

24.500 spring 05  
topics in philosophy of mind  
session 11

- teatime

self-knowledge

# plan

- Bar-On's *Speaking My Mind* again
- Dretske, Evans, Bar-On on transparency

- avowals proper (242)
  - I want Teddy!
  - I feel so hot!
  - I hate this mess!
  - I'm wondering what she'll do next
- verbal acts, spontaneous, unreflective, no audience-intention, etc.



ditto 'there's Teddy!', etc.  
(see 243)

- Sellars' three senses of expression again
  1. the action sense: S expresses her state A by intentionally F-ing
  2. the causal sense: utterance U/behavior B expresses state A iff it's caused by something's being in A
  3. the semantic sense: sentence s expresses the proposition that p iff s means that p (ignoring context sensitivity)
- against Alston, some natural expressions fall under (1)
  - reaching for the teddy, rubbing one's eyes, dancing a jig

1. the action sense: S expresses her state A by intentionally F-ing
  - S expresses<sub>1</sub> mental state M by intentionally F-ing iff M is a reason (or ‘rational cause’) for the act (249)
    - a rational cause of my reaching for Teddy is my desire for Teddy (248)
    - but this doesn’t fit with what Bar-On says later about “reasons”
    - my desire for Teddy is not (arguably) my normative reason for (a consideration in favor of) reaching

- ch. 8 on the “dual expression thesis”:
- when I avow ‘I am in M’ I express<sub>1</sub> not only that I am in M but that I believe/judge that I am in M (307)
  - my reason for saying that ‘I am in M’ is that I’m in M, not that I believe that I’m in M (309)
  - isn’t the d.e.t. false, then?
    - my (“normative”) reason for saying that ‘I am in M’ is not that I believe that I am in M (that is my “motivating reason”), so it doesn’t express<sub>1</sub> that I am in M
      - the “normative”/“motivating” terminology is Michael Smith’s

- no
- the d.e.t. might be true, because
  - a) “claiming that an avowal expresses<sub>1</sub> [that believe I am in M] is portraying [it] as the subject’s reason for action;
  - b) it does not commit us to taking the avowal itself (as product [i.e. the token utterance—see 251]) as having epistemic reasons”
- wot?
  - re (b), that I am in M is my reason for saying/judging that I am in M, but is not my “epistemic reason”?
  - re (a), the worry is that the fact that I believe that I am in M is not my reason for saying that I am in M—how does (a) answer it?

back to ch. 7

- it is no more obligatory to regard her avowal 'I am so excited' as resting, epistemically, on her judgment about how things are with her...than it is obligatory in the case of her saying 'this is great!'
- what matters...is not the absence of a self-judgment...but rather [its] irrelevance...to the treatment of the avowal as a secure performance, protected from epistemic criticism or correction
- [the explanation of this] is that avowals...simply serve to vent (express<sub>1</sub>) the subject's mental condition (258)
  - but it can't be: 'I am tired' (said looking into a mirror [DBO's earlier example) expresses<sub>1</sub> my tiredness



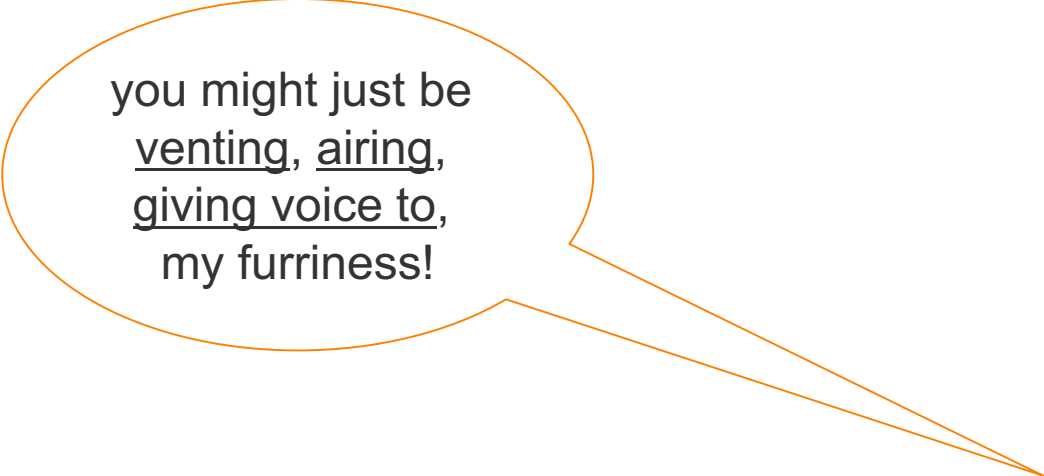
- “I want that bear” is not entirely criticism-free, because one may be demonstrating a non-bear, or nothing
- and what about “I love you”?
  - when things go well, it expresses<sub>1</sub> my love, but it’s hardly immune to criticism (even granted that you exist)

- if ‘that’s great!’ and ‘I am so excited’ expresses<sub>1</sub> my excitement (possibly in addition to expressing<sub>1</sub> my belief that that’s great/I am excited), then:
  - ‘I see Teddy!’
  - ‘I know where you are!’ (said during hide-and-seek)
  - ‘I’ve got it!’ (said while doing a crossword puzzle)
- (can) express<sub>1</sub> my seeing Teddy, my knowledge of your whereabouts, and my discovery of the answer; yet these are not epistemically secure
  - but then it is unclear why “the expressive character of avowals...help[s] us see why avowals seem protected from the kinds of epistemic...criticism that are appropriate to ordinary perceptual reports” (263)

- in ch. 10 (400):
  - ‘I see Teddy!’
  - ‘I know where you are!’ (said during hide-and-seek)
  - ‘I’ve got it!’ (said while doing a crossword puzzle)
- turn out not to express<sub>1</sub> my seeing Teddy, my knowledge of your whereabouts, and my discovery of the answer, because:
- “one cannot engage in behavior that will suffice\* to show one’s being in the relevant state”
- that is: “a suitably attuned and placed observer could [not] perceive your M by perceiving your behavior” (278)
  - but why is this required for expressing<sub>1</sub>?
  - and if a “suitably attuned and placed observer” can perceive that I am imagining a pink ice cube (see later), or that I want Teddy (241-2), why can’t she perceive that I see Teddy?
    - \* ‘suffice’ is slightly misleading, because one may, e.g., reach for Teddy and not want it

back to ch. 7

- further, if 'I want Teddy' expresses<sub>1</sub> my yearning for Teddy, isn't it just terminology that prevents 'Teddy is furry' from expressing<sub>1</sub> Teddy's furriness?
  - it is just stipulated that one can only express<sub>1</sub> one's mental condition
- that I want Teddy is my reason for uttering 'I want Teddy', that Teddy is furry is my reason for uttering 'Teddy is furry'



you might just be  
venting, airing,  
giving voice to,  
my furriness!

- ch. 8
  1. a “rational reconstruction” of avowals as replacing natural expressions
  2. the account extended to mental conditions with no natural expressions
  3. avowals express<sub>1</sub> that one believes one is in M (not just that one is in M)
    - covered earlier
  4. the “asymmetric presumption of truth” explained
  5. false avowals

1. a “rational reconstruction” of avowals as replacing natural expressions

“you’re scared of the clown, aren’t you?”

the expressivist story...makes it plausible to deny...that [the self-ascriber] forms a recognitional judgment about the presence and character of the relevant condition

- why?—cf. “such a nice doggy!” (288)
- suppose that blushing (assume it can be modulated by the agent) is a natural expression of some state S of the liver—’my liver is in S’ won’t replace blushing because (without noticing the blushing) I can’t recognize that my liver is in S

- 2 the account extended to mental conditions with no natural expressions, e.g.:
- thinking/wishing that p
  - smelling vanilla
  - having a mental image of a pink ice cube
  - saying 'I believe p' replaces saying 'p' (294)
    - but 'maybe grandma will buy me that toy' where this expresses a wish (294), already seems to smuggle in self-knowledge
    - what's the explanation for the difference between 'I believe that's vanilla' [looking at the pods], and 'that smells [to me] like vanilla'?
    - what about the pink ice cube?

- 4 the “asymmetric presumption of truth” explained
- a) relative indubitability [doubt that I am in M (when avowed) is out of place]
  - b) epistemic directness/immediacy [groundless]
  - c) relative incorrigibility [no challenges from audience]
  - d) asymmetric presumption of truth [avowals strongly presumed to be true]
- (a)-(c) are (i) explained by IETMa, which is (ii) in turn explained by the expressive character of avowals
  - re (i), IETMa can only explain (b) (at best; note that (b) implies IETMa, i)
    - wasn't AETM supposed to explain (d) earlier?
  - re (ii), I can express<sub>1</sub> that p (it seems), yet the proposition that p (relative to my evidence) might not be IETMa (see ‘I am tired’ example)



- (d) explained:  
when witnessing expressive behavior, we take it that the subject is in the condition that we perceive in the product of her act...the behavior is transparent-to-the-subject's condition...this presumption of transparency is what becomes, in the case of semantically articulate, self-ascriptive expression, the asymmetric presumption of truth (313)
  - right, we do think that if someone says 'I want a beer', she's very likely to be in the condition of wanting a beer (she's more likely to be right than if she said 'there's beer in the fridge')
  - but what's the explanation of that?

## 5 false avowals

- IE, which I have explained by appeal to the expressive character of avowals, protects avowals only from brute (local) epistemic error
- we do not have the notion that the self-ascriber has simply got it wrong
  - but cf. ‘that’s yellow’, taken to be IETMi and IETMa
  - why does the explanation of (d) apparently rule out false avowals? (325)

- ch. 9
  - 2 do avowals articulate privileged self-knowledge?
  - the deflationist challenge:
- avowals can't be knowledge because they are not made on any "epistemic basis" (using a "special epistemic method" (344))
  - if I avow that I am in M, I do not have distinct evidence that I am in M (plausibly)
    - this point does not depend on neo-expressivism
  - but that is perfectly consistent with avowals amounting to knowledge (otherwise, foundationalism would be false)
- the "deflationary view": avowals do not ("really" (342)) express self-knowledge
  - that is pretty deflationary (isn't this also called "skepticism")?

- the default view (Wright):
- self-ascriptions are default authoritative  
“because this is how mental concepts work”  
(347)
  - why is this “deflationary”?
- hard to make sense of the default view
  - it’s not this: it’s a priori that self-ascriptions are default authoritative
    - that’s consistent with privileged access being due to the special nature of the mental, etc.

- no cognitive achievement (Fricker; recall Boghossian)
  - NCA1: self-knowledge is not the upshot of “something which the person may do”
    - obscure
  - NCA2: self-ascriptive judgments and a person’s first level mental states are not “ontologically distinct”
    - cf. Shoemaker

- the JTB worry:
  - do avowals express beliefs?
    - no in the opining sense (one has formed the active judgment...could offer specific evidence...)
    - yes in the holding-true sense (elephants don't wear pajamas, etc.—see Stalnaker, *Inquiry*, Fodor, Dennett)
      - this seems to be (doubtfully) analysed in terms of counterfactuals (see 364, fn. 15)
    - and yes in a more robust sense (see 365)
      - obviously right in the case of an avowal in thought
  - what about justification?
    - no epistemic effort or act required, but that's not necessary for justification

- taking the low road:
  - combining neo-expressivism and reliabilism
  - but why doesn't this (and the high and middle road) suggest that the answer to question 1 (what accounts for avowals' unparalleled security?) is epistemic?
  - why isn't the expressivist explanation redundant?
    - presumably because of the argument of ch. 4

- taking the high road:
  - a Burgean transcendental argument:
    - if we can successfully deliberate rationally and practically, avowals must enjoy a special epistemic status (378)
  - or a related Shoemaker-style view connecting rationality and self-knowledge



- the right road:
  - “the proponent of the middle road proposes” that immunity to error produces a default entitlement
  - so, someone who judges that he is sitting (in the “normal way”) is “entitled by default” to that belief



[I]n making a self-ascription of belief, one's eyes are, so to speak, or occasionally literally, directed outward—upon the world. If someone asks me “Do you think there is going to be a third world war?,” I must attend, in answering him, to precisely the same outward phenomena as I would attend to if I were answering the question “Will there be a third world war?”. (Evans 1982, 225)

With respect to the attitude of belief, the claim of transparency tells us that the first-person question “Do I believe P?” is “transparent” to, answered in the same way as, the outward-directed question as to the truth of P itself. (Moran 2001, 66)

## Bar-On against transparency: ch. 4

- cf. p. 4 and p. 94 (is ‘I am not mad at you’ an avowal?); see also p. 334
- the “main objection to the materialist introspectionist” (fn. 9):
  - he can’t explain the security of avowals
    - note: some oscillation between ‘security’ and ‘apparent security’ (the former officially has ‘apparent’ built in—see p. 11)
    - but why don’t we just notice that avowals are often very reliable?—the avowal is confirmed by other evidence

# transparency-to-the-world

- we can determine whether we believe that p by simply.... (p. 112)
  - not “simply”: what’s the extra?
- similarly with respect to whether we hope that p...
  - how is that supposed to go?
- this is an epistemic approach to explaining security
- they are secure because they are arrived at by “an especially secure epistemic route”
  - so presumably the previous “main objection” applies here?

1. too epistemically indirect
  - but isn't it conceded that the transparency procedure is right for some cases?
2. limited scope ("I'd really like a cup of tea right now")
  - unclear why this is a problem, given the earlier suggestion about desires
3. phenomenal avowals aren't good candidates
  - but see Dretske
4. transparency method is not especially secure
  - the democrat and dog examples are quite different—the former isn't a case where transparency leads one astray, although the latter is
5. applies to some non-avowals (seeing, remembering,...)
  - what's the problem?
    - \* to transparency as a method; not to the claim that transparency explains security



- next time:
  - transparency again