GARY OSTERTAG: *Propositions and the logical form of predication*

What makes the proposition that Caesar stabbed Brutus true? One answer is that it is made true by the fact that Caesar and Brutus (in that order) satisfy the *stabs* relation. This answer, however, presupposes that *stabs* has two argument positions, α and β, that are ordered sequentially. As Fine (2000) points out, the idea is problematic: It distinguishes between a relation and its converse, implying that (say) *the cat is on the mat* and *the mat is under the cat* correspond to distinct (albeit necessarily co-instantiated) states of affairs. *Positionalism* is able to avoid this implausible consequence of (what Fine calls) the standard view. On this approach, relations have argument positions, although these positions are not sequentially ordered. *Anti-positionalism* also avoids the unacceptable consequence. Here, the very idea of an argument position is an extrinsic feature of relations: Relations do not, strictly speaking, *have* argument positions. (Such positions are, however, derived through a process of triangulation.) Both theories of relations promise to resolve a problem facing the Russellian. The structured propositions Russellians espouse are not in fact structured enough to represent adequately the contents of our beliefs and assertions. I argue that Positionalism and anti-positionalism, although the best options for providing the missing structure, nonetheless fail to deliver the desired unity. In a final section I consider the act-theoretic approaches recently defended by Scott Soames and Peter Hanks and draw a similar conclusion.