

**The World without, The Mind within: An Essay on First-Person Authority**



Review Author[s]:  
Brie Gertler

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idea that a statement like “Sherlock Holmes does not exist” is involved simultaneously in “playing along with” the story’s pretense of reference, and then stepping outside of it to assert that “he” does not exist. Moreover, his analyses of game 2 and game 4 statements may provide the basis for a viable hybrid approach to fictional discourse combining a pretense reading (like Kendall Walton’s) of fictional-context discourse with a platonist construal (like Nicholas Wolterstorff’s) of the discourse of literary criticism concerning fictional characters.<sup>13</sup> Combining these views may bring advantages over pure pretense or platonist accounts, for (unlike Walton) we can assess serious-minded statements of literary criticism about characters, their relations to authors, and so on, without needing to take these claims, too, as involving pretense; while (unlike Wolterstorff) we can do justice to the role of pretense in fictional discourse by taking the author and readers to be pretending that there is a certain man, rather than merely delineating an abstract person-kind.<sup>14</sup>

Beyond its main focus, the book covers a wide range of topics concerning reference and (non)existence, including discussion of whether existence is a predicate (he argues that it is), how to handle tensed claims that certain individuals no longer exist, and how to understand discourse involving illusions and hallucinations. Perhaps most notably, the book closes with a lengthy discussion of the problem of the nonexistent in Indian philosophy—a discussion of interest in its own right, as it brings to light fascinating parallels with, as well as divergences from, the more recent Western debate. Regardless of whether it meets its ostensible goal, there is much that will be of interest in this work for philosophers of language, metaphysicians, and comparative historians of philosophy.

AMIE L. THOMASSON

*The University of Hong Kong  
and Texas Tech University*

**The World Without, The Mind Within: An Essay on First-Person Authority.** ANDRÉ GALLOIS. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. Pp. xii, 213.

In self-attributing beliefs and desires, we exploit a method that is different from (and perhaps superior to) our methods for attributing such states to others. On one traditional diagnosis, this difference stems from the subject’s exclusive access to introspective evidence. Gallois rejects the “access to evidence” model of the epis-

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discusses himself, pp. 198–99). It seems to me we would do better to simply distinguish pretense-involving from serious discourse, regardless of the types of entities purportedly discussed or the basis (i.e. linguistic or visual) for the discussion.

<sup>13</sup> See, e.g., pp. 100–101. For Walton see *Mimesis as Make-Believe*; for Wolterstorff see *Works and Worlds of Art* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980).

<sup>14</sup> Nonetheless, the platonist view of fictional characters he adopts—that they are sets of properties—is subject to a number of problems that are not discussed, and his arguments for adopting that over creationist views are cursory and unconvincing. (For criticisms of the set-of-properties view see my *Fiction and Metaphysics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 56–62. For Chakrabarti’s discussion of “creationist” views and arguments for his platonist view, pp. 117–23). Still, the pretense view could surely be wed with a different account of what sorts of abstract entities fictional characters are.

temic difference between self-knowledge and other-knowledge; in this ambitious book he provides a non-introspectivist alternative account of first-person authority. His intriguing proposal is that rational subjects can know their consciously held propositional attitudes without observing their own states. While he allows that we sometimes have introspective evidence for our own propositional attitudes, he is deeply suspicious about the power often accorded to such evidence. (His doubts about introspective evidence are most strikingly manifested in his attempt to show, in just a few sentences, that “I exist” is dubitable even for one engaged in the Cogito.) Robust conceptions of rationality and state consciousness weigh heavily in Gallois’ arguments and, I think, threaten to trivialize his claim that we enjoy first-person authority. But by departing from introspectivist accounts of self-knowledge, Gallois has made a provocative opening move in a gambit which promises to advance our understanding of the epistemic difference between self-knowledge and other-knowledge.

After two introductory chapters in which he refines the thesis that we have first-person authority about our own attitudes, and responds to initial skeptical doubts, Gallois sketches the “Basic Account” of first-person authority about beliefs. He then augments it to cover other propositional attitudes. My remarks will focus on the elaboration and extension of the Basic Account, which forms the middle half of the book. The final quarter of the book, which stands on its own, defends first-person authority from content externalist threats, and argues that competing accounts of first-person authority are insufficiently explanatory.

To his credit, Gallois carefully distinguishes first-person authority from privileged access. To have privileged access to one’s states is to be in a better position than anyone else to have justified beliefs about them. By contrast, on Gallois’ interpretation first-person authority involves merely a unique type of access. A subject has first-person authority about propositional attitudes just in case: If she has a consciously held propositional attitude, then she can know that she does “in an epistemically significant way in which no one else can know” this. (1) Remarkably, there is nothing in this definition to rule out that others can know that you have a particular propositional attitude in “an epistemically significant way” in which you cannot know this. This is a curious construal of first-person authority, as it allows for a symmetrical, non-hierarchical relation between self-knowledge and other-knowledge.

Gallois contends that the paradoxical nature of Moore assertions, such as “it is raining but I don’t believe that it is”, shows that we can know our beliefs “non-observationally”. That is, your evidence for “it is raining” suffices on its own, without any observation of the belief, to justify your belief *that you believe* that it is raining. This is the Basic Account of first-person authority. Gallois’ way of using Moore paradoxes is noteworthy for its focus on justification, since the paradoxical nature of Moore utterances seems independent of whether the belief in question is justified. His claim that justification is relevant to Moore paradoxes rests on his thesis that conscious beliefs are at least “subjectively” justified, that is, are taken by the subject to be justified. Call this thesis “USJ”, for the *ubiquity of subjective justification*. A second thesis ties the justification for “it is raining” to the self-attributing belief: even if one’s justification for believing that *p* is merely subjective justification, that justification suffices, without further evidence, to justify the belief that one believes that *p*. Call this thesis “SJS”, for the *sufficiency of justification for self-attributions*. Together, these two theses

entail that one is justified, non-observationally, in self-attributing any conscious belief; they thereby entail that we have first-person authority in Gallois' sense.

An extremely robust notion of rationality lies behind USJ and SJS, and thereby motivates the Basic Account. If USJ is correct, rationality requires not only that one's beliefs avoid obvious inconsistencies, but also that the subject is generally aware of her beliefs, and rejects any which she does not take to be justified. For instance, one may not take oneself to be justified, in any epistemic sense, in one's religious beliefs; perhaps, as Kant held, it is the lack of even apparent epistemic justification which renders such beliefs truly religious. USJ rules out such unjustified beliefs, for rational subjects, by taking rationality to involve some higher-level *awareness of* the justificatory status of lower-level beliefs. Gallois seems to take USJ to need little defense; and in fact it does need little defense given his stringent requirements for rationality.

The bulk of argument is therefore devoted to supporting SJS, which also concerns highly self-aware subjects. SJS entails that a rational subject is justified in taking herself to actually *believe* everything for which she has subjective justification. Allow that subjective justification is "all things considered", so that it overrides any counterevidence. Still, the step from subjective justification for a belief, to subjective justification for *self-attributing* that belief, requires more than mere consistency among beliefs. It further requires—if the latter justification is to be salient to actual self-attributing beliefs—that the processes responsible for forming higher-order beliefs are sensitive to the presence of lower-order subjective justification. Gallois argues for SJS as follows. If a rational subject could have subjective justification for *p*, and yet not be justified in self-attributing a belief that *p*, that subject would have a "bizarre" picture of the world. For he would not distinguish the belief that *p* from the corresponding fact. A change in belief would masquerade as an inexplicable alteration in facts; the absence of a belief about a particular issue would appear as a mysterious indeterminacy. This picture of the world is irrational, according to Gallois, and so a rational subject would reject it on a priori grounds, and would thus be justified in self-attributing any conscious belief, as SJS claims.

Why think that we can know a priori that the world isn't bizarre? I suspect that Gallois thinks we are a priori justified in believing that the world is not bizarre because believing this, and adjusting one's other beliefs accordingly, is part of what it means to be rational. This commitment further underscores the burden Gallois places on rationality. Rationality requires believing a priori in a non-bizarre world; believing only when one takes oneself to be justified; and being sensitive to the presence of subjective justification. The more demanding the requirements for rationality, the less is needed to demonstrate that rational subjects have first-person authority about their propositional attitudes. But placing excessive demands on rationality risks trivializing this thesis.

Gallois' restriction of first-person authority, to *conscious* beliefs, may appear to mitigate the triviality danger. Seeming violations of this thesis can then be explained by the fact that the belief in question wasn't conscious. Gallois declines to define "consciously held beliefs", but he does offer a criterion: consciously held beliefs are those which are "apt for linguistic expression by sincerely stating what one believes". (121) Unfortunately, his criterion does not quiet the triviality worry. For it says that consciously held beliefs are those which are, in some sense, accessible to the subject. It comes as little surprise that an exceedingly

self-aware subject—that is, one who meets Gallois' requirements for rationality—can knowingly self-attribute those beliefs that are accessible to her.

Gallois' strategy for extending the Basic Account to cover propositional attitudes other than belief, which I can give only in outline, also assumes a high degree of rational self-awareness. According to Gallois, rational subjects adopt propositional attitudes *for reasons*. These reasons are either strategic (one expects to benefit from having the attitude) or cognitive (e.g., one finds the object of desire desirable). Moreover, a rational subject who has the concept of various attitude modes (desire, fear, etc.) knows the sorts of reasons which lead to attitudes of those modes. Finally, rational subjects are in a position to identify their reasons for holding an attitude, and to non-observationally know which propositional contents they entertain. These conditions together entail that a rational subject can non-observationally know her propositional attitudes.

The notion of rationality which this argument requires is demanding indeed. Not only must the rational subject's beliefs have certain sources—reasons—but she must be *aware of* those sources. For it is by identifying the source of an attitude that one determines the attitude mode. For instance, a brainwashing victim, whose beliefs are caused but not by reasons, is therefore non-rational, even if he reflects upon his beliefs and fabricates causally inert rationales for them. And many of us are frequently non-rational, too, if we are unaware of the source of a consciously-held attitude. This requirement seems to conflict with Gallois' apt observation, earlier in the book, that we are not authoritative about the causal source of our attitudes. Even if a reason needn't cause an attitude, it must contribute to maintaining the attitude, in order to qualify as *the reason for* the attitude. And why think that we have special insight regarding what sustains our attitudes, any more than we have special insight about what causes them?

Arguably, explanations of first-person / third-person asymmetries are especially vulnerable to the threat of triviality. After all, efforts to account for these asymmetries have led to philosophers to endorse otherwise unpalatable views, including dualism. Perhaps the most we can hope for is to comprehend the nature of the asymmetry. Gallois' proposal, that the subject is uniquely able to know her own propositional attitudes without evidence, is promising in this regard. And he is to be commended for endeavoring to explain in detail how propositional attitudes can be known without anything like introspective evidence. But the degree of rationality and self-awareness his arguments for authority require, and the accessibility of the propositional attitudes they concern, seriously limit the scope of his thesis and the significance of his account. Even if Gallois fails to establish that we enjoy substantial first-person authority, however, his innovative account of self-knowledge is a promising first step towards the larger goal of showing that subjects have unique yet non-introspective sources of justification for self-attributing propositional attitudes.

BRIE GERTLER

*College of William and Mary*