

## “Reference, Predication, Judgment and their Relations”

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### Introduction

What are propositions such that it is not mysterious how they represent and have truth-conditions?

Over the course of the past ten-plus years, Peter Hanks and Scott Soames have developed detailed versions of *Act-Based* views of propositions which have purported to provide an illuminating answer to the above question (Hanks 2011, 2015, 2020, Soames 2010, 2014, 2015). It is easiest to get a grip on their approach by thinking of it in a two-step fashion. First, they start with acts of referring or thinking of objects *o*, acts of indicating (expressing etc.) properties *being F*, and acts of predicating the latter of the former. The key idea is that to refer to *o* and predicate *being F* of it is to represent *o* as being *F* and to perform a token of the most basic propositional act, for example, that of *judging that o is F*.<sup>1</sup> Second, they then claim that *the proposition that o is F* is just the *act-type* of *judging that o is F* which has its truth-conditions by inheritance.

The reaction to Hanks’ and Soames’ approach has been twofold. The sympathizers tend to be enthusiastic and feel that the *Act-Based* views are fundamentally on the right track. They’ve therefore mostly focused on investigating the differences between the two versions, especially when it comes to the central point of contention: the question whether predication is forceful and how to solve the Frege-Geach problem (Hom & Schwartz 2013, 2021, Recanati 2019, Reiland 2013, 2019a). In contrast, the skeptics tend to think that there is something completely wrong-headed about the approach in principle.

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<sup>1</sup> Hanks takes the act to be one of judging *that o is F*, Soames it to be that of entertaining *the proposition that o is F*. I will follow Hanks here, pretending that this difference doesn’t exist since it doesn’t matter for any of the points I’m making.

In this paper I want to take a step back from the detailed debates and discuss certain foundational aspects of the *Act-Based* approach having to do with the relations between reference, indication, predication, and judgment. I think that some of what Hanks and Soames have said about it over the years is at the very least highly misleading and as a result there is considerable confusion about this in recent commentary which has spawned several objections. For example, a very common way that people have understood the view is as follows. There are good reasons to think that we need notions of reference and property-indication that are understood independently from predication and judgment. But how are the former then related to the latter? It's simple. Reference to  $o$  + indication of *being F* + predication of *being F* of  $o$  = judgment *that o is F*. In other words, reference, predication, and indication are all *parts* of judgment which is a structured sequence of these acts.

This is a very natural way of reading some of what Hanks and Soames have said and in a recent paper Jeff Speaks has argued that it is the view they should adopt if they want to be good Fregeans. At the same time, he argues that this view faces its own kind of unity problem since such a sequence is no more than a *list* of acts and it's unclear why it should suddenly represent or have truth-conditions (Speaks 2020).

My main aim in this paper is to argue that the above way of thinking about the view is completely mistaken and betrays the basic idea behind the *Act-Based* approach. Even though it's true that we need notions of reference and indication that are understood separately from predication and judgment, their relation to the latter is not that of parts to a whole. Rather, reference to  $o$  and indication of being  $F$  are necessary preconditions for being able to predicate *being F* of  $o$ , but not parts of it. Nor are any of the above parts of judgment. Instead, to predicate *being F* of  $o$  just is to judge *that o is F* in the sense that the latter is reductively analyzed in terms of the former. Thus, judgment is not a structured sequence of anything but a simple unity in and of itself.

I will proceed as follows. I will first argue anew that we need an atomistically understood thin notion of reference, a bare act of thinking of  $o$ , bringing it to mind, making it available to do something further with it without yet doing it. However, this doesn't mean that we don't also need a more involved notion of reference, something like making  $o$  a *target* of some satisfaction-condition generating operation like predication. (Section 1). Next, I will argue against the sequential interpretation and spell out the preconditional alternative. I will also argue that Speaks's argument that Hanks and Soames should accept the former

if they want to be good Fregeans doesn't have any bite. (Section 2) Finally, I will argue that the claim that to predicate is to judge should not be understood in terms of identity or grounding, but analysis. (Section 3)

## 1. Reference: Thinking of vs. Making a Target

How should we understand the notion of reference? I think that the *Act-Based* approach is naturally coupled with the view that reference is to be understood in an atomist manner, as a bare act of thinking of an object or bringing it to mind which isn't conceptually dependent on any other act like predication or judgment. For example, it's a relatively common view in contemporary cognitive science and philosophy of perception that perception involves causally driven, non-conceptual, context- or situation-bound reference to objects (Burge 2010, Clark 2004, Fodor & Pylyshyn 2015). Furthermore, many people think that perceptual reference somehow grounds conceptual, context- or situation-bound/demonstrative reference (Campbell 2002). It's not a stretch to think that this in turn somehow grounds *naming*, which enables context- or situation-free/non-demonstrative reference. The important point is that the bare act of reference could occur independently of any further act like predication and it is what you have to *add* predication to, to get representation and propositional content.

The atomist conception of reference as a bare act of thinking of an object can be contrasted with the venerable "sentence-level" holist view stemming from Kant with his claim of the primacy of judgment over concept, elaborated by Frege and Wittgenstein with their context principle and later defended by Quine and Davidson (e. g. see Davidson 1977). On that view reference is to be understood as a holist manner, as an abstraction from something propositional.

Perhaps surprisingly, such a sentence-level holist view is not only held by the above sages and their intellectual followers like Brandom, but also by neo-Griceans like Stephen Schiffer and Stephen Neale who have proposed that we should understand the notion of reference in terms of what is for them propositionally primitive, speaker meaning. For example, Schiffer offers roughly the following analysis of speaker reference in terms of speaker meaning:

S refers to *o* in uttering *x* just in case, in uttering *x*, S means a singular, *o*-dependent proposition. (Schiffer 1981, for discussion see Neale 2015: 259-260)

Even more surprisingly, in a recent paper, Hanks himself seems to side with the sentence-level holists:

...acts of reference are possible only as elements of complete illocutionary acts with satisfaction conditions, such as assertions, questions, commands, or promises. ...Equivalently: acts of reference are possible only as they make contributions to complete illocutionary acts.... Acts of reference occur as components in acts of making assertions, asking questions, giving orders, making promises, and other illocutionary acts with satisfaction conditions. (Hanks 2019: 15)

I want to make two points about reference vis-à-vis the issue of atomism vs. sentence-level holism. First, I want to offer a simple and familiar argument to the effect that we need something like the atomist notion of reference as a bare act of thinking of. Second, I want to argue that at least some of the debate might be terminological and that we need both an atomist notion of reference as a bare act of thinking of *o*, and a more involved, holist notion of making *o* a target of predication.

Let's start with the simple argument. Consider the following five speech acts:

- (1) Using 'Arvo is a composer' to *say* that Arvo is a composer.
- (2) Using 'What is Arvo's best composition?' to *ask* what Arvo's best composition is.
- (3) Using 'Write some more music!' to *tell* Arvo to write some more music.
- (4) Using, 'Arvo, write some more music!' to *tell* Arvo to write some more music.
- (5) Using 'Arvo!' to call Arvo and get his attention.

In the (1) the name occurs in declarative sentence, in (2) in an interrogative sentence and in both of these cases it is plausibly used to make its bearer a target of some further act of operation that generates satisfaction-conditions. To stick with the simpler example, in (1) the name is used to make Arvo a target of predication of the property of being a composer.

(3) is an imperative sentence and I mostly provide it to contrast it with (4). In (3) a name doesn't occur, but the sentence's meaning requires that the speaker address the imperative to someone who is then the one told to write more music. The main point is that (4) functions exactly in the same way, the addition of the name in the appositive

position is just to aid the hearers in recovering who the imperative is addressed to, it doesn't itself contribute to the fulfilment-conditions. Thus, the way the name functions in (1) vs. (4) is quite different since in (4) it is not used to make its bearer a target of any satisfaction-condition generating operation. Finally, in (5), the name is just used in a call to get the person's attention.

Now, what about the meaning or content of the name 'Arvo' in the four instances in which it occurs? Is it the same in all cases or is it somehow different? Familiar considerations of compositionality, productivity, and learnability push us towards the view that the name 'Arvo' has exactly the same meaning in all cases. On the *Act-Based* approach it is natural to put this in terms of saying that the name is used to perform the same act in all cases. But it follows that this act has to be something like the atomistically understood act of reference in the bare sense of just thinking of an object, making it available to do something further with it, without yet doing it. Because there is no other act that is commonly performed in all four cases.

To put this argument as a challenge, if *Act-Based* theorists like Hanks really want to be holists then they need to tell us what act it is that is common to the above four cases or explain away the motivation for thinking that they involve a shared act.

However, and this brings us to my second point, the problem here might be partly terminological. I suspect that at least some people, perhaps Hanks among them, will find it intuitive to say that in cases (1) & (2) you are referring to Arvo, but in (4) and (5) you're not. Whatever you are doing by using the name, that is not referring. Then they are probably using 'reference' for a more involved notion, something like making an object a *target* of predication or some analogous satisfaction-condition-generating operation. Of course, if that is how they use 'reference' then it would not make sense for them to talk about a bare, independent act of reference any more than it makes sense to talk about a bare act of predication without mentioning that something is made a target of it. But that is just a matter of how they use the word 'reference'. It does not interact at all with our argument that we need a notion of bare act of thinking of *o*.

Furthermore, those sympathetic to atomism have no reason to deny that we also need the more involved notion of reference as making something a target of predication. The substantive debate here is between those who think that the atomist notion makes sense and those sentence-level holists who think that it doesn't make any sense at all and

that any acts of reference need to be understood in terms of the propositional or otherwise satisfaction-conditional. The above simple argument is directed against such holists and it is hard to see why an *Act-Based* theorist should be such a holist and how they could be.

## 2. Sequence versus Preconditions

We saw above that on the *Act-Based* approach it is natural to distinguish between the bare act of thinking of an object, bringing it to mind, and the involved act of making it a target of predication. The latter is basically one aspect of predication, one side of the coin, the other being predicating the property itself. The need for the distinction between two notions of reference should actually be neither controversial nor surprising since it is widely appreciated that on the *Act-Based* approach we need to draw the entirely parallel distinction between the bare act of *indicating* a property, bringing it to mind, and the act of predicating it of something. This is for two reasons.

First, consider complex properties like *being not red* or *being red or green*. Such complex properties must be formed through performing operations like negating and disjoining on simple properties. However, this requires that the simple properties themselves be made target of other acts or operations. And this means that there must be a way in which they are brought to mind that doesn't involve predicating them of something (Soames 2010: Ch. 7).

Second, consider quantification. On standard views of quantification it is conceptualized in terms of predicating second-order properties like being universally instantiated of properties themselves.<sup>2</sup> For example, on Hanks's view, to judge that everything is colored is to predicate being universally instantiated of the property of being colored. Again, this requires that properties themselves be made targets of predication and this means that there must be a way in which they're brought to mind that doesn't involve predicating them of something (Hanks 2015: 87).

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<sup>2</sup> It should be clear that this doesn't really amount to an analysis of quantification since our understanding of what it is for a property to be universally instantiated is plausibly derived from our understanding of everything having it, rather than vice versa. Whether anything more informative can be said is an open question.

We now have the basic elements of the approach together. First, there are independently understood acts of thinking of objects and acts of indicating properties. It helps to introduce a bit of formalism here. Let's use  $\text{THK}(o)$  for the former, and  $\text{IND}(F)$  for the latter. Next, there is the act of predication for which we can use Frege's assertion sign ' $\vdash$ '. In such an act something is always made a *target* of predication and something is *predicated* of the target. These are two sides of the same coin – neither can exist independently, without the other. So, really, we should write it out as follows:  $\vdash \langle \_T, \_P \rangle$  where the slot with 'T' gets filled with the target of predication and the slot with 'P' gets filled with what's predicated.<sup>3</sup> If we put it all together we seem to get:

$$\vdash \langle \text{THK}(o)_T, \text{IND}(F)_P \rangle^4$$

But how are THK and IND related to ' $\vdash \langle \_T, \_P \rangle$ ' and the judgment *that o is F*?

There are two options here that also shed some light on what exactly the question is. The first and very common view is that the former acts are literally *parts* of the acts of predication and judging, e. g. that the act of predication or judging is a *sequence* of sub-acts. The second option is that they are not part of predication and judging at all, but just necessary preconditions to be able to perform them. In what follows I will argue that the first view is completely wrongheaded, and the second view is the only one that is consistent with the basic idea behind the *Act-Based* approach.

To get the discussion going, consider the following ways Hanks has presented his view over the years (boldface indicates my emphasis):

Suppose Ann asserts that George is clever. Ann's assertion is **a composite action; it is composed out of more basic actions**. In asserting that George is clever, Ann refers to George and she predicates the property of being clever of him. ... We should therefore distinguish within an act of predication two more basic acts. In asserting that George is clever Ann singles out or identifies a certain property, the property of being clever. Let us say that Ann expresses the property of being clever. In her assertion Ann also attributes or applies this property to George. The term 'predication' is best reserved for this act of attribution or application. This

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<sup>3</sup> In cases where what is predicated is a relation we can write it like this:  $\vdash \langle \_T1, \_T2, \_P \rangle$  etc. Note that the targets now come as ordered to make clear what the order of predication is, to accommodate cases where this is needed.

<sup>4</sup> The above symbols are supposed to primarily stand for the relevant act-tokens. However, they can also double duty for the act-types.

means that the type of action Ann and Bill performed has three **components**: (i) reference to George, (ii) expression of the property of cleverness, and (iii) predication. (Hanks 2011: 11-13)

This draws out the fact that acts of predication **have a certain structure**. In the simplest cases, to engage in an act of predication requires referring to an object, identifying a property, and predicating that property of the object. Suppose Obama asserts that Clinton is eloquent. In doing so, he refers to Clinton, he expresses the property of being eloquent, and he predicates this property of Clinton. These three sub-acts **make up** Obama's act of asserting that Clinton is eloquent. (Hanks 2015: 23)

Ignoring tense, here are the propositions expressed by 'Frege was a logician', 'Was Frege a logician?', and 'Frege, be a logician!' respectively:

1.  $\vdash$  <Frege, LOGICIAN>
2. ? <Frege, LOGICIAN>
3. ! <Frege, LOGICIAN>

These are types of actions. 'Frege' stands for a type of act of referring to Frege, and 'LOGICIAN' stands for a type of act of expressing the property of being a logician. These are sub-types of the more complex types represented by (1)-(3). Read the notation here as descriptions of these complex types. In a token of (1), for example, an agent refers to Frege (**Frege**), expresses the property of being a logician (LOGICIAN), and predicates this property of Frege ( $\vdash$ ). ... **These are complex, structured types of actions whose constituents are themselves types of actions.** ... The complexity of propositions on this approach is the complexity of actions. (Hanks 2021).

Some of what Hanks says in the above quotes makes it sound like the view on offer is that:

*Sequence-P*: acts of thinking of and acts of indicating are literally *part* of the act of predication.

However, on the conception of THK and IND as bare acts of thinking of this would be bizarre. On the face of it, the above acts and  $\vdash$  <\_\_T, \_\_P> are just three separate things you can do. After all, we have already established that THK and IND could occur without predication. Of course, it is true that you can't predicate *being F* of *o* without *first* doing something like THK(*o*) and IND(*F*). Still, this doesn't give us any reason to think that these acts themselves are literal parts of the act of predication. Rather, they're just necessary preconditions for it. You can't make an object a *target* of predication, you can't get anything into the T slot, unless you first bring it to mind by THK. Similarly, you can't predicate a property of something, you can't get it into the P slot, unless you first bring it to mind by



IND. But the fact that these acts are necessary preconditions of predication doesn't mean that they're part of it.

The more interesting and very common way of construing what Hanks says above is the subtly different view that:

*Sequence:* acts of thinking of, acts of indicating, **and** acts of predicating are all separate from each other, but *part* of the act of judging. The act of judging is a structured *sequence* of sub-acts.

On this view, THK, IND, and  $\vdash \langle \_T, \_P \rangle$  are separate acts which, when performed together, literally compose the act of judging:  $\vdash \langle \text{THK}(o)_T, \text{IND}(F)_P \rangle$ . The latter is a structured sequence of sub-acts.

Many people have read Hanks and Soames as holding such a view (e. g. see King 2014: 128).<sup>5</sup> In a recent paper, Jeff Speaks argues that *Sequence*, or what he calls the *complex-act theory*, is indeed the view that Hanks and Soames should adopt (we'll come back to why, below), and reports that this is Soames's preferred view. At the same time, he claims that this gives rise to a new sort of unity problem. The whole point of the enterprise was to find a candidate for what propositions are such that it wouldn't be mysterious how they represent and have truth-conditions and thereby dissolve any putative problems regarding the "unity of the proposition". However, if we think of propositions as complex sequences of acts, we get a new sort of a unity problem:

...in one very obvious sense, the theory of propositions as complex acts is parallel to the theories of Russell and Frege. The theory is an attempt to tell us what propositions are. But if we ask what the proposition that *o* is *F* is, we are given a list of things, none of which is identical to that proposition—the act of cognizing *o*, the act of cognizing *F*, and the act of predicating *F* of *o*. These are, in the above sense, elements of the proposition that *o* is *F*: they are (according to the present theory) part of the explanation of what that proposition is, but none of them is that proposition. We are thus owed an account of how the complex act that is the proposition that *o* is *F* is related to these elements—an account of what unifies these acts into a proposition. (Speaks 2020: 652).

Indeed. If the act of judging is supposed to be a structured sequence of THK, IND, and  $\vdash \langle \_T, \_P \rangle$ , then there seems to be indeed a question why it is that that this *sequence*,

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<sup>5</sup> I used to present both Soames and Hanks's views along those lines myself in Reiland 2013.

in essence, just a list of acts, suddenly represents or has truth-conditions. Speaks goes on to discuss different sorts of responses to the problem, but to me it seems obvious that if such a problem arises then the basic idea behind the *Act-Based* approach has already been betrayed.

The culprit is construing things in the manner of *Sequence*. The same way in which there is no reason to think that THK and IND are parts of predication, there is no reason to think that these and  $\vdash \langle \_T, \_P \rangle$  are literally *parts* of judging. Rather, as suggested above, the acts of thinking of and indication are *necessary preconditions* for being able to perform the act of predication. And as Hanks and Soames frequently say, to perform the act of predication just is to perform the act of judgment (more about the exact force of the ‘is’ in the next section). So the view we should adopt is:

*Precondition:*            acts of thinking of and acts of indicating are necessary preconditions for being able to perform the act of predication. To perform the act of predication just is to perform the act of judging.

On this view, THK, IND, and  $\vdash \langle \_T, \_P \rangle$  are separate acts such that the former two are necessary preconditions for being able to perform the latter. If we want to stick with the formalism that we started with,  $\vdash \langle \text{THK}(\phi)_T, \text{IND}(F)_P \rangle$ , then it should be read in such a way that  $\text{THK}(\phi)$  and  $\text{IND}(F)$  are not taken to be parts of the predication but preconditions. However, the view is much more perspicuously represented as follows:

$$\begin{array}{l} \text{THK}(\phi); \text{IND}(F) \\ \text{---} \\ \vdash \langle (\phi)_T, (F)_P \rangle \end{array}$$

Here it is visually clear that  $\text{THK}(\phi)$  and  $\text{IND}(F)$  are not part of the act of predication, but just preconditions that occur before the latter can take place.

On this view there are no problems of unity. The act of predication itself is not structured in the sense of being composed of other acts. Rather, it is a single act that is metaphysically a *multiple relation* between the predicator, the target of predication, and what is predicated. Again, think of it like a coin with two sides, the one side being the act of

making something a target, the other the act of predicating a property of it. If the predicator makes this relation obtain, she thereby generates propositional content and truth-conditions. And since to predicate just is to judge, judgment is not structured in the sense of being composed of other acts either. This is the basic idea behind the *Act-Based* approach.

What about Speaks' reasons for claiming that Hanks & Soames should adopt *Sequence*? His point pertains to the fact that both Hanks and Soames are Fregeans insofar as they want to claim that the following speech acts express representationally equivalent yet cognitively different propositions:

(6) Arvo says: 'I am a composer.'

(7) Arvo says: 'Arvo is a composer.'

What Arvo says is true in both cases just in case if he, Arvo, is a composer. However, familiar *de se* cases show that the cognitive effects of those two propositions can potentially differ. Suppose, heaven forbid, that Arvo forgets who he is, his own name, while retaining the knowledge that he's a composer. Then it could easily happen that he believes that he is a composer while suspending judgment about the proposition that Arvo is a composer, when somehow confronted with it.

Hanks and Soames both say that what accounts for the cognitive difference is that in the former proposition the target of predication is Arvo referred to via something like the 1<sup>st</sup>-person concept or mode of presentation whereas the latter it is not. Here's Soames:

The new analysis springing from the cognitive conception of propositions distinguishes predicating P of an agent A identified as predication target in *the first-person way* from predicating P of A *however identified*. Since doing the first is also doing the second, but not conversely, the acts are different. Since the same property is predicated of the same thing, they are cognitively distinct but representationally identical propositions. (Soames 2015: 46).

Thus, on the notation we started with, we can represent the two above propositions as follows (read '*o*-1stPer' as '*o* thought of in the first-person way' and '*o*-Arvo' as '*o* thought of via the name 'Arvo'):

⊢ <THK(*o*-1stPer)<sub>T</sub>, IND(*composer*)<sub>P</sub>>

⊢ <THK(*o*-Arvo)<sub>T</sub>, IND(*composer*)<sub>P</sub>>

Speaks thinks that to give this sort of explanation Hanks and Soames must read the above notation along the lines of the *Sequence* view. On this view the two propositions can be easily distinguished since then they have two different constituent acts: one has as a constituent, as part of the sequence, the act of THK(*o-1stPer*) whereas the other doesn't.

Why does Speaks think Hanks and Soames must adopt *Sequence*? This is because he thinks that there are only two other ways of trying to distinguish between the propositions, both of which are bad. One option is to claim that the property is predicated not of the object, but of the act or mode of presentation itself (Speaks 2020: 650). This is obviously wrongheaded since it results in us ending up with propositions that are not about Arvo but about acts or senses. The other option is to claim that the modes of presentation modify the form of predication itself, leading to a proliferation of different types of predication. That seems equally wrong.

The main problem with Speaks's argument is that he has missed a third, most natural option that seems already implicit in the way Soames puts it in the quote above. On this option we insist that to use 'I am a composer' with its meaning it doesn't suffice if you just think of yourself in the first-person way: THK(*1stPer*). You also have to make yourself a *target* of predication in the first-person way! The difference becomes clear on the new notation, on which what you need to do is the following:

$$\text{THK } (o-1stPer), \text{IND } (composer)$$

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$$\vdash (o-1stPer)_T, (composer)_P \rangle$$

Here the property is still predicated of the object, but it's just that the way the object is made a target of predication is via the 1st-Person mode of presentation. However, to use 'Arvo is a composer' with its meaning all you need to do is:

$$\text{THK } (o-Arvo); \text{IND } (composer)$$

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$$\vdash (o-Arvo)_T, (composer)_P \rangle.$$

On this view the two propositions can be easily distinguished since then they just are two different acts of predication: in one the target of predication is identified via the 1<sup>st</sup>-Person mode of presentation whereas in the other it isn't.

Why has Speaks missed this option? It might be because he is at heart a Russellian and thus, even if he seems to grant that THK and IND could be performed under modes of presentation, he talks about the notion of predication as if it doesn't involve modes of presentation. As far as he is concerned you predicate a property of an object. But no-one with Fregean sympathies would grant this. The important Fregean point is that all thought is always from a partial *perspective*, via a mode of presentation, a concept etc. (Burge 2010: 45). This goes for not only acts of thinking or indicating, but also for acts of predication. More specifically, the aspects of predication involving making something a target of predication, are similarly always from a perspective. There are no bare targetings in this sense of 'bare'. We can talk about  $(\phi)_T$ , but this is just an abstraction from targetings via a mode of presentation. Thus, contrary to what Speaks thinks, you always predicate a property of an object thought of in some particular way. This is what Speaks misses and why his claim that Hanks and Soames have to adopt *Sequence* doesn't have any bite.

### 3. Predication and Judgment

Thus far we've discussed the relations between thinking of and indication on the one hand and predication and judgment on the other. It is now time to discuss the relationship between predication and judgment. Hanks and Soames frequently put it by saying that to predicate just *is* to judge. But what exactly does this mean?

One way to think about it is that these two acts are just *identical*. Of course, since to predicate is to judge it is true that every act of predication is *token-identical* to an act of judging. To put in another way, if one predicates being *F* of *o* and thereby judges *that o is F* there are no two separate brain events going on. However, both Hanks and Soames deny that the two acts are type-identical. In fact, this denial is important and gets back to Russell's original *Multiple Relation Theory of Judgment* which inspired both Hanks' and Soames' views.

On Russell's view the primary truth-bearers are acts of judging which he thought of as a multiple relation between objects, targets, and properties. On his view for one to judge that *o is F* is for one to be multiply related to the object *o* and property of *being F*, not to

stand in a dual relation to *the proposition that o is F*. At least Hanks has been deeply influenced by his reading of Wittgenstein's objection to Russell's multiple relation theory of judgment. Russell treated judging as a multiple relation between a person and disjoint items, say you, Arvo, and the property of being a composer. Wittgenstein objected that the judgment that Arvo is a composer must contain something that is capable of being true or false. However, this is not so on Russell's theory on which it is a relation to disjoint items (for this interpretation see Hanks 2015: 161-163).

Hanks' and Soames' projects start with the thought that Russell had a real insight when he thought that it is a multiple relation between a person and disjoint items what generates representation and propositional content. However, at least Hanks also thinks that Wittgenstein's objection is damning. The trick is to capture the insight while avoiding the objection. This can be done if we distinguish between predication and judging qua types:

We can take predication to be a polyadic relation that a subject bears to various, disconnected entities. Russell's mistake was to confuse the relation of judgment with the relation of predication. Facts about predication ground facts about judgment, but the two kinds of facts must be kept distinct from one another. (Hanks 2015: 163)<sup>6</sup>

To predicate is to stand in a multiple relation to disjoint items. A predicator chooses a target of predication and then predicates a property of it. But to judge is not to stand in a multiple relation to disjoint items, but to perform an act with propositional content, an act that thus "contains" something capable of being true or false. Still, Hanks, seems to think, to predicate is to judge in the sense that facts of predication *ground* the facts about judging.

How should we understand this grounding-claim? It's natural to take the notions of *grounding*, *making the case* and *metaphysical determination* to be equivalent, and inverse to the notion of *in virtue of*. All of these are standardly taken to be relations between facts (Audi 2012: 686, Rosen 2010). A set of facts *A* makes it the case that fact *f* obtains, it determines or grounds *f*. Inversely, *f* obtains in virtue of *A*. However, even though there has been lots of confusion over this in 20th century philosophy, questions of grounding should be sharply distinguished from questions about nature or essence that standardly take the form 'What is X?', e. g. 'What is knowledge?' (Rosen 2010). While the former are questions about

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<sup>6</sup> For Soames' reasons for distinguishing between predication and judgment see Soames 2010: 61-66.

facts, the latter are plausibly questions about *properties* and their asymmetric, reductive analysis in terms of other properties and structure (e. g. Schroeder 2007: Ch. 4).

Hanks puts his claim about the relation between predication and judging in terms of grounding: facts about predication ground facts about judging. However, if this were the best way of thinking about things then it wouldn't be true that to predicate just *is* to judge. Rather, it would be the case that one set of facts, about predication, would determine another set of facts, about judgment. Then it wouldn't probably even be true that acts of predication are token identical to judgments.

However, I think the view that Hanks and Soames intend or at least the one they should adopt is better put in terms of nature, essence or analysis. What it is to judge that *o* is *F* is to be reductively analyzed in terms of predicating being *F* of *o*. This makes sense of the claim that to predicate just is to judge. The 'is' is not one of identity, but one of analysis or reduction like the 'is' in the claim that knowledge is justified true belief. This gets us what we need: token identity, type difference.<sup>7</sup>

As we have seen, predication is metaphysically a multiple relation between disjoint items: a predicator, a target, and the property predicated. But what should we say about judgment?

We know that judging can't be a multiple relation since it is supposed to be an act with propositional content. Perhaps simply following the Frege-Russell tradition or the general orthodoxy, Hanks and Soames keep insisting that judgment is therefore a binary, dyadic, two-place relation, more specifically a tokening-relation between the judger and a proposition:

Roughly speaking, attitude relations are tokening relations. ... Attitude relations, on my theory, are binary relations to propositions. Judgment, for example, is a relation a subject bears to a

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<sup>7</sup> Don't be put off the plausibility of the reductive claim by the fact that 'judgment' as used in ordinary language and in a lot of philosophy, especially epistemology, is a much richer notion than something that could result from mere predication. I've discussed this before, arguing that we should distinguish between the thin predication-resultant notion of judging, *S(emantic)-judging*, from the much richer notion used in epistemology, *E(pistemic)-judging* which is something like the act of settling a question about how things are in the light of one's evidence (a theoretical decision that concludes theoretical deliberation, analogously to how a practical decision concludes practical deliberation.) To illustrate the difference between these two notions: when one guesses that *p*, one *S*-judges that *p*, but doesn't *E*-judge that *p*. When you *S*-judge you exhibit being a *representational* creature, but not necessarily yet an *epistemic* one. The analytic or reductive claim of the *Act-Based* theory is strictly about *S*-judging (for more, see Reiland 2019b).

type. To judge that Clinton is eloquent is to perform a token judgment of the type  $\vdash \langle \text{Clinton, ELOQUENT} \rangle$ . (Hanks 2015: 161)

But this is a somewhat bizarre claim. There is no fundamental or interesting sense of ‘is’ in which judgment is a tokening relation of a type. This is easiest to see once we remind ourselves that on the *Act-Based* approach it is the properties of tokens that ground the properties of types. Namely, it is the actual token acts of predication and judgment that are supposed to generate truth-conditions. As Hanks puts it himself:

The order of explanation for truth conditions goes from particular judgments and assertions to propositions. ... Particular acts of judging, asserting, wondering, asking, wanting, intending, requesting, promising, and ordering are the explanatorily basic bearers of satisfaction conditions. Propositions inherit their satisfaction conditions from these actions. (Hanks 2015: 26).

Thus, on Hanks’s own view the properties of token acts of judgment are more fundamental than those of the types. The properties of tokens are what ground the properties of types. But then what sense is there to the claim that judgment is a tokening relation to a type? After all, the judgment is supposed to be prior and more fundamental than the type so it can’t itself be understood as a relation to the type.<sup>8</sup>

I think the natural view here is that metaphysically, a particular judgment is not a relation at all, but a *monadic property*, a specific modification of the mind. To *judge that o is F* is to instantiate a particular monadic property that *has propositional content*. To *judge that o is G* is to instantiate a different monadic property that has a different propositional content. Even though in both cases we can identify something that is in common, the attitudinal aspect of how the mind is modified, this doesn’t require us to treat the act as a *relation* to an object. Two analogies might be helpful here.

First, consider *adverbialism* about sensations like pain. On the adverbialist view for you to feel pain is for you to have a monadic property, a particular modification of your conscious experience, namely *pained-ly*. It’s not for you to be related to anything. Of

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<sup>8</sup> This also means that Hanks’s own view is inconsistent with his claim that propositions qua types could exist without any acts of predication (Hanks 2015: 27). I’ve discussed this inconsistency briefly before in Reiland 2017. It’s also unclear how the above claims about the primacy of token acts in the generation of content relate to the *interpretivist* aspects of Hanks’s view on which he claims that it’s the subsequent assignment of acts into types that creates *determinate* content (Hanks 2015: 208-210).



course, this is not a perfect analogy since on the adverbialist view sensations aren't representational or have propositional content, but it's useful to keep in mind.

Second, consider *representationalist* views of visual experience, the common factor between perceptual experiences and hallucinations. On the representationalist view for you to visually experience a pink elephant is for you to be in mental state that represents a pink elephant at this and that location etc. and is accurate or inaccurate depending on whether there is one. It would be highly misleading to think that for you to be in this representational state is for you to be related to anything at all, least of all a proposition. That way lies the veil of propositions. Rather, a much more natural view is that it is for you to instantiate a monadic property which represents there being a pink elephant and thereby has propositional content.<sup>9</sup>

Let me finish by making two small points that should make the above claim that on the *Act-Based* view judgment should be metaphysically thought of as a monadic property sound a lot less radical. First, of course, judgment can still be *derivatively* characterized as tokening of the type. It's just that this can't be the basic metaphysical story of what it really is. Second, this is a claim in metaphysics. It doesn't necessarily have any bearing on how propositional attitude ascription works in language and what the right semantics is for propositional attitude verbs like 'judge'. But this is a topic for another time.

## Conclusion

My aim in this paper has been to discuss certain foundational aspects of the *Act-Based* approach having to do with the relations between reference, indication, predication, and judgment.

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<sup>9</sup> See also the discussion of fearing *that p* vs. fearing *the proposition that p* in Grzankowski 2016: 317-318. Like judgment that p, fear that p is a propositional attitude, one that has propositional *content*. However, like fear of Fido, fear *of* the proposition that p is an *objectual* attitude, one that is directed towards an object, the proposition that p. Treating judgments as binary relations to propositions seems very much like treating them on the second model whereas it is the first one that is the right one. All of this might be due to the prejudicial use of the standard Russellian terminology on which propositions are supposed to be "objects of the attitudes". As if for a judgment or fear that p to have the propositional content that p were for it to be related to a proposition qua an object. That was true on Russell's own conception of propositions as chunks of the world the attitudes were *about*. But it makes very little sense on the broadly Fregean conception of propositions, held also by the *Act-Theorists*, on which they are themselves supposed to be representational and have truth-conditions.

I first argued that we need an atomistically understood thin notion of reference, a bare act of thinking of *o*, bringing it to mind, making it available to do something further with it without yet doing it. However, this doesn't mean that we don't further need a more involved notion of reference, making *o* a *target* of some satisfaction-condition generating operation like predication.

Second, I've argued that the acts of thinking of *o* and indication of the property of *being F* are in no sense parts of the acts of predication of *being F* of *o* and judgment *that o is F*. Rather, the former are simply necessary preconditions for the performance of the latter. The acts of predication or judgment are emphatically not structured sequences of separate acts but unities in and of themselves.

Finally, I've argued that we should understand the relationship between the act of predication of *being F* of *o* and the judgment *that o is F* as one of analysans to analysandum. To say that to predicate is to judge is to say that judgment is reductively analyzed in terms of predication. Furthermore, while predication is metaphysically a multiple relation between disjoint items, namely a predicator, a target, and the property predicated, judgment is metaphysically not a relation at all. Rather, it is a monadic property, just one that has propositional content. It can only derivatively be characterized as relational, as standing in the being-a-token-of-relation to a type.

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