

Showing by Avowing

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Abstract Dorit Bar-On aims to account for the distinctive security of avowals by appealing to expression. She officially commits herself only to a negative characterization of expression, contending that expressive behavior is not epistemically based in self-judgments. I argue that her account of avowals, if it relies exclusively on this negative account of expression, can't achieve the explanatory depth she claims for it. Bar-On does explore the possibility that expression is a kind of perception-enabling showing. If she endorsed this positive account, her argument would re-gain an explanatory advantage over its rivals. But extending this account to linguistic expressive behavior would bring Bar-On very close to constitutive accounts of first-person authority.

Keywords Avowing · Bar-On · Constitutivism · Expression · Showing

In arguing for an expressive account of the security of avowals, Dorit Bar-On repeatedly states that she doesn't need a positive account of expression. What her powerful and illuminating account of avowals requires is only, she argues, the claim that we sometimes do express our mental states linguistically. Bar-On is willing to suppose that there are significant differences between expressing that involves conventional means, including linguistic ones, and expressing that involves naturally provided means. She's also willing to suppose that there are significant differences between expression that involves voluntary action—our beginning, modulating, or at least failing to suppress some behavior—and expression that is merely the causal upshot of some underlying state.¹ Bar-On therefore uses two negative characterizations of what

¹For the statement that we only need 'the fairly robust intuition that, avowals aside, we regularly express our thoughts, feelings, and emotions', see Bar-On 2004:299. A similar claim is made on p. 261. See note 29 on p. 265 for the two allowances of significant differences. Unless otherwise indicated, all citations are to this book.

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all expressive behavior has in common. First, even when its products are linguistic, the point—if it has one—of expressive behavior is not to inform anyone about what it expresses (257; 260). Second, expressing subjects do not engage in any ‘prior deliberation on, or assessment of, or even recognition of’ their expressed states (257). But even these negative features aren't strictly necessary. What matters is that no acts of self-judgment that happen to be present play an epistemic role in the security of any avowal (258; 223). Her working negative account of expression simply characterizes expressive acts as: not epistemically based in self-judgments.

Bar-On does recognize a *rhetorical* role for a more positive account of expression to play (274; 286–7). Her readers may better appreciate her arguments if they’ve reflected on the possibility that expressive activity has certain shared positive features, whether it uses conventional or natural expressive means, and whether or not it is voluntary. Bar-On sympathetically explores a positive account of expression, on which expressive acts *show* what they express. But her argument is not supposed to turn on whether this account could succeed. What does the proof work, as opposed to the persuasive work, is the demonstration that rival accounts can’t meet important desiderata as well as her Neo-Expressivist Account can (20–21; 287).

The positive account of expression, however, is more important to her actual argument than Bar-On's official position admits. First, one of the benefits she claims for her account requires the positive understanding of expression in terms of showing. Only on that understanding of expression is she able to explain, rather than stipulate, that only some of our self-ascriptions are distinctively secure. But she treats the greater explanatory depth of her account as a main reason to endorse it. Second, her account moves more smoothly if we can rely on some positive account of expression in understanding how interpreters regard linguistic expressive behavior *as* expressive. In particular, it is helpful to suppose that interpreters of expressive behavior are perceiving subjects’ mental states. But this supposition commits us to a specific version of the positive account, on which expressive behavior shows what it expresses by enabling its perception. This second role for the positive account is less crucial than the first, but if the positive account were decisively rejected, Bar-On would owe an alternative explanation of how to understand the interpretation of expressive behavior.

If Bar-On must embrace rather than remain agnostic about the positive account, then it is important to see what costs she would incur in doing so. I argue that developing a version of the positive account that can cover non-natural expressions, and avowals in particular, will bring Bar-On closer to constitutivism than she would like. Bar-On doesn’t want expressive behavior, whether natural or not, to be wholly or partly constitutive of expressible mental states. But if avowals are actually to show what they express, she will have to allow for partially constitutive connections. Using the positive account of expression to pursue the expressivist project would alter not only our view of self-knowledge but our view of the states of selves thus known.

1 The Positive Account

Bar-On begins her exploration of a positive account of expression in terms of showing by noting that not all showing is expressive. I can, for example, show you

the cake we're having for dessert by undoing the baker's parcel. And I could do this 75
without expressing anything (though I could easily alter my behavior, so that in 76
addition to showing you the cake I also express my excitement about the coming 77
party). One strategy for picking out the relevant showings, adopted by Mitchell 78
Green, stipulates that expressive showings must show introspectible states of the 79
expressing subject.² Bar-On can't rely on that strategy. Such reliance could easily 80
slide into some Cartesian version of the Epistemic approach, which explains 81
avowals' security in terms of subjects' unique epistemic relation to their own mental 82
states. It might also involve just the sort of stipulation she thinks her account is able 83
to do without. Finally, it would risk circularity. She's trying to explain first-person 84
privilege in terms of expressivity. Adding the introspection requirement makes first- 85
person privilege part of the explanation of expressivity, on the plausible assumption 86
that introspection is, or produces, self-awareness marked by first-person privilege. 87

So Bar-On proposes, at first considering only natural expressions, two 88
qualifications on 'show' that will make it a good gloss on 'express'. She suggests 89
that natural expressions show the states they express by enabling their perception.³ I 90
can see my friend's sorrow by seeing her tears, or her crying of them. Of course, 91
neither the tears running down my friend's face, nor her crying—her letting them 92
run, her refraining from trying to stop crying—are *chunks* of her sorrow. And her 93
sorrow is not an item inside her (298 n. 12). So Bar-On prefers to say that I see my 94
friend's sorrowing by seeing her crying. But she does count this as my perceiving 95
her mental state.⁴ 96

As soon as showing is understood as perception-enabling, it is clear that I can 97
only express my present states. One can't perceive what isn't there, and my past and 98
future states aren't around to be perceived. So I can't show them to you in the sense 99
of enabling you to perceive them. In a brief discussion of why I can't express 100
character traits like courage, or bodily states like sunburn, Bar-On introduces the 101
second constraint on expressive showing. Expressive behavior needs to be *sufficient* 102
to show what it shows. When I behave so as to enable you to perceive one of my 103
physical states—when, to use one of Bar-On's examples, I pull up my sleeve to 104
expose my sunburned shoulder—my *behavior* is not sufficient to show you my state 105
(275) (in this case, you need to observe not only my pulling aside of my shirt, but 106
the expanse of skin thereby uncovered). Likewise, if I pull aside a curtain so you can 107
see a girl smiling on the other side of a window, or even if I just point to the girl. In 108
neither case is my own behavior sufficient to show you her happiness. So I can't 109
express the mental states of others. 110

If we adopt the sufficient-to-show criterion, it turns out I can't even express every 111
state of my own that might be labeled 'mental'. For example, I can't express my 112
courage, because (Bar-On argues) such character traits and moral virtues are partially 113

² Green (2007) lays out twenty 'dicta' about self-expression in giving 'a preliminary delineation of the notion of expression,' which his book aims to explicate and defend (44). The introspectibility requirement is one of these (38). He also requires expressive behavior to be designed to show what it shows.

³ On p. 272. She cites chapter three of the manuscript that became Green (2007).

⁴ Bar-On's preference is dictated by her views about the metaphysics of mental states, not reluctance to accept that we know of others' conditions by perception. She adamantly rejects the view that we 'merely perceive...behavior and infer to the presence and character of subjects' internal states as the best explanation of the behavior we perceive' (278; see also 415–6).

constituted by contextual features. Keeping her seat on the bus showed Rosa Parks's 114
courage only because of complicated background conditions.⁵ It isn't only that a 115
person needs knowledge about the Jim Crow American South to realize that this 116
sitting showed courage. The point is that the social arrangements matter to the sitting 117
being an exercise of Parks's courage. So Parks's sitting isn't itself sufficient to show 118
her courage, and hence Bar-On need not count it as expressive. This analysis lets 119
Bar-On deny that we can express character traits, and any dispositional psycholog- 120
ical state that would be like a character trait in this way, without having to appeal to 121
the claim that we can't introspect such states. 122

But the application of either the perception-enabling point or the sufficiency point 123
to linguistic expressions is complicated. Bar-On discusses this while articulating 124
more precisely the relationship between showing-by-enabling-perception and being- 125
sufficient-to-show. She asserts again that she doesn't need this positive account to 126
apply to linguistic expressions (283). But she pauses to consider the objection that 127
for her account to work, linguistic expressions can't just be '*coming in place of*' 128
natural expressions, but must actually '*inherit* [their] expressive role' (296; 129
emphases original). So she considers whether linguistic expressions could ever be 130
sufficient to show, in the perception-enabling sense of 'show', the conditions they 131
express. She first acknowledges that the products of linguistic expressive acts 'do 132
not themselves show the states they express,' adding that what matters is that the 133
acts themselves do.⁶ She addresses the question of whether linguistic acts could ever 134
show in the perception-enabling sense, while considering a more explicit suggestion 135
about just *how* expressive behavior enables perception, in general. 136

The suggestion is that expressive behavior enables perception because it is a 137
characteristic component of the state it expresses.⁷ Just as I could perceive a tree by 138
seeing one of its branches, I could see your sorrow by seeing your crying. Bar-On notes 139
that a culturally specific gesture, or a phrase like 'Oh dear' or 'Oy vey', can become 140
second nature, and hence characteristic components of feeling distressed. In a similar 141
way, she suggests, saying (or being disposed to say) 'I'm so glad you've come' could 142
become second nature, and so a characteristic component of (being in) the state it 143
expresses (299). The appeal to *characteristic* components makes room for the idea that 144
the behavior—crying—by which I now see your sorrow need not be present every time 145
you are sad. Tears can enable the perception of sorrow even if some grief is dry-eyed. 146

Bar-On concludes by asserting that while linguistic expressions might be 147
characteristic components of the mental states they express, she doesn't need them 148
to be (299). But like her other announcements that she can get by with only a 149
negative account of expression, this isn't quite accurate. If Bar-On needs to rely on 150
the idea that expressive behavior suffices to show what it expresses, she needs to 151
rely on the idea of characteristic components. I will defend this claim after detailing 152
the extent to which her account's success does depend on the notion of sufficient 153
showing. Finally, I will show how treating linguistic expressive behavior on the 154
characteristic component model would commit Bar-On to making very tight, perhaps 155
even constitutive, connections between expressible states and expressing behavior. 156

⁵ Bar-On discusses Parks's case, which she takes from Green, on 276–7.

⁶ Bar-On 297; see also 402.

⁷ Bar-On 298, citing Green. See Green, 84–87.

2 Bar-On's Argument from Comparative Success Depends on the Positive Account

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Bar-On begins her book by laying out desiderata for any account of avowals' security. They show she is committed to explaining not only the source and nature of avowals' security, but also to explaining why it is *avowals* that are thus secure.⁸ Bar-On states that an account must *explain* why neither self-ascriptions of non-mental states, and ascriptions of mental states to others, are not secure; and why the security my avowals have cannot be transferred to another person or alienated from me. But she is able to explain, rather than stipulate, the non-transferability and inalienability of security only because she appeals to the positive account's claim that expressive behavior is sufficient to show what it expresses (401). That my behavior can't express my bodily states, or another person's mental states, is not secured by anything the negative account can say about such behavior. To establish that my sleeve- or curtain-pulling behavior can't express my sunburn, or my smiling friend's happiness, Bar-On must rely on the fact that my showing behavior isn't sufficient to show either of these conditions. Likewise with non-transferability and inalienability. I can't transfer the security of my avowals to another because I can't make their behavior *sufficient* to show any of my states. And my avowals can't be secure expressions of someone else's mental states because, whatever I might be attempting, any behavior of mine will only be sufficient to show a state of *mine*. Without the appeal to sufficiency, Bar-On has no explanation of these facts.

This matters because Bar-On explicitly claims the greater explanatory depth of her account as a direct reason to endorse it (277, 284, 421). She specifically highlights the ability of Neo-Expressivism to explain why all and only present-tense ascriptions of one's own occurrent mental states are distinctively secure. The Epistemic Approach, by contrast, can only 'stipulate that we just do not have privileged epistemic access to, or uniquely secure epistemic methods for the recovery of' our character traits, sub-personal psychological processes, and non-occurrent mental states (284).

In fact, not even all self-ascriptions of occurrent mental states will enjoy security. Perceptual self-ascriptions lack avowals' distinctive security, and the positive account is needed to explain this. The negative account of expression isn't obviously suited to ruling them out. Attending to the phenomenology of a speaking subject, we might suppose that an utterance of 'I'm seeing a tree' *felt* as free of epistemic mediation as 'I'm feeling an ache.' This supposition becomes more tempting when we allow, as Bar-On does, that subjects may occasionally be expressing 'tree-ish visual sensation [s]' with such an utterance (400). Based on the phenomenology, we might expect the tree-utterance to be secure from questions about its basis, much like the ache-utterance. What rules it, and all perceptual self-reports, out of the category of secure avowals is that 'one cannot engage in behavior that will suffice to show that one is in the relevant state' (400). No stretch of my behavior would be sufficient to show that it was a *tree* with which I was in current visual contact. Appealing to this point from the positive account makes it easier to understand why an interpreter would be *right* to treat that utterance as a self-report rather than as expressive behavior. Treating it as a report frees an interpreter (appropriately) to understand it without taking it to be true—and hence without granting it the presumption of truth that governs avowals. (And it

⁸ See the second and third desiderata, p. 20.

frees theorists from having to suppose that perceivers regularly engage in failed expressive behaviors—behaviors whose semantic products ascribe to us conditions we are not in.) The sufficiency gives a reason for this interpretive choice.

Bar-On argues that she does better than her rivals at accounting for avowals' security, rather than simply recording its details. She uses this comparative assessment to make the case that her account of that security is correct. But her account achieves this explanatory advantage by explicit appeal to the idea that expressive behavior is sufficient to show what it expresses. Unless Bar-On can demonstrate that something else would enable her to do an equally good job of respecting and explaining Epistemic Asymmetry, Bar-On can't view the positive account as genuinely optional.

3 The Positive Account Makes it Easier to Understand Avowal-Interpretation

Thinking of expression in terms of showing also makes it easier to think through how audiences are able to do what Bar-On's account depicts them as doing. Bar-On holds that some tokens of the same (semantic) utterance type could be the products of expressive acts while others are not. (Yelling 'I'm so angry at my mother!' as one hangs up from a troubling phone conversation expresses that anger. But uttering that same sentence, in a recital of beliefs acquired solely because of trust in one's therapist, would not do so.) Expressivity is a matter of *how* a self-ascription is made (402), and we treat others' ascriptions as secure to the extent that we treat them as expressive (263–4; 268; 279; 314–18). Presumably we often treat as expressive acts that actually are expressive. Now, suppose we grant Bar-On's contention that the negative account suffices as an account of what makes an act expressive. Even so, it wouldn't serve smoothly as an account of what is involved in *taking* an act to be expressive. That is, considering the ordinary interpreter, it seems odd to suppose that she first picks up (how?) on the fact that another's behavior isn't epistemically mediated and then, on that basis, classifies it as expressive. Presumably she takes it to be expressive, or not—and *hence* as epistemically mediated, or not. It is easy and natural to suppose that interpreters class as expressive those acts (whether they have linguistic products or not) that seem similar in *observable* ways to acts like weeping or shouting for joy—acts we perceive as ventings of states of mind.⁹

Suppose Bar-On were really to do without all the claims she asserts she doesn't need. In that case, we could not take interpreters' ability to distinguish expressive

⁹ Bar-On *almost* addresses this worry explicitly. She notes that taking a token utterance of, "She just got up and left!" to be an expression of the speaker's annoyance 'would seem to depend on perception of an accompanying tone of voice, facial expression, etc.' (301). This suggests that when an utterance is not a self-ascription, interpreters can treat it as behavior that is in some sense expressive when it is accompanied by behavior that is naturally expressive. A bit later, Bar-On notes that self-ascriptions 'wear the conditions they purport to express on their linguistic sleeve,' explaining that 'linguistic understanding of what the 'I' ascription says...suffices for knowing what kind of condition the subject would be in if she were expressing *her* condition' (315). Therefore, she claims, even if we can't extend the positive, expression-as-showing account to avowals, avowals would still turn out to be transparent-to-the-subject's condition in the ways that matter to her account, and that are tied up with the similarities exhibited by all expressive behavior on the negative account of expression (316). The trouble is that some self-ascriptions of mental states, i.e. those made in an alienated way (319–20), aren't expressive. It is the proper sorting of *those* utterances, not non-ascriptive ones like, 'She just got up and left!', into expressive and non-expressive, that I'm worried about.

from reporting behavior to be grounded in their taking some utterances of ‘I’m so angry with my mother!’ as positively similar to grimaces. We couldn’t suppose that interpreters see similarities between linguistic and non-linguistic expressive acts. We would need an explanation of how an interpreter could figure out, directly, that some behavior wasn’t epistemically mediated. And interpreters’ classifications of avowals as expressive might reduce to, rather than explain, their granting them the immunity from certain criticism that they do, and conferring on them the presumption of truth that they do.¹⁰

This worry has application in another context. Bar-On uses her ‘Myth of Jenny’ to explore how children increase their tool-box of expressive means, from reachings and cries to ‘Teddy!’ and, eventually, ‘I want Teddy!’ While the Myth of Jenny is not officially part of her argument, and plays only a persuasive role, its ability to play that role is enhanced when readers are drawing on the positive account of expression as showing. That is, in thinking about those interpreters who have the specific task of interacting with linguistically developing children, it is useful to be able to think that these adults can perceive (some of) children’s mental states in their behavior. And it is useful to suppose that as these adults offer ‘You really want your Teddy, huh?’ or ‘You really miss your Dad, don’t you?’, they take themselves to be offering a tool that the child will use in activity that will continue to be expressive in some positive sense. (Not that they will conduct their child-rearing in Neo-Expressivist vocabulary—only that their reactions and tacit beliefs would, if codified, be a good fit for the account of expression in terms of showing.)

Perhaps Bar-On would be willing to retreat to a version of her view that merely stipulated that only self-ascriptions of present occurrent mental states (perceptual states excluded) were secure, while giving an expressive account of their security. And perhaps she could, if she wished, provide explicit scaffolding for the myth of Jenny, and for an account of our ability to respond differentially to expressive and reportive utterances. The scaffolding could in no way draw on the idea of interpreters perceiving positive similarities between natural and conventional expressive behavior. Since the retreat would be a retreat, and since this explicit scaffolding has yet to be provided (even assuming it could be), Bar-On needs the notions of sufficient-to-show and perception-enablement. Does she also need the specific claim that expressive behavior is a *characteristic component* of what it expresses?

Note that the Characteristic Component (hereafter ‘CC’) account gives us a very clear case of a showing that *is* sufficient. If Bar-On decided against it, she would owe another positive account of showings that were sufficient to show. That’s because it isn’t likely that repeating the cases of showings that are *not* sufficient to show—pulling aside a shirt to show sunburn, or pointing to a girl smiling, or keeping a seat on a bus—is enough to get us a full understanding of the sufficiency requirement. But without such an understanding, it isn’t clear how we could use the requirement to decide cases in which we are unsure whether a particular behavior is expressive.

¹⁰ This is a problem because Bar-On rejects accounts on which avowals’ security is *simply* a matter of our having a practice of granting them secure status.

Bar-On also appeals to the CC account in order to show that she hasn't saddled herself with behaviorist commitments by using the sufficient-to-show requirement to delineate expressions (421). Here too she either needs the CC account, or must provide an alternative account of how to achieve sufficiency without falling into behaviorism. So if Bar-On does, as I've argued, need the sufficient-to-show point, she *also* needs the CC account. That means that, absent the provision of alternatives, she needs expression to be sufficient to show what it expresses, to enable perception of what it expresses, and to be a characteristic component of what it expresses. But treating *avowals* as expressive in these ways would bring Bar-On close to constitutivism.

4 Making Characteristic Connections Just Tight Enough 287

Bar-On makes some of her most detailed remarks about her understanding of *characteristic* in the course of explaining how that notion enables her expressivism to escape 'behaviorist irrealism' (421). She argues that despite its use of the sufficiency point to explain which states can be securely avowed, Neo-Expressivism is in no way committed to 'denying the existence of genuine mental episodes over and above characteristic behavior dispositions' (422). She argues that she escapes this commitment because her account of showing relies on *characteristic*, not essential, components. Unlike an essential component, a characteristic component need not always be present (I can be sad without weeping). And unlike essential components, characteristic components can vary with contingent facts of biological evolution, cultural change, and individual idiosyncrasy (I can express happy satisfaction with a smile, or with a high-five gesture). The possibility of detaching any particular expressive behavior from the mental state it would (in some contexts) express shows that Neo-Expressivism isn't committed to the metaphysical ties between mental states and behavior that irrealist versions of behaviorism are.

Both in this closing discussion, and in her first discussion of characteristic components (on 298), Bar-On relies on the example of seeing a tree in her yard by seeing one of its branches. She points out that the branch is not an essential part of the tree, and that it could perform its perception-enabling role even if it is in some way atypical for that kind of tree, or even if it is an artificial graft, or has been painted over. She doesn't explain what enables a grafted branch to count as a CC when, presumably, neither a lizard crawling on the tree nor a bird house hung in it (even if bark eventually grew to encase its hanging wire) would be. Presumably you could not show me your tree by showing me the lizard or the bird house, because—to state the obvious—they don't have the right kind of unity with the tree.¹¹ And yet the grafted branch does.

There are surely many ways to work this issue out. And hence, presumably, many ways to work out how to individuate expressive acts and their products, both natural and conventional, so as to find exactly those that are CC's of our expressible states. But one easy way will mean including, in those individuations, references to the mental states

¹¹ Perhaps if we share a home, and installed the bird-house together, than you can. But this might depend on our coming to think of the tree as the tree with that birdhouse. If our concept of it changes, then so perhaps can the ways it can be shown to us.

expressed. Consider, for example, that *crying* is a CC of sorrow (and other emotions as well). For crying to be sufficient to show my sorrow, when I am sorrowing, it has to be *crying*—and not the eye-watering that happens as a result of chopping onions or walking into a cold wind. But it will be easiest to get a grip on the difference between crying and mere eye-watering (like the difference between grafted branches and branch-size bird-houses) by defining crying as eye-watering normally caused by sorrow.¹² If we took this route, metaphysical dependence is preserved, but conceptual independence is not. Bar-On does suggest that we pre-theoretically take mental states to be behaviorally expressible (421–22). So perhaps she wouldn't mind allowing our ordinary concepts of characteristic behaviors to embed an understanding of those behaviors as expressive—as normally resulting from particular mental states.¹³ There are, however, two other allowances that a full endorsement of her CC account appears to require. Bar-On might be less sanguine about these.

First, recall that the full development of this positive account of expression requires that avowing, or being disposed to avow, a mental state could be a characteristic component of that state. But perhaps some expressible mental states have no characteristic components at all. Green, for example, holds that beliefs are unlikely to be expressible in the perception-enabling sense, because (in his view) they lead to behavior only in connection with desire, and even then, to an array of behaviors that is too wide to be shown in the relevant sense by any one of them (92). One could counter this, and apply the avowal-as-CC suggestion to belief, if one adopted a non-reductionist dispositional account of belief itself. The disposition to avow would need to be significant enough to count as characteristic without making it (or its actualization) essential to the existence of the belief.¹⁴ This is not implausible, and one could presumably provide similar accounts for desires and intentions. Making the same sort of move for phenomenal states is less plausible, and yet Bar-On explicitly endorses the suggestion that states like (seeming to) smell vanilla or feeling cold in one's foot can be expressed (292–95).

It is hard to see how phenomenal states could be expressed in the perception-enabling way by their avowals because these states appear to lack the internal complexity of other mental states. It isn't only that they may lack intentional content. Rather, they are simple in that they appear to have consequences rather than components. And while the CC analysis doesn't apply exclusively to concrete objects, its appropriateness is hard to grasp if we can't think of the perceived states as having aspects, if not parts. Emotions intuitively seem complex in the relevant way: they are composed of dispositions to behavior, bodily posture and facial arrangement; and perhaps include distinctive phenomenological feels.¹⁵ A slumped

¹² The qualifier 'normally' marks my intention to respect Bar-On's allowing for dissimulation (where I cry, and hence express sorrow without expressing *my* sorrow) and expressive failure (where I shout 'Ouch!' without either intending to dissimulate or actually being in pain).

¹³ For another indication that she might not mind too much, note how she counts acts that result in expressive failures as nevertheless *reasonable*: by having interpreters advert to the absent state of mind that is normally a rational cause of that expressive behavior (395).

¹⁴ This could perhaps be done by following Eric Schwitzgebel's account of belief in terms of dispositional profiles, where aspects of a profile differ in their significance for possession of the belief (2002). While Schwitzgebel includes dispositions to be in certain phenomenal and cognitive states in his profiles, this approach might still strike Bar-On as too irrealist.

¹⁵ See Green's discussion of the idea that emotions are affect programs (88–93).

posture may be a component, and not simply a consequence of, dejection. The non-reductive dispositional treatment of intentional states suggested above would be a way of locating, within those states, the complexity that can fund component status. But it isn't obvious that phenomenal states are like either emotions or beliefs in this way. If an avowal of a phenomenal state is to be a CC of it, it must be shown that such states actually are complex in this or some other way. Bar-On might not want to incur a commitment to demonstrate this.

Second, treating a disposition to a mental state as a CC of that state may have implications for the question of whether that mental state has conceptual content.¹⁶ Here's why. Officially, Bar-On links expressivity to linguistic acts and not their products. But expanding the positive account to cover avowals requires finely individuating linguistic acts, so they can be linked to the mental states of which they are in fact characteristic components. If my act were *only* the act of venting my state (whatever it is), it could hardly suffice to show the particular state I'm in. Only if it is (also) the act of e.g. producing an utterance of 'I'm so glad to see you!' is it even potentially a *characteristic* component of my particular state. So we must identify the relevant acts as acts of producing particular utterances, identified by their semantic contents. And the 'we' here includes those making the avowals, if their acts are to count as intentional *as* those particular acts. So semantic content, on the positive view of expression, matters at the level of acts and not only on the level of products.¹⁷

But this has significant consequences if we're pursuing the CC account. That account requires some real unity, appropriate to the kind of object or state in question, connecting CC's to that of which they are components.¹⁸ In the case of organisms, and perhaps artifacts, some notion of functional unity might be what does the trick. Thus, while no particular chicken has to have feet, if I am seeing a chicken by seeing its foot, that foot is functionally connected to the chicken (the details allowing a prosthetic foot to work just as well need not concern us here). What is the appropriate kind of connection between act and state when the act has, or is tightly connected to, semantic content? One fairly obvious candidate would be the connection of explication: the act is connected to the state because it is the act of making explicit what is implicit in the state (what is made explicit need not exhaust the state, of course). If we went this route, any mental state that can be expressed with an avowal, including phenomenal states, would seem to have aspects that are implicitly conceptual.¹⁹

¹⁶ I won't venture beyond the intuitive notion of a distinction between conceptual and non-conceptual content. An occurrent belief provides a fairly uncontroversial example of a state with conceptual content, and a consciousness of a particular shade of color provides a controversial example of a state potentially without it. For discussion of how difficult it is to articulate a helpful notion of 'conceptual', see York H. Gunther's editorial introduction to *Essays on Non-Conceptual Content* (2003:1–19).

¹⁷ The act/product distinction is easiest to grasp when the acts in question are *ventings of one's state*, which ventings can have various products—gestures, actions, utterances. On a purely negative account of expression, there is no need to individuate expressive acts more finely. But if we aim to apply the CC account, even if only to natural expressions, we already need to individuate expressive acts more finely, and hence presumably by reference to their products.

¹⁸ The nature of this unity could determine what appropriate explanations were available, and required, for why a component characteristic of this type of object or state was in fact missing from this token of the type.

¹⁹ I'm assuming that the explication relation holds between relata that are both conceptual.

We would then face a familiar problem. Some of the mental states we avow are ones we are willing to ascribe to pre-linguistic children and non-human animals. We could suppose that human children's mental states have the conceptual content needed to fund CC status for the avowals they'll learn to make, even before they've achieved linguistic competence. Among other drawbacks, this might have troubling consequences for some cross-species mental state ascriptions. Alternatively, we could suppose that as children move through the developmental stages recounted in the Myth of Jenny, they not only increase their expressive repertoires and acquire mentalistic discourse, but also undergo psychological changes that make their mental states newly apt for genuinely expressive connections to fine-grained semantic contents.²⁰ Either way, the tight connections now drawn between avowals and states might be too close to constitutivism for Bar-On. This problem could perhaps be avoided if there were an alternative to the explicitation connection available to link states and acts-of-producing-semantic-products. But then Bar-On must provide it, or find a way to do without the radical expansion of the positive account of expression.

5 Conclusion

Bar-On aims to respect the distinctive features of avowals without grounding those features in Cartesian ontology or Cartesian epistemology. Her strategy is to track our natural ability to show our states. Some of our genuinely expressive showings could also be tellings, and they can sometimes 'represent genuine self-knowledge' (428). We see this, Bar-On argues, once we separate 'the semantics of avowals from their epistemology and use' (428). If, however, Bar-On develops the positive account of showing and treats avowals (or the dispositions to make them) as CC's of the states they express, the separation can't be completely clean. This doesn't bankrupt her strategy, but points toward a further task for expressive approaches to self-knowledge. We need to understand better how not only the gestures characteristic of our culture, but also the languages we learn, come to be deep enough inside us that they are available for venting our states, just as our tears are. Using a different metaphor, we need to understand better how our linguistic achievements do, as Bar-On says, become second nature to us. An important lesson to draw from her rich book is that pursuing this project is an excellent route to a sensible philosophy of mind.

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²⁰ Thinking about what would be involved in truly granting CC status to avowals is perhaps another way of arriving at the criticism Mathew Boyle levies at expressivist, including Neo-Expressivist, accounts of self-knowledge: that they haven't explained how to secure a child's *comprehension* of an avowal that replaces a natural expression, nor fully explained how a comprehended avowal could have the relation to (say) pain that crying does (2009: 145-6). Boyle's criticism, and resolution, focus on the 'I' component of avowals. The issue at stake here concerns the content ascribed to the self designated by that 'I'.

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