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ORIGINAL RESEARCH

Quotative *be like*

Andreas Stokke[1] · **Derek Ball**[2]

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Abstract
This paper examines a form of talking about speech acts, mental states, and other features so far unexplored in philosophy: quotative *be like.* Quotative *be like* is the use of *like* and *to be* that occurs in constructions such as "Ellen was like"I'm leaving!"" We argue that neglect of quotative *be like* represents a gap in our understanding of our ways of characterizing the minds and speech of ourselves and others. Further, we show that quotative *be like* is not reducible to more familiar forms of direct discourse or indirect discourse. Mapping out a number of different options for theorizing about quotative *be like*, we argue for an account on which the quoted material in quotative *be like* picks out properties.

Keywords Quotative *be like* · Quotation · Attitude reports · Direct discourse · Indirect discourse

There is a variety of familiar ways of talking about mental states and speech acts:

(1) **Direct Discourse** (DD)

a. Ellen said, "I'm leaving now!"
b. "Is she leaving now?" I wondered.
c. Akira thought, "Everyone should go home."

✉ Derek Ball
Db71@st-andrews.ac.uk

Andreas Stokke
Andreas.stokke@gmail.com

[1] Department of Philosophy, Uppsala University, Postal Box 627, 751 26 Uppsala, Sweden

[2] Department of Philosophy, University of St Andrews, Edgecliffe, The Scores, St Andrews KY16 9AL, UK

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(2) **Indirect Discourse** (ID)

a. Ellen said that she was leaving.
b. I wondered whether she was leaving.
c. Akira thought that everyone should go home.

DD and ID continue to raise difficult philosophical and linguistic issues. But if they are still not fully understood, it is not for lack of trying. By contrast, although it has been discussed in the linguistics literature, one common way we talk about mental states and speech acts has entirely escaped philosophical attention: quotative *be like*.

(3) **Quotative Be Like** (QBL)

a. Ellen was like "I'm leaving now!"
b. I was like "Are you leaving now?"
c. Akira was like "Everyone should go home."

We maintain that neglect of QBL has resulted in a significant gap in our understanding of our ways of characterizing our own minds and speech because, as we will argue here, QBL is importantly different from familiar forms of ID and DD.

More generally, QBL is important for at least three reasons. First, QBL is very common. Several corpus studies have shown that QBL is the most common quotative construction in many dialects of English—more common than *says* or *thinks* (Barbieri, 2009; Tagliamonte & D'Arcy, 2005). Other studies show its frequency growing rapidly (Cukor-Avila, 2002; D'Arcy, 2012).

Second, QBL is new. The first mention of QBL in the linguistics literature occurred in 1982 (Butters, 1982). Corpus studies find no evidence of QBL before the 1980s (D'Arcy, 2012), and at least up until quite recently QBL was still used more frequently by younger speakers (Dailey-O'Cain, 2000). In particular, while we should of course acknowledge that what one might call imitative ways of reporting speech and thought have been around in English and many other languages for a long time, the particular phenomenon of QBL itself is a novel addition.

Third, QBL is a robustly cross-linguistic phenomenon found in English, Hebrew, Japanese, Swedish, and many other languages.[1] Correspondingly, QBL is grammaticalized (Vandelanotte, 2012, and see Sect. 1 below).

This paper has two main aims. The first is to demonstrate that QBL functions differently to both DD and ID, and thereby provides novel expressive resources.

The second aim is to map out some of the space of options for theorizing about QBL. We do this by setting out a minimal semantics for QBL, according to which QBL ascribes a relation between the subject and the denotation of the quoted material. We then proceed by examining two questions concerning the nature of this relation and the nature of the relatum contributed by the quotation, respectively.

[1] See Buchstaller and Van Alphen (2012) for further examples and discussion. There are a variety of related constructions in English, such as *be all* and *be all like*. There are subtle and interesting differences among these and QBL, but we will not discuss these details here. As far as we know, all of the core observations about English QBL that we discuss in this paper hold cross-linguistically.

We develop a way of answering these questions on which QBL attributes properties that are picked out—or as we will say, "indicated"—by the quotation. But our primary goal is not to argue definitively for any view. Instead, we hope to point out a range of dimensions along which QBL is distinctive and deserving of philosophical attention.

Section 1 surveys some relevant facts about the grammar and use of QBL. In Sect. 2 we argue that QBL is significantly distinct from DD. Section 3 considers approaches to QBL in terms of dispositions and counterfactuals. We suggest that these approaches are inadequate. In Sect. 4 we turn to an alternative account according to which QBL is a tool for folk psychology. We spell out a version of this view on which QBL involves a non-assertoric speech act that issues an invitation to simulate the mental state of others. We argue that this view fails to account for significant uses of QBL. In Sect. 5 we sketch the minimal semantics and discuss the view of QBL as attributing properties.

1 Some features of QBL

The word *like* has many uses in English: for example, as a preposition ("It smells like a pineapple"). One common use of *like* is as a *discourse particle*:

(4) a. I was like so tired.

b. He was wearing this like very pink shirt.
c. Could you like cut me a piece of bread?
d. I think she, like, doesn't care.

On this use, *like* arguably does not contribute to the proposition—the truth-conditional content—expressed by the sentence, but instead conveys something about the relation between various elements of the sentence and the communicative exchange in which it occurs. It is difficult to state precisely what is communicated by *like* in examples such as those in (4), but in typical cases this use of *like* is associated with focus (Underhill, 1988)—to a first approximation, indicating information that is new in the discourse.[2]

The use of *like* in QBL is distinct from *like* as a discourse particle.[3] Discourse-particle *like* can be omitted from sentences containing it without loss of grammaticality. Moreover, because discourse-particle *like* does not contribute to the proposition expressed, the resulting sentences communicate essentially the same information:

(4′) a. I was so tired.

[2] For this reason, the use of *like* as a discourse particle is sometimes called *focuser like*. See Dailey-O'Cain (2000).

[3] Many languages do not use the same word for QBL and the discourse particle corresponding to the English *like*. For instance, Swedish uses *bara* ("just") for QBL but uses *typ* ("type") as a discourse particle corresponding to English *like*. In English discourse particle *like* can be used with DD, as in "What Trump basically said was, like, 'Give us your nuclear weapons.'" We take it to be clear that this is not an instance of QBL.

b. He was wearing this very pink shirt.
c. Could you cut me a piece of bread?
d. I think she doesn't care.

By contrast, in instances of QBL *like* cannot be omitted:[4]

(3′) a. *Ellen was "I'm leaving now!"

b. *I was "Are you leaving?"
c. *Akira was "Everyone should go home."

QBL may be associated with discourse-particle *like* because of its informality. Although both discourse-particle *like* and QBL are now used by people of all ages across the social spectrum, both are typically low-register, and neither would be felt appropriate in, for example, an academic paper or a judicial verdict. We will have little to say about this feature of QBL in what follows. In our view, the pervasiveness of QBL is strong evidence of its usefulness as an expressive device and therefore deserves to be studied seriously from within both linguistics and philosophy.

As its name suggests, a central feature of QBL is its quotative behavior. Typical instances of QBL introduce a quotation. *Be like* cannot be combined with a *that*-clause or an embedded question:

(3")a. *Ellen was like that she was leaving.

b. *I was like whether she was leaving.
c. *Akira was like that everyone should go home.

Moreover, *be like* is commonly combined with quotations of exclamations and other non-clausal constructions, as in (5).

(5) Ellen was like "Wow!"

Exclamations of this kind do not denote propositions. Indeed, it is controversial whether they have denotations at all, even if they may lexically encode operations on contextual information, or other features.[5]

To this extent, QBL resembles DD. Yet many verbs used in DD, such as *say, think*, and *wonder* can also be used in ID. As such, they can take a quotation, a *that*-clause, or an embedded question as a complement. *Be like* is significantly different, since it cannot take a *that*-clause or an embedded question.

There are other verbs of DD that cannot be used in ID, such as *utter*. But one can use these verbs by quantifying over what was uttered or referring to it with a definite description or a pronoun, rather than mentioning it with quotation:

(6) a. *Demonstrating a sentence written on a blackboard:* Ellen uttered that (sentence).

[4] See Romaine and Lange (1991) for development and for further arguments distinguishing QBL from discourse-particle *like*.

[5] See Zanuttini and Portner (2003) for relevant discussion of exclamatory clauses.

b. Ellen uttered every swear word that came into her head.
c. Every time someone utters the word of the day, Pee Wee screams.
d. Ansel uttered "Abracadabra," and I uttered that word, too.

QBL differs by, to a first approximation which we will refine in the next section, *requiring* a quotation:

(6′) a. *Demonstrating a sentence written on a blackboard:* *Ellen was like that (sentence).

b. *Ellen was like every swear word that came into her head.
c. *Every time someone is like the word of the day, Pee Wee screams.
d. *Ansel was like "Abracadabra," and I was like that word too.

To be sure, it might be suggested that *like* in (6′) can be understood as attributing similarity. So, for example, (6′a) can be read as stating that Ellen was similar to the sentence on the board. However, even if such readings are intelligible, it is clear that they are not QBL readings. (It may be possible to get QBL readings of these sentences in certain contexts. See Sect. 5 for discussion.)

2 Is QBL reducible to direct discourse?

The differences noted above notwithstanding, the observation that QBL resembles DD is suggestive. Most conspicuously, both QBL and DD centrally involve quotation, and as such both phenomena convey something by *mentioning* certain linguistic material. This will be a central part of the account of QBL we will discuss in Sect. 5. Here we want to consider the proposal that QBL just is a form of DD. By this we mean the proposal that QBL is just another way of using quotation to report speech or thought in the same way that familiar DD verbs like *says, thinks,* or *wonders* do. As we will show, although QBL uses quotation, it is not reducible to this kind of standard DD.

Consider again the examples in (3).

(3) **Quotative Be Like** (QBL)

a. Ellen was like "I'm leaving now!"
b. I was like "Are you leaving now?"
c. Akira was like "Everyone should go home."

It is natural to think that, in each case, the QBL report is true if and only if the corresponding utterance took place. For instance, (3a) is true if Ellen said, "I'm leaving now!" Given this, a simple view would have it that:

QBL as Says

X was like "S" is true iff X said "S."

It is obvious that the right-to-left direction of QBL as Says is often (perhaps always) true. However, the left-to-right direction is often false.

For example, suppose that Ellen is watching a movie alone and feels annoyed at the soundtrack. Even if she remained silent during the movie, she could truly report her state of mind the next day using (7).

(7) I was watching this movie last night, and I was like "God! This soundtrack is so annoying!"

In other words, QBL as Says is too simple, because QBL ascriptions can be true even when *X* has not said anything.

Still, a plausible suggestion is that in the case of (7), Ellen must have at least thought, "God! This soundtrack is so annoying," even though she did not say it out loud. So another proposal is to generalize QBL as Says to make QBL equivalent to a DD speech or thought report:

QBL as DD

X was like "S" is true iff X said or thought "S."

Yet there are cases similar to that of (7) that speak against this proposal, as in (8).

(8) Ellen was like [in a demanding voice:] "Blah blah blah! Do what I say!"

(8) can be used to report that Ellen was acting in a bossy and demanding way. Yet in that kind of case, it is clear that (8) can be true even if Ellen has not said *or thought* "Blah blah blah!".

Moreover, QBL as DD is subject to another decisive objection. QBL can be used with gestures:

(9) a. When I heard what Trump said, I was like <slaps forehead>
b. When you see him after his recital, just be like <makes thumbs up>.
c. Do you think she'll be like <makes annoyed face>?

The first thing to note is that for QBL as DD to apply to such cases, we would have to allow that gestures can be quoted. This we think is in fact plausible, as we will argue in 5.1. But since one cannot say or think <slaps forehead> or any other gesture, even if quoted, QBL as DD cannot be correct.

One might try to rescue QBL as DD by claiming that the gestures in (9) can be paraphrased away. For example, perhaps (9a) is equivalent to:

(9′) a. When I heard what Trump said, I thought, "That's stupid."

But it is far from clear that such paraphrases will in general be available. It is natural to think that, at least in some contexts, what is communicated by a gesture cannot adequately be paraphrased along the lines of (9′a). The following thesis is plausible:

Non-Paraphrasability Thesis

For some gesture <g>, for some context c, <g> cannot be paraphrased in c by an expression of the form "S."

One motivation for the Non-Paraphrasability Thesis is that it explains why (10a) and (10b) are not interchangeable.

(10) a. "That's stupid," I said/thought.
b. *<slaps forehead> I said/thought.

If the Non-Paraphrasability Thesis were false, one would expect that (10b) could be read as (10a). Yet, if the Non-Paraphrasability Thesis is true, then there are at least contexts in which a QBL report like (9a) is not reducible to a DD report like (9′a).

Even if the Non-Paraphrasibility Thesis is false, there are serious objections to QBL as DD. For example, imagine that, in response to a question of whether she liked a movie, Ellen makes a puking face. In fact, she did like the movie, but she wants others to think she did not. Suppose that <puking face> can be paraphrased as "I hate the movie," in this context. Then we take (11a) and (11b) to be true.

(11) a. Ellen was like <makes puking face>.
b. Ellen was like "I hate the movie".

QBL as DD does not capture this case, since according to QBL as DD, (11b) is true if and only if Ellen said or thought, "I hate the movie". But Ellen neither said nor thought, "I hate the movie"; the puking face was only for show.[6]

What we have noted is that, as opposed to DD, QBL can be felicitous even if the relevant subject has not said or thought anything closely related to the quoted material. Yet, to be sure, this is not to claim that the ingredient quotation is not a central feature of QBL, just as it is of DD. But given the differences between QBL and DD that we have pointed out in this section, it is at least an open question whether quotation functions the same way in QBL as it does in DD.

Moreover, examples like (6) and (6′) strongly suggest that quotation functions differently in these constructions. For example, one can quantify in to DD constructions but not into QBL. Consider a related example in detail. Suppose that the words "dog," "cat," and "mouse" are written on a board, and Tim utters each of these words. Then (12a) is a DD report of Tim's utterance, and one can quantify in to this report as in (12b) and (12c).

(12) a. He said, "dog," "cat," and "mouse."
b. He said every word on the board.
c. Some words are such that he said them.

[6] Thanks to an anonymous referee for this example.

By contrast, although (12′a) is a true QBL report of Tim's utterance, one cannot quantify in to QBL as in (12′b) and (12′c).

(12′) a. He was like, "dog," "cat," and "mouse"
b. *He was like every word on the board.
c. *Some words are such that he was like them.

The view we discuss in Sect. 5 explains this difference, because on this view quotations function differently in QBL than they do in DD. In particular, quotations in QBL indicate a property; since quantifier expressions such as "every word on the board" do not, attempts to quantify in to QBL like (12′b) and (12′c) fail.

3 QBL as counterfactual or dispositional

We used examples (7) and (8) to show that QBL need not report something someone said. QBL can be used to report on situations in which nothing was said. But even though, for example, Ellen did not speak in the situations described for (7), she might easily have said the sentence quoted in the QBL report, "God! This soundtrack is so annoying!" It would have been natural for her to utter that sentence, given her state of mind.

Along these lines, a suggestion that deserves examination is that QBL may be a way of characterizing mental states in terms of the utterances or gestures they tend to cause. A rough sketch of a view like this might be as follows:

X was like "S"/<g> is true iff *X* was in a state that is likely to cause an utterance of "S"/the making of <g>.

The view might be developed in several different ways. For example, it might be maintained that QBL attributes *dispositions*:

QBL as Dispositional

X was like "S"/<g> is true iff X was disposed to say or think "S"/make <g>.

Alternatively, it might be held that the states attributed by QBL are analyzable in counterfactual terms:

QBL as Counterfactual

X was like "S"/<g> is true iff, in suitably related circumstances, X would have said or thought "S"/made <g>.

Proposals of this style still reduce QBL to DD (plus relatively uncontroversial further ingredients—dispositions or counterfactuals). But they do so in a way that makes sense of examples like (7), as well as uses of QBL with gestures, like those in (9).

QBL as Dispositional and QBL as Counterfactual also survive a *prima facie* plausible objection. Namely, QBL can be used to report states of agents that cannot speak or make relevant gestures:

(13) a. And then my cat was like "I'm outta here."
b. When Trump said that, China was like <slaps forehead>.

This may look problematic for QBL as Dispositional and QBL as Counterfactual, since cats are never disposed to say "I'm outta here," nor are there any relevant circumstances under which they would say this. Nor are countries disposed to make gestures and there are no relevant circumstances in which they would.

But this objection is not decisive, since it is natural to respond that examples of this kind are best understood as involving pretense. So if one is sympathetic to dispositional or counterfactual views of QBL, one might argue that (13a) invites us to pretend that cats can talk, and suggests that the best way of filling out the pretense is one in which the cat is disposed to say "I'm outta here"; and similarly for (13b).

But there are other cases that the proponent of QBL as Dispositional or QBL as Counterfactual cannot dismiss so easily. In particular, there are situations in which QBL is not permitted, even though the subject in question arguably does satisfy the dispositional or counterfactual condition. For example, suppose that on Monday Ellen ironically says, "Oh, yeah, I LOVE haggis!" We take it that Ellen's state cannot be reported on Tuesday by (14).

(14) #Yesterday Ellen was like "I don't like haggis."

It is clear that, in this case, Ellen was disposed to say "I don't like haggis." And similarly, in suitably related circumstances, Ellen would have said, "I don't like haggis." So, at least, this looks like a counterexample to both QBL as Dispositional and Counterfactual.

As we will see next, there are a number of further problems for this style of view. Considering them can help shed more light on how to understand QBL as a way of talking about thoughts or utterances. We will first consider some issues for the dispositional view, then turn to some problems for the counterfactual view.

3.1 Missing dispositions

QBL as Dispositional is closely related to familiar behaviorist views, which attempt to identify mental states with dispositions to behave. But these accounts are subject to well-known objections. For example, Putnam (1975) argued against the view that pain can be identified with dispositions to behave in certain ways by imagining "super-Spartans," who feel pains but have no such dispositions, and would not exhibit the relevant behaviors in relevantly similar circumstances. Analogously, it is plausible that we can imagine a person of whom we might truly make various QBL attributions, but who lacks the relevant dispositions.

In particular, there are counterexamples involving gestures, which cause problems for QBL as Dispositional. For example, consider a super-Spartan monk who takes a

vow of immobility (perhaps medically impossible, but surely conceivable) and persists so long that he loses the disposition to move, or suppose that you are being hunted by a T-Rex who (at least according to popular myth) can only see things that move. It might be true to say of the monk or you that you are like<waves arms about in a terrified manner>. But neither of you would be disposed to wave your arms about in a terrified manner.

The proponent of QBL as Dispositional might argue that the dispositions in question are present, but are masked by other facts. In other words, the counterexamples might be construed along the lines of the way that the disposition of a fragile glass to shatter when struck might be masked by being packed in styrofoam (cf. Bird, 1998). Yet this reply is difficult to evaluate. Must it really be the case that (no matter how thorough his training) the monk who has taken a vow of immobility retains the disposition to move?

But in any case, there is a related traditional objection to behaviorism that cannot be responded to in this way. The objection is that behavior is not typically determined by a particular mental state on its own. Instead, a person's behavior is determined by a range of mental states (Chisholm, 1957). For example, if you believe that it is raining, you may be disposed to carry an umbrella; but only if you want to stay dry and believe that an umbrella will help you stay dry. This makes it impossible to identify particular mental states with dispositions to behave, since the presence of different combinations of mental states will result in different dispositions. Plausibly, something similar is true in the case of QBL. When you are like, "I want to live!," or<waves arms about in a terrified manner>, whether you are disposed to wave your arms about or say "I want to live!" depends on a swathe of beliefs and desires.

QBL therefore cannot be identified with what we are disposed to say or do.

3.2 Non-occurrent beliefs

It might be thought these kinds of objections do not threaten QBL as Counterfactual to the same degree, but merely show a need for care about what "suitably related circumstances" are relevant. For example, perhaps the monk would wave his arms in circumstances in which he had not taken the vow of immobility but which are otherwise similar. And perhaps you would wave your arms in circumstances where you believe that T-Rexes cannot see but which are otherwise similar. If we allow circumstances like this to count as "suitably related," then QBL as Counterfactual might survive the Putnam- and Chisholm-style objections.

But relaxing the notion of "suitably related circumstances" suggests a second problem for QBL as Counterfactual. We all have many non-occurrent beliefs. For example, we all believe that two plus two equals four, and that giraffes have necks. And in many circumstances, we would express those beliefs. For instance, if asked, we would say, "Two plus two equals four," or "Giraffes have necks." So QBL as Counterfactual might be expected to predict that it is always true that one would say such a thing if the notion of suitably related circumstances is relaxed in the proposed way. But if so, then the corresponding QBL reports should also always be true and felicitous. However, the QBL reports in (15) are unacceptable in most cases:

(15) a. I was like "Two plus two equals four."
b. She was like "Giraffes have necks."

A proponent of QBL as Counterfactual might attempt to explain the infelicity of (15a–b) by pointing out that in many conversations, it would be uninformative to assert (for example) that one has the non-occurrent belief that two plus two equals four.[7] But uninformativeness is arguably not the problem with (15a–b). We have many non-occurrent beliefs which it would be informative to assert in most situations, but QBL reports corresponding to these beliefs are still infelicitous. For example, imagine that Susy has the non-occurrent belief that her mother's name is "Barbara." That is something that it would be informative for her to assert in many cases, since most of Susy's interlocutors do not know her mother's name. Even so, (16) is clearly infelicitous in most contexts.

(16) Susy was like "My mom's name is "Barbara.""

Since Susy would say "My mom's name is 'Barbara'" in many relevant circumstances, it is not clear how the proponent of QBL as Counterfactual can explain this infelicity.

What would be required to resist the objection is an account of "suitably related circumstances" that rules in circumstances in which you believe T-rexes cannot see and circumstances in which monks are released from their vows, but rules out circumstances in which you are asked about simple arithmetic or giraffine anatomy, or are discussing your mother's name. We do not know how to show conclusively that no account of this kind is possible. However, it is hard to see how the details could be worked out in a plausible way.

As we noted above, both the dispositional and counterfactual approaches to QBL are ways of reducing QBL to DD by appealing to some uncontroversial further resources. Even though such approaches are *prima facie* promising in handling examples like (7) in which no utterance is made and likewise offering explanations of uses of QBL with gestures, these accounts nevertheless face serious problems.

We therefore conclude that it is difficult to see how QBL could be reduced to DD, and it is at least worth exploring other views. In other words, we have now achieved the first aim of the paper, namely to show that QBL is importantly different from both DD and ID, and therefore provides novel expressive resources. In the next section we discuss some approaches according to which QBL forms part of the ways in which we understand the minds of other people.

[7] Thanks to an anonymous referee for this point.

4 Folk psychology and mindreading

In this section we explore the view that QBL is a tool for *folk psychology* or *mindreading*, that is, our capacity for understanding the mental states of others. Broadly, on this view, QBL is to be understood as belonging to the range of resources we use for the purposes of folk psychology.

4.1 QBL as a tool for folk psychology

On one way of understanding this suggestion, it is unsurprising. There is a sense in which it is innocuous to claim that standard ID and DD reports are tools for mindreading or folk psychology. Surely, an ID or DD report of someone's speech or thoughts often serves as input to a process on the part of the listener that aims at representing the mental state of the subject of the report. Conversely, some theorists argue that the ability to understand attributions of thoughts or utterances as in ID and DD is a "specialization of the more general mindreading ability, developed for use in the communicative domain" (Wilson, 2002: 414).

Consider the DD examples from above in (1a) and (1c):

(1) a. Ellen said, "I'm leaving now!"
c. Akira thought, "Everyone should go home."

Clearly, being told (1a) can play a role in your coming to represent Ellen's state of mind on the relevant occasion. For instance, depending on what else you believe about Ellen and about the context, you might come to think that Ellen was fed up, or that she was stressed, or something else. The same holds for DD *think*-reports as in (1c). Depending on the context, you might take this report as one factor in attributing to Akira the desire that people leave his house, or the belief that no one should be out and about right now, and so on.

In this sense, it should be equally innocent to propose that QBL can play a similar role. We take it to be undeniable that QBL reports often enter into processes on the part of hearers directed at forming a picture of someone's mental state. What we want to explore here is a more full-blooded approach according to which QBL *qua* speech act is part of folk psychology. Next, we turn to discussing a proposal along these lines.

4.2 QBL and simulation

On one widely held view, folk psychology is a matter of *mental simulation* (Goldman, 2006; Gordon, 1986; Heal, 1986). Roughly, according to this picture, we arrive at representations of the mental lives of others by employing our own cognitive capacities to simulate their mental states. This can provide predictions of how someone will behave or about how they will, or do, feel. In turn, representing the mental states of others in such ways facilitates cooperation and understanding.

Against this background, one might suggest that QBL reports issue invitations for the hearer to simulate the mental state of the subject of the report, while providing a

prop or support for the simulation in the form of the quoted material or the relevant gesture. We might state this idea as follows:

QBL as Invitation to Simulate

X was like "S"/<g> is an invitation to simulate X, using "S"/<g> as a prop.

QBL as Invitation to Simulate is modeled on the familiar view of fictional discourse, originating in the work of Walton (1990) and Currie (1990), according to which utterances made by fictional narrators are prescriptions to imagine certain things.

Consider, for example, the first sentences of A.S. Byatt's novel *The Children's Book*:

(17) Two boys stood in the Prince Consort Gallery, and looked down on a third. It was June 19th, 1895. (Byatt, 2009: 5).

In writing (17), Byatt was not asserting that on 19 June 1895 two boys were standing in the Prince Consort Gallery looking down on a third boy. (17) is not put forward as a claim about what was actually the case. Rather, on what Matravers (2014) calls the "Consensus View," fictional utterances are prescriptions, or invitations, to imagine things. While Byatt was not asserting something about the actual world, she was inviting us to imagine that on 19 June 1895 two boys were standing in the Prince Consort Gallery looking down on a third boy.

Similarly, according to QBL as Invitation to Simulate, *X was like "S"/<g>* does not make an assertion but instead issues an invitation to simulate X. This kind of speech act is analogous to the kind of invitation or suggestion we routinely issue by using imperatives, as in (18).

(18) a. Get a good night's sleep!
b. Try our kale omelet!
c. If you don't know what to do, go for a run.

Correspondingly, QBL will be seen as expressing the invitation or suggestion to simulate X's state of mind by using the quoted material or gesture as a prop.

Yet we do not think that this can be the whole story about QBL. In particular, this view runs into problems concerning embeddings, as in (19):

(19) a. If she's like <makes thumbs up>, then you should seriously consider it.
b. I thought that he'd be like "Get out of here," but I was wrong; he invited me in.
c. A: And then she was like "I'm outta here!"//B: No, that's not true - she wanted to stay!

Consider (19a). Clearly, what (19a) means is not that if you are invited to simulate her by using the gesture as a prop, then you should seriously consider it. Instead, the conditional operates on the truth-conditions of the QBL ascription.

Compare (20).

(20) If two boys stood in the Prince Consort Gallery, and looked down on a third, then there were three boys in the Gallery.

(20) does not mean that if you are invited to imagine that two boys stood in the Prince Consort gallery, and looked down on a third, then there were three boys in the Gallery. Rather, the conditional in (20) operates on the truth-conditions of "two boys stood in the Prince Consort Gallery, and looked down on a third." The latter sentence is true at a world *w* if and only if, in *w*, two boys stood in the Prince Consort Gallery, and looked down on a third.

More generally, most agree that many sentences that are uttered by writers of fiction have truth-conditions, and hence can be true or false at the actual world. The difference between a fictional use of (17), as in Byatt's novel, and a non-fictional use is not a semantic difference, but a difference in the force with which the sentence is uttered.[8] In the fictional case, it is uttered non-assertorically. Yet this does not mean that it does not have truth-conditions, and correspondingly, those truth-conditions can interact with operators like conditionals.

Accordingly, we should take embeddings of QBL like (19a–c) as evidence that QBL ascriptions have truth-conditions, and can be true or false with respect to the actual world. So, even if QBL as Invitation to Simulate is right, there is still a challenge of spelling out what those truth-conditions are. That is, we want to know what *C* is in the following schema:

X was like "S"/<g> is true iff *C*.

We have previously considered some proposals for filling out *C*, such as in terms of dispositions or counterfactuals, or by reducing QBL to DD. But we have argued that proposals of this kind fail.

In light of this, one suggestion is to take QBL reports at face value. That is, to look for a way of filling out *C* that avoids explaining away the truth-conditions of QBL in terms of other well-known constructions or theoretical resources. In the next section, we turn to this kind of approach.

5 QBL as reporting be-like relations

An orthodox view has it that ascriptions of propositional attitudes report that the subject stands in some relevant relation to the proposition in question. Consider, for instance, the following sketch of an account of belief ascriptions:

Minimal Semantics for Belief

X believes that p is true iff X stands in the belief relation to *p*.

[8] This observation goes back, at least, to Searle (1975).

The sketch is neutral both on the nature of the belief relation and the nature of propositions. So, any view on which *believe* expresses a two place relation could accept a minimal sketch of this kind.

It is worth considering the analogous view for QBL: namely, the view that QBL reports that the subject stands in some relevant relation to the quoted expression or gesture. Along these lines, a minimal proposal concerning QBL would have it that an instance of QBL is true if and only if the subject stands in the be-like relation to the denotation, in context, of the quoted sentence or gesture:

Minimal Semantics for QBL

X is like "S"/<*g*> is true iff X stands in the be-like relation to [["S"]]^c/[[<g>]]^c.

To see what this proposal amounts to, consider again (3a).

(3) a. Ellen was like "I'm leaving now!"

According to the Minimal Semantics for QBL, (3a) is true if and only if Ellen stood in the be-like relation to [["I'm leaving now"]]^c, the denotation of ""I'm leaving now"" given the context.

We pointed out that the minimal semantics for belief is neutral both on the nature of the belief relation, and on the nature of propositions. Different theorists might develop the view in different ways: for example, one might be a Stalnakerian functionalist or a Fodorian representationalist about the belief relation, and one might take propositions to be sets of worlds, Russellian structured complexes of objects and properties, or Fregean abstract entities. The Minimal Semantics is compatible with any of those views.

Correspondingly, the Minimal Semantics for QBL is neutral on the nature of the be-like relation, and on the nature of the entities that thinkers stand in the be-like relation to. In other words, the minimal semantics for QBL can be developed in different ways, depending on how one addresses the following two issues:

The Nature of the Relation
In virtue of what does a thinker stand in the be-like relation to an entity?
The Nature of the Relatum
What kinds of things do we stand in the be-like relation to?

We first turn to a way of addressing the latter issue on which the relata of QBL are the relevant subject and an expression or a gesture. We then discuss how this approach might address the issue of the Nature of the Relation, and we highlight a problem for it. Next, we turn to another way of addressing the two questions.

5.1 QBL, quotation, and gesture

Given that QBL centrally involves quotation, a natural thought is that an adequate theory of QBL must focus on the role that quotation plays in this form of reporting. Some theorists have proposed that the semantic values of quoted expressions belong to a special type, often called "*u*" (cf. Potts, 2007), comprising, roughly, the domain of well-formed linguistic expressions. If we suppose that the semantic values of quotations are of type *u*, then one way of implementing the Minimal Semantics for QBL is as a rough analysis of QBL along the following lines:[9]

$$[[\text{be like}]]^{c,g} = \lambda q_u.\lambda x_e.\ x \text{ stands in the be-like relation to } q.$$

To make this proposal general enough to capture QBL in full, we would need to argue that it applies to the instances of QBL with gestures as well. While a complete account of this is beyond the scope of this paper, we want to make one suggestion in this direction.

Many ordinary uses of gestures contribute denotations to sentences in much the same way linguistic phrases do (cf. e.g. Clark, 1996; Schlenker, 2019):[10]

(21) a. Can I have a<mimics smoking a cigarette>?
b. If you owe that guy money, he might just<slides finger across throat>.
c. I'm going to<mimics eating>.

But in other cases, we seem to be talking about the gesture itself:

(22) a. Some gestures involve the head, such as<nods>.
b. If you agree, you can just<nods>.
c. In some places,<shakes head> means "yes."

Examples like (22) seem closely analogous to examples in which a word is purely mentioned:

(23) "Ellen" begins with an E.

Given this parallel, it is plausible to suggest that there is a distinction between use and mention for gestures that parallels the analogous distinction for linguistic entities; in (21) the gestures are used, while in (22) they are mentioned.

[9] Alternatively, one can take the type of the gesture or quotation involved in QBL to be *e* or perhaps some other category, such as an eventive of type *v*, and impose restrictions on these so as to be confined to communicative or quotative items. We focus on a proposal that takes QBL to involve linguistic expressions (including gestures) of type *u*.

[10] (21a–c) represent so-called *pro-speech* uses of gestures "which fully replace some spoken words" (Schlenker 2019: 736).

We suggest that the gestures in QBL are purely mentioned and not used.[11] If this is right, then it is reasonable to suggest that the quoted gestures in QBL contribute semantic values of the same type as quoted linguistic expressions.[12]For simplicity, we assume that this type is *u*, expanded to include gestures. Roughly, that is, the value of a purely mentioned linguistic expression is that expression itself, and the value of a purely mentioned gesture is that gesture itself.

So, on this view, QBL takes as its first argument an item of type *u*, that is the value of a purely mentioned expression or gesture. QBL then takes a subject *x*, and predicates of *x* that she stands in the be-like relation to *u*. In other words, on this view, the relata of QBL are the subject and an expression or gesture.

Given this, the challenge for this proposal is to give an account of the Nature of the Relation. What is it to stand in the be-like relation to a linguistic expression or gesture, i.e. a quotation? One can imagine various strategies for cashing out the be-like relation: for example, perhaps (by analogy with functionalist accounts of propositional attitudes) to stand in the be-like relation to "I'm leaving now!" is to be in a particular functional state. Or perhaps (by analogy with Dennettian interpretationist views (Dennett 1987)) to stand in the be-like relation to "I'm leaving now!" is for one's behavior to be predictable in a particular way. We find it hard to see how to fill in the details of such accounts.

Moreover, there are some at least *prima facie* reasons to think that QBL does not report a relation analogous to propositional attitudes. Namely, while one can quantify into belief ascriptions, as in (24a), this is not possible for QBL, cf. (24b).

(24) a. John believed something.
b. *Ellen was like something.

(24a) is evidence that belief is a relation. So (24b) puts pressure on the corresponding view of QBL.

We therefore turn our attention to an alternative approach to the two issues concerning the Relation and the Relatum, which strikes us as potentially more promising. In order to motivate it, we will first present a closely related view, defended by Davidson (2015).

5.2 QBL as feature sharing

Building on Clark and Gerrig (1990), Davidson argues that the quotation in a be-like ascription is a *demonstration* displaying some contextually salient feature of the subject of the report. On Davidson's view, the contribution of the quotation is not an expression or gesture, as on the view discussed above, but rather the demonstration itself. By "demonstration" here is not meant the kind of reference-fixing that is relevant for indexicals or demonstratives, but rather a form of iconic representation of the relevant feature. As Davidson puts it, "In a demonstration, some salient properties

[11] We allow ourselves not to indicate this in the notation used in the paper. If one wants, one can use ""<g>"" to mention gestures. We take it that context will disambiguate here.

[12] See also Clark and Gerrig (1990): 781-2.

(determined by the context of utterance) of the original event are replicated in the demonstration" (2015: 485).

Accordingly, on this view, the be-like relation is the relation of sharing some contextually salient property with this demonstration or depiction. In short, Davidson's account is the following.[13]

QBL as Feature Sharing

X was like "S"/<g> is true iff some state or action of X shares some salient feature with the demonstration made by "S"/<g>.

QBL as Feature Sharing handles many of the cases we have discussed. Suppose Ellen says "I'm leaving now!" That speech act has a feature—being an utterance of "I'm leaving now!"—that might be salient in the context. Now suppose that Ansel reports Ellen's speech using (3a):

(3) a. Ellen was like "I'm leaving now!"

In making the report, Ansel has made a demonstration that consists of an utterance of "I'm leaving now!" That utterance clearly shares the salient feature with Ellen's speech act. And so the report is true.

QBL as Feature Sharing can also handle cases in which the salient feature is not the particular words used. For example, consider again (8):

(8) Ellen was like [in a demanding voice:] "Blah blah blah! Do what I say!"

As we have already noted, a report like (8) typically does not indicate that Ellen uttered the words "Blah blah blah!" Instead, it might communicate that she spoke in a particularly demanding way. Again, this is captured by QBL as Feature Sharing: as long as Ellen spoke in a demanding voice, and as long as this demanding tone is contextually salient, then an utterance of (8) could be true.

However, we have already discussed several kinds of cases that present problems for QBL as Feature Sharing. First, consider cases of gesture such as (9a).

(9) a. When I heard what Trump said, I was like<slaps forehead>.

An assertion of (9a) would be true if the speaker literally slapped her forehead when she heard what Trump said. But she need not have slapped her forehead. She might simply have thought, "That's stupid," while not exhibiting any outward reaction at

[13] We are simplifying Davidson's proposal in certain respects. Davidson develops her view in an event-semantic framework. On her view, the denotation of "like" is a relation between an event and a demonstration that obtains just in case the demonstration reproduces properties of the event that are relevant in the context of speech. Call this relation *demo*. A Davidsonian analysis of the truth conditions of a sentence like *Ellen was like, "I'm leaving!"* would yield: $\exists e.\ [agent(e, Ellen) \wedge demo(d1,e)]$, where d1 is the demonstration that is the semantic value of "I'm leaving!" We take it that the view discussed in the text captures the essence of Davidson's view in the context of the minimal semantics that we are working with.

all. The forehead slap is a conventionalized representation of incredulity. It is not at all clear that the state (9a) is reporting on needs to share any salient features with the forehead-slapping demonstration.

Second, consider the case we used as a counterexample to QBL as Says. Ellen watches a movie in silence, and the next day reports her state using (7):

(7) I was watching this movie last night, and I was like "God! This soundtrack is so annoying!"

(7) is true if Ellen thought to herself "God! This soundtrack is so annoying!" QBL as Feature Sharing can explain this case without difficulty. In that case, the demonstration and Ellen's thought share the feature of having the content that the soundtrack is annoying.

But as we have noted, (7) can be true even if Ellen entertained no such thought. At the time she is watching the movie, she may simply feel annoyed at the soundtrack; she need not think about this annoyance. (Perhaps it is not until later that she realizes that she was feeling annoyed throughout the movie and reflects that the soundtrack must have been the source of her feeling.) In this case, it is not clear that any state of Ellen's at the time she is watching the movie shares any salient feature with the demonstration contributed by the quotation in the QBL report.

Davidson might reply that we are presupposing a narrow view of the kinds of features that quotations can share with the states or events we use them to report. Perhaps, for example, we can understand the quotations and the reported events as sharing some very general or disjunctive feature. For example, in (7), the quotation ""God! This soundtrack is so annoying!" shares with Ellen's state the disjunctive feature: *being annoyed, or being commonly caused by annoyance.*[14] We concede that the examples can be handled in this way. But at this point we have departed very significantly from the motivating idea of Davidson's account: that QBL can be explained in terms of *iconicity, replication,* or *resemblance*. Entities that share a disjunctive property do not thereby resemble each other in any pre-theoretic sense. We therefore conclude that it is worth investigating alternative starting points.

One such alternative can be found in Davidson herself. Although in many places, Davidson stresses that quotation is iconic, a matter of replication, in others she suggests that the relation between the quotation and the reported event might be looser. Here, Davidson draws on Clark and Gerrig's (1990) idea that a quotation *performs* some aspect of the reported event.[15] She emphasizes that on Clark and Gerrig's view, performance must be understood very flexibly: "A theory that hard codes the relationship between the original token and the quotation will be doomed to fail." (2015, 486).

Along these lines, we propose that Clark and Gerrig's notion of performance need not, and should not, be understood as requiring iconicity or resemblance. Instead, we suggest that a more fruitful way to develop an account in the spirit of Davidson,

[14] Thanks to an anonymous referee for suggesting this reply.

[15] This view has roots in Wierzbicka (1974).

Clark, and Gerrig is to focus directly on the fact that QBL ascriptions use a quotation to attribute a property. The rest of this paper develops an account of this kind.

5.3 QBL as indicating properties

QBL is used to attribute some property to an agent. In certain cases, this is a property that it is reasonably straightforward to capture by using other words. For example, we take typical uses of the QBL ascription in (3a) to be attributing the property of intending to leave, and typical uses of that in (20) to be attributing the property of being sad:

(3) a. Ellen was like "I'm leaving now!"
(25) Sue was like<makes sad face>.

In other cases, QBL ascriptions communicate nuances that are not easily put in other words, as was encapsulated by the Non-Paraphrasability Thesis discussed earlier. For example, an ascription of (7) communicates that the speaker had the property of being annoyed at the soundtrack; but (depending on subtle features of tone, expression, gesture, and so on) may communicate more than this: her degree of annoyance, whether she was merely irritated or outright enraged, whether the annoyance came as a surprise or was expected, and so on.

The final view of QBL that we want to discuss takes the natural thought that QBL ascriptions attribute properties literally. In particular, we want to suggest that the quotations in QBL ascriptions should be thought of as picking out properties. For example, in (3a), the quotation "I'm leaving now!" might pick out the property of intending to leave.

As seen from this, although we are taking a version of Davidson's (2015) proposal as a starting point, we reject the idea that the relation between the quotation and the reported event is iconic; we deny that the quotation or gesture itself needs to display or replicate the property being attributed. Correspondingly, the quotation or gesture need not share any features with the relevant state or action of the agent. Instead, we can think of the ingredient quotation or gesture as picking out a property that is predicated of the subject of the QBL attribution.

There are a number of ways in which such a view might be developed, depending on exactly how we take the quotation or gesture to pick out a property, and we will briefly consider some options in what follows. We will use *indicate* as a theoretical term for the hypothesized relation between a quotation or gesture and a property. So, the view we are considering is the following:

QBL as Property Instantiation

X is like "S"/<g> is true in a context *c* iff X has the property indicated by *"S"/<g>* in *c*.

There are different ways of spelling this out in a semantic framework. One way might be as follows. Suppose we let IND_c be a function representing indication, so that

IND_c(*"S"/<g>)* returns the property indicated by *"S"/<g>* in *c*. Then we can give the following semantics:

$$[[\text{be like}]]^{c,g} = \lambda q_u.\lambda x_e.\ \text{IND}_c\,(q)\,(x)\,.$$

For example, for (3a), the quotation "I'm leaving now" will be seen as indicating a property, given the context c, roughly, the property of wanting to leave. In this case IND_c("I'm leaving now") is that property. Hence, (3a) is true if and only if Ellen has the property of wanting to leave. So this is a way of capturing QBL as Property Indication in that to say that *X* was like *"S"/<g>* is to say that *X* had some property *f*, namely the property indicated by *"S"/<g>* given the context.

A crucial theoretical challenge for a view like this is to say more about the indication relation. But before we turn to that, we want to mention some advantages of this view.

First, QBL as Property Instantiation can be combined with a straightforward account of the QBL relation. To stand in the QBL relation to the property indicated by a quotation or gesture is simply to instantiate (or "have") the property. So, if the quotation in (3a) indicates the property of intending to leave, then (3a) is true just in case Ellen had the property of intending to leave.

Second, QBL as Property Instantiation does not posit a special state of being-like that is expressed by QBL, but rather takes QBL to be a device for attributing ordinary states like being sad, being fed up, or thinking something is stupid. In other words, on this view, there is no special be-like relation. So, in particular, it contrasts with the view previously mentioned on which QBL attributes a be-like relation between the subject and a linguistic expression and gesture. As we said, this relation looks mysterious. There is no such mystery for the Property Instantiation view on which QBL simply attributes properties.

Third, QBL as Property Instantiation provides a good explanation of why speakers find QBL useful. As long as the mechanism by which quotations or gestures indicate properties is suitably flexible, so as to be able to explain the nuanced way in which quotations or gestures can indicate a range of complex and subtle properties, including those which are not easily captured in other ways, it will be possible to explain how QBL provides novel expressive resources.

Still, if QBL is a way of attributing properties to individuals, one might well ask why we need it, since we have obvious ways of doing that: for instance, by simple predication as in "Ellen was annoyed." Yet, as suggested above, QBL arguably affords us ways of attributing properties that are not easily picked out in other ways. Consider again (8).

(8) Ellen was like [in a demanding voice:] "Blah blah blah! Do what I say!"

The QBL report arguably attributes a property to Ellen that would at least be very cumbersome to pick out in other ways. For instance, one might say, "Ellen was being bossy and demanding," but (8) arguably captures more of the situation. For example, (8) is naturally seen as conveying something about the way in which she was behav-

ing that is not obviously expressed by "bossy" and "demanding," and moreover about the speaker's reaction to, or evaluation of, her behavior.

Fourth, this account explains that QBL can be used about non-human animals, and even about inanimate objects, as in (26).[16]

(26) a. And then my cat was like, "I'm outta here!"
b. My alarm clock was like "Get up!" So I did.

Take (26b). On the Property Instantiation view, (26b) arguably attributes the property of ringing to the alarm clock, where the quotation indicates this property. But moreover, using QBL conveys something of the speaker's reaction, roughly, being disturbed. After all, she could have chosen many other quotations to use. By contrast, the Feature Sharing view has problems with cases like this in that there is no plausible feature shared by the alarm clock and the quotation "Get up!" The only candidate would seem to be something like saying "get up!" which is not a plausible property for an alarm clock to have.[17]

Fifth, it seems that QBL as Property Instantiation can handle the cases that we originally highlighted as problematic for QBL as Feature Sharing. Cases of conventionalized gestures like (8a) can be handled in that the quoted gesture <slaps forehead> is naturally seen as indicating (something like) the property of thinking that some salient thing is stupid.

(9) a. When I heard what Trump said, I was like <slaps forehead>.

Cases of true QBL attributions without speech can be handled similarly. For instance, we can account for (7) by taking the quotation to indicate (something like) the property of being annoyed, as we said above.

(7) I was watching this movie last night, and I was like "God! This soundtrack is so annoying!"

The data about irony are more challenging. We saw that, if on Monday Ellen ironically says, "Oh, yeah, I LOVE haggis!," Ellen's state cannot be reported on Tuesday by (14).

(14) #Yesterday Ellen was like "I don't like haggis."

If this is right, one might ask, why can you not indicate disliking haggis with the quoted sentence and attribute it to Ellen on Monday in this way? One possible reply is that, as we have seen, QBL very often reports speech. Indeed, as we suggested earlier, if X said "S," it is most often (perhaps always) true that X was like "S." So, since Ellen did not say, "I don't like haggis," the infelicity of (14) might be due to it being

[16] Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for the example of (26b).

[17] There are alarm clocks that play sounds like "get up," and in such a case (26b) can be used, as in "I got this new alarm clock that speaks. It's wild. This morning it was like "Get up!"".

associated with a strong suggestion that she did. Indeed, it is natural to think that the reason why (14) is infelicitous is precisely because it is known that Ellen did not say, "I don't like haggis." If you know that yesterday Ellen conveyed her dislike of haggis in some way, but you do not know how, (14) may be acceptable.

This may generalize to other features of QBL. In particular, we have seen that QBL usually cannot report non-occurrent beliefs. To take our earlier example, (15a) cannot report your non-occurrent belief that two plus two equals four.

(15) a. I was like "Two plus two equals four."

As in the case of irony, one possible explanation for this is that using a QBL report strongly suggests the truth of the corresponding DD report, in the absence of obvious evidence to the contrary. Typically, audiences to (15a) will think that you *said*, "Two plus two equals four," or that the speaker has a reason to report you as thinking (to yourself), "Two plus two equals four." On the other hand, for a case like (8), this expectation is arguably defeated by the implausibility of the assumption that Ellen actually uttered, "Blah blah blah!" Even if QBL is often used to report speech—and hence such an interpretation is a natural one—given other clues audiences may easily arrive at other readings.

5.4 The metasemantics of indication

So QBL as Property Instantiation has a number of attractive features. Still, it faces one outstanding issue. What exactly is the indication relation? Exactly how do quotations and gestures succeed in picking out properties? Such questions call for an account of the *metasemantics* of indication.

We do not have a detailed metasemantic account of the indication relation to offer. Such an account would have to explain at least how a hearer can determine what property a speaker has in mind. Of course, there may be some indeterminacy in what the speaker has in mind, and (as in other cases) we may allow a certain amount of mismatch between what the speaker has in mind and the hearer's interpretation. But we still need an account of exactly how a speaker can land on at least roughly the right property, especially given the flexibility of QBL ascriptions. For example, we take it that in an example like (5), the quotation might indicate any of a number of different properties:

(5) Ellen was like "Wow!"

λx. x was amazed
λx. x said "Wow!"
λx. x was shocked
…

Explaining how successful communication is possible against this background is a complex task. Sometimes indication does seem to rely on resemblances or iconicity. But there are arguably many more ways properties get indicated by quotations or gestures in QBL.

As we have mentioned, QBL often conveys something of the speaker's reaction to the relevant event, as in cases like (8) or (26b). On our view, such effects can arguably be explained in a Gricean way by pointing to the particular quotation or gesture that is used. Audiences might be expected to reason about why other candidates were not chosen. For instance, the speaker of (26b) might have used a quotation like "Wake up sweetheart," using a soft, loving tone of voice, and hence since she actually used "Get up!", audiences might infer that she wants to convey being annoyed at the alarm clock.

More generally, a crucial difference between the Property Instantiation view and the Feature Sharing view is that interpreting the quotation or gesture to reach the property indicated can appeal to the full range of the speaker's background knowledge.

For instance, in order to understand (26b), the hearer must know that alarm clocks typically ring and are used to wake people up. Speakers rely on hearers having such background knowledge in order to facilitate picking out properties with QBL. It is not obvious that the Feature Sharing view makes room for this kind of contextual dependence, given that the relation is established entirely by resemblance or iconicity.

Finally, it is worth mentioning that an account of the metasemantics of indication may itself provide explanations of some of the other phenomena involving QBL we have observed. Take (6′a).

(6′) a. **Demonstrating a sentence written on a blackboard:* Ellen was like that (sentence).

In accordance with what we said earlier, on the assumption that *that (sentence*) is of type *e*, the semantics for *be like* we have proposed explains the unacceptability of this case as plain ungrammaticality But, moreover, if one thinks that the demonstration can contribute a value of type *u*, osne potential way of explaining this kind of case is to note that it involves a gesture, namely the gesture demonstrating the sentence on the board. So a plausible suggestion is that *this* gesture will be seen as the argument to QBL. That is, it will be interpreted along the lines of (6").

(6″) Ellen was like <stretches out an arm and points to the board>.

(6") is perfectly intelligible. It will typically be understood to mean that Ellen stretched out her arm and pointed to the board.

Moreover, note that QBL *can* be used in a way that is similar to (6′a), as in (6‴).

(6‴) Ellen was like<holds up paper with "I am leaving" written on it>.

(6‴) can be understood as either reporting that Ellen held up a piece of paper (with that sentence on it) or that Ellen intended to leave. Arguably, even (6′a) itself can be used like that in the right context; if the interpreters have appropriate background knowledge, the demonstration might succeed in contributing a value of type *u* and in indicating a property like *wanting to leave*.

6 Conclusion

One main task of this paper was purely negative: to establish that QBL is not straightforwardly reducible to DD or other familiar ways of talking about our speech acts and our minds. But we take the broader message of this paper to be that QBL is a phenomenon well worthy of study.

We began by noting that QBL is one of the most common ways in which we talk and think about our minds, and hence understanding QBL is crucial to understanding how we talk and think about speech acts, mental states, and other features. In addition, the data we have adduced—that QBL requires quotation, pairs with gesture, behaves surprisingly in reporting irony, cannot naturally be used to report non-occurrent beliefs—are of independent philosophical interest.

We have suggested a view on which QBL does not attribute a special kind of be-like relation, but instead uses the ingredient quotation or gesture to indicate properties that are attributed to the subject in question. Our proposal develops a suggestion in Davidson (2015), but we depart from Davidson in that we reject the idea that the relation between the quotation and the reported property is iconic or a matter of replication or resemblance. Moreover, we have seen that this view provides ways of understanding many of the salient aspects of QBL by appealing to the metasemantics of indication. We leave the development of a more detailed account of the metasemantics of indication as a project for future work.

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