

Week 8 Notes

Outline:

Recapitulation.

I. The Social Metaphysics of Normativity

- 1) Normative statuses and normative attitudes.
- 2) Normative attitudes of attribution and acknowledgment.
Context of assessment/deliberation.
(Compare: normative statuses of commitment and entitlement.)
- 3) JTB example, in a *pragmatic* MV.
- 4) Traditional status-dependence of normative attitudes vs. Modern attitude-dependence of normative statuses. Contract theories of political obligation, see norms as emerging from attitudes of those governed.
- 5) Kant on autonomy.
- 6) Hegel on reciprocal recognition.

II. Making Normative Attitudes/Statuses Explicit in an Extension of the Base Vocabulary: From Attributions to Ascriptions

- 1) Making attitudes and statuses explicit. From attribution to ascription.
- 2) In ascribing one is doing *two* things, *attributing* one doxastic commitment and *acknowledging/undertaking* another.
- 3) *De dicto/de re* for tenses.
- 4) *De dicto/de re* for ascriptions. A regimentation.
- 5) ^s Scare quotes^s as the dual of *de re* ascriptions.

III. *De Re* Ascriptions and Representational Uptake

- 1) The primary representational locution in ordinary language, the one we use to talk about the representational dimension of our thought and talk, to specify what we are thinking and talking *about*, is *de re* ascriptions of propositional attitude.
- 2) What one is *doing* in using such expressions is explicitly marking the difference of social perspective between *attributing* a commitment and *acknowledging* it.
- 3) Q: What does it mean that the distinction between what we *say* and what we talk *about* makes explicit a distinction, implicit in what we *do*, of social perspective?

Recap:

One thing we learn is that the way conceptual content attaches to sentences in virtue of reason relations is by means of (is mediated by) the ranges of subjunctive robustness of (candidate) implications. This is the home of the extension/intension distinction. By contrast, a bottom-up order of explanation-construction starts with extensions of sentences (truth values, even at a world) and gets to intensions as functions from something to extensions.

The idea of pure conceptual roles, roles w/res to reason relations where the particular modal form of the reason relations—deontic-normative for pragmatic specifications of the reason relations, alethic-modal for truthmaker semantic specifications of them—does not matter, is one that comes into view only with the Hlobil isomorphism at the level of reason relations between what is specified in normative terms in the pragmatic setting and in metaphysical terms in the truthmaker semantic one.

That isomorphism can only be formulated because we have a more detailed pragmatic picture. That picture starts with Restall-Ripley bilateralism about implication, adds a fuller account of doxastic commitments to accept and reject, and moves from their single-sorted to a double-sorted deontic normative MV. It ends with a more articulated specification, where for an implication to hold according to a set of discursive practices is for the position that consists of *commitment to accept* all its premises and *commitment to reject* all its conclusions is a constellation of commitments to which one cannot be jointly *entitled*.

The pragmatic perspective (MV) is particularly important to us because it is where we look to justify the claim that the radically open-structured (or “substructural”) relations we look to deserve (in spite of their sub-structurality) to count as *reason* relations of implication and incompatibility. The argument is, in effect, that their open-structured character does not keep them from codifying reasons for and reasons against that work fine in dialogical situations of giving and asking for reasons, making, challenging, and defending claims.

It is appropriate, then, to return to look more closely at our normative pragmatic MV and to the discursive practices, practices of acknowledging, challenging, and defending doxastic commitments to accept/reject claimables—which we now are entitled to think of as roles w/res to reason relations.

Part I: The Social Metaphysics of Normativity

- 1) Normative statuses and normative attitudes.
- 2) Normative attitudes of attribution and acknowledgment. Context of assessment/deliberation. (Compare: normative statuses of commitment and entitlement.)
- 3) JTB example, in a *pragmatic* MV.
- 4) Traditional status-dependence of normative attitudes vs. Modern attitude-dependence of normative statuses. Contract theories of political obligation, see norms as emerging from attitudes of those governed.
- 5) Kant on autonomy.
- 6) Hegel on reciprocal recognition.

1. One crucial ingredient in making the Hlobil isomorphism visible is having a sufficiently developed *pragmatic* MV to pair with the sophisticated truthmaker *semantic* MV.

In particular, Fine's modal-mereological *semantic* story includes a substantial *metaphysical* story about the worldly states, their possibility/impossibility, and their fusions or inclusion relations, in terms of which the substantial *explanation* of reason relations (sense of "implies" and "incompatible") offered is expressed.

We might aspire to framing a correspondingly flexible and expressively powerful vocabulary for discussing the elements of our pragmatic story.

But do we know what "**commitment**" means?

Compare: Does Fine know what *states* are and what *fusion* is? He has a metaphysical story.

One feature of that story that I emphasized is the move from a *single-sorted* deontic MV, capable of expressing only the basic on/off normative valences correct/incorrect, appropriate/inappropriate, assertible/nonassertible, in-bounds/out-of-bounds. But we saw (and this will be confirmed by new observations going forward) that a *two-sorted* deontic vocabulary is much more expressively powerful. (*AR* Ch.s 5 and 6 offer the cash for this claim.) Distinguishing the *two normative statuses* of *commitment* and *entitlement*, with the normative-modal relation of some commitments *precluding* entitlements, gives us a rich enough vocabulary to describe or specify minimal discursive practices, which include claimings functioning as challenges to (reasons against) and defenses of (reasons for) others. This context, it is claimed, is sufficient to characterize specifically *doxastic* commitments.

2. A fuller, more filled-in, picture of *the metaphysics of the normativity of discursive practice* would distinguish also normative *statuses* from normative *attitudes*.

Distinction between normative *statuses* and practical normative *attitudes*.

I won't discuss the bilateral distinction between (doxastic) commitments to *accept* and commitments to *reject*. Will just collapse that distinction for this discussion.

One important motivation for this distinction is the conception of **normative statuses as at base social statuses**.

(Hegel) invites us to think about the relations between someone's **being committed** or responsible, entitled or authoritative and their **being practically taken or treated as** having that status by others. The latter is the attitude.

This is a **pragmatist thought: social pragmatism about norms (statuses)**.

The initial, normative as social, thought appears later as **specifically modern**, for Hegel. Briefly discuss the relations of the deontic-status vocabularies of commitment/ entitlement and responsibility/authority. Each gets at important aspects of the more primordial notion I am after, and each also misleads regarding the target distinction of kinds of status.

This will all be a lesson in the (seductive) power of binaries, distinctions, which promise redescriptive expressive enlightenment, but can mislead (cf. **dualisms**).

Binary **distinctions are good servants, but poor masters**.

When faced with a contradiction, make a distinction.

But this holds for any incompatibility.

Incompatibilities breed distinctions.

3. And just as we distinguish two flavors of normative *status* (namely, commitments and entitlements—and, among commitments, we distinguish bilaterally between commitments to *accept* and commitments to *reject*, thought of as practical attitudes, though I am ignoring that), so, too, we distinguish two flavors of normative *attitude towards* normative statuses: one can *acknowledge* commitments or claim entitlements *oneself*, and one can *attribute* those statuses to *others*. [I should motivate these distinction in advance of illustrating them with the JTB story. Can I claim that they are already implicit in the story already told? Or just that they are necessary to fill it in?]

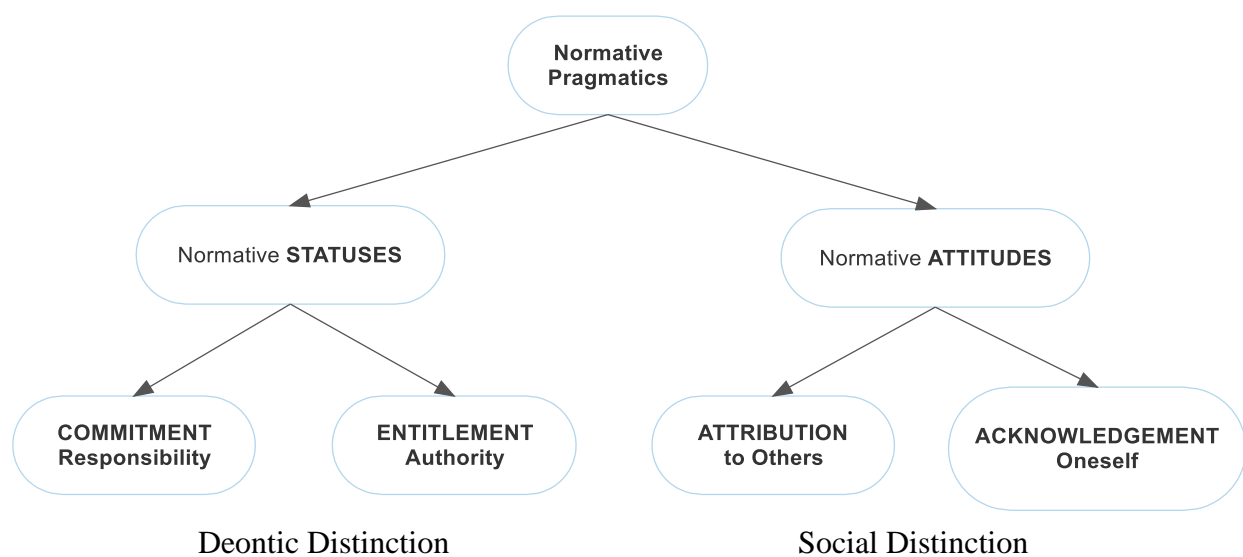
Should make a diagram of these distinctions:

Status and attitude. Two kinds of status (bilaterally subdivided further):

commitment/entitlement, two kinds of practical stances: to accept/reject. Two kinds of normative attitude: acknowledge/attribute.

Later will have diagram of Kantian autonomy as one sort of institution of statuses by attitudes, and then of Hegelian recognition as another.

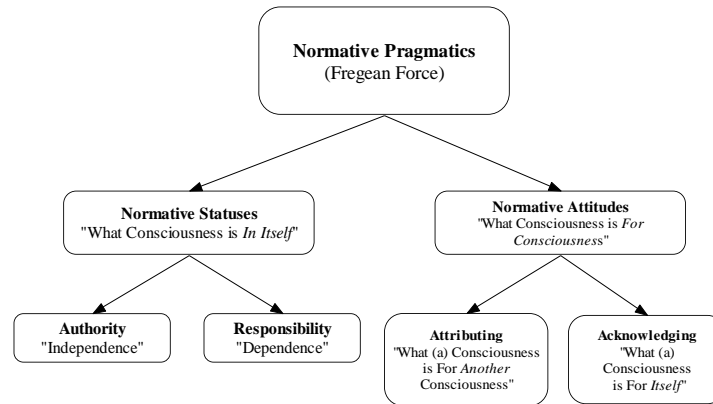
Recall our BSD discussion of pragmatic MVs, and the chart accompanying it.



In my regimented idiom, the distinction between normative *statuses* and normative *attitudes* corresponds to Hegel's distinction between *what consciousness is in itself* and *what consciousness is for consciousness*.

Within the category of normative *statuses*, the distinction *authority* and *responsibility* corresponds to Hegel's use of the terms "independence" and "dependence" ("Unabhängigkeit"/"Abhängigkeit") when they are applied to the *subjects* of consciousness rather than the *objects* of consciousness.

Within the category of normative *attitudes* is the further distinction within the category of normative attitudes in terms of the different social perspectives they embody is that between *attributing* a normative status (to another) and *acknowledging* or claiming a normative status (oneself). This is the distinction, within the domain of what consciousness is *for* consciousness, between what a consciousness is for *another* consciousness and what a consciousness is for *itself*.



Elements of the model are in bold.
Modeled Hegelian phrases are in quotes.

Though the concern of the *Self-Consciousness* chapter is ultimately with the *subjects* of normative attitudes and statures, those attitudes and statures also have *objects*. On the side of attitudes, what is attributed or acknowledged is just statures of authority and responsibility. One normative subject, X, can attribute authority or responsibility to another, Y. X is then the *subject* of the attitude, the normative status attributed is the *object* of the attitude, and the subject *to whom* the status is attributed is the *indirect object* or *target* of the attribution.

If we ask how norms interact with the doings of discursive practitioners, we find two kinds of contact: in the *context of deliberation* and in the *context of assessment*.

4. [JTB story.]

So far we have only looked at some of the pragmatics concerning doxastic commitments (and entitlements to them) in general. A normative status closely related to doxastic commitments is the status of *knowledge* (and claims to knowledge). Indeed, a prominent contemporary theory of the speech act of assertion (Tim Williamson's) appeals precisely to the status of knowledge in order to understand assertions as essentially knowledge-claims.

Then: but from a pragmatic point of view, we can ask not only what one *says* when one says that someone knows something, but also what one *does* in saying that.

“One way to get a preliminary taste for how one could think that representational semantic talk could be understood as expressing differences in social perspective among interlocutors, consider how assessments of *truth* work. Perhaps the central context in which such assessments classically arise is attributions of *knowledge*.

According to the traditional *JTB* account, knowledge is justified true belief. Transposed into a specification of a normative status something could be taken to have by interlocutors who are keeping score of each others commitments and entitlements, this account requires that in order for it to be *knowledge* that a scorekeeper takes another to have, that scorekeeper must adopt three sorts of practical attitude: First, the scorekeeper must *attribute* an inferentially articulated, hence

propositionally contentful *commitment*. This corresponds to the *belief* condition on knowledge. Second, the scorekeeper must *attribute* a sort of inferential *entitlement* to that commitment. This corresponds to the *justification* condition on knowledge.

What is it that then corresponds to the *truth* condition on knowledge? For the scorekeeper to take the attributed claim to be true is just for the scorekeeper to endorse that claim. That is, the third condition is that the scorekeeper himself *undertake* the same commitment attributed to the candidate knower.

Undertaking a commitment is adopting a certain *normative stance* with respect to a claim; it is not attributing a property to it.

The classical metaphysics of truth properties misconstrues what one is doing in endorsing the claim as *describing* in a special way.

It confuses *attributing* and *undertaking* or *acknowledging* commitments, the two fundamental social flavors of deontic practical attitudes that institute normative statuses. It does so by assimilating the third condition on treating someone as having knowledge to the first two. Properly understanding truth talk in fact requires understanding just this difference of social perspective: between *attributing* a normative status to another, and *undertaking* or adopting it oneself.

It is the practice of assessing the truth of claims that underlies the idea that propositional contents can be understood in terms of truth conditions.

I want to show how this idea of *truth* claims as expressing differences in social perspective can be extended to *representation* more generally.” [AR5]

In JTB case, one both *attributes* and *acknowledges* a commitment, and attributes entitlement to it.

So these seem like two important flavors of attitude, differing by their social perspective: attributing/acknowledging.

Note that **one can *be* committed without *acknowledging* that one is, if the commitment is consequential: a consequence of commitments one *does* acknowledge.**

Q: Are the two kinds of attitude, acknowledgement and attribution, equiprimordial?
Or can one be defined in terms of the other?

MIE good Popperian methodology about thesis that acknowledging (undertaking) is just doing something that licenses attribution.

This is an **attribution-first approach**.

The Queen’s shilling (from *MIE* 1).

5. Q: What are the relations between normative *attitudes* and normative *statuses*?

Which “comes first”?

Hegel on traditional and modern societies in terms of priority of statuses and attitudes:

Traditional is status-dependence of normative attitudes. (Status-first approach.)

Modern is attitude-dependence of normative statuses. (Attitude-first approach.)

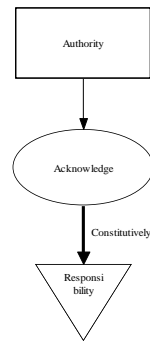
Normative statuses of authority and responsibility also have both subjects and objects. The subject of the status is the normative subject who is authoritative or responsible. The objects are what they have authority over or responsibility for. Our concern here is with the fundamental case where what one has the authority or responsibility to do (what one is entitled or committed to do) is adopt normative attitudes of attributing or acknowledging further normative statuses. The fact that the objects of normative attitudes can be normative statuses, and the objects of normative statuses can be normative attitudes means that complex constellations of basic attitudes and statuses are possible. It is in these terms that I will suggest we ought to understand both the Kantian individualistic autonomy model of the institution of normative statuses by normative attitudes and the Hegelian social recognition model of the institution of normative statuses by normative attitudes, and the way in which the latter develops elaborates and develops the former (the sort of *Aufhebung* it is).

6. **Kant on autonomy** and statuses precipitating out of attitudes.

If we start with two basic normative statuses, normative independence and dependence as authority and responsibility, and two basic normative attitudes, attributing responsibility or authority to another and acknowledging or claiming responsibility or authority for oneself, and think about them in the context of the idea that normative statuses might be not just dependent on normative attitudes but instituted by them, then an important compound of statuses and attitudes becomes visible.

Kant’ construal of normativity in terms of autonomy is at base the idea that rational beings can *make* themselves responsible (*institute* a normative *status*) by *taking* themselves to be responsible (*adopting* an *attitude*). His idea (developing Rousseau’s) is that so long as the attribution of responsibility is self-consciously self-directed, that is, so long as it takes the form of *acknowledgment* of oneself *as* responsible, it is *constitutive*, in the sense that adopting that attitude is sufficient, all by itself, to institute the status.

**Autonomy:
The Basic Kantian Normative Status**



The claim that i) normative attitudes *institute* normative statuses goes beyond the mere claim of ii) attitude-*dependence* of normative statuses. Beyond these two is the claim that iii) at least some normative attitudes are *immediately constitutive* of normative statuses. This sort of *taking* someone to be committed is sufficient for *making* that one *be* committed.

Kant’s conception of normative subjects as autonomous, as I am reading it, is a conception of them as able to *bind* themselves normatively by their attitudes, to *make* themselves responsible (acquire an actual normative status) by *taking* themselves to be responsible (adopting a normative attitude). In the favored cases, adopting the attitude actualizes the virtual status that is the object of the attitude. The resulting status is not just attitude-dependent (no attitude → no status) but immediately instituted by the attitudes (attitude → status). That is what it is to understand the attitude as *constitutive*.

Further, being able to adopt such immediately constitutive self*-attributions is itself a normative status. For **Kant thinks that rational knowers-and-agents have the *authority* to adopt immediately constitutive self*-attributions or acknowledgments. To be a discursive being is to have the authority to commit oneself, epistemically in judgment and practically in intention (“adopting a practical maxim”).** Both of these are undertakings or acknowledgings of responsibility: committing oneself to how things are or how they shall be. This *authority* to *make* oneself responsible just by *taking* oneself* to be responsible might be called the *basic Kantian normative status* (BKNS, for short). Being a normative subject, for him, is being an autonomous agent-and-knower: one that can be the subject of normative statuses such as responsibility and authority. Furthermore, one is in the end committed to (responsible for) only what one explicitly *acknowledges* as one’s commitments (responsibilities)—and for commitment that turn out to be implicit in those acknowledgements as consequences or presuppositions of them. **It is that authority to make oneself responsible that, according to Kant, other rational beings are obliged to recognize, as the fundamental dignity of rational knowers-and-agents.** The basic Kantian normative status is a complex, attitude-involving status. For it is the authority (the complex status) to adopt a certain kind of attitude: an immediately status-instituting attitude,

what I am calling an “immediately constitutive” attitude. This sort of attitude is an attributing of a status (in the case of the BKNS, exclusively to oneself*) such that adoption of that attitude is sufficient all by itself for the status to be exhibited by the one to whom it is attributed (in the case of the BKNS, so long as that is also the one by whom it is attributed). In Hegel’s terminology, it is a way consciousness can be *for* a consciousness that is sufficient to determine that that is the way consciousness is *in* itself. For one’s consciousness to be *that way for* one’s own consciousness *is* to be that way *in* oneself.

7. Hegelian recognition as *socializing* that.

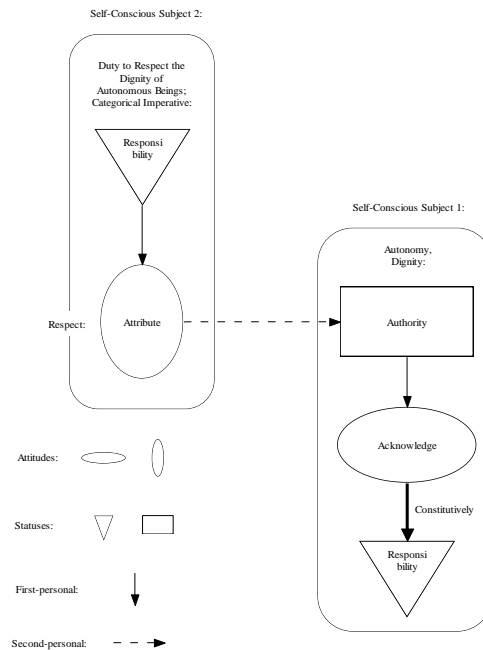
We can think of Hegel’s diagnosis of the metaphysical error that manifests itself as forms of self-consciousness understanding itself in the way characteristic of Mastery as having three levels, proceeding from the more to the less abstract.

First, it is characteristic of self-consciousness with the structure of Mastery to understand itself as being, in itself, “pure independence.” That is, it conceives itself as exercising authority unmixed and unmediated by any correlative responsibility, which is normative “dependence.”

Second, as “pure independence,” the Master cannot acknowledge the responsibility of his attitudes to normative statuses: the status-dependence of normative attitudes that was, Hegel thinks, a genuine insight of traditional forms of normativity (*Geist*), albeit one that was expressed in deformed, because one-sided, practical conceptions of normativity in terms of the model of subordination and obedience. Third, the Master has a conception of normative *force*, in Frege’s sense of the pragmatic significance of statuses and attitudes—what one is *doing* in becoming authoritative or responsible, and in attributing and exercising authority or attributing and acknowledging responsibility—that leaves no room for the contrast and division of labor between such force and the determinate conceptual *content* of either normative states or attitudes. This is the form of complaint that binds together the treatment of all the forms of self-consciousness conceiving itself according to categories of Mastery. There is no intelligible *semantics* (account of content) that is compatible with the *pragmatics* (account of normative force, status, and attitude) to which they are committed.

Hegel’s recognition model of the institution of normative statuses by normative attitudes articulates the idea that other-regarding attitudes of attributing responsibility and authority (holding other normative subjects responsible, taking them to be authoritative) are equally essential to them really being responsible or authoritative (having the statuses of being committed or entitled) as are self-regarding attitudes of acknowledging those statuses.

The Social Dimension of the Kantian Autonomy Model

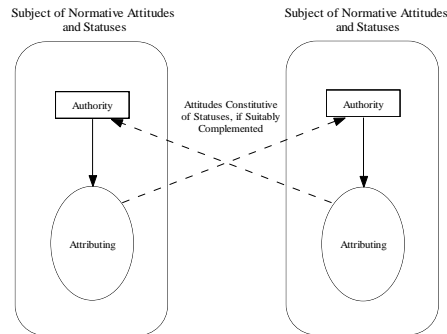


Suppose one accepted the motivations that lead Kant to the conception of the complex of basic attitudes and statuses that is the socially extended BKNS, but thought both that *all* normative statuses are instituted by normative attitudes, and that such institution requires not only the attitude of the subject of the status but also the attitude of some other who attributes it. This latter is the idea that the attitudes of any one individual normative subject can institute normative statuses only when they are *suitably complemented* by the attitudes of others.

Recognition, the recognitive attitude of attributing the authority distinctive of autonomy, is an essential component required to institute that very authority. These are the thoughts that lead from the Kantian model of *individual* autonomous normative subjects as *immediately* instituting their determinate responsibilities by their attitudes of acknowledging them to the Hegelian model of the *social* institution of normative statuses by attitudes of normative subjects that must be *mediated* by each other's suitably complementary attitudes.

I am understanding Hegel as taking *this* very basic constellation of normative attitudes and statuses to be the underlying metaphysical structure of (genuine) normativity:

Robust General Recognition
is Attributing the Authority
to Attribute Authority
(and Responsibility)



“Self-consciousness exists *in and for itself*, because and by virtue of its existing in and for itself for an other; which is to say, it exists only as recognized.” [PhG178].

Instituting a self in the sense of something with the status of a normative subject requires cognitive attitudes that are *symmetric, reciprocal, or mutual*.

“Each is for the other the middle term, through which each mediates itself with itself and unites with itself; and each is for itself, and for the other, an immediate being on its own account, which at the same time is such only through this mediation. **They recognize themselves as mutually recognizing one another.**” [PhG 184].

“Thus the movement is simply the double movement of the two self-consciousnesses. Each sees the *other* do the same as it does; each does itself what it demands of the other, and therefore also does what it does only in so far as the other does the same. Action by one side only would be useless because what is to happen can only be brought about by both.” [PhG 182].

Hegel refers to the cognitive community of recognizing-and-recognized individual normative subjects as “Spirit” [Geist]: “...this absolute substance which is the unity of the different independent self-consciousnesses which, in their opposition, enjoy perfect freedom and independence: 'I' that is 'We' and 'We' that is 'I'. [PhG 177].

As with the Kantian autonomy structure, attributing a responsibility has to be complemented by the acknowledgment of the subject of the responsibility. One only *is* responsible (a status) for what one *acknowledges* responsibility for (an attitude). The status of responsibility, which is virtual in the sense of just being the object of these paired attitudes of attribution and acknowledgment, only becomes actualized—a status outside the attitudes it is an object of—when the status attributed is also acknowledged. This is just the other side of the coin of the requirement that for acknowledging a commitment or responsibility to succeed in instituting that status (for it to be constitutive of the commitment it acknowledges, for it to be a successful undertaking of that commitment, a status) someone else must both be authorized to *hold* the subject responsible (attribute the commitment, an attitude) and must *actually* do so.

Part II. Explicitating attitudes: Ascriptions

- 1) Making attitudes and statuses explicit. From attribution to ascription.
- 2) In ascribing one is doing *two* things, *attributing* one doxastic commitment and *acknowledging/undertaking* another.
- 3) *De dicto/de re* for tenses.
- 4) *De dicto/de re* for ascriptions. A regimentation.
- 5) ^s Scare quotes^s .

[That this bit can be done is supposed to help confirm the correctness of the analysis in Part I.]

1. We saw that *logical* vocabulary has a peculiar status: it is not a proper MV since it's use is parasitic on the base V that it conservatively extends.

There is something analogous for pragmatics: we can introduce locutions into an extension of the object V in order to make explicit normative attitudes and statuses.

Methodological claim:

If we have a good metavocabulary for specifying the *doings* in which normative statuses and attitudes are *implicit*, then it ought to be possible to confirm this, by introducing expressions into (an extension of) the *base* vocabulary that *make explicit* those implicit normative phenomenon.

This new sort of vocabulary would let one say what one is *doing* in adopting normative attitudes, paradigmatically *attributing* normative statuses.

These are *ascriptions* of *propositional attitudes*, paradigmatically “claims, or believes, is committed to *p*.”

Return to the pragmatic specification of the practice of claiming.

We have seen various ways to make explicit what is *said*.

Can we make explicit what is *done*?

Can we explicitate attitudes and statuses?

(We'd need both of them, and both flavors of status and of attitude, to explain the status of knowledge or the constellation of attitudes expressed by ascriptions of knowledge.)

This is different from making *reason relations* explicit.

So it will not be *logical* vocabulary—merely vocabulary that *generically* has the same sort of expressive job, just for pragmatic normative statuses and attitudes rather than semantogenic *reason relations*.

From attributions to ascriptions:

An *ascription* of propositional attitude expresses the practical attitude of *attributing* a doxastic commitment, by making an assertion: “S believes (is doxastically committed to accept) *p*.”

The (virtual) *object* of propositional attitude ascriptions, like the attributions they express, is a normative *status*, typically a *commitment*.

**In ascribing, one is accordingly doing *two* things:
attributing one doxastic commitment and *acknowledging* another.**

First: from quotation (“direct discourse”) to “indirect discourse”: S claims that *p*.
The relation between original utterance expressing the attitude (“reported claiming”) and the specification of that content in the ascription (“reporting claiming”).

Big difference between direct and indirect discourse relations of reporting sentence and reported sentence is *indexicals* and *terms in other languages*.

(Cf. McDowell: “On Quotation and Saying That”).

De dicto/de re for tenses:

“The President of the U.S. will be a woman by January 21.”

”Joe Biden is the President of the U.S..”

So

“Joe Biden will be a woman by January 21.”

In ascribing a doxastic commitment (/entitlement, status), one is doing two things: attributing one doxastic commitment and acknowledging another.

So there can be an issue about what part of the utterance is doing what job.

A regimentation to clear things up:

‘That’ and ‘of’.

These are ***de re ascriptions*** of propositional attitude.

De re ascriptions used to express information conveyed.

In an Appendix to Ch. 8 of *MIE*, we show how to generate/interpret arbitrarily nested de dicto/de re ascriptions. This is determining the *reason relations* governing the use of those complex propositional attitude ascriptions from the reason relations and attitudes/statuses of the reporting and reported interlocutors.

An *ascription* of propositional attitude expresses the practical attitude of *attributing* a doxastic commitment, by making an assertion: “S believes (is doxastically committed to accept) *p*.”

In ascribing, one is accordingly doing *two* things:

attributing one doxastic commitment and *acknowledging* another.

So there can be an issue about what part of the utterance is doing what job: expressing the commitment *acknowledged* or the commitment *attributed*.

De Re Ascriptions and Representational attitudes:

De re ascriptions of propositional attitude are the principal representational locutions in natural language: the ones we use to distinguish what we are saying or thinking from what we are talking or thinking *of* or *about*.

So representation shows up pragmatically as acknowledging a distinction of social perspective. That is, what one is *doing* in making a representational claim is acknowledging a distinction of social perspective, between *attributing* commitments and *acknowledging* them.

“The tradition distinguishes two readings of or senses that can be associated with propositional attitude ascriptions. Ascriptions *de dicto* attribute belief in a *dictum* or saying, while ascriptions *de re* attribute belief about some *res* or thing. The distinction arises with sentential operators other than 'believes'; consider to begin with the claim:

The President of the United States will be a woman by the year 2025.

Read *de dicto*, this means that the dictum or sentence

The President of the United States is a woman.

will be true by the year 2025. Read *de re*, it means that the *res* or thing, the present President of the United States, namely (as I write) Joe Biden, will be a woman by the year 2025. Our concern here is with how this distinction applies to ascriptions of propositional attitude--though it is a criterion of adequacy on the account offered here that it can be extended to deal with these other contexts as well. Clearly the difference has to do with *scope*, a way of expressing the difference between two different possible orders in which one can apply the operations of a) determining who the definite description picks out, and b) applying the temporal operator to move the time of evaluation of the whole sentence forward—doing (a) first yields the *de re* reading, while doing (b) first yields the *de dicto* reading. We want to look a little deeper at the phenomenon.

In ordinary parlance the distinction between *de dicto* and *de re* readings is the source of systematic ambiguity. Sometimes, as in the case above, one of the readings involves a

sufficiently implausible claim that it is easy to disambiguate. It is best, however, to regiment our usage slightly in order to mark the distinction explicitly. This can be done with little strain to our ears by using 'that' and 'of' in a systematic way. Consider:

Henry Adams believed the inventor of the lightning rod did not invent the lightning rod.

It is quite unlikely that what is intended is the *de dicto*

*Henry Adams believed **that** the inventor of the lightning rod did not invent the lightning rod.*

Adams would presumably not have endorsed the *dictum* that follows the 'that'. It is entirely possible, however, that the *de re* claim

*Henry Adams believed **of** the inventor of the lightning rod **that** he did not invent the lightning rod.*

is true. For since the inventor of the lightning rod is the inventor of bifocals (namely Benjamin Franklin), this latter claim could be true if Henry Adams had the belief that would be ascribed *de dicto* as

*Henry Adams believed **that** the inventor of bifocals did not invent the lightning rod.*

(A proper Bostonian, loathe to give such credit to someone from Philadelphia, Adams maintained that Franklin only popularized the lightning rod.)

Quine emphasizes that the key grammatical difference between these two sorts of ascriptions concerns the propriety of *substitution* for singular terms occurring in them. Expressions occurring in the *de re* portion of an ascription--within the scope of the 'of' operator in the regimented versions--have in his terminology *referentially transparent* uses: coreferential terms can be intersubstituted *salva veritate*, that is, without changing the truth value of the whole ascription. By contrast, such substitution in the *de dicto* portion of an ascription--within the scope of the 'that' operator in the regimented versions--may well change the truth value of the whole ascription.

Syntactically, *de re* ascriptions may be thought of as formed from *de dicto* ones by *exporting* a singular term from within the 'that' clause, prefacing it with 'of', and putting a pronoun in the original position. Thus the *de dicto* form

S believes that $\Phi(t)$,

becomes the *de re*

*S believes **of** t that $\Phi(it)$.*

The significance of Quine's fundamental observation that the key difference between these two sorts of ascription lies in the circumstances under which the substitution of coreferential expressions is permitted was obscured by considerations that are from my point of view extraneous:

1. Quine's idiosyncratic view that singular terms are dispensable in favor of the quantificational expressions he takes to be the genuine locus of referential commitment leads him to look only at quantified ascriptions, embroils his discussion in issues of existential commitment, and diverts him into worries about when 'exportation' is legitimate.
2. This emphasis led in turn—Kaplan bears considerable responsibility here—to ignoring the analysis of ordinary *de re* ascriptions in favor of what I call *epistemically strong de re* ascriptions, which are used to attribute a privileged epistemic relation to the object talked or thought about. This detour had fruitful consequences for our appreciation of special features of the behavior of demonstratives (and as a result, of proper name tokenings anaphorically dependent on them), particularly in modal contexts. But from the point of view of understanding aboutness in general--my topic here--it was a detour and a distraction nonetheless.

The important point is, as the regimentation reminds us, that it is *de re* propositional attitude ascribing locutions that we use in everyday life to express what we are talking and thinking *of* or *about*. One way of trying to understand the representational dimension of propositional content is accordingly to ask what is expressed by this fundamental sort of representational locution. What are we *doing* when we make claims about what someone is talking or thinking *about*? How must vocabulary be used in order for it to deserve to count as expressing such *de re* ascriptions? Answering that question in a way that does not itself employ representational vocabulary in specifying that use is then a way of coming to understand representational relations in nonrepresentational terms.” [AR5]

“Recall that I think we should understand discursive practice in terms of the adoption of practical attitudes by which interlocutors keep score on each other's commitments (and entitlements to those commitments, but we can ignore them here). Claiming (and so, ultimately, judging) is *undertaking* or *acknowledging* a commitment that is propositionally contentful in virtue of its *inferential* articulation. The large task is to show what it is about that inferential articulation in virtue of which claimable contents are therefore also *representational* contents. This is to move from propositional contents introduced as potential premises and conclusions of inferences, via the social dimension of inferential articulation that consists of giving and asking for reasons of each other in communication, to propositions as talking of or about objects, and saying of them how they are. (I'll give short shrift here to the *objectivity* part of the claim—it is the topic of the next chapter—but think about how assessments of *truth* were presented above as distinct from assessments of *belief* and *justification*.)

Undertaking a commitment is doing something that makes it appropriate for others to *attribute* it. This can happen in two different ways. First, one may *acknowledge* the commitment, paradigmatically by being disposed to *avow* it by an overt assertion. Or one may acknowledge it by employing it as a premise in one's theoretical or practical reasoning. This last includes being disposed to *act* on it *practically*--taking account of it as a premise in the practical reasoning that stands behind one's intentional actions. Second, one may undertake the commitment *consequentially*, that is, as a conclusion one is committed to as an inferential consequence entailed by what one *does* acknowledge. These correspond to two senses of 'believe' that are often not distinguished: the sense in which one only believes what one takes oneself to believe, and the sense in which one believes willy nilly whatever one's beliefs commit one to. [The fact that people often move back and forth between belief in the empirical sense, which does not involve inferential closure, and belief in the logical or ideal sense that does, is one of the reasons that when being careful I prefer to talk in terms of commitments rather than beliefs--I don't officially believe in beliefs.] The second sense is the one in which if I believe Kant revered Hamann, and I believe Hamann was the Magus of the North, then whether the question has ever arisen for me or not, whether I know it or not, I in fact believe Kant revered the Magus of the North—for I have committed myself to that claim.

Attributing beliefs or commitments is a practical attitude that is *implicit* in the scorekeeping practices within which alone anything can have the significance of a claim or a judgment. *Ascribing* beliefs or commitments is making that *implicit* practical attitude *explicit* in the form of a claim. In a language without explicit attitude ascribing locutions such as the 'believes that' or 'claims that' operator, attributing commitments is something one can only *do*. Propositional attitude ascribing locutions make it possible explicitly to *say* that that is what one is doing: to express that practical deontic scorekeeping attitude as a propositional content--that is, as the content of a claim. In this form it can appear as a premise or conclusion of an inference; it becomes something which can be offered as a reason, and for which reasons can be demanded. The paradigm of the genus of *explicitating* vocabulary, of which propositional attitude ascribing locutions are a species, is the conditional. The use of conditionals makes explicit as the content of a claim, and so something one can *say*, the endorsement of an *inference*--an attitude one could otherwise only manifest by what one *does*. Ascriptional vocabulary such as 'believes' or 'claims' makes *attribution* of doxastic commitments explicit in the form of claimable contents.

In asserting an ascriptional claim of the form

S believes (or is committed to the claim) that $\Phi(t)$,

one is accordingly doing two things, adopting two different sorts of deontic attitude: **one is attributing one doxastic commitment, to $\Phi(t)$, and one is undertaking another**, namely a commitment to the ascription. The explicitating role of ascriptional locutions means that the

content of the commitment one *undertakes* is to be understood in terms of what one is doing in *attributing* the first commitment.

The ascription above specifies the content of the commitment attributed by using an unmodified 'that' clause, which according to our regimentation corresponds to an ascription *de dicto*. A full telling of my story requires that quite a bit be said about how these ascriptions work, but I'm not going to do that here. Roughly, the ascriber who specifies the content of the attributed commitment in the *de dicto* way is committed to the target being prepared to *acknowledge* the attributed commitment in essentially the terms specified--that is, to endorse the *dictum*.

I want to take an appropriate account of *de dicto* ascriptions of propositional attitudes for granted, and show what is different about *de re* ascriptions, those that are regimented in the form:

S claims of t that $\Phi(it)$.

I think that the beginning of wisdom in this area is the realization that (once what I have called "epistemically strong *de re* ascriptions" have been put to one side) the distinction between *de dicto* and *de re* should not be understood to distinguish two kinds of *belief* or belief-contents, but two kinds of *ascription*--in particular two different *styles* in which the *content* of the commitment ascribed can be *specified*. (Dennett is perhaps the most prominent commentator who has taken this line.)

In specifying the content of the claim that is attributed by an ascription, a question can arise as to who the ascriber takes to be responsible for this being a way of *saying* (that is, making explicit) what is believed, the content of the commitment. Consider the sly prosecutor, who characterizes his opponent's claim by saying:

The defense attorney believes a pathological liar is a trustworthy witness.

We can imagine that the defense attorney hotly contests this characterization:

Not so; what I believe is that the man who just testified is a trustworthy witness.

To which the prosecutor might reply:

Exactly, and I have presented evidence that ought to convince anyone that the man who just testified is a pathological liar.

If the prosecutor were being fastidious in characterizing the other's claim, he would make it clear who is responsible for what: the defense attorney claims that a certain man is a trustworthy witness, and the prosecutor claims that that man is a pathological liar. The disagreement is about whether this guy is a liar, not about whether liars make trustworthy

witnesses. Using the regimentation suggested above, the way to make this explicit is with a *de re* specification of the content of the belief ascribed. What the prosecutor *ought* to say (matters of courtroom strategy aside) is:

The defense attorney claims of a pathological liar that he is a trustworthy witness.

This way of putting things makes explicit the division of responsibility involved in the ascription. That someone is a trustworthy witness is part of the commitment that is *attributed* by the ascriber, that that individual is in fact a pathological liar is part of the commitment that is *undertaken* by the ascriber. (Think back to the account of the role of the truth condition in attributions of knowledge.) Certainly in thinking about these matters *we*, as theorists should use such a disambiguating regimentation, in keeping with the analytic credo expressing commitments to faith, hope, and clarity (even if we're not sure that the greatest of these is clarity).

Ascription always involves attributing one doxastic commitment and, since ascriptions are themselves claims or judgments, undertaking another. My suggestion is that the expressive function of *de re* ascriptions of propositional attitude is to make explicit which aspects of what is said express commitments that are being *attributed* and which express commitments that are *undertaken*. The part of the content specification that appears within the *de dicto* 'that' clause is limited to what, according to the ascriber, the one to whom the commitment is ascribed would (or in a strong sense should) *acknowledge* as an expression of what that individual is committed to. The part of the content specification that appears within the scope of the *de re* 'of' includes what, according to the *ascriber* of the commitment (but not necessarily according to the one to whom it is ascribed) is acknowledged as an expression of what the target of the ascription is committed to. (This is what the target should, according to the ascriber, acknowledge only in a much weaker sense of 'should'.) Thus the marking of portions of the content-specification of a propositional attitude ascription into *de dicto* and *de re* portions makes explicit the essential deontic scorekeeping distinction of *social* perspective between commitments attributed and those undertaken.

5

The difference expressed by segregating the content specification of a propositional attitude ascription into distinct *de re* and *de dicto* regions, marked in our regimentation by 'of' and 'that', can be thought of in terms of *inferential* and *substitutional* commitments. According to the model I started with, propositional, that is, assertible, contents are inferentially articulated. Grasping such a content is being able to distinguish in practice what should follow from endorsing it, and what such endorsement should follow from. But the consequences of endorsing a given claim depends on what other commitments are available to be employed as auxiliary hypotheses in the inference. The ascriber of a doxastic commitment has got two different perspectives available from which to draw those auxiliary hypotheses in specifying the content

of the commitment being ascribed: that of the one to whom it is *ascribed* and that of the one *ascribing* it. Where the specification of the content depends only on auxiliary premises that (according to the ascriber) the target of the ascription *acknowledges* being committed to, though the ascriber may not, it is put in *de dicto* position, within the 'that' clause. Where the specification of the content depends on auxiliary premises that the *ascriber* endorses, but the target of the ascription may not, it is put in *de re* position.

More particularly, the use of expressions as singular terms is governed by *substitution-inferential* commitments. The rule for determining the scorekeeping significance and so the expressive function of *de re* ascriptions that I am proposing is then the following. Suppose that according to *A*'s scorekeeping on commitments, *B* acknowledges commitment to the claim $\Phi(t)$. Then *A* can make this attribution of commitment explicit in the form of a claim by saying

B claims that $\Phi(t)$.

If in addition *A* acknowledges commitment to the identity $t=t'$, then whether or not *A* takes it that *B* would acknowledge that commitment, *A* can also characterize the content of the commitment ascribed to *B* by saying

B claims of t' that $\Phi(it)$.

Again, the question just is whose substitutional commitments one is permitted to appeal to in specifying the consequences someone is committed to by acknowledging a particular doxastic commitment. Where in characterizing the commitment the ascriber has exfoliated those consequences employing only commitments the ascriptional target would acknowledge, the content specification is *de dicto*. Where the ascriber has employed substitutional commitments he himself, but perhaps not the target, endorses, the content specification is *de re*.

(The question might then naturally be asked, are there locutions that perform the converse function, permitting one to *undertake* an *assertional* commitment, while *attributing* to another responsibility for the use of the singular term that settles what *substitutional* commitments are to be used in extracting its inferential consequences?)

I think **this important expressive role is played by scare quotes**. Suppose a politician says:

The patriotic freedom fighters liberated the village.

disagreeing with the characterization, but wanting to stipulate that she is referring to the same folks, his opponent might respond:

Those "patriotic freedom fighters" massacred the entire population.

Saying this is attributing responsibility for use of the term, while undertaking responsibility for the claim. I don't see why the expressive role of scare quotes is not every bit as philosophically significant as that of *de re* ascriptions, though the relative mass of the literature devoted to these two topics suggests that this is an idiosyncratic view.)

Understood in the way I have suggested, what is expressed by *de re* specifications of the contents of the beliefs of others are crucial to *communication*. Being able to understand what others are saying, in the sense that makes their remarks available for use as premises in one's own inferences, depends precisely on being able to specify those contents in *de re*, and not merely *de dicto* terms. If the only way I can specify the content of the shaman's belief is by a *de dicto* ascription

He believes malaria can be prevented by drinking the liquor distilled from the bark of that kind of tree,

I may not be in a position to assess the truth of his claim. It is otherwise if I can specify that content in the *de re* ascription

He believes of quinine that malaria can be prevented by drinking it,

for 'quinine' is a term with rich inferential connections to others I know how to employ. If he says that the seventh god has just risen, I may not know what to make of his remark. Clearly he will take it to have consequences that I could not endorse, so nothing in my mouth could *mean* just what his remark does. But if I am told that the seventh god is the sun, then I can specify the content of his report in a more useful form:

He claims of the sun that it has just risen,

which I can extract *information* from, that is, can use to generate premises that I can reason with. Again, suppose a student claims that

The largest number that is not the sum of the squares of distinct primes is the sum of at most 27 primes.

He may have no idea what that number is, or may falsely believe it to be extremely large, but if I know that

17163 is the largest number that is not the sum of the squares of distinct primes,

then I can characterize the content of his claim in *de re* form as:

The student claims of 17163 that it is the sum of at most 27 primes,

and can go on to draw inferences from that claim, to assess its plausibility in the light of the rest of my beliefs. (It is true, but only because *all* integers are the sum of at most 27 primes.) Identifying what is being talked about permits me to extract information across a doxastic gap.

We saw originally in the treatment of truth assessments and knowledge the crucial difference between *attributing* a commitment and *undertaking* or acknowledging one. We now see what is involved in moving from the claim that

It is true that Benjamin Franklin invented bifocals,

which is the undertaking of a commitment to the effect that Benjamin Franklin invented bifocals, via the undertaking of a commitment to the claim that Benjamin Franklin is the inventor of the lightning rod, to the claim that

*It is true **of** the inventor of the lightning rod that he invented bifocals.*

(It is through this 'true of' locution that the earlier remarks about the essentially social structure of truth assessments connects with the account just offered of the social structure that underlies propositional attitude ascriptions *de re*.) Extracting information from the remarks of others requires grasping what is expressed when one offers *de re* characterizations of the contents of their beliefs--that is to be able to tell what their beliefs would be true *of* if they were true. It is to grasp the *representational* content of their claims. The point I have been making is that doing this is just mastering the *social* dimension of their inferential articulation.

Ascribing practical commitments *de re*:

If we look at *de re* specifications of the content of *intentions*, we will see that the prediction or explanation of *success* of actions plays a role here similar to that of the assessment of *truth* in the case of *beliefs*. So we can have the *de dicto* ascription of an intention:

Nicole intends that she shoot a deer.
together with the *de re* ascription of a belief:

Nicole believes of that cow that it is a deer.
yielding the *de re* ascription of an intention:

Nicole intends of that cow that she shoot it.

We would appeal to these perspectively different sorts of specifications of the content of her intention in order to explain different aspects of her behavior. If what we want to do is to predict or explain what Nicole is *trying* to do, we should use the *de dicto* specification of her intention and her belief. That will explain why she will pull the trigger. But if what we want to predict or explain is what she will *succeed* in doing, what will actually happen, then we should use the *de re* specifications. They will explain why she will shoot a cow, even though she only wants to shoot deer. Success of actions plays the same role as truth of claims, as far as concerns the difference between *de re* and *de dicto* specifications of the contents of intentional attitudes.

Conclusion

I have claimed that **the primary representational locution in ordinary language, the one we use to talk about the representational dimension of our thought and talk, to specify what we are thinking and talking about, is *de re* ascriptions of propositional attitude.** It is the role they play in such ascriptions that gives their meanings to the 'of' or 'about' we use to express intentional directedness. I have also claimed that the expressive role of these locutions is to make explicit the distinction of social perspective involved in keeping our books straight on who is committed to what. The social dimension of inference involved in the communication to others of claims that must be available as reasons both to the speaker and to the audience, in spite of differences in collateral commitments, is what underlies the representational dimension of discourse.

Beliefs and claims that are *propositionally* contentful are necessarily *representationally* contentful because their inferential articulation essentially involves a *social dimension*. That social dimension is unavoidable because the inferential significance of a claim, the appropriate antecedents and consequences of a doxastic commitment, depend on the background of collateral commitments available for service as auxiliary hypotheses. Thus any specification of a propositional content must be made from the perspective of some such set of commitments. One wants to say that the *correct* inferential role is determined by the collateral claims that are *true*. Just so; that is what *each* interlocutor wants to say--each has an at least slightly different perspective from which to evaluate inferential proprieties. Representational locutions make explicit the sorting of commitments into those attributed and those undertaken--without which communication would be impossible, given those differences of perspective. The *representational* dimension of propositional contents reflects the *social* structure of their *inferential* articulation in the game of giving and asking for reasons." [AR5]