As G. E. Moore famously observed, sentences such as 'It's raining but I don't think it is', though they aren't contradictory, cannot be used to make coherent assertions.\(^1\) The trouble with such sentences is not a matter of their truth conditions; such sentences can readily be true. Indeed, it happens often enough with each of us that we think, for example, that it isn't raining even though it is. This shows that such sentences are not literally contradictory. But even though such sentences have unproblematic truth conditions, we cannot say the same about their conditions of assertibility. There are no circumstances in which one can use such sentences to perform coherent assertoric speech acts. Situations exist in which these sentences would be true, but none in which anybody could use them to say so.

This phenomenon is known, following Wittgenstein,\(^2\) as Moore's paradox. And as some authors have noted, the difficulty arises not only with assertions, but also with speech acts whose illocutionary force is not assertoric.\(^3\) Thus I cannot coherently say 'Thank you but I feel no gratitude' or 'Rain is likely, but I don't expect it'. If somebody were to produce such an utterance, we would automatically try to interpret the words nonliterally, or as having been used ironically or with some other oblique force. Only by doing so could we regard the speaker as having performed any speech act at all.

It has not generally been noted that there is an important kinship between Moore's paradox and Descartes's *cogito*. The sentence 'I don't exist' has unproblematic truth conditions. Not only is it possible for this sentence to be true; it once was true for each of us. Nonetheless, the sentence has no coherent conditions of assertibility; no circumstances exist in which one could coherently perform a speech act by assertively producing that sentence. It's arguably this which underwrites Descartes's

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claim in Meditation II that “the statement ‘I am, I exist’ is necessarily true every time it is produced by me, or mentally conceived.”

Like Moore’s paradox, the cogito is a function not of the truth conditions of sentences, but rather of the performance conditions of speech acts and, possibly, the mental analogue of these performance conditions for the corresponding propositional attitudes. A useful test is to see whether a change of grammatical tense or person relieves the difficulty. There’s no problem about saying ‘I didn’t exist’ (or ‘won’t exist’), or ‘It’s raining but you don’t think it is’.

The sentence ‘I am not thinking’ resembles the sentence ‘I don’t exist’ in these very ways. Just as ‘I exist’ is true every time I think it or assert it, so also is the sentence ‘I am thinking’. This led Descartes to conclude that the “I” whose existence he had established is essentially a thinking thing. And this appears to point to a certain kind of self-knowledge. I cannot, when I’m thinking, doubt that I am thinking. So it’s tempting to suppose that my being engaged in thinking is enough for me to know that I’m thinking. And, because this conclusion rests on just the kind of reasoning that underwrites Moore’s paradox, Moore’s paradox seems to be relevant at least to a certain sort of self-knowledge.

If being engaged in thinking is enough to know that one is thinking, then to that extent at least the mind is transparent to itself. As Descartes put it, “nothing can be in our mind of which we are not at that time conscious.” But this thesis of transparency is untenable. Not all of our thinking is, in fact, conscious thinking. This is clear in part from results in clinical and cognitive psychology, but it’s also obvious from everyday, commonsense considerations. We often consciously puzzle over a problem, for example, only to have the solution occur to us later, apparently spontaneously, without the problem having in the meantime been in any way consciously before our mind. It’s hard to see how this could happen unless problem-solving thinking sometimes fails to be conscious. Such nonconscious problem-solving sometimes occurs, moreover, when we’re not even aware that any thinking is going on, for example, when we’re asleep. Many other commonsense considerations support the same conclusion. Being engaged in thinking is plainly not sufficient for that thinking to be conscious.
What, then, went wrong with the reasoning that seemed to show otherwise? It’s undeniable that, just as I cannot sensibly assert ‘It’s raining but I don’t think it is’, so I cannot assert that I’m not thinking, or perform the mental act of thinking that I am not thinking. But this hardly shows that whenever I do think, I automatically think that I’m thinking. The question of whether I’m thinking may simply not be before my mind, consciously or otherwise.

Since not all human thinking is conscious, nor can it all readily become conscious, it would be a mistake to expect the analogue of Moore’s paradox that underlies the *cogito* to help establish any thesis about transparency. All it shows is that when creatures with the concept of thinking are actually thinking, they cannot sensibly deny, in speech or in thought, that they are thinking.

I’ll return later to the question of whether Moore’s paradox does help establish some form of self-knowledge about one’s own mental states. But whatever the case about that, I want now to argue that Moore’s paradox does point to factors that help explain a special case in which our thinking is almost without exception conscious thinking.

Whenever we say anything sincerely, we express some intentional state that we’re in. If I sincerely say, for example, that it’s raining, I express my thought that it’s raining. Similarly with other sorts of speech act and the mental attitudes that correspond to them. If I say thank you, I express my gratitude; if I say it will probably rain I express my expectation that it will. And so forth. Every sincere speech act expresses an intentional state with the same content as the speech act and a mental attitude that corresponds to the speech act’s illocutionary force.

Moore’s paradox reflects this connection between our speech acts and the intentional states they express. I cannot use the sentence ‘It’s raining but I don’t think it is’ to make a coherent assertion precisely because the assertion that the first conjunct purports to make expresses the very intentional state that the second conjunct denies I’m in. The same holds for the sentences ‘Thank you but I’m not grateful’ and ‘It’ll probably rain but I don’t expect it to’; thanking somebody expresses one’s gratitude, and saying something will probably happen expresses
one's expectation. Similarly for versions of Moore's paradox derived from other illocutionary forces and the corresponding mental attitudes.

Many of our intentional states are not in any way conscious states. But when we express our intentional states in speech, those states are always conscious, or almost always. Suppose I think it's raining. My thought may or may not be conscious. But if I verbally express that thought by asserting that it's raining, the thought is invariably conscious. Indeed, with an exception that I'll mention in closing, any intentional state that I express with a speech act will be a conscious intentional state.

Intentional states are expressed not only by speech, but also by many forms of nonverbal behavior. Taking an umbrella may express my belief that it will rain, or my desire not to get wet, or both. Facial expressions and bodily movements of various kinds may express my delight in something or my dislike of it, my fear of something or my anticipation of some future event. In all these cases the intentional state my nonverbal behavior expresses may well be conscious; but it may also fail to be. I may take the umbrella absently, "without thinking," as we might say — that is, without thinking consciously. And one's facial expressions and bodily movements often betray delight, distaste, fear, and expectations of which one is, oneself, wholly unaware.

This difference between expressing intentional states verbally and expressing them by one's nonverbal behavior is striking. When an intentional state is expressed in speech, it's always conscious, but when it's expressed nonverbally it needn't be. Doubtless this contrast helped to persuade Descartes and others that language and consciousness are both essential to mentality. It's tempting to think and talk about intentional states in terms of the speech acts that would express them, since doing so enables us to describe the content and mental attitude of intentional states with an accuracy and precision not otherwise available. And if we describe our own intentional states and those of others by reference to speech acts that would express those states, we may take the further step of thinking about all intentional states as though they are expressed in speech, and hence conscious. But as we've seen, there is ample evidence that our commonsense, folk-psychological conceptions don't require that all intentional states are conscious, and indeed ample evidence that many of them are not.
It's important here to distinguish between verbally expressing an intentional state and reporting that state. Verbally expressing our intentional states and reporting them are both ways of conveying to others what states we're in; but there are important differences between these two ways. When I think it's raining, I verbally express my thought by saying that it's raining. My verbal expression has the same content as the intentional state it expresses and an illocutionary force that corresponds to the mental attitude of the intentional state. By contrast, I report my thought that it's raining when I explicitly say that I have that thought, for example, when I say 'I think it's raining'. And the content of my thought differs from that of the speech act that reports it.

The contrast between reporting and expressing one's intentional states emerges most decisively, however, with intentional states that have a nonassertoric mental attitude. If I wonder whether it'll rain, I express my wondering by saying 'Will it rain?', whereas I report that wondering by saying 'I wonder whether it'll rain'. Here the illocutionary force of the speech act that verbally expresses my intentional state is that of a question, corresponding to the mental attitude of wondering. By contrast, the illocutionary force of my report is assertoric, as it is with all reports of intentional states.

Again, Moore's paradox is helpful. I cannot assertively produce the sentence 'It's raining but I don't think it is' because asserting the first conjunct would express an intentional state that the second conjunct denies I am in. Suppose, now, that there were no difference between reporting an intentional state and verbally expressing it. Then my denial that I am in the intentional state of thinking that it's raining would be tantamount simply to expressing the thought that it's not raining. Accordingly, the Moore's-paradox sentence would be equivalent to 'It's raining and it's not raining', which is an actual contradiction. But Moore's paradox is not literally contradictory. To avoid this result, therefore, we must distinguish reporting our intentional states from verbally expressing them.

Drawing this distinction allows us to formulate a second connection between consciousness and speech. Verbally expressing an intentional state is, with a certain type of exception, a sufficient condition for that state to be conscious. But also, when a creature has the requisite concepts
and linguistic ability, a mental state's being conscious is sufficient for the creature to be able to report being in that state.

This second connection between language and consciousness is to be expected. Conscious mental states satisfy two conditions: we're conscious of being in them, and the way we're conscious of them seems to us to be immediate. We needn't, of course, be conscious of our conscious states in a way that's at all attentive or focused; we're only peripherally conscious of the vast majority of our conscious states. But when mental states occur of which we are not in any way conscious, those states are not conscious states. And, given the requisite concepts and linguistic ability, being conscious of something is sufficient for being able to report about it.

What about the other way around? Being able to report about a mental state is not sufficient for that state to be conscious, because a state's being conscious requires not just that one is conscious of that state, but also that one is conscious of it in a way that's from an intuitive point of view immediate. Being able to report some mental state one's in solely because of behavioral evidence one has that one is in that state is not sufficient for the state to be a conscious state.

This intuitive immediacy may not amount to much. It's enough for our consciousness of our own mental states to be intuitively immediate that we're conscious of them in a way that doesn't rely on any inference, at least not on any inference of which we're aware. So, although being able to report on a state doesn't suffice for that state to be conscious, being able to report on it noninferentially does.

We are now in a position to explain why verbally expressed intentional states are invariably conscious. Moore's paradox is absurd because the speech acts of asserting that \( p \) and asserting that I think that \( p \), though they differ in respect of their truth conditions, have roughly the same conditions of assertibility. Any circumstances in which I could say that \( p \) are circumstances in which I could say I think that \( p \). And with a qualification that won't affect the argument here, the converse holds as well.

More important, this performance-conditional equivalence is second nature for us. We automatically take saying \([p]\) and saying \([I \text{ think that}\)
to amount to much the same thing insofar as conditions of assertibility are concerned. Indeed, we ourselves tend insensibly to slip between saying the one and saying the other; we may even have difficulty recalling on specific occasions which of the two forms we used. It’s a matter of well-entrenched linguistic habit that the two are, for practical purposes, interchangeable. It’s because this performance-conditional equivalence is second nature to us that Moore’s paradox is not just absurd, but intuitively jarring. We know automatically that no circumstances can exist in which somebody could sensibly say that \( p \) but deny thinking that \( p \).

Suppose I think that it’s raining, and I express my thought by saying ‘It’s raining’. Because saying ‘It’s raining’ is performance-conditionally equivalent to saying ‘I think it’s raining’, I could equally well have said that I think it’s raining. And because that equivalence is second nature for us, I might as easily have said the other; in most circumstances it’s likely to be a matter of complete indifference to me which I say.

Now put performance conditions aside for a moment, and think instead of truth conditions. What makes the sentence ‘I think it’s raining’ true isn’t the rain, but my being in a certain intentional state. Its being true requires that I think it’s raining. So if I were to say ‘I think it’s raining’, however we may take that remark in respect of performance conditions, I am literally telling you about one of my intentional states. I am reporting a certain thought.

So, when I express my thought that it’s raining by saying ‘It’s raining’, I could equally well have reported my thought that it’s raining. Moreover, because it’s second nature for us that saying ‘It’s raining’ is performance-conditionally equivalent to saying ‘I think it’s raining’, if I had instead said ‘I think it’s raining’, my report would not have been based on any inference, at least not on any inference of which I was conscious.\(^{11}\) So, whenever I actually say ‘It’s raining’, I could equally well have noninferentially reported my thought that it’s raining.

But noninferential reportability is sufficient for a state to be a conscious state. So, given that it’s second nature for us that saying ‘It’s raining’ is performance-conditionally equivalent to saying ‘I think it’s raining’, whenever I verbally express any intentional state, that state will be conscious. And, since Moore’s paradox is a reflection of that performance-conditional equivalence, we have used the factors that
underlie Moore’s paradox to explain why verbally expressed intentional states are always conscious.

Let me again briefly rehearse the argument. I’ve urged that Moore’s paradox is absurd because saying \([p]\) is performance-conditionally equivalent to saying \([I \text{ think that } p]\). And it’s intuitively jarring because that equivalence is so automatically a part of how we use these words. Given the equivalence, whenever I say \([p]\), I could equally well have said \([I \text{ think that } p]\). But to say \([I \text{ think that } p]\) is, literally, to report one’s thought that \(p\). And because it’s second nature that saying \([p]\) is performance-conditionally equivalent to saying \([I \text{ think that } p]\), saying \([I \text{ think that } p]\) would be reporting one’s thought noninferentially. Being able to report an intentional state noninferentially, however, is sufficient for that state to be conscious. So the factors underlying Moore’s paradox also explain why all verbally expressed intentional states are conscious.

The explanation applies equally to intentional states whose mental attitude is not assertoric. If I ask, ‘Is it raining?’, for example, the performance-conditional equivalence revealed by Moore’s paradox shows that I could just as well have said ‘I wonder whether it’s raining’. If I say ‘Close the door’, I could instead have said in so many words that I want you to close it. Whenever I verbally express these intentional states, I’m able also to report those states noninferentially; similarly for states with other mental attitudes. A intentional state’s being verbally expressed is sufficient for its being conscious.

The connection between an intentional state’s being expressed and its being conscious holds only, as we’ve seen, when the state is expressed in speech. States expressed by nonverbal behavior often aren’t conscious. It will reinforce the foregoing explanation if we can use it to show why things are different in the two kinds of case.

Unlike speech acts, the pieces of nonverbal behavior that express our intentional states do not have established performance conditions. Taking my umbrellas may in certain circumstances be odd or irrational or inappropriate, but these things don’t define performance conditions for my action. Because taking my umbrella has no performance conditions, even if that action nonverbally expresses, say, my desire not to get wet, the action cannot have the same performance conditions as a speech act that reports the desire I nonverbally express. So taking the umbrella will
not be interchangeable, as a matter of well-entrenched linguistic habit, with the making of such a report. I might well perform the action of taking the umbrella even when I could not readily report the desire my action expresses. Similarly with other cases of nonverbally expressing our intentional states. An intentional state’s being nonverbally expressed is not, therefore, sufficient for that state to be conscious.

I’ve argued that Moore’s paradox is absurd because every speech act is roughly equivalent, in respect of performance conditions, to a report of the intentional state that the speech act expresses. But one might wonder whether the trouble with Moore’s paradox is simpler than this. Perhaps all that’s wrong is that one cannot say ‘It’s raining but I don’t think it is’ without betraying one’s insincerity in saying it. In effect, Moore’s paradox would then be simply self-defeating. Indeed, Moore himself at one point suggests this kind of diagnosis.12

On such an account, we need to explain why it is that saying ‘It’s raining but I don’t think it is’ automatically betrays one’s insincerity.13 One possibility is suggested by Paul Grice’s idea that my meaning something involves intending that my hearer believe that I believe what I say. On this proposal, I couldn’t mean that if in the same breath I said I don’t believe it. So I couldn’t say it sincerely.14 But this is implausible as an explanation of what’s wrong with Moore’s paradox. Moore’s paradox is absurd independent of any context of communication. It’s absurd even in soliloquy, where no betrayal of insincerity is relevant; one cannot say even to oneself ‘It’s raining but I don’t think it is’. The best explanation of this independence from any context of communication will arguably appeal to the performance-conditional equivalence I’ve been relying on.

I suggested earlier that this equivalence holds because of a connection between intentional states and the speech acts that express them. All speech acts express corresponding intentional states; we cannot coherently assert ‘It’s raining but I don’t think it is’ because what the first conjunct purports to assert expresses the intentional state that the second conjunct denies I am in. But what is the status of this regularity about speech acts’ expressing intentional states?15

It cannot be a purely conceptual matter, a matter of nothing more than the meanings of the relevant words. If it were part of the meaning of ‘assert’ that assertions express corresponding beliefs, Moore’s paradox
would not simply have problematic performance conditions, but would be an outright contradiction. Nonetheless, it's somehow a part of the way we automatically think about asserting and other speech acts. The only alternative is that the connection between speech acts and corresponding intentional states is a particularly well-entrenched part of our folk-psychological conceptions.16

This is important because, if that connection is not second nature, the access an individual has to its verbally expressed thoughts will be based on some conscious inference. And access that’s thus consciously mediated would be characteristically third-person access, even if it’s access to the individual’s own states. It would therefore not make one’s verbally expressed thoughts conscious. And since genuine self-knowledge requires conscious first-person access, it would not result in self-knowledge, either.

Shoemaker often writes as though sensitivity to the absurdity of Moore's paradox would be a direct result of having unimpaired conceptual capacities.17 If so, the relevant performance-conditional equivalences would presumably be conceptual truths; they would thus be second nature for us. I've argued against this idea. It's difficult to see how to explain Moore's paradox by appeal to the meanings of words like 'assert' and 'think' without construing it as an outright contradiction. It's more plausible, I think, to see the connection between asserting and believing as part of our folk-psychological knowledge about these things - part of a folk theory so well-entrenched as to constitute commonly shared background knowledge. The relevant conceptual competence is necessary, but not sufficient, for the performance-conditional equivalence. If this is right, a self-blind creature's access to its own mental states would be mediated by a conscious inference that relies on the relevant folk-theoretic connection.

But even if the relevant tie between thinking and asserting were an exclusively conceptual matter and not part of folk theory, our self-blind individual might still have to rely on some conscious inference for access to its own mental states. Conceptual truths function in effect as null premises in inference. So any inference that relies solely on such truths would be automatic. But the self-blind individual's inference would rely on more than the conceptual connection between speech and
thinking. That inference would go from that conceptual connection plus the fact that the individual asserts that \( p \) to that individual’s thinking that \( p \).

Perhaps, however, the relevant inference would after a time come to be second nature, and would therefore no longer be conscious. The resulting access that the self-blind individual would have to at least those of its thoughts which are verbally expressed would then not be based on any inference of which it was aware. Such access would therefore be indistinguishable from the first-person access we have to our conscious states. But the concept of self-blindness does not ensure that the required inference would ever stop being conscious. And if it didn’t, the self-blind individual would continue to be limited to having only third-person access to its mental states.

According to Wittgenstein, Moore’s paradox is absurd because “the statement ‘I believe it’s going to rain’ has a meaning like, that is to say a use like, ‘It’s going to rain’.”18 In effect, this is to construe the speech act ‘I believe it’s raining’ as expressing my belief that it’s raining, rather than as reporting that belief. This diagnosis of Moore’s paradox can be seen as having consequences about self-knowledge. If I make no claim about my mental states when I say ‘I believe it’s raining’, my remark cannot be challenged on that score. And that would help us understand the air of incorrigibility such remarks have, even though they would not then express knowledge about one’s beliefs.19

This view notoriously faces serious difficulties. On it, for example, I cannot literally deny another person’s claim that I don’t believe that it’s raining.20 Shoemaker’s argument, by contrast, appeals to no such diagnosis, and he countenances both genuine self-knowledge and the semantic difference between \([p]\) and \([I \text{ think that } p]\). Still, it’s not clear exactly what the semantic difference between these two amounts to if conceptual competence alone is enough to take one automatically from one to the other.

I’ve argued that Moore’s paradox sheds light on our first-person access by pointing to those factors which explain why all verbally expressed intentional states are conscious. But as I also mentioned, there’s an exception to that regularity. Suppose I assert ‘I think it’s raining’. Speech acts express intentional states with the same content;
so here my speech act expresses my thought that I think it’s raining. It expresses, that is, a higher-order thought to the effect that I have the thought that it’s raining. But that’s not the thought I’m typically aware of having when I say I think it’s raining. Rather, when I say I think it’s raining, the thought I’m ordinarily conscious of is my first-order thought that it’s raining. When I perform a speech act whose content is that I’m in some intentional state, the state that’s conscious is not the state my speech act expresses, but the state it reports.

This is an important exception. It’s doubtless this kind of case that has encouraged some to assimilate the reporting of mental states to the verbal expression of those states. As I remarked earlier, Moore’s paradox helps resist that tendency; if reports and verbal expressions weren’t different, Moore’s paradox would be an actual contradiction, which it isn’t. Still the exception demands explanation. That, however, is a task for another occasion.21

NOTES

* An expanded version of this paper appears in *Philosophical Perspectives* 9 (1995), under the title “Moore’s Paradox and Consciousness.”


In his contribution to the Symposium at which this paper was presented, Rogers Albritton urged that the paradoxical phenomenon Wittgenstein meant to refer to was not simply that sentences such as ‘It’s raining but I don’t think it is’ are troubled, but that they are troubled even though their counterparts that aren’t in the first-person present tense are unproblematic. (“‘Comments on ‘Moore’s Paradox and Self-Knowledge,’” *Philosophical Studies*, this issue. Cf. *Remarks on the Philosophy of Psychology*, vol. I, §490.) But even if this is so, understanding what the paradoxical contrast consists in requires first understanding just what goes wrong with the first-person, present-tense cases. And it’s possible that the correct account of these cases may make the contrast with their unproblematic counterparts no longer seem paradoxical.


7 So the trouble is that the second conjunct denies that any such intentional state exists, and denies thereby that the full conjunction can be used to make any coherent assertion. Though I believe that all verbally expressed intentional states are conscious states (see next paragraph of the text), I do not, as Albritton suggests (“Comments”), diagnose the difficulty with Moore’s paradox as due to one’s having to be conscious of the belief that the first conjunct purports to express.

8 I’ll ignore this exception until then.

9 There’s no circularity in this last qualification, since we’re explaining what it is for a state to be conscious in terms of what it is we’re conscious of. A state is conscious just in case one is conscious of being in that state, and conscious of that in a way that’s independent of any inference of which one is, in turn, conscious.

10 [I think that [p]] can, of course, be used to qualify the firmness of one’s conviction that p is the case, in ways that simply asserting [p] doesn’t.

11 I take this qualification for granted in what follows.


13 Many speech acts telegraph their insincerity; what’s allegedly different here is that Moore’s paradox does this solely as a result of its semantic properties, and not, e.g., because of the way it’s uttered.


15 Earlier I described this regularity solely in terms of sincere speech; but how about insincere speech? When my utterance of ‘It’s raining’ is a lie, none of my assertoric intentional states has the content that it’s raining; so my words can’t express any such state. Still, don’t I say it’s raining? Only in a qualified way. ‘Say’ and related verbs of illocutionary act are sometimes used in a weak sense, as roughly equivalent to ‘utter’; saying in this sense involves no illocutionary act. When we recite lines in a poem or play, we seldom if ever produce them with illocutionary force, though typically we pretend to; in these cases we say things in only the weak sense. When an actor utters ‘My heart is in the coffin there with Caesar’, nobody takes him to perform an actual illocutionary act, despite his pretense to do so. As Frege remarked, “stage assertion is only sham assertion” (Gottlob Frege, “Thoughts,” in *Logical Investigations*, translated by P. T. Geach and R. H. Stoothoff [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977]: 1–30, p. 8).

Insincere speech also operates this way. When we speak insincerely we pretend to be in intentional states that don’t exist, and thereby pretend to perform the relevant illocutionary acts. Lying and play acting differ of course in the motives we have for pretending; so in lying my pretense isn’t candid, as it is in play acting. Moreover, in lying the character I play is a fictional version of myself, one who actually believes the things I pretend to assert. So when I speak insincerely, it’s only in the reciting sense that I say anything. Insincere speech notwithstanding, all illocutionary acts do express corresponding intentional states.


16 It’s sometimes argued that some form of semantic contradictoriness must underlie Moore’s paradox because otherwise Moore’s paradox would “merely … depict situations which we take to be extremely unlikely” (Jane Heal, “Moore’s Paradox: A Wittgensteinian Approach,” *Mind*, CIII, 409 [January 1994]: 5–24, p. 6. Cf. Albritton’s contrast [“Comments”] between sentences that involve “linguistic malpractice” and those which simply say something very surprising.)

But here as elsewhere the dichotomy between conceptual and merely empirical misleads. Much that seems intuitively impossible runs counter not to any semantic connections, but only to deeply entrenched background beliefs about the way things
are. Moreover, the pragmatic difficulties on which I’ve relied do not belong squarely in either camp.


See also “Moore’s Paradox and Self-Knowledge,” Philosophical Studies, this issue, and “On Knowing One’s Own Mind,” Philosophical Perspectives: Epistemology, 2 (1988): 183–209, esp. pp. 193–198, in both of which Shoemaker develops his useful notion of being self-blind. An individual is self-blind if it has our concepts of mental phenomena and so can ascribe to itself mental states, but has no first-person access whatever to its mental states. Such an individual could come to believe that it’s in a particular mental state in only a characteristically third-person way. Given the complete absence of first-person access, Shoemaker argues, a self-blind individual presented with compelling third-person evidence both that it’s raining and that it doesn’t believe that it’s raining would have reason to assert ‘It’s raining but I don’t think it is’.

18 Philosophical Investigations, II, p. 190. Indeed, Wittgenstein understands Moore’s paradox exclusively in terms of use:

Moore’s paradox can be put like this: the expression “I believe that this is the case” is used like the assertion “This is the case”; and yet the hypothesis that I believe this is the case is not used like the hypothesis that this is the case (p. 190).


19 Cf. Wittgenstein’s better known claim that saying ‘I’m in pain’, like crying ‘ouch’, expresses rather than reports my pain (Philosophical Investigations, §§244, 256). And if no speech act reports our states of pain, we cannot be said to have knowledge of them (§246). Here the sense of incorrigibility is stronger, since one can deny ‘It’s raining’, but not ‘ouch’.

20 Or that I’m not in pain. Moreover, as noted above, collapsing the distinction between reporting and expressing leads to construing Moore’s paradox as an outright contradiction.

21 I address this question in “Why Are Verbally Expressed Thoughts Conscious?”, Report No. 32/1990, Center for Interdisciplinary Research (ZiF), University of Bielefeld.

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