

24.500 spring 05  
topics in philosophy of mind  
session 10

- teatime

self-knowledge

# plan

- matters arising
- Bar-On's *Speaking My Mind*, chs. 6, 7,...

- the “essential indexical” is unrelated to IETM
  - indeed, Perry’s shopper finally comes to know that he is making a mess in a way that is subject to error through misidentification
  - propositions expressed by some indexical free sentences can be known in a way that is IETM
    - e.g. that Perry wrote “The essential indexical” (imagine one knows this, but has forgotten any distinct evidence one had for it)
- and it has no particular connection to self-knowledge (that I am making a mess is not about my mental states)

the guaranteed reference of 'I' has little  
to do with the other phenomena

- the “essential indexical” phenomenon arises for demonstratives (which aren’t guaranteed to refer)
- what’s an example?
  - how about Perry’s hiking case? (Jessica)

annuntio vobis gaudium magnum  
habemus papam!

The author of the book, *Hiker's Guide to the Desolation Wilderness*, stands in the wilderness beside Gilmore Lake, looking at the Mt. Tallac trail as it leaves the lake and climbs the mountain. He desires to leave the wilderness. He believes that the best way out from Gilmore Lake is to follow the Mt. Tallac trail up the mountain to Cathedral Peaks trail, on to the Floating Island trail, emerging at Spring Creek Tract Road. But he does not move. He is lost. He isn't sure whether he is standing beside Gilmore Lake, looking at Mt. Tallac, or beside Clyde Lake looking at Jack's peak, or beside Eagle Lake looking at one of the Maggie peaks. Then he begins to move along the Mt. Tallac trail. If asked, he would have explained the crucial change in his beliefs this way: 'I came to believe that *this* is the Mt. Tallac trail and *that* is Gilmore Lake.'

Perhaps “That is Gilmore Lake” just comes to “What I see now in front of me is Gilmore Lake” (p. 38 of *The Problem of the Essential Indexical*)

- that is doubtful
  - surely the proposition expressed by “that is Gilmore lake” is not about oneself (that proposition is true in a world in which I don’t exist, etc.)
  - and in any case, I may see more than one thing in front of me

## *Speaking My Mind: recap*

- “avowals”: utterances that ascribe current states of mind, “I am (in) M” (3)
  - “ I have a terrible headache’
  - “I’m wondering whether it’s going to rain”
  - for all appearances, avowals are ‘baseless’/*non-evidential* (2); no evidence, inference, or ordinary observation (27)
  - they express the subject’s knowledge
  - they are not normally *subjected to ordinary epistemic assessment*

- phenomenal avowals
  - “I am feeling thirsty”
- intentional avowals
  - “I am mad at John”
  - “I believe it is going to rain”
- my goal is to identify and explain a kind of security—special, even if not absolute—that we seem to enjoy whenever we issue an avowal
- avowals exhibit epistemic asymmetry but semantic continuity: ‘I am in M’ is true iff the speaker is in M, etc.
- the account does not invoke any special epistemic method or access we have to our own present states of mind
- but: avowals do express “non-deflationary” self-knowledge



- three questions
  - 1) what accounts for avowals' unparalleled security? (i.e., why are they strongly presumed to be true, etc.)
    - another way [? - this is taken back on 14] of putting this question: how can avowals be understood in a way that preserves semantic continuity while fully respecting epistemic asymmetry?
    - one need not subscribe to the epistemic approach (11), and my own answer to (i) will be non-epistemic
      - but see the explanation of epistemic asymmetry on 10; “[seem?] much less subject to ordinary mistakes”
  - 2) do avowals articulate privileged self-knowledge?
  - 3) how do we have privileged self-knowledge?
- a non-epistemic non-cartesian answer to (1), which is consistent with non-deflationary answers to (2)
- there is something misleading about (3)

- avowals again
  - “I am in (psychological condition) M”, right?
    - well, no:
    - “I am very tired” (looking in the mirror)
    - “I am mad at my mother” (at the therapists, see 25)
    - “I am a very patient person”
    - “I am seeing a red cardinal”
  - are not avowals (16)
    - further, some thoughts and judgments (in addition to utterances) are avowals (17)
      - so what are avowals?
      - mental self-ascriptions, in language or thought, that we think are epistemically privileged?
      - this mixing of thought and language is problematic (often the argument is just about ‘I’)

“the motion of the Earth is without any doubt against Scripture”

- ch. 6
  - 1) what accounts for avowals' unparalleled security? (i.e., why are they strongly presumed to be true, etc.)
- ascriptive security: “when avowing, I enjoy...a special security in the ascription of the occurrent mental state to myself...of a kind I do not enjoy when making any non-mental ‘I’-ascriptions [e.g. ‘my legs are crossed’]. I shall refer to this as the ‘ascriptive security’ of avowals” (93)
- ascriptive security is “immunity to a certain kind of error” (189), namely “immunity to error through misascription” (192)

S knows that a is F in a way subject to error through misascription iff:

- S's evidence for the proposition that a is F is:
  - that a is G (that a has some property X; note: this is just equivalent to the proposition that a exists)
  - that if a is G, it is F (that  $X = Fness$ )
- and S's identification evidence (i.e. the second bit) could be defeated without her instantiation evidence (i.e. the first bit) also being defeated
- otherwise, S knows that a is F in a way immune to error through misascription
  - not clear that there are any examples of the “a has some property X and X is Fness” sort (see 193)
  - and is it really so odd to wonder whether what one is feeling is thirst, or anger (193)?
  - see also “overstaying my welcome” (226)

- avowals are both IETMi and IETMa
  - disputable that they are always IETMa
- “this combined immunity can serve to mark a significant contrast between avowals and all non-mental ‘I’-ascriptions”
  - what about: ‘I am facing a yellow thing’?
    - isn’t this (relative to the usual way of knowing) both IETMi and IETMa?
      - at any rate if we assume that my evidence is not (in part) that I seem to see a yellow thing (Chris’s point)
    - and can’t ‘that is yellow’ be IETMa?
    - ditto ‘Bar-On wrote *Speaking My Mind*’ (assume one has forgotten any distinct evidence one had for this)
      - but see the “I see a vase” example (368, fn. 17)

- “possessing immunity to error clearly does not signal the presence of a highly secure epistemic basis” (200)
  - it doesn’t signal the presence of any kind of secure basis
- “a person who is immune to error does not go astray in her pronouncements” (200)
  - that may be, but the phenomenon of IE is perfectly compatible with falsehood (see 201, 203)
  - the jargon of ‘immunity to error’ is misleading: I can be right that someone is in pain, and wrong that it’s me
  - why is the Epistemic Approach incompatible with the claim that avowals have both kinds of IE (203)?

- the jargon of ‘immunity to error’ is misleading...
- case 1: I know that that is yellow in a way that is IETM
- case 2: I know that Bob’s snack is yellow in a way that is SETM (I know that his snack is Judy’s banana, and that her banana is yellow)
- in a similar situation to case 2, I can:
  - misidentify Bob’s snack as Judy’s banana (I falsely believe that Bob’s snack = Judy’s banana), and
  - get the snack’s color wrong (I falsely believe that Bob’s snack is yellow), while
  - being right that something (viz. Judy’s banana) is yellow (I truly believe that Judy’s banana is yellow)

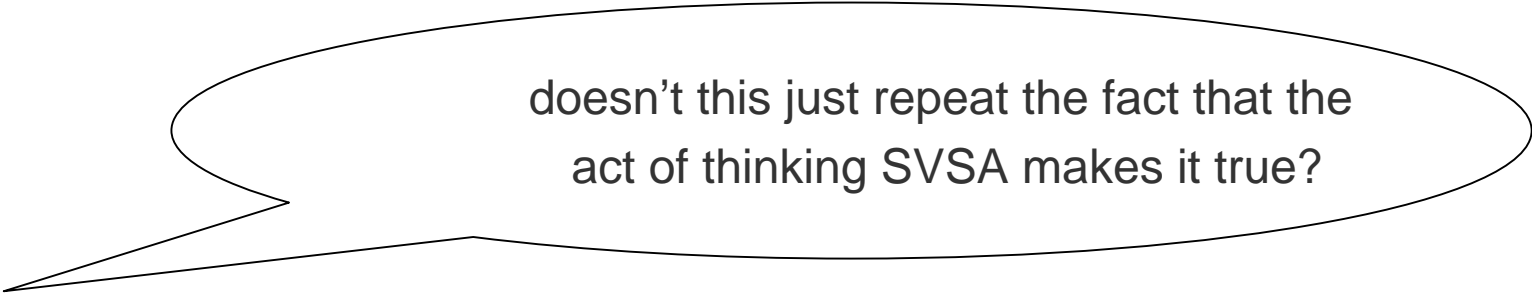
- likewise, in similar situation to case 1 (I'm looking at x, it looks yellow, I judge "that is yellow", etc.), I can
  - misidentify x as Judy's banana (I falsely believe that x = Judy's banana), and
  - get x's color wrong (I falsely believe that that (x) is yellow), while
  - being right that something (viz. Judy's banana) is yellow (I truly believe that Judy's banana is yellow)
  - see Wittgenstein: "the possibility of an error has been provided for"—this doesn't characterize the phenomenon



- in the remainder of [ch. 6], I shall try to show that the ascriptive immediacy that attends AIE is no bar to achieving...correct self-ascription
  - unclear why there is a problem here
- I shall do this by considering...self-verifying avowals
- a key feature of them will enable us to understand the source of AIE of avowals (210)
- my next task will be to understand how avowals might be seen not only as protected from various epistemic errors and criticisms, but also as especially apt to be true
- this will be accomplished by connecting IETMa with the idea that avowals serve to express subjects' mental states, rather than report them (206-7)

- SVSA: I am thinking (presently entertaining the thought) that p
  - if SVSA is thought, it is true (cf. Burge); just as the proposition that I am writing that p is true when written by me
  - the key feature of SVSA, shared by (intentional) avowals, is that the content of the thought is “explicitly articulated” or “spelled out”
    - i.e. the content of SVSA has as a constituent the content of the ascribed thought (at any rate on some structured view of propositions)
  - OK, but what’s the connection between that and the claim that “there is no need for any recognitional identification” of the content? (212)
    - cf. she is thinking/saying/writing that p (these need not be IETMa)

- SVSA: I am thinking (presently entertaining the thought) that p
  - I can tell that a certain thought is crossing my mind...simply by telling it—i.e. that content
  - this is because, in my own case, articulating the content serves directly to give voice to my present state; it constitutes expressing the very thought I am ascribing to myself



doesn't this just repeat the fact that the act of thinking SVSA makes it true?

- Sellars' three senses of expression
  1. the action sense: S expresses her state A by intentionally F-ing
    - but we don't get much of an explanation here (yet), unlike (2) and (3)
    - hugging, saying 'it's so great to see you', expresses<sub>1</sub> my joy at seeing you (248)
  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)
    - according to Bar-On, an avowal 'I am in M' expresses<sub>1</sub> M, as well as (perhaps—see later) my belief that I am in M

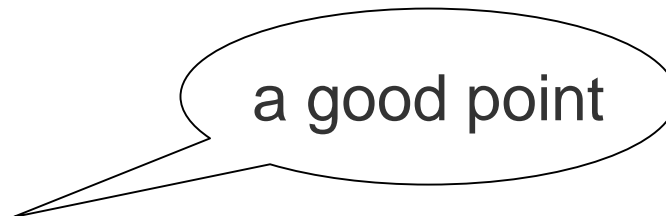
## ch. 7

- avowals are not portrayed as absolutely incorrigible...we can see [because of IETMa] why...they are ordinarily protected from epistemic challenge...unlike other empirical assertions
  - how can this be right?
    - ignore the fact that some avowals aren't IETMa
    - plenty of ordinary empirical assertions are IETMa
      - indeed, unless all evidence bottoms out in facts about one's mental states, a regress argument will show they have to be

- simple expressivism
  - “I have a toothache” is just a way of moaning
    - pretty implausible
    - the Geach point is even stronger here, because “ow!” doesn’t function at all like a premise, unlike “let it be the case that no one steals!”
      - 1) if stealing is wrong, getting Bart to steal is wrong/if I have a toothache, I need aspirin
      - 2) stealing is wrong (let it be the case...)/I have a toothache (ow!)
      - 3) getting Bart to steal is wrong/I need aspirin

- the fact that ethical sentences...can be embedded...does not tell against the expressivist claim that the standard function of ethical utterances is to express attitudes and feelings... (234)
- but (modulo some unclarity about “standard function”), who’s disagreeing?
  - on this point, see Harman, *The Nature of Morality*
- what’s going on on the top of 238?
  - how can the avowal be “truth conditionally equivalent” to anything?

- a difference between the emotivist and expressivist: the former thinks that all ethical discourse is “non-factual”; the latter thinks that only some mental discourse is (236)
- the expressivist might make her theory apply to all mental discourse, following the emotivist
- but this makes no sense, because the expressivist theory assumes that there are states of mind (and hence that there are mental facts)





- 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
    - an utterance of ‘p’ expresses<sub>1</sub> my belief that p (the belief was its “rational cause”; the fact that p was not its rational cause, on this Davidsonian conception of a reason\* [n.b. this seems to be the wrong interpretation—see next slide])
    - what about an utterance of ‘I believe that p’?
    - that should only express<sub>1</sub> my second-order belief, not my first-order one—which is not what Bar-On says
      - \*see Davidson, “Actions, reasons, and causes”

- 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)
  - but now my reason for saying that ‘I am in M’ is non-Davidsonian—the fact that I’m in M, not the fact 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)
  - ‘I am tired’ (said looking into a mirror [DBO’s earlier example) expresses<sub>1</sub> my tiredness [Adam’s point]

- “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)

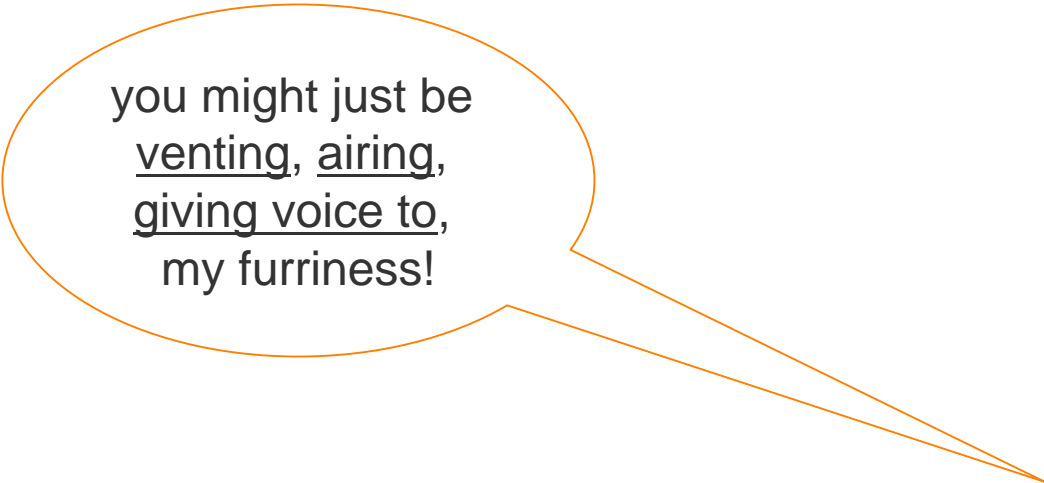
- if ‘that’s great!’ and ‘I am so excited’ expresses<sub>1</sub> my excitement (possibly in addition to expressing<sub>1</sub> my belief that that’s great/I am excited), then:
  - ‘I see Teddy!’
  - ‘I know where you are!’ (said during hide-and-seek)
  - ‘I’ve got it!’ (said while doing a crossword puzzle)
- (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!

- next time:
  - chs. 8, 9, 10
  - Evans, Dretske, Bar-On on transparency