

1. Avowing and pledging in my own name

Assume that we, the protagonists, have to be able to rely on others and get others to rely on us. To secure the reliance of others, we will want to convey our (congenial) attitudes intentionally.

I might report my belief states, expecting others to rely on the reports for tit-for-tat reasons. But as a reporter I will often be able to save my name for reliability by explaining, e.g., that:

a) 'the evidence was misleading'; or b) 'things changed since I saw the evidence'.

And the admissibility of such excuses will make my words cheap and unconvincing.

But there is a non-reportive way of communicating my belief-states: via content-judgments.

If I judge that p, the manifest link to belief means I will convey that I believe that p (Evans).

And since judging that p (making up my mind that p) ~ensures that I believe that p,

I will not have to rely on (say, introspective) evidence to tell that I believe that p. Thus...

I will have the motive, means and confidence to renounce excuse a): i.e., to *avow* the belief.

And such an avowal of the belief state will make my words relatively costly and credible,

if the belief can be tested behaviorally: e.g. it is not over-probabilified or metaphysical.

My avowing the belief that p will amount to betting (riskily) on myself to act as if p.

Such avowal is likely to become the default—I am presumed to opt in—enabling me

to avow beliefs by any self-ascription where I do not opt out by saying I am just reporting.

Thus, I will have the means (and motive) to avow preference & intention. But the confidence?

This too, assuming desiderata fix the corresponding rankings of scenarios and options.

If the desiderata weigh suitably in judgment, I can be confident of my practical dispositions.

And I can avow the disposition by saying what I want or by voicing the desiderative judgment.

Avowing any behaviorally testable attitude is *committing* to it in a basic game-theory sense;

it involves advertising a willingness to pay a special cost in the event of a miscommunication.

But renouncing the changed-evidence excuse as well would raise the cost and be attractive.

So is this feasible with any of our attitudes? Might I *pledge*, not just avow, an attitude?

Ironically, I can have the confidence to pledge to X, and thereby pledge an intention to X,

so long as language provides a suitable means of doing so: e.g. 'I will X', 'I promise to X'

Having endorsed such a formula, my concern for reputation can assure me now that I will X;

and this, despite the fact that desiderata may shift and make X-ing otherwise unappealing.

Thus, I can renounce excuse b) as well as a), although not practical excuses ('I broke a leg')

Might I pledge a belief or a preference? No, for a distinct but parallel reason in each case.

I can purport to believe that p only given the data, to prefer V to W only given the desiderata.

Thus, I cannot claim to foreclose changing my mind in response to new data or desiderata.

In avowing and pledging, I speak *for* myself, not *about* myself; I assume the authority

that goes with claiming to be able to renounce a reporter's excuses, i.e. a) and b).

But can I ever hope to speak also for others in this way? Can I commit others as well as me?

2. Avowing and pledging in the name of others too

I may speak for others in two distinct exercises, involving communing and incorporation.

I will commune with others insofar as we create common ground on various attitudinal issues.

I will incorporate with them insofar as we coordinate in crafting and enacting a common mind.

Speaking for others in these ways may involve co-avowing attitudes or co-pledging intentions.

Each involves a form of joint action: a practice that speech facilitates but may also presuppose;

this is suggested by the rule-following story and is supported empirically (Tomasello).

In *joint action* it is manifest between the parties—say you, me and another—that

- a. we each prefer a certain result that none of us can (effectively) achieve on our own;
- b. we each recognize a plan of action whereby we can achieve the result together, or at least a plan of action for identifying a plan for achieving that result; and
- c. we are each disposed to join up with various others, if they try to implement the plan.

If we all act on such a basis, we enact a joint intention, each playing our required part. Examples of joint actions will include cooperation in directly seeking a common outcome, as in saving a swimmer on the beach or competing for a shared benefit (chess, democracy) They also include the activities of creating common ground or crafting a common mind.

Creating common ground

It is often manifest that you and I and others are exposed to the same data or desiderata, and that the data and the desiderata (note) are relevant for each, grounding similar attitudes. And so, manifestly speaking for others too, each may presume to co-avow such an attitude. The motives for doing this may be to test the attitudes and/or to benefit from sharing them.

Taking beliefs, for example, we might follow this plan (*vigilantly*), building up *common ground*:

- a. One presumptively co-avows a belief, seeking out what the other is ready to accept.
- b. If the other does not demur, that belief is registered by each as a matter of common belief.
- c. If the other does demur, each invokes data in the search for distinct common ground: if we succeed, fine; if not, we may seek reconciling explanations....or give up (Stalnaker).

A similar plan may enable the emergence of common, co-avowed ground in matters of desire. And such plans may be enacted, not just in the unbounded ways illustrated, but also for people constrained by (e.g. political) group or constrained by (e.g. religious) grounds. In these ways, we protagonists may *commune* attitudinally, not just read one another's minds.

Crafting a common mind

Acting together jointly may only involve episodic cooperation in furthering a single goal, as in getting together to save a swimmer, to play a game of tennis, or indeed to converse. We speakers may organize ourselves to act together across an open range of scenarios, on the basis of a set of desires and beliefs that is rationally formed, updated and enacted. Doing this, we would constitute an agent in our original sense of agency.

Explicitly or not, voluntarily or not, we can pledge to abide by a plan for acting together that will enable us to generate a group set of attitudes and to update and enact it as appropriate. We might do this by authorizing, ex ante or ex post, a single spokesperson, as in Hobbes, or, more likely, by authorizing processes for determining a (set of) spokes-voice(s) to follow. Any one of us in an authorized position could then co-avow or co-pledge the group's attitudes.

Our processes cannot generate a voice in the bottom-up manner of majority voting. (List-P). A, B and C could generate these views, each with a majority: p (A,B), q (B,C), not-p&q (A,C). But A, B and C might craft a voice by resort to top-down editing, as in a straw-vote procedure, and the lesson generalizes to other top-down possibilities: preview, review, checks...

This means that in forming non-dictatorial group agents, we must create a common mind that is distinct from our individual minds or any straightforward function of those minds. We internalize and enact this mind as members, putting our individual attitudes off-line; We, the group agent, may be the same collection as we, the individual members: no mystery. But as an agent, we are quite distinct, and enjoy an operational, if not ontological autonomy. This independence has implications for the explanatory indispensability of group agency, and, to anticipate 6, for a group agent's fitness to be held responsible in its own right.