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## MOORE'S PARADOXES AND CONSCIOUS BELIEF\*

**ABSTRACT.** For Moore, it is a paradox that although I would be absurd in asserting that (it is raining but I don't believe it is) or that (it is raining but I believe it isn't), such assertions might be true. But I would be also absurd in judging that the contents of such assertions are true. I argue for the strategy of explaining the absurdity of Moorean assertion in terms of conscious Moorean belief. Only in this way may the pathology of Moorean absurdity be adequately explained in terms of self-contradiction. David Rosenthal disagrees with this strategy. Ironically, his higher-order thought account has the resources to fulfil it. Indeed once modified and supplemented, it compares favourably with Brentano's rival account of conscious belief.

### INTRODUCTION

As Moore observed, it would be “absurd” of me to assert, “I went to the pictures last Tuesday but I don't believe that I did” (1942, p. 543). Nonetheless my assertion might be true. For you may imagine a consistent scenario in which I fail to believe the truth that I went to the pictures last Tuesday. Moreover, if you contradict my assertion then your words, “If he went to the pictures last Tuesday then he believes he did” do not express a necessary truth.<sup>1</sup> Moore calls the fact that it is absurd to assert such a possible truth, a “paradox” (1993, p. 209). Most people who are confronted with Moore's example say that in some sense the speaker has contradicted himself, even after admitting that no contradiction lies in the words of the assertion. So a natural way of solving the paradox is to explain the absurdity

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of the assertion in a way that identifies a contradiction-like phenomenon but not with its content.

Moore did not seem to notice that it would also be absurd of me to silently *judge* that I fail to believe the truth that I went to the pictures last Tuesday. This suggests the strategy of explaining the absurdity of Moorean assertion in terms of the absurdity of Moorean belief.<sup>2</sup> But a more sophisticated variant is to explain the absurdity of Moorean assertion in terms of *conscious* belief, in other words, in terms of beliefs one is *aware* of having. After all, my judgement can hardly be a belief of which I am unaware. My aim is to argue that this strategy is fruitful. For only such an analysis can do justice to the pathology of Moorean belief by diagnosing it in terms of a single self-contradictory belief. I compare two ways of carrying this out. Although he does not endorse the strategy, the first combines a modification of David Rosenthal's higher-order thought theory with the principle that conscious belief both collects and distributes over conjunction. A rival approach is to adopt Brentano's definition of conscious belief, together with the principle that belief of any sort distributes over conjunction. I argue that the Rosenthal-inspired strategy is best. I then explain the absurdity of Moorean assertion in terms of conscious belief.

An important fact still often overlooked in the debate is that Moore also observes that to say, "I believe that he has gone out, but he has not" would be likewise "absurd" (1944, p. 204). Unlike Moore's first example, which has the *omissive* form *p* & *I don't believe that p*, this has the *commissive*<sup>3</sup> form, *p* & *I believe that not-p*.<sup>4</sup> This semantic difference is inherited from the genuine difference between agnostics and atheists. The result is the difference between the omission of specific true belief and the commission of a specific mistake in belief. So the explanation of Moorean absurdity had better explain both forms.

In §1, I defend Shoemaker's strategy of explaining the absurdity of Moorean belief before explaining that of Moorean assertion. After noting features of conscious belief in §2, I explain in §3 why the awareness of belief is important to Moorean absurdity, notably that the irrationality of Moorean belief

should not be diagnosed as a pair of contradictory beliefs but rather as a single self-contradictory belief. Since this distinction is underpinned by the failure of belief to collect over conjunction, I argue in §4 that although belief of any kind distributes over conjunction, only *conscious* belief collects over conjunction. In §5, I show that there are difficulties in Rosenthal's two accounts of Moorean absurdity, in particular that both are incomplete in not addressing Moorean belief. In §6, I examine Rosenthal's higher-order theory of conscious belief and show that it fails to capture the nature of self-awareness. In §7, I modify his account to avoid this snag and supplement it with the principle that conscious belief both distributes and collects over conjunction. This diagnoses the absurdity of conscious Moorean belief as the awareness of self-contradictory belief. In §8, I examine Brentano's rival account of conscious belief and in §9, show how it provides a different diagnosis of the absurdity of conscious Moorean belief. In §10, I show that the Rosenthal-inspired account has the advantage of avoiding two strong objections to Brentano's. In §11, I show how the awareness of Moorean beliefs provides an opportunity for one to revise one's beliefs for the better. Finally in §12, I explain the absurdity of Moorean assertion, in compliance with Shoemaker's strategy, in terms of conscious belief.

#### 1. ABSURD ASSERTIONS AND BELIEFS: THE TRAPPIST MONK

Given that there is a relation between absurd beliefs and absurd assertions, we could try explaining the absurdity of Moorean belief in terms of Moorean assertion. But this strategy does not seem promising. Most commentators on Moore's paradox assume that

If I assert that *p* then I believe that *p*.

But this assumption seems falsified by the possibility of insincere assertions, notably lies. However, it is incontrovertible that

If I sincerely assert that *p* then I believe that *p*.

But it does not follow from this that

If my sincere assertion that *p* is absurd in some way then my belief that *p* is absurd in the same way.

For a counterexample to this claim is my assertion

I am asserting nothing now.

Such an assertion would be absurd. For although the content of my assertion might be true, it cannot be true once I assert it. As a reasonable speaker I would recognise that my assertion is self-falsifying in this way and so would not believe my own words. By contrast, it would not be absurd at all of me to believe that I am asserting nothing now if I am a Trappist monk who recognises my continuing obedience to a vow of silence. What does follow however is the reverse connection that

If my belief that *p* is absurd then my sincere assertion that *p* is also absurd

One way of cashing out this connection is the claim that

If I assert that *p* then I ostensibly express my belief that *p* in the sense that in making an assertion to you I deliberately offer you defeasible reason to think that I believe my own words (see Williams 1996). Shoemaker endorses this direction of the connection<sup>5</sup> in his principle that

If I cannot non-absurdly believe that *p* then I cannot non-absurdly assert that *p*, but not conversely.

In other words,

If my belief that *p* is necessarily absurd then my assertion that *p* is necessarily absurd as well

where the failure of the converse is supported by the example of the Trappist monk.

On this strategy we may explain the absurdity of Moorean assertions by extrapolating to the absurd beliefs such assertions ostensibly express.

This approach might be challenged by the claim that not even the most irrational person could assert or believe such a thing as

Moore's examples. If this were true then no Moorean beliefs could be available to explain absurd assertions. But then again, there could be no Moorean assertions to be explained either. Rather than denying that Moore's paradox arises, it seems more fruitful to accept that I may utter the words "I went to the pictures last Tuesday but I don't believe that I did" as an assertion that is defective in some way. Of course, if it is logically impossible even for a maximally irrational speaker to believe these words then the strategy I propose would not be viable. Instead we would have to explain the absurdity of Moorean assertion in terms of the putative fact that it is necessarily insincere.

However there seems to be no good reason to think that Moorean belief, nor indeed any other kind of belief, is impossible. Given that it is possible for someone like Hobbes to believe a self-contradiction (that there is a method of constructing, with compass and straightedge, a square that is guaranteed to have the same area as that of a given circle) there seems little motivation for denying that someone might be irrational enough to hold a Moorean belief, which by contrast might be true. At this point it is useful to note some key features of conscious belief.

## 2. FOUR FEATURES OF AWARENESS OF BELIEF

Suppose that I have been sitting next to the window for some time. Although I may only be peripherally aware of the weather, I may be aware of it enough to unconsciously register changes of rainfall. I could probably recall the onset of rain, although I have yet to be aware of any changes in my recent beliefs about rain. Other unconscious beliefs include prejudices that I sincerely but mistakenly deny holding. Since I don't suddenly pass into total ignorance by falling into a dreamless sleep, they also include beliefs that I hold when dreamlessly asleep. By contrast, suppose that I peer out of the window in search of fine weather. My disappointment at discovering rain might go hand in hand with my awareness that I think it is raining.

There are four features of the awareness of belief we should note. First, I have used “aware” as a synonym of “conscious”. This seems unobjectionable. Where *N* is a noun, surely I’m conscious of having an *N* just in case I’m aware of having an *N*. To say that I am conscious of a belief, fear, suspicion or toothache is just to say that I am aware of having it.

Second, I take “aware” as factive in the sense in which “I’m aware of a toothache I don’t have” reports a self-contradiction. Against this, it might be objected that if I am aware of *a* as being *F*, *a* must exist but it need not be *F*. For example, I might be aware of the cat as it moves around behind me but mistake it for the dog. But this objection is harmless. In being aware of the cat then there is a cat of which I am aware. There is no dog but then it is not the dog I’m aware of. Surely I am not aware of the cat *as being* the dog (for then surely it would be the dog). Rather I am aware of the cat as *seeming* to be the dog. But then it is *true* that the cat seems to be the dog. So instead of claiming that

I am aware of *a* seeming to be *F* only if *a* exists and *a* really is *F*

it is best to note that

I am aware of *a* seeming to be *F* only if *a* exists and *a* really seems to be *F*.

So the facticity of awareness, at least for my purposes, remains intact. It follows that I cannot be aware of holding a belief unless I really do hold it. Just as I am aware of a toothache by knowing or truly believing that I have it, so I am aware of my belief that *p* only if I know or truly believe that I hold the belief that *p*.

Third, we should distinguish the question of whether a belief is conscious from the question of whether it is occurrent. My occurrent belief or awareness is one that I have just formed. So to say that I am aware of a belief is neutral on the question of whether I have just formed that belief or whether I have just become aware of holding it. Finally, in becoming aware of holding a belief surely I not only become aware of that belief itself but also become aware of myself as holding it.

### 3. WHY AWARENESS OF BELIEF IS IMPORTANT TO MOOREAN ABSURDITY

There are two connections between beliefs of which one is aware and assertions. The first is that in making an assertion, I can only express a belief of which I am aware. For suppose that I mutter, "Bush is a moron" in my sleep. This would not *express* my belief that Bush is a moron but would rather *manifest* it. The difference is that

I manifest my N just in case I behave in a way that *affords* you reason to think I have N.

By contrast, I express my N just in case I behave in a way that *offers* you reason to think that I have N, in other words, intentionally affords you that reason. Where N is a belief this gives us a definition of expression of belief:

I express my belief that p to you just in case I believe that p and I intentionally behave in a way that offers you reason to think that I believe that p

This fits with a definition of assertion that nicely accommodates lying:

I assert that p to you just in case I ostensibly express my belief that p to you with the intention of changing your mind in a relevant way.

This definition explains why I must be aware of the beliefs that I express by my assertions. For I can hardly offer you a reason to think that I have what I am unaware of having.

The second connection is that the hearer of my assertion cannot accept my words without acquiring beliefs of which he is aware. Suppose that you ask me if you can still get a beer in the Red Lion and I reply by saying "The pubs are still open". If you believe me then you will come to believe my words. But this belief you have just acquired can hardly be one of which you are unaware. Rather it is a thought that you have just formed, and have just become aware of, as I make my assertion to you. Moreover, you would not nor-

mally come to believe my words unless you also came to believe that I was sincere in my assertion. So you will also come to think that I believe that the pubs are still open. Again, this belief you have just acquired can hardly be one of which you are unaware.

Now consider Moorean belief. If you knew that I had a Moorean belief but was unaware of having it then you should be able to see that I was absurd. By contrast, if you knew that I was *aware* of having such a belief then you should be able to see that I this makes me *more* absurd unless such awareness leads me to revise my beliefs for the better.

Most importantly, the awareness of belief is relevant to the diagnosis of the absurdity of Moorean belief. Most explanations of the absurdity of Moorean belief diagnose it in terms of the irrationality of holding a pair of contradictory beliefs,<sup>6</sup> namely those that contradict each other.

For example, in addressing only the commissive belief, Jane Heal (1994, p. 21–22) plausibly assumes that belief distributes over conjunction:

If I believe that (p & q) then I believe that p and I believe that q  
So if I believe that (p & I believe that not-p) then I believe that p  
and I believe that I believe that not-p. Heal also endorses the  
more controversial principle of belief-elimination,

If I believe that I believe that p then I believe that p.  
So I believe that p and I believe that not-p.

My previous account (Williams 1994, 1996 and 1998) likewise proceeds in terms of a pair of contradictory beliefs. Assuming only that belief distributes over conjunction, my forming the belief that (p & I don't believe that p) falsifies its second conjunct. So although I may form that belief and although what I believe might be true, it cannot be true *if* I believe it. When my belief is commissive this result is avoided only if I hold contradictory beliefs about whether p.<sup>7</sup> Since this is something I am in a position to work out (as we just did) on minimal reflection,<sup>8</sup> I am irrational in continuing to hold the

Moorean belief. For a self-falsifying belief is as useless as a guide to the truth as a pair of contradictory beliefs. Any evidence that (absurdly) justifies me in coming to believe the omissive proposition would justify me in believing what is then false. Likewise any evidence for my belief that *p* is *ipso facto* evidence against my belief that not-*p* and conversely. Nonetheless the two irrationalities are distinct, as we should expect from the clear difference between a specific lack of true belief and a specific mistake in belief.

But the irrationality of Moorean belief is surely severer than that of holding a pair of contradictory beliefs (De Almeida, 2001, p. 43; Kriegel, 2004) for we may consistently suppose that I have contradictory beliefs because I am unaware of one or both of them. For example, a visit to a psychiatrist might unearth my long-repressed belief that my mother was an adulterer that persists in the face of my sincere adult assertion that she was not. Before the visit I held a pair of contradictory beliefs about my mother. But since I was not aware of both beliefs I was in no position to revise them. At that stage it would be harsh to judge me "absurd". A better account would diagnose the irrationality of Moorean belief as a single belief in a self-contradiction, as when I believe that both (*p* & not-*p*).

What underpins this distinction is the failure of belief to collect over conjunction, in other words the failure of the principle

If I believe that *p* and I believe that *q* then I believe that (*p* & *q*).

This failure likewise underpins the difference between believing a self-contradiction and holding a set of inconsistent beliefs, as when I believe that *p* and believe that *q* and believe that not-(*p* & *q*). This tripartite distinction is the difference between holding a belief that contradicts itself, holding beliefs that contradict each other and holding a set of beliefs that cannot all be true.<sup>9</sup> I now turn to the crucial question of the distribution and collection of belief over conjunction.

#### 4. DISTRIBUTION AND COLLECTION OF BELIEF OVER CONJUNCTION

There are two reasons why belief *per se* fails to collect over conjunction. First of all, surely I cannot think the fat thought that conjoins the content of *all* the beliefs that I hold about the world, at least not in a way that makes me aware of that thought. What explains this inability is the conjecture that

My belief that *p* requires my ability to think the thought that *p*.

This required ability of thought explains why although we may intuitively suppose that a dog has rudimentary beliefs about the food in its bowl (which helps us explain its behaviour as it strains at its leash), we hesitate to attribute to it the belief that it will be beaten in Lent. Clearly it does not have the concept of Lent and so lacks the ability to think thoughts of Lent. The requirement also explains our difficulty in characterizing the beliefs of other species in any fine-grained way, since it is difficult to specify, using the linguistic expressions of *our* thoughts, exactly what concepts (or derivatively, thoughts) are available to those with radically different linguistic capacities and ways of behaving.

Admittedly, the required ability of thought is challenged by the fact that in one sense I can believe things on authority that I do not understand. For example, I may believe an authority on physics who assures me that entropy is increasing although I have no idea what entropy is. But believing that she has said something true is different from believing what she says. Although I don't believe that entropy is increasing, I do believe that she has said something true (although I don't know what) because although I cannot think thoughts of entropy, I can think the thought that by using the word "entropy", she has said something true.<sup>10</sup>

Granted this, I may be unable to think the thought of the fat conjunction of all of my present beliefs although I have the ability to think the thought of each of my present beliefs separately. One reason for my inability is not that I lack the relevant concepts needed to think the would-be thought, but

rather because that thought is just too complex for me to think. But in such a case I could not even hold an *unconscious* belief of the conjunction of everything I now believe.

A second reason why belief does not collect over conjunction is given by the following possibility. Suppose that I know *a priori* that it is false that both *p* and not-*p* yet continue to separately believe that *p* and believe that not-*p*, because I am unaware of one or both of these beliefs. Were belief to collect over conjunction, I would know what I believe to be false. But there is reason to rule this out. For it is now uncontroversial that

If I know that *p* then I believe that *p*.

But having accepted this we should also accept

If I know that *p* then I don't believe that not-*p*.

Otherwise we would have to accept the possibility that I know what I hold contradictory beliefs about. But such 'knowledge' would hardly be conducive to finding the truth.

By contrast there is no reason to deny the plausible claim that belief distributes over conjunction, whether it is occurrent, non-occurrent or conscious. If my stepping out of the door into wet and cold weather leads me to acquire the belief that it is wet and cold then surely it leads me to then acquire the belief that it is wet and leads me to then acquire the belief that it is cold. So the balance of evidence is in favour of the principle

If I form the belief that (*p* & *q*) at *t* then I form the belief that *p* at *t* and I form the belief that *q* at *t*.

Likewise, if I am disposed to behave as if it is wet and cold (for example by putting on my raincoat and scarf) then surely I am disposed to behave as if it is wet (for example by putting on my raincoat) and am also disposed to behave as if it is cold (for example by putting on my scarf). So again, in the absence of any counterexample, it seems plausible that

If I am disposed to believe that (p & q) then I am disposed to believe that p and I am disposed to believe that q.

Now suppose that I become aware of my belief that it is wet and cold. Surely I then become aware of my belief that it is wet and become aware of my belief that it is cold. So again it seems plausible that

If I am aware of my belief that (p & q) then I am aware of my belief that p and I am aware of my belief that q.

Since belief distributes but does not collect over conjunction, if I hold a self-contradictory belief then I hold contradictory beliefs but not conversely. And if I hold contradictory beliefs I hold a set of inconsistent beliefs but not conversely.

It is more irrational to hold a self-contradictory belief than to hold a pair of contradictory beliefs. For self-contradictory beliefs are less conducive to truth than pairs of contradictory beliefs. When I hold contradictory beliefs half of my beliefs are bound to be true. But when I hold a self-contradictory belief then all my beliefs are bound to be false.

However it is much more plausible to claim that *conscious* belief collects over conjunction:

If I consciously believe that p at *t* and consciously believe that q at *t* then I consciously believe that (p & q) at *t*.

Suppose that as I step out into inclement weather, I become aware of my belief that it is cold at the same moment that I become aware of my belief that it is wet. Surely I am then aware of a single belief that it is both cold and wet. In the absence of counterexample we should accept this principle. Having done so, we may now say that conscious belief both collects and distributes over conjunction. So an interesting feature of consciousness is that in becoming aware of each of a pair of contradictory belief I become aware of a single belief in a self-contradiction.

We noted that any satisfactory account of Moorean absurdity should explain the absurdity of both Moorean assertion and Moorean belief. I have defended the strategy of

first explaining the absurdity of Moorean belief and then explaining the absurdity of Moorean assertion in terms of Moorean belief. I have argued that such an explanation should diagnose the irrationality in terms of a self-contradictory belief, rather than merely in terms of a pair of contradictory beliefs. As we shall see, the supposition that one holds a *conscious* Moorean belief promises to deliver just such a satisfactory explanation. I will argue that Rosenthal's higher order thought theory may be developed to fulfil this promise. But Rosenthal himself thinks that all that needs explaining is the absurdity of Moorean assertion and that doing so need not appeal to Moorean belief.

##### 5. ROSENTHAL'S TWO ACCOUNTS OF MOOREAN ASSERTION

Rosenthal has two different accounts of why such an assertion cannot be "genuine" (2002) or "coherent" (1995b). In his later account (2002, p. 170) he holds that the omissive sentence

... is not assertible because one conjunct denies the occurrence at that time of the occurrent intentional state required for the other conjunct to perform a genuine illocutionary act.

In other words, in asserting that (p & I don't believe that p), I deny that I have the occurrent belief that p, one that I must have if my assertion that p is to be "genuine". Rosenthal further holds that the commissive assertion is not assertible because one conjunct asserts the occurrence at that time of an intentional state "manifestly incompatible" (2002, p. 170) with that required for the other conjunct to perform a genuine illocutionary act. In other words, in asserting that (p & I believe that not-p), I assert that I have the occurrent belief that not-p, one that I cannot have if my assertion that p is to be "genuine", unless I hold contradictory occurrent beliefs about whether p. But there are two problems with this account. Firstly, it assumes that

If I make a genuine assertion that p then I believe that p.

There are two senses in which an assertion can be said to be genuine. But Rosenthal's assumption is not true in either sense.

These two senses correspond to the distinction between successfully making an assertion and making a successful assertion. I fail to make an assertion if I utter, "The pubs are still open" but am too drunk to articulate these words intelligibly. Nor do I succeed in making an assertion if I utter these words as an actor in a play, since all I attempt is to depict the assertion of a fictional guise. Having successfully made an assertion, that assertion may succeed or fail depending upon its point, in other words what change of mind I intend to bring about in you. For example, in attempting to inform or let you know that *p*, I intend to get you to know that *p*. When I lie to you that *p*, I intend to get you to mistakenly believe that *p*. So insincere assertions, notably lies, may be genuine assertions in both senses. This falsifies the crucial assumption Rosenthal needs. Moreover, as Baldwin points out (1990, p. 228) if you learn that I'm lying to you when I make omissive or commissive Moorean assertions, this knowledge does nothing to expunge the absurdity.

In his earlier account (1995b, fn 15, p. 208) Rosenthal anticipates this objection with the heroic claim that lies are not genuine assertions but are rather bits of play-acting. But then it would follow that I could refute the accusation that I have told you a lie by merely admitting that I was lying, for then I could not have told you anything. Austin (1970, p. 69–71) is similarly heroic in holding that if I insincerely say "I promise," I don't strictly speaking promise but only say I do. But if this were true then it would make a mockery of justice. For then I could conveniently escape from a contractual promise by just admitting my insincerity. A seminar that succeeds in teaching people to be more assertive need not make them more sincere. Nor need it make them tell the truth more often. So although liars only pretend to believe what they assert, they really do make assertions. In other words, although liars are not genuine (in the sense that they are not sincere) their lies are genuine assertions.

Nonetheless Rosenthal does approach the insight that when I make the omissive assertion to you, I in effect tell you that I am insincere and in the commissive assertion, tell you that I am guilty of a stronger form of insincerity, namely lying. This

defeats the point of the assertion, whether it is my attempt to inform or deceive you, for then you will not believe that my words are true.

The second problem with the account is that Rosenthal has to claim that my commissive assertion cannot be genuine unless I hold contradictory belief about whether  $p$ . So the only way that he can show that my commissive assertion could not be genuine is by showing that I could not hold contradictory beliefs. But there seems no reason why it is impossible for someone to hold a pair of contradictory beliefs.

In (1995b, p. 200), Rosenthal offers a different explanation of the absurdity:

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 [coherent] assertability. Any circumstances in which I could [coherently] say that  $p$  are circumstances in which I could [coherently] say I think that  $p$ . And with one qualification that won't affect the argument here, the converse holds as well.

Since Rosenthal's conclusion is that there are no circumstances in one can use Moorean sentences to perform "coherent" assertions (1995b, p. 195) my parenthetical insertions into his passage are in order. In other words, the conditions in which I could coherently assert that  $p$  are identical to those in which I could coherently assert that I think that  $p$ , with equal appropriateness. Thus in response to the question whether it is raining, one could just as appropriately reply, "Yes" as say, "I think so". Assume that the conditions under which I may coherently assert " $p$ " and those under which I may coherently assert "not  $p$ " are mutually exclusive. Assume also that the conditions in which I may coherently assert a conjunction include those in which I may coherently assert its conjuncts. Then the conditions under which I may coherently assert that ( $p$  & I don't believe that  $p$ ) include those in which I may coherently assert that  $p$ . These are identical to those in which I may coherently assert that I believe that  $p$ . So they *exclude* conditions under which I may coherently assert that I *don't* believe that  $p$ . But since the conditions under which

I may coherently assert a conjunction include those in which I may coherently assert its conjuncts, these *include* conditions in which I may coherently assert that I don't believe that p. Since this is a contradiction, there cannot be any conditions in which I may coherently make the omissive assertion that (p & I don't believe that p).

Rosenthal would have to explain the commissive assertion as follows: since the conditions in which I may coherently assert a conjunction include those in which I may coherently assert its conjuncts, the conditions in which I may coherently assert that (p & I believe that not-p) include those in which I may coherently assert that I believe that not-p. But conditions in which I may coherently assert that I believe that not-p are identical to those in which I may coherently assert that not-p, with equal appropriateness. These *exclude* conditions in which I may coherently assert that p. But since the conditions in which I may coherently assert a conjunction include those in which I may coherently assert its conjuncts, the conditions in which I may coherently assert that (p & I believe that not-p) *include* those in which I may coherently assert that p. Since this is a contradiction, there cannot be any conditions in which I may coherently make the commissive assertion that (p & I believe that not-p).

But we may challenge Rosenthal's claim that the conditions in which I could coherently assert that p are identical to those in which I could coherently assert that I believe that p, with equal appropriateness. Suppose that you ask me whether the pubs are still open and I honestly reply, "I wouldn't like to say, but I think so" then the conditions under which I've asserted that I believe that the pubs are still open don't seem to include those in which it is appropriate to assert that they are. If this challenge succeeds then Rosenthal is left only with the claim that the conditions in which I may coherently assert that p *include* those in which I may, with equal appropriateness, coherently assert that I believe that p. This leaves Rosenthal's account of the omissive case untouched but damages the parallel account of the commissive case, because that account requires the claim that conditions in which I may coherently assert that I believe

that not-p include those in which I may, with equal appropriateness, coherently assert that not-p.

A second objection to the account is that we have no reason to think that the conditions under which I may coherently assert "p" and those under which I may coherently assert "not p" are mutually exclusive, without a fuller account of "assertability conditions". Of course there are no conditions in which I may coherently assert "p & not-p". But if you ask me whether the pubs are open and I really have no idea whether they are, then although I may be blamed for giving any definite answer, it may nonetheless be as coherent to answer "Yes" as to answer, "No".

But the main problem with either account is that I seem no less absurd if I silently believe Moore's examples without asserting them. In that case an explanation of the absurdity that, like Rosenthal's, is restricted to assertion, will be incomplete. Perhaps Rosenthal thinks that it is impossible for even the most irrational of speakers to hold a Moorean belief. In that case, the reason why this is so should demonstrate to any hearer of my assertion that I cannot believe my own words. In other words, the hearer would be in a position to see that my assertion is necessarily insincere and so would not accept my words either. The alternative can only be that there is a reason why it would be severely irrational of me to hold a Moorean belief. In the absence of any argument that Moorean belief is impossible, this alternative is preferable. Ironically, this alternative is already available to Rosenthal in his account of conscious belief. For that account may be developed in a way that provides a satisfactory explanation of the severe irrationality of holding a conscious Moorean belief, namely that such a thinker is aware of believing a self-contradiction.

#### 6. ROSENTHAL'S ACCOUNT OF CONSCIOUS BELIEF

We have noted that in becoming aware of holding a belief I also become aware of myself as holding it. Rosenthal's analysis of conscious belief attempts to capture this feature. According to

Rosenthal (1997) I am conscious of my belief that p just in case I have a “suitable” thought about that belief. Since my mere supposition that I hold a belief would not make me aware of a belief that I really do hold, the suitable higher-order thought in question had best be a belief. Rosenthal observes (1997, p. 471) that this second-order occurrent belief is suitable only if it represents not only the occurrence of the first-order belief, but also represents myself *as* myself in that state of belief. Consistently with this, Rosenthal holds a higher order principle of conscious belief:

If I consciously believe that p then I believe that p and I believe that I myself believe that p.

This *de se* element is needed. For even if I am Williams, my belief that Williams now believes that that p would not capture my awareness of my own belief. For I might not realise that I am Williams but have in mind someone else. Rosenthal adds that the second-order belief must be formed at roughly the same time as the first. This also seems plausible. For if I acquire the conscious belief that it is raining as I peer out of the window in search of dry weather, then I acquire the belief that I believe that it is raining more or less as I come to believe that it is raining. Rosenthal further adds that the second-order belief must be formed non-observationally and non-inferentially. This seems correct as well. Although my observation of rain plays a part in the causal history of my belief that it is raining, it is not what licenses my belief that I hold this belief. Nor is that second order belief a result of ghostly observation of, or inference from, the first. As Evans points out (1982, p. 225–6) to decide whether I believe that it is raining all I normally have to do is to look to the outside world and decide whether it is raining.

But Rosenthal’s higher order principle of conscious belief fails to capture the fact of my self-awareness. Admittedly, my second-order belief that I believe that it is raining represents myself. But I may be unaware of holding this second-order belief. In that case my second-order belief is not a *conscious* representation of myself. So holding it does not guarantee that I am aware of myself. But as we will now see, this snag may be avoided.

## 7. MODIFYING ROSENTHAL'S ACCOUNT OF CONSCIOUS BELIEF

I have argued that Rosenthal is wrong in thinking that the absurdity of Moorean belief need not be explained. So it is worth deciding whether Rosenthal's principle will help us to explain the absurdity of conscious Moorean belief. It turns out that it does, but to see this we must first consider another snag.

This is that the principle needs supplement. This need is shown by Baldwin's (1990, p. 230) account of the absurdity, one that implicitly anticipates Rosenthal's principle. Baldwin argues that

... a rational thinker will not consciously hold a Moorean belief. For to hold a belief consciously is both to hold the belief and be aware, and thus believe, that one holds it; and no rational thinker will believe either that he both believes and fails to believe the same thing (which is required by a conscious belief that *p* and that one does not believe that *p*) or that he both believes and disbelieves the same thing (which is required by conscious belief that *p* and that one believes that not-*p*).

So if I consciously believe that (*p* & I don't believe that *p*) then Rosenthal's principle means that I believe that (*p* & I don't believe that *p*) and also hold the belief that I believe that (*p* & I don't believe that *p*). But clearly some other principle is needed as well in order to derive my single belief that I both do and don't believe that *p*. One such plausible principle that comes to mind is that conscious belief distributes over conjunction, one I defended above. So if I consciously believe that (*p* & I don't believe that *p*) then I consciously believe that I *don't* believe that *p*. But by the same principle I consciously believe that *p*, so by Rosenthal's principle, I believe that I *do* believe that *p*.<sup>11</sup> So I hold a pair of contradictory beliefs. But this result does not fit Baldwin's description of my omissive belief as my single belief that I both do and don't believe that *p*. For the commissive belief, parallel reasoning delivers the result that I believe that I believe that *p* and I believe that I believe that not-*p*.<sup>12</sup> This hardly counts as my single belief that I both believe and disbelieve that *p*.

As we noted above, Rosenthal's principle predicts a higher-order belief that need not be conscious. Indeed Rosenthal cannot modify his principle as

If I consciously believe that *p* then I believe that *p* and I *consciously* believe that I believe that *p*

without some restriction. For on Rosenthal's account my second-order belief is a thought that occurs to me *just after* I have formed the thought that constitutes my first-order belief. So unless restricted, the modification would saddle us with an infinite succession of discrete mental performances that not even the most rational thinker could complete.

But there is no reason why we should not qualify the modified principle with the restriction that it may only be applied a finite number of times. This restriction is dictated by the conjecture that to believe that *p*, such a human being must possess the ability to think the thought that *p*. Moreover it seems reasonable to expect that a fairly reflective thinker would be aware of her second-order beliefs. Thus the vicious regress may be blocked in a principled way. To overcome the second snag in deriving a single self-contradictory belief, we may appeal to the principle that conscious belief both collects and distributes over conjunction, as defended above.

Then we may argue as follows. Suppose that I consciously believe that (*p* & I don't believe that *p*). Since conscious belief distributes over conjunction, I consciously believe that *p* (as well as consciously believing that I don't believe that *p*). So by the modified and now restricted Rosenthal principle, I consciously believe that I believe that *p*. So I consciously believe that I *do* believe that *p* and I consciously believe that I *don't* believe that *p*. So since conscious belief collects over conjunction, I consciously believe that I *both do and don't* believe that *p*.<sup>13</sup> In other words, I am aware of my self-contradictory belief. Surely this awareness of such irrationality should lead me to revise my beliefs for the better.

Parallel reasoning delivers the result that if I consciously hold the commissive belief, then I consciously believe that I hold a pair of contradictory beliefs.<sup>14</sup> Again, such awareness signals my need to revise my beliefs in some way.

Finally, the objection we considered in the last section is now neutralised. For as a reasonably reflective thinker, I will be

aware of my second-order belief that I believe that it is raining and so will be aware of myself.

#### 8. BRENTANO'S RIVAL ACCOUNT OF CONSCIOUS BELIEF

Brentano (1874, chapters 1–2) provides a rival account. Brentano holds that it is a distinctive property of all conscious mental states, including beliefs, that they “include within them an implicit awareness of themselves” (1874, pp. 127–8). In other words, in being aware of my beliefs I am aware, among other things, of myself. More specifically, Brentano's principle of conscious belief is that

I consciously believe that *p* just in case I believe that (*p* & I myself believe that *p*).

This differs from Rosenthal's principle, according to which every conscious belief is accompanied by a *separate* belief about it. Moreover, Brentano's analysis is a definition of conscious belief, unlike Rosenthal's principle. On that definition, the belief that represents myself is a belief of which I am aware. This avoids the objection against Rosenthal's unmodified principle. An equivalent formulation of Brentano's definition is that I consciously believe that *p* just in case *I believe that I myself truly believe that p*. This is consistent with Wittgenstein's observation (1980, § 490) that in considering what I believe about the world, I cannot hold apart my conception of the world from how I take the world to be. By contrast, Rosenthal holds that I consciously believe that *p* only if *I truly believe that I myself believe that p*. Since belief distributes but does not collect over conjunction, Brentano's definition entails Rosenthal's principle but is not entailed by it.

Both accounts may explain our intuition that animals are incapable of holding conscious beliefs. On both accounts, such beliefs require a belief about the self as well as a belief about belief. Given that most animals do not possess such sophisticated concepts, then the conjecture that a subject's belief that *p* requires the subject's ability to think the thought that *p*, prohibits most animals from forming conscious beliefs.

## 9. APPLYING BRENTANO'S ACCOUNT TO MOOREAN BELIEF

Brentano's principle provides a simple explanation of the absurdity of conscious Moorean belief. Suppose that I consciously hold the omissive belief that (p & I don't believe that p). Then by Brentano's principle

I believe that [(p & I don't believe that p) and I believe that (p & I don't believe that p)].

The first conjunct of what I believe is true only if I *don't* believe that p. But since belief distributes over conjunction, the second conjunct of what I believe is true only if I *do* believe that p. So I hold a self-contradictory or necessarily false belief. It follows that when I hold an omissive Moorean belief, what I believe might be true unless I believe it. But when I hold that belief consciously, what I believe cannot be true.

Now suppose that I consciously hold the commissive belief that (p & I believe that not-p). Then by Brentano's principle

I believe that [(p & I believe that not-p) and I believe that (p & I believe that not-p)].

The first conjunct of what I believe is true only if I *believe that not-p*. But since belief distributes over conjunction, the second conjunct of what I believe is true only if I *believe that p*. So what I believe is true only if I hold contradictory beliefs about whether p.

This last result is stronger than that provided by my original account. On the original account, when I come to believe that (p & I believe that not-p) this act of belief falsifies the content of that belief unless I hold contradictory beliefs about whether p. Nonetheless that content, in other words that I mistakenly believe that p, might be true *whether or not* I hold contradictory beliefs about whether p. But on Brentano's account, if I consciously believe that (p & I believe that not-p) then the full content of that belief cannot be true *unless* I hold contradictory beliefs about whether p.

## 10. COMPARING THESE TWO ACCOUNTS

My modification of Rosenthal's account predicts that when I hold the omissive belief that (it is raining but I don't believe that it is raining) but am unaware of doing so, then my belief is self-falsifying. But when I become aware of it, then I consciously believe a self-contradiction. When I hold the commissive belief that (it is raining but I believe that it is not raining) but am unaware of doing so, then my belief is self-falsifying unless I hold a pair of contradictory beliefs. But when I become aware of my belief, then I consciously believe that I hold a pair of contradictory beliefs.

By contrast, the result Brentano predicts is that when I become aware of the omissive belief then what I believe is a self-contradiction. And when become aware of the commissive belief then what I believe is necessarily false unless I hold a pair of contradictory beliefs.

Both theories are economical. The first appeals to my modification of Rosenthal's principle plus the fact that conscious belief both collects and distributes over conjunction. The Brentano-inspired alternative appeals to Brentano's definition of conscious belief plus the fact that belief of any kind distributes over conjunction.

But the first theory seems to have the edge. For there are two strong objections to the second to which the first is not vulnerable. The first objection is that the Brentano-inspired theory must say that once I become aware of my Moorean belief then what I believe is a self-contradiction. But the very paradox is set up in acknowledgement that the content of that belief might be true. However a follower of Brentano could reply that given a theory of appropriate belief-revision, one's awareness of certain types of irrational belief can only result in beliefs that are already changed. Or he could try weakening Brentano's definition of a conscious belief to a mere conditional. But Rosenthal may avoid all of this even if he concedes, as I think he should, that Moorean assertion prompts the need for an explanation of Moorean belief.

The second objection is that Brentano's definition of conscious belief is not generalisable to other conscious intentional states. For surely my consciously wondering whether *p* cannot be my wondering whether (*p* & I myself wonder whether *p*).

But it might be replied that the example of wondering is unfair in virtue of its peculiar oddness. For wondering seems to be necessarily a state one is aware of. I may unconsciously desire to sleep with my wife's sister but can I unconsciously wonder if she would be willing? Nonetheless we should admit that my conscious desire to make it the case that I am drinking beer does not seem to be my desire to make it the case that (I am drinking beer and I desire to make it the case that I am drinking beer). After all, I might be uncomfortably aware of the desire for beer in the knowledge that this desire is unwelcome. Likewise, my conscious fear that the police will raid me, doesn't seem to be my fear that it will be the case that (the police raid me but I myself fear that the police raid me). For a deeper fear is that the raid will take me by surprise. So it seems correct to say that my self-aware desire that *p* is my true belief that I myself desire that *p* and that my self-aware fear that *p* is my true belief that I myself fear that *p*. In the absence of relevant differences between desire and fear on the one hand and belief on the other, my self-aware belief that *p* would be nothing more than my true belief that I myself believe that *p*, as predicted by Rosenthal's original account.

But are there no relevant differences? After all, beliefs, unlike desires or fears, are truth seeking in the sense that a good belief is true. A further difference is that neither fear nor desire distribute over conjunction. I may sensibly fear that my wife and girlfriend are *both* in the pub without fearing that my wife is in the pub or fearing that my girlfriend is there. Likewise, I may sensibly desire to drink beer with lemonade without desiring to drink beer and without desiring to drink lemonade. So a follower of Brentano might still insist that my self-aware belief that *p* is unique in being my belief that I myself truly believe

that *p*. Since belief distributes over conjunction, this means that it is also my true belief that I myself believe that *p*.

Once again however, the Rosenthal-inspired strategy avoids such complications. Moreover, it provides a clearer explanation of the increase in irrationality once one becomes aware of the commissive belief.

#### 11. CHANGING MY MIND

Given that I am irrational in my beliefs, becoming aware of them provides me with an opportunity to revise them for the better. This is one important way in which a higher-order belief may cause different behaviour from the belief it is about. So in what way should I change my mind?

Suppose that it is a fact that (*p* & I don't believe that *p*). This fact impugns my *knowledge* but not my rationality. I am merely ignorant of the truth that *p*. Now suppose that I come to believe that (*p* & I don't believe that *p*). Since belief distributes over conjunction, the second conjunct of what I believe becomes false. If I am aware of what I believe and am at all rational I will realize this change of fact and will accordingly give up my false belief that I don't believe that *p*. So if my omissive belief is conscious then it is part of a useful recognition of my own specific ignorance, one that is rationally remedied by true belief. On the other hand if that recognition leads me to no epistemic revision, then I am indeed irrational. For then I believe in effect that I am ignorant of the truth that *p*, yet mistakenly think that I don't accept that truth.

A similar revision of belief will be triggered by my awareness of the commissive belief. Suppose that it is a fact that (*p* & I believe that not-*p*). This fact impugns my *infallibility* but not my rationality. Now suppose that I come to believe that (*p* & I believe that not-*p*). Since belief distributes over conjunction, I now hold contradictory beliefs. If I am aware of what I believe and am at all rational I will realize this and will accordingly give up one or both of these beliefs. So if my commissive belief is

conscious, then it is part of a useful recognition of my own specific *mistake*, one that is rationally corrected. On the other hand if that recognition leads me to no epistemic revision, then again I am irrational. For then I realise that I hold contradictory beliefs yet continue to hold them. Such a case might occur when exasperated by a particularly obtuse psychiatrist who keeps reassuring me that my belief that I am being persecuted is just a delusion, I remark, “Look, I bloody well know that people aren’t persecuting me, but I just can’t help believing that they are!”

## 12. MOOREAN ASSERTION

With a few harmless exceptions,<sup>15</sup> when I make an assertion to you I intend to make you believe me, in other words, to believe that I am sincerely telling the truth. We may take my apparent attempt to make you think me sincere as my ostensible expression of belief.

When I let you know that *p*, I fulfil my main intention of imparting my knowledge to you. But when I tell you the lie that *p* I attempt to make you mistakenly believe that *p*. In either case I intend to get you to believe my words. But I cannot succeed in this attempt unless I also get you to think that I am sincere in making the assertion. For if you think that I’m play-acting or recognise that I’m lying then you have no reason to accept my words, so my attempt to impart knowledge or lie to you will fail. Since I should see with minimal reflection that this is so, my full intention must be to *get you to believe my words by getting you to think me sincere* in uttering them. In other words, I aim to make you believe *me* in the sense of making you think I’m sincerely telling the truth.<sup>16</sup>

Suppose that you now believe me when I assert to you that (*p* & I don’t believe that *p*). This means that you now believe me to be sincerely telling the truth. So you must now think that I believe that *p* (in virtue of now thinking me sincere) and you must now, in the same instant, believe that I

don't believe that *p* (in virtue of now thinking me to be telling the truth). Moreover, these two beliefs you have just acquired can hardly be beliefs of which you are unaware. Rather they are conscious thoughts that you form as I make my assertion to you.

Since your conscious beliefs collect over conjunction, it follows that you now consciously believe that I both do and don't believe that *p*. Since you would be deeply irrational to consciously believe a self-contradiction, I am in a position to see, when I make the assertion to you, that you won't believe me unless you are deeply irrational. Since I should be charitable enough to try to avoid judging you irrational when I attempt to communicate with you, I should see that you couldn't believe me.

A parallel line of reasoning applies to the commissive assertion. Suppose that you come to believe me when I assert to you that (*p* & I believe that not-*p*). You must now think that I believe that *p* (in virtue of now thinking me to be sincere) and you must now, in the same instant, believe that I believe that not-*p* (in virtue of now thinking me to tell the truth). Since these two beliefs you have just acquired are conscious thoughts, you now consciously believe that *I* hold contradictory beliefs about whether *p*.

Since this is in effect a judgment that I am irrational, I am in position to see, when I make the assertion to you, that you won't believe me unless you judge me irrational. And since I should see that you would be charitable enough to try to avoid judging me irrational when I attempt to communicate with you, I should again see that you couldn't believe me. So in either case I should recognise that that you cannot believe me unless you are theoretically irrational or judge me to be so. Accordingly I should revise my plans. If I don't then I'm practically irrational.

This account complies with Shoemaker's principle. For what you must consciously believe if you believe me when I make a Moorean assertion to you is identical to what I must consciously believe if I am sincere in making it.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> In parsing your “Either it is not raining or he believes that it is raining” as “If it is raining then he believes that it is raining” I take ‘if’ as implication. Although such an inference is generally invalid, most would allow it here. For example, Stalnaker 1975 and 1984 would allow it on pragmatic grounds because you don’t know which disjunct is true. If we symbolise “I believe that p” as “Bp” we have the following proof:

- |                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| 1. $\sim(p \ \& \ \sim Bp)$   | Suppose the falsehood of Moorean assertion |
| 2. $\sim p \vee \sim \sim Bp$ | De Morgan’s Law                            |
| 3. $\sim p \vee Bp$           | $\sim \sim$ elim                           |
| 4. $p \rightarrow Bp$         | $\rightarrow$ equivalence                  |

<sup>2</sup> Sorensen (1988, chapter 3, pp. 16–56) is probably the first commentator to consider the nature of Moorean belief. Since then Williams 1994, 1996, 1998, Baldwin 1990, Heal 1994, Rosenthal 1995a, 1995b and Shoemaker 1995, 1988 have discussed it.

<sup>3</sup> Sorensen coins these useful terms in (1988, p. 16).

<sup>4</sup> This difference in formalism is disguised by Moore’s examples. This is one reason to think that Moore himself did not see the difference. If we formalise “I went to the pictures last Tuesday but I don’t believe that I did” as “ $p \ \& \ \sim Bp$ ” then “I believe that he has gone out, but he has not” becomes “ $Bp \ \& \ \sim p$ ”. This commutes to “ $\sim p \ \& \ Bp$ ”. To achieve canonical reference to belief this may be represented as “ $p \ \& \ B\sim p$ ”.

<sup>5</sup> Shoemaker (1995, fn. 1, p. 227) puts it this way: “What can be coherently believed constrains what can be coherently asserted but not conversely”. But since “coherently” is ambiguous between “consistently”, “appropriately” and “rationally” then the principle best stick with Moore’s own term “absurdly”, by which he means “irrationally, either in theory or practice”.

<sup>6</sup> Including Hintikka (1962, p. 67), Williams (1994, pp. 164–5, 1996, pp. 136–7, 1998, p. 296), Heal (1994, pp. 21–22) and Sorensen (1988, pp. 40–42 and 2000, p. 42).

<sup>7</sup> Given

B-&)  $B(p \ \& \ q) \rightarrow (Bp \ \& \ Bq)$       Belief distributes over conjunction

- |  |                                |
|--|--------------------------------|
| 1. $(p \ \& \ B\sim p) \ \& \ B(p \ \& \ B\sim p)$ | Suppose true commissive belief |
| 2. $p \ \& \ B\sim p$                              | 1, &-elim                      |
| 3. $B\sim p$                                       | 2, &-elim                      |
| 4. $B(p \ \& \ B\sim p)$                           | 1, &-elim                      |
| 5. $Bp \ \& \ BB\sim p$                            | 4, B-&                         |
| 6. $Bp$  | 5, &-elim                      |
| 7. $Bp \ \& \ B\sim p$                             | 3, 5, &-intro.                 |

<sup>8</sup> As De Almeida (2001, p. 42) notes, I need the minimal intelligence to present myself with such an argument for the absurdity. But this hardly constitutes an objection.

<sup>9</sup> Against De Almeida (2001, pp. 42–43), my original diagnosis does not predict that my belief that

I have at least one false belief

is Moorean, despite the fact that such a belief means that I have inconsistent beliefs (in the sense that they cannot all be true). For since belief fails to collect over conjunction, I may hold inconsistent beliefs, as when I believe that  $p$  and believe that  $q$  and believe that  $\text{not}-(p \ \& \ q)$ , without holding contradictory beliefs. Evidence for my belief in my occasional mistakenness need not count against any of my other beliefs, nor *visa versa*. My correct belief in my occasional mistakenness does not entail beliefs that contradict each other, since we may consistently suppose that I don't believe that all of my beliefs are true. See Williams (1996, p. 145) for further discussion of this point.

<sup>10</sup> Similarly, when presented with the inscription, “ $1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1$  is greater than  $1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1$ ”, I may sincerely assert, “That's true” without having the thought that 10 is greater than 6. What I believe is that the inscription says something true, in virtue of believing that the number denoted by the left-hand side is greater than that denoted by the right-hand side.

<sup>11</sup> Using ‘ $B^c p$ ’ to denote ‘I consciously believe that  $p$ ’, given

RP)	$B^c p \rightarrow (Bp \ \& \ BBp)$	Rosenthal's Principle
$B^c\text{-}\&$ )	$B^c(p \ \& \ q) \rightarrow (B^c p \ \& \ B^c q)$	Conscious belief distributes over conjunction
1.	$B^c(p \ \& \ \sim Bp)$	Suppose conscious omissive belief
2.	$B^c p \ \& \ B^c \sim Bp$	1, $B^c\text{-}\&$
3.	$B^c p$	2, $\&$ -elim
4.	$Bp \ \& \ BBp$	3, RP
5.	$BBp$	4, $\&$ -elim
6.	$B^c \sim Bp$	2, $\&$ -elim
7.	$BBp \ \& \ B^c \sim Bp$	5, 6, $\&$ -intro

<sup>12</sup> Given

RP)	$B^c p \rightarrow (Bp \ \& \ BBp)$	Rosenthal's Principle
$B^c\text{-}\&$ )	$B^c(p \ \& \ q) \rightarrow (B^c p \ \& \ B^c q)$	Conscious belief distributes over conjunction

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <math>B^c(p \ \&amp; \ B \sim p)</math></li> <li>2. <math>B^c p \ \&amp; \ B^c B \sim p</math></li> <li>3. <math>B^c p</math></li> <li>4. <math>B p \ \&amp; \ B B p</math></li> <li>5. <math>B B p</math></li> <li>6. <math>B^c B \sim p</math></li> <li>7. <math>B B p \ \&amp; \ B^c B \sim p</math></li> </ol>   | <p>Suppose conscious commissive belief</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1, <math>B^c</math>-&amp;</li> <li>2, &amp;-elim</li> <li>3, RP</li> <li>4, &amp;-elim</li> <li>2, &amp;-elim</li> <li>5, 6, &amp;-intro</li> </ol>   |
| <sup>13</sup> Given  |   |
| <p>A) <math>B^c(p \ \&amp; \ q) \leftrightarrow (B^c p \ \&amp; \ B^c q)</math></p>  | <p>Conscious belief distributes and collects over conjunction</p>   |
| <p>RP') <math>B^c p \rightarrow (B p \ \&amp; \ B^c B p)</math></p>  | <p>A modification of RP restricted to finite recursions</p>   |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <math>B^c(p \ \&amp; \ \sim B p)</math></li> <li>2. <math>B^c p \ \&amp; \ B^c \sim B p</math></li> <li>3. <math>B^c p</math></li> <li>4. <math>B^c \sim B p</math></li> <li>5. <math>B p \ \&amp; \ B^c B p</math></li> <li>6. <math>B^c B p</math></li> <li>7. <math>B^c B p \ \&amp; \ B^c \sim B p</math></li> <li>8. <math>B^c(B p \ \&amp; \ \sim B p)</math></li> </ol> | <p>Suppose conscious omissive belief</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1, A</li> <li>2, &amp;-elim</li> <li>2, &amp;-elim</li> <li>3, RP'</li> <li>5, &amp;-elim</li> <li>4, 6 &amp;-intro</li> <li>7, A. I consciously believe a self-contradiction</li> </ol>                          |
| <sup>14</sup> Given  |   |
| <p>A) <math>B^c(p \ \&amp; \ q) \leftrightarrow (B^c p \ \&amp; \ B^c q)</math></p>  | <p>Conscious belief distributes and collects over conjunction</p>   |
| <p>RP') <math>B^c p \rightarrow (B p \ \&amp; \ B^c B p)</math></p>  | <p>A modification of RP restricted to finite recursions</p>   |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <math>B^c(p \ \&amp; \ B \sim p)</math></li> <li>2. <math>B^c p \ \&amp; \ B^c B \sim p</math></li> <li>3. <math>B^c p</math></li> <li>4. <math>B^c B \sim p</math></li> <li>5. <math>B p \ \&amp; \ B^c B p</math></li> <li>6. <math>B^c B p</math></li> <li>7. <math>B^c B p \ \&amp; \ B^c B \sim p</math></li> <li>8. <math>B^c(B p \ \&amp; \ B \sim p)</math></li> </ol> | <p>Suppose conscious commissive belief</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1, A</li> <li>2, &amp;-elim</li> <li>2, &amp;-elim</li> <li>3, RP'</li> <li>5, &amp;-elim</li> <li>4, 6 &amp;-intro</li> <li>7, A. I consciously believe that I hold a pair of contradictory beliefs</li> </ol> |

<sup>15</sup> One exception to this is when I say something to you merely in order to 'wind you up'. For example, suppose that I know that you think highly of Bush's intelligence, an opinion I in fact share. Nonetheless I insincerely state that Bush is a moron in order to 'rattle your cage'. Here my intention is not to get you to believe my words by accepting my sincerity but rather to ensure you remain verbally opposed to my words by accepting my sincerity. Another exception occurs when I make a 'Tom Sawyer' assertion to you. For example, on learning that you have just discovered that I am a habitual liar, I decide to tell you the truth for once. So when you ask me if the pubs are still open, I tell you the truth that they are still open in order to deceive you into mistakenly thinking that they are not. In both cases I aim to make you think that my words are *false*. When my assertion is Moorean, the first case is harmless because I can hardly hope to prolong verbal disagreement with you unless you think (mistakenly) that I'm sincere. But I am in position to see that you couldn't take me to hold a Moorean belief unless you thought I was irrational. The Tom Sawyer example is likewise harmless because my intention to get you to *mistakenly* believe that my words are false means that I believe that my own words are true. But when my assertion is Moorean I cannot rationally believe my own words.

<sup>16</sup> If I were a parrot who uttered, "I can fly" you might believe my words but could hardly believe *me*.

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