Penultimate version. Ultimate version published online 28 January 2014 in Philosophical Studies. *The present version inserts a negation in the first statement of the barber paradox in section 2.2 below that (unfortunately) was omitted in the published version.*

Desiring, Desires, and Desire Ascriptions

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Philosophers who study propositional attitudes have thought less about desire than belief, and less about desire ascriptions than belief ascriptions. But if they turned their attention to desire, they would likely find the following claims plausible.

First, true desire ascriptions describe things that agents desire. More specifically, a true desire ascription of the form $\ulcorner N_1$ wants N_2 to $F\urcorner$ describes something to which the referent of N_1 stands in the desiring relation, namely the content of $\ulcorner N_2$ to $F\urcorner$. For example, if the desire ascription 'Michelle wants Sasha to exercise' is true, then it describes something to which Michelle stands in the desiring relation, namely the content of the phrase 'Sasha to exercise'. Second, when agents desire things, they also have desires, and those desires have contents. For example, if Barack wants Malia to study, then Barack has a desire, and that desire has a content. Third, a true desire ascription specifies the content of one of the agent's desires. For example, if 'Barack wants Malia to study' is true, then one of Barack's desires has a content that is specified by the phrase 'Malia to study'.

Let's call these three claims together *the plausible view*. The plausible view seems plausible, but in a rich and intriguing paper, Delia Graff Fara (2013) presents an apparent

problem for it. More precisely, Fara describes a specific version of the plausible view, and then argues that it is false. I will here defend the plausible view.[1]

1. Fara's Objection (the Short Form) and Its Significance

Fara begins her paper by sketching an objection to her target theory (Fara 2013, p. 250).

> Fiona says that she wants to catch a fish; Charlotte says that she wants to have some champagne. Neither has expressed with full specificity what it is that she wants. Fiona wants to catch a fish that's big enough to make a meal; a minnow will not do. Charlotte wants enough champagne to feel it go to her head; a thimbleful will not do. Nevertheless, each speaks truly. How is that?
>
> I call this "the problem of underspecification." The problem is to explain how these desire reports can be true even though neither subject has a desire with a content that's specified precisely by her embedded clause. These embedded clauses *underspecify* what it is that each wants. . . . Here I will examine a particular account of the semantics of desire reports and explain why it cannot solve the problem of underspecification. (Fara 2013, p. 250)

We can construe Fara's remarks about Fiona as an argument against the plausible view, as follows. Suppose Fiona utters 'I want to catch a fish', and suppose she speaks truly when she does. Then she wants to catch a fish. But suppose Fiona also wants to catch a *meal-sized* fish; a tiny minnow "won't do." So, the embedded clause of the desire ascription that Fiona uttered

[1] William Lycan (2012) presents somewhat similar arguments against standard semantic theories of desire ascriptions. Unfortunately, I do not have space to discuss Lycan's arguments here.

underspecifies what she wants. So, Fiona does not have a desire whose content is that she catch a fish. But the plausible view entails that if Fiona's ascription is true (in her context), then she does have a desire whose content is that she catch a fish. So, the plausible view is false.

The above objection may appear initially compelling, but an advocate of the plausible view can offer a plausible reply. Fiona wants many things. One thing she wants is to catch a meal-sized fish. Another thing she wants is to catch a fish. (Perhaps she wants the latter as a consequence of wanting the former.) Fiona also has many desires. She has a desire to catch a meal-sized fish. She also has a desire to catch a fish. (Perhaps she has the second desire as a consequence of having the first.) Fiona's ascription fully specifies the content of her second desire, but not the first. Her ascription may underspecify what she wants, in some sense, but no single desire ascription can specify everything Fiona desires, or specify all of her desires. A tiny minnow "won't do" because catching one will not satisfy Fiona's desire to catch a meal-sized fish, and Fiona herself will be unsatisfied as long as that desire is unsatisfied. Nevertheless, catching a tiny minnow will satisfy Fiona's other desire, namely her desire to catch a fish.

Perhaps this reply is persuasive. But as I said above, the plausible view is not exactly the same as the view that Fara criticizes, and Fara's objection to her target theory is a bit different from the above objection. In what follows, I describe the specific theory of desiring, desires, and desire ascriptions that Fara criticizes. I respond to her criticism of that theory, partly by elaborating on the previous paragraph, but also partly by presenting a theory that more fully describes the relations among desiring, desires, and contents.

Why examine Fara's argument so closely? One reason is that it has implications for theories of other attitudes and attitude ascriptions, and in particular for the theory of belief and

belief ascriptions. [2] Consider a view of belief that is analogous to the plausible view of desire: true belief ascriptions describe things that agents believe, agents have beliefs with contents, and the contents of those beliefs are specified by true belief ascriptions. Here is a Fara-like objection to it: Suppose that Betty is away from her home and says 'I believe that there is a table in my living room', and suppose that she speaks truly. But suppose Betty also believes that there is a *rectangular* table in her living room. (If she found only a *round* table in her living room, she would be surprised.) So, the embedded clause in Betty's belief ascription underspecifies what she believes. So, Betty does not have a belief whose content is that there is a table in her living room. But the plausible view of belief entails that she does. So, the plausible view of belief is false. Now if Fara's objection to (her more specific version of) the plausible view of desire is sound, then so is the preceding objection to the plausible view of belief. But I maintain that neither is sound. I respond to the argument concerning belief in much the same way that I respond to the earlier argument concerning desire. Betty believes many things. She also has many beliefs. She has a belief that there is a table in her living room. She also has a belief that there is a *rectangular* table in her living room. Her self-ascription fully specifies the first belief, but not the second. And so on. Despite the parallels, I concentrate on desire in this paper. I leave it to readers to construct a Fara-like objection to a more detailed version of the plausible theory of belief, and to anticipate my hypothetical reply.

The plausible theory of desire includes semantic claims about desire ascriptions, and metaphysical claims about the relations among desiring, desires, and contents. Fara's more detailed target theory similarly mixes semantics and metaphysics. As we will see, Fara does not explicitly question the semantic claims of the detailed theory. She does seem to question its

[2] Fara (2013, 270-72) mentions Shier (1996) and Bach (1997), who argue that belief ascriptions underspecify their contents. Fara does not mention either Lewis (1994) or Braddon-Mitchell and Jackson (2007), but they also endorse theories of belief on which ordinary belief ascriptions do not fully specify the contents of agents' belief-states.

metaphysical claims, at least as I understand her. Thus part of this paper will be occupied with the metaphysics of desiring, desires, and contents.

2. The Relational Analysis and the Content-Specification Version of the Relational Analysis

Fara calls the theory of desiring, desires, and desire ascriptions that she criticizes 'The Content-Specification Version of the Relational Analysis'. It consists of three components: the Relational Analysis, the Content Component, and the Specification Component.

2.1 The Relational Analysis

Fara uses (1) to present the Relational Analysis (Fara 2013, p. 250).

1. 'Lora wants Rudy to be in London' is true just in case Lora bears the relation expressed by 'wants' to the proposition that Rudy is in London.

Fara does not present a completely general version of the Relational Analysis, but she seemingly intends something like (2) below.

2. *The Relational Analysis*

   If *N* is a proper name and *S* is an infinitival phrase (with or without explicit subject), then ⌜*N* wants *S*⌝ is true iff the referent of *N* bears the relation expressed by 'wants' to the proposition that *S* semantically expresses.

The Relational Analysis is a claim about the semantics of desire ascriptions. I accept it, and I suspect that many other philosophers would also. I shall provide some explanation and justification for it.

Consider argument (3) below.

3. a. Michelle wants Sasha to exercise.

   b. Therefore, there is something that Michelle wants, namely that Sasha exercise.

Argument (3) appears to be valid and appears to use existential generalization on the infinitival phrase ‘Sasha to exercise’. Thus we can reasonably conclude that the occurrence of the infinitival phrase in the desire ascription refers to something that Michelle wants. Since ‘Michelle’ is the subject of ‘want’, we can infer that ‘want’ semantically expresses a binary relation that can hold between agents and things to which occurrences of infinitival phrases refer, when they appear as the grammatical direct objects of ‘want’. Finally, the argument’s conclusion uses a ‘that’-clause to describe something that Michelle wants. ‘That’-clauses refer to propositions. Hence, we can plausibly conclude that propositions are among the objects of desire, and that the infinitival phrase in (3a) refers to a proposition.

A skeptic could reasonably question whether the above reasoning shows that the infinitival phrase in (3a) refers to a proposition. Such a skeptic could correctly point out that propositions are traditionally taken to be eternal (that is, not to vary in truth-value from time to time). But the infinitival phrase that occurs after ‘want’ in (3a) lacks tense and so does the ‘that’-clause used to describe Michelle’s desire in (3b). A skeptic could reasonably take the absence of

tense in these phrases to indicate that the objects to which they refer are non-eternal, and therefore not propositions. Fortunately, however, issues about time and tense are irrelevant to Fara's argument against her target theory. Therefore, I will assume, for the sake of argument (and along with Fara), that the infinitival phrases of ascriptions such as (3a) refer to propositions.

The infinitival phrase in (3a) has an explicit subject, 'Sasha'. But other infinitival phrases that appear in desire ascriptions do not, such as the phrase 'to sleep' that occurs in 'Fred wants to sleep'. So, one might wonder whether such desire ascriptions relate an agent to a proposition. Argument (4), however, suggests that desire ascriptions of this type are true only if the relevant agent stands in the desiring relation to a proposition.

4. a. Fred wants to sleep.

   b. Therefore, there is something that Fred wants, namely that he sleep.

Here we have apparent existential generalization over the infinitival phrase 'to sleep'. This phrase has no explicit subject, but the description of something that Fred wants that occurs in (4b), namely 'that he sleep', does contain an explicit subject. Therefore, I will again assume, for the sake of argument (and along with Fara, 2013, note 2), that an occurrence of an infinitival phrase after 'wants' that has no overt subject refers to a proposition that concerns the referent of the main subject of the desire ascription in which it occurs (in the above case, Fred). This may be due to the occurrence of an unpronounced pronoun (often called 'PRO') in the infinitival phrase that co-refers with, or is bound by, or is otherwise controlled by, the grammatical subject of the occurrence of the verb 'want'.

2.2 The Objects of the Desiring Relation

As Fara points out (2013, p. 251), the Relational Analysis is consistent with many different views about the nature of propositions and semantic contents. Fara describes two mainstream theories of semantic contents. I will present them below, and mention some others. The differences between the two main theories will figure importantly in my explication of Fara's argument.

One well-known theory says that the semantic content of a sentence is a proposition, and that a proposition is the set of metaphysically or logically possible worlds in which it is true. On such a view, the infinitival phrases that appear in desire ascriptions refer to sets of possible worlds. Therefore, the semantic content of, and the proposition expressed by, a sentence of the form ⌜*N* wants *S*⌝ is the set of possible worlds in which the referent of *N* stands in the desiring relation to the proposition (the set of worlds) expressed by *S*.[3] Call this 'the Possible-Worlds Theory of Desire Ascriptions'.

The Possible-Worlds Theory entails that if propositions *P* and *Q* are true at exactly the same possible worlds, then it is impossible for an agent to desire *P* without also desiring *Q*. Consider, for instance, the proposition that Fred is a barber who shaves all and only those who **do not** shave themselves and the proposition that Fred sleeps without sleeping. (*Note: **bold** indicates correction that doesn't appear in published version.*) These propositions are true at exactly the same worlds, namely none. The Possible-Worlds Theory entails that they are the same proposition, namely the empty set. So, the theory entails that it is impossible for Fred to want to be a barber who shaves all and only those who do not shave themselves without also wanting to sleep without sleeping.

[3] The above semantic analysis is inspired by Montague's (1973) analysis of belief ascriptions, which takes 'believe' to be an ordinary binary predicate, rather than a kind of sentence operator, as Hintikka (1969) does.

Many semanticists would think that this last consequence is incorrect. A theorist can avoid it by adopting a more fine-grained theory of the propositions and the propositional objects of desire. One such finer-grained theory is *Millian Russellianism*. Russellianism says that propositions are structured entities that have individuals, properties, and relations as constituents. Millian versions of Russellianism add that the semantic content of a proper name is its referent. On Millian Russellianism, the proposition that Fred is a barber who shaves all and only those who do not shave themselves is distinct from the proposition that Fred sleeps without sleeping, for these propositions differ in their constituents. So, it is possible for Fred to want one without wanting the other.

The Millian Russellian theory entails that if Mark Twain is identical with Samuel Clemens, and Fred wants to meet Mark Twain, then Fred wants to meet Samuel Clemens. Many semantic theorists would find this consequence unacceptable, and would prefer a yet finer-grained theory of propositions, such as a non-Millian, descriptivist version of Russellianism, or some sort of Fregean theory. But the differences between Millian Russellianism and these other, finer-grained theories will not matter for the issues that will occupy us here, so I will not discuss them any further. [4] Since I will not be discussing descriptivist Russellian theories, I will use 'Russellianism' to refer to the Millian version of the Russellian theory. [5]

3. The Rest of the Content-Specification Theory

[4] For similar reasons, I also ignore views (such as Crimmins 1992) that say that attitude verbs are ternary predicates.
[5] Desire ascriptions that contain quantifier phrases in their content clauses, such as 'Fiona wants to catch *a fish*', seem ambiguous between a notional reading and a relational reading. Many theorists attribute this apparent ambiguity to a scope ambiguity. Fara (2013) discusses hypothetical replies to her argument that appeal to such ambiguities. But I will not appeal to such ambiguities. When I discuss a desire ascription that contains a quantifier phrase, I will always have in mind a reading in which all of the quantifiers in the ascription's infinitival phrase take maximally narrow scope.

The second component of the Content-Specification Theory is *the Content Component* (Fara 2013, p. 253).

5. *The Content Component*

   X bears the relation expressed by 'wants' to a proposition *P* iff *X* has a desire with *P* as its content.

Fara here makes a transition from speaking of the *desiring relation* to speaking of *desires* and their contents. (Let us assume, as Fara seemingly does, that the verb 'want' expresses the wanting relation and this relation is the same as the desiring relation expressed by the verb 'desire'.) Fara says that the Content Component tells us which relation desire is. So, Fara seemingly intends the Content Component to make a metaphysical claim about the nature of desiring and desires.

Finally, we get *the Specification Component*. Fara (2013, p. 253) says that it tells us what it is for a desire to have *P* as its content.

6. *The Specification Component*

   X has a desire with *P* as its content iff *X* has a desire that is satisfied in exactly those possible worlds in which *P* is true.

As Fara uses the term 'satisfied', an agent's desire can be satisfied at a world though the agent does not have that desire at that world (2013, p.270, note 12). [6] From these components, we can

[6] Lycan (2012, 203-4) discusses a similar principle, and (following Stampe, 1986) brings up a seemingly serious problem with it. Suppose that, on Monday, I want to eat spaghetti on Tuesday, and that I will, in fact, eat spaghetti

derive the theory that Fara criticizes.

7. *The Content-Specification Version of the Relational Analysis of Desire Ascriptions*

   If *N* is a proper name and *S* is an infinitival phrase (with or without explicit subject), then ⌜*N* wants *S*⌝ is true iff the referent of *N* has a desire that is satisfied in exactly those worlds in which the proposition that *S* semantically expresses is true.

I will call this theory 'the Content-Specification Theory', for short. The Content-Specification Theory entails all of the claims that the plausible view does; it entails, for instance, that if 'Michelle wants Sasha to exercise' is true, then Michelle has a desire whose content is the proposition that Sasha exercise. In that sense, the Content-Specification Theory seems to be a more specific and more detailed version of the plausible view.

4. Fara's Objection to the Content-Specification Theory

Fara presents an objection to the Content-Specification Theory in the following paragraph.

> But let us now return to our original instances of the underspecification problem. Fiona's desire to catch a fish is not one that gets satisfied in exactly those possible worlds in which the proposition that she catches a fish becomes true. And when Fiona *says* that

on Tuesday. The Specification Component entails (or strongly suggests) that my desire to eat spaghetti on Tuesday is already satisfied on Monday. We might avoid this consequence by revising the Specification Component to mention something about the time at which the agent has the desire and the temporal content (if any) of the relevant proposition. Fortunately, we can ignore matters of time and tense here.

she wants to catch a fish, she does not express a desire that becomes satisfied just in case the proposition that she catches a fish becomes true. That proposition becomes true if she catches a tiny minnow. But her desire does not thereby become satisfied. Moreover—and this is the point I wish to emphasize—her self-ascription of the desire is, despite all this, true. The desire that makes her claim true has a more specific content than the proposition expressed by her embedded clause.

. . . The question I meant to be posing at the outset is whether these facts show the content-specification variant of the relational analysis to be wrong. The answer is that they do show that. (Fara 2013, p. 254).

I will call this objection 'the Underspecification Objection'. It can be stated a bit more formally as follows.

8. *The Underspecification Objection*

   a. Fiona says that she wants to catch a fish and speaks truly when she does so.

   b. If (8a), then Fiona wants to catch a fish.

   c. Therefore, Fiona wants to catch a fish.

   d. If (8c), then: if the Content-Specification Theory is true, then Fiona has a desire that is satisfied in exactly those possible worlds in which she catches a fish.

   e. Therefore, if the Content-Specification Theory is true, then Fiona has a desire that is satisfied in exactly those possible worlds in which she

catches a fish.

f. Fiona does not have a desire that is satisfied in exactly those possible worlds in which she catches a fish.

g. Therefore, the Content-Specification Theory is not true.

Line (8a) is true by stipulation. (8b) is very plausible; we will discuss it in detail later. (8d) is undeniable, because (8c) and the Content-Specification Theory together entail that Fiona has a desire that is satisfied in exactly those possible worlds in which she catches a fish. Fara gives an argument for (8f) in the above passage: If Fiona has a desire that is satisfied in exactly those worlds in which she catches a fish then she has a desire that is satisfied in *all and only* those worlds in which she catches a fish. But in some worlds in which she catches a fish, she catches a tiny minnow and no other fish. If she catches only a tiny minnow, "her desire does not thereby become satisfied." So, Fiona does not have a desire that is satisfied in exactly those possible worlds in which she catches a fish.

Fara (2013, pp. 254-5) presents a second, parallel argument against the Content-Specification Theory that appeals to Charlotte and her desire to have some champagne. Charlotte raises issues about mass terms (such as 'champagne') and quantification over masses ('some champagne'). Otherwise, she raises the same issues as Fiona. I wish to concentrate on the issues that they have in common, so I shall ignore Charlotte.

5. Russellianism, a Weaker Theory, and an Objection to the Weaker Theory.

The Content-Specification Theory entails that anyone who desires *P* also desires every proposition that is true in exactly the same possible worlds as *P*. So, it entails, for example, that

if John wants Mary to eat a slice of pizza then he also wants [Mary to eat a slice of pizza and arithmetic to be incomplete]. Possible-Worlds theorists would find this consequence acceptable. but most Russellians would not. So, many Russellians would be happy to embrace Fara's conclusion that the Content-Specification Theory is false. But Russellians should not think that they can sit back and relax, for there is a slightly modified version of the Content-Specification Theory that most Russellians would accept, and Fara's original objection can be easily modified so as to target that modified theory.

To obtain the slightly modified version of the Content-Specification Theory, consider the *left-to-right* direction of the Specification Component, and call this 'the Weak Specification Component'.

9. *The **Weak** Specification Component*

   If *X* has a desire with *P* as its content, then *X* has a desire that is satisfied in exactly those possible worlds in which *P* is true.

The Weak Specification Component is plausible. It is certainly acceptable to Possible-Worlds theorists, and would surely be acceptable to Russellians who think that propositions have truth-values with respect to possible worlds. Now consider the theory one gets by combining the Weak Specification Component with the (original) Relational Analysis and the (original) Content Component.

10. *The **Weak** Content-Specification Version of the Relational Analysis of Desire Ascriptions*

> If *N* is a proper name and *S* is an infinitival phrase (with or without explicit subject), then: if ⌜*N* wants *S*⌝ is true, then the referent of *N* has a desire that is satisfied in exactly those worlds in which the proposition that *S* semantically expresses is true.

Let us call it 'the *Weak* Content-Specification Theory', for short. This weaker theory does not have the earlier consequence that most Russellians find objectionable (that anyone who desires *P* also desires every proposition that is true in exactly the same possible worlds as *P*). Moreover, it entails the claims of the plausible view, so Russellians who find the plausible view plausible would likely find the Weak Content-Specification Theory plausible as well. Thus, many Russellians would want to defend the Weak theory from objections. Moreover, anyone who thinks that the original Content-Specification Theory is true must also accept, and defend, the Weak-Content Specification Theory, for the former entails the latter.

Fara's objection to the *original* Content-Specification Theory relies only on the left-to-right direction of the Specification Component. So, we can easily modify that argument to obtain a parallel argument against the *Weak* Content-Specification Theory. I shall call it 'the Modified Underspecification Objection'.

11. *The Modified Underspecification Objection*

    a. Fiona says that she wants to catch a fish and speaks truly when she does so.

    b. If (11a), then Fiona wants to catch a fish.

    c. Therefore, Fiona wants to catch a fish.

d. If (11c), then: if the **Weak** Content-Specification Theory is true, then Fiona has a desire that is satisfied in exactly those possible worlds in which she catches a fish.

e. Therefore, if the **Weak** Content-Specification Theory is true, then Fiona has a desire that is satisfied in exactly those possible worlds in which she catches a fish.

f. Fiona does not have a desire that is satisfied in exactly those possible worlds in which she catches a fish.

g. Therefore, the **Weak** Content-Specification Theory is not true.

The Russellians I described above are committed to finding a false premise in this argument. So is anyone who accepts the original (strong) Content-Specification Theory, for if the Weak Content-Specification Theory is false, then so is the original (strong) theory. Thus from here on, I will concentrate on the Weak Content-Specification Theory and the preceding objection to it.

6. Should We Accept the Conclusion of the Objection?

Now that we have a (modified) version of Fara's argument before us, we can ask: Should we simply embrace its conclusion, and so conclude that the Weak Content-Specification Theory is false? There is one reason not to do so. The Weak Content-Specification Theory entails the claims of the plausible view. If we were to reject the Weak Content-Specification Theory, we would have to ask ourselves whether we could continue to accept the plausible view. So, rejecting the Weak Content-Specification Theory would throw the plausible view into doubt.

There is another reason to worry about rejecting the Weak Content-Specification Theory:

doing so would commit us to rejecting one of its three components. But which component should we reject? The Relational Analysis is very plausible, and those who accept either the Possible-Worlds Theory or the Russellian Theory are committed to it. The Weak Specification Component is also quite plausible, and rejecting it would leave the notion of the content of a desire rather obscure. That leaves the Content Component (which says that *X* bears the relation expressed by 'wants' to a proposition *P* iff *X* has a desire with *P* as its content). Is there a good reason to reject it? In theory, one could deny the right-to-left direction of the Content Component. But I am unable to formulate a good reason to do so. I conclude that if we wish to reject the Content Component, then we must reject its left-to-right direction: we must claim that there is an agent who stands in the desiring relation to proposition *P*, but who fails to have a desire with *P* as its content.

Fara, of course, rejects the (original) Content-Specification Theory, so she is committed to denying one of its components. She does not explicitly say which she rejects. But various remarks by her suggest to me that she thinks that Fiona does stand in the relation expressed by 'want' to the proposition that Fiona catches a fish, but does not have a desire whose precise content is that Fiona catches a fish. If Fara does think this, then she is committed to denying the Content Component in the left-to-right direction. [7]

But should we reject the Content Component? I think not. It is simply too plausible (it is, after all, a part of the plausible view). Unfortunately, I have not yet given any reason to accept it. So, in what follows, I argue for a theory of desires and their contents that entails the Content Component. I then consider an objection to my argument, and an alternative theory of desires

[7] In an earlier paper (Fara 2003, 159), Fara seemingly endorses the claim that *X* stands in the desiring relation to *P* iff *X* has a desire whose content *entails P*. This claim is inconsistent with the Content Component.

that is inconsistent with the Content Component. I then reply to the objection, and criticize the alternative theory of desires.

I mentioned earlier that the Content Component is a metaphysical claim about the relations among desiring, desires, and contents. So, my forthcoming defense of the Content Component will be mostly a discussion in metaphysics, not semantics.

7. Desires and Their Contents

7.1 Two Kinds of Desires

The Content Component mentions desires. But what are desires? Agents have desires when they stand in the desiring relation to propositions. So, one sort of thing that desires might be are *desired propositions*. (This claim is analogous to the claim that beliefs are believed propositions.) More precisely: it might be the case that if *X* desires *P*, then proposition *P* is a desire that *X* has, and *P* is one of *X*'s desires. There is a plausible argument for thinking that at least some desires are desired propositions. If Fred wants to eat, then one of his desires is to eat (alternatively, one of his desires is that he eat). If Michelle wants Sasha to exercise, then one of her desires is for Sasha to exercise (or: that Sasha exercise). The occurrences of 'is' in the previous two sentences appear to be occurrences of the 'is' of identity, and the terms that flank their right-hand sides apparently refer to propositions.

But the claim that all desires are desired propositions may not account for all seeming truths about desires. Often an agent's desires cause him to act: for instance, Fred's desire to eat may cause him to eat. Yet it is unclear whether propositions can cause people to act. Furthermore, desires can be caused, can cease, and can be extinguished, whereas propositions cannot (or at least not in the same way). Finally, if all desires are desired propositions and both

Barack and Michelle want Sasha to exercise, then Barack's desire that Sasha exercise is identical with Michelle's desire that Sasha exercise. Yet Barack's desire could differ in its effects from Michelle's desire: Barack's desire could cause Barack to speak to Sasha while Michelle's desire may have no such effect on Barack.

There are entities of another sort that are good candidates for being desires, and which clearly can cause actions, be caused, and so on, namely certain mental *states* or *events*. If Fred stands in the desiring relation to the proposition that he eat, then he is the agent of a mental state or event, consisting (roughly) in his standing in the desiring relation to that proposition. Let's say that such a state or event is a *desiring-event*. (I prefer the term 'event' to 'state' because the term 'state' can be used for *mental properties*, such as the property of wanting Sasha to exercise, whereas the entities I wish to discuss are not properties. [8]) More precisely, if *X* desires *P*, then *X* is the agent of a desiring-event *E*, and *E* is a desire that *P*, and *X* has desire *E*, and *E* is one of *X*'s desires. (The view that some desires are desiring-events is analogous to the view that some beliefs are events of believing propositions.)

The above considerations make the following view appear reasonable: All desires are either desired propositions or desiring-events, and an agent desires *P* iff she has a desire that *P* iff *P* is one of her desires iff an event *E* of her desiring *P* occurs iff *E* is one of her desires. [9]

7.2 Contents of Both Kinds Desires and an Argument for the Content Component

The Content Component mentions not only desires but also their contents. What is the content of

[8] I use the term 'event' so that it subsumes both short-lived events, such as Fred's desire to eat, and long-lived events, such as my long-standing desire to see the Grand Canyon.

[9] *Properties* of desiring propositions (e.g., the property of desiring that Sasha exercise) are also reasonable candidates for being desires. I shall ignore them, for I think that the claim that some desires are desiring-properties raises basically the same issues for the Content Component as does the claim that some desires are desired propositions.

a desire? (Notice that if we use the phrase '*the* content', we assume that each desire has a unique content.) We need to consider both kinds of desire. If, on the one hand, a given desire is a desired proposition, then it *is* a content. It is peculiar to talk about the content of a content. But if one does, it seems that the most natural thing to say is that its content is *itself*. So, the content of a desired proposition *P* is *P* itself. If, on the other hand, a desire is a desiring-event, then it is an event of an agent's desiring a certain proposition *P*, and the seemingly natural view is that its (one and only) content is *P*. So, we get the following result: no matter what kind of desire we are discussing, if an agent desires *P*, then she has a desire that *P*, and the content of any desire that *P* is *P*.

The left-to-right direction of the Content Component follows, assuming that 'want' expresses the relation of desiring: if *X* stands in the relation expressed by 'wants' to proposition *P*, then *X* has a desire with *P* as its content. We can reasonably assume that the Content Component in the right-to-left direction is true. So, we now have an argument for the Content Component.

7.3 A Critic's Reply

A critic of the Content Component is committed to finding some flaw in the above argument. Since I distinguished between two kinds of desire, the critic might want to distinguish between two versions of the Content Component. Using 'desire_p' for desired propositions and 'desire_e' for desiring-events, we can state the two versions as follows.

Two Versions of the Content Component

(12p) *X* bears the relation expressed by 'wants' to a proposition *P* iff *X* has a desire_{p} with *P* as its content.

(12e) *X* bears the relation expressed by 'wants' to a proposition *P* iff *X* has a desire_{e} with *P* as its content.

The critic could similarly distinguish between two versions of the Weak Content-Specification Theory, one concerned with desired propositions and the other concerned with desiring-events.

The critic could point out that I argued for (12p) by claiming that (a) if *X* desires *P*, then *P* is a desire that *X* has, and (b) if *P* is a desire that *X* has, then the content of (the desire) *P* is *P* itself. The critic could deny either claim, but denying (b) is perhaps more plausible—after all, it is peculiar to say that proposition *P* has a content.

But the original Content Component does not distinguish between desired propositions and desiring-events. So what would the falsity of (12p) show about the truth value of the original Content Component? That would depend on whether the noun 'desire' is ambiguous between $\textit{desire}_p$ and $\textit{desire}_e$. If it is, and (12p) is false, then the Content Component is false under the disambiguation on which 'desire' means $\textit{desire}_p$. The other (alleged) disambiguation of the original Content Component is false iff (12e) is false. So, to be safe, the critic should show that this second (alleged) disambiguation is also false.

But, plausibly, the noun 'desire' is *un*ambiguous in ordinary English. Plausibly, the noun 'desire' in ordinary English is a general, non-specific term whose extension includes two metaphysically different types of items (desired propositions and desiring-events) that ordinary speakers do not ordinarily need to distinguish. But what does the (alleged) falsity of (12p) show

about the truth value of the original Content Component if the noun 'desire' is *un*ambiguous? Answer: by itself, nothing, for if (12e) is true, then the Content Component is true. Suppose (12e) is true, and suppose *X* desires *P*. Then *X* has a desire_e (a desiring-event) whose content is *P*. But if 'desire' is unambiguous, and *X* has a desire_e whose content is *P*, then *X* has a desire (no subscript!) whose content is *P*. So, the original Content Component is true.

So, whether or not 'desire' is ambiguous, a critic of the Content Component should argue that (12e) is false. (And in any case, (12e) is the metaphysically more interesting claim, and so deserving of the critic's attention.) So let us turn to considering how a critic of the Content Component might criticize (12e) and my argument for it. (From here on I shall assume, for the sake of simplicity, that the noun 'desire' is unambiguous. Thus I shall speak of the Content Component *simpliciter*, without distinguishing between its alleged disambiguations.)

A critic who denies (12e) could claim that I made some incorrect assumptions about the *individuation* of desiring-events when I argued for (12e).[10] To see why he might say this, consider the following example. Suppose Martha has a desire to eat and a desire to sleep. Does she have two distinct desires? Well, the proposition that she eats is distinct from the proposition that she sleeps, so she has two distinct desires *of one sort*, namely two distinct *desired propositions*. But does it follow that she has two distinct desires of the other sort, namely *desiring-events*? No, for these events may be one and the same. That is, there may be a single event which is both a desiring by Martha that she eat and a desiring by Martha that she sleep (and no other events which are a desiring by Martha that she eat or a desiring by Martha that she sleep). Now suppose that there is such an event which is *both* a desiring by Martha that she eat and a desiring by Martha that she sleep. Then what is its content? (That is, what is its one and

[10] The critic might say that my mistake(s) occurred either in section 8.1, where I made claims about what desiring-events *consist in*, or in section 8.2, where I made claims about the contents of desiring-events.

only, exact, full, complete content?) The seemingly natural answer is that such an event's content somehow "includes" both the proposition that Martha eat and the proposition that Martha sleep. So the content of such an event is something like a set that has both of those propositions as members (and perhaps others as well), or a conjunction of those propositions (and perhaps others), or some other proposition that entails both of those propositions. Now consider (12e) again, the claim that if *X* wants *P*, then *X* is the agent of a desiring-event whose (one and only, complete) content is *P*. The critic can argue that this claim is incorrect: *X* may desire *P*, though there is no desiring-event whose (one and only) content is *P*. Instead, the relevant desiring-event may have a richer content, as in Martha's case above.

To make the issues and options more vivid, we can consider an extreme view of desiring-events that says that there is *one and only one* desiring-event occurring in Martha at any one time. This single desiring-event is simultaneously an event of Martha's desiring that she sleep, and an event of her desiring that she eat, and an event of her desiring that she go to law school, and so on, for every proposition to which Martha stands in the desiring relation. It is a single mighty, all-inclusive, desiring-event. Its content is the set of all propositions to which Martha stands in the desiring relation, or some sort of conjunction of those propositions, or some sort of proposition that entails all of them. [11] If this extreme view is correct, then, once again, from the fact that there is an event that is a desiring by Martha that she eats, we cannot infer that its (complete) content is that Martha eats. Hence, the critic may say, (12e) is false.

The critic can point out that the preceding metaphysical claims about desiring-events are entirely consistent with the semantic claims of the Relational Analysis. The Relational Analysis entails that 'Martha wants to sleep' is true iff Martha stands in the desiring relation to the

[11] Lewis (1994, section II) and Braddon-Mitchell and Jackson (2007, 185-193) endorse a view about belief that resembles the above extreme view of desire.

proposition that she sleep. But the truth of that ascription and its analysis do not entail that Martha is the agent of a desiring-event whose full content is the proposition that she sleep. Instead, Martha could be the agent of a desiring-event whose full content "includes" that proposition and many others as well; her being the agent of such a richly "contentful" desiring-event may be why she stands in the desiring relation to the proposition that she sleeps. The critic can also point out that if the preceding metaphysics is correct, then a precisified version of Fara's claim that true desire ascriptions can underspecify desires is also correct: 'Fiona wants to catch a fish' could be true though Fiona is not the agent of a desiring-event whose full, complete content is that Fiona catches a fish. [12]

7.4 A Response to the Critic

The critic's theory of desiring-events entails that the Content Component, or at least (12e), is false. But I respond that the critic's theory of desiring-events is incorrect, and therefore his objection to (12e) is unsound. I shall argue for this by first considering an example involving events other than desires.

Suppose that a metal ball simultaneously spins and grows warm. Plausibly, there are at least three events occurring: an event of the ball's spinning, an event of the ball's growing warm, and an event of the ball's doing both. [13] These events are intimately related, for the occurrence of the last "rich" event necessitates the occurrences of the former two "poorer" events. But neither of the poorer events necessitates the richer one. So, each of the poor events is distinct from the

[12] If this extreme view is correct, then no ordinary, reasonably short, desire ascription fully describes the complete content of any human agent's (single, mighty, all-inclusive) desiring-event.

[13] Plausibly, there are many more events occurring, such as an event of the ball's spinning at exactly rate R, and an event of its spinning at a rate in the range of $R \pm \delta$, and so on. The example is modeled after one given by Davidson (1969). My arguments concerning it are inspired by Lewis's (1986) theory of events, as are my arguments below concerning desiring-events.

rich event. Also, each of the poor events is distinct from the other, because each could occur without the other. Moreover, the events differ in their causes and effects. The event of the ball's (merely) growing warm is caused by a candle's burning near the ball. The event of the ball's (merely) spinning is not caused by this, but rather by a glancing impact from another metal ball. The spinning causes certain neural events in an observing human's visual cortex, whereas the warming does not. So, the three events are distinct.

Analogous considerations suggest that if Martha has a desire to eat, then there is an event of Martha's desiring to eat that is distinct from all events of Martha's desiring to sleep, and also distinct from any event that "combines" these events. Suppose that there is a rich "combo" event that is both a desiring by Martha that she eat and a desiring by Martha that she sleep. Then (I claim) there is also another, poorer event of Martha's desiring (merely) that she eat. The richer event and the poorer event are intimately related, for the occurrence of the rich event necessitates the occurrence of the poor one. But they are distinct, for the poor one could occur without the rich one (if, for instance, Martha had had plenty of sleep and felt wide awake, but had been deprived of food for twenty-four hours), and so the poor one does not necessitate the rich one. Also, the events (plausibly) differ in their causes and effects. Among the rich event's causes is an event of Martha's being awake for forty-eight hours. But this is not a cause of the poor event of Martha's desiring (merely) that she eat. The rich event causes Martha to crawl into bed; the poor event does not. In addition to these two events, there is also a poor event of Martha's desiring (merely) that she sleep, which is distinct from the rich event and also distinct from the previous poor event. The two poor events are also distinct from the (hypothetical) mighty, all-inclusive desire, for parallel reasons having to do with causation and modality.

I am gesturing towards an *abundant* theory of desiring-events, that is, a theory on which

many distinct desiring-events occur in a single agent at a single time, many of them differing most conspicuously in their contents or in their modal and causal properties. I have been giving reasons for thinking that an abundant theory of desiring-events is correct. If such a theory is true, and Martha has a desire to eat, then there is an event of her (merely) desiring to eat, whose (one and only, complete, exact) content is that Martha eat. Similarly, if Martha has a desire to sleep, then there is an event of her (merely) desiring to sleep, whose (one and only, complete) content is that she sleep. Generalizing, we can plausibly conclude that if *X* desires *P*, then there is a desiring-event whose agent is *X* and whose (full) content is *P*. So, (12e) is true.

I do not claim that abundant theories of desiring-events are undeniable. I do claim that they are plausible. They are also consistent with the Content Component. Since the Content Component is itself plausible, I conclude that we should accept both an abundant theory of desiring-events and the Content Component.

I earlier pointed out that we also have good reason to accept the Relational Analysis and the Weak Specification Component. Therefore, we have good reason to accept the entire Weak Content-Specification Theory. So, we have good reason to think that the Fara-inspired objection to that theory is unsound. But which of the objection's premises is false?

8. Critique of the Modified Underspecification Objection

I deny either line (11b) or line (11f) of the Modified Underspecification Objection, depending on details about Fiona's desires. If Fiona wants to catch a fish, then I deny (11f). But if she does not (despite saying that she does), then I deny (11b). (Fara may, in fact, assume and stipulate that Fiona does want to catch a fish. I think she can coherently do so. Nevertheless, it will be worthwhile discussing how Fiona could speak truly, even if she does not want to catch a fish,

because doing so will prepare the way for some of my subsequent discussion.) I start with (11b) below.

8.1 Saying, Speaking Truly, and Desire Ascriptions

Line (11b) says that if Fiona says that she wants to catch a fish, and she speaks truly when she does so, then she wants to catch a fish. So to deny (11b), one must claim that Fiona says that she wants to catch a fish, and speaks truly when she does so, but she does *not* want to catch a fish. Some may initially find this claim hard to accept. After all, if Fiona says that she wants to catch a fish, though she does not want to catch a fish, then she says something false. But how could Fiona speak truly when she says something that is false? Here is a plausible answer, in my opinion: *meaning* or *asserting* something true is (at least sometimes) sufficient for speaking truly. But what one *says* is not always the same as what one means or asserts. So, if Fiona *means* or *asserts* something that is true, then she may speak truly, even if what she says is false.

There are plausible examples of speakers who mean something true that is different from something false that they say, and who thereby speak truly. Suppose, for example, that Bill utters (13).

13. I ate a billion French fries last night.

(13) semantically expresses, in Bill's context, roughly the proposition that Bill ate a billion French fries on *E*, where *E* is the night before Bill utters (13). When Bill utters (13), one of the things he says is the semantic content of that sentence in his context. (Notice that the attribution 'Bill said that he ate a billion French fries on *E*' seems true.) This proposition is false. So, one of

the things Bill says when he utters (13) is false. But when he utters (13), he does not intend to mislead his hearers. He *means*, or *asserts*, some other propositions, such as the proposition that Bill ate *many* French fries on *E*, and he intends his hearers to realize this. [14] The propositions that he means and asserts are true. So, he primarily intends to communicate true propositions when he utters (13). That is, plausibly, enough for him to speak truly when he utters (13).

The same sort of phenomenon can occur with desire ascriptions, even in cases where there is no hyperbole. Suppose that Sarah is teaching a philosophy seminar and suppose she has noticed that many of the students in her seminar arrived late. So she utters (14).

14. I want everyone to arrive on time for the next meeting of this seminar.

One of the things that Sarah says is the semantic content of (14), in her context. This proposition includes, or is partly determined by, the semantic content of the quantifier phrase 'everyone', in her context. On the view of quantifier phrases that I favor (advocated by Bach 2000 and Soames 2005, 2009b), the semantic content of that quantifier, in any context, is restricted to people, but is otherwise completely unrestricted. So, the semantic content of (14) in Sarah's context is equivalent to the proposition that Sarah wants everyone *in the universe* to arrive on time for the next meeting of *S*, where *S* is her seminar. This is one proposition that Sarah says. It is false. But Sarah does not mean or assert this proposition, and she does not intend anyone to take her to mean or assert it. In fact, the semantic content of (14), in her context, may never cross her mind. She instead means or asserts one or more other propositions, such as the proposition that Sarah wants everyone *to whom she is speaking* to arrive on time for the next meeting of *S*, or the

[14] See Bach (1997, 2005) for a related distinction between saying and implic-*i*-ting, Soames (2005, 2009b) for a related distinction between semantic content and asserting, and Braun (2011) for a related distinction between locuting and asserting.

proposition that Sarah wants everyone *who is enrolled in S* to arrive on time for the next meeting of *S*. These propositions are true. So, plausibly, Sarah speaks truly when she utters (14).

Let's return to Fiona and suppose that she wants to catch a *meal-sized* fish. She utters sentence (15).

15. I want to catch a fish.

The semantic content of (15), in her context, is the proposition that Fiona wants to catch a fish. But Fiona may never consider this proposition seriously as she utters (15), because she is focusing on the proposition that she wants to catch a *meal-sized* fish. (Compare her with Sarah above, who never considers the semantic content of her desire ascription.) Moreover, Fiona may not want to catch a fish. (Perhaps she has not reflected enough to realize that she cannot catch a meal-sized fish unless she catches a fish. Perhaps she *would* want to catch a fish *if* she reflected enough, but she has not done so yet. [15]) Nevertheless, the proposition that she wants to catch a fish is the semantic content of (15) in her context. So she says it. However, she means or asserts, and primarily intends to communicate, one or more other true propositions, such as the proposition that she wants to catch a *meal-sized* fish. But since she means or asserts those propositions, and those propositions are true, she speaks truly when she says that she wants to catch a fish. So, Fiona says that she wants to catch a fish, and she speaks truly when she does so, but she does not want to catch a fish. So, (11b) is false.

[15] Alternatively, we can imagine that Fiona is *not* disposed to want to catch a fish, even after reflection: imagine that when we ask her 'Do you want to catch a fish?' she sincerely says 'I want to catch a *meal-sized* fish but I do not want to catch a fish'. This might show that Fiona does not want to catch a fish. It might also show that she is irrational (I am of two minds about whether it does.) But none of this would make a difference to my criticism of (11b). (Note that I am imagining that Fiona does not want to catch a fish; I am *not* imagining that Fiona wants *not* to catch a fish. The negations in the preceding ascriptions take different scopes.)

8.2 Having More than One Desire

I imagined above that Fiona does not want to catch a fish, though she says that she wants to catch a fish. But, of course, it is also possible that Fiona really does want to catch a fish, when she says that she wants to catch a fish. (One could reasonably take Fara to be *stipulating* that Fiona wants to catch a fish, and that stipulation seems coherent.) Imagine, for example, that Fiona wants to catch a meal-sized fish and then reflects carefully on her desire. She consciously thinks to herself, "I want to catch a *meal-sized* fish. But catching a fish is necessary for catching a meal-sized fish. So, I had better catch a fish if I want to satisfy my desire for a meal-sized fish. So, one of my goals now is to catch a fish. So, I want to catch a fish. Of course, if I catch only a tiny minnow, then my desire to catch a fish will be satisfied though my desire to catch a meal-sized will be unsatisfied. I myself will be unsatisfied. But such is life." If Fiona reasons in this way, then she wants both to catch a meal-sized fish and to catch a fish. Moreover, her reasoning in this way is consistent with her being a paragon of rationality.

If Fiona does want to catch a fish, then I deny (11f). That is, I say that Fiona does have a desire that is satisfied in exactly those possible worlds in which she catches a fish. The relevant desire is (of course) her desire to catch a fish. She has that desire because she stands in the desiring relation to the proposition that she catch a fish.

It may be hard to recognize that Fiona has a desire that is satisfied in a minnow-only world, because it may be easy to overlook the difference between *agent* satisfaction and *desire* satisfaction. An agent may be unsatisfied when some of her desires are satisfied, if some of her other desires remain unsatisfied. Now in some worlds in which Fiona catches a fish, she catches only a tiny minnow. In those worlds, her desire to catch a *meal-sized* fish is unsatisfied. And *she*

would be unsatisfied if her desire to catch a meal-sized fish were unsatisfied. Nevertheless, her desire to catch a fish *is* satisfied in worlds where she catches only a tiny minnow.

My claims about desire satisfaction are supported by my claims in section 7 about the nature of desires. If Fiona wants to catch a fish, then it follows that she has two desires, a desired proposition and a desiring-event. The relevant desired proposition is the proposition that she catch a fish; the relevant desiring-event is one in which she is the agent and the desired proposition is that she catch a fish. The content of both desires is the proposition that Fiona catches a fish. That proposition is true at all and only those worlds in which she catches a fish. So, those desires are satisfied at exactly those worlds in which it is true that she catches a fish.

I have argued that (11f) is false, if Fiona wants to catch a fish. But Fara argues in favor of (11f) in the passage that I quoted in section 4 above (from Fara 2013, p. 254). That passage contains an argument for line (8f) of argument (8). But line (8f) is identical with line (11f). So, I am committed to denying some premise in Fara's argument for (8f). Let us look at that argument more closely.

In the passage I quoted, Fara says, "That proposition [that Fiona catches a fish—DB] becomes true if she catches a tiny minnow. But her desire does not thereby become satisfied." Which desire is Fara referring to when she writes 'her desire'?[16] Fara mentions both Fiona's desire to catch a fish and the desire that Fiona expresses when she says that she wants to catch a fish. These may or may not be the same. Let's assume, for the sake of argument, that when Fara writes 'her desire' she is referring to the desire that Fiona expresses when she says that she wants to catch a fish. (This assumption will do no harm to Fara's argument, for I will consider below the possibility that the proposition that Fiona expresses is the proposition that she catches a fish.)

[16] I am focusing here on what Fara *uses* the phrase 'her desire' to (speaker-) refer to. If Fiona has more than one desire, then the phrase 'her desire' (in a context in which 'her' refers to Fiona) is semantically like an improper definite description. But Fara may nevertheless use the phrase to speaker-refer to a particular desire of Fiona's.

Given that assumption, we can reconstruct Fara's argument for (8f) and (11f) as follows.

16. a. The desire that Fiona expresses when she says that she wants to catch a fish is not satisfied if she catches only a tiny minnow.

    b. If (16a), then the desire that Fiona expresses when she says that she wants to catch a fish is not satisfied in exactly those worlds in which she catches a fish.

    c. Therefore, the desire that Fiona expresses when she says that she wants to catch a fish is not satisfied in exactly those worlds in which she catches a fish.

    d. If (16c), then Fiona does not have a desire that is satisfied in exactly those worlds in which she catches a fish.

    e. Therefore, Fiona does not have a desire that is satisfied in exactly those worlds in which she catches a fish. [= (8f) = (11f)]

Line (16b) is undeniable. What about (16a)? Remember, we are assuming that Fiona wants to catch a fish *and* wants to catch a meal-sized fish. (Fara seems to assume this, too.) So, assuming the view of desires for which I argued in section 7, Fiona has at least two desires, a desire to catch a fish and a desire to catch a meal-sized fish. Since she has both desires, she may express the first, or the second, or both, when she says that she wants to catch a fish. Which desire or desires she expresses depends on which propositions she *asserts*, or *means*, when she says that she wants to catch a fish. If, for instance, she asserts *both* that she wants to catch a fish *and* that she wants to catch a meal-sized fish, when she utters 'I want to catch a fish', then she expresses

both desires. Suppose she does express both desires. Then (16a) is false, for there is no such thing as *the* desire that she expresses when she says that she wants to catch a fish. Suppose instead that she expresses only her desire to catch a fish. Then once again (16a) is false, for that desire is satisfied if she catches a tiny minnow (though Fiona herself may be unsatisfied in such a situation). Suppose finally that she expresses only her desire to catch a meal-sized fish. Then (16a) is true, but (16d) is false. That is, the desire that she expresses when she says that she wants to catch a fish is not satisfied in exactly those worlds in which she catches a fish; nevertheless she *does* have a desire that is satisfied in exactly those worlds, for she has an *unexpressed* desire to catch a fish, and that desire is satisfied in exactly those worlds in which she catches a fish. So, (16d) is false. So, either (16a) or (16d) is false, and argument (16) is unsound.

Fara's argument for (16e) may be initially persuasive; but if it is, then it is persuasive because it (unintentionally) misdirects our attention. Fara's use of the singular possessive phrase 'her desire' encourages us to attend to just one of Fiona's many desires. We are naturally led to focus on Fiona's desire to catch a *meal-sized* fish, because satisfying this desire is necessary for satisfying Fiona. (Moreover, Fiona may express this desire when she utters 'I want to catch a fish'.) Once we focus on that desire, we tend to dwell on (a) the fact that it is unsatisfied in a minnow-only world and (b) the fact that Fiona would be unsatisfied if she caught only a minnow. We may forget to distinguish between desire satisfaction and agent satisfaction, and so conclude that Fiona has *no* desire that is satisfied in minnow-only worlds. But she does: she has a desire to catch a fish.

Summarizing: Fara's argument for (16e) (which is identical with (11f)) is unsound. Moreover, either (11b) or (11f) is false, depending on whether Fiona wants to catch a fish. So, the Modified Underspecification Objection is unsound.

We can draw a further conclusion. (11b) and (11f) are identical to lines (8b) and (8f), respectively, of the original Underspecification Objection. But either (11b) or (11f) is false. So, the original Underspecification Objection is also unsound.

9. Conclusion

I began this paper with a compelling view, the plausible view of desire. The Content-Specification Theory, and the Weak Content-Specification Theory, entail the claims of the plausible view. They are, in that sense, more specific versions of the plausible view. Fara presents a seemingly strong objection to the Content-Specification Theory, and her objection can be easily revised to obtain an equally compelling objection to the Weak theory. This throws some doubt onto the plausible view. But I argued that anyone who rejects the Weak Content-Specification Theory would have to reject its Content Component. I then argued for a theory of desires that entails the Content Component, and I criticized alternative theories of desires that are inconsistent with the Content Component (such as the theory that each agent has a single, mighty, all-inclusive desire). I concluded that we should accept the Content Component and the Weak Content-Specification Theory. I thus inferred that Fara's objection to the original Content-Specification Theory, and the parallel objection to the Weak Content-Specification Theory, are unsound. I focused on two premises in the latter objection, and argued that one or the other is false, depending on details about Fiona's desires. Since those two premises also appear in Fara's original objection, I concluded that both objections are unsound. All of this should be good news to those who find the plausible theory plausible. [17]

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