**Chapter 8**

**Conclusion and Avenues for further Development**

The book has outlined a novel semantics of attitude reports and modal sentences based on a rather rich ontology of attitudinal and modal objects. While many philosophers and perhaps semanticists may feel hesitant to accept such a wealth of less familiar objects, from the present approach the acknowledgment of such an ontology for the semantics of natural language goes along with the methodology of descriptive metaphysics on which this book is based. This means giving intuitions and in particular intuitions reflected in language priority, rather than philosophical preconceptions on what there is and considerations of ontological sparseness.. It is notable that the rejection of propositions is shared with the approach of ‘metaphysics first’ of Devitt (1996, 2013), who also argues that mental entities like thoughts (though in a naturalized sense) should play the central role in the semantics of attitude reports. The present approach, one may say, rejects propositions not because it gives priority to language as such but because it is an approach of ‘descriptive metaphysics first’.

The approach had a range of empirical motivations and applications. On the conceptual side it avoids problems with attitude verbs taking propositions as arguments and modals acting as quantifiers ranging over worlds. It shows convergence with recent views of cognitive content bearers and with recent localized approaches to modality. It also matches recent research on which clausal complements do not act as referential terms, but rather as predicates of complement bearers. It had explored more speculative syntactic analysis, though, making use of a decomposition of attitude verbs in syntax (light verb – attitudinal noun).

There are a range of tasks for further developments of the approach. The syntax proposed was that of ‘simplified syntax’, thus the syntactic proposals ultimately need to be elaborated within a properly developed syntactic theory.

The semantics analysis of modals was focused on deontic modals and the application to other modals is yet to be fully developed. Also the syntax-semantics interface for modals requires much further development. For example, the decompositional analysis is plausible only for a small number of modals and it is not clear how modal auxiliaries would fit in.

Truthmaker semantics was used only at the sentential sentential level. However, sentence-based truthmaker semantics itself still awaits the development of a compositional semantics at the subsentential level.

Attitudinal objects semantics was applied mainly having finite clauses in mind (*that*-clauses). But it is a semantics that is meant to be applicable to other clause types as well. It is obvious how it may apply to certain uses of interrogatives and the corresponding attitudinal objects. Questions are attitudinal objects display the same characteristic properties, though involving answerhood conditions as their satisfaction conditions. This means that questions have as their satisfiers constative attitudinal objects. Embedded interrogatives may also serve to describe mental attitudinal objects of inquiry, which have as their satisfiers attitudinal objects of knowledge. As is well-known, though interrogatives are not restricted to describing particular illocutionary or mental objects, but have a more general meaning, which permits them to be used in a variety of other contexts and which will have to be covered as well (*Who comes depends on who is invited, John announced who is invited*).

Infinitival clauses present a general linguistic challenge since the semantic differences in English are not generally obvious. In certain cases, in particular with *wh*-clauses, the choice of a finite vs an infinitival clause indicates a difference in the satisfiers of the respective attitudinal objects: the finite clausal complements applies to an attitudinal object whose satisfiers are situations, the infinitival complements to one whose satisfiers are actions. Infinitival wh-clauses may be used sued as predicates of practical knowledge, attitudinal objects whose satisfiers are actions:

(1) John knows how to open the bottle

Lohninger / Wurmbrand (2019) argue that only in some languages is there a semantic match between the choice of finite clauses and infinitival clauses as complements. Their account for such languages, infinitival clauses denote situation and finite clauses denote propositions, may be recast in terms of a unified ontology of modal and attitudinal objects, making use the notion of direction of fit (infinitival clauses would apply to objects with a world-to-word/mind direction of fit, finite clauses to objects with a word/mind-to-world direction of fit).