

MOOREAN ABSURDITY AND SHOWING WHAT'S WITHIN

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MOORE'S PARADOX AND SHOWING WHAT'S WITHIN

1. Moorean absurdity and Moore's Paradox
 2. Absurdity and the violation of norms
 3. Speaker meaning
 4. Speaker meaning in your heart
 5. Speech acts and their norms
 6. Moorean speech and Moorean thought
 7. Mental assent
 8. Showing what's within
 9. Mixed illocutionary cases
 10. Non-illocutionary cases

1. Moorean Absurdity and Moore's Paradox¹

Moorean absurdity occurs in any utterance or thought in which an agent overtly expresses an intentional state that she also explicitly disavows; it also occurs in any utterance or thought in which an agent overtly expresses an intentional state whose content is incompatible with that of another intentional state that she also explicitly avows. Her expression-and-disavowal, or expression-and-avowal, might occur in her utterance or thinking of a single sentence such as 'It's raining but I don't believe it.' On the other hand this expression-and-disavowal, or expression-and-avowal, might occur without the medium of a single sentence. It might occur through the utterance or thinking of two consecutive sentences such as

It's raining. I don't believe that it is.

Alternatively, for all we know about what a conscious mind can do, it might occur through the simultaneous thinking or uttering of the above two displayed sentences.

The above disjunctive characterization of Moorean absurdity (as either overtly expressing an intentional state that one also explicitly disavows, or overtly expressing an intentional state whose content is incompatible with that of another intentional state that one also explicitly avows) is not a grammatical characterization. Someone who utters a sequence of sentences such as those displayed above may simply be using her second sentence to express surprise or amazement. Doing so is not at all absurd. Nor is it absurd if the above sequence registers a mid-utterance change of mind.

Likewise, as I recover from laryngitis I might test my voice by uttering the above sequence. In this

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case I don't mean a word of what I say, and nothing in my performance is absurd. An actor who utters 'It's raining but I don't believe it' on stage in the course of a play about, say, G.E. Moore, is also not behaving absurdly; nor is he harboring absurd beliefs. This is due to the fact that so long as he is not a method-actor, he is not expressing any of his beliefs. Instead, he is portraying a character expressing and avowing beliefs, and thereby portraying a character who is behaving absurdly. That is why the non-absurdity of the actor's performance is compatible with the above characterization of Moorean absurdity.² Similarly, in Wittgenstein's example the train announcer who says over the loudspeaker, 'Train number 121 arriving on track #3 in two minutes (personally I don't believe it),' is not behaving absurdly. The reason is that he is only saying his first conjunct *ex cathedra* in the hopes of keeping his job, rather than putting it forth as an expression of his state of mind. That is why the non-absurdity of his announcement is compatible with the above characterization of Moorean absurdity.

My account of Moorean absurdity invoked the notion of an overt expression. It may be possible to express an intentional state without doing so overtly. Perhaps when I involuntarily grimace as the paring knife slices into my finger I am expressing pain. I am not, however, overtly doing so. Accordingly, if while thus grimacing as the knife slices flesh I also say, "...but I'm not in pain," I am in error but am not absurd. Likewise, my blushing might express my embarrassment even though I cannot help it. If while blushing I also explicitly deny that I am embarrassed, I am simply wrong but not absurd. Contrary to what these examples suggest, it is not enough for overtness that my expression be intentional. We will consider what more is required in Section 3 below.

² It also shows why Szabo-Gendler 2001 is mistaken to contend that the actor's performance is absurd. Szabo-Gendler is confusing absurdity in the actor with absurdity in the character portrayed. This mistake undermines the gravamen of his criticism of modal fictionalism.

Whereas Moorean absurdity is a phenomenon for which we theorists need no apology, *Moore's Paradox* is a testament to the ignorance of students of language and thought. For Moore's Paradox is the apparent tension that arises from the facts that (1) such utterances and thoughts as 'It is raining but I don't believe it,' seem absurd, but (2) their absurdity is not due to a semantic contradiction.

An assertion of an explicit contradiction P&¬P is absurd, but with the help of standard logical techniques we may explain its absurdity without landing in paradox. Likewise, a self-falsifying utterance such as an utterance of 'I am not now uttering any words' is absurd, but the absurdity is not paradoxical because there is no mystery how the utterance of that sentence falsifies itself: We explain the phenomenon with standard logic plus a gentle reference to pragmatics. A slightly fuller reference to pragmatic notions such as is available from double-indexing semantics shows what is absurd about an utterance of 'I am not here now'. With minimal assumptions about the structure of contexts of utterance plus the behavior of indexicals 'I', 'here' and 'now', we may infer that this sentence expresses a contingent proposition even though in every context in which it is (or could be) uttered it is not true. We account for the absurdity without landing in paradox.

Matters are not so simple with cases of Moorean absurdity. 'It is raining but I don't believe it,' and 'It is raining but I believe it is not', not only express propositions that could be true. They are also sentences that could be truly uttered or truly thought.³ If I utter 'It is raining but I don't believe it,' what I utter could be true so long as I am not sincere. If I say to myself without uttering any words, 'It is raining but I don't believe it,' what I say to myself could be true so long as I am not sincere. (Below I show that it is possible to say something to oneself in the privacy of one's own

³ Cargile 1967 is to my knowledge the first to observe this.

thoughts that one does not also believe.)⁴ We label rather than explain the phenomenon with such expressions as ‘pragmatic paradox’ or ‘pragmatic absurdity’. In what, then, might we locate the source of Moorean absurdity?

My aim in what follows will be to resolve Moore’s Paradox by explaining the source of Moorean absurdity. With apologies to existentialists, the first step shall be to elaborate on the notion of absurdity.

2. Absurdity and the Violation of Norms

Absurdity arises from severe violation of a system of norms.⁵ Some well known systems of norms are theoretical rationality and practical rationality. We find a severe violation of theoretical rationality in any agent whose system of beliefs is guaranteed to put her in error no matter how the world happens to be, and in a way that she could in principle discern with no empirical investigation. Jane’s belief that Hesperus is shining puts her in error if in fact Venus is not shining, but it is not absurd simply to be in error. So too, Jane’s belief that Hesperus is shining but Phosphorus is not shining puts her in error no matter how the world turns out to be compatible with metaphysical possibility. However, Jane’s ignorance of the identity of Hesperus and Phosphorus may prevent her from being able to discern her error except by empirical investigation, and if that is so, then her belief that Hesperus is shining but Phosphorus is not, need not be absurd. On the other hand, if

⁴ Kriegel 2004 asserts that although Moorean sentences can be true, they cannot be truly asserted and they cannot be truly believed. As we shall see below, only the latter claim is correct. Kriegel’s view that a Moorean sentence cannot be truly asserted seems to rest on his view that an utterance is an assertion only if it is an expression of a belief, that is, only if it is sincere. This view simply stipulates away the possibility of a lie, and will not be assumed here.

⁵ “In ordinary life, a situation is absurd when it includes a conspicuous discrepancy between pretension and aspiration or reality: someone gives a complicated speech in support of a motion that has already been passed; a notorious criminal is made president of a major philanthropic foundation; you declare your love over the telephone to a recorded announcement; as you are being knighted, your pants fall down.” This characterization from Nagel 1979, is more inclusive than the one given in the text, but I will only need the less inclusive characterization in what follows.

Jane believes that Taylor saw Hunter but that Hunter was not seen by Taylor, then not only is she in error no matter what else is true of the world, she can in principle discern her error with no empirical investigation. That is why it is absurd for her to believe that Taylor saw Hunter but that Hunter was not seen by Taylor. (Harboring an absurd belief need not make her irrational; perhaps she is irrational only if she violates theoretical rationality in a way that would be open to minimal, as opposed to extensive, reflection.)

A belief or system of beliefs that severely violate the norms of theoretical rationality is absurd even if prudential, moral, or other norms enjoin one to hold it. In that case it would be absurd from the point of view of theoretical rationality, while permissible, and perhaps even mandatory, from the point of view of some other system of norms. Thus suppose that the only way to save the life of a loved one is to take a pill and undergo hypnosis with the result that I come to believe a contradiction. Suppose further that I agree to induce that belief in this way. Then I undertake to do something that is absurd from the point of view of theoretical rationality, but morally mandatory—or at least permissible. Instead of this gaseous “point of view” talk, we could just describe the situation as one in which my coming to believe a contradiction is both absurd (full stop) and morally permissible.

Theoretical rationality is not the only system of norms admitting of severe violation. We find a severe violation of practical rationality in one whose system of plans, together with her utilities and subjective probabilities, guarantee that she does not maximize subjective expected utility, and in a way that she could in principle discern with no empirical investigation. Suppose I accept a sure thing of \$1 over a wager in which a fair coin is tossed, such that if it comes up heads I win \$1,000 and if it comes up tails I gain nothing. This choice guarantees that I do not maximize subjective expected utility, and I could in principle discern this with no empirical investigation. A

rival to this classical style of decision theory, prospect theory⁶, offers a distinct set of norms whose violation takes a different form from that adduced by subjective expected utility theory. We need not settle this rivalry here. Suffice it to say that each theory offers an account of practical rationality, and with it an account of what constitutes a severe violation of that form of practical rationality. No matter the theory, a severe violation of what is by its lights practical rationality will be deemed absurd. As with the case of theoretical rationality, we may expect the norms of practical rationality to collide with other norms. When that happens, what is absurd from the point of view of theoretical rationality might be acceptable, and perhaps even mandatory, from the perspective of that other system of norms.

My system of beliefs might be absurd without its following that I am being absurd in reporting on or otherwise acknowledging them. My therapist shows me films of myself behaving in phobic ways around spiders, even the harmless ones. I conclude from these observations of myself that I believe that all spiders are dangerous. However, after learning how few spiders are truly dangerous, I come to see that on the whole they are not, and that those that are tend to be reclusive. Yet old phobias are hard to shake, and I might acknowledge both this fact and my new empirical investigations into arachnids with the words, ‘Even though I believe that all spiders are dangerous, really they aren’t.’ This is an eminently reasonable thing for me to report. After all, each conjunct of that report is both true and justified. Yet if this report is sincere and correct, it follows (as we shall see below) that I am in error. Indeed I could know that at least one of my beliefs is in error with no further empirical investigation. According to our account of absurdity, it follows that my system of beliefs is absurd. That is compatible with the fact that when I assert, ‘Even though I believe that all spiders are dangerous, really they aren’t,’ this assertion is true, justified, and not the

⁶ See for instance Tversky and Kahneman 1992, and Wakker and Tversky 1993. Green 1999 discusses the philosophical significance of these approaches to decision theory.

least absurd.

The assertion might be true, justified, and not absurd. It might also be sincere. If it is, then it reports-and-expresses a pair of beliefs that cannot fail to put me in error. It reports my belief that all spiders are dangerous. It expresses my belief that not all spiders are dangerous. This pair of beliefs is absurd. But there the pair sits, and I have good evidence for the presence of that pair of beliefs. So it can be theoretically rational of me to report or express a system of beliefs that are sure to violate theoretical rationality, even when those beliefs are my own. If by dint of phobia or obtuseness you've violated norms of theoretical rationality to the point of absurdity, you're only being reasonable in acknowledging the fact.

It can be theoretically rational for me to acknowledge someone's severe violation of theoretical rationality, even my own. It can also be theoretically rational to commit such a violation. Anyone who writes a sizeable book has a good chance of making an error somewhere. If she predicts in her preface that she has made an error somewhere in the ensuing five hundred pages, she is only being reasonable. On the other hand her preface together with the ensuing text cannot all be true. In addition, if we assume that she believes everything she says in her book (including the preface), her belief system is absurd. How then can her prefatory prediction of error be reasonable? The phobic stands back from his belief that all spiders are dangerous and acknowledges its falsity while also acknowledging that, being bound up with habits of mind, autonomic responses, and the like, it is hard to shake. The modest author stands back from the many beliefs she expresses in her book to acknowledge that the limitations of her intellect (and those of her research assistants and other authors on whom she has drawn) make it likely that she has erred somewhere in those five hundred pages. Those limitations are epistemic limitations—limitations on one's ability to live up to norms of theoretical rationality. It is theoretically rational to acknowledge those limitations; after all,

the author knows she is no less fallible than others. This is to say that it can be theoretically rational to harbor a system of beliefs that severely violate norms of theoretical rationality.⁷ Hence it can be theoretically rational to harbor a system of beliefs that is absurd from the point of view of theoretical rationality. The so-called Preface Paradox is thus a misnomer. Instead we should acknowledge the existence of *prefatory absurdity* while denying that such utterances or beliefs are paradoxical at all.

The phobic puts his finger on his absurdity; he knows which of his beliefs is wrong without being able to shake it. The author draws a circle around her absurdity; she acknowledges that at least one of her many beliefs is likely to be wrong without being able to pinpoint which ones. You might even know that I harbor an absurdity without knowing whether the source of that absurdity is theoretical rationality, practical rationality, or some other system of norms. Suppose that a severe violation of one system of norms N1 would result in absurdity, and a severe violation of another system of norms N2 would do so as well. Suppose now that you know that my behavior severely violates either N1 or N2 but you do not know which. In such a case, surely, my behavior is absurd in spite of your not knowing the precise source of that absurdity.

Similarly, suppose N1 and N2 are systems of norms, and I perform an action of which I can know, with no further empirical investigation, that it will violate either N1 or N2. Here, while we cannot infer that I have severely violated any one system of norms, I have severely violated their conjunction, namely N1 & N2. In that case my behavior is again absurd in spite of our not being in a position to locate the source of that absurdity in a violation of either N1 or N2.

⁷ Descartes's theism and views about evil lead him to conclude that so long as we are using our minds in the most rigorous and careful way possible, God would not permit us to be in error. For this reason, Descartes would hold that so long as the author in question has done her utmost to ensure the accuracy of her claims, that is, so long as she clearly and distinctly perceives the truth of each of these claims, she could not be justified in making her prefatory prediction of error. In lieu of Descartes' extraordinary but implausible position, we do well to acknowledge the likelihood of our error even when, as authors, we have done our best.

3. Speaker Meaning

In what follows I shall use ‘meaning what s/he says’ and its cognates to refer to cases in which an agent says something in such a way as to take responsibility for it. On this usage, one means what one says even if one is a liar, and even if one is mistaken. On this usage, one who assertively utters an indicative sentence P means what she says only if she stands to be right or wrong on the issue of P depending on whether P is true; she also puts forth P *as* something she believes, whether or not she really does believe it. Ronald Reagan did not, we hope, mean what he said in warming up a microphone before a press conference with the words, “The bombing begins in five minutes.” So too one does not generally mean what one says in rehearsing lines from a play. By contrast, you mean what you say in promising to educate a dying friend’s children only if you commit yourself to educating those children, and only if your sincerity in making that promise depends upon your intending to educate them. The notion of meaning under scrutiny here is often referred to by the misleading phrase, ‘speaker meaning’.

What is speaker meaning? I shall pursue only as much of an answer to this question as is needed for the account below. Paul Grice is widely believed to have shown that to achieve a case of speaker meaning, one must make an utterance with the intention of producing an effect on an audience, with the further intention that this effect be achieved at least in part by the audience’s recognition of your intention. (Grice, 1957, 1969, 1982) This is a so-called reflexive communicative intention. Unfortunately, Grice’s conditions for speaker-meaning are too restrictive (Davis, 2003; Green, 2003; forthcoming a). Speaker-meaning is possible in the absence of a reflexive communicative intention (an intention to produce an effect on an audience by means, at least in part, of recognition of that intention) For instance, when Herod presents Salome with St. John’s severed head on a charger, he both shows her that St. John is no longer and means that St. John is

no longer.⁸ He intends Salome to come to believe that St. John is dead, but presumably intends her to conclude this from the presence of the severed head rather than from any recognition of Herod's intention that she believe anything. After all, the severed head is there for her to see.

Speaker meaning does not require a reflexive communicative intention. In fact, it does not even require a communicative intention (an intention to produce a cognitive effect, such as a belief, on an audience). A framed suspect might mean that she is innocent in saying, "I am innocent!" Yet she is fully aware that no one will believe her and, being realistic, she does not intend to convince anyone. She might not even intend her interrogators to believe that *she* believes she is innocent, since she might know that they're certain she's lying. Or, gazing into my newborn daughter's eyes I might say, "All things valuable are difficult as they are rare," meaning what I say, without having the slightest intention to produce beliefs or other attitudes in her or in anyone else. Again, in the film *Sleeper*, Woody Allen's character Miles Monroe discovers in his solitary exploration of a futuristic world a genetically modified chicken the size of small house. Miles remarks, "That's a big chicken." In saying this he does not seem to be intending to produce an effect on anyone, himself included.

An intention to communicate, to say nothing of a reflexive intention to communicate, is not required for speaker meaning. However, one way of achieving speaker meaning is to harbor another kind of reflexive intention, specifically, that built into the notion of *overtness*. Doing something overtly involves as a minimum making some aspect of oneself manifest. I might make manifest the bruise on my arm by pulling back the sleeve that had been covering it. In so doing I need not cause anyone actually to perceive that bruise. What matters instead is that the bruise be open to view by appropriately situated observers. I can likewise manifest my commitment to some proposition P by

⁸ The fact that he is not telling her that St. John is no longer is neither here nor there: We know independently that speaker meaning does not require telling. One can, for instance, speaker-mean, 'How many apples are in the bowl?', without making an assertion.

making that commitment open to inspection to appropriately situated interlocutors. I might do that by asserting P in front of an audience, be they distracted or not; I might do it by asserting P in the privacy of my study. In my locked, unbugged study, the only audience to whom I am manifesting my commitment is myself. I nevertheless mean what I say when I say to myself, “All things valuable are difficult as they are rare.”

I can make some aspect of myself manifest without being overt. The bulging vein on my forehead makes my anger manifest without itself being, or being a part of, any overt behavior on my part. I can even intentionally make some aspect of myself manifest without behaving overtly. As we approach each other in a dark alley I cough to keep from startling you when we get closer; but I need not be overtly coughing. Contrast this with a case in which I am a schoolteacher who has come upon a young couple displaying affection, and I stentoriously clear my throat before they notice me. Here my throat-clearing will be overt: Not only do I intentionally manifest my presence, I also manifest my intention to manifest my presence.

Overtly to do something requires doing it with the intention that the act be manifest, and further with the intention that *that* very intention itself be manifest. But it is not true that I can achieve overtness merely by having two intentions, namely (a) an intention that some commitment of mine be manifest, and (b) a further intention that this very intention be manifest. Consider the following Strawson-inspired example (Strawson 1964). You are exploring a house for possible purchase. I want to manifest to you my belief that it is rat-infested, and so enact the following plan. I will enable you to see me leaving a rat in the house, while acting as if I think I am unobserved. I also know that you think me a good and veracious friend, and know that, although you won't conclude from the presence of the rat that it is genuine evidence that the house is rat-infested, you will nevertheless conclude from my odd behavior that I must believe that the house is rat-infested.

In acting as I do in the above example, I intend that my belief that the house is rat-infested be manifest. I thus satisfy condition (a) above. I will also intend in so acting that this very intention (that my belief that the house is rat-infested be manifest) itself be manifest. Hence I satisfy condition (b) as well. However, in this case it does not seem that I overtly display my belief that the house is rat-infested. The problem appears to be that, as in the case of my secreting your monogrammed handkerchief into the crime scene in order to implicate you, something about my performance is under the table—or at least the floorboards. Contrast this with a case in which you and I are discussing the aforementioned house over lunch, and you ask my opinion of it. I happen to have a rat in my briefcase, and wordlessly take it out, dangling it by the tail in front of you. Here, surely, I overtly display my belief that the house has a vermin problem.

From the foregoing it seems that at least one means to achieve overtness in a way that will make speaker-meaning possible, requires all the relevant intentions be out in the open.⁹ One approach to filling this need is to demand that to be overt, the intention that my commitment be manifest self-referentially demand that this very intention be manifest as well.¹⁰ That suggests the following sufficient condition for speaker meaning:

Sufficient Condition for Propositional Speaker Meaning: S means that P if

1. S performs an action A intending that:
2. In performing A, S's commitment to P be manifest, and that it be manifest that S intends

⁹ That is compatible with our having ulterior motives in cases of speaker meaning. In remarking on the weather I might be trying to be sociable, or for that matter be intending to distract you while plotting your demise. In either case I nevertheless speaker-mean that it's a nice day when I say, "Nice day." For further discussion of the distinction between ulterior and ostensible motives in speaker meaning see Green 1999b.

¹⁰ Green forthcoming, Chapter Two, develops this point in further detail. In addition to elucidating the sufficient condition given below for propositional speaker meaning, speaker-meaning that P, that work also develops the notion of objectual speaker meaning, in which an agent means α , where α is an object.

that (2).

P might be the proposition that it is windy outside, with A being the uttering of certain words or a non-conventional action such as the throwing open of curtains to reveal a looming storm. In the Herod case the P in question is the proposition that St. John is dead, and the action is Herod's presenting of St. John's head on the charger. Once again, one's commitment to P might be manifest without anyone being aware of this fact. As a result one can overtly intend that one's commitment to P be manifest without intending to produce effects on others. In light of our Sufficient Condition for Propositional Speaker Meaning, then, one might mean something without intending to produce effects on any audience, and one can mean something in the course of overtly making one's commitment manifest.¹¹

4. Speaker Meaning in Your Heart

'Speaker meaning' is a misleading label because it applies to cases involving no speech. Suppose that we share no language and I want to alert you to the danger of the quicksand nearby. I mime out before you my being pulled under the surface by quicksand. In so doing I might speaker-

¹¹ Some authors have been skeptical of the very possibility self-referential intentions. (Such scepticism is not to be confused with scepticism of the doctrine that all intentions are self-referential. One can accept that self-referential intentions are possible while remaining neutral on the question whether all intentions are self-referential.) Thus for instance Seibel 2003 writes, "...the content of [the self-referential intention] contains an element which refers to the intention itself. But what does that element look like?...How does it single out the intention and nothing but it? By identifying features, i.e., properties which are exclusively possessed by the intention? But what could be these features?" Intentions admit of the same act/object dichotomy as do many other intentional states, and like other mental events, are spatiotemporally located. On the modest assumption that no two intentions have identical spatiotemporal coordinates, we may then use such coordinates to individuate intentions. One might still wonder what the *content* is of an intention whose content refers to that very intention, which itself comprises both an intending (a state or act) and a content. One answer may be given in terms of an analogue of truth conditions applicable to intentions, namely satisfaction conditions. Just as the thought, had as I regain consciousness after a near-fatal accident, 'This thinking is miraculous' will be true just in case that thinking is, indeed, miraculous, so too, the intention, 'This intention shall be manifest' will be satisfied just in case that intention is, indeed, manifest.

mean that there is quicksand nearby without making a sound—indeed without moving my lips. The label ‘speaker meaning’ is also misleading because one can speaker-mean things without doing anything publicly observable. To see this, consider first of all that the distinction between speaker-meaning and merely mouthing words has an analogue in the realm of thought. I can think through the lines of a poem in my head without assenting to what those lines say. On the other hand I might not only say something to myself but also mean it in such a way as to be committed to it. As with speech, I might thereby mean some proposition P in such a way as to stand to be right or wrong on the issue of P depending on whether P is true. If in the course of a vigorous morning run I resolve to make it up to the top of the hill before me by saying in my heart the words, ‘I shall conquer that hill!’, I might mean what I say. If I do, then I undertake a commitment that will be satisfied if and only if I conquer that hill.¹²

I take the phenomenon of speaker-meaning something to oneself to be familiar and uncontroversial. In spite of this, talk of so-called “inner speech” tends to make philosophers nervous because of its association with discredited attempts to base an account of linguistic meaning upon an incorrigibly private language. However, I here make no claim that linguistic meaning can be explained in terms of mental acts of ascribing meaning to words. For all I say in this essay, acts of inner speech are only possible in the context of a linguistic community. However, one might still challenge the idea that it is possible overtly to do something in the privacy of my own thoughts. Does overtness, invoked in my sufficient condition for speaker meaning above, make any sense in this context? I contend that it does. My believing that it is raining outside does not guarantee that I

¹² Anselm distinguishes between two things the fool might be thought to be doing when he says in his heart, “There is no God.” (1995, p. 101) On the one hand the fool might be silently saying these words to himself. Anselm thinks this case is possible. What he does not think possible is another case in which the fool not only says to himself, “There is no God,” but also understands what he is saying. Anselm’s point is that if the fool were to grasp the concept of God, he would immediately see that God could not fail to exist. In what follows I will not lay down any limitations on what absurd thoughts a person can entertain even as he understands the words—if such there be—in which they are couched.

will tell myself that it is. For instance if I am conscious of the rain but not attending to it, I will not tell myself that it is raining. Hence I can believe that it is raining outside without speaker-meaning anything. I might also make my belief that it is raining manifest to myself by, for instance, going to the closet to take out an umbrella. Here too, however, I haven't speaker-meant anything, but have merely acted on and thereby displayed my belief that it is raining outside.

What if I intentionally manifest to myself my belief that it's raining? This too is not sufficient for speaker meaning something to myself. I film myself going outside with an overcoat, hat and umbrella. Unfortunately I also have anterograde amnesia, which prevents me from retaining new information for more than a few seconds. (Assume that I know that I suffer from this malady.) I leave the film of myself for a later stage of myself to watch. I know that that later person-stage will watch the film and see an earlier person-stage going out dressed for bad weather. I also know that the later person-stage will not know who or what made the film, and with what intent. Because of this, the earlier person-stage might intend, in placing the film where he does, to manifest to himself his belief that it is raining. However, he will in all likelihood not believe that in so doing he is manifesting to himself this very intention. After all, the later person stage will have no idea where the film came from; and the earlier person-stage knows this. Because of this, the earlier person stage will in all likelihood be unable *overtly* to manifest his belief that it is raining. This squares with our intuition that in leaving the film there for the later stage of himself to see, the earlier stage doesn't speaker mean that it is raining.

In order to speaker meaning something to myself, what we want instead is a case in which I not only intentionally manifest to myself my belief that it is raining, but also intentionally make my intention to manifest that belief to myself, itself manifest. If I have anterograde amnesia, and know it, I might create a movie to be a screen-saver on my computer showing me ostentatiously going to

the closet to get a hat and umbrella. In that movie I stare significantly at the camera while donning gear for the weather. In placing the movie where I do, I may reasonably intend not only to make my belief that it's raining manifest to my later self, but also intend to make manifest to my later self this very intention. (Assume that I have retained enough knowledge from before the accident producing my amnesia that I know that the only way this movie could have ended up as a screen-saver was if I had put it there myself.) As with the case of the quicksand example above, here I speaker-mean something without producing any words.¹³

The situation is similar when I say something to myself while uttering no words aloud. If I say in my heart, "It's raining," I may reasonably intend to make my belief that it's raining manifest to myself. Further, in a standard such case, not only do I intentionally manifest to myself my belief that it's raining, I also intentionally make that very intention manifest to myself. For I will normally be aware that the only reason I would "hear" myself saying these words was that I had intended to manifest my commitment to myself. In an unusual case, such as schizophrenia, I might be suffering from delusions of the sort that cause me to hear voices. If I am schizophrenic and know it, then I probably also know that I am prone to hear such voices. In that case it is less clear that I can intend, by saying something to myself, to manifest my intention to manifest a belief to myself. One symptom of schizophrenia, then, may be an inability to mean things to oneself by saying things in one's heart.

Speaker-meaning something in the privacy of one's own thoughts seems possible, and indeed not at all unusual. This becomes clear in light of our sufficient condition for speaker meaning, which requires no communicative intentions, much less reflexive communicative

¹³ Those sympathetic to a "memory links" account of diachronic personal identity need not be distracted with the question whether a person could survive an amnesia of this sort. Grice's (1941) version of such an account can accommodate this kind of case.

intentions. However, it might seem that a disanalogy between speaker meaning in one's heart and speaker meaning done in public is that only the latter can fail to be sincere. No mystery surrounds the idea of lying to others. What about lying to oneself? Sometimes we use this expression to refer to people believing things on insufficient evidence. For instance, Hunter's lying to himself in thinking he can make it in time for his Chicago flight might be due merely to the facts that (a) his chances are so slim, and (b) he should have known better. This need not involve his telling himself anything that he knows is untrue. On the other hand, everyday experience also suggests that I can say something to myself, meaning it, without believing what I say. I tell myself that this is my last piece of pie when I know perfectly well that by the time I leave the room, the pie plate will be clean. The phenomenon is also reflected in literature. For instance, in Ann Packer's, *The Dive from Clausen's Pier* (Knopf, 2002), the narrator Carrie is visiting her fiancé in the hospital after his spinal injury from a dive off a pier. She is gradually losing interest in caring for him, and wants to move away:

Again he closed his eyes, and now tears seeped out, a single trail moving down each cheek. I set his hand down and began stroking his forearm again. I wish I could say I felt selfless then, unaware of myself. That I was thinking only of him, or that I wasn't even thinking. But I was: *This is me doing the right thing. This is me being brave and strong for Mike.* (p. 102)

When Carrie says, "This is me being brave and strong for Mike," she is telling herself that she is being brave and strong for Mike. She speaker-means it. Yet she doesn't really think she is being brave and strong for him. She knows full well that she is moving away from him emotionally, that her visits to the hospital are becoming less frequent and more halfhearted, and that she may not even love him any more.

We have intuitive support for the idea that one can speaker-mean something to oneself. We now have, in addition, intuitive support for the idea that one can speaker-mean something to oneself without believing it. Intuitions are fallible, however, and this latter intuition might seem mistaken. A speech act that is not sincere is typically made with the intent to deceive. Is it plausible that one can intend to deceive oneself by saying something to oneself? Likewise, speaker-meaning is widely construed as an attempt to produce an effect on an audience by means, at least in part, of their recognition of the speaker's intention to produce that effect. I have rejected that account and suggested that it is at least sufficient for speaker meaning that one intentionally and overtly manifest one's commitment to a proposition. Is it possible to do this in the privacy of one's own thoughts without being sincere?

I manifest my commitment to P by making that commitment available. I might do that by asserting P in front of a distracted audience; I make my commitment available to them even if they don't acknowledge that commitment. If I manifest my commitment to P by asserting it in the privacy of my own study, I make that commitment available to myself and no one else. (Assume that there are no recording devices or eavesdroppers.) But much the same holds for things said in my heart. There are many things I believe that are not manifest to me. Introspection, psychotherapy, and elenchus are all ways of dredging up beliefs into consciousness. When I follow one or more of these paths, I might articulate what I find by consciously thinking to myself some such thing as: "I *do* seek my colleagues' approval!"; or "I *don't* think that consequences are all that matter for morality!" As in the case of what I utter in my locked study, when I say one of these things "in my heart" I make my belief manifest to myself and to no one else. That is still enough for me to speaker-mean that I reject consequentialism, and it is still enough for me to mean that not enough of my self-worth comes from within.

I cannot make manifest, to myself or anyone else, a belief that I do not have. How then can I fail to be sincere in the confines of my own thoughts? In the cases in which I make a sincere assertion I not only make my belief manifest, I also (intentionally and overtly) manifest my commitment to the content of the proposition that I assert. Hence when I sincerely assert that it is raining, I not only manifest my belief that it is raining, but also manifest my commitment to the proposition that it is raining. By contrast, I might manifest commitment to a proposition that I do not believe. Similarly, when Carrie says to herself, “This is me being brave and strong for Mike,” she intentionally and overtly manifests commitment to the proposition that she is being brave and strong for Mike, without actually believing that proposition. She would like to be being brave and strong for Mike, but she doesn’t think she is (and in fact she isn’t).

5. Speech Acts and Their Norms

We now see that speaker meaning is possible in the context of one’s own thoughts, and that it is even possible to speaker-mean something in such a milieu without being sincere. Further, like beliefs (which are governed by the norms of theoretical rationality), and actions (which are governed by the norms of practical rationality), speech acts are governed by their own system of norms. That system overlaps with but is not coextensive with the norms of theoretical rationality. According to speech act norms, assertions are to be relevant, justified by the speaker’s evidence, and sincere. Promises are to be sincere and not obviously impossible to fulfil. Questions are not to presuppose anything controversial. And so forth.

What would be a severe violation of speech act norms? It is absurd to attempt to promise you something that is obviously beyond my control to bring about, e.g., to make it the case that the Napoleonic Wars did not occur if it is common knowledge between us that those events took place

in the past. It is absurd to attempt to bequeath something to you that, as you and I both know, is not my own to give, such as the Horsehead Nebula. These cases square with the account of absurdity given in Section II above, for in all of them one can discern with no further empirical investigation that one will violate a system of norms.

Unlike some other speech acts, assertion is beholden to a norm of theoretical rationality, namely that one is to assert only what is true. It also includes a norm whose source is less clear: Assert only what one believes. We don't need to decide here whether this sincerity norm governing assertion flows from theoretical rationality or from some other system of norms. Perhaps it does, or perhaps on the other hand it is a *sui generis* norm of assertion. For in either case, an assertion about which it can be known, just by inspecting its content, that it is false, is absurd. So are assertions whose content is falsified by particular aspects of their use. For instance, an utterance of 'I am not now uttering any words,' is false even though its content could be true. It is thus absurd knowingly to utter such a sentence even if it expresses a proposition that could be true. Similarly for a conscious thinking of, 'I am not now thinking': It is absurd consciously to think this sentence even if it expresses a proposition that could be true. (I assume that if one consciously thinks this sentence, one knows that one is doing so.)

Suppose that we know of some promise P that anyone who makes it or purports to make it, meaning what he says, has either promised to do something that she will not, in fact, do, or has made a lying promise. Suppose, in addition, that we may infer this with no further empirical investigation. Were we able to infer with no further empirical investigation that the promise will not be kept, we would be able to conclude that the promise is absurd. Were we able to infer with no further empirical investigation that the promise is not sincere, we would be able to conclude that it is absurd. Knowing that no matter how the world is, the promise is either one or the other of these is

also enough to justify our concluding that it is absurd. It does not follow from this, though it may also be true, that such a promise is impossible. Fortunately we need not settle that issue.

Similarly, suppose that we may know of some sentence or thought S that anyone who asserts (thinks) it, meaning what they say (think) is either mistaken or is not sincere. We may know this without requiring any empirical investigation, and no matter what else is in the speaker's (thinker's) mind. Did we know with no further empirical investigation that the speaker's (thinker's) utterance is mistaken, we could conclude that the utterance is absurd. Did we know with no further empirical investigation that the speaker's (thinker's) utterance is not sincere, we could conclude the same thing. As with the case of the promise just contemplated, our ability in principle to infer with no further empirical investigation that the assertion is either mistaken or not sincere is also enough to justify our conclusion that it is absurd. Here too it may be going too far to say that such an assertion (thought) is impossible, and here too we are fortunate that we need not settle that issue.

I will argue that all instances of Moore's Paradox are absurd on account of severely violating norms for speech acts in this way: We may know with no further empirical investigation that either the speaker is in error, or is not sincere. We might not know which one it is, but as we saw in Section II above, this does not matter. What matters is that we may know with no further recourse to facts about the world that the speaker is violating one of the norms internal to assertion (or whatever speech act is the vehicle of her Moorean utterance). That is perfectly compatible with the content of what is asserted being true. It is also perfectly compatible with the speaker believing what is asserted.

6. Moorean Speech and Moorean Thought

My approach assumes that all instances of Moore's Paradox are speech acts, even while

some are not acts of speech. This assumption seems to be in conflict with the widely shared view that Moore's Paradox can be realized merely by believing some such thing as 'P, but I don't believe it', rather than saying it. Surely belief is not a form of assertion, not even a form of mental assertion? It is considerations like these that would make those interested in the phenomenon of Moorean absurdity doubt that a speech-act approach could possibly be broad enough to cover the relevant explananda.

It is not, however, true that merely believing, 'P, but I don't believe it,' is absurd, or causes one to be absurd. If either that entire belief or one component of it is not accessible to conscious introspection, then the agent may be unable to discern with no further empirical investigation that she will be in error. Suppose that either the entire belief, 'Spiders are harmless, but I believe they aren't,' or one of its two conjunctive components, is locked in my unconscious in such a way that it would require at least a year of intense psychoanalysis including films of my own behavior, virtual reality exercises, fMRI information, and so forth, to come to be aware of it. In believing both conjuncts of 'Spiders are harmless, but I believe they aren't,' I cannot fail to be in error.¹⁴ However, the same goes for my belief that Hesperus is shining but Phosphorus is not. In both cases it would take empirical investigation to determine that I must be in error. In the latter case I must learn the identity of Hesperus and Phosphorus; in the former case that I believe both conjuncts of, 'Spiders are harmless, but I believe they aren't.' Just as it is difficult to see what would be absurd about believing that Hesperus is shining but Phosphorus is not, so too it is difficult to see what would be

¹⁴ We discuss the omissive and commissive cases in order. Assume that belief distributes over conjunction. Then one who believes 'P, but I don't believe it' believes P, and believes that he does not believe that P. That latter belief must be in error. For the commissive case suppose that I believe that (p & I believe that not-p). Then assuming that belief distributes over conjunction, I believe that p. But what I believe, that p & I believe that not-p, is true only if I also believe that not-p. Thus what I believe is true only if I have contradictory beliefs about p, one of which must thus be mistaken. A Moorean belief, be it omissive or commissive, conscious or unconscious, cannot fail to put the person harboring it in error.

absurd in this case of believing both conjuncts of, ‘Spiders are harmless, but I believe they aren’t.’

If some “part” of a Moorean belief is unconscious, then one may be unable to bring it into consciousness by introspection. Rather, one may need to do some empirical investigation to detect its presence. Because of that, an unconscious belief of this sort is no more absurd than believing both that Hesperus is shining and that Phosphorus is not. It may not be intuitively clear what an unconscious belief having the form either of a commissive or omissive Moorean sort would be like; yet we need not dwell on this issue. The reason is that approaches taking Moorean belief as the explanans and other cases of Moorean absurdity as the explananda¹⁵, predict that believing the following two propositions puts one in a situation of Moorean absurdity: (a) P, (b) I believe that not-P. One need not believe their conjunction in order to exemplify Moorean absurdity, according to this standard account. After all, the argument used in the footnote to the last paragraph applies equally well to anyone who merely believes both (a) and (b). Similarly for the commissive case. Accordingly, all we need to imagine is an agent whose belief (a) is unconscious while his (b) belief is conscious. In that case, while his entire set of beliefs put him in such a position that he cannot fail to be in error, he is not absurd for holding this set of beliefs. He cannot fail to be in error, yet he will be unable to discern this fact without further empirical investigation. For this reason, his system of beliefs is no more absurd than his believing that Hesperus is shining and Phosphorus is not shining.

I claim that a necessary condition of an agent’s being absurd is that her severe violation of norms is one that she can in principle come to be aware of with no further empirical investigation. Accordingly, if some of my Moorean belief is submerged in my unconscious, then I am not, at least on this basis, absurd. Rather, one needs consciously to think some such sentence as ‘P, but I don’t

¹⁵ Positions of this kind are discussed in Section E.2 of the Introduction to this volume.

believe it,' in order to generate absurdity recognizably Moorean. But this by itself is not enough, for there are many propositions we think through without committing ourselves to them. Instead, one needs not just consciously to think it, but more specifically to speaker-mean it in the way described in Section 3 above. As we saw in that section, this does not require that one believe what one says to oneself. It does require that one manifest commitment to what one says to oneself, and in particular a commitment to the truth of what one says. (Strictly speaking, I have given only a necessary condition for speaker meaning. However, I take it as not in need of argument that merely thinking a thought, and merely manifesting commitment to oneself, are not sufficient for speaker meaning.)

7. Mental Assent

The approach adumbrated thus far might also seem to be superseded by the view that takes “mental assent” as the core notion, and explains other cases in its terms. However, as this term is normally used, mental assent must be sincere. (Shoemaker 1995) The reason is that mental assent is construed by authors such as Shoemaker as an episodic instantiation of belief. On this usage, one cannot mentally assent to a proposition that one does not believe. Because of this, Shoemaker’s approach does not have sufficiently broad scope. It does not account for cases in which a person says to himself a Moorean sentence that he does not in fact believe. As noted above we have everyday familiarity with the experience of saying things to oneself that one means but does not believe. Doing so with a Moore sentence can still be absurd. It follows that the mental assent approach lacks adequate scope to be the source of a general explanation of Moorean absurdity.

8. Showing What’s Within

Showing comes in at least three forms. First of all, I might show my courage by acting bravely. My brave behavior is good evidence for my courage. A grammatical tag for this category is *showing-that*, since the brave behavior also shows that I am courageous. Secondly, recall from our discussion of manifestation above that I might show something in such a way as to make it perceptible. I show my bruise, and thereby enable others to see that bruise. Let us put this perception-enabling form of showing under the rubric of *showing- α* , where ' α ' is a singular term. Finally, I might also *show how* something looks, feels, sounds, etc. I present your nose with a durian and enable you to know how it smells. Similarly, the trepidation in my voice might enable you to know how my anxiety feels if you are sufficiently empathetic. If you are sufficiently empathetic, then hearing my voice may enable you to imagine feeling as I do. If you can do that, then you know how I feel. These three forms of showing we may label *showing-that*, *showing- α* , and *showing-how*. The discussion below depends primarily on the notion of *showing-that*; *showing- α* has a cameo in Section 10.

We are now in a position to tie together various strands to support an account of what is absurd in the utterances that Moore was the first to discover. Assertions purport to show beliefs. If they are sincere, they do show those beliefs. This is not because they make beliefs perceptible (that doesn't seem to make sense), nor because they show how a belief feels (beliefs don't seem to feel like much of anything). Rather, an assertion is evidence that the speaker believes what is asserted. That is why the sincerity of an assertion shows that you believe what is asserted. Now suppose you show a belief or other attitude that you also deny having. Then since 'show' is a success verb, that denial must be in error. The showing might be public (in an utterance) or private (in a saying to oneself). If you show a belief (or other attitude) and then go on to describe yourself as believing its contradictory, then whether or not this latter statement is true, you are in error. On the other hand

if you purport to show a belief (or other attitude) that you do not in fact have, then you are not sincere. Suppose then that you (perhaps silently) assert

1. P but I don't believe that P.

Then by the assumption that assertion distributes over conjunction, you have asserted P and have asserted that you don't believe that P. The former assertion is either sincere or not. Suppose it is sincere. In that case, it shows your belief that P, but then your other assertion, that you don't believe that P, is in error. In that case you're in violation of the norm that assertions are to track the truth. On the other hand suppose that the assertion of P is not sincere. Once again you are in violation of a norm of assertion, namely assert to only those things you believe. So either the assertion is sincere or it is not; but in either case we may infer with no further empirical investigation that you are in violation of a norm of assertion. Hence with no further empirical investigation we may conclude of someone who asserts, 'P but I don't believe it', that she is in violation of a norm of assertion. It is a severe violation of a norm or system of norms to perform an act of which it can in principle be inferred with no further empirical investigation, that it will violate that norm. From our original contention that absurdity consists in a severe violation of a system of norms, we may infer that assertion of 'P but I don't believe it,' is absurd.

So too, suppose you assert

2. P but I believe that not-P,

With assertion-distribution we may infer that you have asserted P and have asserted that you believe

that not-P. Your first assertion is either sincere or it is not. Suppose it is sincere. Then your second assertion, that you believe that not-P, is either correct or incorrect. In the former case, you are in error: for your first assertion, being sincere, shows your belief that P, and so you believe that P; while the correctness of your second assertion implies that you believe that not-P. Anyone who believes both P and not-P is in error. On the other hand, if the second assertion, that you believe that not-P, is incorrect, then you are in violation of a norm of assertion. Likewise and as before, if the first assertion, namely that P, is not sincere, you still violate a norm of assertion. It follows that if you assert 'P but I believe that not-P', then we may conclude with no further empirical investigation that you are in violation of some norm of assertion. It is a severe violation of a system of norms to perform an act of which it can in principle be known with no further empirical investigation that it will violate those norms. From our original contention that absurdity consists in a severe violation of a system of norms, we may infer that assertion of 'P but I believe that not-P,' is absurd.

I cannot be sure that the norm that assertions are to track the truth is a norm of assertion. It might instead be a norm of theoretical rationality, applying to assertion, as with any other activity aiming at the truth, simply by universal instantiation. However, if this is so it will not undermine our explanation of the absurdity in cases such as (1) and (2). For if this is a norm of theoretical rationality only, then one who asserts (1) performs an act that, no matter how the world turns out to be, either violates a norm of assertion or violates a norm of theoretical rationality. Likewise, if the norm that assertions are to track the truth is a norm of theoretical rationality only, then one who asserts (2) performs an act that, no matter how the world turns out to be, either violates a norm of assertion or violates a norm of theoretical rationality. As we saw in Section 2 above, that still suffices for absurdity.

9. Mixed Illocution Cases

The approach offered here generalizes with little difficulty to cases other than those involving only assertion. I shall consider two such cases, one involving supposition, and the other involving interrogatives.

Even off stage, one can utter an indicative sentence with other than assertoric force by, for instance, forwarding a proposition merely as something to be entertained, as a supposition for the sake of argument, or as a conjecture. Taking, for brevity, only the case of supposition for the sake of argument (which hereafter I shall just refer to as supposition), offhand it seems we can intelligibly inquire whether a speech act of supposing is sincere no less than we can inquire into the sincerity of a compliment, an assertion, an apology, or a promise.¹⁶ A supposition's sincerity does not require that speaker believe what she has proffered as a supposition. Rather, it is at least sufficient for her sincerity that the speaker perform such a mental act of supposing as one might do in one's unspoken hypothetical deliberations. (I doubt that such a mental act is required for the speaker to be sincere, but the question whether it is need not be settled here.) The result of such a mental act is that the speaker is in the intentional state of supposing, occupancy of which I shall take to be at least a necessary condition for her speech act of supposing to be sincere.

That a speech act of supposing can be assessed for sincerity might be obscured by the fact that it is not pragmatically deviant to assert or believe

3. P, though my state of mind is not one of supposing that P.

¹⁶ In its use as part of a verb phrase of the form 'A supposes' taking complements of the form 'that P', 'suppose' is often used to impute beliefs, sometimes with the suggestion that the believer is in error. I shall nevertheless consider only its use to refer to the acceptance of a premise for the sake of argument. This usage of 'suppose' is thus also to be distinguished from uses of 'assume' to refer to a person's commitment, often unacknowledged, to the truth of a proposition. ('Assume' is however used at other times to refer to the use of a premise for the sake of argument, as are 'say', 'pretend' and 'imagine', and what is said below will apply to all these uses.)

One can also suppose this sentence (or its content) by imagining a case in which: P holds but one refrains from supposing P. Further, one can assert or believe without oddity


4. P, though my state of mind is one of supposing that not-P.

One can also suppose it, thereby supposing both P and the proposition that her state of mind is one of supposing not-P. No paradox need result.¹⁷ On the other hand, as exemplified by the relevance of sentences involving interrogatives to the question what it is for an interrogative to be sincere, we need not restrict our inquiry to examples in which the two conjuncts of either of the sentences just displayed are put forth with the same illocutionary force, or are held under the same propositional attitude. Accordingly, consider a situation in which a speaker inscribes P under the scope of a supposition sign of the sort used in natural deduction systems. That sign indicates without asserting that P is put forth with the force of supposition, and will indicate show that all reasoning carried out to its right and below P are within P's scope. Assume further that the speaker is using the sign of supposition to guide her informal reasoning rather than to aid her in the use of a formal system, and that she appends to her inscription of P the parenthetical remark that her state of mind is not one of supposing P. Such a parenthetical remark would normally be read not as within the scope of the supposition sign but rather as being put forth assertorically, and thus would behave analogously to the parenthetical that occurs in

5. If (as is indeed the case) snow is white, then grass is green.

¹⁷ Sorensen 1988 argues along similar lines that there are no imagination blindspots, and I take it that he would say the same for supposition. We are about to see that these points may be granted without its following that there is no analogue for the case of supposition of the Moore paradox.

Here the speaker asserts the conditional, ‘If snow is white, then grass is green’ while also putting forth ‘snow is white’ assertorically even though grammatically speaking the parenthetical clause occurs in the antecedent.¹⁸ Likewise, in

6.  P (though my state of mind is not one of supposing P for the sake of argument)

the content of the parenthetical clause will normally be read as being put forth assertorically rather than as part of what is being supposed. In addition, the content P and the content expressed in the parentheses can be conjoined to form a logically consistent proposition. Nevertheless, if someone were to write the above display on a chalkboard addressing an audience familiar with the conventions of natural deduction, their audience may have no choice but to find the performance absurd. A first, charitable response to this performance might be to construe the parenthetical remark as retracting the supposition of P. However, just as we may be unable to construe one who says, “P but I don’t believe it” as expressing a mid-utterance change of mind, so too this interpretation may be unavailable if, for instance, the speaker goes on to infer things from P. A second charitable response is that the speaker is dissociating herself from her supposition of P, perhaps because her commitment to not-P is so deeply entrenched that she cannot bring herself to

¹⁸ This perspective on parentheticals is defended in Green 2000b.

reason as if P is true. This construal will also be ruled out by the speaker's going on to reason under P's scope with adequate facility. A third charitable response might be to construe the speaker as signaling that her state of mind is not merely one of supposing P, but is instead one of accepting P in a way that may seem stronger than supposition (*i.e.*, belief or conjecture). This interpretation, too, may be ruled out by contextual factors, and would have been explicitly ruled out had the speaker instead inscribed "P (though my state of mind is not one of accepting P in any way at all)", within the scope of the supposition line. Attempts at charitable interpretation might, in the end, meet with failure, with the result that the audience would have no choice but to find the speaker's performance absurd. Such a case would be an analogue for supposition of the absurdity to be found in certain utterances of "P but I don't believe it".¹⁹

How shall we explain what is absurd in such a case? Suppose that the speaker's putting forth P as a supposition for the sake of argument is sincere. Then her doing so shows her state of mind of supposing that P. Her parenthetical utterance, having the force of an assertion, must therefore be in error, whence she is in violation either of theoretical rationality or norms of assertion (or both). On the other hand, if the speaker's putting forth P as a supposition for the sake or argument is not sincere, then she is in violation of a norm of the speech act of supposition. (No absurdity arises from a person's putting forth P as a supposition for the sake of argument while going on to avow that she supposes not-P.) Accordingly, anyone who utters (6) above in the conditions ascribed is in

¹⁹ Some authors, for instance Searle and Vanderveken 1985, and Rosenthal 1998, have suggested analogues of the Moore paradox involving neither belief nor assertion without developing the possibility of such a paradox for the case of supposition. However, not all of these authors keep sight of the fact that a speech act can generate Moorean absurdity only if it characteristically expresses an intentional state. As Heal 1977 argues, although a speech act such as an imperative might seem to generate Moorean absurdity, as in 'Shut the door, but I don't want you to shut the door', this appearance is probably deceptive. The reason is that imperatives are not speech acts one of whose roles is the expression of an intentional state, and it is for this reason not the case that imperatives are speech acts that characteristically express an intentional state. One performing an imperative might provide her addressee with evidence of her intentional state (perhaps a desire), but it does not follow from this that the imperator expresses any such state. Further, one performing an imperative might *adventitiously* express such an intentional state as a desire, but this fact is of little interest to the study of Moorean absurdity.

violation of some system of norms, and we may determine this with no further empirical investigation. That is what makes her utterance absurd.

Some authors have suggested that the following utterance exhibits Moorean absurdity:

7. It's raining but I don't know that it is.

The point, however, needs to be handled with care. It is clear that some utterances of this sentence in a speech act generate no absurdity. We know from the discussion of supposition just offered that a speaker can utter (or think) an indicative sentence in a speech act without making an assertion. Suppose, then, the first conjunct of (7) is uttered as, say, a *conjecture*. It is perfectly appropriate to put forth a conjecture while making clear that you don't know it to be true. This is attested by the fact that while it is appropriate to respond to my assertion of P with the challenge, "How do you know?", it is not appropriate to challenge my conjecture with that question. It seems, more generally, that (7) is a case of Moorean absurdity if the first conjunct is an assertion.

Let us suppose then that the first conjunct of (7) is an assertion. Then it does seem plausible that we have a case of Moorean absurdity. If so, then we may account for this fact as follows. An assertion, if sincere, justified, and correct, shows not only one's belief, but also one's *knowledge*. Going on to deny that one knows what one asserts must put one in error. Similarly, in

8. It's raining but I know that it isn't

if one is sincere, justified, and correct, the first conjunct shows one's knowledge, whence the second

conjunct must be in error. (Unlike believing p and believing not- p , one can't know this pair of propositions.) In (8) of course, we also have a semantic contradiction, but we would need some reason to think that absurdity is "additive" before predicting that (8) ought to sound "more" absurd than other cases that we have considered.

I close this section with a discussion of non-indicative versions of Moorean absurdity. It is not clear to me whether non-indicative cases of Moorean absurdity exist. For instance, I do not know whether, 'Shut the door, but I don't want you to shut the door,' exemplifies Moorean absurdity. Likewise, I do not know whether 'What time is it, even though I have not the slightest interest in knowing the time?', exemplifies Moorean absurdity. Both cases are pragmatically odd, but it would be rash to infer that they exhibit the same sort of oddity that we find in Moore's cases. However, if either one of these cases does exemplify Moorean absurdity, the approach offered in this paper explains why. The explanation would proceed by observing that if the first conjunct is sincere, then it shows a state of mind that the second conjunct mistakenly disavows; thus whether or not the first conjunct is sincere, the speaker is in violation of some system of norms, and she is in violation of such norms in a way that is open to inspection with no further empirical information.

10. Non-Illocutionary Cases

We glossed Moorean absurdity as any utterance or thought in which an agent overtly expresses an intentional state that she also explicitly disavows; or any utterance or thought in which an agent overtly expresses an intentional state whose content is incompatible with that of another intentional state that she also explicitly avows. This account does not strictly require that the agent in question use words, even in the privacy of her own thoughts. That raises the question whether we find Moorean absurdity in cases in which an agent scowlingly denies that she is angry, or

exuberantly avows her lack of exuberance.

Just as we have found cases of speaker meaning that do not require uttering any words, a speech act does not require any act of speech. For instance, an extended finger at an auction is a promise to purchase the item at the amount bid on the condition that no one else outbids that offer. Pulling down one's lower eyelid in some Mediterranean cultures is a warning. So too, nodding one's head is an assertion under the right conditions. That is why it can be the vehicle of Moorean absurdity. As Williams (forthcoming) observes, if you ask me whether the pubs are open and I nod my head in emphatic agreement while saying, "I don't believe so," this seems no less absurd than one of the standard cases 1 or 2 above. This and similar cases involving nonverbal speech acts can be explained in terms of the line of thought we have developed thus far: A nodded head, for instance, shows one's acceptance of some salient proposition if in fact that head's owner is sincere; together with her subsequent utterance we may infer with no further empirical investigation that one is either in error or not sincere.

Other cases involving nonverbal behavior are quite different. When an agent scowlingly denies that she is angry, or exuberantly avows her lack of exuberance, she might be in error only. She might simply be unaware of the fact that she is scowling or that she is behaving exuberantly. The scowl might not be one that she has noticed, and she might not be conscious of the exuberant behavior. In those cases, her disavowal or avowal is simply a mistake of fact and so is not absurd: It is not the case that with no further empirical investigation she could conclude that she is in violation of a system of norms. If we find such cases amusing it is because it is easy to be amused at people who are blind to their own emotional displays. Likewise, one's companion on a midnight walk through a cemetery who tremblingly says "Not scary at all," might be unaware of the tremors in her voice, and might be unable to detect her own fear without empirical investigation. Given these

possibilities, we cannot conclude from these performances that the agent is behaving absurdly, or is in some other way absurd.

The emotional expressions in these last cases are not intentional, to say nothing of overt. Might an agent overtly express an intentional state without conventional devices such as words or gestures? If so, that would suggest that a case of Moorean absurdity might be found in which an agent behaves both expressively and overtly (rather than performing a speech act) while disavowing what she expresses. To that end, imagine that I not only scowl, but overtly do so: According to the gloss given above, it would be sufficient to achieve this result if I not only intentionally display my anger, but also intend to display this very intention. In such a case it would be natural to describe me as scowling *significantly*. In fact, in such a case it is also natural to describe me as speaker-meaning that I am angry. That does not fall under our sufficient condition for propositional speaker meaning as given in Section III above. The reason is that condition applies when an agent manifests her commitment (to a proposition, state of affairs, etc.). However, it is not clear that I am committing myself to anything in scowling, even overtly. Instead, what I am doing in overtly scowling is displaying my anger—making that anger perceptible rather than merely giving evidence for the presence of that anger. (This is suggested by the fact that if I am dissimulating, not showing my anger but merely seeming to do so, I may be misleading or mendacious but no liar.) In this case I am showing my anger in the showing- α way discussed in Section 8, rather than merely showing that I am angry.

Speech acts are not the only vehicles by which we express ourselves. They are also not the only way in which speaker meaning is achieved. In a case in which we intentionally and overtly show our intentional state, we speaker-mean that state without performing a speech act, and we express that intentional state as well. Suppose that I scowl in such a way as not only to express my

anger, but to do so overtly. If I could at the same time deny that I am angry, then we would have the makings of Moorean absurdity. However, it is not clear that I could do both these things at once. For in light of what I literally say when I deny that I am angry, it is hard to see how an interpreter could sensibly construe me as intending overtly to display my anger. My literal utterance will put pressure on the interpreter either to construe my facial behavior as inadvertent or covert; or at least as facetious. That is why, when it might seem as if a case of Moorean absurdity involving non-verbal, non-conventional expressive behavior is in the offing, the best we may be able to do is either to describe the agent as protesting too much or as hamming it up.

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