MOORE’S PARADOX AND FIRST-PERSON AUTHORITY

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Summary
This paper explores Wittgenstein’s attempts to explain the peculiarities of the first-person use of ‘believe’ that manifest themselves in Moore’s paradox, discussed in Philosophical Investigations, Part II, section x. An utterance of the form ‘p and I do not believe that p’ is a kind of contradiction, for the second conjunct is not, as it might appear, just a description of my mental state, but an expression of my belief that not-p, contradicting the preceding expression of my belief that p. Thus, ‘I believe that p’ is just a stylistic variant of ‘p’; the word ‘believe’ doesn’t seem to have a substantial role to play in such an utterance. Following Wittgenstein, I discuss why there could not be a first-person present-tense use of the word that was more akin to its use in the third person: why it is impossible to describe one’s own current beliefs in a detached manner without thereby expressing them. In the final section, I try to develop Wittgenstein’s suggestion that the non-epistemic authority we have regarding the contents of our beliefs can be clarified by considering its link with intention and action.

1. Moore’s Paradox is the observation that it makes no sense to say:

(1) It is raining and I don’t believe it.

What is the point of Wittgenstein’s discussion of this paradox in chapter x of MS 144, published as Part II of the Philosophical Investigations? A first answer to this question might be given as follows: One of the leitmotifs of Wittgenstein’s later philosophy is his critique of referentialism, the view that words have meaning in virtue of standing for objects (their reference). And Wittgenstein was particularly concerned with the application of referentialism to psychological language and the consequent view that words like ‘understand’, ‘think’, ‘pain’, ‘hope’, or ‘believe’ denote states or processes in the privacy of our minds (cf. PI § 308). According to this—highly natural—view, one would be inclined to say that the statement:
(2) I believe that it’s not raining.

was a description of the speaker’s state of mind (PI IIx, 190ab), whereas the statement:

(3) It is raining.

was a description of something entirely different, namely the weather (cf. RPP I § 819). So one should expect these two statements to be perfectly compatible, as descriptions of two logically independent subjects.

Suppose ‘I believe it’s going to rain’ meant: ‘When I say to myself the sentence “It’s going to rain” it gives me a feeling of assurance’ […] If that were the case, Moore’s paradox would not come about: I could then utter the assertion: ‘I believe it’s going to rain; and it’s not going to rain’. (MS 132, 98f.) However, this conjunction is a sort of contradiction. So expressions of belief, such as (2), cannot be understood as merely descriptions of one’s own state of mind. As a more plausible reading Wittgenstein suggests that (2) is in fact used very much like the assertion:

(4) It is not raining.

In this case the introductory phrase ‘I believe that …’ is fairly unimportant (PI IIx, 190c). It may be seen as a rhetorical device to attract attention to oneself as opposed to others, comparable to the preface: ‘If you want to know my opinion …’ (cf. PI IIx, 191b). It is an introductory signal and not itself part of the statement thus announced. Another possibility is that the words ‘I believe that…’ are used — like ‘It is probable that…’ — to express a degree of uncertainty (cf. RPP I § 821). Again, they wouldn’t be part of the statement itself. They indicate the way a statement is presented, not its content: ‘Don’t regard a hesitant assertion as an assertion of hesitancy’ (PI IIx, 192m). Both readings of ‘I believe that …’ dispel the semblance of paradox. For once it is clear that by uttering (2) ‘I believe that it’s not raining’ one asserts that it’s not raining, the statement’s incompatibility with (3) ‘It is raining’ is obvious. Is that Wittgenstein’s solution of Moore’s paradox? So it seems, for the just quoted remark about hesitancy concludes the discussion in chapter x.
2. The account given above, however, cannot be the whole story, or it would be difficult to understand why Wittgenstein thought Moore's paradox so extraordinarily explosive and illuminating: ‘Moore poked into a philosophical wasp nest with his paradox; and if the wasps did not duly fly out, that’s only because they were too listless’ (CV 87 = MS 137, 120).

What I presented as a first approximation to a solution of Moore's paradox is, from a different perspective, exactly what is so disquieting about the matter: The paradox disappears when we convince ourselves that the word ‘believe’ has a peculiar function in assertions of the form ‘I believe that…’. But exactly this asymmetry between different uses of the same verb is likely to appear paradoxical:

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

So it looks as if the assertion “I believe” were not the assertion of what is supposed in the hypothesis “I believe”! (PI IIx, 190cd)

Equally paradoxical is the asymmetry between the use of the word ‘believe’ in the first person singular present tense and its use in the past tense (PI IIx, 190ef):

(5) I believe that the butler did it.

says roughly the same as:

(6) The butler did it.

On the other hand:

(7) I believed that the butler had done it.

cannot be shortened in such a way. For this really is a statement about my past belief. Obviously in statements such as (5) the word ‘believe’ does not have the same function as in (7), or in a number of other forms of statements, such as:

(8) Suppose I believe that the butler did it, and in fact he didn't.
(9) Inspector Witherspoon believes that the butler did it.
So it ought to be possible for there to be a language, a variant of English, that takes this difference into account by not using the same word in both kinds of cases (PI IIx, 191ef). Let us suppose, in that language instead of ‘I believe that p’ one simply says ‘p’; or, if one wants to express uncertainty: ‘Probably, p’; or, in order to attract attention to oneself one uses the words: ‘I say, p’ (cf. PI IIx, 192i). In this language Moore’s paradox would not exist; ‘instead of it, however, there would be a verb lacking one inflexion’ (PI IIx, 191f). But of course this language is merely a clarified version of our language. A difference in use is clearly marked in difference of wording.

This then is the disquieting phenomenon: When we go by use and function, rather than appearance on the page, the word ‘believe’ in statements of the form ‘I believe that p’ (for short, first-person use) is different from the word ‘believe’ in other statements (for short, third-person use). Thus the word ‘believe’ in its third-person use is grammatically incomplete. In the sense in which I can say of others that they believe something; and of myself that in the past I believed something or that I might have believed something (which as it happens I know to be false)—in that sense of the word I cannot say of myself that I believe something now. That sounds odd, because we are so strongly inclined—prejudiced—to take it for granted that language always functions in the same way. ‘Don’t look at it as a matter of course, but as a most remarkable thing, that the verbs “believe”, “wish”, “will” display all the inflexions possessed by “cut”, “chew”, “run”’ (PI IIx, 190k).

Amongst other things, Wittgenstein is here also attacking ‘Frege’s idea that every assertion contains a hypothesis,’ which is the thing that is asserted’ (PI § 22; cf. RPP I § 500). For, as noted above, one aspect of the asymmetry in question is that the assertion:

(5) I believe that the butler did it.

does not assert what is supposed in the corresponding hypothesis:

(10) Suppose I believe that the butler did it.

The hypothesis (10) is about my state of belief which is not part of the content of the assertion (5). Moreover, it is wrong to regard a hypothesis

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1. Frege rather uses the term ‘Gedanke’: ‘thought’.
as the basic element to which something else needs to be added in order to produce an assertion (as suggested by Frege’s notation). In fact, the asertorical use of sentences is far more elementary than the comparatively sophisticated language-game of hypothesizing (cf. RPP I § 478).

Wittgenstein once called it ‘the main mistake made by philosophers of the present generation, including Moore’ when considering language only to look at a form of words and not the use made of the form of words (LC 2). Undoubtedly, a reason for his interest in Moore’s paradox and the importance he ascribed to it was that it affords a particularly clear example of that mistake, or the tendency to make it. Going by superficial appearances one is inclined to deny that (1) ‘It is raining and I don’t believe it’ involves a contradiction; and yet if anyone were to utter that sentence, one would say to him that:

he contradicted himself! That is an indication of considerable gaps in logic. It is an indication—as are so many other things—that what ordinarily we call ‘logic’ is applicable only to a minute part of the game with language. That, indeed, is why logic is so uninteresting, while, on the face of it, it ought to be so interesting. (MS 132, 119f., follows after RPP I § 488; cf. LW I § 525)

In a similar vein Wittgenstein wrote in a letter to Moore, shortly after Moore had presented a paper on his paradox:

This assertion [‘p is the case and I don’t believe that p is the case’] has to be ruled out and is ruled out by “common sense”, just as a contradiction is. And this just shows that logic isn’t as simple as logicians think it is. In particular: that contradiction isn’t the unique thing people think it is. It isn’t the only logically inadmissible form and it is, under certain circumstances, admissible. And to show this seems to me the chief merit of your paper. (ML 285, October 1944)

Wittgenstein saw Moore’s paradox as a striking example of the shortcomings of formal logic. That explains why he thought it so important and likened it to a poke into a wasps’ nest. But it does not fully explain his own continuing occupation with it (over some five years). Why should Moore’s paradox, apart from being an embarrassment to the aficionados of formal logic, also pose a serious philosophical problem to Wittgenstein himself?

3. We saw that the use of the word ‘believe’ is not uniform: in utterances of the form ‘I believe that p’ (what I called its first-person use) it doesn’t
play the same role as in other forms of statements (what I called its third-
person use). Indeed, in its first-person use it may not have any real func-
tion at all, as often one can express one's belief just as well by the mere
statement 'p'. Thus, if for the moment we look only at simple present-tense
statements, we could say that the word ‘believe’ has no substantial use in
the first person:

[I believe that p.] = p
You believe that p.
He/she believes that p.

Is there an explanation for this irregularity? This is the question that a
considerable part of Wittgenstein's remarks on the topic are concerned
with: Why do we not have a more substantial use for the word ‘believe’
in the first person present tense? Wittgenstein writes that he is 'tempted
to look for a different development of the verb ["to believe"] in the first
person present indicative' (PI IIx, 191j); that is, a development that would
allow me to say with the word ‘believe’ of myself exactly what I can say
of others; a development in which the words 'I believe that' could not be
dropped, but would be as semantically indispensable as 'You believe that'
or 'He believes that'.

Believing, Wittgenstein tentatively suggests, 'is a kind of disposition of
the believing person. This is shewn me in the case of someone else by his
behaviour; and by his words. And under this head, by the expression "I
believe …" as well as by the simple assertion (PI IIx, 191k–192a). So if the
first-person use is to be assimilated to the third-person use, it too would
have to be based on observation. In order to ascribe a belief to myself I
would have to take notice of myself as others do, to listen to myself talking,
to be able to draw conclusions from what I say' (PI IIx, 192a). It would
have to be possible for me to say: 'Judging from what I say, this is what
I believe' (PI IIx, 192d); or again: 'I seem to believe' (PI IIx, 192c). And
then, if I am able to take such a distanced attitude towards my own words
and beliefs, I could also say: (1) 'It is raining and I don’t believe it' (PI
IIx, 192f). This, however, seems impossible. Apparently, I cannot adopt
such a distanced attitude towards my own behaviour (– and so Moore’s
paradox arises). Why not?

2. To this question Wittgenstein reverts with remarkable frequency; see RPP I §§ 703-5,
711, 712, 737, 739, 744f., 752, 814.
A natural and tempting answer is that there is just no need. I do not need to observe and interpret my own behaviour because I experience myself from the inside and so know immediately what I believe (RPP I §§ 704, 711, 738f., 744f.): “One feels conviction within oneself, one doesn’t infer it from one’s own words or their tone.” — What is true here is: one does not infer one’s own conviction from one’s own words; nor yet the actions which arise from that conviction’ (PI IIx, 191i). Of course, there is no specific feeling by which one tells what one believes. The word ‘feel’ is just a convenient expression to fill a gap: when one regards something as true without being able to give reasons or evidence, one may say: ‘I feel that …’. — But is it not at any rate true that I know immediately what I believe? No, one can’t really speak of knowledge here, at least not in the ordinary sense of the word, which can be characterized by three features (PI § 246; PI IIxi, 221):

(i) There are reasons, evidence or a way of acquiring knowledge (e.g., sense perception). I.e., there is an answer to the question ‘How do you know?’.
(ii) There is a possibility of doubt or error.
(iii) There is a possibility of ignorance or surprise.

But these are exactly the points that Wittgenstein is concerned to clarify in his discussions of Moore’s paradox. None of these features pertains to expressions of one’s belief: One’s claim that one has a certain belief is not based on reasons, evidence or self-observation; there is no room for doubt or error about the contents of one’s own belief; nor can one be entirely ignorant of, or surprised to find out, what one believes.³ These are the features of the concept of belief on which Wittgenstein is trying to shed more light. He is trying, in other words, to find an explanation for the non-epistemic authority we have regarding the contents of our beliefs.

But is it really non-epistemic? Do I not know what I believe? True, one may say, the lack of those three features, which are present in more ordinary cases of knowing, shows that this is a somewhat special kind of knowledge. But that doesn’t mean that it cannot be a case of knowledge all the same. If it’s true that p and someone is able reliably to report that p, it would seem appropriate to say that he knows that p. Hence, as I

³. Even in cases of self-deception one cannot be entirely ignorant of what one tries to overlook, nor can one be truly surprised when eventually it resurfaces from the back of one’s mind. After all, calling it self-deception implies at least some vague awareness of the matter.
am reliably able to report what it is I believe, why not say that I know it?—There is, indeed, no reason to be dogmatic about the use of the word ‘know’. ‘Say what you choose, so long as it does not prevent you from seeing the facts’ (PI § 79). But then, if we use the word ‘to know’ in this diluted sense, all it means is: ‘to be able to state reliably’ (cf. PI Iiviii, 185c). Hence, saying that I ‘know’ what I believe would not afford any explanation why I am able to state my beliefs, even without any observation of my behaviour.

4. Wittgenstein suggested tentatively that believing is ‘a kind of disposition’ (PI Iix, 191k) that can manifest itself both in utterances (e.g. ‘It’s raining’) and in non-verbal behaviour (e.g. taking an umbrella). So it should be possible to identify such a disposition through self-observation; as in the case of other dispositions. For example, I know from self-observation that after the second glass of wine I become melancholy; or that today I am uncommonly irritable. I can also observe my dispositions to believe or not to believe things: that for certain periods or with respect to certain things I am particularly credulous or suspicious (cf. RPP I § 502; RPP II § 417). But can I also observe that I believe something? Can I observe, for example, ‘that I reply “Yes” to the question “Will he come?” and also exhibit such-and-such other reactions’ (RPP I § 503)?

We can distinguish between the manifestation (or expression) of a disposition and the self-ascription of a disposition (RPP I § 832). For example, my utterance ‘Tennis ist langweilig’ may be a manifestation of a disposition to speak German, but not its description or self-ascription; whereas ‘I have a disposition to speak German’ is a self-ascription, but not a manifestation of that disposition. As long as this distinction is applicable, the kind of incoherence Moore described is not a problem. Of course the self-ascription of a disposition may be accompanied by a manifestation of the opposite disposition; or the claim that one does not have a certain disposition may be at odds with a simultaneous manifestation of that

4. This is not meant to be more than an approximate location of ‘believe’ on the map of psychological concepts. Beliefs are very unlike states of consciousness with genuine duration, and more like dispositions, in that they are not interrupted by a break in one’s attention or consciousness, but manifest themselves in a person’s verbal and non-verbal behaviour under certain circumstances (RPP II § 45). On the other hand, the fact that there are crucial logical differences between ordinary dispositions and believing is exactly what the discussion of Moore’s paradox, and in particular Wittgenstein’s invitation to construe believing as ‘a kind of disposition’, is meant to bring out.
disposition; but that would never amount to nonsense. It would simply be an error, like the following:

(11) I don’t use metaphors: I never beat about the bush.

Or (RPP I § 503):

(12) I’m incapable of pronouncing any word with four syllables.

Such judgements are based on observations of one’s own linguistic habits or capacities; observations that may well be inaccurate.

An utterance of the form ‘I believe that p’ we take as a manifestation (or expression) of one’s belief that p. Now the question is whether it could not, instead, be construed as a fallible self-ascription of a kind of noetic disposition; rather as ‘the report “I am in the state of belief …”’ (RPP I § 832; cf. RPP II § 281).

There are indeed cases where observing one’s own responses one appears to learn something new about one’s beliefs or desires, as in this example from Tolstoy’s Anna Karenina:

At first Anna sincerely believed that she was displeased with him [Vronsky] for daring to pursue her; but soon after her return from Moscow, having gone to a party where she expected to meet him but to which he did not come she distinctly realised by the disappointment that overcame her, that she had been deceiving herself and that his pursuit was not only not distasteful to her, but was the whole interest of her life.5

Clarifying one’s thoughts and feelings, deciding whether something is on balance a good thing or a bad thing, may take some time and may involve taking stock of one’s emotional responses in real or possible situations. An insufficiently considered judgement may not express one’s real views, yet sometimes one has reasons to prevent oneself from attending to all that is relevant, preferring to stick to a convenient prejudice, deceiving oneself; until one’s attention is forced back to what one tried to overlook. However, even when occasioned by an observation of one’s emotional response or behaviour, the expression of one’s thoughts and feelings is not for that matter just a hypothesis. What Anna’s disappointment brought home to her is that she had been deceiving herself. That means, even before the event

she should have been aware that she thought more highly of Vronsky than she cared to admit. And if now she were to say: ‘I believe that Vronsky’s attention is not at all disagreeable’, she would, again, express or manifest her belief (just as earlier she might have expressed the belief that Vronsky was a nuisance), and not just make a self-ascriptive on the basis of some fallible evidence.

Could perhaps psychoanalysis provide us with a case of a statement of belief that was based entirely on disinterested self-observation, allowing for a direct conflict with a simultaneous expression of belief? Consider an example, cited by Freud, of a member of parliament, named Lattmann, who called for a ‘rückgratlos’ (spineless) declaration of loyalty to the Kaiser, when he intended to say ‘rückhaltlos’ (unreserved). There is no doubt that such slips of the tongue often betray what a person truly believes contrary to, or beyond, what he intended to say. The thought is in one’s mind while one is expressing something else, and inadvertently a part of it finds its way into the speech, especially when there is a phonetic similarity between a word one wanted to say and a word expressive of one’s parallel secret thought. So it is conceivable that it had just occurred to Lattmann, or had been lurking at the back of his mind, that such a public kow-tow to the Emperor would show some lack of character. But it is also possible that he could in all honesty deny any such thought, insisting that he really believed the declaration in question to be perfectly appropriate, reasonable and dignified. His slip of the tongue, he might protest, was just that, an unfortunate phonetic accident. Freud, however, does not accept this possibility. For him it is an axiom that in this sphere there are no coincidences: everything we do or say is a manifestation of our thoughts and desires. Hence, if indeed we are not aware of any such thoughts or desires, they must be unconscious. It would appear then that Lattmann, if psychoanalytically trained, could have been in a position to say:

7. Admittedly, Freud also suggests that psychoanalysis can prove the existence of unconscious thoughts and desires by bringing them to consciousness: ultimately elicit from the patient an acknowledgement that he did indeed have them. However, apart from the practical worry that such a confession may be entirely due to the analyst’s persuasive suggestions, this does not seem to be taken as a negative criterion. Which is to say that a patient’s failure to own up to the suggested thoughts and desires is not regarded as conclusive proof that they didn’t exist. And Freud has no qualms saying that analysis may uncover thoughts the patient will never recognise as his own (S. Freud, J. Breuer: *Studien über Hysterie*, Frankfurt/Main: Fischer, 1970, 218). Cf. M. Eagle, ‘Validation of Motivational Explanation in Psychoanalysis’, in: *Psychoanalysis and Contemporary Science* 2 (1973), 265-75.
(13) It is honourable to make a declaration of loyalty to the Kaiser, but (as my slip of the tongue shows) unconsciously I don't believe it.

However, the psychoanalytical inference is as dubious as the underlying idea that all our mistakes must be determined by, and expressive of, our beliefs and desires, a premise for which Freud offers no support. But setting such doubts aside, the idea of unconscious beliefs—which I am unable just to express, but must discover through behavioural evidence—implies a split personality (cf. RPP I § 820). In order to be able to say: “Judging from what I say, this is what I believe.” [...] One would have to fill out the picture with behaviour indicating that two people were speaking through my mouth’ (PI IIx, 192ef). For as an observer of oneself one must step back from oneself, adopting the stance of another person. But then we lose hold of the very thing we were trying to construe: an observer's attitude towards one's own utterances. If there are two people speaking through my mouth, then it is no longer my own utterances I am contradicting. The case is similar to the (not unlikely) scenario of a railway official making the announcement: 'Train No. ... will arrive at ... o'clock. Personally I don't believe it' (RPP I § 486). The first sentence we don't regard as the speaker's own statement, but as an announcement that he is obliged to make even if he does not believe it to be true.

5. Is there anything more that could be said to explain why it is impossible (pathological cases apart) to distance oneself from one's own expressions of belief in the way required by Moore's paradoxical sentence (1)? Chapter x of Part II of the Investigations does not provide much of an answer. The point is only touched upon in two laconic remarks:

Do I myself not see and hear myself, then?—That can be said. (PI IIx, 191h)

My own relation to my words is wholly different from other people's. (PI IIx, 192b)

Yet from the underlying manuscript sources it appears that this must be the Archimedean point of the whole discussion. When talking about Moore's paradox in a lecture (on 14th February 1947), Wittgenstein said (according to Geach's notes): 'It is colossally important that one doesn't normally infer one's own beliefs from one's own behaviour' (LPP 67). Moreover he
remarked: ‘Moore’s paradox is bound up with the problems of voluntary motion and intention’ (LPP 67). This connection I shall now attempt to reconstruct.

It seems to me that Wittgenstein’s thoughts on this matter remained unfinished, but at the time he had hoped here to find an explanation for the infallibility of expressions of belief, and indeed did find such an explanation at least in outline. Thus, Wittgenstein’s discussions of Moore’s paradox are (amongst other things) a contribution to his discussion of first-person authority, complementing his earlier remarks on this topic (PI §§ 246ff.).

In Philosophical Investigations II, chapter x, there is only one passage mentioning a link between belief and voluntary action. Wittgenstein presents the idea of a language in which the verb ‘to believe’ is replaced by the expression ‘to be inclined to say’, except in the first person singular present tense, where instead of ‘I believe it is so’ one simply says: ‘It is so’ (PI IIx, 191e). He continues:

Moore’s paradox would not exist in this language; instead of it, however, there would be a verb lacking one inflexion.

But this ought not to surprise us. Think of the fact that one can predict one’s own future action by an expression of intention. (PI IIx, 191fg)

What ought not to surprise us here is that the imagined verb would lack one inflexion (cf. PI IIx, 190k). For the same thing occurs elsewhere, namely with the future auxiliary ‘will’ in its use to predict future events on the basis of past or present experience (e.g., ‘It will rain tonight’; ‘He will be here presently’). This concept, too, is incomplete, as ‘will’ in the first person singular has a rather different meaning: ‘I will be there’ is (normally) an expression of intention, and not a prediction based on experience.

Of course the analogy is not perfect, for in this case there is a first person singular after all, although expressed by a different verb form: ‘shall’. ‘I shall be there’ is not an expression of intention, but roughly the same kind of prediction as ‘My wife will be there’, treating a person’s presence at the place in question as an occurrence to be predicted on the basis of one’s knowledge, rather than as something within the speaker’s immediate power. Even one’s own voluntary actions one can often predict on the basis of experience: ‘Compliant as I am, I expect I shall eventually acquiesce in

8. Or, according to Shah’s notes: ‘This paradox hangs together with voluntary and involuntary activity, and intention, and (the fact) that intention is a prediction—not a prediction based on hypothesis’ (LPP 195).
his wishes’ (cf. LPP 66). There may even be an outright conflict between intention and prediction: ‘I intend to say no, but I expect I shall in the end be persuaded to say yes.’ This, however, is only possible where the action in question is to take place some way in the future, so that there is yet time for me to change my intentions. My future intentions may not be known to me, so that my predictions are, in principle, just like others’ predictions based on experience and quite fallible. By contrast, it is hardly possible for me to make an inductive prediction about what I am intentionally going to do right now. If, for example, I am really resolved to lock the door now, I may of course have misgivings about my success (perhaps the key won’t work), but I can neither doubt nor expect that I am at least going to try. To that extent intention outranks inductive expectation. The word ‘intentional’ implies that one is immediately aware of what one is doing. It is obvious that ‘my relation to my actions is not one of observation’ (RPP I § 712); rather more obvious than that I cannot be an observer vis-à-vis my own beliefs. Therefore Wittgenstein tries to draw attention to the close conceptual link between intentions and beliefs, to show that the latter are just as much part of our selves and not to be observed from the outside as are the former.

Every intention involves beliefs or knowledge, and every belief can manifest itself in intentions or actions. When somebody else says ‘This train is for Hereford’ I can doubt whether the utterance is really the expression of a belief; not when I say it. For my beliefs are interwoven with intentions (e.g. to travel to Hereford). When I distrust another person’s statement I suspect that he might not be prepared to act in accordance with his words (e.g., not board this train even when he wants to go to Hereford by train). But it is logically impossible for me to be in doubt about my own intentions (except of course in the sense that I may be undecided), and to the extent that my beliefs are involved in my intentions, they too must be logically exempt from any doubt. For example, my intention to take the train on Platform 2 to Hereford involves the belief that the train on Platform 2 is the Hereford train. Thus I can just as little be in doubt that I have this belief as I can be in doubt that I have that intention.

9. Are there not also beliefs about entirely theoretical or historical matters that can hardly impinge on my actions? For any belief there will at least be the possible verbal action of saying truthfully what one holds to be true in the matter, for example, trying to give the correct answer when examined.
Why don’t I make inferences from my own words to a condition from which words and actions take their rise? In the first place, I do not make inferences from my words to my probable actions. (RPP I § 814; cf. RPP I § 738)

If I were to infer what I believe from my utterance “This is the Hereford train”, I would also have to infer what, given my goals, I am likely to do. But that I cannot infer, because I intend it (cf. LW II, 10d). My intentions do not leave any room for an uninvolved observer’s attitude towards the intended action (setting aside the qualification entered above: that long-term intentions may be expected to change); and so there is also no room for an uninvolved observer’s attitude towards the beliefs involved in one’s intentions, which could potentially be any of one’s beliefs.10

10. I am indebted to David Dolby for comments on an earlier version of this paper.