Does Gratitude to R for φ-ing Imply Gratitude that R φ-ed?[[1]](#footnote-1)\*

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Abstract:

Many find it plausible that for a given beneficiary, Y, benefactor, R, and action, φ, Y’s being grateful *to* R for φ-ing implies Y’s being grateful *that* R φ-ed. According to some philosophers who hold this view, all instances of gratitude *to,* or “prepositional gratitude,” are also instances of gratitude *that*, or “propositional gratitude.” These philosophers believe there is a single unified concept of gratitude, a phenomenon that is essentially gratitude *that*, and whose manifestations sometimes have additional features that make them instances of gratitude *to* as well. In this article, I show that view to be mistaken. I base my argument on two hypothetical cases, in each of which a beneficiary, Y, is grateful *to* a benefactor, R, for φ-ing, but not grateful *that* R φ-ed. Generalizing from those cases and other cases of gratitude, I argue that prepositional gratitude is the proper response to benevolence-motivated action and propositional gratitude consists in a beneficiary’s judging a state of affairs to be valuable for himself and welcoming that state of affairs. Because not every instance of a benefactor’s acting benevolently toward a beneficiary is something that beneficiary finds valuable for himself and welcomes, it is possible to be grateful *to* a benefactor for φ-ing but not grateful *that* she φ-ed. Prepositional gratitude and propositional gratitude can each occur without the other and are thus two distinct phenomena. I conclude by explaining the importance of accurately understanding the relationship between prepositional gratitude and propositional gratitude.

Keywords: appreciation, benevolence, gladness, gratitude, prepositional gratitude, propositional gratitude

1. Introduction

We use gratitude terms (such as “grateful” and “thankful”) in a variety of ways. One common distinction in the ways we use such terms is marked by the kind of phrase that follows the gratitude term in locutions about gratitude. Sometimes, we speak of gratitude (or of being thankful or grateful) *to* someone for something they have done for us. We do this when we say, for example, “I am grateful to a stranger for rescuing me,” or “he is grateful to a colleague for providing thoughtful comments on his paper.” Other times, we speak of gratitude (or of being thankful or grateful) *that* something is the case. We do this when we say things like “I am grateful that the weather was beautiful during my vacation,” or “he is grateful that his cancer went into remission.” When gratitude terms are used in the first way, they are often understood as describing a three-place relation: a beneficiary, Y, is grateful *to* a benefactor, R, for something, φ, the benefactor did. When gratitude terms are used in the second way, they are often understood as describing a two-place relation: a beneficiary, Y, is grateful *that* some beneficial state of affairs, *p*, is the case. Sometimes, the state of affairs being described in this second sort of gratitude locution is a benefactor’s having performed an action, and when that is the case, such locutions, which typically take the form “Y is grateful *that* *p,*” can take a more specific form: “Y is grateful *that* R φ-ed.”

What is the connection between being grateful *to* a person for something she did and being grateful *that* she did it? In other words, for a given Y, R and φ, what is the logical relationship between (1) “Y is grateful *to* R for φ-ing” and (2) “Y is grateful *that* R φ-ed”? Virtually everyone agrees that (2) does *not* imply (1). If R does φ maliciously with the goal of harming Y but ends up greatly benefiting Y instead, that would seem to be a case where Y might be grateful *that* R φ-ed but not grateful *to* R for φ-ing.[[2]](#footnote-2) But though (2) does not imply (1), many find it plausible that (1) implies (2).[[3]](#footnote-3) On this view, if I am grateful *to* a stranger for rescuing me, that logically or conceptually implies I am grateful *that* she rescued me. This view has led some philosophers to believe that there is a single unified concept of gratitude, a phenomenon that is essentially gratitude *that*, and whose manifestations sometimes have additional features that make them instances of gratitude *to* as well.[[4]](#footnote-4)

My goal in this article is to challenge that view. To that end, I proceed as follows. After making several preliminary remarks about gratitude *to* and gratitude *that* in section 2, in section 3 I put forward two counterexamples to the claim that Y’s gratitude *to* R for φ-ing entails Y’s gratitude *that* R φ-ed—two hypothetical cases each of which describes a beneficiary, Y, a benefactor, R, and something, φ, the benefactor did, such that it seems true to say that Y is grateful *to* R for φ-ing but false to say that Y is grateful *that* R φ-ed. These cases suggest that gratitude *to* does not always entail gratitude *that* and that the two concepts referenced by (1) and (2) in the previous paragraph are distinct concepts. Generalizing from those cases and other cases of gratitude, I argue in section 4 that gratitude *to* is the proper response, in a beneficiary, to the benevolence-motivated actions of his benefactor, and gratitude *that* is best understood as a beneficiary’s finding a state of affairs valuable for himself and welcoming that state of affairs. Since someone’s benevolently trying to benefit a beneficiary does not always constitute a state of affairs that beneficiary welcomes and finds valuable for himself, there are cases where a person can be grateful *to* someone for doing something but not grateful *that* she did it. Having rejected the thesis that gratitude *to* R for φ-ing entails gratitude *that* R φ-ed, I consider in section 5 other ways in which gratitude *to* might be conceptually related to gratitude *that*, and I show that insofar as there is any conceptual connection between the two phenomena, that connection is weak, indirect and vague. I conclude with several reflections on why correctly understanding the relationship between gratitude *to* and gratitude *that* is important.

2. Preliminary remarks about gratitude *to* and gratitude *that*

I will use the term *prepositional gratitude* to refer to the sort of gratitude described by gratitude *to* locutions, since in such locutions, the gratitude term is typically followed by a prepositional phrase beginning with the preposition “to”.[[5]](#footnote-5) Prepositional gratitude is always a three-part relation: a beneficiary, Y, is grateful to a benefactor, R, for something, φ, the benefactor did. An essential part of what it is for Y to be grateful to R for φ-ing is for Y to recognize R’s φ-ing when it happens and to remember R’s φ-ing. If R does a favor for Y and Y does not realize R did a favor for him, or Y completely forgets the favor within a few hours, it would be false to say Y is grateful to R for doing the favor. Another part of being grateful to R for φ-ing is being motivated to thank R for φ-ing.[[6]](#footnote-6) If R does Y a favor, then even if Y recognizes and remembers the favor, Y would seem to fall short of gratitude to R insofar as Y had no motivation to express his gratitude to R by thanking her. Recognition, remembering and thanking aside, Y’s being grateful to R for φ-ing also entails Y’s having certain feelings—specifically, feelings of care or concern for R. If I am grateful to a stranger for rescuing me, then I should bear her an enhanced degree of goodwill—have a special hope or desire that she fare well, be especially happy when I learn she is flourishing in the future and especially sad if I learn she is suffering.[[7]](#footnote-7) Being grateful to someone also entails an enhanced motivation to benefit her in the future. If I am grateful to a colleague for giving me especially thoughtful and helpful comments on a paper, then I should be especially motivated to return the favor if she ever asks me to comment on a paper of hers one day in the future.[[8]](#footnote-8) I could not plausibly claim to be grateful to her if, were she to ask me to comment on a paper of hers in the future, I found myself completely unmotivated to do so. I could not plausibly claim to be grateful to a stranger for rescuing me if I failed to notice, despite clear evidence, that she saved me, or if I quickly forgot that she rescued me, or if I had no desire to thank her, or if I remained indifferent when I heard about her flourishing or suffering in the future, or if I was unmotivated to rescue her if I one day had the chance to do so at little risk to myself.

I will use the term *propositional gratitude* to refer to the sort of attitude described in gratitude *that* locutions, since in such locutions, the gratitude term is typically followed by the word “that” and a proposition.[[9]](#footnote-9) Propositional gratitude claims are claims about the relationship between a beneficiary, Y, and some state of affairs, *p*. Being grateful that *p* involves cognitive elements of recognition and understanding. When Y is grateful *that* *p*, this implies that Y recognizes *p* as a state of affairs that is valuable for him.[[10]](#footnote-10) To be grateful that the weather was beautiful during my overseas vacation or that my cancer went into remission is, in part, to recognize and understand the value those states of affairs hold for me. It is, in part, a refusal to take them for granted or to forget about their value. To be grateful that *p* also has an affective dimension. Specifically, to be grateful that *p* is, in part, to be inclined to get some sort of enjoyment out of *p*, to be inclined to feel glad that *p* is the case, or to welcome it.[[11]](#footnote-11) If I am not inclined to get any enjoyment out of the beautiful weather during my overseas vacation, then it seems false to say I am grateful that the weather was beautiful, even if I judge that good weather on my vacation was valuable for me.

Prepositional gratitude and propositional gratitude are sometimes distinguished by the fact that prepositional gratitude is essentially a three-place relation, or triadic concept, while propositional gratitude is essentially a two-place relation, or dyadic concept.[[12]](#footnote-12) Prepositional gratitude and propositional gratitude are also sometimes distinguished by saying that the former is “focused” or “targeted” or “directed” at something in particular, while the latter is not. These distinctions can be helpful, but they can also mislead. This is because propositional gratitude locutions can take the form of a three-place relation when the subject and predicate in the proposition *p* are specified. Consider a claim of the form “Y is grateful that *p*,” where *p* is the proposition “Y’s orchard yielded a bountiful harvest.” Though this is technically a propositional gratitude locution, what it conveys could be described as a three-place relation: Y is grateful that R (the orchard) φ-ed (yielded a bountiful harvest). There is also a sense in which the gratitude described here is focused or targeted: it takes the subject of proposition *p*, the orchard, as its focus or target. Because these potential ambiguities arise in just the sorts of cases I will be considering, I will leave aside the distinction between dyadic and triadic concepts, as well as the distinction between targeted and untargeted or focused and unfocused gratitude. I will instead phrase my arguments in terms of the distinction between gratitude *to* someone for something and gratitude *that* something is the case.

3. Cases where Y is grateful *to* R for φ-ing but not grateful *that* R φ-ed

It is no surprise many find it plausible that for a given Y, R, and φ, Y’s gratitude *to* R for φ-ing entails Y’s gratitude *that* R φ-ed. Many of the paradigm or standard sorts of cases that philosophers use to evoke our intuitions about gratitude seem to confirm that entailment claim. If a friend or colleague goes out of her way to buy me a thoughtful gift, then I will very likely be grateful *to* her for doing so, and I will also likely be grateful *that* she did: that my friend or colleague bought me a thoughtful gift is typically a good state of affairs for me, because I wind up with a nice new possession and I learn (or have confirmed) that someone close to me thinks about me and cares about me, and those are the sorts of things that I typically recognize as valuable for me and welcome.[[13]](#footnote-13) If a stranger in a boat sails over and pulls me from the water as I am drowning in a lake, I will very likely be grateful *to* her for rescuing me and grateful *that* she did. That she saved me by pulling me from the lake is a good state of affairs for me. I recognize this, and its having happened brings me great relief, gladness and joy.

Cases like these have several features in common. They involve, for instance, relatively little sacrifice by the benefactor. They also feature acts through which the benefactor succeeds in benefiting the beneficiary. When we consider cases without those features, however, we find reason to doubt the claim that gratitude *to* R for φ-ing entails gratitude *that* R φ-ed.

Consider the following case:

Youssef, a graduate student, is unable to find a rare book that he owns, which he needs in order to complete an academic paper that is due today. After searching his apartment, he concludes the book must be in his office on campus. When he arrives at his office, however, he is unable to find the book there. Not long after he leaves for campus, his roommate, Robert, discovers the book in an unusual place in the apartment. Robert tries to contact Youssef on his cell phone and office phone to inform him of this but is unable to reach him. Knowing how urgently Youssef needs the book, Robert takes an hour of his day to drive to Youssef’s office and deliver the book to him. Robert does this with the aim of benefiting Youssef, and he does it for Youssef’s sake, not as a means to the end of benefiting himself or anyone else. He does it out of an intrinsic desire to spare Youssef the misfortune of missing his paper deadline. When Robert arrives at Youssef’s office, however, he learns that, to Youssef’s surprise and relief, Youssef had been able to borrow a copy of the book from a colleague in his department.

It seems fair to me, in this case, to say that Youssef should be grateful to Robert for bringing him the book. And it seems plausible to imagine that Youssef is grateful to Robert for bringing him the book. Most decent people in Youssef’s situation would be grateful to Robert for doing so; they would thank Robert, and they would experience enhanced goodwill toward Robert, as well as an enhanced motivation to bestow on Robert a favor similar in kind and magnitude should they find themselves with an opportunity to do so in the future (e.g., if next week, Robert urgently needed something from his apartment brought to him at his office, a decent person in Youssef’s position should be more motivated to do that than he would have been if Robert hadn’t brought him the book). We can thus imagine this as a case where Y is grateful to R for φ-ing (where Y is Youssef, R is Robert, and φ is bringing Youssef’s book to his office).

Even if we grant that detail, however, this case need not be a case where Y is grateful *that* R φ-ed. We could imagine that even though Youssef is grateful *to* Robert, he nevertheless realizes that because he was able to borrow a copy of the book, Robert’s showing up with the book did not actually benefit him. Youssef also realizes, we might imagine, that Robert’s showing up with the book was a sacrifice for Robert, who took an hour out of his day to do it. Because Youssef likes Robert, he regrets this sacrifice. Though he is touched by Robert’s concern, we could imagine that on reflection, he comes to the conclusion that things would have been better if Robert hadn’t brought him the book at all. Though he is moved by Robert’s benevolence, he wishes that Robert had not brought him the book. And insofar as he wishes it had not happened, he does not welcome Robert’s having brought him the book and cannot be grateful *that* Robert brought him the book.

To be sure, there could be certain states of affairs related to this situation about which Youssef experiences propositional gratitude. He may, for instance, be grateful *that* Robert is such a good friend as to take an hour out of his day to bring Youssef a book. That state of affairs may make Youssef glad, and it may be something in which he recognizes value for himself. And it might make sense in this case for Youssef to be grateful *to* Robert for *being such a good friend*.[[14]](#footnote-14) But the fact remains that Youssef should *also* be grateful *to* Robert for *bringing him the book*. Bringing him the book is something that he should thank Robert for, that he should be prepared to recognize and remember, and that he should be prepared to reciprocate, even though he is not necessarily grateful *that* it transpired. This is thus a case of some Y (Youssef), some R (Robert) and some φ (bringing Youssef the book) such that (1) “Y is grateful *to* R for φ-ing” is true but (2) “Y is grateful *that* R φ-ed” is false.[[15]](#footnote-15)

Consider now a second case:[[16]](#footnote-16)

Yakov and Ruth work together in a factory with dangerous machinery. One day, Yakov gets one of his hands caught in a machine. Ruth is next to him, and she realizes that if she does nothing, Yakov will lose his hand. Thinking quickly but clearly, she does the only thing she can do to stop Yakov from losing his hand: she sticks both of her hands into the machine, allowing him to remove his hand. She does this for Yakov’s sake, not as a means to the end of benefiting herself or anyone else. She does it out of an intrinsic desire that Yakov be spared the suffering of losing a hand. As a result of her decision (which she foresaw), Ruth loses both of her hands.

This case, like the previous case, seems to be one in which the beneficiary should be grateful to the benefactor for doing what she did. At the very least, one could plausibly imagine Yakov’s being grateful to Ruth for sticking her hands into the machine. Most decent people in Yakov’s situation would be grateful to her: they would never forget what Ruth had done. They would thank Ruth (though they’d likely acknowledge that words could barely do justice to the gratitude they felt they owed), and they would experience an enhanced concern for Ruth. This concern would take the form of an especially strong desire to see Ruth recover from the injury, as well as a motivation to go to great lengths to help Ruth recover and come as close as possible to a decent life after the accident. These details about Yakov’s reaction to Ruth would make it plausible that this is a case in which Y is grateful to R for φ-ing (where Y is Yakov, R is Ruth, and φ is Ruth’s sticking her hands into the machine in which Yakov’s hand was stuck).

Even if we imagine this as a case where Y is grateful to R for φ-ing, however, this need not be a case where Y is grateful *that* R φ-ed. True, Yakov might be grateful *that he still has two hands*. But this does not mean he will be grateful *that Ruth stuck both her hands into the machine in order to bring that state of affairs about.* We could imagine Yakov reflecting on the fact that Ruth’s sacrifice, in losing both of her hands, was a much more substantial harm than the one she spared Yakov, who would have lost only one hand. In light of this, Yakov might well reason that even though what Ruth did was a benefit for him (or at least a sparing of harm), all things considered, it would have been better—and he would have preferred it—if she had not stuck her hands into the machine. That way, he might reason, at least neither of them would be left with no hands. In light of his gratitude to her for doing what she did, Yakov would plausibly feel something like terrible grief at the awful pain and lifechanging disability his benefactor just incurred. As a result of all this, it seems plausible that Yakov might feel a sort of gut-wrenching sadness rather than gladness when he reflects on the fact that Ruth stuck both her hands into the machine. And insofar as Yakov is not glad that Ruth stuck her hands into the machine, and insofar as he wishes she had not done it, he does not welcome her having done it, and he cannot be grateful *that* she did.

Someone might object that Yakov could, in the midst of all these negative feelings of gratitude, still experience *some* gladness—albeit gladness that is dwarfed by much more powerful negative feelings. Personally, I could imagine someone in Yakov’s position asserting quite confidently that he experiences no good feelings at all when he reflects on what Ruth did, especially in the immediate aftermath of the incident. And if that assertion were true, then insofar as feeling glad is necessary for being propositionally grateful, this would indeed seem to be a case where Yakov is grateful *to* Ruth for doing what she did but not grateful *that* she did it.

Someone might question whether feeling glad really is necessary for being propositionally grateful. It might be argued that even if Yakov does not *actually feel* glad in the aftermath of the incident, perhaps he harbors a *disposition* or *tendency* to feel glad that Ruth stuck her hands into the machine; and perhaps the *tendency* to feel glad is all that is needed, together with finding a state of affairs valuable for oneself, in order for someone to count as propositionally grateful. A little reflection shows this possibility to be plausible. Imagine a cancer patient who learns his cancer has gone into remission. He recognizes the value for himself in that state of affairs, and he is disposed to feel glad about that state of affairs: under ordinary circumstances, he would feel glad when he reflected on the fact that his cancer went into remission. Imagine though that just before he learned his cancer had gone into remission, he received the sad news that his beloved parents had passed away suddenly. Even if the sad news leaves him temporarily incapable of actually experiencing any positive feelings, like gladness, about his cancer’s going into remission, it still seems plausible to imagine that he is grateful that his cancer went into remission. We could imagine him sincerely asserting, ten years later, that even though he was very sad around the time he first learned he had won his battle with cancer, he had always been grateful that his cancer went into remission. This would seem to show the possibility of being grateful that *p* without actually feeling glad that *p* (as long as one is disposed to feel glad that *p*). Now, if it were possible to be propositionally grateful but not actually feel glad that *p*, then the case of Yakov and Ruth might not be a case of gratitude *to* without gratitude *that*, even if it is a case of gratitude *to* without actual feelings of gladness.

Ultimately, though, this line of reasoning is unpersuasive, because the case of the cancer survivor is crucially different from the case of Yakov and Ruth. In the case of the cancer survivor who is grateful that his cancer went into remission, the reason why the beneficiary does not actually feel glad about *p* is a state of affairs completely unrelated to *p*. In the case of Yakov, that is not so. And this is reflected in another difference between the two cases. Yakov, in the scenario I have been considering, would not welcome Ruth’s having stuck her hands into the machine. He wanted and would have preferred that she not have done it. By contrast, the grateful cancer survivor, despite not actually feeling glad, still welcomes the fact that his cancer went into remission. Even though he does not feel glad about it in the moment, it is still a state of affairs he wanted and preferred to the relevant alternative possibilities. It is a state of affairs he accepts, or is satisfied with. If the survivor did not welcome, want or prefer that his cancer had gone into remission, then it would seem false to say he was grateful that his cancer went into remission. This shows that what is necessary for propositional gratitude is not actually feeling glad when reflecting on *p*, but rather welcoming, wanting, preferring or accepting that *p*. That condition, which we might call the “welcoming condition,” seems to entail that a propositionally grateful person is *inclined* or *disposed* to feel gladness when reflecting on *p*, but it does not entail that he *actually feels* glad that *p*. And since the welcoming condition is lacking in the case of Yakov and Ruth, that case is one in which Yakov is not grateful *that* Ruth stuck her hands in the machine. The case of Yakov and Ruth can thus be understood as an instance of some Y (Yakov), some R (Ruth) and some φ (Ruth’s sticking her hands into the machine) such that Y is grateful *to* R for φ-ing but not grateful *that* R φ-ed. It is a case where (1) “Y is grateful *to* R for φ-ing” is true but (2) “Y is grateful *that* R φ-ed” is false.[[17]](#footnote-17)

The two cases I described in this section help structure an argument for the claim that gratitude *to* can exist without gratitude *that*. The first case showed that there are times when Y is grateful to R for φ-ing even though R’s φ-ing did not actually benefit Y—that is, did not actually leave Y better off, in a situation more valuable for him, than if R had not φ-ed. And insofar as recognizing *p* as a valuable state of affairs for oneself is necessary for one to be grateful that *p*, the first case showed that it is possible for Y to be grateful to R for φ-ing but not grateful that R φ-ed. The second case demonstrated that there are times when Y is grateful to R for φ-ing, and R’s φ-ing is valuable for Y, but Y still nonetheless wishes that R had not φ-ed, and does not welcome, accept, or prefer R’s having φ-ed. Insofar as welcoming, accepting, or preferring *p* is necessary for being grateful that *p*, and wishing *p* was not the case is inconsistent with being grateful that *p*, the second case implies the possibility of Y’s being grateful to R for φ-ing but not grateful that R φ-ed.

4. Some defining features of gratitude *to* and gratitude *that*

Generalizing from the cases in the previous section can help us articulate some of the defining features of gratitude *to* and gratitude *that*. When it comes to prepositional gratitude, the cases suggest that gratitude *to* is, roughly, the proper response to benevolence-motivated actions. And I believe this is right.[[18]](#footnote-18) Some would dispute this characterization on the grounds that it does not seem to cover all cases where prepositional gratitude is owed to a benefactor. Michael Rush, for instance, has recently tried to argue that a beneficiary, Y, can owe gratitude to a benefactor, R, for φ-ing even if that benefactor lacks benevolent motivation, so long as four conditions are met:

1) Y believes that R’s φ-ing was a benefit to Y;

2) Y is glad that R φ-ed;

3) Y believes that R played a relevant [causal] role in bringing about the φ-ing; and

4) Y believes R didn’t φ for any nefarious or malevolent “disqualifying” reasons.[[19]](#footnote-19)

Even though, as I have argued, 1) and 2) are not necessary for Y’s gratitude to R to be warranted, it might be thought that 1) – 4) are jointly *sufficient* for prepositional gratitude to be warranted. And if that were true, then benevolent motivation would not be a necessary part of that to which prepositional gratitude is a proper response. That, in turn, would raise the possibility that I have overlooked a whole category of prepositional gratitude, and one might wonder whether the entailment claim I have denied in section 3 actually does hold within that overlooked category.

Ultimately, though, Rush’s arguments fail to establish the possibility that prepositional gratitude can be owed in the absence of benefactor benevolence. The problem with Rush’s attempt to specify the conditions under which gratitude *to* is owed is that it entails that gratitude *to* is warranted even in cases where the benefactor is callously indifferent to the beneficiary. Imagine a case in which while Y is being mugged, R happens to walk by and thereby unwittingly scare the muggers away. Here, conditions 1) – 4) imply that Y should be grateful *to* R for scaring the muggers away. And some people might find this plausible. I suspect, however, that much of that apparent plausibility can be attributed to certain assumptions we make in cases like this about R’s attitudes—like, for instance, the assumption that R might have actually known or suspected that walking near this group of people at this moment could thwart a crime, or the assumption that even if he did not knowingly scare away the muggers in this instance, R might have developed the habit of taking certain routes at certain times of day in part because he suspected that doing so might increase his chances of deterring muggers and protecting the innocent.

If we do away with these assumptions, though, and imagine that the benefactor is completely devoid of benevolent intentions, cases like the one in the previous paragraph elicit different intuitions. Imagine that a person named Yardley is being mugged in a dark alley when the sound of approaching footsteps scares the muggers away. Yardley is relieved, and he walks to the edge of the alley to thank whomever it was whose footsteps scared the muggers away. When he gets to the edge of the alley, he recognizes the person who scared the muggers away, Roger, as the very same man who sat idly by and watched from the safety of his office window as Yardley got mugged two days earlier. Yardley remembers seeing Roger sit at his window and blithely eat a sandwich as Yardley was mugged, and though he made frantic eye contact with Roger, Roger did not call the police. He simply continued to watch with mild interest as the mugging unfolded. Rather than thanking Roger, Yardley confronts him and asks why he didn’t intervene or call the police about the mugging two days earlier. Roger responds coolly and sincerely that he doesn’t have any ill will toward Yardley, he just didn’t care about him enough to intervene. And when Yardley says, “Well, thanks for helping me this time,” Roger responds, sincerely, “Oh, I didn’t mean to. Don’t get me wrong: I’d never go out of my way to harm you. But I wouldn’t have intentionally done anything to help you either. I honestly just don’t care what happens to you.” This is a case where Rush’s four conditions are met,[[20]](#footnote-20) yet it seems false to say, in this case, that Yardley ought to be grateful *to* Roger for scaring the muggers away. And we can imagine a reasonable person in Yardley’s position not being grateful *to* Roger for scaring the muggers away (though such a person might still very well be grateful *that* Roger scared the muggers away). The moral of the story is that in order for prepositional gratitude to be warranted, a further condition is required: the benefactor must have benevolent attitudes toward the beneficiary, and the benefactor’s action must be motivated by those attitudes. Gratitude *to*, then, is properly a response only to benevolence-motivated actions.

This point has implications for some philosophers’ attempts to define propositional gratitude, and in particular, for their attempts to distinguish propositional gratitude from mere gladness in cases that involve no agential benefactor. Michael Rush, for instance, in trying to articulate such a distinction, writes: “The test for whether one is *grateful that* *x* in cases that lack an agent to be a benefactor is to see whether one would have been grateful to an agent that one took to be such a benefactor, and that one took to have acted without malice or other negative attitude that would have stopped one’s gratitude to them in its tracks.”[[21]](#footnote-21) Imagine I get a kite stuck in a tree, and then it falls down. Am I grateful *that* it did? According to Rush, this depends on whether I would be grateful *to* an agent who caused it to come down. But, as I have shown, whether I should be (and thus would be) grateful to such an agent will depend on that agent’s attitudes. If the agent benevolently got it down for me, then I should (and likely would) be grateful to her. If she did it accidentally and is otherwise callously indifferent to me, then I should not (and likely would not) be grateful to her. So Rush’s test really cannot help us decide when a person would be (or is) grateful *that* and when he would be (or is) merely glad.

By contrast, the conceptualization of propositional gratitude I introduced in section 2 provides a way of distinguishing propositional gratitude that *p* from mere gladness that *p* without referring to a beneficiary’s arbitrary beliefs about the motivations of hypothetical agents. On my view, propositional gratitude consists in a person’s 1) finding a state of affairs valuable for himself and 2) welcoming, wanting, preferring, or accepting that state of affairs.[[22]](#footnote-22) Condition 2), the welcoming condition, implies a tendency or disposition to feel glad that state of affairs obtains. Thus, I am grateful that the weather was good during my vacation and grateful that my cancer went into remission insofar as I recognize value for me in those states of affairs and I welcomed them. Youssef is not grateful that Robert brought him the book insofar as Youssef saw no value for himself in that state of affairs. Yakov is not grateful that Ruth stuck both her hands in the machine because even though he recognized a benefit or value for himself in her having done that, her suffering was disproportionate to the suffering she spared him, so he wished she had not done it, would have preferred that she not have done it, and was thus not glad that she did. None of those are cases of mere gladness, however. Mere gladness, as distinct from propositional gratitude, occurs when a person, in the absence of any factors that would render him unable to experience positive feelings, welcomes, wants, accepts or prefers a state of affairs but does not find any value for himself in it. I might be merely glad that (though not grateful that) firefighters succeeded in rescuing someone I do not know from a burning building. I would be grateful that my kite fell from a tree insofar as I wanted or preferred it to happen and recognized value for myself in that state of affairs.

If these generalizations about prepositional gratitude and propositional gratitude are on the right track, then they allow us to articulate the assumption behind the mistaken belief that gratitude *to* R for φ-ing entails gratitude *that* R φ-ed: The assumption is that every instance of a benefactor’s benevolently motivated action is something the intended beneficiary, if he is fully informed and rational, will find valuable for himself and welcome. This assumption seems safe to those who consider only the paradigm cases of gratitude, like the case of someone buying a nice gift for a colleague, or the case of someone in a boat saving another person from drowning. My two cases in the previous section, however, show that assumption to be false.

5. The relationship between gratitude *to* and gratitude *that*

I have argued against the claim that Y’s being grateful *to* R for φ-ing entails Y’s being grateful *that* R φ-ed. Gratitude *to* does not entail gratitude *that*—at least not when predicated of the same state of affairs constituted by R’s having φ-ed for Y.

The fact that gratitude *to* R for φ-ing does not entail gratitude *that* R φ-ed, however, doesn’t show there to be no connection between gratitude *to* and gratitude *that*. My arguments so far leave open the possibility that gratitude to R for φ-ing always entails the existence of some state of affairs, *p*, related to particular features of R’s φ-ing, such that Y is grateful *that* *p*. In other words, prepositional gratitude to R for φ-ing may always entail propositional gratitude about some *part* of R’s φ-ing, even if it does not imply overall gratitude that R φ-ed, or propositional gratitude about the totality of R’s having φ-ed. One specific possibility, suggested by the case of Youssef and Robert, is that Y’s gratitude to R for φ-ing entails Y’s gratitude that R had benevolence toward Y sufficient to motivate φ-ing. A second possibility, related to the first one, is that Y’s gratitude to R for φ-ing entails Y’s gratitude that there existed someone in Y’s life, or in the world more generally, who bore the benevolence toward Y that R demonstrated in φ-ing. A third possibility, suggested by the case of Yakov and Ruth, is that Y’s gratitude to R for φ-ing, where R’s φ-ing was aimed at supplying Y with some benefit, T, entails Y’s gratitude that he received T. Any of these possibilities, if true across all cases, would constitute a way in which gratitude *to* entails gratitude *that*.

Ultimately, though, each of these possible generalizations seems vulnerable to counterexamples. Consider the third possibility—the possibility that Y’s gratitude to R for φ-ing, where R’s φ-ing was aimed at supplying Y with benefit T, entails Y’s gratitude that he received T. That generalization was shown to be false in the case of Youssef and Robert, where the benefit, T, was Youssef’s having the book from his apartment while he was working in his office. We can imagine Youssef’s being grateful *to* Robert for bringing the book to him from his apartment but not grateful *that* he has the book from his apartment, insofar as he recognizes no value for himself in that state of affairs (because he found another copy of the book to work with). Y’s gratitude to R for φ-ing in order to provide T does not entail Y’s gratitude that Y got T.

Now consider the first possibility: that Y’s gratitude to R for φ-ing entails Y’s gratitude that R had benevolence toward Y sufficient to motivate φ-ing. This possibility seems plausible enough in cases where Y believes R has a reasonable level of benevolence toward him. But things are different in cases where Y believes R has far more benevolence toward him than he deserves from R. Consider a modified version of the case of Yakov and Ruth, with a prologue and an alternate ending. Imagine that Yakov, before being relocated to work next to Ruth, worked at a slightly less powerful machine in the same factory next to David. One day, David got his hand stuck in the machine, and it was clear to both him and Yakov that David would lose his hand unless Yakov sacrificed one of his own hands by sticking it into the machine. Yakov did not do this, and David lost his hand. Yakov felt terrible for David, but on reflection, he did not believe he should feel guilty for refusing to sacrifice his own hand to save David’s hand. He believed that he, like anyone in the same position would be, was blameless for choosing not to sacrifice his hand to save someone else’s. Now imagine that Yakov is later promoted and placed at a more powerful machine next to Ruth. He learns that Ruth had led a difficult life full of tragic events—much more so than Yakov, who lived a relatively happy and untragic life. Despite all the suffering and tragedy she had endured, however, Ruth had always been a kindhearted, forgiving, and generously self-sacrificing person. Now imagine that one day, Yakov gets one of his hands stuck in the machine they share, and Ruth, thinking quickly but clearly, does the one thing she knows will save Yakov’s hand: she sticks both of her hands into the machine, allowing him to withdraw his hand. Fortunately, though, just as Yakov withdraws his hand from the machine, an unusual and unpredictable power failure at the factory causes the machine to shut down, and Ruth is able to withdraw both her hands before they are injured and cut off. It is still clear to everyone that if Ruth had not stuck her hands into the machine, the power failure would have come too late to save Yakov’s hand. Here is a case where Ruth has benefited Yakov and, though she has not suffered any loss, she has demonstrated great benevolence with her willingness to make a great sacrifice for him. Imagine in this case that Yakov is grateful to Ruth for sticking her hands into the machine. Now, because of the power failure, there is no benefactor sacrifice for Yakov to feel bad about. Still, though, it seems plausible that in the midst of all this good fortune, Yakov might be less than ecstatic in realizing that Ruth bears him so much benevolence. Because of her past selfless sacrifices, because of how much she had already undeservedly suffered in her life, because of how much worse off this benevolence would have made her relative to the harm she would be sparing Yakov, and because Yakov would not have sacrificed even half as much as Ruth would to benefit a coworker, it is plausible to imagine someone in Yakov’s position being troubled by Ruth’s benevolence and wishing she did not bear him such benevolence. Now, insofar as he finds it troubling and wishes it was otherwise, he cannot welcome it, and so he cannot be grateful that his benefactor bears him such benevolence. And insofar as this attitude is consistent with Yakov’s being grateful to Ruth for sticking her hands into the machine, he can be grateful *to* her for doing so but not grateful *that* she had the benevolence that made her willing to do so.

Now consider the second possibility: that Y’s gratitude to R for φ-ing entails gratitude that there was *someone* in Y’s life benevolent enough toward Y that she was willing to φ, even if Y isn’t grateful that it was *R* who φ-ed. This generalization, like the one I just considered, is shown to be false in cases where Y does not deserve (or believes he does not deserve) benevolence sufficient to motivate R’s φ-ing for him. Imagine that Yorick is a reprehensibly selfish person who has done many unforgivable things to innocent people throughout his life and gotten away with all of them, so that no one knows him for the reprehensibly selfish person he is. Yorick has never, despite having had opportunities, atoned or made amends for his wrongdoings. As a result of his wrongdoings, he amassed a great deal of wealth, most of which he has spent ensuring that his life was comfortable and secure. Despite his bad deeds, however, Yorick does not completely lack a conscience. Late in life, he has come to feel ashamed and guilty of all he has done, though he remains too selfish and cowardly to confess and atone for the harm he has caused innocent people. Now imagine that one night while he sleeps, his house catches fire. Regina, a neighbor out for a late-night walk, happens to see his house half engulfed in flames as she is walking by. She realizes Yorick may be asleep in his bed and in grave danger, and despite great (and justified) fear, she is motivated by benevolence to run into his burning house and save him—which she does successfully and without injury. It seems plausible that afterward, Yorick might be grateful to Regina for risking her life to save him, in that he recognizes her benevolence, thanks her, wishes her well for what she did, and is motivated, despite his selfishness, to do good things for her in the future. It also seems plausible, though, that he might be so ashamed of how little he deserved to be saved that he wished she hadn’t had such benevolence for him. Indeed, he might not welcome *anyone’s* having such benevolence for him. It thus seems plausible that someone in Yorick’s position can be grateful to Regina for saving him but not grateful that there existed anyone benevolent enough to save him the way Regina did. And insofar as those two attitudes are consistent, it is possible for Y to be grateful to R for φ-ing but not grateful that there existed someone benevolent enough to φ for him the way R did.

Even if there is no one particular feature of Y, R and R’s φ-ing that Y’s prepositional gratitude entails propositional gratitude about, perhaps Y’s gratitude to R for φ-ing entails Y’s gratitude that *at least one element* of R’s φ-ing is what it is, where this element could be the existence of someone with R’s benevolence, some particular R’s being so benevolent, the benefit R bestows, or some combination of these, depending on the case. I must confess that it is difficult to imagine a realistic case where Y is grateful *to* R for φ-ing and Y is not grateful *that* *p* for *any* *p* involving *some* element of R and R’s φ-ing for Y. But need not be because all instances of gratitude *to* entail instances of gratitude *that*. It may simply be because opportunities to be grateful *that* are so common that they coincidentally pop up in at least one or two places whenever one person is grateful to another for φ-ing. But even if we conceded that this vaguest entailment claim were true, that still would not imply very much as far as the connection between prepositional gratitude and propositional gratitude goes. That entailment claim, after all, is too vague to be of use in making meaningfully or helpfully specific inferences about what Y is propositionally grateful about, given Y’s gratitude *to* R for φ-ing together with all the details of R’s φ-ing. If there is a meaningful conceptual connection between prepositional gratitude and propositional gratitude, it seems not to be that the former entails the latter.

Another way in which prepositional gratitude and propositional gratitude might be connected helps clarify the notion of benevolent motivation I mentioned in the previous section. Reflection on the cases of prepositional gratitude I put forward in section 3 suggests that gratitude *to* is properly a response to actions motivated by a desire, on the part of the benefactor, to make the beneficiary grateful *that*. In other words, prepositional gratitude seems to be, at least typically, properly a response to actions aimed at creating states of affairs that will be valuable for the beneficiary and that the beneficiary will welcome. This would explain why we often think benefaction is more successfully or nobly carried out when the benefactor tries to downplay the sacrifice she made in acting benevolently: the greater a grateful beneficiary perceives R’s sacrifice to have been in φ-ing, the less likely the beneficiary will be to welcome, accept, or be satisfied with the fact that R φ-ed (as the case of Yakov and Ruth in section 3 demonstrated). Of course, there are situations in which a benefactor knows it is impossible for her to benefit her beneficiary in a way he will welcome. A beloved parent who realizes that the only way to save the life of his child is to sacrifice his own life, for instance, might realize that his doing so will not be something his child is likely to welcome easily. As that case makes obvious, however, such a benevolent act may still be worthy of deep and substantial prepositional gratitude. But where it is possible to make a benevolently motivated act easier for the beneficiary to welcome or to accept, doing so may be a sign of a noble benefactor and may render such an act worthy of even more prepositional gratitude.

Whatever the connection is between prepositional gratitude and propositional gratitude, understanding it correctly is important for several reasons, and recognizing that propositional gratitude is distinct from (or at least not entailed by) prepositional gratitude has a number of important implications. Some of these implications concern the empirical study of gratitude in the social sciences. If prepositional gratitude were thought to entail propositional gratitude, then we might be tempted to posit a general concept of gratitude, which is essentially propositional gratitude, and to understand prepositional gratitude as a subset of instances of this phenomenon. That conceptualization might tempt social scientists to prioritize the study propositional gratitude (which would appear to be the broader concept) over the study of prepositional gratitude.[[23]](#footnote-23) It might tempt social scientists to assume that anything they discover about propositional gratitude will be true of prepositional gratitude as well. That could (and, I believe, has) led to widely held misconceptions about prepositional gratitude. Those include, for example, the misconception that being grateful to someone always entails positive feelings.[[24]](#footnote-24) If my analysis of gratitude *to* and gratitude *that* is correct, however, it suggests that a fruitful sort of gratitude to investigate would be prepositional gratitude *without* propositional gratitude. This category would be rendered incoherent by the thesis that gratitude *to* entails gratitude *that*, which may help explain why it has not been deeply explored by social scientists.

The recognition that propositional gratitude is not entailed by prepositional gratitude also has implications for our practices of morally assessing people. It seems valuable for us to be able to conceptualize, reason about, and communicate coherent judgments about the character of people we share a community with. It is important to be able to recognize people as generous, loyal, and compassionate, so we know who to befriend, who we can count on, who we can be proud of and look up to. It is also important to be able to recognize people as cruel or thoughtless or arrogant or servile, so we know how to help them become better people, how to protect ourselves from their nefarious tendencies, and when to avoid them altogether. Having coherent concepts for all these character traits, then, is important for everyday interpersonal interaction. If my analysis of prepositional gratitude and propositional gratitude is correct, and the two really are distinct phenomena, then despite what many people believe, there doesn’t exist a single coherent concept of “grateful person,” or a single coherent concept of “ungrateful person.” One way to highlight this point is to imagine two sorts of people, each of whom instantiates grateful tendencies vis-à-vis one kind of gratitude and ungrateful tendencies vis-à-vis the other.[[25]](#footnote-25) On the one hand, we could imagine a person who is habitually prepositionally grateful but rarely or never propositionally grateful. This would be a person who regularly and habitually recognizes when people do benevolent things for him and routinely remembers those actions, thanks his benefactors, bears them goodwill, and is motivated to help them or return favors. But he is also someone who is rarely glad or grateful *that* those people benefit him as they do—perhaps because low self-esteem makes him think he is not worthy of his benefactors’ sacrifices or because he has a hard time appreciating the ways in which certain things are valuable for him. On the other hand, we can imagine a person who is habitually grateful *that* benefactors benefit him but habitually ungrateful *to* those benefactors for doing so. This is a person who is quick to recognize when benefactors’ actions are valuable for him and finds it easy to welcome those actions, but he is also someone who fails to recognize the benevolent motivations behind those beneficent actions, someone who doesn’t care much about his benefactors, wish them well, or return favors after they benefit him—even when they ask. Which of these two individuals is grateful? Which is ungrateful? Is one more grateful than the other? If we continue to believe that prepositional gratitude is a subset of propositional gratitude, we will be stuck with such difficult-to-answer questions, and we will lack the language and conceptual machinery necessary to distinguish these two very different types of people.[[26]](#footnote-26)

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1. \* Forthcoming in *Philosophical Studies.* Accepted October 28, 2019*.* <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11098-019-01368-z>. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Those who might dispute this claim include Fitzgerald (1998). For a defense of this claim, see Manela (2016a). I give an original counterexample to the claim that “Y is grateful *that* R φ-ed” implies “Y is grateful *to* R for φ-ing” in section 4, below. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Philosophers who have argued for this position recently include McAleer (2012) and Rush (2019). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. See, for instance, Rush (2019). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. I first introduced the term “prepositional gratitude” in Manela (2016a). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. For a discussion of how a motivation to thank is a central part of prepositional gratitude, see Manela (2019: 301 – 303). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Relative to how I would feel if I were to learn that a random stranger is flourishing or suffering. I argue for these points in more detail in Manela (2016b). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. I argue for this in Manela (2015). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. I take the term “propositional gratitude” from McAleer (2012). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. I add the phrase “for him” because propositional gratitude does not seem to be the proper response to states of affairs a beneficiary does not find beneficial to himself—even if he finds some value in those states of affairs. I might find value (see some good) in the fact that last night firefighters saved a man I did not know from a burning building, but though it seems reasonable for me to be *glad* that they saved such a man or to *praise* them for doing so, it would sound strange to say I am *grateful* that they saved the stranger. If firefighters saved *me* from a burning building last night, however, then it would be reasonable for me to be grateful that they saved me. The difference is that when the firefighters save *me*, I find that state of affairs good or valuable *for* *me*. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Others who see gladness as being part of propositional gratitude include Rush (2019:15). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Those who make this distinction include Rush (2019). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. This example of receiving a thoughtful gift from a friend is an example used by, *inter alia*, Wellman (1999). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Though I will not address this question extensively here, I am skeptical that gratitude to someone for *being* a benevolent or caring friend can ever be properly warranted. I think that we can *love* someone (in part) for being a benevolent or caring friend, and I believe (and will argue later in this article) that a benevolent or caring motivation makes fitting prepositional gratitude for *acts* a friend might do for us; but such benevolence itself is not (at least typically) the proper object of prepositional gratitude. And although we can properly be grateful to loved ones for all the particular things they benevolently *do* for us, when we thank someone for being a good friend (or for being a good mother or a good spouse), what we really express with such thanks is not prepositional gratitude at all, but love (for them), appreciation (of their love and presence in our lives) and (perhaps) praise (for the praiseworthy features of how they love us). Not everyone agrees with my assessment of thanking others for being good intimates. Sungwoo Um (2019), for instance, has recently argued that gratitude for being a good intimate constitutes a sort of genuine prepositional gratitude that is distinct from prepositional gratitude for doings. Insofar as Um is correct, it remains an interesting question whether gratitude *to* someone for being a good intimate always entails gratitude *that* they are a good intimate. But that is not a question I have space to pursue in this essay, where my focus is on gratitude in response to doings. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Some might be concerned that stated in this stark, barebones form, the case seems less convincing—perhaps because “R’s φ-ing,” or “Robert’s bringing Youssef the book,” doesn’t contain the details that seem to make Y’s gratitude to R for φ-ing fitting, and, relatedly, that “R φ-ed,” or “Robert brought Youssef the book,” doesn’t contain the details that make it plausible that Y is not grateful that R φ-ed. Those with such concerns should note that (1) and (2) can be redescribed with as much detail as one might want to include from the case. (1), for instance, could be rewritten as (1′): “Youssef is grateful to Robert for bringing him the book from the apartment, which Robert did out of benevolence toward Youssef, and by which Robert lost an hour of his day,” and (2) could be rewritten as (2′): “Youssef is grateful that Robert brought him the book from the apartment, which Robert did out of benevolence toward Youssef, and by which Robert lost an hour of his day.” Both (1′) and (2′) mention all the same details from the case, and (1′) is clearly true while (2′) is plausibly false. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. This case is similar to one described in Manela (2016b). [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. As with the previous case, some might be concerned that stated in this stark, barebones form, the case seems less convincing—perhaps because “R’s φ-ing,” or “Ruth’s sticking her hands into the machine,” doesn’t by itself contain the detail that seems to make (1) true, even if it does make clear why (2) is false. One might also be concerned that if R’s φ-ing were redescribed in this case as “Ruth saved Yakov from losing a hand,” then (1) might seem more plausibly true but (2) would not seem as obviously false. Again, though, as with the previous case, those with such concerns should note that (1) and (2) can be redescribed with as much detail as one might want to include from the case—and there is a level of detail we can add in such redescriptions such that both propositions contain the same content and the first is plausibly true while the second is plausibly false. For instance, (1) could be rewritten as (1′): “Yakov is grateful to Ruth for sticking her hands into the machine, which she did out of benevolence toward Yakov so that he wouldn’t lose one hand (which he didn’t), and by which she lost both of her hands (which she foresaw),” and (2) could be rewritten as (2′): “Yakov is grateful that Ruth stuck her hands into the machine, which she did out of benevolence toward Yakov so that he wouldn’t lose one hand (which he didn’t), by which she lost both of her hands (which she foresaw).” Both (1′) and (2′) mention all the same details from the case, and (1′) is plausibly true while (2′) is plausibly false. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. I have argued for this view in Manela (2016a). [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. These are paraphrased from Rush (2019: 16). Rush says these conditions form a “definition” of gratitude *to*, but that surely cannot be correct. After all, a person could meet conditions 1) – 4) and be completely unmotivated to thank his benefactor, or completely indifferent to his benefactor, or completely unwilling to reciprocate a benefit for his benefactor—and such a person would clearly be *ungrateful*. Rush’s conditions 1) – 4) are better understood, I think, as an attempt to articulate the conditions under which gratitude *to* is *owed* or *warranted*, not a definition of gratitude. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. One might argue that condition 4), the “no disqualifying reasons” condition, is not met in this case, because indifference is a disqualifying reason. But if indifference is allowed as a disqualifying reason, along with malice or ill will, that is tantamount to saying that some sort of positive attitude, like benevolence, is a necessary condition for Y’s gratitude to R for φ-ing to be appropriate. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Rush (2019: 3). See also Rush (2019: 13). [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. This last condition (that Y must welcome, want, prefer or accept that *p*), which I have called the welcoming condition, is similar to a necessary condition for the fittingness of *prepositional* gratitude suggested by several philosophers. John Simmons, for instance, has argued that in order for gratitude *to* R for providing a benefit to be warranted, the beneficiary must want the benefit and must not want the benefit not to come from R. (Simmons 1979: 178) My second case in section 3 shows this not to be a necessary condition for prepositional gratitude to be warranted. Yakov may prefer that Ruth not have stuck both her hands into the machine to save his hand, and even if he was glad *someone* stuck her hands in the machine to save his hand, he may have not wanted that benefit to come from Ruth. Nevertheless, it still seems clear he should be, and can be, grateful *to* her. Even though this “welcoming condition” is thus not a necessary condition for prepositional gratitude, however, reflection on my gratitude cases and more standard gratitude cases does show it to be a necessary condition for *propositional* gratitude. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Some philosophers have been tempted to subsume prepositional gratitude under the umbrella of propositional gratitude as well. See, for instance, Rush (2019). [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. I discuss this misconception in Manela (2016b). [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. I describe two such people in detail in Manela (2016a). [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. At the end of the day, one might wonder how big such concerns are. One might believe that even if it is conceptually possible that gratitude *to* can occur without gratitude *that*, I haven’t shown the falsity of the claim that *as a general rule,* gratitude *to* implies gratitude *that*. And even if there might be some people who are, as a matter of character dispositions, habitually grateful *to* but not habitually grateful *that*, I haven’t shown the falsity of *the general rule* that people who are habitually grateful *to* are habitually grateful *that*. Now, one might be tempted to argue that insofar as ethics and social science should be concerned with general rules, not absolute entailment claims, the cases I have presented where gratitude *to* occurs without gratitude *that* are too rare and atypical to justify a large shakeup in our thinking about gratitude. In response to this line of reasoning, it should be noted that we often don’t know whether, or to what extent, a general rule should be relied upon until we start to systematically explore what appear at first to be a few unusual exceptions to it. Sometimes, such exploration reveals a “general rule” to have so many predictable exceptions that we are left with no choice but to replace it with more precise and accurate rules. My arguments in this article may not be sufficient to persuade an ardent skeptic that we should in all contexts abandon the general rule that gratitude *to* implies gratitude *that*. But my arguments here should at the very least show an ardent skeptic that there is risk in relying unreflectively on such a rule, and they should convince a skeptic that an exploration of the exceptions to such a general rule, which I have begun in this article, is well worth continuing. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)