

## Review Essay of Dorit Bar-On's *Speaking My Mind*

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“Avowals” are utterances that “ascribe [current] states of mind”; for instance utterances of ‘I have a terrible headache’ and ‘I’m finding this painting utterly puzzling’ (Bar-On 2004: 1). And avowals, “when compared to ordinary empirical reports... appear to enjoy distinctive security” (1), which Bar-On elaborates as follows:

A subject who avows being tired, or scared of something, or thinking that *p*, is normally presumed to have the last word on the relevant matters; we would not presume to criticize her self-ascription or to reject it on the basis of our contrary judgement. Furthermore, unlike ordinary empirical reports, and somewhat like apriori statements, avowals are issued with a very high degree of confidence and are not easily subjected to doubt. (3)

The project of this ambitious, original, and challenging book is to explain why avowals have this distinctive security.

Bar-On’s guiding idea is that avowals “can be seen as pieces of expressive behavior, similar in certain ways to bits of behavior that naturally express subjects’ states” (227). Crying and moaning are natural expressions of pain, yawning is a natural expression of tiredness, reaching for beer is a natural expression of the desire for beer, and so on. In some important sense, avowals are supposed to be like that. In what sense, though? It will be useful to begin with the simplest answer.

### *1 Simple Expressivism*

According to “Simple Expressivism” (228), a position often associated with Wittgenstein, the comparison between avowals and natural expressions is very close—*too* close, in fact, for Bar-On to endorse it. Crying is a natural expression of pain, but someone who cries because he is in pain is not *asserting* that he is in pain. And someone who cries while slicing shallots cannot thereby be convicted of making a false claim about his sensations. The simple expressivist takes a similar view of avowals: an utterance of ‘I am in pain’ is not true or false, any more than an act of crying is. The utterance is a verbal replacement

for crying and—contrary to appearances—performs much the same function. Avowals are never reports or descriptions of one's mental states. The simple expressivist admits that in some cases to make an avowal will involve an assertion. For instance, on the simple expressivist account of belief, to (assertively) utter 'I believe that  $p$ ' is to assert (perhaps tentatively) that  $p$ . But such assertions are not about one's state of mind.

If one thought that the chief problem was to explain why self-ascriptions of sensations ("phenomenal avowals", in Bar-On's terminology), like 'I am in pain', are never *false*, Simple Expressivism does that very nicely. Unfortunately, we also think, contrary to Simple Expressivism, that such avowals are often *true*. And the idea that uttering 'Doctor, I have a sharp pain in my knee' amounts to a prolix way of involuntarily clutching one's knee hasn't much initial plausibility.

On the other hand, the Simple Expressivist account of *belief* can seem appealing at first glance. Typically if someone says 'I believe Smith is in the pub', she is primarily concerned to make a cautious claim about Smith's whereabouts, rather than her own state of mind. (That sentence might well be used to answer the question, 'Where is Smith?'.) But Simple Expressivism could not be more hopeless at explaining why self-ascriptions of belief are never, or rarely, false. According to Simple Expressivism, assertive utterances of 'I believe that  $p$ ' amount to assertions of the proposition that  $p$ , and it is not at all unusual for such assertions to be false. If Simple Expressivism is correct, someone who claims that she believes that Iraq had WMD is bound to be *mistaken*.

Simple Expressivism, as Bar-On points out (233), is akin to emotivism in ethics, on which 'Stealing is wrong' is not used to state a fact, but rather to express the speaker's disapproval of stealing. Simple Expressivism thus inherits the Frege-Geach-Ross problem of explaining embedded occurrences of present tense self ascriptions, such as 'If I'm feeling sick then I'm trying to disguise it' and 'Scooter knows that I believe that Iraq had WMD'.<sup>1</sup> According to the Simple Expressivist, 'I'm feeling seasick', when it occurs unembedded, can be (roughly) paraphrased as 'Yuk!', but 'If yuk!...' makes no sense at all. And if the embedded occurrence of 'I believe that Iraq had WMD' has its

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<sup>1</sup> For a particularly clear discussion, see Soames 2003: 309-14.

unembedded paraphrase of ‘Iraq had WMD’, then ‘Scooter knows that I believe that Iraq had WMD’ is incorrectly analyzed as ‘Scooter knows that Iraq had WMD’.

If all this isn’t bad enough, there is an obvious difference between Simple Expressivism and emotivism in ethics that reflects badly on the former. According to the emotivist, there are no moral facts to be stated in the first place; that is why utterances of sentences like ‘Stealing is wrong’ have no truth values. However, the Simple Expressivist recognizes the full range of psychological facts like everyone else: you are in pain, Smith wants a beer, Jones believes it’s raining, and so forth. The only difference is semantic: for some inexplicable reason, you cannot state the (important) fact that you are in pain by uttering ‘I am in pain’. Instead, ascribing mental states currently to oneself requires speaking in the third person, like the former US presidential candidate Bob Dole: ‘Bob Dole is in pain’, ‘Bob Dole wants a beer’, and the like. Philosophy has no shortage of bizarre and ill-motivated claims, but Simple Expressivism takes the biscuit.

Bar-On’s Neo-Expressivism stands to Simple Expressivism roughly as Blackburn’s quasi-realism (in its recent formulation in Blackburn 1998) stands to emotivism. Gone is the distinctive claim that ‘I am in pain’ has no truth value. Semantically, it now comes in for an orthodox treatment (in Bar-On’s terminology, “Semantic Continuity” is preserved): ‘I am in pain’, as uttered by S, is true iff S is in pain. As with quasi-realism, the problem is to explain the residual insight left, once the undrinkable truth-valueless brew has been thrown out of the window.

## ***2 Two Questions, and One Answer***

*Speaking My Mind* is structured around two main questions. First:

- (i) What accounts for the *unparalleled security of avowals*? Why is it that avowals, understood as true or false ascriptions of contingent states to an individual, are so rarely questioned or corrected, are generally so resistant to ordinary epistemic assessments, and are so strongly presumed to be true? (Bar-On 2004: 11)

Second:

(ii) Do avowals serve to articulate *privileged self-knowledge*? If so, what qualifies avowals as articles of knowledge at all, and what is the source of the privileged status of this knowledge? (11)

The interpretation of the first question is not entirely straightforward. What is the “unparalleled security of avowals” that it presupposes? The terminology naturally suggests “privileged self-knowledge”, or something of the sort. However, the second question indicates that this is incorrect, because the second question is precisely whether we have such privileged knowledge at all.

This is also suggested by the second sentence of (i), at least if it is taken as a gloss on the first. That avowals enjoy security, on this interpretation, is really the sociological claim that we *assume* that avowals express beliefs that are more likely to amount to knowledge, or at least more likely to be true, than the corresponding third-person attributions of mental states. (See also the first quoted passage above.) And this sociological understanding of security fits with the discussion a few pages later, where Simple Expressivist is said to have an answer to (i) (see 14 and also 344), and so must agree with (i)’s presupposition that avowals enjoy “security”. Since the Simple Expressivist denies that avowals *are* true (or false), security can hardly be characterized in a way that entails that they have truth-values. What’s more, Bar-On’s own answer to (i) is advertized as “non-epistemic, in that it will not derive avowals’ special security from the security of a special epistemic method, or privileged epistemic access” (11). If “special security” involves a greater likelihood of knowledge (or truth), rather than our assumption of it, presumably no defensible answer to (i) could be “non-epistemic”.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> However, other passages suggest the opposite interpretation, on which the security of avowals *is* an epistemic matter—avowals express privileged self-knowledge, or something along these lines. “Another way of putting this question is: How can avowals be understood in a way that preserves Semantic Continuity while fully respecting Epistemic Asymmetry?” (11). Semantic Continuity was mentioned at the end of the previous section; Epistemic Asymmetry is explained as follows: “When compared to other non-apriori ascriptions, even non-self-verifying avowals are *much more certain, much less subject to ordinary mistakes*, significantly less open to a range of common doubts, and highly resistant to straightforward correction” (10, emphasis added). And Bar-On emphasizes that her answer to (i) involves explaining Epistemic Asymmetry, and so explaining why avowals are “much more certain, much less subject to

As Bar-On explains in the first chapter, only the first of her two questions will receive a plain answer:

My first goal will be to motivate and develop a non-epistemic answer to question (i)...[The answer will not] resort to the Cartesian idea that avowals concern a special subject matter: viz., states of immaterial minds. Having offered a non-epistemic, non-Cartesian answer to (i), *I will then try to show that this answer is consistent with a range of non-deflationary answers to question (ii)*. Even if one does not regard avowals' distinctive security to be a matter of their epistemic pedigree, one can still maintain that we *do* have privileged self-knowledge that is articulated by avowals. Furthermore, one can attempt to explain the privileged status of self-knowledge partly in terms of the special security of avowals understood non-epistemically. (15; first emphasis added)

All of the “non-deflationary answers to question (i)” that Bar-On considers entail that “avowals serve to articulate privileged self-knowledge” (see chapter 9 and 405). So, after giving her answer to (i), Bar-On argues the answer is *consistent* with various views on which avowals articulate privileged self-knowledge.

Now all this might seem a little disappointing. The subtitle of *Speaking My Mind* is ‘Expression and Self-Knowledge’, but *self-knowledge* is not the chief topic. We aren’t getting an explanation of why self-knowledge is “privileged”, but at best an explanation of why we *presume* this. Admittedly, the explanation of the presumption is argued to be consistent with the presumption’s truth, but that falls conspicuously short of a theory of self-knowledge.

Thus the ambition of *Speaking My Mind* is less sweeping than one might have expected. On the other hand, the attempt to answer (i) is ambitious enough. The rest of this review examines Bar-On’s answer to (i), which occupies a substantial portion of the book.

Question (i) can be divided into two parts. First: why are avowals “so rarely questioned or corrected, are generally so resistant to ordinary epistemic assessments?”

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ordinary mistakes”. But the non-epistemic interpretation of security makes the best overall sense of the book.

(What this resistance amounts to, exactly, will be elaborated below.) Second: why are avowals “so strongly presumed to be true?” Bar-On answers the two parts separately. Her explanation of why avowals are resistant to ordinary epistemic assessments appeals to two types of “immunity to error” that avowals are said to enjoy: immunity to error through misidentification and, in Bar-On’s terminology, “immunity to error through misascription” (194). Neo-Expressivism is used to answer the second part, to explain the strong presumption of truth. Let us take these two parts of question (i) in turn.

### ***3 Immunity to Error Through Misidentification and Misascription***

The phenomenon of “immunity to error through misidentification” is familiar. It was first noted by Wittgenstein in *The Blue Book* (1969), and explored further by (in particular) Shoemaker (1968) and Evans (1982). As Bar-On explains:

...in the case of ascriptions that are immune to error of misidentification (IETM, for short), reasons for retracting the ascription *a* is F (e.g., that I am sitting on a chair, or that I have a toothache) are grounds for abandoning the existential judgment, that *someone* is F. For, in such cases, one has no other reason for thinking that *someone* is F over and above the thought that *she herself* is F. Not so in case of ascriptions that are not IETM. If I discover that it is not true that Sheila is sitting on a chair, my belief that *someone* is sitting on a chair may still survive. (58)

Suppose, to simplify Bar-On’s example slightly, that I believe that I am sitting. If this belief is arrived at in the usual way (that is, by proprioception and the sense of touch), then it does *not* rest on two independent pieces of evidence of the following sort: that the so-and-so is sitting, and that I am the so-and-so. For if it did, the second piece of evidence could be undermined leaving the first intact, allowing me reasonably to ask: *someone (the so-and-so), is sitting, but is it me?* In these circumstances, however, that question has no purchase: absent any other evidence for the hypothesis that someone is sitting, reasons for retracting the claim that *I* am sitting are also reasons for retracting the existential claim.

This example brings out two important points. First, the distinction is not between beliefs (or propositions) *simpliciter*, but rather between beliefs relative to *evidence*. As Bar-On says, “whether an ascription is IETM or not...is a matter of the basis on which

the ascription is made” (2004: 88; see also Shoemaker 1968 and Evans 1982: 219). I might believe that I am sitting because, looking at a mirror, I see a seated man who is my spitting image. Formed on the basis of this evidence, my belief is not IETM: if I discover that I am not that man, that does not impugn my evidence for the proposition that he is sitting. Second, the phenomenon of IETM does not exclusively concern *psychological* beliefs, like the belief that I have a toothache: sitting is not a state of mind.

A third point is also important. IETM has no special connection with the first person pronoun: beliefs expressed using demonstratives and proper names provide other examples. Suppose I see a single spot against a plain background, and judge that that is moving—it looks that way. If I discover that *that spot* is not moving, then this undermines my perceptual evidence for the proposition that *something* is moving. Similarly, I might believe that Kripke lectured on identity at Harvard last year while having completely forgotten the belief’s origins, and without having any relevant identifying knowledge to the effect that Kripke is the so-and-so. If some apparent authority tells me that Kripke hasn’t been to Cambridge for ages, then—absent any other evidence—this undercuts my belief that someone lectured on identity at Harvard last year.<sup>3</sup>

Although avowals are typically IETM, Bar-On observes that this fact alone cannot explain why they differ from non-mental self-ascriptions, because many of the latter are also IETM. Still, she thinks that IETM “goes some way toward explaining the security of avowals” (190). However, it is hard to see how IETM helps at all.

A person’s belief that *a* is F is *subject* to error through misidentification (SETM) iff it is based on certain evidence—that the so-and-so is F, and that *a* is the so-and-so, or something similar. Since a belief is IETM iff it is not SETM, a person’s belief that *a* is F is IETM iff it is *not* based on certain evidence; unlike SETM, IETM is therefore not a feature of a belief that bestows any epistemological value on it. Consider my belief that Kripke lectured on identity at Harvard, and suppose that I never had any reason to hold it; epistemologically, my belief is no better than a guess. My belief is IETM, yet it is quite

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<sup>3</sup> In fact, Bar-On claims that “ascriptions involving proper names are not in general candidates for being IETM” (69).

worthless, and is very likely false. How could the fact that my belief is IETM (or, alternatively, known or believed to be IETM) make it “resistant to ordinary epistemic assessments”?

The terminology of ‘immunity to error’ can obscure this point. If my belief is “not open to a certain kind of error” (195-6), isn’t that something to be said for it? In places, Bar-On can be read as agreeing. For instance, she claims that “a person who is immune to error in some domain does not go astray in her pronouncements” (200). But, as she immediately goes on to point out, a person whose belief is IETM “simply does go down certain paths”. Say a person’s belief about someone’s phone number is *subject to error through misreading the phone book* iff it is based on the evidence of phone book listings. If my belief about Bar-On’s number is *immune* to error through misreading the phone book I have not “gone down a certain path” (namely, looked at the phone book), and have thereby insulated myself from getting Bar-On’s number wrong through misreading the phone book. Yet, of course, immunity to this kind of error hardly offers me protection from epistemic criticism—quite the contrary (cf. 200).

This raises the suspicion that Bar-On’s “ascriptive immunity to error” is not going to fare any better at explaining the distinctive security of avowals. That notion is introduced as follows:

Now consider the ascriptive part of avowals. In the normal case, as I say or think, “I am feeling terribly thirsty”, it would seem as out of place to suggest, “I am feeling *something*, but is it thirst?” as it would to question whether it is *I* who am feeling the thirst. Or take an avowal with intentional content, such as “I’m really mad at you”. “I am mad at *someone*, but is it *you*?” and “I’m in *some* state, but is it being mad?” would both be as odd as “*Someone* is mad at you, but is it *I*?” when I simply avow being mad at you (as opposed to making a conjecture about my own state of mind, for example)...By contrast, both “I am doing *something* with my arm, but am I resting it on the chair?” and “I am resting my arm on *something*, but is it a chair?” could make perfect sense even as I think, “I’m resting my arm on the chair” in the normal way.

.... I dub this additional immunity “immunity to error through misascription”... (193-4)

One might question whether “I am mad at someone, but is it *you?*”, is as out of place as Bar-On claims. (Is it *so* odd to wonder about the object of one’s anger?<sup>4</sup>) In any event, since immunity to error through misascription is the predicational analogue of immunity to error through misidentification, the former notion is just as unexplanatory as the latter.

A person’s belief that *a* is F is *subject* to error through misascription (SETMa) iff it is based on certain evidence. Although Bar-On does not give an explicit characterization of the relevant sort of evidence, for present purposes we can take it to be of the following sort: that *a* is G, and that if something is G, it is F. Since a person’s belief is immune to error through misascription (IETMa) iff it is not SETMa, a person’s belief that *a* is F is IETMa iff it is *not* based on certain evidence; unlike SETMa, IETMa is therefore not a feature of a belief that bestows any epistemological value on it. Consider again my belief that Kripke lectured on identity at Harvard, and suppose that I never had any reason to hold it; epistemologically, my belief is no better than a guess. My belief is IETMa, yet it is quite worthless, and is very likely false.

The combined immunity to error of avowals is supposed to explain why they are “generally so resistant to ordinary epistemic assessments”. This explanandum is made more precise later, when Bar-On identifies three features of avowals that are supposedly explained, the last one having two components:

...[a] the fact that, when avowing, doubt as to whether one is indeed in the self-ascribed state, or whether the state has the intentional content one assigns to it, seems entirely out of place.... [b] [the fact that] avowals seem [from the subject’s point of view] ‘groundless’ and to be issued with a distinctive effortlessness...[c<sub>1</sub>] the fact that we do not expect an avower to have reasons or grounds for her avowal. [c<sub>2</sub>] We also do not stand ready to correct or challenge an avowal. (310)

The example of my completely unjustified belief that Kripke lectured on identity at Harvard shows that IETM and IETMa cannot jointly explain [a] or [c<sub>2</sub>]. My belief enjoys both kinds of security, but it would in place for me to wonder whether I’m right—

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<sup>4</sup> Bar-On does not deny that I can assert that I am angry at someone, but I don’t know who (2004: 117, 95). Her claim, rather, is that I cannot intelligibly assert this on the heels of asserting that I’m angry at you.

especially so, since I cannot recall how my belief originated. And of course my assertion about Kripke can easily be challenged.

Matters might seem more promising with [b] and [c<sub>1</sub>]. If someone's belief that *a* is F is IETM, it is not based on certain evidence concerning the subject part; if someone's belief that *a* is F is IETMa, it is not based on certain evidence concerning the ascriptive part. So, one might think, if someone's belief is *both* IETM and IETMa, it is not based on *any* evidence; in Bar-On's terminology, it is groundless. And that would presumably explain why the avowal that *a* is F *seems* to the avower not to be based on (her) evidence—after all, it *isn't* based on her evidence, and we often know whether a belief of ours is based on our evidence. Likewise, provided that we have some inkling that the avower's belief enjoys both kind of security, we would not expect her to have any reasons or grounds.

However, if someone's belief is both IETM and IETMa, this does *not* imply that it is groundless. The cat runs into the house; on this sole basis I rashly jump to the conclusion that a certain dog, Fido, chased the cat. My conclusion is not supported by other evidence: that Fido is in the neighborhood, that dogs tend to chase cats, and so on. Still, my belief is based on some evidence, and so is not groundless; yet it is both IETM and IETMa.

#### ***4 Neo-Expressivism and the asymmetric presumption of truth***

The main role of Neo-Expressivism is to answer the second part of question (i): to explain why “we strongly presume” (311) that avowals are *true*. So: what is Neo-Expressivism, exactly, and how does this explanation work?

Following Sellars (1969), Bar-On distinguishes three senses of ‘expression’:

EXP<sub>1</sub> the *action* sense: a *person* expresses a state of hers by intentionally doing something. For example, ...I intentionally give you a hug, or say “It's so great to see you”...

EXP<sub>2</sub> the *causal* sense: an *utterance* or piece of behavior expresses an underlying state by being the culmination of a causal process beginning with that state. For example, one's unintentional grimace...may express in the causal sense one's pain..

EXP<sub>3</sub> the *semantic* sense: e.g., a *sentence* expresses an abstract proposition, thought, or judgment by being a (conventional) representation of it. (248; see also 216)

The fact that the word ‘express’ is used freely throughout might raise a worry about circularity, but is it clear that expression<sub>2</sub> and expression<sub>3</sub>, at least, are supposed to be characterized reductively. A subject’s utterance or piece of behavior expresses<sub>2</sub> his state M iff the utterance or behavior is the culmination of a causal process beginning with M. And (ignoring context-dependence for simplicity): a sentence expresses<sub>3</sub> the proposition that p iff it (conventionally) means that p. The situation is less clear with expression<sub>1</sub>. Initially, Bar-On rests with some examples and a necessary condition for expressing<sub>1</sub>—it “requires the performance of an intentional action” (216). Later, however, she tentatively suggests necessary and sufficient conditions: “A person can be said to express<sub>1</sub> a mental state M through a bit of behavior, provided that the behavior is an intentional act on the person's part, and M is the reason (or ‘rational cause’) for the act” (249). Notice that expression<sub>1</sub> and expression<sub>2</sub> are *factive*, in the sense that if one expresses<sub>1 or 2</sub> a state M then it follows that one is in M.

One might express<sub>1</sub> one’s state of excitement in a varieties of ways: clapping, or uttering ‘Yea!’/‘This is so great!’/‘I’m so excited’ (253). As Bar-On emphasizes, although the behavior is quite different in each case—only the last is an *assertion* that one is in the state—the processes that issue in the behavior are importantly alike. An obvious point of comparison is that one might choose either of these four ways to *communicate* the proposition that one is excited.

Clapping is not a “natural expression” of excitement—at least not in the way that blushing is a natural expression of embarrassment. Clapping expresses<sub>1</sub> (and presumably also expresses<sub>2</sub>) one’s excitement; blushing just expresses<sub>2</sub> one’s embarrassment. Although clapping may be fruitfully classified with the avowal that one is excited, the differences between blushing and avowing that one is embarrassed are perhaps more important than the similarities. In any event, Neo-Expressivism is not committed to any strong thesis about the kinship between avowals and involuntary natural expressions like blushing and wincing. As Bar-On says, “*for purposes of my Neo-Expressivist account of avowals’s security*, the reader need only allow that there is a legitimate sense in which

subjects can express their present mental states using a variety of acquired, convention-governed expressive vehicles or means. The core claim is that *in that sense* an avowal, too, can be said to be expressive of one's present mental state" (265, first emphasis added). The "legitimate sense" is evidently *expression*<sub>1</sub>, so the core claim of Neo-Expressivism is simply that avowals (and, less importantly, other sorts of utterances) can be used to express<sub>1</sub> the utterer's mental states: in particular, the avowal 'I am in M' can be used to express<sub>1</sub> one's mental state M.

Consider, to take Bar-On's example, "Jenny's avowal, 'I really want the teddy!'" (315), which expresses<sub>3</sub> that she really wants the teddy. We "strongly presume", let us grant, that Jenny's avowal is true. (Assume the fact that Jenny is in this state does not entail the existence of the teddy—she merely wants relief from teddylessness.) What is the explanation?

We are now in a position to offer an expressivist rendering of the presumption of truth governing avowals. To regard a linguistic act as an avowal is to take it as an expression rather than a mere report of the ascribed condition. It is to take the avowing subject to be speaking directly from her condition, where the self-ascription tells us *what* condition is to be ascribed to her. All that we as audience need to know to identify the condition being expressed is linguistic uptake. Note, however, that insofar as we take the subject to be expressing *her* condition (in the causal [expression<sub>2</sub>] and action [expression<sub>1</sub>] senses), we take it that she *is* in the relevant condition—the condition that is semantically referred to by the self-ascription, which is *the very condition that would render the self-ascription true*. Thus, the judgment that is semantically expressed by her avowal is what we take to be *true*, as long as we take Jenny to be expressing her condition....

...An avowal is asymmetrically presumed to tell us the truth about the subject's condition insofar as it is taken to be the product of an expressive act of avowing—an act whose point is to give vent to the subject's present condition—and thus is seen as taking us directly to the state it ascribes. (316-18)

In a nutshell, the explanation of why we strongly presume that Jenny's assertion is true is that we strongly presume that by uttering 'I really want the teddy!' she is expressing<sub>1</sub>

(and/or expressing<sub>2</sub>) her desire for the teddy, from which it trivially follows that she really does want the teddy. Hence we strongly presume that she really does want the teddy.

Conceding for the sake of the argument that this explanation is correct, the bulge under the carpet has only been moved elsewhere. Suppose P trivially entails Q, and that we presume both P and Q to be true. If our presuming Q to be true is puzzling and needs explaining, then our presuming P to be true must be puzzling and in need of explanation too. For it is not puzzling why we make elementary inferences, and so if it is not puzzling why we presume P to be true, it cannot be puzzling why we presume one of its trivial consequences to be true. Applying this to the case at hand, our presuming that Jenny's avowal is true may have been explained, but the explanandum—our strongly presuming that by uttering 'I really want the teddy!' Jenny is expressing<sub>1</sub> (or expressing<sub>2</sub>) her desire for the teddy—is equally in need of explanation. And Bar-On does not attempt to explain it.

Indeed, it is clear that the “core claim” of Neo-Expressivism (mentioned four paragraphs back) is far too weak for any such explanation to be forthcoming. The easiest way to see this is to note that only a terminological stipulation could stand in the way of saying that one can express<sub>1</sub> the state of seeing a red cardinal by assertively uttering 'I see a red cardinal'. This might not count as an expression<sub>1</sub> for Bar-On because she denies that seeing a red cardinal is a mental state (16). But even if it isn't, such a terminological restriction prevents us from classifying genuinely similar *expressive* acts together. With the restriction lifted, we can truly say that subjects can express<sub>1</sub> their present perceptual states (e.g. seeing a red cardinal) “using a variety of acquired, convention-governed expressive vehicles or means”. However—as Bar-On in effect points out—we do *not* strongly presume that self-ascriptions of such states are expressions<sub>1</sub>: an overconfident birdwatcher might easily falsely assert that she sees a red cardinal.

As is customary, I have concentrated on points of disagreement, ignoring the book's many virtues. But even if Bar-On's grand vision of avowals is incorrect, *Speaking*

*My Mind* is undoubtedly one of the most important contributions to the literature on self-knowledge in recent years.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Many thanks to Daniel Stoljar for comments on an earlier draft.

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