

Bradley's Supposed Rejection of Subject-Predicate Judgements

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In his book on Bradley, Wollheim maintains that Bradley criticizes the traditional subject-predicate view of judgement. Let's see Bradley's argument according to Wollheim:

- (.) In predication we assert, let's say, that A is B. Then:
- (1) All subject-predicate judgements are judgements of identity.
- (2) All true judgements of identity are tautologies.
- (3) All tautologies are false.

(.) Therefore, if we want to maintain that judgements are true and that they are subject-predicate in form, we must assert that subject and predicate make an adjective and this adjective is a predicate of the whole reality which is the metaphysical subject of every judgement.¹

According to both Allard and Griffin, this reconstruction of Bradley's argument against subject-predicate judgements is wrong.² Let's see why briefly.

(1) "All subject-predicate judgements are judgements of identity". Wollheim admits that Bradley never affirms this but finds context support for it³, although really there is none. As a matter of fact, there are texts where Bradley states that judgements of identity are a kind of judgement together with other types of judgement. "A is B" can mean: inclusion, identity or belonging to the meaning of a subject.⁴ But this, Bradley maintains, does not give the essence of judgement. And when Bradley talks about identity, he refers to it from an idiosyncratic view. According to Bradley⁵, in any judgement, we assert, directly, the connection of several attributes with an indirect reference to an identical subject, or we assert directly the identity of the subject with an implication of different attributes. Every judgement⁶ involves both aspects - the connection of the differences and the identity of the subject - but we can emphasize one aspect or the other. In the first case, we read the judgement in intension, and in the second in extension. Every judgement has an identical subject, that is, the ground of judgement, but this subject can be asserted indirectly (intension) or directly (extension).

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(2) "All true judgements of identity are tautologies". This is a difficult issue. Griffin⁷ points out, against Wollheim, that Bradley rejects the view that identities are tautologies⁸ but Rodriguez-Consegra does not agree with this.⁹ I shall not talk about this further because Wollheim's reconstruction already fails in its first premise.

(3) "All tautologies are false". Bradley is not maintaining that judgements are in *no* sense true. He is saying that, if we take a judgement as asserting the existence of its content as given fact, our procedure is unwarranted. Falseness happens when a fraction of the truth is used to qualify the whole.¹⁰

Although Wollheim's reconstruction fails, Griffin has attempted an alternative.¹¹ He summarises the argument as follows: "The conclusion Bradley is seeking to derive is that all subject-predicate judgements about part of what is given are false. To derive from them a true judgement, one has to add that they are true only on the condition that the rest of what is given is thus and so. Thus true judgements about the given are not categorical but conditional. But, since the given itself is supposed not to be separable from the nongiven, we can draw wider conclusions. Any judgement, it would seem, cannot be both true and subject-predicate in form, since whatever the subject refers to is inseparably linked to the rest of reality, and the judgement is true only on condition that the rest of reality is taken into account. It still seems, however, that we have no argument against a true subject-predicate judgement in which the subject expression refers to the whole of reality... Griffin continues by trying to prove that Bradley maintains that, when the subject is the Absolute, subject-predicate judgements are false. (This, if not wholly wrong, is inaccurate: this argument is against every judgement. But it is not a Bradleyan argument).

Allard has pointed out that there is not just one single argument against subject-predicate propositions, but several, connected with different types of propositions².

Chapter 3 of Mander's book on Bradley's *Metaphysics*¹³, concerns subject-predicate judgements. Mander maintains that there are four Bradleyan arguments against subject-predicate judgements. The first: "For him [Bradley], the basic unit of meaning is the actual judgement, which is not to be thought of as broken up in this way into propositional content and attitude." When we deny, doubt or ask, subject-predicate form is not present¹⁴. The second argu-

ment¹⁵: Bradley rejects that "A is B" only means inclusion, identity or belonging to the meaning of a subject. The third argument¹⁶: "In symbolic terms [Bradley maintains] the whole judgement is homogeneous and one idea, or at least any divisions within it are arbitrary. Thus he claims that whatever exists before the mind is one idea, not a subject-predicate complex"¹⁷, and this idea is predicated of reality. The fourth argument¹⁸ is against Herbart's view of judgement (which we will see below).

In my opinion, these views are misleading. It is right that Wollheim is wrong in his reconstruction of Bradley's arguments, but not completely. Wollheim is right about the conclusion of Bradley's arguments. Bradley does not reject subject-predicate judgements but rather attacks the idea that there is some judgement in which the subject is the nude reality. There is no categorical judgement, if a categorical judgement is a judgement that asserts or denies a fact¹⁹ and a fact is a copy, a reflecting of reality²⁰. This is Mander's fourth supposed argument against subject-predicate judgement, occupying most of chapter II²¹ of *The Principles of Logic* (Griffin's main source of textual evidence). But it is not an argument against subject-predicate judgement. The other supposed arguments against subject-predicate judgement are in chapter I. The second of Mander's argument is a rejection of some views of subject-predicate judgements as the essence of it²² and this is not a rejection of subject-predicate judgements. The third argument implies that if we want to maintain the statement that there are true judgements with subject-predicate structure, we must suppose that subject and predicate form an adjective which is predicated of the whole reality. Hence this is not an argument against subject-predicate judgement, but the rejection of a concrete interpretation of this view and, as such, connected with Mander's fourth argument which is not against subject-predicate judgements. Let's see all this.

In chapter II of *The Principles of Logic*, Bradley maintains that a categorical judgement is a judgement which states that a fact is asserted or denied (§3).²³ And since no judgement can do this, all judgement is hypothetical (§3). Bradley begins by mentioning Herbart. He is wrong when he accepts that judgements are about things. Herbart maintains that we have a union or synthesis of ideas in mind and this conjunction expresses a similar conjunction of facts outside the mind. Truth and fact are the same but in a different sphere. Bradley objects that if a judgement is a union of ideas and the truth can only be found in judgements, how can ideas and reality relate? A

fact is individual, substantial, self-existent; an idea is universal, adjective, symbolic (§3). That is, reality and truth diverge (§§4-5). Therefore, facts cannot be reflected as on a mirror in our mind, because then there would be negative facts, hypothetical facts (and then, where is "if... then"?), and disjunctive facts (what can exist as "b or c"?) (§6).

It is true that Bradley maintains that subject-predicate judgements are insufficient, but he is not rejecting this view: he rejects concrete interpretations of this view; as, in Chapter I, he has rejected other interpretations²⁴. In chapter II of *The Principles of Logic* he wonders if there are any categorical judgements, that is, judgements that, according to his definition, contain or reflect reality.²⁵

So, in the rest of chapter II²⁶ of *The Principles of Logic*, Bradley starts from a classification of judgements to show that all judgements are hypothetical and non-categorical. He begins with singular judgements. Firstly: analytic judgements of sense, which "make an assertion about that which I now perceive, or feel, or about some portion of it and we simply analyze it" (§7). Hence, these judgements are the closest to facts.

In analytic singular judgements, when you say "Fire" or "Rain" "you certainly are judging without any other subject than the whole sensible present" (§15, I, A, a). In other linguistic utterances we can say, for example, "running" when we refer to a visible wolf. "It may be said, no doubt, that the subject is elided, but this would be a mere linguistic prejudice. The genuine subject is not an idea, elided or expressed, but it is the immediate sensible presentation" (ibid., b). In the case of those analytic judgements where the subject is expressed "The ideal content of the predicate is here referred to another idea, which stands as a subject. But in this case, as above, the ultimate subject is no idea, but is the real in presentation. It is this to which the content of both ideas, with their relation, is attributed" (§15, B). To sum up, in every analytic judgement a part of the real present environment is authentically the subject of which a whole complex of ideas is asserted. If we say "This bird is yellow", "It is not the bare idea, symbolized by "this bird", of which we go on to affirm the predicate. It is the fact distinguished and qualified by "this bird", to which the adjective "yellow" is really attributed. The genuine subject is the thing as perceived, the content of which our analysis has divided into "this bird" and "yellow", and of which we predicate indirectly those ideal elements in their union" (§16). And Bradley continues, "If you deny this, then show me where

you draw your line, and what point it is in the scale of judgements at which the idea takes the place of the sensible fact, and becomes the true subject" (idem.).

Bradley maintains that every singular judgement has the same contact with reality. Every singular judgement has a part that circumscribes and denotes a part of reality but specified by an ideal content of which we assert some idea or predicate. There are no bare facts, but the real subject is reality of which we assert something. Consideration of proper names makes this more clear. Bradley rejects logically proper names in the sense required by Russell's Atomism. Proper names have connotation or intension. A proper name typically is a sign which means an individual which endures and is identifiable through time and space; it thus has a universal meaning. "If you say that, like 'this' and 'here', it is merely the ideal equivalent of pointing, then at once it assuredly has a meaning, but unfortunately that meaning is a vague universal. For anything and everything is 'this' and 'here'." And "You may have no idea what 'William' connotes, but if so you can hardly know what it stands for" (§17).

Bradley adds that time and space are not principles of individuation: "There is nothing whatever in the idea of a series to hint that there may not be any number of series, internally all indistinguishable from the first. ... and it is idle to say 'my' [series], for it is only in my element that yours and mine collide. Outside it they are indifferent, and the expression 'my' will not distinguish one world from the other" (§21). It is the unique which is given: "It is by the reference of our series to the real, as it appears directly within this point of contact, or indirectly in the element continuous with this point, that these series become exclusive" (§22).

Therefore, singular judgement can not be categorical, it can not reflect reality, like a mirror. As Bradley expresses it in §61, analytic singular judgements (the closest, supposedly, to facts) are false because they come short of the fact. "And it is precisely this coming short of the fact, and stating a part as if it were the whole, which makes the falseness of the analytic judgement." And in § 67 he says, "Now I am not urging that analytic judgement is in no sense true. I am saying that, if you take it as asserting the existence of its content as given fact, your procedure is unwarranted. And I ask, on what principle do you claim the right of selecting what you please from the presented whole and treating that fragment as an actual quality? ... A fraction of the truth, here as often elsewhere, becomes entire falsehood, because it is used to qualify the whole."

For this reason, subject-predicate judgements are not false, but all judgements are either false and categorical or conditioned and, consistently, non-categorical. Bradley says: "Asserting, as it does, of the particular presentation, it must always suppose a further content, which falls outside that fraction it affirms" (§68). In §71, Bradley considers an objection: "Admitted that in the series of phenomena every element is relative to the rest and is because of something else, yet for all that the judgement may be categorical. The something else, though we are unable to bring it within the judgement, though we can not in the end ever know it at all and realize it in thought, is, for all that, fact." The "because" is a real ground, and then, the judgement is true and categorical. Bradley retorts that the "because" is never realized. In a Kantian argument, he says that the condition of "because" is that everything exists, that we have every condition of space and time, but this is impossible (§75).

Bradley stresses (§§ 73-74) that this does not mean that mind distorts reality. "The reality is given and is present to sense; but you can not, ... convert this proposition, and say Whatever is present and given is, as such, real. The present is not merely that section of the phenomena in space and time which it manifests to us. It is not simply the same as its appearance" (§74).

Therefore, according to Bradley, there are no categorical judgements, if these are understood as asserting or denying a bare fact. Judgements never show a bare reality²⁷. This is his real goal and not to reject subject-predicate judgements as Griffin, Allard and Mander maintain. Because, besides this, Bradley's logic is not symbolic logic but epistemology, we see that his analyses are not about the structure of judgements but about the relation between judgement and reality. When he says that a judgement is hypothetical he is not saying that the right logical form of judgments is material implication, but that judgements form a system, the system of appearances.

We can stress Bradley's views on this subject by considering another misinterpretation of his position. According to Wollheim, in chapter II of *The Principles of Logic*, Bradley uses a "designation argument": unambiguous reference to an object in singular judgement²⁸ is impossible because every expression that refers to an object involves universals²⁹. According to Wollheim, Bradley is wrong because he maintains that reference involves singular designation; expressions refer to objects. This, Wollheim says, is against ordinary opinion; it is we who refer to objects by using expressions.³⁰ However, first, Bradley maintains that there is no bare reality; second, this is not a Bradleyan

view, since he stresses that an object is identified by its content (if two objects have the same qualities, then they are the same object); and finally, it is wrong to say that Bradley maintains that expressions refer to objects, because the activity of a subject is the support of meaning. Appearances, that is, the result of judgement, arise because of thought and, therefore, because of the subject.³¹

Bradley maintains that we only know by judging and whenever we judge we are in the presence of appearances. This does not mean that "...the thing always itself is an appearance. We mean its character is such that it becomes one, as soon as we judge it. And this character, we have seen throughout our work, is ideality. Appearance consists in the looseness of content from existence; and, because of this self-estrangement, every finite aspect is called an appearance. And we have found that everywhere throughout the world such ideality prevails" (AR, p.430). Content and existence are the effects of a distinction, not of a division: "If we take up anything considered real, no matter what it is, we find in it two aspects. There are always two things we can say about it; and, if we cannot say both, we have not got reality. There is a "what" and a "that", an existence and a content, and the two are inseparable" (AR, p.143).

In *The Principles of Logic*,³² existence is characterized by "this" and "thisness"; particularity (§23). Particularity is the character of not being able to exhaust its aspects or qualities. Particularity involves being represented in a series, but this does not exhaust particularity. A particular is in an externally exclusive series, that is, the series does not refer to anything, and it only occurs when that series is the only reality (§38). Existence is the appearance of that permanent fund which our ideas, our predicates, never exhaust; the Absolute, the Reality. A particular is not the whole reality. Appearances are real but they are not the whole reality. Then, the distinction content-existence raises the ground of what is, but always in the form of thought, as meaning, as content, as sign, as symbol, as relation, in a word, as appearance.³³

Bradley maintains that being appearance is being in thought. Thought works with ideas. An idea is, logically, a symbol. With respect to a symbol, Bradley distinguishes what it means from what it stands for. The first consists in those attributes by which we recognize the second. It is the intensional, the universal, the ideal, the qualitative, the symbolic. The second is the real, the particular, the extensional and refers to what makes the meaning true.³⁴

Intension can be extension, intension can be referred. Firstly, because an idea is always fact and symbol.³⁵ Secondly, because extension refers, ultimately, to the real. But it may directly signify: (a) any other more concrete idea which contains the intension (for example, horse and race-horse), or (b) any individual of which the intension can be predicated (this horse).³⁶

Therefore, in Bradley, an appearance (symbol, idea, etc.) stands ultimately for reality. "As long as the content stands for something other than its own intent and meaning, as long as the existence actually is less or more than what it essentially must imply, so long we are concerned with mere appearance, and not with genuine reality. And we have found in every region that this discrepancy of aspects prevails. The internal being of everything finite depends on that which is beyond it."³⁷ Appearances are, then, the outcome of predicating a meaning of reality. In judgements we identify this meaning (or content) with the content of the thing; an appearance is compared with another, and the result is appearance also, that is to say, meaning or relativity.³⁸ For this reason there are no categorical judgements: there are no judgements reflecting reality, like a mirror.

Bradley stresses that all is experience. Meaning is experience, too. He does not give any other explanation of what meaning is. (His first metaphor, "meaning consists of a part of the content, cut off, fixed by the mind, and considered apart from the existence of the sign"³⁹, is rejected afterwards.⁴⁰) However, it can be deduced from the above that, to talk about appearances (contents, symbols, relations, an so on) is to talk about meanings. As a matter of fact, Bradley asserts: "Reality, in short, means what it stands for, and stands for what it means"⁴¹. Reality means to do away with symbols, appearances, meanings; but this is impossible for us; we are, always, in the presence of appearances. Appearance refers to a whole that never presents itself - it is an X^{42} - but it always appears as meaning. And this means relation. Ideality is relativity. "The relational form is a compromise on which thought stands, and which it develops".⁴³ Appearances are meanings because they are always incomplete, they always refer to another thing. This is meaning: to be incomplete, to be relative. All appearances refer, on one hand, to their existence, the Absolute, the Reality, the Other, which can never be thought completely. On the other hand, appearances, due to their content, refer also to other appearances, to the ideal system of appearances, which, however, can never embrace the whole to be Absolute Reality. In this way, Bradley asserts that

every judgement is not categorical but hypothetical or, as he put it in *Appearance and Reality*, every judgement is conditional, which means that the judgement is incomplete and what completes it is the Other.⁴⁴

To conclude, textual evidence normally quoted to justify the claim that Bradley rejects subject-predicate judgements has other functions: namely to reject concrete interpretations of subject-predicate judgements. Bradley has his own view of subject-predicate judgement: in a judgement subject and predicate form an adjective which is predicated of the whole reality. It is true that Bradley rejects subject-predicate judgements, but in the same sense that he rejects relations, substances, primary and secondary qualities, and so on.⁴⁵ Bradley says:

I do not believe that a monistic view (or any other view) can reconstitute intelligibly a given relational whole (or indeed any given whole). And I entirely reject the idea that the relation of subject and attribute is in the end intelligible or satisfactory. What I thought I had argued was that every analysis into terms and relations fails. And, far from accepting the relation of subject and attribute as ultimately true, I (as I thought) had very plainly said the opposite. I went so far as to urge that no truth (stated as truth must be stated) could in the end be quite true. At the same time I raised the question of the selfcontradiction, which arises by denying all truth, and endeavoured to show how this was avoided.

I do not imagine for a moment that what I wrote can in the end be satisfactory, but the above is what I aimed at. You on the other side evidently understand me as offering to reconstruct the Universe intelligibly. I may and perhaps must have failed in clearness on this point, but I don't and can't admit that my intention was doubtful.⁴⁶

1. Wollheim 1959, p.73 -89. Cf. Allard 1986, p.28 and Griffin 1983, pp.200-201.
2. Allard 1986, p.27 and Griffin 1983, p.214 ad finem.
3. Wollheim 1959, pp.73 and 74.
4. Bradley, F.H. *The Principles of Logic* (2nd. ed.) (PL in the following). Bk I, Ch I, §16 . Cf. Allard 1986, p.33 and Griffin 1983, p.201-207.
5. PL, Bk I, Ch VI, §12.
6. Ibid. §11.
7. Griffin 1983, pp.207-208.
8. PL, Bk I, Ch V, §§ 1 and 2.
9. Rodriguez Consuegra 1991b, pp.158 and 170-171.
10. See below and cf. Allard 1986, p.34.
11. Griffin 1983, pp.214-221. Quotation pp.217-218.
12. Allard 1986, p.38.
13. Mander 1994.
14. Mander 1994, pp.62-63.

15. *ibid.* pp.63-65.
16. *ibid.* pp.65-69.
17. *ibid.* p.68 ad finem.
18. *ibid.* pp.69 and ff.
19. PL, Bk I, Ch II, §3.
20. *ibid.* §6.
21. PL, Bk I, in the following.
22. PL, Bk I, Ch I, §16.
23. PL, Bk I, Ch II in the following.
24. Andrea Rieber in her paper "Meaning and Metaphysics in F. H. Bradley's Principles of Logic" (*Bradley Studies*, 3:2, 1997, pp113-28) points out another interpretation of subject-predicate judgements rejected by Bradley: inherence. A subject-predicate judgement does not mean that an attribute inheres on a subject.
25. Bradley does not criticize a linguistic theory, but states the relationship between language and reality (Sievers 1991, p.135). But I disagree with Sievers in that Bradleyan doctrines about judgement were psychological theories.
26. PL, Bk I, Ch II, in the following.
27. PL, Bk I, Ch II, §5. Appearance and Reality (2nd edition) (AR in the following) p.145.
28. Wollheim 1956, p.63.
29. *ibid.* p.53.
30. *ibid.* p.68.
31. AR p.430.
32. PL, Bk I, Ch II.
33. PL, Bk I, Ch I, §§ 1,2,3,9 and 10. AR, p.148.
34. PL, Bk I, Ch VI, §§ 1 and 2, and Ch I, §22.
35. AR, p.166; PL, Bk I, Ch I, §§ 1-9.
36. PL, Bk I, Ch VI, §1.
37. AR, p.403 (ad finem)-404.
38. AR, pp.160 and 146.
39. PL, Bk I, Ch I, §4.
40. PL, Bk I, Ch I, §4 footnote * and note 7 (2nd edition).
41. AR, p.198; *vid.* Ch XV.
42. PL, Bk I, Ch II, note 45.
43. AR, p.159.
44. AR, p.320-321.
45. AR, Bk I "Appearance", *passim*.
46. Bradley to Russell, 11th March 1907.

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