

Propositional Attitudes in Russell's *Analysis of Mind*
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June 6, 2022

Five Russellian Principles:

(T/F) Each belief has exactly one of the following two properties: truth, falsity.

(PART) In a propositional attitude, the entities that are the subject-matter of this attitude are also parts of the propositional attitude.

(ACT) In a propositional attitude, the mental subject or act is a part of the propositional attitude.

(SYM) In a propositional attitude, at least one of the entities that are the subject-matter of this attitude are not a part of the propositional attitude, but something that means that entity is.

(T/F*) Beliefs are true or false due to the presence of a proposition whose essence is its capacity to be either true or false.

Proposed Reconstruction:

Russell initially accepts (T/F), (PART) and (ACT), but is convinced by Wittgenstein that (T/F*) is the best explanation of (T/F). This requires (SYM), and so displaces both (PART) and (ACT).

A. "We may identify propositions in general with the contents of actual and possible beliefs, and we may say that it is propositions that are true or false" (AM, 241). (Cf. OP, first paragraph)

B. The *objective reference* of a belief is the *relation* that the belief stands in to the fact that makes it either true or false.

"It is clear that the objective reference of a belief is, in general, in some way derivative from the meanings of the words or images that occur in its content ... it is a very singular thing that meaning, which is single, should generate objective reference, which is dual, namely true or false. This is one of the facts which any theory of belief must explain if it is to be satisfactory" (AM, 235).

C. "We defined the meaning of an image or word by causal efficacy, namely by associations: an image or word acquires meaning, we said, through having the same associations as what it means" (AM, 244).

D. "Not any series of words is a proposition, but only such series of words as have 'meaning', or, in our phraseology, 'objective reference.' Given the meanings of separate words, and the rules of syntax, the meaning of a proposition is determinate. This is the reason why we can understand a sentence we never heard before" (AM, 241).

E. Conclusion: "the objective reference of a belief is not determined by the fact alone, but by the direction of the belief towards or away from the fact" (AM, 272). (Wittgenstein cited here.)

Why? "The objective reference of a proposition is a function (in the mathematical sense) of the meanings of its component words. But the objective reference differs from the meaning of a word through the duality of truth and falsehood." (AM, 272).

If a proposition is made true by a fact, then it stands in a different objective reference relation to that fact than a proposition that is made false by that very same fact.

F. Upshot: “in order to define the reference of a proposition we have to take account not only of the objective, but also of the direction of pointing, towards the objective in the case of a true proposition and away from it in the case of a false one” (AM, 272).

G. Solution: “we know the meaning of a proposition when we know what would make it true and what would make it false, even if we do not know whether it is in fact true or false” (AM, 273). “By this hypothetical form we are able to speak of the meaning of a proposition without knowing whether it is true or false” (AM, 273).

For example, by knowing the meanings of “window”, “left of” and “door”, we can know that “the window is to the left of the door” would be true if the positive fact involving those meanings (in that order) obtained, and would be false if the negative fact involving those meanings (in that order) obtained.

Russell concludes “The purely formal definition of truth and falsehood offers little difficulty” (AM, 273).

H. Wittgenstein: “The Bedeutung of a proposition is the fact that corresponds to it, e.g., if our proposition be ‘aRb’, if it’s true, the corresponding fact would be aRb, if false, the fact \sim aRb. But ‘the fact aRb’ and ‘the fact \sim aRb’ are incomplete symbols, which must be analysed.

That a proposition has a relation (in wide sense) to Reality, other than that of Bedeutung, is shown by the fact that you can understand it when you don’t know the Bedeutung, i.e. don’t know whether it is true or false. Let us express this by saying ‘It has sense’ (Sinn)” (NM, 112).

I. Wittgenstein: “From this it results that ‘true’ and ‘false’ are not accidental properties of a proposition, such that, when it has meaning, we can say it is also true or false: on the contrary, to have meaning *means* to be true or false: the being true or false actually constitutes the relation of the proposition to reality, which we mean by saying that it has meaning (*Sinn*)” (NM, 113).

J. Wittgenstein: “The relation of ‘I believe p’ to ‘p’ can be compared to the relation of ‘p’ says (besagt) p’ to p: it is just as impossible that I should be a simple as that ‘p’ should be” (NM, 119). (Cf. Tractatus 5.542, Russell’s Introduction, CP9, 109-110.)

K. Russell (Aug. 1919): “a Gedanke [thought] is Tatsache [fact]: what are its constituents and components, and what is their relation to those of the pictured Tatsache [fact]?” Also: “Does a Gedanke [thought] consist of words?” (CL 62, p. 96).

Wittgenstein’s response (Aug. 1919): “I don’t know what the constituents of a thought are but I know that it must have such constituents which correspond to the words of Language. Again the kind of relation of the constituents of thought and of the pictured fact is irrelevant. It would be a matter of psychology to find that out.”

These thoughts do not consist of words “But of psychical constituents that have the same sort of relation to reality as words. What those constituents are I don’t know” (CL 63, pp. 98-99).