

Saying What I Think

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To act intentionally, at least in the paradigmatic case, is to act with a special kind of knowledge of what one is doing. Speech acts are no different. To *say* something intentionally, at least in the paradigmatic case, is to know what one is saying, and to know it in a special way. My thesis here is that self-knowledge helps to constitute the very *meaning* of what is said. I approach the topic first from the point of view of the speaker and second from the point of view of the audience. In drawing attention to the self-conscious character of speech, I hope to cast doubt on the general conception of meaning that operates largely unopposed in the contemporary philosophy of language.

The meaning of a speaker's utterance, it is widely held, is a matter of its being a speaker's saying of a particular sayable. *Which* sayable is determined by the semantic role of the constituent terms, their arrangement, and the context of utterance. The point of the utterance often lies beyond what is explicitly stated; this too can constitute a kind of meaning. I communicate with you via implicature when you make the inference I intended you to make in uttering the words I did. And then there are performatives, whose communicative function is secondary to making something happen via the saying itself, as when I make you a promise. A central idea in this paper is that a theory of language that includes simply these elements (speaker, sayable, and utterance) and these kinds of meaning (as revealed by the semantic, pragmatic, and performative linguistic acts) leaves out the main thing: not an unmentioned category of speech act,

but the act of saying itself. This essay is a study of meaning from the point of view of *speakers in conversation*.

I. Articulating a Thought

How should we understand the relationship between thought and its expression in language? I'll begin with a puzzle formulated recently by Eli Alshanetsky.¹ It takes the form of an inconsistent triad:

1. You can often (sometimes readily and sometimes with difficulty) articulate the thought that p.
2. Coming to know the correct words (that is, ones that would express your thought) requires knowing what you are thinking (that is, knowing that you are thinking that p), and having the latter knowledge before successfully completing the articulation.
3. And yet, you cannot know what you are thinking until you come to know the correct words.

He elaborates with an example:

Vacationing with her partner, a woman may be struck by a chilling inkling of a thought that she may not quite manage to put into words. She does not try to suppress it; nor does she put much effort into

¹ Alshanetsky (2019).

formulating it. Weeks later, at a film, a character says something that she immediately recognizes as an articulation of her thought: the realization that she could leave her family in an instant for a stranger, in a flight of passion.

These reactions seem to be responses to discoveries about what we are thinking. What is crucial in these cases is that articulating our thoughts, or just being presented with their articulations, seems to be a way of gaining knowledge of what they are.

There is something right about (3)—the idea that we gain knowledge in articulation. But there are at least two ways of understanding it:

Knowledge-Thought Asymmetry: Thought is perfectly determinate prior to knowing what thought it is.

Knowledge-Thought Symmetry: Thought is as indeterminate as the subject's knowledge of it.

Alshentesky describes the puzzle above (and his solution follows) on the assumption that knowledge of thought would have to be determinate, i.e., on the assumption of Asymmetry. But I'll argue that Symmetry is correct. And its correctness is insightfully articulated in the very passages from Jean-Paul Sartre and Maurice Merleau-Ponty that Alshentesky cites in setting up the puzzle. Here is Merleau-Ponty:

Thought tends towards expression as towards its completion. . . the thinking subject is in a kind of ignorance of his thoughts so long as he has not formulated them for himself, or even spoken and written them.... Speech, in the speaker, does not translate already made thought but accomplishes it.²

Merleau-Ponty says here that the thinker is in ‘a kind of ignorance’ prior to articulation. But what does this mean? Ignorance is typically conceived of as the absence of justification for belief or the absence of belief altogether. But this conception of ignorance has no obvious place for the idea of *thoughts tending towards expression/knowledge as their completion or accomplishment*. If I merely suspect that there is a bear in the closet, this belief is in no sense *complete* when I open the closet door and am mauled. The articulation, and hence the knowledge, is, as described in this passage, the fulfillment of the promise of the very struggle that precedes it. But that’s not discovery in the ordinary sense.

Alshanetsky cites the following passage from Sartre:

It is often in speaking our thoughts that we get to know [connaissance] them: language prolongs them, completes them, specifies them; what was a vague ‘airy consciousness’, a more or less indeterminate knowledge takes the form of a clear and precise proposition in passing into words. So that at every moment our language—whether external or

² Merleau-Ponty (1945), 206.

‘internal’—returns our thought to us more and better defined than as we gave it to language.³

Sartre here also invokes the language of *completion* to describe the epistemic relationship to a thought pre- and post-articulation. He affirms we have knowledge of the yet-to-be-articulated-thought, but he says that such knowledge is ‘more or less indeterminate’, and that it becomes precise only with articulation.

The following example brings this to life. Suppose I am trying to put my finger on what bothers me about a new acquaintance. Something about their manner gives me the sense that they don’t much care what I have to say. Eventually, a friend draws my attention to the controlled smile that appears on their face when someone else is talking. I registered this affectation, which put me off. It was fuzzy before, but now I can see and say clearly what it is: their forced expression suggests they are thinking something quite different from what they are overtly communicating.

I have no exegetical agenda here. But Symmetry would seem to be among the lessons of these passages. Thought is no more determinate than it is known to be by its subject, and hence only fully determinate when actually articulated. The struggle to articulate a thought is a struggle at once to know it precisely and to fully think it, i.e., to fully realize it. It is in this sense that the completion of a thought is articulation. We gain knowledge when we articulate, but this is not a transition from ignorance to knowledge, but a more fully realized knowledge corresponding precisely to the now more fully realized thought. Some clarification follows, and then an argument.

³ Sartre (2004), 84

To say that the thought itself is indeterminate is not to postulate a dimension of logical space containing inchoate propositions. Nor is it to suggest that some thoughts begin life, as it were, as entity-like thought-fetuses, which then develop over time into fully-formed thoughts. Rather to speak of someone's thought as fuzzy or lacking determinacy is to describe her as struggling to do something, to put a thought together, at once to think it and know it. The right metaphor is not struggling to cough up a reluctant hunk of phlegm, but reaching out into the dark for an object that one can't quite grasp. For a thought to be 'complete' in the relevant sense, is for it at once determinately thought and determinately known by the thinker, requirements that are not satisfied separately but at once.

The alternative is Knowledge-Thought Symmetry, according to which the thought on which I can't put my finger is already fully determinate in my mind. This thesis raises the following question. By what right do we attribute such determinacy in the absence of the subject's having *made it* determinate for themselves? Given that I can't say precisely what I'm thinking, why take the determinate thought to have a foothold in my mind at all? Call this *The Foothold Question*.

Here are two kinds of answers to The Foothold Question, neither of which are adequate: the Disposition Reply and the Brain-State Reply.

Disposition Reply: The determinate proposition's foothold is a disposition. To possess the disposition is to be disposed, upon hearing the particular formulation that matches the disposition's (proposition-shaped) profile, to accept it as the correct one.

Brain-State Reply: When I can't put my finger on the right words, the fully determinate belief nonetheless resides in my brain. But it can only reach my consciousness with the help of candidate public-language formulations, between which I can then pick, choose, and pursue further according to how suitable they feel.

The fundamental defect of dispositional approaches to articulation is the inability to distinguish being disposed to have a thought from actually having it.⁴ The following scenarios show the difference. Consider a man who lives in a windowless apartment. On day one, at 8 am, he is disposed to believe that it's raining but only because he's about to walk outside and get rained on. On day two, he checks the weather and learns that it's raining. But when he's in the shower singing at 8 am, the fact that it is raining has entirely receded from his consciousness. On day one at 8 am, he does not believe that it's raining; on day two at 8 am, he does believe that it's raining. They each have a disposition to think 'it's raining' when they walk outside. But on day one, they are learning something; on day two, they are being reminded of what they already know. The disposition to behave in a belief-like way is not the same as belief. By parity of reasoning, to suppose that someone is disposed to find a certain formulation agreeable is not thereby to suppose that the agreeable formulation already has a foothold in their mind. The Disposition Reply does not answer the Foothold Question.

The Brain State Reply avoids this problem. If the inarticulateness of the believer was due to the real but imperfect transmissions between brain and consciousness, then

⁴ See Audi (1994).

the fully determinate belief *would* seem to have some claim to a foothold despite it being so far unarticulated. But it would not be the right kind of foothold.

Why do I say that? Because a thought is, to use Kantian turn of phrase, *nothing to me* insofar as I have no knowledge of it. As a general thesis, of course, it is not true that what is unknown is nothing to me. If I merely believe but do not know that there is a bear in the closet, the bear is still something to me—so much of a something that I lock the closet. Not so with thought.

Why do I say that *bears* but not *thoughts* are something to me even when I have no knowledge of them? Because what a thought *is* in the first instance is its being thought. As such the requirements for being someone's *thought* are of entirely different order from the requirement for being someone's *bear*. Unlike a thought, the being of a bear does not reside in its belonging to someone. An unowned bear is fully a bear. But an unthought-thought is really just a *thinkable*.

What is the nature of my relation to a thought that makes it *my* thought? What makes a belief *mine*? This much at least: *I* represent the proposition as true. To be what *I* believe, *I* must do this. But if *I* cannot now formulate a coherent sentence in my attempts to articulate my thought, then how can the relevant determinate proposition be a possible object of belief or any other attitude for *me*? The being of thought does not consist in its waiting around to be thought. Whatever is waiting around in the brain, whatever kind of propositional meaning a brain-observer can assign to it, in the absence of my actually formulating the proposition, it cannot possibly be *my* thinking that thought. Thoughts exists insofar as someone exercises the conceptual capacities to think the various parts of the thought in concert with one another. A thought is *something* to me (qua thought, if this helps it go down easier) only insofar as it has a determinacy that

this joint exercise of my cognitive capacities gives it, a determinacy that is inseparable from a correspondingly determinate knowledge.

We can approach the point by thinking about inference. Insofar as a belief is ‘something’ to me, I can use it as a premise in reasoning. But until I am clear about what I am thinking—until it is articulated—I am limited in this regard. Until I have, with your help, put my finger on what’s bothering me, ‘her forced smile suggests insincerity’ cannot serve as a link in an inferential chain. I will not, for example, make the connection between the impression *she* has on others to the impression *I* might have on others. For I too often don a mask-like visage while conversing, largely in response to being told of my tendency to make what I’ve learned are variously querulous, skeptical, horrified, and angry facial expressions. Once you’ve helped me pinpoint my thought, its inferential connections to other standing thoughts become apparent, and in fact *only then* is there a thought that *has* those relations to my other standing thoughts. Of course, the place in logical space exists without it figuring in my thought. But the determinate proposition does not have a foothold in my mind until I have articulated it: which is to say, *until I have knowledge of it in its determinacy*.

So what exactly is my solution to Alshanetsky’s puzzle? We know what we think all the while we think it, but the thought is as fuzzy as our vain attempts to say what thought it is; i.e., the thought is as fuzzy as our knowledge of it. This is the rejection of

3. And yet, you cannot know what you are thinking until you come to know the correct words.

And I would quibble with the wording of

2. Coming to know the correct words (that is, ones that would express your thought) requires knowing what you are thinking (that is, knowing that you are thinking that p), and having the latter knowledge before successfully completing the articulation,

which suggests that it is somehow the presence of the already determinate thought that explains my arrival at knowledge of what I think.

The thesis that an already determinate thought alone can explain the phenomenon of articulation might seem justified in light of the need to distinguish between two students, Confused and Insightful. Both are put off by act utilitarianism; neither can formulate a coherent thought when asked why. We can imagine, however, that Insightful is thinking, say, that it will lead to violations of individual rights. And Confused is not thinking a damn thing. Insightful must therefore already possess a thought with that content or else it cannot be what he is already thinking, in contrast to Confused. But, again, this need not be so. Insightful is reaching for without grasping an insight; Confused is not. We can often tell the difference through Socratic midwifery. Insightful is poised, with your help, to put it together but hasn't put it together yet. We can think of this in terms of progress toward a successful exercise of propositional thought. But this is not the same as a fully formed proposition traveling a rougher than normal road from brain to mouth.

Suppose you are ineffectually attempting to formulate your insight. After witnessing your struggle for a few minutes, it occurs to me that you are thinking that p. I'm certain of it and you confirm it by agreeing. "Yes, that's it!". Take the moment before

I have revealed my hypothesis, when you were still struggling. Let's compare your knowledge of your thought with my knowledge of your thought.

My knowledge of your belief is knowledge of a thought of which *you* have knowledge simply *in the thinking*. And what's known/thought has only as much determinacy as the speaker has given through articulation. Or so I have argued. But then how could it be accurate for me to say that you were thinking that *p* prior to your having articulated it? Merleau-Ponty and Sartre point towards the answer. You are making a thought determinate through your struggle to articulate it. I correctly identified that toward which your struggle is progressing.⁵ But this lends no support to the idea that the determinate proposition is already written in your brain. Whether such a thing exists is neither here nor there when it comes to the question of what *you* represent as true.

The point is not that it would be wrong or infelicitous for me to say in such a circumstance "I know what you're thinking—it's *p*!" This is a literal and true use of the word 'knowledge'. But what I know is that it is *p* that you are struggling to say—not that it matches a formula in your brain that you have yet to stumble upon. A thought is 'complete' not because outward expression matches inner inscription, but because the struggle was a struggle to say THAT.

⁵ I don't mean to suggest that in every case, or even in most cases, there is only one determinate thought that fits a struggle to articulate. There will often be a variety of truth-functionally distinct statements that will generate a 'that's it!' from the thinker. The differences between them are, given the point the speaker is making, irrelevant. For the sake of rhetorical simplicity I will ignore this complication.

To summarize. It's not that the thought is already perfectly determinate despite my ignorance of it, but that my knowledge of its determinacy is inseparable from the determinacy itself. The struggle to articulate reaches a conclusion in clarity of thought, in which the thought is in mind. Articulation, pace Alshanetsky, is not discovery. Nor could it be. To see why not, we'll focus in the next section on the act of saying something.

II. Knowing what You're Saying

Saying something is an *act* and not merely a *relation* between a speaker, an utterance, and something said. It is something people *do* and not a state of affairs that *obtains*. Furthermore, it is paradigmatically a kind of *intentional* doing. I contend that in speaking we have the kind of knowledge of what we're doing that characterizes intentional action quite generally. For the purpose of this paper, I will focus on a weaker claim: part of what one knows *in* saying something is *what kind of thing* is being expressed. That's the topic of this section.

What do I mean by 'a kind of thing being expressed'? Suppose you utter the following words as we pass in the hallway: "There's water pouring from the ceiling in room 2334". The truth conditions of utterance are unaffected by whether you are articulating a belief or chanting a hopeful mantra. But if I'm not sure which then I don't yet understand you. To understand what a speaker is saying, I must know whether they are propounding their belief, pronouncing a couple married, rehearsing lines for a play, saying what they're doing in the park, or how they feel after eating a hot dog, etc. Semantics tells us why utterances have the truth conditions they do; pragmatics explains how the semantic meaning of an utterance generates implicatures. The *expressive*

dimension of linguistic communication pertains to what precisely the speaker is giving voice to. This can be explained neither in terms of semantics nor pragmatics. Or so I will now argue.

What is it for an utterance to be expressive of belief rather than hope? This is not the epistemological question of by what clues an onlooker might know. And it cannot be answered by simply postulating a new component of meaning corresponding to the expressive character of language and adding it to the list of ways utterances can be understood and misunderstood. My question is how we conceive of the *epistemic* connection between the speaker and the saying *in* hearing it as an expression of belief rather than as something else.

What exactly do I mean by ‘expression’? My use of the term and its cognates is artificially neatened to suit my purposes here. But its intuitive roots will, I hope, be apparent from the following sketch. Expression, to begin with the original metaphor, makes the inner outer. This is not the same as the process by which, say, essential oils are pushed from the inside to the outside of an orange peel. Still, the hiddenness of the inside of an orange peel has an analogue in the hiddenness to others of our inner lives. When we express something in the sense at issue here, we show something about ourselves: our feelings, mood, character, beliefs, desires, principles, et. al. I turn my ‘inside’ ‘out’ for the world to see. I might do so intentionally, as when I reveal my anger to someone by giving them the finger. Or I might do so inadvertently by shaking their hand too forcefully. Inadvertent expression is the rule rather than the exception since every intentional expression of one thing is the inadvertent expression of many others. Be that as it may, the *expressible*, as I will use the term, is what *can* be intentionally

expressed. By contrast, although I might *exhibit* my lack of coordination by doing my very best to hit a baseball, I am not *in* trying to hit the baseball *expressing* this lack.

We often express ourselves in language, speaking our minds across all of the categories of mind, e.g.:

Belief: The first moon landing took place in 1969

Desire: That ice cream looks delicious

Sensation: Ouch!

Emotion: Go to hell!

Unlike calcium levels, weight, susceptibility to flattery, and astrological sign, among zillions of other examples, our beliefs, desires, sensations, and emotions all fall into the ambit of what we can express. I can inform others about any of the former, but I can't do so by expressing them. We are trying to understand the connection, marked by 'expression', between my desire and my saying "that ice cream looks delicious"—a connection necessarily absent between calcium levels and "my calcium is high".

The items on the above list do not explicitly mention the subject, but each has an expressively equivalent, explicitly self-referential version, one in which the same state is expressed but using the word "I". These are *avowals*:

Belief: I believe the first moon landing took place in 1969.

Desire: I want ice cream.

Sensation: I have a pain in my toe.

Emotion: I am so angry at you!

Avowals self-ascribe what they express. They *show by saying*.⁶ Insofar as someone avows, they reveal that they hold a certain belief (or entertain a certain hope or...) by saying precisely that. However, an avowal is not just *any* utterance that describes one's expressible state; the utterance itself must be the articulation of that very state. Self-ascriptions, even of one's beliefs, desires, etc. do not necessarily satisfy this requirement.

Suppose I harbor repressed anger against my father. To say that my anger is repressed means at least this: when I deny being angry, I am not exactly lying. Suppose that when I non-lyingly deny my anger, my therapist corrects me. She assures me that I am angry. Still, when I think about whether I am angry, I arrive at a negative answer. But I know about repression, and I trust my therapist, so dismiss the negative answer and utter sincerely "I am angry". Despite my being angry and saying so, my utterance does *not* express this anger. Whether or not a self-ascription counts as an expression (and so an avowal) depends upon the source of the utterance. If the source is evidence or testimony, it is an expression of *my belief that I'm angry* but not of the anger itself. Both are cases of *saying one is angry*. But these are different insofar as one has its source in feeling, whereas the other has its source in the determination of a proposition's truth. To put it differently, in avowing I occupy the perspective of the believer herself—the first-person point of view—whereas in self-ascribing on the basis of evidence I occupy the perspective of an observer—the third-person point of view. And you don't understand what I said on a specific occasion unless you understand which it is.

⁶ Cf. Bar-On (2004) and Finkelstein (2003).

A crucial difference between an avowal of a belief that I'm angry ("It looks like I'm really angry—look how my blood pressure is just shot up") and an avowal of the anger itself ("I'm so angry I could punch you") is that whereas in hearing the first (as an avowal of belief) I might still doubt that you are angry, in hearing the second (as an avowal of anger) I cannot doubt that you are angry. And although upon hearing the first as avowal of belief about anger I *can* doubt that you are angry, I cannot doubt that you believe you are angry. I might also doubt whether it was an avowal of belief if, say, I suspected that you were only pretending to avow a belief to deceive me. Qua *showing*, avowals are factive: what doesn't exist cannot be shown. To understand an utterance as an avowal is thus to understand the relevant self-ascription as true. By contrast, to understand an utterance as a mere belief about an avowable state is not therein to understand it as true. It can be hard to tell whether an utterance is an avowal, but to hear it as an avowal is to hear it as revealing what's there.

When I avow my anger, I know that it is *feeling* that I am expressing; I know that, e.g., I am not expressing my having been persuaded by evidence that I feel that way. But the knowledgeability of avowals is a tricky matter. It is not enough for an utterance to be *knowledgeable* in the relevant way that it is reliably produced, doxastically justified, true, or any combination of these. For it is compatible with states' satisfying these requirements that the subject has no conscious awareness of them, because, e.g., it is repressed. But in avowing, I not only know the kind of state being expressed but am also consciously speaking in the light of this knowledge. I speak from the point of view of the believer of the belief. This is what makes the utterance an *articulation* and not just an *effect* of the state.

If I direct the utterance “p” at you, and you jokingly respond by saying “I suspect you believe p” and I non-jokingly reply by saying “OMG you’re right, I do believe p!” then my original remark suddenly becomes obscure to you. In saying what I believe, I know that it is my belief that I am putting into words. And I know which belief it is. You took me to be simply *telling you* that p. In telling you something, I intentionally express an expressible. I reveal knowledge of my thought in supplying you with information about the world. When the utterance is an avowal, it amounts to a self-ascription that has a certain kind of epistemic authority. Qua expression, it makes manifest what must, as a condition of its being an expression of that sort, be present. And if I am *intentionally* expressing a thought, I must already know that I have that thought. Articulation is not self-discovery. My knowledge of what I think is explanatorily prior to the expression since I cannot intend to do anything with respect to a thought of which I am ignorant.

We can, of course, realize that we believe something *as* we assert, but this is not at all the way the audience learns *as* we assert. In the latter case, knowledge of the thought is explanatorily posterior to the act of saying. Not so in the former case. Suppose I spontaneously say “no way” after you tell me that you won a fellowship, even though I had sincerely (or with what I thought was sincerity) assured you earlier that you were a shoo-in. We might describe this as a case of finding out what I *really* believed. But the surprise, in the first instance, is that you won it. My outburst is my reaction to the recognition of a surprising truth, a truth that I therein know myself to recognize and that surprises me. I thus do not learn what I believe the way you do, by hearing myself.

We have arrived at the following conclusion. To say what one believes/wants/feels depends on explanatorily if not temporally prior knowledge of what one believes/etc. This knowledge is manifested in the saying. It is often observed that we don't need evidence, etc., to avow. If I say "I think it's going to rain tonight," it is inapposite to reply "How do you know that you believe that?" The explanation is simple: Since I don't need evidence in order to articulate my belief, your query only makes sense if you are asking about a separable belief concerning my own state of mind, i.e., a second-order belief. Your reply is inapposite because it shows you haven't understood me.

According to what I've said so far, the possibility of expression depends upon prior self-knowledge of the state or act in question. To be someone's expressible state is to already be known by them. It follows that whatever the gap is between thought and expression, it is not epistemic. This is

The Nothing View: There is no epistemic gap between thought and expression.

Note that the Nothing View is silent about the conditions under which a thinker *has* a thought. A stoned teenager says he has just had "the most amazing idea about ants", but it turns out there was nothing to it all. He tries to say what it is; it's just nonsense. Often in doing philosophy, I am unsure whether *I* am thinking anything at all, whether I am just chasing phantoms or whether I've really got hold of something—almost as often as I find myself unsure about whether *you* are thinking anything at all! I won't delve here into the requirements for thought quite generally. I rely simply on the assumption that there *are* cases in which a speaker is attempting and yet failing to

articulate their thought; the existence of similar cases in which there is no thought behind the speaker's attempts to speak meaningfully is interesting, but not relevant here.

Earlier, I argued that the nature of the struggle to articulate one's thoughts cannot be understood as an attempt to bring to awareness what already has determinacy apart from this awareness. Nonetheless, there is often a gap between thought and expression. As the Velvet Underground sing, sometimes "between thought and expression lies a lifetime."

According to the Nothing View, there is no *epistemic* gap between thought and expression. There is a lot to say about the non-epistemic difficulties in speaking one's mind. Sometimes, it's because we don't have a mind to speak, i.e., because we have yet to formulate even the germ of an opinion, or because we can't reconcile contrary impulses. There are various explanations for why it sometimes takes a while or even a lifetime to formulate a thought. On the 'thought'-side, some are harder to think than others, owing to their complexity or subtlety or horribleness. On the 'thinker' side, deficiencies of all kinds—in cognitive abilities, emotional openness, intellectual curiosity, temperament, and various kinds of psychic fortitude, among others—may be cited in explanation for why a thought remains frustratingly out of reach. I refrain from going further down this road, however interesting and important such an investigation might prove, because my topic is the relation between thought and its (successful) expression. The psychology of failure is important here only insofar as an appreciation of the non-epistemic character of such failures enables one to see that such difficulties are no objection to the Nothing View.

III. Speaking to Each Other

As we talk, I have a thought; I say it out loud. I've said something to you. I've uttered words in a language, a language that I speak. Ideally, the meaning of the utterance matches my thought, and you grasp my meaning. This paper is an argument that the linguistic essence of this interaction does not appear in a picture of language that envisions acts of speech as relations between speaker, sayable, and utterance. To bring the activity of speaking into view, we must look beyond, the semantic, the pragmatic, and the performative. This missing element is the act of saying itself.

In the previous section, I focused on the constitutive role played by the speaker's self-knowledge in the act of speaking. Here, I will argue that understanding this role is an essential part of audience uptake. Part of what makes your utterance "there's water pouring from the ceiling in room 2334" an expression of belief is that you know qua expresser of that belief, in uttering the words, that it is that belief that you are expressing. The complementary point is that to *hear* you as expressing a belief is to understand you as manifesting that knowledge in the saying. And if I don't know whether you were asserting or chanting, then I am fundamentally in the dark about what you said.

The word 'meaning' brings to the mind of many contemporary analytic philosophers abstract objects (propositions, words, functions) instantiated by inscriptions and utterances, and extensions (things, stuff, states of affairs, et. al.). My point in this section is to refocus the reader on a crucial element of meaning connected to the knowledge that the speaker must have of themselves and of *what* (i.e., what part of themselves) they are putting into words.

Speaking is, after all, the central phenomenon of language; it is in speech that language lives, and not in functions, extensions, rules, ranges, and sets of possible worlds. And we can see this in the way that the self-conscious character of meaning structures the epistemology of audience uptake. I might know the lexical meanings of the words, the significance of the grammar, and the referents of the relevant demonstrative and indexical expressions without understanding what you were saying. That knowledge will not enable me to distinguish between the believer and the chanter.

It might seem that the *only* way for the audience to understand the *person* is via inference. The fact that you uttered *that* sentence in *that* manner in *those* circumstance is good evidence that you are saying what you believe and not what you hope. This is communication insofar as I make the inference you intended me to make. To take a standard sort of illustration: A waiter arrives at the table. You bellow “My glass is empty!” prompting the waiter to find a pitcher. (I can’t take you anywhere.). What you meant by what you said was that the waiter should fetch water for you, and he, getting that, obliged. This is implicature. Griceans have sought to use it as a model for wide swaths of communication. But it cannot be applied to the audience’s knowledge of what the speaker is saying.

Here's roughly how it's supposed to work: You said “There is water pouring from the ceiling in room 2334.” How do I get from your utterance to the knowledge that you believe that there is water pouring from the ceiling? I know you are a competent speaker of English and you know that I know that, and so you know that if you say those words to me in this context, I will infer that you believe it. Furthermore, you intended for me to reach the conclusion that I did; that was your point in uttering the words you did.

My example is a best-case scenario for this model in the following respect: it's silly. It's very unlikely that you would be chanting your hope aloud rather than giving me some info. And no doubt your tone, facial expressions, eye contact or lack thereof, and my history with you might all serve as premises for a decent inference to the conclusion that you were expressing what you believe. But there is nothing ordinary about this way of understanding another person.

Ordinarily, if asked *how* I knew you were, to take a less ridiculous example, giving me an order rather than making a suggestion, I am apt to speculate. I resort to suppositions and hypotheses about what in your delivery and tone prompted my judgment. There is typically no sense of my having merely to make explicit an inference I know myself to have made in understanding you, as would have been easy for the waiter in the example above. It comes naturally to us to hear one another as giving orders rather than as making suggestions. We rarely need to resort to inference from clues. And indeed, generally needing clues to determine the meanings of sayings is thought of as a profound *disability*.

The Gricean imagines that our knowledge of what others express derives as if from answering the question: what must your state be given that you, a competent speaker of the language, uttered *that string of words*, here and now? But without knowing what kind of saying it is, the data is highly limiting. If I don't know whether your utterance articulates a belief or a hope, then I don't know what state you must be in order to make the utterance. Sayings that are expressions of belief and sayings that are expressions of hope have very different conditions of use. If I understand what you said as an expression of belief, I expect you to have something to say in reply when I ask why you think so. If I understand your saying as an expression of hope, then I expect you to

have something to say in reply when I ask what's so great about it. Yet if what is being expressed is left open, so that the material of inference is merely the words and tones, then I will in general likely never be able to determine what you said, and so will have no idea what state you must have been in in order to say it.

A striking feature of the Gricean approach to expression uptake is a very thin conception of what can be heard. What I hear are word-tokens uttered in a certain order. What you are expressing is not something I can hear, only something I can infer from your hearing words in context. But why say I hear *words*, as opposed to *sounds* that I infer are words? The idea, presumably, is that we have the capacity to hear words directly (not on the basis of inference from sounds), much as we can see tables directly (not on the basis of inference from colors and shapes).

OK, so we hear words and not sounds. But now why not say that what I hear *in* your words is belief and not, say, hope? Wittgenstein writes:

It is possible to say "I read timidity in this face" but at all events the timidity does not seem to be merely associated, outwardly connected, with the face; but fear is there, alive, in the features. PI §537

Not only do I not know you are fearful by inference from creases and lumps and droplets on alternately hairy, mushy, holey, and bony surfaces, but typically it would require effort to extract emotion-neutral physiological detail in explanation of my judgment that you are fearful. I don't infer your fear from those details. Rather I can only bring those details to consciousness by paying unusual attention to the relation between my fine-grained observations of your physiognomy (observations I would never otherwise make) and my own reactions to them.

This is not to deny that the details on which I manage to focus *do* help to explain my judgment. But they don't explain my judgment by being premises in an inference. If you ask how I know he's scared, I might answer "I can see it in his face". But suppose you then ask: "What about his face?" I must now examine my own reactions to imagined changes in his face in order to help me home on the crucial factors. For my purpose, what's important is that the connection between what I go on to cite and my judgment is not that of inference. Inference is *not* the way the various elements of an image contribute to my seeing a pictured face *as* scared rather than, say, sad.

I will not attempt to give a positive analysis of *seeing as*. Whatever the explanation, I take it to be a fact that fear is something that can be seen in a face, just as a duck is something that can be seen in a drawing. And when fear in a face is an expression of that individual's fear and I see the fear in their face, then I know by seeing and not by inference that the person is afraid. And that is the downfall of the application of the Gricean model to our knowledge of what is expressed by utterances. We do not know what people are saying by engaging in highly complex inferences from words and other clues to the judgment that someone is expressing a belief rather than something else. We know it by understanding what they said. There is no more reason to think that inference is the way it works with sayings than with faces. Just as we can see fear in a face, we can hear fear in its verbal expressions, to which I shall now return.⁷

To be expressible by the subject, in the relevant sense, is characterized by a privileged epistemic position. It is also marked by a distinctive sort of uptake on the part of the audience. Insofar as I hear you as *expressing* hope when you say "I hope your

⁷ Cf, Finkelstein (2003), 91.

paper gets accepted,” it makes no sense for me to reply by asking for your evidence. But the same question would be perfectly apposite were you to say “She hopes your paper gets accepted”. The former reply would demonstrate either a nearly unimaginable obtuseness or a suspicion that you inferred that you hoped from some evidence, say, that your hands were sweaty as you contemplated my prospects. To understand what you said is partly to understand what you were expressing: your hope and not a belief that you felt hope.

There is, of course, an epistemic asymmetry between the speaker and the person to whom she speaks. Here is a primitive formulation of the asymmetry: the speaker knows what she is saying because she is the speaker, whereas the hearer knows what the speaker is saying because he is the hearer. The speaker does not need to hear herself to know what she is saying, whereas the hearer can only know what the speaker is saying by hearing her. She knows what *she* is expressing in uttering the words she does because she knows what she thinks, and that knowledge partly constitutes the meaning of the utterance. He knows what she is expressing because he can hear the thought in her words, just as he might have seen curiosity in her face.

The Nothing View is a view about the epistemic connection between thought and expression. I began by focusing on this gaplessness from the point of view of the subject. The subject is not trying to *discover* what they think, they are trying to *articulate it* or, what is the same thing, trying to clarify their own thought. The obstacles to expression are real and even often monumental, but they aren't epistemic. We have now also seen how the epistemic gaplessness shows up for others. There is no step between hearing what you're saying and knowing what you believe (or feel or....), i.e., nothing between understanding the utterance and knowing the thought expressed.

In this section, I have sketched two conceptions of the role played by language in communication. On the first, the saying is the tokening of a certain sentence type caused by mental states of the relevant sort, and an interlocutor's understanding is an inference from that tokening in context to (ideally) the conclusion that the speaker is in those very mental states. According to the second, which I had defended here, the saying is the putting into words of the mental state thereby expressed—its verbal incarnation, so to speak. And to understand words in context is to understand the person. Why? Because understanding the saying is understanding the doing, and understanding the doing is in part to discover what the speaker is thereby (intentionally) revealing of themselves to their audience; it is to understand the point of view of the one who speaks.

Conclusion

One important upshot of this investigation concerns the relation between the study of the mind and the study of language. The linguistic turn is marked by a language-first approach to understanding topics of philosophical interest. This essay argues that the tools for understanding the parts of language that are of particular interest to philosophers include a study of acts of articulation. This is of a different order than semantics and pragmatics insofar as it requires a study of action and mind more broadly. *Saying something* cannot be explained in terms of abstract relations between words and possible worlds or by a match between the speaker's intention in speaking and the audience's uptake of their point. Language exists first and foremost in the speaking of it. And the meaning of what is spoken is not ultimately separable from the nature and parts of the human soul.

There is a domain—the human—that can be demarcated in terms of the ability to intentionally articulate this domain's states. These abilities have been at the margins of the study of language in recent years as the philosophy of language has become increasingly committed to abandoning the point of view of the speaker in favor of studying language from the point of view of an observer. This paper argues for a radical change of course.

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