ON KNOWING OUR OWN MINDS

By Michael McKinsey

Knowing Our Own Minds. Edited by Crispin Wright, Barry C. Smith and Cynthia
Macdonald. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998. Pp. x + 450. Price £40.00 h/b,
£15.99 p/b.)

This is an anthology of fifteen papers concerning various philosophical problems
related to the topic of self-knowledge. All but one of the papers were previously
unpublished, and all but two are descendants of presentations at a conference on
self-knowledge held at the University of St Andrews in 1995. The collection's papers
fall naturally into four groups: (1) six papers on the nature of self-knowledge; (2) two
on the relations between self-knowledge, agency and rationality; (3) five on the con-
sistency of self-knowledge and externalism about cognitive content; and (4) two on
first-person knowledge of meanings. I shall discuss the main themes and points at
issue among the papers as they fall into these groups, but I shall not attempt to
provide complete summaries or criticisms of all the papers' contents.

1. *Papers on the nature of self-knowledge*

The first six papers in the collection are all concerned in various ways with
accounting for the distinctive features of self-knowledge. In his 'Self-Knowledge: the
Wittgensteinian Legacy', Crispin Wright begins with a very useful characterization
of these features, and a clear statement of the philosophical problems that result:
'The cardinal problem of self-knowledge is that of explaining why avowals display
the marks they do.... How is it possible for subjects to know these matters non-
inferentially? ... And what is the source of the special authority carried by their
verdicts?' (p. 22). In the remainder of his paper Wright discusses Wittgenstein's
contribution to the topic in *Philosophical Investigations*, which according to Wright
consists primarily of a refutation of the so-called 'Cartesian' picture of these matters.
On Wright's interpretation, Wittgenstein mounts a two-pronged attack on the
'Cartesian' picture. The first prong consists of the 'private language argument',
which Wright depicts as targeting 'the idea of phenomenal avowals as inner observa-
tion reports' (p. 25), and the second prong concerns 'difficulties in the idea that
attitudinal avowals describe introspectable mental occurrences' (p. 29).

But at the end of Wright's discussion it remained obscure to me why he assumes that the private language argument is at all relevant to the 'Cartesian' picture of self-knowledge. On this picture, of course, the phenomenal experiences of which a subject is directly aware are essentially private *episodes* to which no one else can have direct access, but there is nothing essentially private about the phenomenal (but shareable) *properties* of the experiences of which their subject would have authoritative non-inferential knowledge. For instance, nothing in the 'Cartesian' picture requires that if a subject is directly aware of experiences as having the introspectable property of being a pain, then it must *also* be possible for this property to be the private meaning of a word that only the subject could in principle understand.

In his 'Response to Crispin Wright', John McDowell also expresses doubt that the two-pronged argument which Wright attributes to Wittgenstein was designed to refute the 'Cartesian' conception of self-knowledge. But McDowell's reason is that refutation of this conception is so easy that it hardly requires such elaborate machinery. As Wright points out (p. 14), the authority of avowals is *baseless*, in the sense that in the central cases it is never appropriate to ask 'How can you tell?'. But, McDowell points out, it is always appropriate to ask this of *observational* judgements. So, contrary to the 'Cartesian', the source of self-knowledge cannot be any kind of 'inner observation'.

But this argument is too quick. On Wright's characterization of the 'Cartesian' conception (p. 23), '*inner* observation' is allowed to be disanalogous to normal observation in various respects. One important disanalogy would be the fact that 'inner observation' is baseless. It is no accident that expressions of the 'Cartesian' conception invariably emphasize that self-knowledge is via *direct* or *immediate* awareness of inner events and states. But surely emphasis on the directness of self-knowledge is just another way of emphasizing that self-knowledge is baseless, in McDowell's sense. So his 'Cartesian' is a straw man. Real 'Cartesians' are not so easy to refute.

Though, like Wright and McDowell, most of the authors of the papers in this group try to avoid commitment to anything like the 'Cartesian' conception, Cynthia Macdonald, in 'Externalism and Authoritative Self-Knowledge', suggests that a correct account of the special features of self-knowledge should, like the Cartesian account, make use of certain analogous features of knowledge based on observation. She suggests that the directness of our epistemic access to our own mental properties is analogous to the directness of our observational knowledge. In both kinds of cases, the relevant knowledge is direct, in the sense that it is not based on evidence (p. 131). However, this analogy seems to be of doubtful utility in accounting for the special features of self-knowledge. For the directness of self-knowledge seems different in kind from that of knowledge based on observation. Macdonald emphasizes that both are 'non-evidence-based', that is, both are *non-inferential*. But, as I have just noted, and as McDowell emphasizes in his response to Wright, self-knowledge is typically baseless in a way observation never is.

The 'Cartesian' conception of self-knowledge is one of the main themes which recur throughout the papers in this group. Another main theme is the idea that the special epistemic features of self-knowledge are just primitively 'constitutive' of the concepts (like *belief* and *pain*) which are involved in self-ascription of mental

properties (I shall call this 'the constitutive view'). In the latter part of his paper Wright suggests that this idea (which he calls 'the default view') might have been Wittgenstein's positive contribution to the problem of self-knowledge. Wright himself seems to have at least tentatively endorsed this view elsewhere,[1] but now he asks whether it is possible to understand 'how the default view need not be merely an unphilosophical turning of the back', or a dogmatic symptom of Wittgenstein's 'general anti-explanatory mantra' (p. 41). Wright plausibly suggests that to avoid dogma, one who endorses the constitutive view should explain why the view holds of this particular subject-matter – should explain, in other words, why it is here 'a good move to dismiss the attempt to understand' (p. 44).

Wright just assumes that if the constitutive view were true, then it would be a mistake to 'attempt to understand' the special features of self-knowledge. But this is far from being obvious. One central point of Elizabeth Fricker's 'Self-Knowledge: Special Access *versus* Artefact of Grammar – a Dichotomy Rejected' is that Wright's assumption is false. Relying on Davidson's point that ontological independence and causal relation are both consistent with conceptual dependence,[2] Fricker argues that the existence of conceptual links between first-order mental concepts and second-level ascriptions of the concepts does not entail that there is no 'cognitive achievement' involved in self-knowledge (pp. 181–2). Surely she is right about this.

Suppose it is analytic that if one is, say, in pain, then (by definition of 'pain') one is 'automatically' non-inferentially justified in believing that one is in pain. Then of course one can no longer reasonably ask 'Why, when one is in pain, must one be non-inferentially justified in believing that one is in pain?'. (Being so justified is just what it *is* to be in pain.) But it does not follow that the non-inferential justification in question is not a cognitive achievement. For one can still reasonably ask 'In what does the relevant non-inferential justification consist?'. It is just that now the question must be understood as concerning a *pre-condition* for applying the concept *pain*, rather than as a question that can be reasonably asked, *given* application of the concept. Really the 'new' question is just the old question in a new guise. Thus the defender of 'no cognitive achievement' has merely succeeded in hiding the question behind a definition. But it is still there.[3]

In 'Conscious Attitudes, Attention, and Self-Knowledge', Christopher Peacocke also rejects the assumption that the constitutive view entails that self-knowledge has no 'substantive epistemology'. Peacocke calls this latter claim 'the no reasons view', and he attempts to work out a middle ground between this view and the Cartesian conception. He bases his compromise on the idea that in certain cases a conscious occurrent cognitive attitude, such as a judgement, can provide a *reason* for self-ascribing that attitude, without thereby being the premise of an inference. I think that this suggestion is false. To be sure, it makes sense to say 'The reason why Jones believes that he has just judged that *p* is that he *has* just judged that *p*'. But here, I

[1] C.J.G. Wright, 'Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy of Mind: Sensation, Privacy, and Intention', *Journal of Philosophy*, 86 (1989), pp. 622–34.

[2] D. Davidson, 'Knowing One's Own Mind', *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association*, 60 (1987), pp. 441–58.

[3] See A. Goldman, 'The Psychology of Folk Psychology', *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 16 (1993), pp. 15–28, esp. p. 22.

think, 'reason' must be understood in the sense of 'explanation' or 'cause', rather than in the sense of 'provides a rational ground for'. If we ask Jones why he believes that he has just judged that p, he might well respond 'Because I *have* just judged that p'. But his response does not provide us with the reason (rational ground) for his belief; on the contrary, it is a way of rejecting the suggestion that the belief *requires* a reason for its justification, and it provides a 'reason' for his belief only in the sense that it provides an explanation or cause of his having that belief.

In his very clear and useful response to Peacocke ('An Eye Directed Outward'), M.G.F. Martin writes 'It is tempting to see Peacocke's account as offering a solution to the problems of self-knowledge.... What I shall suggest is that, instead, the account only shows us where the fundamental problems are located' (p. 104). Indeed, I found it a disconcerting feature of Peacocke's paper that even in the special cases he describes, there is no trace of an explanation of why the agent's self-ascriptions should count as knowledge, or even as justified belief. Perhaps this gap is explained by Peacocke's reliance on his idea that cognitive states can provide reasons (rational grounds) for their own ascription. But again this reliance is *prima facie* implausible and requires at least *some* justification: exactly how, or in what sense, could cognitive states provide rational grounds for their own (non-inferential) ascription? Another reason for the gap might be the fact that, at one point (p. 89), Peacocke seems to think he has explained why, in the type of case he considers, self-ascriptions accurately 'track' the belief ascribed. But in fact the 'explanation' seems trivial, since it has the form 'In cases where one self-ascribes the belief that p for the reason that one has just judged that p, one's self-ascription will be correct'. Since judging is a form of (occurrent) belief, this reduces to the following trivial tautology: 'If one (occurrently) believes that p and (for that reason) believes that one believes that p, then one believes that p'.

2. *Papers on self-knowledge, agency and rationality*

The papers by Akeel Bilgrami ('Self-Knowledge and Resentment') and Tyler Burge ('Reason and the First Person') both attempt to trace various internal connections between self-knowledge and the concept of the self on the one hand and the concepts of agency, responsibility and rationality on the other. Bilgrami seems mainly concerned to defend the view that having authoritative self-knowledge of one's own beliefs is constitutive of the concept of belief, in spite of the fact that self-deception is possible. However, he does not defend the unqualified necessity of such a constitutive thesis as 'x believes that p iff x believes that x believes that p'. Rather he defends this biconditional only 'under the condition of responsible agency' (p. 222). But the strategy of this defence is exceedingly obscure. At one point (also p. 222) he suggests that the relevant biconditional holds only for intentional states of a certain sort, namely, those which lead to responsible agency. But then he cannot really be defending the necessity of the relevant biconditional, but only a qualified principle of the form 'For any person x, if x's belief that p is a belief of sort S, then x believes that p iff x believes that x believes that p'. But a principle of this kind would not obviously be constitutive of the concept of belief, but only at most of the concept *belief of sort S*. Moreover, one direction of the qualified biconditional could not be constitutive of

belief in any interesting sense, since it is just the generalization of a trivial tautology, 'For any person *x*, if *x* believes that *p* and *x*'s belief that *p* is of sort *S*, then *x* believes that *x* believes that *p* only if *x* believes that *p*'.

Burge attempts to undermine classic suspicions about the 'I' on the part of such philosophers as Hume and Lichtenberg. His strategy is to argue that the first-person concept is required in some fundamental but unexplained way for 'full under-standing' of reasoning. In particular, human reasoning typically involves not just the rational appraisal of beliefs and inferences, but also a disposition to apply the results of reasoning to the evaluation of one's own beliefs and other attitudes. Such an application of course requires use of the first-person concept. But how is this point relevant to scepticism about the 'I'? One might easily think that Burge is arguing for the thesis that all reasoning requires application of the first-person concept. But this thesis is false, as Burge points out. First-order reasoning which just involves simple inferences could be done by animals and other beings that lack the first-person concept (p. 259). So Burge seems merely to be pointing out that 'full-fledged' reasoning of the sort humans typically engage in (which involves a propensity to evaluate and revise one's own beliefs) requires application of the first-person concept. To be sure, this adds another piece of data to the classic discussions of the first person by such philosophers as Castañeda and Perry.[4] But it hardly strengthens the already overwhelming case against scepticism about the 'I'. The case remains simply that such scepticism flies in the face of common sense, and ignores the central role which the first person plays in our conceptual scheme.

3. *Papers on self-knowledge and externalism*

Four of the five papers in this group concern in various ways my own *reductio* argument for the incompatibility of semantic externalism with the thesis that we can have privileged *a priori* knowledge of the contents of our own thoughts.[5] On semantic externalism, some of our thoughts have logically wide contents, so that having such a thought logically implies the existence of contingent objects of a certain sort external to the thinker. But, so my argument goes, if one could have privileged access to the fact that one's thought has such a content, one could then just deduce the existence of certain contingent objects from something that one knows *a priori*, and so one could know *a priori* that those objects exist. Since this consequence is obviously absurd, semantic externalism and privileged access are incompatible.

In 'What the Externalist Can Know *A Priori*', Paul Boghossian defends a variant of my argument, using the following instance of *modus ponens*:

1. If I have the concept *water*, then water exists
2. I have the concept *water*
3. Therefore water exists.

According to Boghossian, the doctrine of privileged self-knowledge implies that one can know (2) *a priori*, and externalism implies that (1) is knowable *a priori*. So if

compatibilism were true, one could know (3) *a priori*, which is absurd. This *reductio* differs from mine in two important ways. First, unlike mine, Boghossian's argument does not assume that externalist theses like (1) are, if true, logical or conceptual truths. And secondly, unlike mine, Boghossian's argument *does* assume that such externalist theses are, if true, knowable *a priori*. I take this second feature to be a serious weakness, since I think it is fairly clear that externalist theses like (1) are *not* knowable *a priori*. Very roughly, the reason is that such theses are true because certain cognitive properties (like that of having the concept *water*) are relational with respect to external objects, and one cannot know *a priori* that such relations hold, since one cannot know *a priori* that the relevant objects exist.[6] Boghossian (pp. 279–83) defends his claim that on an externalist view theses like (1) are knowable *a priori* by considering a possible world in which water does not exist, where, he says, our uses of 'water' would express no propositions, since in that world there would be no property denoted by 'water'. From this he infers that in that world the concept *water* would not exist, and then claims to have shown that (1) is true by purely *a priori* reasoning. But this argument is a *non sequitur*. Even given externalist views about meaning, it simply does not follow from the assumption that 'water' denotes no property that it expresses no concept, or in other words that it has no meaning.[7]

But even if the argument were valid, it would not show that externalist theses like (1) are knowable *a priori*. Boghossian does not even discuss the crucial question of whether his argument is or is not a piece of *a priori* reasoning. He just asserts that it is (p. 283). But if externalism is true, he is wrong. For in giving his argument for (1) he must *use* the word 'water'. So in giving his argument he must assume that 'water' in fact expresses a concept, that 'water' in fact denotes a property, and hence (given externalism) that water in fact exists. If any of these assumptions were in fact false, then (given externalism) not only would (1) express no proposition, but Boghossian's argument would simply make no sense. In the first step, for instance, we are to assume (no doubt for conditional proof) that in a given possible world *w*, water does not exist. But what exactly is it that we are assuming does not exist in *w*? Why, water, of course, liquid that in fact belongs to a certain natural kind. If this stuff did not in fact exist, then (given externalism) the sentence 'Water does not exist' would express no proposition, and so Boghossian's initial hypothesis would make no sense. (This is one of the basic features of direct reference: where α is a directly referring term, the sentence 'α does not exist' expresses no proposition unless the sentence 'α exists' is in fact true.) So, given externalism about the semantics of natural-kind terms, Boghossian's first step requires the empirical assumption that water exists. Hence his argument is not a piece of purely *a priori* reasoning.

In their 'Externalism, Twin Earth, and Self-Knowledge', Brian McLaughlin and Michael Tye attempt to defend the compatibility of externalism and privileged access against my *reductio* argument. They agree that the argument's *form* (which they

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[6] For an explanation of why my argument does not require the assumption that externalist theses are knowable *a priori*, see my 'Forms of Externalism and Privileged Access', to appear in *Philosophical Perspectives*, 16 (2002).

[7] For an externalist semantics of natural-kind terms which shows this, see my 'Apriorism in the Philosophy of Language', *Philosophical Studies*, 52 (1987), pp. 1–32.

call 'McKinsey's recipe') is acceptable, but they claim that there are no externalist theses to which the argument correctly applies. However, as I have argued in detail elsewhere, this claim is shown false by certain well known semantic facts about cognitive predicates containing small-scope proper names and indexical pronouns.[8]

The predicate 'is thinking that Cicero is an orator' provides an example. On the principle of privileged access endorsed by McLaughlin and Tye (p. 286), one can know *a priori* that one is thinking that Cicero is an orator. But this conflicts with the standard externalist view of such predicates, according to which they express properties that are relational with respect to the referents of the relevant names.[9] The idea is that a name like 'Cicero', being directly referential and having no descriptive meaning, can contribute only its referent to the property expressed by the relevant predicate. Thus one cannot satisfy the predicate without bearing a certain cognitive relation to the man Cicero (the relation which x bears to y iff x is thinking that y is an orator). Since one cannot (logically) bear this relation to Cicero unless he exists, and since one cannot know *a priori* that he exists, my *reductio* shows that (given standard externalist semantics) one cannot know *a priori* that one is thinking that Cicero is an orator, contrary to McLaughlin and Tye's principle of privileged access.

McLaughlin and Tye agree that my argument shows that one cannot know *a priori* that one bears a cognitive relation to any external object such as Cicero (see p. 292). Thus their commitment to privileged access also commits them to the false claim that no predicate of the form 'is thinking that *p' ever* expresses an externally relational property. It similarly commits them to the denial of the (true) view which I have called semantic externalism. This leaves it quite obscure why McLaughlin and Tye should think that cognitive predicates ever fall under any 'externalist' thesis, or exactly what form of 'externalism' it is that they endorse and believe is compatible with privileged access.

In 'Externalism, Architecturalism, and Epistemic Warrant', Martin Davies suggests an interesting way of blocking my *reductio* argument. Using considerations from Dretske and Wright,[10] Davies points out that epistemic warrant for believing a given premise p may not transmit to a given deductive consequence q of p, even when the believer knows that p logically implies q. Many of the kinds of cases to which my argument for incompatibilism applies are in fact like this. For instance, as I have pointed out, the proposition

C.   Jones is thinking that Cicero is an orator

logically implies that Cicero exists. But of course the *basis* for one's warrant in believing that Cicero exists could not be that one has deduced this conclusion from (C), since one would not be warranted in believing (C) in the first place unless one were already warranted in believing that Cicero exists.

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[8] See my 'The Semantic Basis of Externalism', in J. Campbell *et al.* (eds), *Topics in Contemporary Philosophy: Meaning and Truth* (New York: Seven Bridges, 2001), pp. 34–52, and 'Forms of Externalism and Privileged Access'.

[9] See, e.g., my 'Individuating Beliefs', *Philosophical Perspectives*, 8 (1994), pp. 303–30, and 'The Semantics of Belief Ascriptions', *Noûs*, 33 (1999), pp. 519–57.

[10] F. Dretske, 'Epistemic Operators', *Journal of Philosophy*, 67 (1970), pp. 107–22; Wright, 'Facts and Certainty', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 71 (1985), pp. 429–72.

So Davies is right to point out that in the cases to which my argument applies warrant does not always transmit from the cognitive premise to the externalist consequence. But contrary to what Davies suggests, this does not show that my argument is unsound. For the argument does not assume that warrant always transmits from a premise to its known deductive consequences. Rather it assumes that the capacity for *a priori* knowledge is closed under logical implication. Thus if it is assumed (contrary to fact) that proposition (C) is knowable *a priori*, then (C) would be knowable without empirical investigation and independently of any empirical assumptions. (This follows from my way of understanding '*a priori* knowledge': see my 'Anti-Individualism and Privileged Access', p. 9.) Hence (C)'s deductive consequences would surely also be knowable *a priori*, even when warrant for these consequences is presupposed by warrant for (C). For by our assumption for *reductio*, any assumptions on which warrant for (C) depends would not be empirical.

Of course any warrant we might have for (C) would in fact be empirical, and would presuppose empirical warrant for the relevant deductive consequence (that Cicero exists). So warrant does not transmit from (C) to this consequence. But this is perfectly consistent with its also being true that if (C) were knowable *a priori*, then (C)'s deductive consequences would be knowable *a priori* as well.[11]

In her response to Davies ('First-Person Authority and the Internal Reality of Beliefs') Diana Raffman does not discuss Davies' attempt to block my *reductio*. Rather she tries to provide a 'more straightforward' way to block inference to the (absurd) conclusion that we can have *a priori* knowledge of empirical propositions (p. 363). For instance, she considers Davies' example: (1) I believe that *p*; (2) if I believe that *p*, then *E*(me); therefore (3) *E*(me), where '*E*(me)' is some empirical proposition about the subject's external environment. Raffman contends that there is no single sense of 'believes' on which both (1) and (2) are knowable *a priori*. (Thus we are not committed to (3)'s being knowable *a priori*.) But whether or not we grant this contention (and I myself would grant it), it is uninteresting as a response to Davies' paper. On Davies' way of construing it, my *reductio* says (in part): 'Suppose that (1) and (2) are both knowable *a priori*; then it follows that (3) is also knowable *a priori*, which is absurd; hence (1) and (2) are not both knowable *a priori*'. The point of Davies' paper is to provide a way of avoiding the conclusion of this argument by showing in effect that the argument is invalid. Raffman's response is to argue *for* the very conclusion Davies is trying to avoid. Is her argument the same as the way Davies construes my *reductio*? Then she is blatantly begging the question against Davies. Is her argument different from his way of taking my *reductio*? Then it is just irrelevant to Davies' attempt to block the particular argument he is discussing.

In 'The Simple Theory of Colour and the Transparency of Sense Experience' Jim Edwards argues for the mutual incoherence of three views about colour: (1) John

McDowell's view that sense experience is passively structured by concepts; (2) John Campbell's 'simple theory of colour'; and (3) an externalist view of the semantics of colour predicates. Edwards also goes on to argue that given the empirical assumptions of the simple theory, this theory plus externalism implies that one does not have authoritative ('transparent') knowledge of one's colour experiences. His argument for the incoherence of the three views is based on a neat science fiction example in which on another planet ('Z-land'), because of the influence of 'Z-rays', green objects (e.g., grass) all look red, and red objects (e.g., poppies) all look green. By applying the three theories to this example, Edwards apparently derives an inconsistency. But rather than conclude that one of the theories is false, he suggests (implausibly, in my opinion) that the derivation should be blocked by assuming that the Z-landers have no colour experiences.

I found Edwards' discussion to be very unclear and poorly defended. As he explains them, the simple theory and the externalist view seem intended to be different theories of colour, though precisely what their difference is supposed to be is never made clear (pp. 373–4). In any case, being different theories of colour, the two theories must *of course* have inconsistent consequences when applied to some possible circumstances (like the Z-land case). So why should this fact be surprising, and why is Edwards bothering to point it out? But even worse, having in effect pointed out this unsurprising fact, why should Edwards then go on to recommend that we should just *ignore* it, refusing to take his Z-land case to show the inconsistency of the two theories in question? Edwards even goes on to deduce further consequences (for instance, that colour experiences are not transparent) from the conjunction of the two apparently inconsistent theories, as if they were both true, and so perhaps not really different theories at all. Much of this obscurity in the argument would have been alleviated if Edwards had from the outset given precise statements of the two theories, and made their logical relations clear to the reader.

4. *Papers on first-person knowledge of meanings*

In 'On Knowing One's Own Language' Barry C. Smith provides a programmatic survey of the problems which face those who would try to explain self-knowledge through investigation of the analogous sort of 'effortless authority' we exercise regarding the meanings of words in our own language. Smith considers the language-based accounts of self-knowledge proposed by Wright (in 'Wittgenstein's Later Philosophy of Mind') and Davidson (in 'Knowing One's Own Mind'), and while he agrees that both views provide accounts of why we must usually be right when we say what we think, he criticizes both views for providing no explanation of *how* we authoritatively know the contents of our thoughts or the meanings of our words (pp. 418–19). Speakers in general have *a priori* knowledge of instances of the disquotational schema '"p" is true in L iff p', but Smith points out that this knowledge presupposes the speaker's knowledge of what 'p' means, and so disquotation cannot be used to explain how speakers have authoritative knowledge of meanings in the first place (p. 421). He suggests that part of the explanation, at the level of whole sentences, is provided by the idea that knowledge of grammar is determined for each speaker by that speaker's internalized language faculty, which delivers

authoritative judgements about which strings are well formed for the speaker in question (p. 424). However, since 'knowledge of word meaning is not part of the underlying linguistic system', our authoritative knowledge of word meaning remains unexplained, leaving 'a *lacuna* in the linguistic strategy' (p. 426).

While I found much of what Smith says in this paper to be illuminating, I had serious difficulty in seeing exactly how an account of first-person knowledge of meanings is supposed to provide, or to be relevant to providing, an account of first-person knowledge of cognitive states. The only general sort of explanation described by Smith is one suggested by Davidson: by knowing that he assents to a given sentence *s*, and knowing what *s* means, a speaker could thereby know that he has a belief with a given content, namely, the content expressed by *s* (p. 415). But this is implausible as a general explanation of first-person knowledge of beliefs, since surely we do not *have* to consider which sentences we hold true in order to know what we believe or think. If we did always have to consider what sentences we hold true in order to know what we believe or think, then apparently our knowledge of what we believe or think would always have to be based on inference, and so could never be direct or immediate, as it obviously often is.

In his response to Smith, James Higginbotham defends Davidson's account of self-knowledge, and also defends his own view that knowledge of instances of the disquotational schema is relatively easy, requiring no mastery of the concepts involved, but only the capacity to deploy those concepts. I am inclined to agree with Smith about this, but the issue is controversial, requiring resolution of the question raised by Burge of how much grasp of a concept is required before the concept can be said to figure in the contents of one's thoughts and beliefs.[12] Higginbotham also expresses scepticism about Smith's account of grammatical knowledge, but he agrees with Smith that mere reliability is insufficient as a ground of our entitlement to non-inferential knowledge of meanings.

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This is an important collection. Specialists in the topic of self-knowledge will have to consult these papers as a basis for their own future work. Even while disagreeing with them on several points, I thought that the papers by Wright, Fricker, Martin, McLaughlin and Tye, Davies and Smith were especially useful in advancing our understanding of these matters. However, in my opinion, the collection would have benefited from more active editorial intervention. Almost all of the papers were far longer than necessary, and many were unclearly written and difficult to follow.

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[12] See T. Burge, 'Individualism and the Mental', in P. French *et al.* (eds), *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, vol. IV (Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1979), pp. 73–121.