Verbs derived with negative prefixes in English and Romanian. A spanning account

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The aim of the paper is to work out the internal structure of verbs derived with negative verbal prefixes in English and Romanian, within a first phase syntax where verbs undergo decomposition (Ramchand 2008) (*<init, proc, res>*) and within the spanning framework (Svenonius 2012, 2014, Ramchand 2014). I look at the negative verbal prefixes *de-* (*deactivate*), *dis-* (*dishonour*), *un-* (*untie*), competing for expressing 'the undoing of a previous state' (Marchand 1972:636), and the prefix *mis-* (*misdiagnose*), expressing the meaning 'to do something badly', and at the corresponding prefixes *de-* (*deactiva* 'deactivate')*, des/dez-* (*dezonora 'dishonour'*), *dis-* (*dispărea* 'disappear') in Romanian; there is no counterpart for *mis-*. I embrace the view that verbal prefixes scope lower than negation, since *to deconstruct* does not mean 'not to construct' (Lakoff 1969, Hust 1975), and I lexically decompose *disassemble* as 'cause to no longer be assembled', *misdiagnose* as 'give a not correct diagnosis' a.o. Ultimately, I recast the lexical decompositions into first phase syntax and make use of spanning, a framework which spells out spans (i.e. extended projections), dismisses intermediate labels and uses direct linearization: the span spells out at a certain height (specifiers to the left of the heads, complements to the right). For a verb such as *dishonor*, *dezonora*, I put forth the representation <Init, Proc, Neg, N>, linearized as *x [Neg Proc Init] N y*. Thus, scope facts related to negation are captured in an economical and elegant way, showing that English and Romanian behave similarly.

1. Aim

The aim of this to discuss the scope of negative verbal prefixes in English and Romanian in a first phase syntax framework where verbs undergo decomposition into a causation component (an Initition projection), a process component (a Process projection) and a result component (a Result projection) (Ramchand 2008) (*<init, proc, res>*). I look at negative verbal prefixes, arguing that they have different scope effects than word negation or sentence negation, and trying to figure out the positioning of the Negative projection before or after Proc. In addition, I propose that a new version of Distributed Morphology, namely, spanning (Svenonius 2012, 2014, Ramchand 2014) can capture the data in a convincing way.

2.   Negative Verbal Prefixes

In what follows, I take a look at the English negative verbal prefixes *de-, dis-, un-* and *mis-* - and the Romanian negative verbal prefixes *de-, des-/ dez-*, *dis.* The list is far from exhaustive (there are other negative prefixes such as *mal-* in *maltreat* or *counter-* in *counteract* a.o.). However, for the purposes of this paper, I have chosen to focus on the negative verbal prefixes above mentioned, as they are extremely productive and frequently used. In addition, I will speak a bit about the prefix *non-*, which I take as an example of word-external negation, thus contrasting it with the other prefixes, which exhibit word-internal negation.

2.1.   *Negative Verbal Prefixes in English*

Table 1 comprises the negative verbal prefixes *de-, dis-, un-*, *mis-* and *non-* in English, together with some relevant examples for each prefix:

Table 1

de-	*deactivate, decode, deconstruct, decontaminate*
dis-	*decrease, deform disfigure, dishonor, disinherit, disintegrate, displease, distrust*
un-	*untie, unmask, undo, unravel*
mis-	*misdiagnose, misinform, misinterpret, mislead, misspell, mistrust*
non- ?	*nonlove*

I added the prefix *non-* following Horn's (1988) suggestion. However, while the prefixes *de-, dis-, un-* and *mis-* are productive with verbs (as easily proven by a simple google or dictionary search), the same thing cannot be said about the prefix *non-*. According to Horn (1988), the prefix *non-* can attach to any type of verb and seems to have the same meaning as word negation (*nonlove = not love*). This is in contrast to *un-* giving rise to *unlove*, a change of state verb, meaning 'cause to not be in love anymore'. Horn (1988) argues that *un-* combines essentially with non-states, but it can also combine with states, generating in this case a change of state verb. While this seems indeed to be true for *un-* (*undo, unravel, untie* a.o), the situation with *non-* is not that clear. By doing a simple google search and, also, by searching through a list of words derived with the prefix *non-*, I have not been able to find the verb *nonlove* or any other verb derived with the prefix *non-*, for that matter. It seems to be the case that the prefix *non-* is actually productive with nouns (such as *nonauthor*, *nonbeliever*, *nonentity* a.o.) and adjectives (*nonauthoritarian*, *nonbiodegradable*, *nonbreakable*, *noncanonical*, *noncertified* a.o), but not with verbs. In spite of this, I believe Horn's native speaker intuition that *non-* can combine with verbs is to be taken into account. While presenting my work, this example in particular was met with skepticism by one scholar in the audience, arguing that he had never heard *nonlove* used as a verb before. In order to test the acceptability of such a verb, I decided to interrogate three native speakers about a sentence such as 'This kid nonloves school and homework, just like all the other kids'. The speakers deemed the sentence acceptable, although they said they had never heard the verb before. The same test was done with the verbs *noneat*, *nonsleep*, and the speakers again deemed the sentences acceptable. Based on these grammaticality judgements, I will argue that, while not actually productive with verbs, verbs derived with the prefix *non-* are comprehensible and acceptable (though not all speakers may find them equally so).

In contrast to *non-*, the prefixes *de-*, *dis-*, *un-* are very productive and exhibit word-internal negation, compete for the expression of the reversal, 'the undoing of a previous state' (*untie*, *detox, disentangle*) as argued in Marchand (1972: 636). This explains why we sometimes find pairs of the type *untangle/ disentangle*, *unforest/ deforest*, where both variants exist and even have the same meaning 'cause to become not tangled', 'cause there to come to be no forest'. It also explains why in English language teaching, students so often make mistakes in coming up with the correct verb when faced with word-formation exercises (when they are asked to form a certain verb with the help of a negative prefix). These prefixes can also express the opposite/ the removal/ lack of a certain state (*dethrone*, *distrust*, *unman*).

The prefix *mis-* is special, on the other hand, as it expresses the meaning 'to do smth badly' (*to misdiagnose*, 'to give an incorrect diagnosis', *to misinform* 'to give incorrect information' a.o.).

While one might be tempted to try to establish a rule in the formation of verbs with negative prefixes, it is nonetheless necessary to take into account the "fact" that English is a crazy language in many ways and there is a high degree of lexical arbitrariness which cannot be accounted for by means of rules:

If *button* and *unbutton* and *tie* and *untie* are opposites, why are *loosen* and *unloosen* and *ravel* and *unravel* the same? If *bad* is the opposite of *good*, *hard* the opposite of *soft*, and *up* the opposite of *down*, why are *badly* and *goodly*, *hardly* and *softly*, and *upright* and *downright* not opposing pairs? If harmless actions are the opposite of harmful actions, why are shameful and shameless behavior the same and pricey objects less expensive than priceless ones? If appropriate and inappropriate remarks and passable and impassable mountain trails are opposites, why are flammable and inflammable materials, heritable and inheritable property, and passive and impassive people the same? How can valuable objects be less valuable than invaluable ones? If *uplift* is the same as *lift up*, why are *upset* and *set up* opposite in meaning? Why are *pertinent* and *impertinent*, *canny* and *uncanny*, and *famous* and *infamous* neither opposites nor the same? How can *raise* and *raze* and reckless and *wreckless* be opposites when each pair contains the same sound? (Lederer 1989: 16)

What is of direct interest to us is the first question addressing the issue of verbs derived with negative prefixes. While *button* and **unbutton** and *tie* and *untie* are opposites, *loosen* and *unloosen* and *ravel* and *unravel* have the same meaning. This shows that sometimes certain lexical idiosyncrasies defy common expectations and logical explanations about meaning, in other words, there are exceptions to every rule. In spite of this, it is worthwhile to try to establish such rules and thus come up with a structure that manages to account for the negatively prefixed words.

2.2. *Negative Verbal Prefixes in Romanian*

Table 2 comprises the negative verbal prefixes *de-, des-/ dez-, dis-* and *non-* in Romanian, together with some relevant examples for each prefix.

Table 2

de-	*deactiva* 'deactivate', *decoda* 'decode', *deconstrui* 'deconstruct', *deforma* 'deform'
des-/ dez-	*desfigura* 'disfigure', *dezonora* 'dishonor', *dezmoşteni* 'disinherit', *dezintegra* 'disintegrate'
dis-/ diz-	*dispărea* 'disappear' *dizloca* 'dislocate'
non- ?	*noniubi* 'nonlove'

The prefixes *de-, des-/ dez-, dis-/ diz-* express either the reversal of a certain state of affairs or the removal/ lack of a certain state. While these prefixes have word-internal negation, *non-* negates

the whole word. The situation with *non-* is the same as in English, it is more productive with nouns and adjectives than with verbs, where it is felt as odd.

3. Decomposition and Scope Issues in Negative Verbal Prefixes

3.1. Remark

When undertaking the task of decomposing verbs derived with verbal prefixes, establishing the scope of negative verbal prefixes is essential, because, if one adopts the view that semantics can be read off syntax, then scope facts can be captured in the first phase syntax of verbs. Importantly, negative verbal prefixes do not negate a word, but scope lower. The verb *to deconstruct*, for instance, does not mean 'not to construct/ to not construct', just as *to not deconstruct a building* does not mean 'to construct a building'. This means that one needs to look inside the verbal structure in order to see the scope of negative prefixes.

3.2. Analysis

(a) A first attempt in the analysis of negatively prefixed verbs is analyzing them in terms of their positive counterparts (G. Lakoff 1969). One example would be analyzing *dissuade* as *persuade not to*, with the verb scoping above negation.
 (b) A closer look at the data, however, shows that an analysis of prefixed verbs in terms of their positive counterparts seems to be insufficient to capture their meaning (Hust 1975):

(1) I have disarmed the prisoners ≠'I have not armed the prisoners' ='I have caused the prisoners to come not to have arms'

(2) I have disassembled the mechanism ≠'I have not assembled the mechanism' ='I have caused the mechanism to come to be no longer assembled'

I have disarmed the prisoners does not mean 'I have not armed the prisoners', but rather 'I have caused the prisoners to come not to have arms'. *I have disassembled the mechanism* does not mean 'I have not assembled the mechanism', but rather 'I have caused the mechanism to come to be no longer assembled'.

Following the same train of thought, *disfigure* does not mean 'not figure' or 'figure not to', *dishonor* does not mean 'not honor' or 'honour not to', which does not even exist, *distrust* does not mean 'not trust somebody' or 'trust somebody not to' a.o.

In other words, one can assert that:

(3) Negation prefixes seem to act differently from word or sentence negation, being internal to and scoping below CAUSE.

However, within the class of negative prefixes, there seem to be differences in meaning between the negative prefixes. *De-*, *dis-*, *un-* compete for the same (privative/ reversative) meaning. The verb *untie*, for instance, is created with the privative/ reversative prefix *un-* and it can be paraphrased as 'cause to be tied no longer' (Marchand 1969: 205). The prefix *mis-* seems to have a different meaning. The verb *misdiagnose* is paraphrasable as 'give an incorrect diagnosis', not as 'not give a diagnosis/ fail to give a diagnosis'. Negation seems to scope over a silent adjective CORRECT modifying the base ('give a NOT correct diagnosis'). It could hence be argued that verbs derived with *mis-* can be paraphrased as 'cause to have/ be NOT a proper Z'.

One very important issue is what exactly gets negated by the negative prefixed. It seems to be the case that:

(4) The negative prefix negates the final state, which can be expressed by:

(i)   an adjective ('assembled' in *disassemble*, 'tied' in *tied*, 'CORRECT' in *misdiagnose*)
(ii)   a noun ('trust' in *distrust, arm* in *disarm*)
(iii)   a preposition (IN in *dezgropa* 'negative prefix-hole', meaning 'cause to come to be not IN the hole').

However, one must note that it could be equally argued that what is negated is the verb (*be/ have*), since *to distrust* could be paraphrased either as 'cause to come not to have trust' or as 'cause to come to have no trust', just as *disarm* could be paraphrased either as 'cause to come not to have arms' or as 'cause to come to have no arms'. In any case, it is clear that is the resulting state that is negated, and not the ProcP or the InitP.


4. Spanning

What I will try to do in what follows is recast the intuitions of lexical semantic decomposition into a first phase syntax (Ramchand 2008), where the verb is decomposed into an initiation projection (*init*), a process projection (*proc*) and a result projection (*res*).

According to spanning, words are spans, where by *span*, one understands an extended projection of complement heads (Svenonius 2012). The innovative aspect is represented by the elimination of redundant labels (Brody 2000), i.e. dismissing intermediate projections and using the same label for X and XP. Given the fact that heads select phrases, and phrases are projections of heads,

According to Brody's Mirror Theory, the syntactic relation 'X complement of Y' is identical to an inverse-order morphological relation 'X specifier of Y'. Instead of head-movement, there is a direct linearization mechanism which eliminates head-movement from the system, linearizing specifiers to the left of heads (*already go*) and heads to the left of complements (*go-ne*). One can argue that span spells out at a certain height, which is indicated by the diacritic @ (Brody 2000). In addition, in order to indicate that a certain head forms a word with the head below, Ramchand (2014) makes use of the diacritic *. Where exactly the diacritic is placed is a language-specific issue.

To give an example, if, for instance, we are dealing with the structure in (5):

(5) Neg*
      /\
    P Fin@
        /\
      Q   T*
           /\
         R   Asp*
              /\
            S   V@
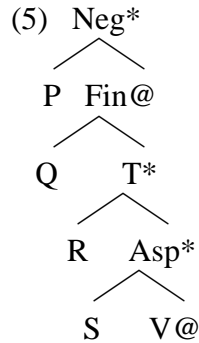
Linearized as P Q [Fin-Neg] R S [V-Asp-T]

the linearization places specifiers to the left of heads and heads to the left of complements, thus giving rise to the order *P Q [Fin-Neg] R S [V-Asp-T]*.

In previous work, I tried to offer an account of denominal verbs within the spanning framework, at the same time making use of Ramchand (2008)'s decomposition of verbs in first phase syntax. As argued in Ramchand (2008), verbs can be decomposed into three components/ subevents in the event-structure: 1) a causing subevent, 2) a process-denoting subevent, and 3) a subevent corresponding to the result state. In the syntactic representation, these subevents project as (i) an initiation phrase (initP), whose subject is the INITIATOR, (ii) a process phrase (procP), whose subject is an UNDERGOER and (iii) a result phrase (resP), whose subject is the RESULTEE:

(6) Init* *de* (En)
      /\
  'x'   Proc
        /\
    'y'   Neg@*
          /\
   'y' N@ *tach* (En)
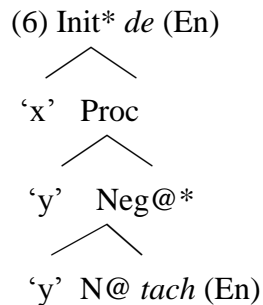
 Linearized as x [Neg Proc Init] N y

Embracing such an analysis leads to the possibility of the DP to have a composite thematic role. In a sentence such as *Pooh broke the honey jar, the honey jar* is both a resultee (subject of the resP) and an undergoer (subject of the procP). In addition, a single verb may identify more than one subevent. In a sentence such as *Piglet entered the room*, the verb *enter* identifies all subevents: the initiation subevent, the process subevent, and the result subevent.

In my own analysis of denominal verbs, I adopt Ramchand's (2008) verbal decomposition into initP, procP, resP, but I opt for eliminating intermediate projections, thus

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using the same label for X, X' and XP. In addition, I adopt Brody's Mirror Theory and the idea that words are spans.

For a verb such as *dance*, I provide the following representation, where X is a DP (e.g. *Winnie*):

(7) Init@*
```
      /\
   'x'  Proc*
         /\
      'x'   N
           dance
```
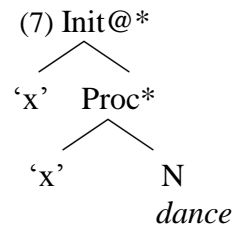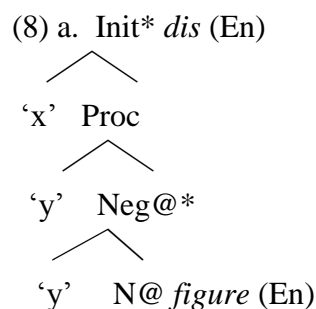
Linearized as x [N Proc Init]

At L-Match (Lexical Match, the first step of Spell Out in spanning, involving syntactic categories), this structure will create the item *dance*.

While in previous work (see Bleotu 2015, 2016), I focused on trying to account for how denominal verbs are formed from nominal roots of various theta roles, I will now try to see how negatively prefixed verbs can be represented within the spanning framework.
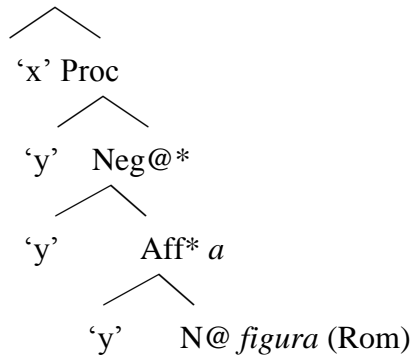
5. Analysis of Negatively Prefixed Verbs

A verb such as *disfigure* ('cause to be no figure') may tentatively be assigned the representation in (8a). Similarily, the verb *desfigura* in Romanian receives the representation in (8b), with the only difference that an affix projection is added to account for the verbal affix added at the end of verbs in Romanian:

(8) a. Init* *dis* (En)
```
      /\
   'x'  Proc
         /\
      'y'   Neg@*
             /\
          'y'   N@ figure (En)
```

Linearized as x [Neg Proc Init] N y

b. Init* *des* (Rom)

```
        ╱‾‾‾‾╲
      'x'    Proc
            ╱‾‾‾‾╲
          'y'   Neg@*
               ╱‾‾‾‾╲
             'y'    Aff* a
                   ╱‾‾‾‾╲
                 'y'    N@ figura (Rom)
```
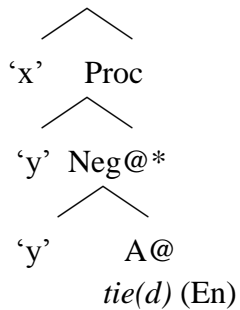
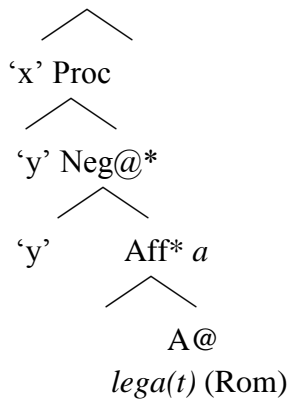Linearized as x [Neg Proc Init] [N Aff] y

       A verb such as *untie* ('cause to be no longer tied) may tentatively be assigned the representation in (9a). Similarily, in Romanian, the verb *dezlega* 'untie' may be represented as in (9b):
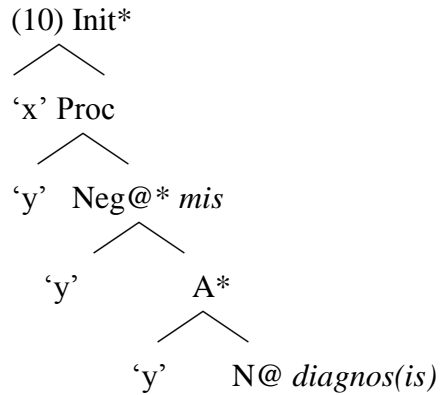
(9) a. Init* *un* (En)

```
      ╱‾‾‾‾╲
    'x'    Proc
          ╱‾‾‾‾╲
        'y'   Neg@*
             ╱‾‾‾‾╲
           'y'    A@
                 tie(d) (En)
```

Linearized as x [Neg Proc Init] A y

b. Init* *dez* (Rom)

```
      ╱‾‾‾‾╲
    'x'   Proc
         ╱‾‾‾‾╲
       'y'   Neg@*
            ╱‾‾‾‾╲
          'y'    Aff* a
                ╱‾‾‾‾╲
                      A@
                lega(t) (Rom)
```

Linearized as x [Neg Proc Init] [A Aff] y

A verb such as *misdiagnose* ('give a NOT CORRECT diagnosis'/ 'not give a CORRECT diagnosis') may tentatively be assigned the representation in (10):

(10) Init*
```
      /\
 'x' Proc
       /\
  'y'  Neg@* mis
         /\
     'y'     A*
              /\
          'y'    N@ diagnos(is)
```
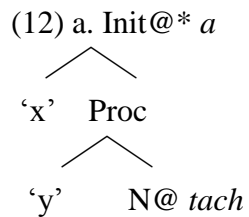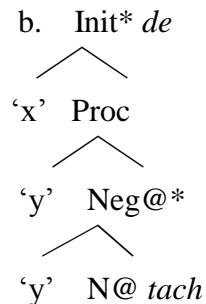
Linearized as x [Neg Proc Init] N A y

One interesting situation is represented by pairs of words such as *conflate/ deflate*, *attach/ detach* a.o., where the addition of the negative prefix may seem to lead to changes in the nominal root:

(11) *de+attach (a+ tach)=> detach*

One possibility to deal with this would be to argue that the prefix actually attaches to something which is rather a root (*tach*):

(12) a. Init@* *a*
```
      /\
 'x'   Proc
        /\
   'y'    N@ tach
```

Linearized as x [Proc Init] N y

b.   Init* *de*
```
      /\
 'x'   Proc
        /\
   'y'   Neg@*
          /\
      'y'   N@ tach
```
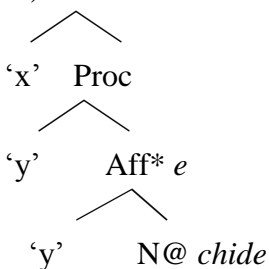
10

Linearized as x [Neg Proc Init] N y

Both *a-* and *de-* combine with *tach* separately, and it is not the case *de-* combines with *attach*.

A similar representation can be found in Romanian for pairs such as *închide* 'close' /*deschide* 'open' or *înfrunzi* 'leaf out'/ *desfrunzi* 'shed leaves', except for the addition of a verbal affix projection, necessary to account for the rich verbal morphology of verbs in Romanian:

(13) a. Init@* *în*
```
      /\
    'x'  Proc
         /\
       'y'   Aff* e
             /\
           'y'   N@ chide
```

Linearized as x [Proc Init] [N Aff] y

b. Init* *des*
```
      /\
    'x'  Proc
         /\
       'y'   Neg@*
             /\
           'y'   Aff*e
                 /\
               'y'   N@ chide
```
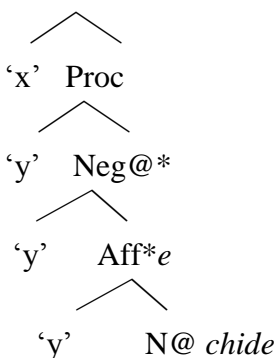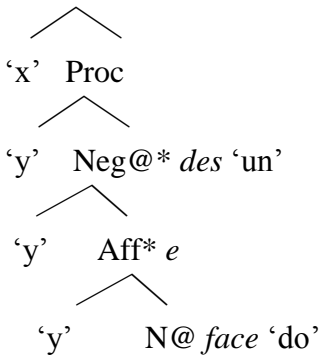
Linearized as x [Neg Proc Init] [N Aff] y
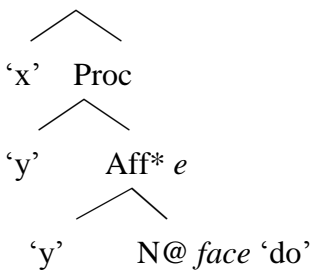
A different kind of pair is *face* 'do'/ *desface* 'undo', where the positive variant lacks any prefix:

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(14) a. Init*

```
        Init*
       /    \
     'x'    Proc
           /    \
         'y'   Neg@* des 'un'
              /    \
            'y'   Aff* e
                 /    \
               'y'   N@ face 'do'
```

Linearized as x [Neg Proc Init] [N Aff] y

b. Init@*

```
        Init@*
       /    \
     'x'    Proc
           /    \
         'y'   Aff* e
              /    \
            'y'   N@ face 'do'
```

Linearized as x [Proc Init] [N Aff] y

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, I provide first phase-syntax representations for negative verbal prefixes in English and Romanian, showing that scope phenomena can be captured syntactically if one resorts to verb-decomposition. In so doing, I use spanning as a direct linearization mechanism, as it is more economical and elegant, dismissing unnecessary movement operations. While not accounting for the choice of a particular negative prefix over another, the first phase-syntax analysis of negatively prefixed verbs within the spanning framework is, nevertheless, a useful and reliable means of capturing scope facts structurally.

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