

ENTERTAINING AS A PROPOSITIONAL ATTITUDE: A NONREDUCTIVE CHARACTERIZATION

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The propositional attitude of entertaining is rarely the topic of focal discussion in contemporary philosophy of mind. After suggesting that entertaining is best understood in phenomenological terms (§1) and arguing against the viability of reductive and eliminative accounts of entertaining (§2), this essay develops a nonreductive characterization of entertaining in terms of its connections to a web of neighboring attitudes (§§3–6).

§1. INTRODUCTION:

UNDERSTANDING THE ATTITUDES

The functionalist orthodoxy in the philosophy of mind offers two pictures of the propositional attitudes. The dominant picture is of a broad web of causally interrelated attitudes, each of which is understood exhaustively in terms of its causal/functional role in the web. But functionalism also offers a recessive picture that analyzes all propositional attitudes into logical combinations of belief and desire: being glad that *p* is just believing that *p* and desiring that *p*; fearing that *p* is just believing that $\diamond p$ and desiring that $\sim p$; being disappointed that *p* is just believing that *p* and desiring that $\sim p$; hoping that *p* is believing that $\diamond p$, believing that $\diamond \sim p$, and desiring that *p*; and so on.¹

The connection between these two functionalist pictures is unclear. The dominant functionalist picture faces a problem that has

recently come to the fore in several areas of philosophy. If each attitude is the other attitudes' wash, so to speak, it is unclear how we are supposed to grasp the nature of any of them. To understand the nature of attitude A in terms of its connections to B and C, we would have to know what B and C are; if we are told that we can understand the nature of B in terms of its connections to A and D, and C in terms of its connections to A and E, this only postpones understanding of A, B, and C until D and E are understood; eventually the circle closes, but we still have no grasp on any single node in the overall web. Related to this is the problem of possible permutations: in certain webs—ones with the right kind of internal symmetry—certain permutations of nodes are possible that do not perturb the web of connections construed purely relationally. Often there is nonetheless a strong intuition that the intrinsic nature of the permuted nodes is different, even though their relational profile is strictly identical. Thus, perhaps belief and desire can be permuted in a way that preserves their functional/relational profiles.² After all, there is no a priori guarantee that the cognitive 'half' and the conative 'half' of the web of attitudes are not perfectly symmetrical in a way that would allow such permutations.

These sorts of problem have been raised in recent discussions of global descriptivism in the philosophy of language (Lewis 1984),

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1 structural realism in the philosophy of science
 2 (Demopoulos and Friedman 1985), and dis-
 3 positional essentialism in the metaphysics of
 4 properties and laws (Armstrong 2004, chap.
 5 10). The general form of the worry goes back
 6 to Newman's (1928) critique of Russell's
 7 (1927) descriptivism. The standard response
 8 to this sort of challenge is to recognize that
 9 at least some nodes in the web must be un-
 10 derstood independently of their connections
 11 to other nodes. Their intrinsic nature must be
 12 grasped directly through something like im-
 13 mediate acquaintance. This notion of direct or
 14 immediate acquaintance is certainly elusive,
 15 even mysterious. But something like it ap-
 16 pears to be needed. Thankfully, the notion is
 17 less mysterious in the mental than in those
 18 other domains, since the idea of immediate
 19 acquaintance with one's own mental states has
 20 struck many as independently compelling.³

21 The move from the dominant to the recessive
 22 functionalist picture can be seen in light
 23 of these problems. Given that there is no way
 24 to rule out epistemically possible permuta-
 25 tions of the web of attitudes, especially if the
 26 cognitive and conative 'halves' of the web are
 27 perfectly symmetrical, it may be necessary to
 28 grasp the nature of the paradigmatic cogni-
 29 tive attitude and conative attitude—belief and
 30 desire, say—by direct acquaintance. Once
 31 we have an independent handle on belief
 32 and desire in this way, we can understand the
 33 other attitudes in terms of their connections
 34 to belief and desire, as well as to each other.
 35 The web no longer floats unmoored from any
 36 grasp of individual attitudes.

37 If this is how we understand the role belief
 38 and desire play in a viable functionalist pic-
 39 ture of the attitudes, belief and desire must
 40 be eligible objects of acquaintance. They
 41 must be something we can encounter directly,
 42 without appreciating the whole functional
 43 architecture of the mind. Plausibly, the only
 44 mental features that can be encountered in
 45 this direct way—the mind's only eligible
 46 objects of acquaintance—are phenomenal

features. It follows that for belief and desire to
 play the sort of theoretical role outlined here,
 there must be phenomenal features character-
 istic of them—a distinctive phenomenology
 of believing and a distinctive phenomenology
 of desiring. A promising characterization of
 these contrasting phenomenologies is painted
 forth by J. L. Cohen (1992, p. 11):

Feeling it true that *p* may thus be compared
 with feeling it good that *p*. All credal feelings,
 whether weak or strong, share the distinctive
 feature of constituting some kind of orientation
 on the 'True or false?' issue in relation to their
 propositional objects, whereas affective mental
 feelings, like those of anger or desire, consti-
 tute some kind of orientation on the 'Good or
 bad?' issue.⁴

Cohen's articulation of 'credal feelings' and
 'affective feelings' in terms of a phenomenal
 orientation on two distinct issues is particu-
 larly seductive, but the general idea that there
 is a cognitive phenomenology of aiming at the
 true and a conative phenomenology of aiming
 at the good goes back at least to Brentano
 (1874, 1889).

There is an inviting connection between
 the phenomenological distinction between
 orientations on the 'true or false' and 'good
 or bad' issues, on the one hand, and the more
 familiar distinction between mind-to-world
 and world-to-mind directions of fit, on the
 other. The latter distinction is standardly ap-
 pealed to in the functionalist literature, but an
 assay of what exactly it comes to is harder to
 find.⁵ One suggestion may therefore be to elu-
 cidate the direction-of-fit distinction in terms
 of the phenomenal-orientation distinction. It
 is possible, of course, that a nonphenomeno-
 logical elucidation of the distinction could be
 devised. But it is less clear how, construed
 in terms of a nonphenomenological notion
 of direction of fit, belief and desire could be
 eligible objects of acquaintance.

These considerations recommend constru-
 ing the difference between belief and desire
 not in strictly functional terms but in phenom-

enological terms, to do with the difference in phenomenal orientation or direction of fit. If this is how we think of the difference between belief and desire as two fundamental attitudes, however, we must recognize that there is a third fundamental propositional attitude, which involves neither phenomenal orientation: entertaining. Entertaining a proposition requires an orientation on neither the ‘true or false’ nor the ‘good or bad’ issue. It has neither a mind-to-world nor a world-to-mind direction of fit. That, at least, is the guiding idea of this essay.

The plan of the essay is as follows. After arguing, in §2, that entertaining can neither be reductively accounted for in terms of belief and desire (as the reigning belief-desire psychology would require) nor eliminated altogether, the essay attempts to provide a nonreductive characterization of entertaining in terms of its connections to other propositional attitudes: §3 explores connections to a number of closely related notions, such as considering, contemplating, and apprehending; §4 explores connections to a wider circle of notions, including thinking, believing, and judging; §5 explores connections to desire and the emotions; §6 concludes with the general shape of the emerging account of entertaining.

§2. THE IRREDUCIBILITY OF ENTERTAINING

Many mental verbs (e.g., ‘thinking’) can be used to designate either a mental process or the product of such a process (e.g., either the process of thinking or the ensuing thought). Perhaps because of the peculiar character of entertaining as aiming neither at the true nor at the good—nor at anything else—the distinction is less obvious for ‘entertaining.’ Here the term *episode* will be used to denote a unit of mental activity where the process/product distinction does not apply so clearly. Thus, this essay’s concern is with episodes of entertaining.

Still, talk of entertaining can be used to refer to a number of different phenomena, including but not restricted to the following:

- Entertaining that *p*
- Entertaining the proposition that *p*
- Entertaining the thought that *p*
- Entertaining the possibility that *p*
- Entertaining an idea
- Entertaining an image

This essay’s concern is with entertaining as a *propositional attitude*, so it is the second formulation that will be taken as canonical (though also the first as shorthand for the second).⁶ It is this kind of entertaining that is claimed here to frustrate the functionalist thesis of analyzability into logical combination of belief and desire.

One kind of objection to the functionalist project is that some attitudes, although involving belief-desire combinations, are not exhausted by those but also involve an extra *sui generis* residue. One might argue, in this vein, that being glad the weather is nice involves believing that it is and desiring that it be, but in addition also involves what may be characterized as the *proprietary phenomenology of gladness*: a certain glad feeling that does not reduce to any feeling the relevant belief and desire might bring along.

A completely different, and in some respects more radical, objection is that there exist some propositional attitudes that do not even involve either a belief component or a desire component. Such attitudes may be accompanied by beliefs and/or desires but do not have beliefs and/or desires as components. This is the case, it is contended, with entertaining. Consider an episode of entertaining the proposition that the order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things (as Spinoza says in *Ethics*, bk. II). Certainly, entertaining this proposition does not seem to involve any element of desire; entertaining that the order and connection of ideas is the same as the

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1 order and connection of things implies neither
 2 wanting it to be, nor wanting it not to be, nor
 3 wanting anything else in particular.⁷ More
 4 interestingly, such an episode does not seem
 5 to involve any element of belief; one could
 6 entertain the proposition precisely because
 7 one neither believes nor disbelieves it. Thus,
 8 entertaining the proposition involves neither
 9 desiring anything nor believing anything. A
 10 fortiori, it cannot be reduced to any combina-
 11 tion of desiring and/or believing.⁸

12 The heart of the problem for the functional-
 13 ist is that entertaining involves neither mind-
 14 to-world nor world-to-mind direction of fit
 15 with respect to the proposition entertained.
 16 This lack of any ‘fit’ relation to the world
 17 captures the doxastic ‘neutrality’ manifest in
 18 entertaining. One can entertain any proposi-
 19 tion regardless of one’s conception of how
 20 the world is or should be, hence regardless
 21 of one’s conceptions of the true and the good.
 22 Accordingly, entertaining does not have any
 23 satisfaction conditions that might fail to be
 24 met if the world neither is nor ought to be a
 25 certain way. Since belief and desire both bear
 26 the ‘fit’ relation to the world, a mental state
 27 that does not bear it cannot be analyzed in
 28 terms of them.⁹ Thus, entertaining must be
 29 treated as irreducible to belief and desire.¹⁰

30 There is one more option for the functional-
 31 ist committed to the belief-desire thesis (the
 32 thesis that all propositional attitudes can be
 33 understood in terms of combinations of belief
 34 and desire). This is to go eliminativist rather
 35 than reductivist with respect to entertaining,
 36 that is, deny that such a mental phenomenon
 37 exists. According to Mandelbaum (2010), for
 38 example, there is no act of mere entertaining
 39 separate from believing. As a matter of em-
 40 pirical fact, our belief-formation mechanisms
 41 are such that we never entertain any proposi-
 42 tion without instantaneously believing it.¹¹
 43 Belief is the default relation to any proposi-
 44 tion that comes before the mind. There are
 45 many difficulties with this suggestion, but the
 46 first objection to it is that mere entertaining

is introspectively manifest. One can simply
 tell by introspection that one is merely en-
 tertaining the proposition that the order and
 connection of ideas is the same as the order
 and connection of things; one may be unsure
 whether they are, not because one’s immedi-
 ate belief that they are has been rescinded in
 light of evidence acquired more recently, but
 because one never formed an orientation on
 the ‘true or false?’ question to begin with.

Mandelbaum’s response to this objection
 from introspection is that beliefs are disposi-
 tional states, and dispositional states are not
 introspectively available, so one cannot tell
 by introspection that one does not believe
 that the order and connection of ideas is the
 same as the order and connection of things.
 However, regardless of what belief is, in the
 example above the episode that one is intro-
 specting (whose content is that the order and
 connection of ideas is the same as the order
 and connection of things) is certainly not a
 standing disposition, but an occurrent mental
 act. So even if it is true that one cannot tell by
 introspection which dispositional beliefs one
 does and does not have, the act of entertain-
 ing is not one of those. For all Mandelbaum
 argues, some mental acts are introspectible,
 and entertaining is one of those.

Mandelbaum could claim that an act of
 entertaining nonetheless automatically causes
 a dispositional belief. But if the connection
 between the entertaining and the ensuing
 belief is merely causal, then the view is not
 eliminativist after all.¹² In its eliminativ-
 ist form, the view has to be that when one
 introspectively seems to oneself to perform
 an act of merely entertaining the proposition
 that the order and connection of ideas is the
 same as the order and connection of things,
 either (i) in reality one does not perform any
 act or (ii) in reality one performs an act of
 committing to the truth of the proposition,
 that is, believing it. Presumably, (i) is a
 nonstarter. As for (ii), as noted, part of what
 one encounters in introspecting belief is the

phenomenology of orientation on the ‘true or false?’ question. Yet when one seems to oneself introspectively to perform the act of entertaining the proposition that the order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things, one does not encounter any phenomenal orientation on that question.¹³

To conclude, in all likelihood entertaining is neither eliminable nor reducible. It exists and is irreducible to combinations of belief and desire. To that extent, it must be treated as a third leg in the stool of the attitudes. To understand the realm of the attitudes, then, it seems we must posit three primitive attitudes grasped by acquaintance: belief, desire, and entertaining. In this picture, we grasp what entertaining is (as well as what belief and desire are) by encountering its (and their) distinctive phenomenology in our stream of consciousness.¹⁴

In what follows, a characterization of this phenomenology will be attempted. Naturally, this is an elusive task. The next section discusses the phenomenology internal to the realm of entertaining. The two following sections discuss the phenomenology of entertaining in relation to cognitive attitudes (first) and conative and mixed attitudes (second).

§3. PHENOMENOLOGY

INTERNAL TO ENTERTAINING: ENTERTAINING, CONTEMPLATING, CONSIDERING, APPREHENDING

The central, characteristic phenomenal feature of entertaining is simply its doxastic neutrality: its lack of phenomenal orientation on either the truth or the goodness issue. It is worth noting, however, that there are forsooth two distinct modes in which entertaining may be done. There is, on the one hand, a kind of entertaining of *p* that is done with a view to a certain cognitive achievement, typically the establishment of some credence in *p*. We often entertain that *p* in the context of trying

to figure out the plausibility of *p*, whether and to what extent we should believe that *p*. One might, for example, entertain the proposition that the order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things because one is concerned to know whether one should believe it. On the other hand, there is also another kind of entertaining that is purely contemplative, done with no doxastic business or concern in mind (and certainly not targeting any cognitive achievement). One might entertain a scenario in which world peace obtains (or the corresponding proposition) because one finds it curiously soothing to do so; or one might entertain a brief exchange with one’s deceased grandfather (describable as a longish propositions), somewhat as a child entertains scenarios in which he has superpowers, again for some unclear emotional benefit utterly unrelated to the plausibility of the proposition entertained. There is a noticeable, if quite subtle, phenomenological difference between these two modes of entertaining. The former involves, but the latter does not, a phenomenological element of doxastic or epistemic engagement with the proposition that *p*. Thus, some episodes can be described as engaged entertaining and some as disengaged entertaining.

Although there is a phenomenological difference between these two types of entertaining episode, it is an open question whether the difference pertains to a proprietary phenomenology of entertaining or derives from surrounding mental states, notably desires and emotions. One view is that the entertaining itself feels the same in both cases; it is just that the engaged variety is accompanied by a desire to know whether the proposition entertained is true or plausible, whereas the disengaged variety is not. The episode’s overall phenomenology certainly differs, but it is unclear whether the entertaining component of the episode does. Since entertaining is a primitive attitude not analyzable in terms of others, what is at stake is whether there are

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1 two primitives or one associated with enter-
 2 taining; if the entertaining itself is the same
 3 in the engaged and disengaged modes, we
 4 have only one primitive on our hands here;
 5 if it is different, we have two. From a meth-
 6 odological point of view, it is preferable to
 7 posit initially a single primitive, accounting
 8 for the difference between the two modes
 9 of entertaining in terms of surrounding de-
 10 sires—pending a reason to think this would
 11 not work. It may well be that some such
 12 reason could be adduced, but this essay will
 13 proceed as though entertaining is one.

14 Still, it is important to keep in mind the
 15 difference between engaged and disengaged
 16 modes of entertaining. With some savagery
 17 to ordinary language, we might say that en-
 18 tertaining *p* in the engaged mode is a matter
 19 of *considering p*, while entertaining *p* in the
 20 disengaged mode is a matter of *contemplating*
 21 *p*. Thus, the engaged/disengaged distinction
 22 corresponds to a consideration/contemplation
 23 distinction. (The qualification ‘with some
 24 savagery’ is needed because in truth it is per-
 25 fectly grammatical to use ‘contemplating’ to
 26 describe an engaged episode of entertaining
 27 or ‘considering’ to describe a disengaged one.
 28 Nonetheless, it would be fair to remark that
 29 the engaged usage belongs relatively more
 30 on the fringe of the range of ordinary uses of
 31 ‘contemplating’ but is relatively more central
 32 to, closer to the core of, the ordinary use of
 33 ‘considering’—and vice versa. This makes
 34 it reasonable to introduce a quasi-technical
 35 usage of ‘contemplating’ denoting all and
 36 only disengaged episodes of entertaining
 37 and of ‘considering’ for all and only engaged
 38 episodes of entertaining.)

39 In any case, we should not confuse the
 40 phenomenology of neutrality and the phe-
 41 nomenology of disengagement. Entertaining
 42 is doxastically neutral on the truth (and good-
 43 ness) of *p* when performed both in an engaged
 44 and in a disengaged mode. This neutrality
 45 is, as noted, the central characteristic of the
 46 phenomenology of entertaining. The element

of engagement does not undermine neutral-
 ity—it introduces a doxastic concern but not
 a doxastic position.

Another, more generic phenomenal char-
 acteristic of entertaining is what we may call
phenomenal intensity. It seems phenomeno-
 logically manifest that conscious experiences
 vary in their phenomenal intensity—how
 vividly they are present to consciousness, as
 it were—and can even differ along no other
 dimension but that of phenomenal intensity.
 When we discuss sensory conscious experi-
 ences, it is important to distinguish this
 kind of phenomenal intensity from a more
 straightforward type of sensory intensity. The
 phenomenal intensity of a visual experience
 of red is not a matter of the degree of bright-
 ness or saturation of the red experienced.
 Visual experiences of red can vary independ-
 ently along the dimension of experienced
 brightness or saturation and the dimension of
 phenomenal intensity/vivacity, which has to
 do rather with the clarity and alertness with
 which they are present to consciousness.¹⁵
 The claim being made here is that this is true
 of episodes of entertaining as well: one can
 entertain that *p* more vividly or less vividly,
 in a phenomenal sense of ‘vividly,’ such that the
 episodes differ in nothing but their phenom-
 enal intensity. Thus, one might on a sunny
 afternoon calmly entertain the proposition
 that the enumeration in the Constitution of
 certain rights shall not be construed to deny
 or disparage others retained by the people;
 and a moment later, perhaps after a sip of
 espresso or a bite of raw chocolate, and due
 to increased interest, concentration, and intel-
 lectual energy, suddenly entertain the same
 proposition more alertly and clearly, that is,
 with noticeably greater phenomenal intensity
 or vivacity.

A third phenomenal feature worth noting
 is what we may call *presentational phenom-
 enology*. Chudnoff (2011) argues that certain
 purely intellectual states, such as intuitions,
 have this commonality with perceptual states,

that they boast a ‘presentational phenomenology.’ The presentational phenomenology of perceptual states consists in the fact that whenever one undergoes a perceptual experience, in addition to being related to the proposition that is the content of the experience, one is also perceptually aware of a certain item.¹⁶ For example, looking at the clock, you may see that it is getting late. Here, although your perceptual state has the propositional content that it is getting late, it also involves a sort of nonpropositional item-awareness of the clock. This is the presentational phenomenology of perception. Chudnoff argues that intuitions have a similar feature: when one intuits that *p*, there is always some abstract object *O*, such that intuiting that *p* involves being aware of (presented with) *O*. Typically, says Chudnoff, *O* is an essence of some property or particular.¹⁷ For example, when one intuits that the taller-than relation is transitive, one is aware of the essence of the taller-than relation (a universal). Although the intuition has a propositional content (that the taller-than relation is transitive), it also involves an item-awareness (of the relation’s essence). This is the presentational phenomenology of intuition. The claim made here is that entertaining often, perhaps typically, involves a presentational phenomenology as well.

This is especially clear in the disengaged, contemplative variety of entertaining. Let us contemplate the proposition that Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion. When one examines the phenomenology of this contemplative episode, one finds that it is quite complex. It may involve, for example, a visual image of the U.S. Capitol building in Washington and an auditory image of the word *establishment* in silent speech. In addition, however, it seems to involve a purely intellectual awareness of certain items: religion in general, law in general, government in general. It is not immediately obvious how to best describe how (under what mode of presentation) these

items are presented in the phenomenology: whether as essences, as properties, as notions, or as some other type of entity. It may be that the presentational phenomenology itself is simply silent on this matter. It is clear that it presents those items not in any particular spatiotemporal manifestation (this instance of religiosity, that instance of governing), but in general. In that sense (but only in that sense), it presents them as abstract entities.¹⁸ What we may say with confidence is that there is a sense, however vague and open-ended, of a commonality among standard instance of religiosity, of lawfulness, and of governing, as well as of a peculiarity of theirs; and that it is this commonality-cum-peculiarity that is presented in the entertaining. The ontological status of such commonality-cum-peculiarity is something on which we may stay neutral. Introducing the term *commonarity* as shorthand for commonality-cum-peculiarity, it is thus reasonable to elucidate the thesis that entertaining has a presentational phenomenology as follows: if a subject entertains a proposition of the form <the Fs are Gs>, then normally S is item-aware of the Fs’ commonarity and the Gs’ commonarity; similarly for entertaining propositions whose contents are propositions with other logical forms.¹⁹

If this is right, then while entertaining that *p* is itself a propositional awareness, it typically involves in its phenomenology an element of item-awareness. The traditional philosophical notion of *apprehending* seems to comport well with the kind of theoretical role that this kind of item-awareness plays in the present phenomenological analysis of entertaining (inspired by Chudnoff’s phenomenological analysis of intuition). If we construe the notion of apprehending as capturing the item-awareness built into entertaining, we can elucidate the thesis of presentational phenomenology further: if a subject entertains a proposition of the form <the Fs are Gs>, then normally S apprehends the Fs’ commonarity and the Gs’ commonarity.

1 In summary, the discussion above has
 2 identified three phenomenal features of entertain-
 3 ing: orientational neutrality, phenomenal
 4 intensity, and presentational phenomenol-
 5 ogy. (The first is the most essential.) In the
 6 course of the discussion, connections have
 7 been drawn among a number of other related
 8 notions. It was suggested that *considering* is
 9 the engaged mode of entertaining and *con-*
 10 *templating* its disengaged mode, and that *ap-*
 11 *prehending* is the presentational component
 12 of entertaining. In the next section, we turn
 13 to connections between entertaining and a
 14 more remote circle of notions more central
 15 to doxastically committal cognition.

16 §4. RELATION TO THE COGNITIVE 17 ATTITUDES: ENTERTAINING, THINKING, 18 JUDGING, BELIEVING 19

20 The discussion in this section will progress
 21 through three main themes: the connection
 22 of entertaining to thinking (§4.1), judging
 23 (§4.2), and believing (§4.3). The discussion
 24 will have to be relatively brief, inasmuch as
 25 one could easily dedicate an essay or a book
 26 to the phenomenological relation between
 27 entertaining and each of these other attitudes.
 28

29 §4.1. *Entertaining and Thinking*

30 What is the relation between episodes of
 31 entertaining and episodes of thinking? To
 32 answer this question, it is important to distin-
 33 guish between *thinking-that* and *thinking-of*.
 34 As we will see, *thinking-that* is distinct from
 35 entertaining, though there may be interest-
 36 ing connections between them. *Thinking-of*,
 37 meanwhile, may be nothing more than enter-
 38 taining.

39 *Thinking-of* is doxastically noncommittal
 40 in a variety of ways. First, one can think of
 41 a particular *a*, or of a property *F*, without
 42 committing to the notion that *a* exists or that
 43 *F* is instantiated. Relatedly, one can think of
 44 *a* and of *F* without thereby thinking that *a* is
 45 *F*. In fact, at least in one legitimate hearing
 46 of the locution, one can think of *a's being F*

without thinking *that a* is *F* (more on that mo-
 20 mentarily).²⁰ Thus, *thinking-of* is doxastically
 neutral in the manner characteristic of enter-
 taining. At the same time, *thinking-of* cannot
 be identified with entertaining. For one thing,
 thinking of *a* and thinking of *F* are not propo-
 sitional attitudes, but ‘objectual attitudes,’ so
 they do not qualify as forms of entertaining
 a proposition—the kind of entertaining this
 essay is concerned with.²¹ If anything, it is
 more plausible to identify *thinking-of* with
 apprehending, which as noted above is an
 objectual constituent of the presentational
 phenomenology of entertaining. However,
 even this identification is problematic. It is
 important to keep in mind that apprehending
a or *F* presents itself as involving an apprecia-
 tion of the ‘commonarity’ of *a* or *F*—whereas
 one may think of *a* or of *F* without having a
 sense of their commonarity. Thus, episodes
 of apprehending would appear to be a proper
 subset of episodes of thinking of, namely,
 propositional *thinking-of*.

Consider now thinking *that a* is *F*. This sort
 of episode is clearly not doxastically neutral:
 one commits to the obtaining of a state of
 affairs and arguably also to the existence
 of a particular and to the instantiated-ness
 of a property. Thus, thinking that *a* is *F* is
 definitely not a form of entertaining, since it
 involves full-blooded doxastic commitment.
 This is not the minor doxastic engagement
 involved in considering *p*; it is the much more
 involved state of considering and then affirm-
 ing that *p*. (Note well: the temporal language
 here—‘and then’—is meant metaphorically;
 in many acts of thinking-that, the consider-
 ing and the affirming are simultaneous, that
 is, are logical rather than temporal compo-
 22) There is something of a tradition
 of assimilating thinking to entertaining, but
 authors who have done so have failed to no-
 tice the distinction between *thinking-of* and
thinking-that. Thus, Cassam (2010) points
 out that “someone who wonders whether *P*
 is thinking—thinking about *P*, as we would

say—but is not mentally affirming that P” (p. 84). However, such a person, although thinking about, or of, *p*, is not thinking *that p*. Thinking *that p* does require mentally affirming *p*.

To summarize the discussion thus far: thinking comes in two separate varieties, thinking-of and thinking-that, and there is a close connection between the former and entertaining insofar as both are doxastically neutral; however, any connection between the latter and entertaining would have to be much more complicated.

An interesting question is how to treat reports such as ‘S is thinking of *a*’s being F,’ that is, reports that use imperfect nominals as the grammatical objects of ‘thinking of.’²³ One view is that thinking of *a*’s being F is the same as thinking that *a* is F and therefore should be treated as a variant of thinking-that. Another view is that just as thinking of *a* does not require thinking that *a* exists and thinking of F does not require thinking that F is instantiated, so thinking of *a*’s being F does not require thinking that *a*’s being F obtains (hence that *a* in fact is F). A third view is that reports of the form ‘S is thinking of *a*’s being F’ are used sometimes as suggested in the first view and sometimes as suggested in the second view. Plausibly, the second view is the most accurate, in that although the relevant reports can certainly be used along the lines suggested in the first view, competent speakers would typically use them along the lines suggested in the second view. In any case, on both the second and third view, there is a central appropriate use of such reports in which thinking of *a*’s being F is doxastically neutral and noncommittal on the question of whether *a* is F.

In addition to distinguishing thinking-of and thinking-that, we should distinguish *occurrent* thinking-that and *standing* thinking-that. Occurrent thinking-that can be correctly ascribed only when a certain mental event takes place in the subject, typically in the

form of the subject performing the right kind of cognitive act. At the very least, occurrently thinking that *a* is F is performing a mental act of predicating F of *a*. By contrast, standing thinking-that can be correctly ascribed even when the subject performs no mental act, even when no mental event takes place in her—indeed, even when she is fast asleep. (Compare thinking-of, which can be correctly ascribed only when the subject performs some mental act; it is always false to say of someone in a dreamless sleep that she is thinking of this or that. Clearly, thinking-of has only an occurrent variety.)

In a quasi-stipulative vein, we may use the terms *belief* and *judgment* to denote these two varieties of thinking-that. For belief is not an act, but a state, whereas judgment is an act rather than a state. We can appreciate this by the appropriateness of the progressive tense for each. It is grammatical to say not only that S judges that *p*, but also that S is judging that *p*; by contrast, it is ungrammatical to say that S is believing that *p*—one can only say that S believes that *p* (see Williamson 2000, p. 35). Accordingly, one can correctly say of someone in a dreamless sleep that she believes that *p*, but not that she judges that *p*. Thus, it is natural to identify occurrent thinking-that with judging and standing thinking-that with believing. In this bookkeeping scheme, thinking divides into thinking-of and thinking-that, and the latter divides into occurrent thinking-that, or judgment, and standing thinking-that, or belief. Entertaining is closely linked to thinking-of, insofar as a subset of thinkings-of (those that constitute apprehending) are components of entertaining’s presentational phenomenology. The link between entertaining and the two forms of thinking-that remains to be explored.

§4.2. *Entertaining and Judging*

Given the above connections between entertaining, thinking-of, and occurrent thinking-that, it might be suggested that one

1 could in fact analyze entertaining in terms of
 2 judging. The analysis would construe entertain-
 3 ing as a judgment from which the element
 4 of affirmation has been somehow removed.
 5 The predication of F of *a* is bracketed, as it
 6 were, so that one ‘withholds judgment,’ with
 7 the result that one is merely entertaining that
 8 *a* is F. In a slogan, entertaining equals judg-
 9 ing minus affirming. Note well: the slogan is
 10 not meant as a psychological claim about the
 11 causal formation of entertainings;²⁴ rather, it
 12 is intended as an analytical claim about the
 13 logical structure of entertaining.

14 It is hard to see what supports the analysis
 15 of entertaining as judging minus affirming.
 16 It is particularly hard to see what is sup-
 17 posed to make it preferable over the opposite
 18 analysis, which could be summarized in a
 19 competing slogan: judging equals entertain-
 20 ing plus affirming. After all, it is in general
 21 much more natural to analyze a whole in
 22 terms of its parts than a part in terms of the
 23 whole and other parts. Certainly this is so
 24 when the parts are self-standing items that
 25 can occur in the absence of the whole. We
 26 are not tempted to understand a door as a
 27 house minus walls and windows. It is equally
 28 odd to understand entertaining in terms of a
 29 subtraction from judging.

30 Furthermore, arguably ‘judging minus
 31 affirming’ would at most capture *consider-*
 32 *ing*, the engaged variety of entertaining, as
 33 it suggests a mental activity in which the
 34 plausibility of the proposition entertained
 35 is in the subject’s sights. On the proposal
 36 being discussed, entertaining is a matter of
 37 withholding judgment. But a person only
 38 withholds judgment when the question of
 39 whether to assent to a proposition or dissent
 40 from it arises. Withholding judgment puts the
 41 issue of affirmation on the table, so to speak.
 42 By contrast, in contemplating a proposition
 43 (i.e., entertaining it in the *disengaged* mode)
 44 affirmation does not enter the picture—it is
 45 neither asserted nor withdrawn, but simply
 46 absent. It would seem, then, that ‘judging

minus affirming’ misses out on contemplat-
 ing. Thus ‘judging minus affirming’ is too
 narrow to capture entertaining as such.

There is good reason to think that ‘judging
 minus affirming’ is also too broad to capture
 entertaining. For there are other propositional
 attitudes that could be described this way:
 doubting comes to mind immediately. When
 one comes to doubt what one previously be-
 lieved—for example, that truth-conditional
 semantics is more plausible than justification-
 conditional semantics—one enters a state
 naturally described as judging minus affirm-
 ing.²⁵ But entertaining that *p* is clearly not the
 same as doubting that *p*.

All this recommends rejecting an analysis
 of entertaining as ‘judging minus affirming.’
 This leaves two options open regarding the
 relationship between entertaining and judg-
 ing: either (i) we analyze judging as enter-
 taining plus affirming, or (ii) we treat judging
 and entertaining as mutually unanalyzable
 primitives.

What is at stake in this choice is not the
 number of primitives. If (ii) is true, then en-
 tertaining and judging are primitives, and if (i)
 is true, judging is not a primitive but (for all
 that has been said) affirming is. Whether our
 primitives here are entertaining and judging
 or entertaining and affirming, they are two.
 So the number of primitives is not at stake.

Other matters, however, are at stake.
 First of all, if (ii) is true, then judging and
 entertaining has a certain phenomenal com-
 monality, since entertaining is a component
 or aspect of judging. By contrast, if (i) is
 true, then there need not be any phenomenal
 commonality or overlap between entertain-
 ing and judging. Second, the two views
 differ on the question of whether judging is
 phenomenologically simple or structured:
 according to (i), it is simple; according to (ii),
 it is structured. Relatedly, while both views
 posit an entertaining primitive and a cogni-
 tive primitive, according to (i) the cognitive
 primitive is an attitude (judging), whereas

according to (ii) it is an attitude-component (affirming). These are substantive differences between the two views.

Even with these substantive differences clearly laid out, it is difficult to assess which view is more plausible. Arguably, the view that judging is reducible to entertaining plus affirming—(ii) above—is more elegant. But it is unclear whether this should be taken to suggest it is also more plausible.

Consider the issue of phenomenal commonality. One advantage of the view that judging is entertaining plus affirming is its potential to offer a unified account of several propositional attitudes. One could maintain that judging is entertaining with an overlay of affirmation, doubting is entertaining with an overlay of positive nonaffirmation, supposing is entertaining with an overlay of mock affirmation, and so on.²⁶ The emerging picture is of a group of cognitive acts with an entertaining core modulated by an affirmation-related element. There is a certain elegance in this unified picture. But whether the picture is consequently more plausible depends on whether we are pre-theoretically inclined to find phenomenal commonality among all these types of cognitive act. Arguably, there is indeed a phenomenal commonality, namely, the feel of grasping the proposition, or having it before one's mind. (In the case of entertaining, that grasp constitutes the whole of the attitude, but in the case of other cognitive attitudes, only a proper part). Clearly, however, some might reject this introspective claim, professing to find no such common core of pure grasping in their various cognitive acts. In other words, theoretical unity is truth-conducive (hence indicative of plausibility) only where there is corresponding unity in the phenomena, but it is not obvious in this case that the phenomena have the degree of unity claimed—that there is indeed a phenomenal commonality among judging, doubting, suspecting, and so on.

One argument for the existence of such unity in the phenomena appeals to the independent idea that appreciating what one is judging, doubting, or supposing would require having the relevant proposition before one's mind, and having the relevant proposition before one's mind just is entertaining the proposition. The idea is that without a common core of entertaining, it is unclear how subjects would know exactly what they were judging, doubting, or supposing. Even in 'automatic,' unreflective judgments (e.g., that the table is brown), where there is no temporal gap between entertaining and affirming, the affirmation that *a* is indeed F requires that the subject apprehend $\langle a \rangle$ and $\langle F \rangle$ and entertain their propositional unity.²⁷ The whole proposition needs to be before the subject's mind. This consideration may suggest that entertaining is indeed a logical component of all or most (occurrent) cognitive attitudes. It is not entirely obvious what to make of this argument, but something about it smells right. If we accept it, then we have *pro tanto* reason to take entertaining to be a unifying component of all or most cognitive attitudes.²⁸

§4.3. *Entertaining and Belief*

What about the standing, dispositional cognitive attitudes, such as belief? Clearly, entertaining cannot be a component of belief, precisely because entertaining is an occurrent act whereas belief is a standing state. It may nonetheless be possible to understand belief centrally in terms of entertaining, as will now be argued. The main idea is simply to combine the view that judgment is entertaining plus affirming with the view that believing is just being disposed to judge. It would follow that believing is just being disposed to entertain-and-affirm.

Let us start with Searle's (1990; 1992, chap. 7) 'connection principle': the claim that every unconscious intentional state must be *potentially* conscious. This principle con-

nects the unconscious to the conscious. We might suggest a parallel principle connecting the standing to the occurrent: every standing intentional state must be potentially occurrent; or better, for a subject to be in a standing state with propositional content *p*, the subject must be disposed to be in a corresponding occurrent state with propositional content *p*. That is: a subject *S* is in a standing intentional state directed at *p* only if *S* is disposed to enter occurrent intentional states directed at *p*. If we adopt such a principle, one substitution instance would be the following: *S* standingly thinks that *p* only if *S* is disposed to occurrently think that *p*. Recall, now, that we have determined to use the term *belief* for such standing thinking-that, and ‘judgment’ for occurrent thinking-that. So the principle could be more succinctly expressed as follows: *S* believes that *p* only if *S* is disposed to judge that *p*.²⁹

This connection principle is highly plausible. The argument for it may be summarized thus: if *S* is not disposed to occurrently think that *p*, then *S* does not dispositionally think that *p*; if *S* does not dispositionally think that *p*, then *S* does not standingly think that *p*; if *S* does not standingly think that *p*, then *S* does not believe that *p*; therefore, if *S* is not disposed to judge that *p*, then *S* does not believe that *p*.

With this belief-judgment connection principle in place, we may now plug into it the account of judgment in terms of entertaining-and-affirming. What we obtain is the following belief-entertainment connection principle: *S* believes that *p* only if *S* is disposed to entertain-and-affirm that *p*.³⁰

Being a one-way conditional, the belief-entertainment connection principle does not quite provide an analysis, or account, of belief. It does, however, provide an interesting and far-from-trivial conceptual connection between the two, one that is at once somewhat surprising and not at all implausible against the background of the right assump-

tions. Furthermore, it may be turned into a potential analysis if a case could be made for the converse one-way conditional—the claim that if *S* is disposed to judge that *p*, then *S* believes that *p*. For then the disposition to judge would be not only necessary but also sufficient for belief.

In fact, this sufficiency claim seems if anything less controversial than the necessity claim. Plausibly, any explanatory work one might summon dispositional thinking-that to perform could be shouldered more economically by dispositions to think-that (see Audi 1994). If so, there is no conceivable rationale for positing any aspect of dispositional thinking-that (i.e., believing) over and above what is involved in the disposition to think-that (i.e., disposition to judge).

With the two conditionals in place, we can embrace the corresponding biconditional: *S* believes that *p* iff *S* is disposed to judge that *p*. The biconditional itself could serve as an analysis of judgment in terms of belief just as well as one of belief in terms of judgment. But in line with the unificatory aspiration presented above, we may plausibly offer the biconditional as a *prima facie* analysis of belief in terms of judgment. This direction of analysis is also recommended by the general thought that it is preferable to understand the dispositional in terms of the occurrent than the occurrent in terms of the dispositional. According to the emerging analysis, then, for *S* to believe that *p* is just for *S* to be disposed to judge that *p*. In other words, when ‘*S* believes that *p*’ is true, it is true in virtue of *S* being disposed to judge that *p*.

If we do adopt an analysis of belief in terms of judgment, we may further combine it with the analysis of judgment in terms of entertaining plus affirming from the previous subsection. The result would be that belief is just the disposition to entertain-and-affirm. For *S* to believe that *p* would be for *S* to be disposed to entertain *p* and affirm what *S* entertains.

The analysis of belief in terms of a disposition to entertain and affirm is not entirely straightforward, however. Certainly, it could not be understood as claiming that S has both a disposition to entertain and a disposition to affirm. For one thing, it is very natural to say that most subjects believe that $231.857 > 143.769$ but do not have the disposition to entertain this proposition at all, much less to entertain and affirm it. It might be thought that this difficulty could be overcome simply by attributing to the subject a merely conditional disposition, namely the disposition to affirm that p if she entertains that p .³¹ This new requirement is too broad, however. We can conceive of a subject S and a proposition p such that S does not in fact believe that p , but if S entertained that p , S would come to see the plausibility of p and thus would come to judge that p . This non-believer thus satisfies the conditional requirement that she would be disposed to affirm p if she entertained p . Therefore, this cannot be a requirement on believing. In other words, subjects have more conditional dispositions of this sort than they have beliefs.³²

To neutralize this difficulty, we need to home in on a more specific (entertaining-related) disposition, one that subjects have (when and) only when they believe that p . A full specification of the character of a disposition—the kind of specification sufficient to individuate the relevant disposition—must refer to (i) triggering conditions and (ii) manifestation conditions. Thus, the vase's disposition to break when dropped has dropping as its triggering condition and breaking as its manifestation condition. Let us now propose triggering and manifestation conditions for the kind of disposition that is plausibly coextensive with belief.

First, a subject may have the disposition to entertain and affirm that $231.857 > 143.769$ in a variety of relatively specific triggering circumstances. One obvious triggering circumstance involves the subject being

asked whether $231.857 > 143.769$. But there are many other circumstances that might causally trigger the subject's entertaining of this proposition: a business transaction requiring a cost-benefit analysis in which the costs and benefits sum up in the right way, a calculation of the lengths in miles or kilometers of two routes from her place of residence to her destination, and so on. Let us collect all these triggering circumstances of the disposition to entertain that p under the label ' p -entertaining-triggers.' Crucially, any subject who believes that p all along would in fact be disposed to judge that p when the p -entertaining-triggers obtain.³³ Thus, it is quite plausible that the p -entertaining-triggers are the triggering conditions of the disposition coextensive with believing that p .

As for the manifestation conditions, these cannot be just the circumstances in which the subject ends up affirming that p , since as we just saw, some subjects may come to acquire new beliefs as a result of entertaining certain propositions. However, when subjects acquire new beliefs in this way, the affirmation of the proposition entertained is not immediate but instead is mediated by further reasoning and/or research. The difference between, on the one hand, a subject who believes that Twardowski lived and worked in Lvov, and on the other hand, a subject who does not believe this but might come to believe this were they to entertain the proposition, is that the latter would require at least one more thought in order to affirm the proposition. Typically, this would require some preliminary research, but even if the subject is lazy and affirms the proposition because, say, both 'Twardowski' and 'Lvov' are Polish-sounding names, she would still need to have that extra thought about Polish sounds. By contrast, it is at least possible for a subject who already believes that Twardowski lived and worked in Lvov to affirm this proposition upon entertaining it without at the same time having any other thought, and more generally without

1 the mediation of any other mental state. Let
 2 us call the manifestation conditions special
 3 to this believer the ‘immediate-affirmation
 4 conditions.’ These are the manifestation
 5 conditions that characterize the disposition
 6 which plausibly coextends with belief.

7 The result is an analysis according to which
 8 S believes that *p* iff S is disposed to imme-
 9 diately affirm that *p* when *p*-entertaining-
 10 triggers obtain. Interestingly, this analysis
 11 reveals quite a bit of structure in the notion of
 12 belief, which is often taken to be an attitudinal
 13 simple in contemporary philosophy of mind.
 14 Needless to repeat, belief is also often treated
 15 as primitive, or fundamental, hence as not
 16 analyzable in terms of any other propositional
 17 attitudes—something that would turn out to
 18 be false if we adopt the present analysis. As
 19 emphasized above, this does not mean that
 20 the theory of the attitudes has no need for a
 21 cognitive primitive in addition to the primi-
 22 tive of entertaining; rather, it means that the
 23 cognitive primitive is affirmation, rather than
 24 belief or judgment, where affirmation is a
 25 phenomenal component of judgment that ‘at-
 26 taches to’ entertaining when we judge.³⁴

27 Once belief is understood in terms of enter-
 28 taining, a number of related cognitive attitudes
 29 follow suit. Thus, insofar as being convinced
 30 that *p* is just strongly believing that *p* and sus-
 31 pecting that *p* is just weakly believing that *p*,
 32 we can expect both to be analyzable in terms
 33 of entertaining. There are interesting questions
 34 about how exactly the analysis should go, but
 35 the expectation is that *some* entertaining-based
 36 analysis would work.³⁵

37
 38 To conclude this section, entertaining has
 39 close connections, and seems to be at the heart
 40 of, many of the central cognitive attitudes:
 41 thought, judgment, doubt, supposition, be-
 42 lief, conviction, suspicion. Most importantly,
 43 far from being primitive, belief (standing
 44 thinking-that) can be analyzed as the right
 45 disposition to entertain and affirm. Still, there
 46 must be a cognitive primitive in the theory of

attitudes. This is either the attitude of judging
 (occurrent thinking-that) or the element of af-
 firming, a phenomenal component of judging.
 Some considerations have been offered above
 in support of the latter option, but those are
 somewhat inconclusive.

§5. RELATION TO CONATIVE AND MIXED ATTITUDES: ENTERTAINING, DESIRE, AND EMOTIONS

The previous section explored the prospects
 for a unified account of the cognitive attitudes
 in terms of a core attitude of entertaining. The
 discussion did not touch on the other half of
 ‘belief-desire psychology,’ to do with cona-
 tive propositional attitudes. Since entertaining
 itself is ‘orientationally neutral,’ there is no
 prima facie reason it should be fitter to ana-
 lyze attitudes with an orientation on the ‘true
 or false?’ question than ones with an orienta-
 tion on the ‘good or bad?’ question. Thus,
 one might think that just as judging can be
 understood as entertaining plus a fundamental
 act of affirming, so there might be a funda-
 mental act naturally associated with conative
 attitudes, such that desiring could be under-
 stood as entertaining plus it. This act would
 have to be a sort of conative ratification of the
 content entertained by the subject—what we
 might call, with a somewhat technical notion
 in mind, an act of *approving*. The idea, then,
 is that to occurrently desire that *a* be F is to
 entertain that *a* is F and approve of *a*’s being
 F, that is, to perform an operation of approval
 over the proposition entertained.

As before, this sort of analysis does not
 dispense with a conative primitive. Instead, it
 takes the conative primitive to be a phenom-
 enal *component* of a propositional attitude
 rather than a propositional attitude. There is
 no economy of primitives here, but there is a
 claim of phenomenal commonality between
 entertaining, judging, and desiring—they all
 involve a fundamental phenomenology of
 grasping a proposition, of having a proposi-
 tion before one’s mind.

Also, as before, once we understand occurrent desire in terms of entertaining plus approving, we can understand standing desire (e.g., the desire to stay alive, or to be happy) as a disposition to occurrently desire.³⁶ The result, to a first approximation, is this: S ‘standingly’ desires that *a* be F iff S has the right disposition to entertain that *a* is F and approve of *a*’s being F. A more accurate approximation would articulate more precisely the triggering and manifestation conditions of the ‘right’ disposition.³⁷

In addition to cognitive and conative attitudes, there are ‘mixed’ attitudes that involve a combination of both: being glad that, being disappointed that, being frustrated that, and so on. Presumably, these would be amenable to understanding in terms of entertaining modulated by both an affirmation-related act and an approval-related act. Consider the standard functionalist analysis of being glad that *p* as simply the compresence of believing that *p* and desiring that *p*. This would be replaced, in the present picture, with the following: being occurrently glad that *p* is nothing but entertaining that *p* while both affirming and approving of that which is entertained; being standingly glad that *p* is nothing but the disposition to occurrently being glad that *p*.³⁸

Similar remarks apply to other propositional attitudes with ‘mixed’ directions of fit, including—centrally—the emotional attitudes, such as disappointment, frustration, hope, and fear (all of which include an element of assent or dissent and an element of approval or disapproval). The emerging picture replaces the functionalist belief-desire story, where all propositional attitudes are accounted for in terms of belief and desire, with an entertaining story, so to speak. In this entertaining story, all occurrent propositional attitudes are accounted for in terms of a core episode of entertaining modulated by an affirmation-related and/or approval-related elements, and all standing propositional at-

titudes in terms of dispositions to undergo the relevant episodes.

§6. CONCLUSION: THE RAMSEY SENTENCE OF ENTERTAINING

The project of understanding all the propositional attitudes (partly) in terms of entertaining is extremely ambitious. But the claim that entertaining cannot be understood in terms of belief and desire (nor any other pair of cognitive and conative attitude) is much more modest, and it already presents a deep challenge to the functionalist orthodoxy. It requires that we posit a third primitive attitude and, moreover, one that does not fit the functionalist mold very well. We can appreciate that by noting that the functionalist theorizes about mental states mostly in terms of their functional role and intentional content and appeals to causal connections among mental states and to the environment to account for both in naturalistically kosher terms. However, for both functional role and intentional content, it is less obvious how these causal treatments might proceed with regard to entertaining (which perhaps explains the tendency of functionalists to ignore entertaining).³⁹

Consider first functional role. At the level of token acts of entertaining, there are many that seem completely divorced from behavior. One might entertain the proposition that one can fly to Persia without being in the least disposed to behave in any particular way. One could even do so without being disposed to reason in any way, namely, if one entertained the proposition in the disengaged mode (i.e., if one contemplated the proposition). Indeed, if two subjects contemplate that *p*, but one’s contemplative episode is more phenomenally vivid than the other’s, it is not clear what difference there might be in the functional profile of the two episodes. It is hard to rule out the possibility that some story could ultimately be told to the effect that there is; still, it is less obvious how such a story would proceed.

1 Similarly for intentional content. The
 2 standard approach to this in the functional-
 3 ist orthodoxy is to account for the attitudes'
 4 intentional content in terms of broadly causal
 5 relations to the environment. The direction
 6 of the causal relation appealed to changes
 7 with the attitude's direction of fit: a belief's
 8 content is determined by the part of the world
 9 that it is caused by in the right way, a desire's
 10 by the part of the world that it causes in the
 11 right way (see, e.g., Dretske 1988). Since
 12 entertaining has no direction of fit, it is un-
 13 clear what causal connections it might bear
 14 to the environment. Certainly at the level of
 15 token acts of entertaining, no such connection
 16 appears to hold; when one contemplates the
 17 proposition that one can fly to Persia, one's
 18 contemplation neither causes nor is caused by
 19 the state of affairs of one's being able to fly to
 20 Persia. More generally, contemplating some
 21 state of affairs is dissociated from the sub-
 22 ject's environment in a way belief and desire
 23 are not. Perhaps a special causal-naturalist
 24 approach could be devised from within the
 25 functionalist framework, but again it is less
 26 obvious what the story would be.⁴⁰

27 More generally, it seems to me that the
 28 great emphasis in the philosophy of mind of
 29 the past half-century on naturalizing mental
 30 phenomena, typically through reductive
 31 explanation in terms of structure and/or
 32 function, has often tempted philosophers to
 33 overlook mental phenomena whose essen-
 34 tial profile seems independent of structure
 35 and function. In appearing cut off from the
 36 environment, on the one hand, and behavior,
 37 on the other, entertaining appears to resist
 38 understanding in terms of structure and func-
 39 tion. To that extent, it represents a distinctive
 40 challenge for the program of naturalizing
 41 the propositional attitudes.⁴¹ It is doubtful
 42 that entertaining defies demystification in
 43 the sense of being *ultima facie* mysterious,
 44 but one may reasonably suspect that its
 45 scant treatment in contemporary philosophy
 46 of mind may be owed to this deep prima

facie challenge it raises for the project of
 functionalist naturalization. In this respect,
 the disregarding of entertaining is patterned
 somewhat after the disregard for phenomenal
 consciousness that has characterized the
 philosophy of mind and cognitive sciences
 of the second half of the twentieth century.

A consequence of this neglect is that our
 present understanding of entertaining is sur-
 prisingly patchy. This predicament would
 be disconcerting for any propositional atti-
 tude but is especially so when the attitude
 in question is one of three primitives in the
 theory of the attitudes. The goal of this essay
 has been to make initial observations about
 entertaining and draw basic distinctions with
 and connections to other notions by way of
 offering a nonreductive characterization of
 entertaining.⁴² In the process, a number of the-
 ses about entertaining have been articulated
 that collectively generate a rather specific
 profile. Here are ten central theses:

- Entertaining cannot be analyzed in terms of belief and desire.
- Entertaining has a neutral phenomenal orientation.
- There is a distinction between two kinds of entertaining that *p*, engaged and disengaged, which may be thought of as considering and contemplating (respectively).
- Entertaining a proposition typically involves a presentational phenomenology whereby the subject apprehends some item(s).
- Some forms of thinking-of amount to apprehending and can thus be constituents of entertaining.
- Judging, or occurrent thinking-that, is nothing but entertaining with an overlay of affirmation.
- Believing, or standing thinking-that, is nothing but the right disposition to entertain-and-affirm.
- Occurrent desiring is nothing but entertaining with an overlay of approval.

- Standing desires are nothing but the right dispositions to entertain-and-approve.
- Occurrent gladness is nothing but entertaining with an overlay of affirmation and approval, and standing gladness is nothing but the right disposition to entertain-and-affirm-and-approve.

Other theses of a similar bent arise for other central cognitive, conative, and mixed attitudes: doubting, supposing, suspecting, wishing, intending, hoping, fearing, being disappointed, being frustrated, and more.

With a long enough list of theses of this sort, one could offer a regimented nonreductive account of entertaining in the standard way: by formulating a Ramsey sentence (see Lewis 1972). Such a Ramsey sentence is often produced by collecting a large number of platitudes about that for which one wishes to account, stringing them into a long conjunction, replacing occurrences of the term for that which is to be accounted for with a free variable, and prefixing the whole thing with the existential quantifier. But the device of a Ramsey sentence as such is more flexible than this in a number of ways, only two of which will be relevant here. First, the statements strung together need not be platitudinous. Thus, the above ten theses about entertaining are not platitudes, yet we can string them into a statement of Ramsey-sentence logical form all the same. This would read: ‘there is an x , such that x cannot be analyzed in terms of belief and desire, and there is a distinction between engaged and disengaged kinds of x , and . . .’ and so on. Second, there is no need to insist

that all ten theses must turn out true for the account of entertaining to be viable. Perhaps we should expect only seven or eight of them to turn out true. If so, the Ramsey sentences should not involve simply a conjunction of all ten theses. Rather, it should consist in a (long!) disjunction of conjunctions of most of these ten theses. For example, one could produce all the possible lists of eight among these ten theses, generate a conjunction of the eight theses in each list, and then make a disjunction of all of these conjunctions. The resulting Ramsey sentence would be true if at least eight out of the ten theses are true. We may call this a ‘cautious Ramsey sentence.’

As noted above, ultimately there might be further theses connecting entertaining to doubting, supposing, suspecting, wishing, intending, hoping, fearing, being disappointed, being frustrated, and so on. The ultimate account of entertaining that should emerge from the present discussion would consist of the cautious Ramsey sentence based on all of these theses. The probability that all ten theses are true may be limited, but the probability of each is rather high (especially the first four). In consequence, the probability that a substantial subset of these theses are true—a subset substantial enough to produce a robust nonreductive characterization of entertaining in the form of a cautious Ramsey sentence—is quite high. The hope is that the package emerging from these ten theses will strike the reader not only as enjoyable for contemplating but also as worthy of considering.

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NOTES

For comments on a previous draft, thanks are owed David Chalmers, George Graham, Indrek Reiland, and especially Eli Chudnoff and David Pitt; and for useful conversations and comments on presentations, to Alex Byrne, Lizzie Graf, Benj Hellie, Avram Hiller, Robert Howell, Pete Mandik, Michelle Montague, Casey O’Callaghan, and Galen Strawson.

- 1 1. For discussion of the project and its prospects, see Searle 1983, chap. 1. For a particularly impres-
2 sive pursuit of the project as it pertains to emotional propositional attitudes, see Gordon 1987.
- 3 2. Arguably, belief that p is connected to perceiving that p in a way that exactly parallels how desire
4 to ϕ is connected to trying to ϕ , so that their permutation would not perturb these connections.
- 5 3. Arguably, the mental domain is the only domain where there is any pressure to posit direct acquaint-
6 tance with intrinsic natures independently of the need for it to anchor our grasp of a functional web of
7 nodes.
- 8 4. For Cohen (1992), belief that p is only the *disposition* to “normally to feel it true that p and false that
9 not- p , whether or not one is willing to act, speak, or reason accordingly” (p. 4). And in one sense—the
10 sense of a ‘standing’ belief, this is certainly plausible. But to the extent that we are willing to speak of
11 conscious believing, or at least conscious thinking (more on this below), we may consider the relevant
12 creedal feeling as the feeling *of* believing, rather than merely dispositionally connected to belief.
- 13 5. For relevant work, though, see Anscombe 1957 and Searle 1983.
- 14 6. Entertaining that p seems to be the same as entertaining the proposition at p . The relation between
15 this and entertaining either the thought that p or the possibility that p is a contentious matter. Enter-
16 taining an idea or an image does not seem to be a propositional attitude at all, but what we might call
17 an *objectual attitude*. This essay’s concern, however, is with the impact of a correct understanding of
18 entertaining on our grasp of the propositional attitudes.
- 19 7. One can entertain the proposition that dragons are friendly without either desiring them to be friendly
20 or desiring them to be unfriendly, indeed without desiring anything.
- 21 8. A companion piece (Kriegel MS) develops the case for the irreducibility of entertaining much more
22 fully.
- 23 9. Furthermore, the fit relation is built into the attitude of a mental state and is external to the state’s
24 content in such a way that no specification of the content can cancel it out. If the fit relation was built
25 into the content, such that believing that p and desiring that p were really two mental states with the
26 same attitude toward different contents—say, the former toward ‘ p obtains’ and the latter toward ‘ p
27 should/ought to obtain’—we might be able to analyze entertaining that p as, say, believing that p while
28 supposing that p does not obtain.
- 29 10. It should be stressed that the kind of nonreductivism encouraged here is not with respect to the
30 reducibility of entertaining to neurophysiological facts, but only with respect to its reducibility to facts
31 about belief and desire. It is perfectly possible to offer an account of entertaining as a primitive propo-
32 sitional attitude and at the same time offer a reductive explanation of it in terms of some neural property
33 N. In fact, it is even possible to take entertaining to be primitive and yet offer a reductive functionalist
34 account of entertaining (see Ryder Forthcoming). For just as in taking belief and desire to be primitive
35 among the propositional attitudes, functionalists are not committing to the functional inexplicability
36 of entertaining, so in taking entertaining to be primitive as well, one is not committing to its functional
37 inexplicability.
- 38 11. This claim is supported by empirical work due to Gilbert 1991, according to which the traditional
39 model, whereby when presented with a proposition we first entertain it and only later come to believe
40 or disbelieve it, is false to the facts. In reality, when presented with a proposition, we automatically
41 believe it and only later may suspend or even reverse our initial belief. The empirical evidence for this
42 is varied, but the findings revolve around the following point: when comparing two groups of subjects
43 presented with the same propositions, such that one group’s cognitive functioning is interfered with
44 (interference condition) and one group’s is not (control condition), subjects in the interference condi-
45 tion behave in a way that suggests greater, rather than lesser, belief in those propositions than subjects
46 in the control condition (Gilbert, Tafarodi, and Malone 1993).

12. In fact, such a view would not even be reductionist, as it would deny any constitutive connection between entertaining and belief. This is important, because in some of Mandelbaum's presentations of his view—in particular, pictorial ones (e.g., 2010, p. 24)—entertaining seems to be portrayed as indeed automatically causing believing. Since here the connection between entertaining and believing is merely causal, as such it would not affect the present dialectic, as argued in the text.
13. Mandelbaum would probably deny that there is such a feature as phenomenal orientation which distinguishes belief, desire, and entertaining, as he holds that only the contents of propositional attitudes are introspectively accessible—the attitudes themselves are inaccessible. As a general claim this cannot be true, however; surely one can tell by introspection not only that the content of one's current attitude is that one owns a private jet, but also that one's attitude is desire rather than belief. One is not confused as to whether one believes that one owns a jet or would like to own one. It may yet be that there is indeed no such feature of phenomenal orientation, of course. But then some other phenomenal feature must be offered to underwrite the nonpermutability of belief and desire, and one prediction is that whatever that phenomenal feature turns out to be, the act that introspectively seems to one to be the mere entertaining of a proposition would not exhibit it.
14. In fact, the view this essay will end up defending is somewhat different from this. But this is the minimal departure from the functionalist orthodoxy we must make to accommodate entertaining.
15. This can be seen most clearly by comparing visual perceptual experiences and visual after-images in which the brightness and saturation are the same but the phenomenal intensity is different.
16. According to Chudnoff, the item one is aware of is the truthmaker of the perception's propositional content. As this part of the view is more problematic than the rest in a variety of ways, it will not play a role in what is retained here from Chudnoff's characterization of presentational phenomenology.
17. Naturally, not any abstract object—not even any essence—would do. There needs to be a certain intimate connection between O and p . One's awareness of this abstract object is of the sort Russell (1910) posited in discussing acquaintance with universals.
18. The qualification 'only in that sense' is needed because it is important to distinguish two notions of abstractness. In one sense, entities of kind K are abstract when K s are non-spatiotemporal. In another, laxer sense more common among trope theorists, K s are abstract when there can be more than one K at the same place at the same time. The presentational phenomenology of entertaining does not seem to me to take a stand on this. It does not, therefore, commit to the relevant items being non-spatiotemporal.
19. There is an interesting extension to propositions of the form $\langle a \text{ is } F \rangle$. For a has a peculiarity but not a commonality. We can, however, define the notion of 'commonarity' so that a still has a commonarity.
20. In the formal mode, we might say more generally that adding a nominal complement to the verb 'thinking of' and adding a sentential complement to the verb 'thinking that' always results in a statement with different truth conditions—at least on one legitimate hearing/reading of the resulting statements.
21. There is a question as to whether thinking of a 's being F is a propositional or objectual attitude. It seems that the terms *propositional attitude* and *objectual attitude* are not sufficiently defined to discriminate here—we need to stipulate their meanings in such a way that it becomes determinate whether thinking of a 's being F is propositional or objectual.
22. For the notion of a logical component, or logical part, see Kriegel 2009, chap. 6.
23. These nominals are called imperfect because they contain traces of the verb. They are contrasted with perfect nominals, such as ' a 's F -ness,' in which the verb disappears altogether.
24. As such a claim, it is certainly not true to the facts; although sometimes one arrives at an episode of entertaining by first judging that something is the case but then taking back the affirmative compo-

1 nent of one's attitude, much more often one in fact proceeds in the opposite way, first entertaining a
2 proposition and then affirming it to produce a judgment.

3 25. Even the act of supposing that p could be described as 'judging minus affirming.' One can suppose
4 that p without any commitment to the truth or obtaining of p —one can perfectly well withhold judg-
5 ment. Yet supposing that p is not quite entertaining that p . For it involves a sort of mock affirmation (at
6 least provisionally mock affirmation), whereas entertaining (whether contemplating or considering)
7 involves no affirmation-related component. (Like entertaining, supposing comes in both an engaged
8 and a disengaged variety. In the disengaged variety, supposing that p is not doxastically or cognitively
9 'serious' and is to that extent entirely a matter of mockery—it involves nothing but mock affirmation.
10 However, in the engaged variety the act of supposition is very much serious. When we suppose a cer-
11 tain proposition in order to see what consequences it might have, for example, the mock-affirmation
12 is only provisional, insofar as the very point of the exercise is to consider whether one ought to affirm
13 the proposition supposed.)

14 26. However, the analysis of supposition should be in line with the distinction, in the preceding note,
15 between two modes of supposition.

16 27. Here $\langle a \rangle$ and $\langle F \rangle$ are intended as the relevant constituents of $\langle a \text{ is } F \rangle$. But the claim could also
17 be put in terms of the 'commonarity' of a and of F .

18 28. The view is not without precedent. It was certainly Brentano's (1874) view: one section of his
19 *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* is titled "Mental Phenomena Are Presentations or Are Based
20 on Presentations"—where *presentation* is his term for an orientationally neutral conscious act, such
21 as entertaining or imagery. Current proponents of a picture similar to this in essential respects include
22 Scott Soames (Forthcoming).

23 29. A strikingly similar analysis of believing that p as just being disposed to consciously judge that p
24 is explicitly asserted, and defended in a sustained manner, by Smithies (MS). He himself supports the
25 analysis by consideration of the appropriateness of epistemic-normative evaluation of judgment and
26 belief in a discussion too nuanced to summarize here.

27 30. It might be objected that many believers are not at all disposed to entertain the propositions they
28 believe, even though there is a sense in which they are disposed to judge these propositions true if they
29 entertain them. This objection will be considered momentarily.

30 31. Here the subject is not required to be disposed to entertain that p . She is only required to be disposed
31 in such a way that if and when she does entertain p , she affirms what she entertains. This would lead
32 to the following analysis: S believes that a is F iff S is disposed to entertain that a is F and affirm that
33 a is F.

34 32. So while the conditional proposition is a necessary condition for belief, it is not a sufficient condi-
35 tion for it.

36 33. By definition, the presence of p -entertaining-triggers guarantees the subject's entertaining of p . But
37 it is not by definition that the presence of p -entertaining-triggers would lead a subject to judge or affirm
38 that p . That part is substantive and depends on the subject actually believing the proposition.

39 34. There is clearly a close connection between affirmation and the phenomenal orientation mentioned
40 already in the Introduction. One option is to hold that affirmation is fully phenomenally constituted by
41 this phenomenal orientation.

42 35. The simplest analyses would go as follows: S is convinced that p iff S is disposed to entertain and
43 strongly affirm that p ; S suspects that p iff S is disposed to entertain and weakly affirm that p . The
44 strength of affirmation would be naturally construed as a kind of phenomenal intensity of affirmation. It
45

would not be surprising, however, if it turned out that the ultimate analysis of conviction and suspicion is in truth much more complex.

36. This is analogous to the way standing thinking-that (believing) was understood as a disposition to occurrently think-that (judge).

37. There is also a completely different approach to attempting to analyze desire in terms of entertaining. This involves analyzing desire in terms of belief (and then belief in terms of entertaining, as per the previous section). Lewis (1988) argued that this desire-as-belief thesis is in tension with central tenets of decision theory, but some have denied that it is (e.g., Price 1989, Hájek and Pettit 2004). This is not the place to weigh in on that debate, but in any case the ‘desire as belief thesis’ is phenomenologically implausible, given that the phenomenal orientation of belief and desire are different. Insofar as we understand phenomenal orientation in terms of direction of fit, the point is that propositional attitudes with a world-to-mind direction of fit cannot be analyzed in terms (solely) of propositional attitudes with a mind-to-world direction of fit.

38. The functionalist analysis identifies no common attitude toward p in being glad that p (being glad that p is construed as simply a fortuitous compresence of two wholly separate attitudes toward p). By contrast, the entertaining-based analysis identifies a single attitude toward the content that happens to be modulated in two separate ways. This is not intended as a major advantage for the ‘entertaining analysis.’ Still, it is plausibly a minor advantage.

39. To say this is not to suggest that it is impossible to make such causal treatments work, much less that entertaining defies naturalization. It is merely to suggest that it is less obvious how the familiar style of causal treatment might proceed.

40. Ryder (Forthcoming) attempts to develop such a naturalistic account of entertaining.

41. There is some obvious connection here to Chalmers’s ‘hard problem’ of consciousness, which is best articulated as the problem that consciousness seems to defy reductive explanation in terms of structure and function (see Chalmers 2002). The connection strikes me as not at all accidental: it is precisely because entertaining, too, does not lend itself very easily to explanation in term of structure and function that it is so natural to theorize about it from a phenomenological perspective and that its very nature seems to come through most clearly in its phenomenal character.

42. To repeat, the characterization is nonreductive in that it does not attempt to account for entertaining in terms of other attitudes. It is not meant to be nonreductive in the sense of positing entertaining as a nonphysical feature of the world. For all that has been said here, entertaining is nothing but E-fiber firings.

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