

Replies to Leite, Shaw, and Campbell

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Reply to Leite

Both Leite and Shaw focus on the viability of a crucial argument early in BISCAM, one that aims to show that the state we are typically attributing to normal human adults in using the word ‘belief’ is metaphysically inseparable from the believer’s knowledge that they hold the belief. Before turning to the details of their challenges, it will be useful to describe the idea underlying the argument. Belief-attributions (of the sort specified) say something about the believer’s take on the world, a take that is *theirs* in a special sense. A belief is not the sort of thing that can be separated from me, as a couch or a tumor might be. For starters, a belief is not an object at all. Belief is a state, as being pale is a state. But whereas being pale does not draw into operation my rational abilities—the cognitive abilities that make it possible for me to speak my mind—to believe is precisely an exercise of those capacities. The mine-ness of my beliefs consists in part in the fact that we do not discover them, as we discover our complexion. I argue that our knowledge of what we believe does not lapse when the belief in question is not on our minds. If a belief that was no longer ‘on my mind’ was therefore unknown to me, those beliefs would no longer mine in the relevant sense. What makes an out-of-mind belief still mine is, among other things, that I am *able* to bring them to mind. The language of ability—to believe is to *be able to say* what we believe—preserves the mine-ness of a belief that is no longer on my mind. The point could be made this way:

ultimately, what explains why we should say someone still *knows* they hold a belief even when it's not on their minds is exactly what explains why we should say that they still *hold* a belief even when it's not on their minds.

Here is the embattled argument:

(A) S believes that p only if S is able to honestly assert that p.

(B) S is able to honestly assert that p only if S is able to avow the belief that p.

(C) S is able to avow the belief that p only if S knows that she believes that p

Conclusion: S believes that p only if S knows that she believes that p.

Marcus (2021), 40.

Leite presents an array of would-be counterexamples to (A) and (B). These examples make a case that my purely conceptual approach should yield to one informed by hands-on clinical practice. But the putative counterexamples exploit ordinary-language interpretations of my (explicitly) quasi-technical uses of the expressions 'belief' and 'in mind'. And the cited clinical phenomena do not, as Leite contends, elude my approach; I just describe them differently.

In objection to (A), Leite cites statements such as the following: "I believe he can be relied upon but I recognize that I may have been swayed by his charm" (Leite 2023, ?). The speaker *cannot* honestly assert that he can be relied upon. And so we have belief without the ability honestly to assert.

But this use of ‘belief’ indicates that the speaker has his doubts. It attributes ‘weak belief’, as the phenomenon has been labeled in recent discussions.¹ The class of weak beliefs includes hunches, suspicions, and educated guesses. But this is not *belief* in the sense I specify. As I use the term, ‘belief’ refers to the state in which theoretical reasoning concludes. To believe *p* is to represent *p* as *binding* me; it is consciousness of a *necessity*, leaving me no room either to withhold belief or to disbelieve. This is not a state compatible with doubt. To draw a conclusion is to see it as what I *must* (in the specified sense) believe. To see the proposition through a lens of doubt is to view it not as what I must believe, but only as, say, what is likely. This sort of case is thus not a counterexample to (A).

Much of Leite’s commentary focuses on unconscious beliefs. Some unconscious beliefs may be known, he contends, but others are not. He writes: “There’s an important difference between the patient who responds by saying, “Wow, you’re right. I do believe that, but I never recognized it”, and the patient who says, “You know, I always kind of knew that I believed that.”” (Leite 2023, ?).

Here again, I emphasize that my topic is not “every acceptable, literal, and true occurrence of” the term ‘belief’. (Marcus (2021), 9). I accept the contrast made plain here by Leite, and I accept that the use of ‘belief’ in both cases is perfectly apt. It poses a challenge for my theory: to distinguish between the cases. But there are other ways of meeting the challenge than conflating the two states.

Here is how I would describe the difference. In Leite’s first case, reasoning proceeds *as if* on the basis of an endorsement of certain premise-propositions despite

¹ See Hawthorne, Rothschild, and Spectre (2016).

the thinker's not endorsing the relevant proposition. In Leite's second case, reasoning really does proceed on the basis of the endorsement of a certain proposition even though the thinker denies it—and denies it without lying. The first category includes implicit bias; the second category includes repressed beliefs. In the first case, the discovery (of the mental state) is a revelation; in the second case, it comes as no surprise. My topic is the second category.

Leite appeals to unknown unconscious beliefs in objection to “an intermediate lemma that Marcus derives from (A) and (B): S believes that p only if S is able to avow the belief that p.” Leite holds that an *unconscious* believer need not have the ability to avow their belief. He finds it common in practice that a patient can acknowledge that they hold a repressed belief while also judging it to be false. This threatens my thesis in two ways. First, it describes a scenario in which a belief is held but cannot be brought to mind, and so cannot be avowed. Second, it describes a scenario in which contradictory beliefs are in mind, the impossibility of which is a foundation for my project. But, first, having an ability does not entail the possibility of exercising it, and, second, the recognition of incoherence does not amount to having both beliefs in mind in my sense.

About the first issue: If I know that my mother loves me and I unconsciously believe that she doesn't, I cannot bring the latter to mind without abandoning the former. If I don't surrender the former, then the effect of bringing the latter to mind is to give it up. It might thus be impossible to bring it to mind. But it doesn't follow that the thinker lacks the ability to honestly assert it. After all, it is conceivable that a fragile glass won't break when dropped because God will hold it together in any of the triggering circumstances. On the one hand, breaking when dropped defines fragility; on the other hand, in some circumstances, fragile items cannot break even when dropped.

Similarly, what it is to have a belief is in part to be able to bring it to mind, but in the case under discussion, this disposition can't be realized because of the presence of the contradictory belief. To understand what's happening in this scenario is to grasp why an extant ability fails to be exercised. The incorrigible contradictory belief masks the exercise of the ability. No counterexample.

This brings us to the second point. Leite:

It can be tempting to imagine that the belief stops existing the very moment that it is functioning consciously and is recognized as false, but clinical experience shows that that's not how human beings always work... Someone who believes at bottom that they are worthless and unlovable will not be freed instantly by the recognition that there are people who love them – not even when they put two and two together. It can be an important step clinically to acknowledge, really experiencing the incoherence in an emotionally rich way, “I believe that I am worthless and unlovable, and yet I recognize that my spouse loves me for who I am. (Leite 2023, ?).

Here's how I would understand such a case. To have the belief at all is to view the proposition as what one ought to believe. The patient interprets the behavior of others through this lens. She makes sense of how people treat her as a specific example of how they treat worthless and unlovable people. This despite the fact that when she focuses on the question of whether her spouse loves her for who she is, she recognizes that he does. My view does not entail that, in recognizing the latter, the unconscious belief goes away. To do that, one would have to fully inhabit the perspective of repressed belief. In

Leite's example, the patient knows a proposition to be false and also knows that she believes it. But knowing that you hold a belief is not sufficient for bringing the repressed belief to mind.

A belief's being in mind—a *judgment*—is the recognition of a truth that is thereby believed. When Leite's patient recognizes that they hold a false belief, they are exactly not recognizing its truth. To become conscious of one's belief would be to occupy the perspective from which, say, a loving interpretation of one's spouse's behavior would be ruled out. And to recognize—and to hold on to that recognition—that one's spouse sees one's own lovability is incompatible with adopting the point of view of the repressed belief.

My appeals to terminology in these replies might create the impression that I am somehow defining an important clinical phenomenon out of existence. But I'm not. I accept that overcoming repression may often require the patient to “experience[e] the incoherence in an emotionally rich way.” But it makes no sense to describe someone as having a belief known to be false *in mind*, as I have explained the expression. As above, however, this doesn't deprive me of the resources for describing the phenomenon at issue. I would instead speak of incrementally coming to inhabit the perspective of the belief known to be false, that is, in recognizing one's own reactions to be the effect in part of holding an unacknowledged belief, one thereby comes gradually acknowledge it. acknowledged. This, in turn, may result in the abandonment of that very belief.

In defense of the idea that unconscious beliefs are avowable, I argue that needing help to exercise an ability is no bar to continuing to possess it. An able surgeon remains able even in the absence of the paraphrenia and assistance needed to exercise his ability. So the fact that a believer might need the help of a therapist doesn't show that they lack

the ability to avow the belief. But Leite likens my argument to the following: “In one way, it’s true that the logic final is passable for a smart undergraduate who hasn’t yet taken the class: if they acquire the relevant skills (which they have a capacity to acquire), they will be able to pass. It doesn’t follow that they are able to pass the final now.” (Leite 2023, ?)

Here is why I treat the ability to avow like the surgeon’s and not like the logic student’s ability. Repression is a response to the prior awareness of the repressed truth (or would-be truth). And what must be done to right the defect is to *un*-push-down that awareness. Therapy ideally brings to the surface what was once already at the surface. Again, the point is not there isn’t a phenomenon in which a belief organizes a certain person’s thoughts and feelings despite their never having become aware of it. This is implicit bias and the like—not my topic. Perhaps therapy could be helpful here too! But I am speaking of the condition in which painful awareness is banished from consciousness. The thinker must have the ability to bring the belief to mind, as its prior exercise is precisely what made repression necessary in the first place. Something is stopping the thinker from becoming conscious of what they hold true. But that isn’t the same as being ignorant of their belief.

Reply to Shaw:

Whereas Leite takes issue with (A) and (B), Shaw focuses on (C). Shaw finds my answer to a potential objection unsatisfying. Here’s how I frame the worry:

Is knowledge a necessary condition of the ability to act in light of p or rather only a necessary condition of the unmasked ability to act in light of p? If only the latter, then believing that p would not, after all, be inseparable from knowledge that one holds the belief. (Marcus (2021), 51-52.)

Shaw organizes my reply as follows:

- (i) Knowledge that p is a necessary condition of acting in light of p.
- (ii) “But if so, it is (one would think) because p’s eligibility to be a fact in light of which S acts is determined by whether or not S knows that p.” Marcus (2021), 52.
- (iii) “If that’s right, then it is difficult to see what it could mean to have the ability to act in light of p despite not knowing that p.” Marcus (2021), 52.

So far so good. But Shaw worries that (iii) doesn’t follow, comparing the argument to the following:

- (i’) Having some awareness of a bike is a necessary condition of intentionally riding the bike (under that description).
- (ii’) This is because: the eligibility of any given bike for use in an intentional bike-riding is determined in part by whether or not one is aware of the bike.

(iii') So: one cannot count as having the *ability* to ride a bike unless one is aware of the bike.

Even if one thinks (i') is true (because without awareness of a bike, any bike-riding wouldn't be intentional under the relevant description), (iii') is certainly false. Losing awareness of a bike does not destroy my *ability* to ride it. (Shaw 2023, ?)

Shaw sees that awareness of a particular object, while it may be a necessary condition of using it, is not by that fact a necessary condition of an ability to use it. Similarly, he reasons, knowledge of a particular fact may be a necessary condition for it serving as our reason, but it does not follow that it is a necessary condition of our ability to act on its basis.

To assess this objection, consider a critical difference between the ability to use an object and the ability to act in light of a fact. The ability to use a particular object is a matter of skill. But the exercise of skill has no essential normative valence. I can use my doctoring talents either to heal or to harm. But acting on the basis of a fact does have an essential normative valence. I must view the fact as supporting the action.² If I don't represent p as being a good reason to x, then I neither x nor intend to x on the grounds that p. But unless I take myself to know, or at least believe, that p is a fact, then at best it's the likelihood of p rather than the fact that p that serves as my reason.

If you like:

² This difference between the exercise of skill on the one hand, and practical and epistemic virtue has been explored in Horst (2022) and Horst (forthcoming).

- (1) Acting on a reason p entails representing p as supporting the action.
- (2) Representing p as supporting the action entails representing p as true.
- (3) Therefore, having the ability to act on the basis of p entails knowing or believing that p.

Let's consider an example. Suppose I want it to rain. And suppose pressing the button in front of me will make it rain. But I don't know that. I can of course press the button. I'd like to think that I can press pretty much any button. But can I press the button in light of the fact that doing so will make it rain? No, for I do not view making it rain as any kind of reason to press the button. And that's because I don't know that *pushing the button will make it rain*. The connection between button-pushing and rain is not a part of my world, so to speak, if I am ignorant of it. But only if a fact is part of my world am I able to do anything in its light. The invisible casts no light.

The conclusion of this argument is weaker than (i) above, as it mentions knowledge *or* belief. That's still enough to defeat Shaw's objection, which applies equally to believing that p and knowing that p. But a crucial thesis of the discussion in which this argument appears is that the cognition expressed in an ordinary avowal "I believe that p" cannot be understood as a second-order belief. I will not review the argument for that thesis here, but the central thought is that when people avow, they manifest knowledge, a kind of knowledge that cannot be factored into belief + evidence. It is in the nature of our knowledge of belief that no such decomposition is possible. Belief is, rather, an attitude such that knowing one holds it is inseparable from holding it. This a difficult idea to make out. I would urge a skeptical reader to check out BISCAM for the reasoning behind this conclusion.

Shaw also appeals to the intuitiveness of describing someone who has recovered from self-deception as having *learned* something about what they think. As such, they must have been ignorant of what they think. In reply to this objection in BISCAM, I argue, as Shaw says, that “the selfsame forces that suppress belief in cases of self-deception likewise suppress, without destroying, concomitant knowledge of belief.” But Shaw is unpersuaded, arguing as follows:

[W]hile we sometimes describe the self-deceived as having known all along on some level, we would not describe them as having known all along *that they knew* (even ‘on some level’). The latter claim suggests they have arrived at the kind of self-awareness that would overcome their self-deception. (Shaw (2023), ?)

Shaw suggests here that although a self-deceiver may continue to believe the unpleasant truth while remaining self-deceived (pace deflationists about self-deception), there is no reason to think that they know that they hold that belief.

But as I’ve argued elsewhere, there is at least one kind of self-deception that is unintelligible without attributing to the subject knowledge of what they are at the same time hiding from themselves: self-deceptive *action*.³ I will make the point briefly here. Take the example of a man who finishes his brother’s sentences in order to undermine him. When asked, he denies it, claiming that his sentence-finishing is aimed at being helpful. He is deceiving himself, so not lying in the ordinary sense. He is acting under the description *undermining his brother*. To act under this description means at least

³ Marcus (2019).

that undermining is not an accidental by-product of his action. It is his true, repressed aim. He is deceiving himself about what must remain his aim, on pain of no longer intentionally pursuing it. Quite generally, a condition for the possibility of any (intentional) action, and hence of self-deceptive action, is knowledge of one's aim. But once one sees how self-knowledge can be repressed in the case of action, there is no reason to think the phenomenon is limited to action. One can know one holds a repressed belief, even as one non-lyingly insists otherwise.

Shaw, in the passage above, says that *knowing the whole time* would amount to awareness, which would spell the end of the self-deception. But this inference relies on a patent falsehood: that knowing that *p* requires the knowledge to be on one's mind as long as it persists. In fact, very little of the zillions of things we know are on our minds at any given time. Of course, a repressed (but known) belief doesn't *just happen* not to be on one's mind. A full-blown theory of self-deception would explain how it doesn't just happen not to be on the self-deceiver's mind.

Shaw also remarks that "at least some cases of self-deception, there may be *no* such patterns of behavior that witness the putative bit of suppressed self-knowledge. What is the point of saying self-knowledge must be there, suppressed, if it need have no manifestations at all?" (Shaw 2023, ?). But the idea that ascribing a belief is a mistake in the absence of observed behavioral manifestations is implausible on all but the most behavioristic conceptions of mental states. And if Shaw's point is that such states couldn't *possibly* be manifested—well, that's precisely what's at issue.

The distinction between belief and implicit bias should help to diffuse hostile intuitions. A member of a search committee might give low marks to a potential job candidate because they are biased against female logicians. If his pattern of marking

candidate files is pointed out to him, he may accept that his behavior was guided by a bias against women. He will not experience this as the directing of his attention to what he knew was there all along. But there is another class of cases in which a pattern of discrimination is pointed out to one and one accepts not only that one held a certain belief, but also that one had somehow managed to avoid bringing that thought to consciousness.⁴ The latter states are constituted by an evaluation. They, and not the others, are my topic.

Shaw doubts that the thesis that *every belief is self-known, whether easily recallable or not* does any work; he thinks that the thesis that *only beliefs that are easily recallable are self-known* would do just as well for my purposes. And why defend a stronger thesis when a weaker thesis will do?

Here's what he's right about. It is impossible to hold contradictory beliefs only insofar as they are in mind. And the consciousness of necessity in which inference consists depends just upon all of the relevant belief's being in mind. And a belief is expressible only insofar as it is mind. These facts about judgments (i.e., beliefs that are in mind) go together. The question, however, is whether this picture is compatible with belief's being unknown when hard to bring to mind. I contend that it is not.

Consider that Shaw might have pressed his line of objection even further than he does. Why not say that when a belief is not in mind, we no longer hold the belief? What work is an out-of-mind belief doing in the account? The explanatory gains Shaw argues would be preserved if I jettisoned the thesis that out-of-mind beliefs are known would

⁴ The thesis of suppressed knowledge plays a central role William Fingarette's landmark study of self-deception, (1969).

equally be preserved if I jettisoned the thesis that a thinker continues to hold belief when it is no longer in mind.

So what would be wrong with the more extreme view? Robert Audi has argued plausibly that it is a condition of adequacy of a theory of belief that it recognizes the difference between, on the one hand, a dispositional belief (as he calls it) and, on the other, a disposition *to* believe.⁵ While I get ready for the day in my windowless apartment, I have no idea that it is raining. But since it is raining, I am disposed to believe that it's raining as soon as I walk outside. This is different than someone who believes that it's raining but is distracted as he walks out of the house, only to be reminded of what he already believed by the rain itself.

The plausibility of this distinction is linked to our implicit grasp of the temporality of belief.⁶ Upon seeing the forecast, I believe that it will rain today. As my mind turns to other things, the forecast recedes from consciousness. Nonetheless, I continue to believe that it will rain today. What could explain my no longer believing it? I might change my mind if, say, I saw a new forecast. I might also forget the forecast. But if it is stipulated that I neither changed my mind nor forgot, then I still believe it. The passage of time itself does not by itself suffice for the cessation of a belief. Nor does the fact I have not been reflecting on the weather in the interim. I see no reason why we shouldn't say the same about knowledge of belief.

A belief's not being 'on one's mind' is not the same as our being ignorant of it. Why, then, should it be implausible to say that the self-deceiver knows she holds the

⁵ Audi (1994).

⁶ Cf. Rödl (2012).

beliefs she suppresses? Shaw may answer as follows: the difference between the two cases is that in one case the thinker can bring the belief to mind and in the other case, they can't. Because the self-deceiver *can't* bring it to mind, we should say that they are ignorant of what they believe.

But the premise of this reasoning is false. The condition for the possibility of psychotherapy is the ability of the thinker to bring their repressed thoughts to mind. She needs help, but, as was discussed above in reply to Leite, this is no bar to having an ability. Furthermore, it is not as if all non-repressed beliefs can be called to mind at will. Our beliefs lie on a continuum of expressibility, from the easily recallable to the deeply repressed.

Reply to Campbell

I describe the book as “a unified conception of the mind in its theoretical orientation.” The unity of my conception consists in the interrelatedness of the accounts of belief, inference, and the singleness of the rational mind. I also sketch a taxonomy of judgments that include not-theoretical kinds of judgments, each of which also constitutes (ideally) a kind of knowledge of the world. Campbell asks “What are the boundaries, and what is the internal structure, of the mind’s ‘theoretical’ orientation?” (Campbell 2023, ?). I am grateful to LC for giving me an occasion to flesh this taxonomy out in greater depth.

The focus of the book is *theoretical* judgments, in which the object of the judgment is *truth*. My belief that p is my answer to the question “Is p true?” Inference is a matter of recognizing (in the ideal case) that the conclusion-proposition *must* be

true in light of the truth of the premise-propositions. In the ideal case, a theoretical judgment constitutes *knowledge*, specifically *theoretical* knowledge.

‘Theoretical’ in this context is typically used in contrast with ‘practical’.

Anscombe, following Aquinas, formulates the contrast as follows: “Practical knowledge is ‘the cause of what it understands’, unlike speculative knowledge, which is derived from the objects known.” (Anscombe (1980), 87.) Here’s how I make the point: The object of practical judgment is the to-be-done, or *good* in the formal sense. In representing x-ing as to-be-done (in the relevant sense), other actions become eligible to be done *because* I am x-ing. Knowing that I have an aim is what explains my doing things because I have that aim. Practical knowledge of one’s end is in this sense part of what it is to pursue the end. I use my knowledge of what I’m doing when I take steps to complete my action. This is knowledge of the world, but the object of judgment is the to-be-done (or good), rather than the to-be-believed (or true).

What theoretical judgment is to truth and practical judgment is to the good, aesthetic judgment is to the beautiful. Belief is (as it were) an answer to the question of whether p is to be believed. Action is (as it were) an answer to the question of whether x is to be done. And an aesthetic judgment—a conceptually structured feeling, as I have argued elsewhere—is (as it were) an answer to the question of whether o is to be appreciated.⁷

To ask for a reason upon hearing the articulation of a judgment is to ask for different things depending on the kind of judgment. They are different ‘why?’ questions. If I say “I believe that p”, a topic-comprehending reply is something along the lines of

⁷ See Gorodeisky and Marcus (2018) and (2019).

“What makes you think p is true?”. And I answer with appeals to considerations that show that p is true. If I say “I am x-ing”, a topic-comprehending reply is something like “What’s the point of doing that?”. I reply by reply by citing what they took to justify the action. If I say “I find o beautiful”, a topic-comprehending reply is something along the lines of “What is it about o that appeals to you?”. And I reply by attempting to articulate what it is about the object that merited my reaction.

Campbell asks why inference, perception, and testimony do not constitute distinct forms of judgment. This is easiest to say in the case of inference. As I have explained them, inference and belief are an inextricable pair. To affirm a proposition is already to affirm a host of other propositions. Inferential connections constitute the inseparability of certain beliefs from others, and so the singleness of a single mind. Belief is not intelligible without inference and visa-versa.

As to testimony and perception, I find Campbell’s own suggestion congenial: “All that matters is that in so judging, one exercises a capacity which enables one to respond to a demand to provide reasons which speak to the truth of what one judges to be the case.” (Campbell 2023, ?). Here's how I would make the point: Testimony and Perception are not kinds of judgments per se, they are sources of theoretical knowledge. A testimonial judgment is an ordinary theoretical judgment based on testimony. A perceptual judgment is an ordinary theoretical judgment based on perception. When I say *based on*, I mean what is indicated by a back-and-forth in which someone is asked how they know p and replies by citing either what they saw (heard, tasted, felt, et. al.) or what they were told. There is nothing reductive about this classification. It is not to assimilate testimony with inference from evidence nor is it to say anything in particular about perception beyond the fact that it is a source of belief, i.e., the source of the

consciousness of the necessity of *p*'s truth, and ideally knowledge. Inference, by contrast, is not a source of belief. It is the understanding of the connection between truths that constitutes a connection between the corresponding beliefs. Inferential connections are mental glue, as it were. Testimony and perception are neither judgments nor glue but sources—ideally, of empirical knowledge.

In BISCs, I draw the following contrast to illustrate the idea of a judgment of self-consciousness. To hear “I think my brother is a loser” as a theoretical judgment (i.e., as a judgment whose topic is the speaker herself) does not exclude thinking of the speaker as knowing perfectly well that his brother is *not* a loser. But to hear the very same utterance as what I call a judgment of self-consciousness, (i.e., as the making explicit of the self-consciousness of a theoretical judgment about my brother), is to hear it as incompatible with knowing perfectly well that his brother is not a loser.

The point is not that some judgments are self-conscious and others are not. Judgment of whatever sort manifests knowledge of the self. Sometimes a judgment makes this explicit, e.g., “I believe that *p*” and “I find *o* beautiful”, whereas at other times we might simply say “*p*” or “that’s beautiful”. When I refer to a sentence such as “I believe that *p*” as a judgment of self-consciousness, I mean to indicate that although it has the grammar of a straightforward assertion, “I think that...” does not contribute to the truth conditions of the topic-proposition. This is explicitly self-conscious knowledge, knowledge of the self that is sustained simply by, as the case may be, believing, doing, or finding beautiful.

Typically, “I think that *p*” is understood as a judgment of self-consciousness. This shows itself in the sense of topic-changing when statements of this form, said in the ordinary way, are treated as the expression of theoretical knowledge of the subject

herself. A topic-shifting reply to “I believe that p” is “Why do you think you believe that?”. A topic-shifting reply to “I find o beautiful” is: “Do you really find it beautiful?” If you respond in one of these ways, I will know you have either misunderstood me or suspect me of dishonesty. Nonetheless, these statement-forms do (paradigmatically) reveal knowledge of the very sort queried in these inapposite replies. This is puzzling until one sees that the knowledge in question is not something over and above being in the state itself.

Among the ‘just sayables’ *not* mentioned in BISCAM are native linguistic judgments. A brief discussion will help bring philosophical judgment into focus. Consider the difference between a judgment about correct English usage made by a non-English speaker who has been observing us and a judgment about correct English usage made by one of us. Both can speak equally knowledgeably about the use of a certain phrase. But only the latter can say “*We* say x not y”. This use of the first-person plural is important.

To see its importance, suppose the English speaker was unfamiliar with the phrase x. He observes English speakers' use of the phrase and observes, with surprise, that “*We* say x, I guess”. Given that he is an English speaker, the source of this knowledge is atypical. It is not an articulation of his knowledge qua English speaker. Rather, he is on this occasion judging like the linguistic anthropologist.

If a native English speaker corrects a new-to-English speaker, they might say something along the lines of “*We* say x, not y”. And in doing so they purport to speak as a plural subject, from the point of view of speakers of English quite generally. In speaking this way, I predicate something of *us*—that we say x not y. The source of my knowledge is simply my *being* an English speaker. It is the source both of my

knowledge that it is x rather than y that we say, and also knowledge of who it is that says it. This linguistic, first-person plural judgment has the characteristic immunity to misidentification which has long been observed in typical cases of first-person singular judgments. I can be wrong about what *we* say, but I can't be wrong about *who* my statement predicates saying x rather than y to. The first-person plural does not exhibit this immunity in a sentence such as "we who have gout suffer mightily." My conception of the 'we' in the latter case is the various people who have gout, of which, as a separate matter, I know myself to be one. In the other case, I make explicit the understanding of the language I speak, part of which is that, qua language, it is shared. *The people who share the language I speak* is not such that it is a separate matter that I know myself to be one. I cannot be alienated from my conception of myself as the speaker of a particular language that I do in fact speak. But I can be alienated from myself as gout-sufferer.⁸

Philosophical judgment is also a kind of first-person plural judgment. But rather than manifesting knowledge we have qua speaker of a certain language, it is (or purports to be) knowledge we have of ourselves qua human.

The picture of philosophy that I have in mind is as old as the discipline, held by Plato, Kant, and Wittgenstein among many others. CI Lewis's formulation strikes me as particularly apt:

Everyone can be his own philosopher, because in philosophy we investigate what we already know. It is not the business of philosophy,

⁸ My approach here is informed by Cavell (1958). Cf. Haase (2012).

as it is of the natural sciences, to add to the sum total of phenomena with which men are acquainted. Philosophy is concerned with what is already familiar. To know in the sense of familiarity and to comprehend in clear ideas are, of course, quite different matters. ...Just this business of bringing to clear consciousness the principles which are implicitly intended in our dealing with the familiar, is the distinctively philosophic enterprise.” (Lewis (1929), 2-3)

We share an implicit understanding of a phenomenon that comes under philosophical scrutiny. And it is this understanding that serves as the judge, for each of us, of a specific proposal. The topic of BISCAM is the nature of our point of view on the world, the nature of the we who say “I”. Because belief (in the sense I specify) is fundamentally a first-person phenomenon, to understand it is in the first instance to understand what it is *for the believer*. I am trying to catch myself in the act, qua believer. And in so doing I aim to say what it is to be one of us, the ones who say “I”. The aim is to elucidate what one might call universal rational subjectivity.

Either BISCAM does or doesn’t make explicit the understanding implicit in our having a point of view. Philosophy ideally clarifies its topic, bringing its nature to consciousness through articulation. This is the object of philosophical judgment: clarity. The fundamental philosophical question is: Does this make sense? Does it make sense *of x*. For example, is there any sense to be made of the idea that we are physical? There are loads of empirical questions regarding the nature of the physical world, including and especially regarding the operations of our bodies. But the question of whether *we* are physical is not. To reach the philosophical conclusion that physicalism

about *us* is false is to say that no sense can be made of the idea. In the end, the theory has to answer to the sense we make of judgments in the target areas. In philosophy success is sense, and failure is nonsense.

These very paragraphs are themselves an attempt to make explicit our understanding of what we do when we do philosophy. To treat it as a philosophical thesis is to try to make sense of it as a description of what *we* do, which is to say, in the first instance, of what *you* do. If you reply to my thesis by saying: “let’s poll all of the philosophers to see if you’re right,” then you have not responded philosophically, since you have not attempted to make sense of what you do when you do philosophy. And if at this point you say: “But polling is how I do philosophy”, then I would say that you and I are up to very different things.

I am not possessive about the label ‘philosophy’; let a thousand flowers bloom. Let there be many things ‘philosophers’ are doing that are wonderful and illuminating in their own ways, but whose nature is not properly described by my articulation of what I’m up to when doing what I call ‘philosophy’. Cosmology, for example, plainly is not and should not simply be a matter of clarifying through articulation. I won’t go down the list. The philosophy of mind is a different story, however. Many who set out to understand ‘the mind’ turn away from the first-person perspective on principle, substituting the study of the mechanics of human bodies for the study of ourselves qua rational creatures, the study of what we’re made of for the study of what we are. And what should be the central topic of philosophy vanishes.

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