

24.500 spring 05
topics in philosophy of mind
session 8

- beertime
- moratorium on self-blindness

self-knowledge

plan

- immunity to error through misidentification:
 - Shoemaker's self-reference and self-awareness, Evans and Wittgenstein
 - Bar-On's *Speaking My Mind*

Wittgenstein on 'I'

- use as object:
 - 'my arm is broken', 'I have grown six inches' 'the wind blows my hair about'
- use as subject:
 - 'I see so-and-so', 'I think it will rain', 'I have toothache'
- the first type "involves the recognition of a particular person, and there is in these cases the possibility of an error"
- "to ask 'are you sure it's *you* who have pains?' would be nonsensical"

- the no-reference view:
 - “to say ‘I have pain’ is no more a statement *about* a particular person than moaning is”
 - the implication of the next sentence is that ‘I’ in the mouth of a man does not refer to the man who says it
 - the “use as subject” “creates the illusion that we use this word to refer to something bodiless...the real ego”

- the no-reference view has obvious problems
 - “I am in pain”; “LW said he was in pain”,
 - “I am in pain, and sitting on a tack”
- ditto the cartesian view (‘I’ used as subject refers to an ego, ‘I’ used as object refers to my body)
 - “I see a canary and have grown six inches”
 - cf. “I am out of gas”, “the ham sandwich is getting restless”
 - see Stanley, Persons and their properties, *Phil. Quart.* 1998

self-reference and self-awareness

- various puzzling features of self-reference lead to no-reference views of 'I', used "as subject"
- but they shouldn't, because other sorts of reference (demonstrative, and 'I' used "as object") depend on the possibility of reference with 'I' used "as subject"

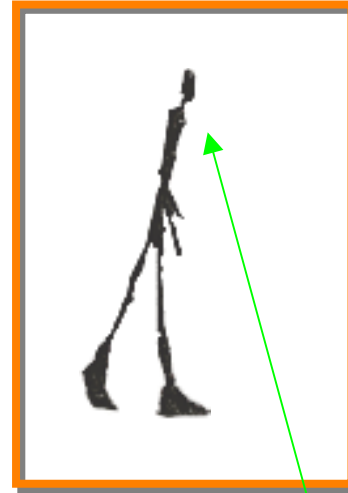
- the “statement” “a is ϕ ” is subject to error through misidentification relative to ‘a’ iff the following is possible:
 - the speaker knows some particular thing to be ϕ , but
 - makes the mistake of asserting “a is ϕ ” because, and only because, he mistakenly thinks that the thing he knows to be ϕ is what ‘a’ refers to
 - this is tied too closely to language (the statement “a is ϕ ” is apparently supposed to be an interpreted sentence, not a proposition)

- SETM (relative to the subject-term):
 - ‘I am bleeding’
 - ‘my arm is moving’
- Immune to ETM:
 - ‘I feel pain’
 - ‘I see a canary’
 - ‘I am waving my arm’

- absolute IETM iff SETM is impossible
 - ‘I feel pain’
 - ‘I see a canary’
 - ‘I am waving my arm’
- circumstantial IETM iff SETM is impossible relative only to some bases of knowing
 - ‘my arm is moving’
 - ‘I am facing a table’
- CIETM depends on AIETM: “e.g., in the circumstances just imagined, the proposition ‘I am facing a table’ would be known or believed as a consequence of the proposition ‘I see a table in the center of my field of vision’ [which is AIETM]”
 - a doubtful epistemological claim

- CIETM depends on AIETM: “e.g., in the circumstances just imagined, the proposition ‘I am facing a table’ would be known or believed as a consequence of the proposition ‘I see a table in the center of my field of vision’ [which is AIETM]”
 - a doubtful epistemological claim
 - surely one can discover through vision that one is facing a table without having any beliefs about one’s mental states
 - this is conceded in fn. 3, but then what does “as a consequence of some other self-ascription” mean, given that the person need not believe the self-ascription?

- in any event, the crucial claim about AIETM is incorrect (McGinn/Evans)
 - ‘I see a canary’
 - ‘I am facing a table’
- are not AIETM



looks like me, wearing a
"there's a canary"
expression

an alternative account:

- S knows that a is F in a way subject to error through misidentification iff:
 - S's evidence for the proposition that a is F is:
 - that b is F (that the G is F, that the Gs are F)
 - that a = b (that a = the G, that a is one of the Gs)
 - and S's identification evidence (i.e. the second bit) could be defeated without her instantiation evidence (i.e. the first bit) also being defeated
- otherwise, S knows that a is F in a way immune to error through misidentification
- if we like, we can speak of a proposition (or “statement”) being SETM (IETM), but this must be relativized to evidence (Evans/Shoemaker)

- that I see a canary is IETM (relative to the usual evidence)
- ditto: that is yellow (contrast: that is a canary/Sydney's pet)
- a contrast with speaker-intentions
 - but this is just a contrast between 'I' and 'that', not between the propositions
- a contrast with reference-failure
 - here there is a related contrast between thoughts: no "mock I-thoughts" (see Evans, ch. 1); although perhaps the relevant notion of an I-thought needs to be explained linguistically
- a contrast with memory
 - again a linguistic contrast
- see fn. 4

- the supposition that every item of self-knowledge rests on an identification leads to a vicious regress
- first argument; either “the identification of a presented object as oneself” is “grounded on”:
 - a) a is the F , and I am the F , so I am a , or:
 - b) a stands in relation R to me, and anything that stands in relation R to me is me, so I am a
- in either case the identification of a as oneself involves self-knowledge
 - doesn't this point go through just as well for knowledge, of x , that it is F ?
 - it has nothing to do with self-knowledge; IETM is a consequence of de re knowledge in general (the supposition that every item of de re knowledge rests on an identification leads to a vicious regress)

- “perhaps the most important point”:
 - identification of the presented object as oneself would have to go together with together with misidentification, and it is precisely the absence of this possibility that characterizes the use of ‘I’ that concerns us
 - I think this is one of the main sources of the mistaken opinion that one cannot be an object to oneself, which in turn is a source of the view that ‘I’ does not refer

- if the supposition that the perception is by ‘inner sense’ is supposed to preclude the possibility of misidentification, presumably this must be because it guarantees that the perceived self would have a property, namely, the property of being an object of my inner sense, which no [other] self could have...
- ...in order to identify a self as myself by its possession of this property, I would have to know that I observe it by inner sense...
- thus...observation by inner sense of oneself is at best a superfluous hypothesis

- this seems to turn on the Perry/Castañeda point about the “essential indexical”, not IETM (see n. 4, and n. 5 of ‘Persons and their pasts’)
- the “essential indexical” has nothing to do with IETM
 - indeed, Perry’s shopper finally comes to know that he is making a mess in a way that is subject to error through misidentification
 - propositions expressed by some indexical free sentences can be known in a way that is IETM
- and IETM can’t scotch the inner sense view, because of Shoemaker’s point about demonstratives (9)

- if one finds it puzzling that there can be the sort of self-ascriptions that are AIEM and not based on self-observation, one should reflect on the fact that if this were not possible there would be much else, and much that we take for granted, that would also not be possible
 - this extra stuff includes demonstrative reference and self-ascriptions like 'I am facing a table'

Legend:

- Atomic number
- Symbol
- Atomic weight
- Metal
- Semimetal
- Nonmetal

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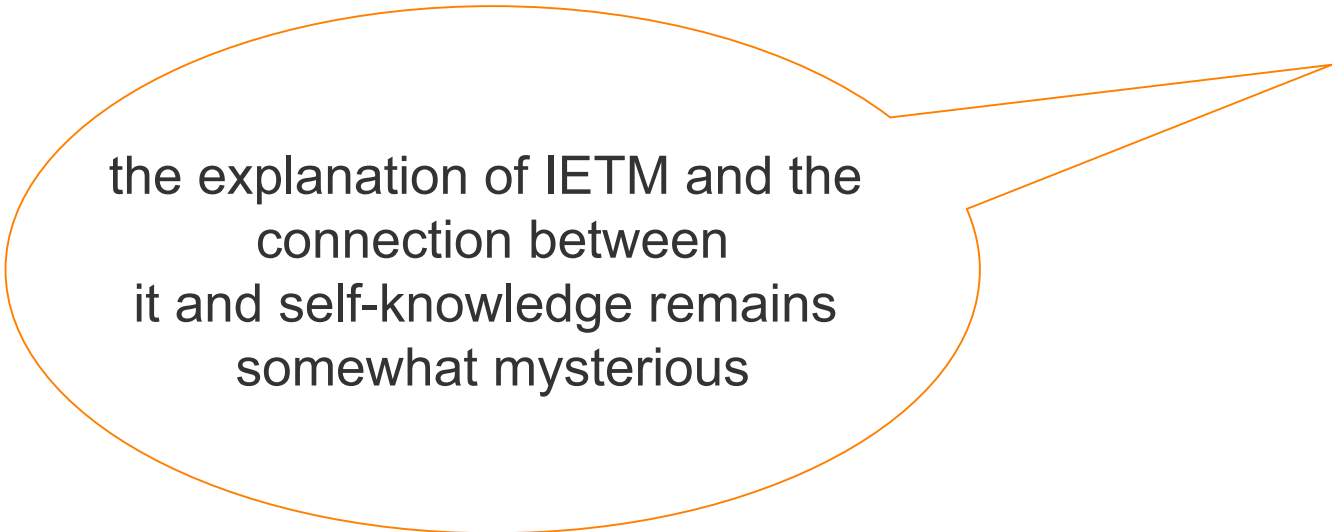
- ϕ is a P^* -predicate iff there is a way w of knowing ϕ to be instantiated such that, necessarily:
 - S knows ϕ to be instantiated in way w iff S knows that he himself instantiates ϕ
- supposedly, ϕ is a P^* -predicate iff $\lceil I \text{ am } \phi \rceil$ is AIETM
- there are psychological predicates that are not P^* -predicates, but they are psychological only because they are related in certain ways to those which are
- fn. 8 corrects the definition:
 - the way w of knowing satisfies the stated condition *and* does not resolve into (1) a way of knowing the predicate to be instantiated that does not satisfy the condition plus (2) an identification of that in which it is instantiated as oneself
 - not really clear that this rules any ϕ out

Legend: Metal (red), Semimetal (green), Nonmetal (yellow)

Callout for Carbon (C): Atomic number 6, Symbol C, Atomic weight 12.01

- the priority of P*-predicates:
 - anyone who can self-ascribe any predicate whatsoever thereby shows that he is potentially capable of self-ascribing some P*-predicates, and that if he is presently incapable of doing so this is due simply to a correctable lack of his vocabulary or his stock of concepts
 - the claim is that anyone who can self-ascribe on the basis of vision ‘facing a table’ can also self-ascribe ‘seeing a table’
 - this has nothing much to do with IETM; it’s basically the claim that not much needs to be added to knowledge of tables (etc.) to get self-knowledge
 - that self-knowledge is economical, in other words

- upshot:



the explanation of IETM and the connection between it and self-knowledge remains somewhat mysterious

Bar-On's *Speaking My Mind*

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

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

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

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

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

ch. 3

- two views from ch. 2
 - in avowals (as utterances) ‘I’ is used “as subject”
 - cartesian view: this is because ‘I’ (in such uses) refers to a special entity, an immaterial ego
 - but this doesn’t explain anything
 - no reference view: this is because ‘I’ doesn’t refer
 - crazy (see earlier)
 - Shoemaker and Evans: ‘I’ refers, but no “epistemic ability...to recognize” is needed—“reference without identification” (59)

summary:

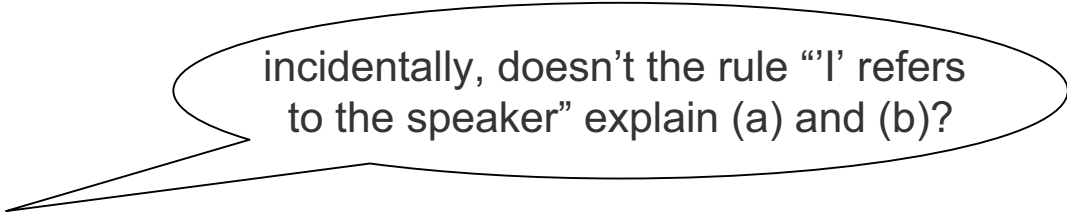
1. RWI does not explain the guaranteed success of 'I' in picking out its referent
2. an alternative account of how 'I' refers is offered (the indexical reference view)
3. IETM goes beyond the phenomenon of guaranteed success...
4. neither phenomenon (IETM, guaranteed success) explains the security of avowals

1. RWI does not explain the guaranteed success of 'I' in picking out its referent
 - some discussion of Evans on Russell's Principle
 - "that is F" (i.e. S's knowing that that is F) can be IETM
 - note: need not be (recall earlier example)
 - there is a contrast with proper names
 - but can't "a is F" be IETM? (one knows that a is F, but one has forgotten any distinct evidence one might have had for that proposition)
 - however directly referential proper names are thought to be, their successful use to refer to the right individual must be backed up by [?]. a judgment to the effect that *John = such-and-such*
 - why?
 - surely not a true judgment (recall Kripke on 'Feynman' and 'Cicero'), in which case it doesn't "back up" the use of the name

1. RWI does not explain the guaranteed success of 'I' in picking out its referent
 - two features
 - a) the referent of 'I' is guaranteed to exist (i.e. uses of 'I' are not subject to reference failure, unlike 'that', etc.)
 - b) the user of 'I' is guaranteed success in referring to herself
 - the deprivation tank example (73-4) is not happy if the emphasis is on the word 'I'
 - since RWI applies to demonstratives, it can hardly explain guaranteed success
 - is this Bar-On's point?

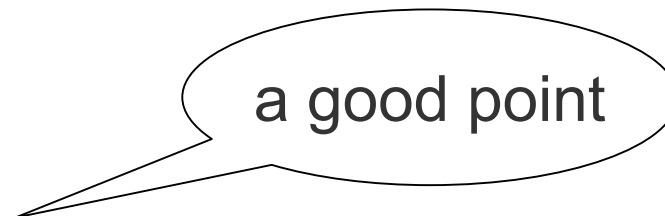
2 an alternative account of how 'I' refers is offered (the indexical reference view)

- this is supposed to explain (a) and (b)
- IR seems to be a version of RWI, with any “knowing which” requirement removed

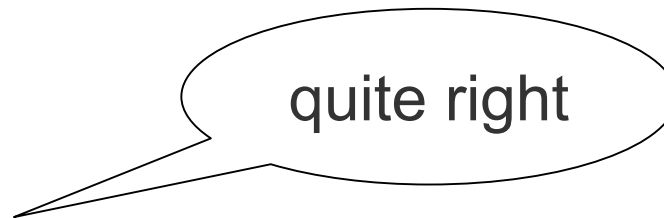


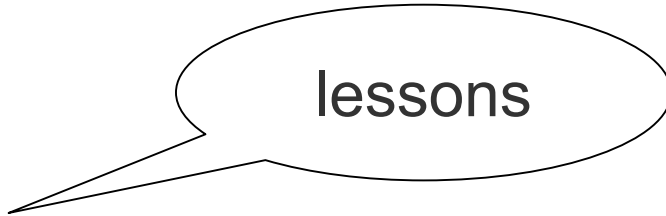
incidentally, doesn't the rule "I' refers to the speaker" explain (a) and (b)?

- 3 IETM goes beyond the phenomenon of guaranteed success...
- guaranteed success is not sufficient for IETM
 - can have guaranteed success with falsity (hence without knowledge); even with knowledge, not sufficient for IETM
 - neither is it necessary (demonstratives, e.g)
 - can hardly be necessary if guaranteed success is a semantic phenomenon



- 4 neither phenomenon (IETM, guaranteed success) explains the security of avowals
- obviously guaranteed success doesn't
 - IETM doesn't either (demonstratives, e.g)
 - also “my legs are crossed”, “I am facing a table”, etc.





- distinguish:
 1. the essential indexical
 2. IETM
 3. 'I's guaranteed reference
 4. the fact that one can think about oneself while floating in a tank



lessons

- the only interesting connection between 1-4 and self-knowledge is that IETM is a necessary condition for privileged access
- if S knows that she is in M in a way that is not IETM, then her knowledge rests on:
 - a) a/the G is in M, and
 - b) I am a/the G
- and since (a)-type knowledge is not privileged, S's knowledge that she is in M will not be privileged either

- next time:
 - more from *Speaking My Mind*