Chapter 4
The Self and Its Knowledge: *The Legacy of Rasvihary Das*

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Abstract This essay explores Rasvihary Das's idea of self-knowledge and tries to situate his thoughts in contemporary perspective. This essay begins with a description of the source and nature of the philosophical problem that one confronts when one talks about self-knowledge. Contrary to Rasvihary, a non-objectual view of self-knowledge has been shown to be worth considering. In the latter half of the essay, an account of different kinds of avowals has been taken up for scrutiny against the background of Rasvihary's ascription of immediacy to self-knowledge.

Keywords Elusiveness thesis · Non-conceptual information · Inner-sense model · Self-ascription · Misidentification · Avowal

4.1 The Problem of Self-knowledge

The Upaniṣadic seer urges us to know our own selves. The temple of the Delphic oracle carries the inscription 'Know thy self.' Since the dawn of civilization humans started asking about the nature of self. Self-knowledge as commonly understood is a common phenomenon. Every one of us quite effortlessly knows

Rasvihary Das (1894–1973) was born in district Sylhet, now in Bangladesh. He received his higher education in Kolkata. He was deeply influenced by two of his teachers, viz. B.N. Seal and K.C. Bhattacharyya, both very distinguished philosophers of early 20th century India. After completing his postgraduate studies at University of Calcutta, he joined Indian Institute of Philosophy, Amalner where he stayed for more than two decades, first as a senior fellow and then as Professor of Logic and Metaphysics. Here in Amalner he received training in Indian philosophy from some of the best traditional pandits. Later, he joined as a faculty in philosophy department of University of Calcutta where he was till his retirement. He was also visiting professor at the Universities of Harvard and Gottingen. He was the founder of Indian Academy of Philosophy, Calcutta that still fosters research and various other programmes in philosophy.

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a lot of things about our own selves: our beliefs, hopes, desires, fears, etc. We are unhesitatingly sure of our own intentional states, sensations and emotions. Any normal individual would claim a command over all these knowledge.

Even from the ordinary use of the word 'I', it seems that we all know the self. 'I' normally stands for the speaker or the knower. So to know the self is to know it as either the speaker or the knower. The relation between speech and knowledge (thought) has been highlighted in contemporary times by Donald Davidson. Davidson urges that ascription of thought requires ascription of the ability to interpret. Unless one can interpret speech, we cannot give an account of such a creature possessing thought. Ascription of thought and ascription of speech are contemporaneous. This line of thinking gives credence to Rasvihary's comment that to know the self is either to know it as a speaker or as a knower. Since speaking in a significant sense depends on knowing, we can consider the self as knower. To know anything as a knower is to know it as performing the function of knowing. And where else can one have this knowledge except in the direct experience of knowing that one has? When I have a cognitive experience, I know my own self directly as the knower. And precisely here, the philosopher raises the question: in a knowledge situation, do I know myself as the knower?

One could, of course, argue that there is no problem here, for we do certainly know ourselves as knower in the act of knowing. We cannot think of knowledge without any reference to the knower, the owner of the knowledge. We cannot think of colour without there being any object that possesses the colour. Experience of the colour implies experience of the object that has the colour. Similarly, an epistemic experience requires an acquaintance with the knower, the self. Of course it would be rather naive to deny the possibility of any act of knowing, for then we would not even be able to talk intelligibly about knowing. So the argument goes that not only I know, also I know myself as a knower.

If we all are so familiar with self-knowledge, then why do we find people from across the globe urge us to know our selves? This advice to know one's self sounds like telling us the obvious. The philosopher, of course, could say that although we know the self, we do not know its nature. We are aware of the self in its generality, what we need to know is its specific nature and function. I could very well be acquainted with a flower without being aware of the specificities of that flower of which may be a botanist is aware of. In a certain sense, certainly I am aware of my self, my own existence; but then, I might be unaware of the extent of my ability and power.

Here, let me explain the problem of self-knowledge in greater detail. A theory of self-knowledge is expected to explain two points as follows: *one*, our knowledge of what kind of thing we are; *two*, the nature and extent of our knowledge of particular thoughts, sensations, perceptual experiences, etc. Clearly, these two forms of self-knowledge are related. If one believes in the material nature of self, then an account of thoughts and sensations will have a materialist underpinning. If, on the other hand, one believes in an immaterialist theory of self, one needs to reinterpret the physicalist understanding of particular self-knowledge. Nonetheless, the relation between these two forms of self-knowledge has been questioned many

a times in Western philosophical tradition. Without going into an exegesis, let us try to understand the source of this scepticism.

To put the point rather bluntly, following Kant, knowledge can be said to spring from two sources. Sensory input is given in, what Kant calls 'intuition', and those raw materials are conceptualized by the faculty of understanding. Now, if this model of knowledge is applied to self-knowledge, we are tempted to think of introspection, instead of 'outer senses', as the source of our knowledge of what kind of things we ourselves are. In this model, introspection is a form of self-perception, involving the exercise of an inner sense. So, inner sense could be thought of as an appropriate source of self-knowledge. And this is precisely the source of discomfort for many philosophers. Many notable names including Hume and Kant have expressed their inability to get hold of a persisting thing called self in introspection involving inner sense. What inner sense provides us with are discrete individual perceptions. If one pursues this line of thinking, then one is led to what might be called 'Elusiveness of self.' Inner sense does not provide any clue to a self that is fixed and abiding. If introspective awareness, involving the inner sense, is suppose to give us the knowledge of our selves as persisting entity, then Elusiveness thesis implies that knowledge of self as an abiding entity is unavailable to us. We are not in a position to know ourselves. We do not know what kind of things we are. This is the sceptical argument for denying that we know what we are. The argument of the sceptic for Elusiveness thesis could be presented in the following way (Cassam 2004: 4).

1. Knowledge requires intuitions and concepts.
2. Introspection is the source of much of our self-knowledge.
3. Introspective awareness is a form of perceptual awareness involving the exercise of 'inner sense.'
4. For a persisting self to acquire the knowledge of her own nature through introspection, she would need to be aware of herself through inner sense.
5. No persisting self could present itself in inner sense.

There are more than one ways one could confront the sceptical argument. One could deny that introspection is the only source of self-knowledge. Much of our knowledge of our selves is gained through interaction with other people. Knowledge of when I was born or whether I have any psychological problem is a respectable piece of self-knowledge that we acquire through testimony provided by other people. On this view, it would be legitimate to claim that outer senses, along with introspection, are important sources of self-knowledge. One could also argue that in introspection, we are aware of ourselves as flesh and blood creatures contrary to what Elusiveness thesis claims. Introspection does provide us with knowledge of our selves.

A more interesting and subtle way of responding to the sceptical argument could be found in Evans (2004: 204). Evans argues that a subject's internal state cannot properly be an *object* to him, as inner-sense model demands. In perceptual experience, what is received as input is the non-conceptual information of the world as being in a certain way. This non-conceptual informational state of the

subject later gives rise to conceptualization of such states by making judgements about the world that rest on earlier non-conceptual states. One's self-knowledge is acquired by reusing these skills of conceptualization. Here, we can imagine three steps. First, there is the non-conceptual informational state of the subject representing the world. Judgements appear at the second level by organizing the non-conceptual states with the help of the conceptual apparatus. If the same model is applied to the knowledge of self, then there should be a non-conceptual informational state of the subject representing the internal state, as that internal state stands in a relation to the world. Unfortunately, no such non-conceptual informational state of the subject is available in case of self-knowledge. So, one cannot claim to have a perception of one's own experience.

If Evans's line of argument is correct, then it follows that since Elusiveness thesis requires the inner-sense model of perception and since inner-sense model is unsatisfactory, then Elusiveness thesis is susceptible to doubt. Here, one must resist the attempt to jump to the conclusion that Evans's argument shows that self-knowledge is possible. What this line of argument shows, at best, is that the Elusiveness thesis involving the inner-sense model of perception is open to doubt. One could very well reject the claim that Elusiveness thesis owes all its legitimacy to inner-sense model of perception.

One could confront the sceptical argument by suggesting that thoughts are acts or properties and no act or property can exist without a substance to which it belongs. So being conscious of a thought is also to be conscious of a subject whose thought it is (*à la* Chisholm).

Now what would happen if one is happy with the idea of introspective self-knowledge but rejects the inner-sense model? Here, one faces a dilemma. Either one has to reject the Kantian claim that knowledge requires the contribution of both intuition and concept, or the inner-sense model has to be stopped from applying to self-knowledge. Rejection of either of them comes with a heavy price. The difficult questions that we now face are as follows: *one*, In what sense can there be introspective self-awareness other than through inner-sense? And *two*, Can the non-perceptual mode of introspective self-awareness (whether this is possible at all) be viewed as the basis of one's self-knowledge?

4.2 Rasvihary's Theory of Self-knowledge

Before getting into a detail analysis of Rasvihary's analysis of self-knowledge, let me very briefly present the general trends in Rasvihary's philosophical trajectory. Against this background, it would be easier to situate Rasvihary's theory of self-knowledge.

For Rasvihary, philosophy is concerned with knowledge. Knowledge, according to Rasvihary, is a mode of consciousness where the object is taken to exist independent of the act of consciousness of which it is an object. The object of knowledge must be an existent one and one could think of two aspects of this

object, viz. the thing and its character. The former is the *that* part of the object, while the latter is the *what* part of the object. Viewed in this way, knowledge is a form of consciousness of an object having a character. If the character is falsely ascribed to the thing, then the knowledge concerned will turn out to be a false one. The veracity of the character allegedly ascribed to the object cannot be ascertained in the same act of knowledge. Thus, any knowledge remains open to scepticism.

Belief, for Rasvihary, contains two elements: (a) understanding of a proposition and (b) assenting to the proposition. Assenting again consists of two elements: (i) volitional and (ii) emotional. When we assent to a proposition, we decide in favour of it. This is the volitional aspect. Also, when we assent to a proposition, we feel sure of it. This is the emotional aspect. Belief in its volitional and emotional aspects could be strong or weak. Knowledge proper, on the other hand, claims to be objectively valid, and so it does not make sense to talk about strong or weak sense of knowledge.

Philosophy primarily belongs to cognitive realm, as opposed to the domain of action or praxis. Philosophers aim at clarifying the concept of knowledge, its possibility and its nature as it is manifest in the different branches of knowledge. Moreover, philosophical knowledge is communicable or teachable by rational means. It is the onus that a philosopher carries with her for putting forward arguments in favour of her thesis. Philosophical knowledge is out there in an open public space for critical scrutiny. A philosopher cannot claim to have knowledge that is incommunicable and hence not open to rational scrutiny. This is where mystical knowledge is different from philosophical knowledge. Mystical knowledge, in its essence, is not teachable and so defies rational scrutiny.

Talking about philosophy this way would immediately give rise to the issue of relation between science and philosophy. Science, like philosophy, also is a cognitive affair. Philosophic knowledge is different from scientific knowledge in that in philosophical analysis of knowledge the role of subject comes into focus. As a result, consciousness and self-consciousness are important elements in philosophy. Science can afford to ignore the role of subject and instead exhausts itself into an understanding of the object ('fact' in a broad sense) concerned. Whenever scepticism raises its head, or we suffer from illusory experience, we become self-conscious and critical of our cognitive experience, giving rise to philosophic analysis. This is where the role of the knower comes into prominence. It is also noteworthy that the assumptions and the theoretical postulates of scientific theories, the fundamental concepts and methodologies of scientific enterprise form important subject matter of philosophy. This is why philosophical knowledge is always more general than scientific knowledge. Rasvihary does not deny scientific knowledge to be reflective, for obviously scientific analysis focuses on our perceptual experience, a conscious process. But nonetheless scientific judgements are expressed in objective judgements, without any reference to knower or the knowledge itself. In short, philosophy, for Rasvihary, is a critical reflection on life, 'life' taken to include all experiences of science, art, morality, etc. (Das, n.d.: 11).

Rasvihary calls himself a 'common sense realist.' Common sense beliefs are the natural starting points for any philosophical analysis. Rasvihary thinks that we

are naturally inclined to realism that does not need justification. It is the rejection of realism that needs justification. Idealism, while opposing realism, holds that the object of knowledge is either illusory or imaginary. While illusion version of idealism holds that there are no objects (of knowledge) at all, the imagination version of idealism holds that what we claim to know is actually a product of our imagination, implying that knowledge is a form of doing or activity. Rasvihary, in many of his articles, argues against each of these versions of idealism. Rasvihary's version of realism consists in the view that the object of knowledge exists independently of the act knowing and that knowledge cannot arise without some object being given to it (Das, n.d.: 15).

The way Rasvihary formulates the idea of knowledge implies that knowledge could turn out to be false resulting in the possibility of an element of scepticism, always following a cognitive experience. Philosophy, which has been identified with critical reflection, has always been made cautious by a sceptical attitude. For Rasvihary, scepticism is not a positive theory; it is an attitude of mind which is the crux of any genuine critical pursuit (Das, n.d.: 20).

Since Rasvihary is more a methodological sceptic, and not a substantial sceptic, he does not hesitate to call himself 'practical idealist.' Rasvihary believes in certain ultimate values, values that are desirable on their own account. Rasvihary claims to give a rational appreciation of these values, and these values are sought to be realized by us. Rasvihary mentions three such values, viz. truth, freedom and love. These three values correspond to three aspects of human existence such as cognition, feeling and willing, respectively.

When philosophers talk about the problem of self-knowledge, they talk about the logical or epistemological problem of self-knowledge, according to Rasvihary (Das, n.d.: 123). In a knowledge situation, we generally make a distinction between the subject and the object. Now, in a supposedly self-knowledge, the self is both the subject and the object. And so the subject–object distinction collapses. But this is the distinction on which knowledge rests. For knowledge to take place, subject–object distinction is undeniable, but in a self-knowledge, this distinction ceases to exist.

Philosophers in the classical Indian tradition who deny that self can be an object of knowledge follow this line of argument. They (the Prābhākars and Advaitins) hold that the same self cannot be the subject and object due to *karma kartṛ virodha*. It is due to the act of the subject (*kartā*) that another thing called 'object' (*viṣaya*) is produced. Self, who is the subject or knower, always knows something else, something other than itself. They further argue that even if self is manifest in knowledge, the definition of objecthood (*karma*) cannot be applied to self. The definition of objecthood is as follows: an object is that which possesses the result of an act that belongs to someone else (*parasamavetakriyāphalavāgitva*). In the case of so called self-knowledge where the self allegedly becomes its own object, it is the self who is both the initiator of the act and possessor of the result of the act. Even the inflexion of objective case ending is not applicable to the statement expressing cognitive experience such as—*Aham ghatam jānāmi*; 'am' (the objective inflexion) is attached to the object '*ghata*' and not to the self (*aham*). But the

problem is that there are linguistic uses where the objective case is applied to self. So the middle path could be to acknowledge that where linguistic uses are prevalent, self can be regarded as object of knowledge, but not always. She can further argue that since we can give an account of perceptual experience and also inferential knowledge of self, in these cases at least there is no *karma kartṛ virodha*. Of course, the relation that self holds to knowledge in self-knowledge and in knowledge of other things is different. When the self is knower, the relation is that of inherence (*samavāya*), and when the self is the object, the relation is that of objecthood (*viṣayatā*).

But can't we say that the self is known in self-knowledge, but it is not known as the *object*. Then, the problem of the collapse of subject–object distinction does not arise and also, self-knowledge can be accepted. For Rasvihary, this line of thinking is non-starter. Whenever we talk about 'object' in epistemological context, we mean that which is known. So to know the self is to treat the self as the object and to deny the self to be the object is to deny the knowledge of the self. To claim that the self is known but not as an object, amounts to claiming that the self is known as not known, which is obviously a contradiction.

Here, one can however find a different line of thinking in another essay of Rasvihary (Das, n.d.: 115). The crux of the problem related to self-knowledge seems to be the fact that the self turns out to be the subject and object as well in self-knowledge, whereas normally in any knowledge, subject–object duality seems to be present. If one argues that I is known as a result of reflection in Me (object) where Me is constructed by I, it remains to be proved that what is constructed is actually a reflection of I. What guarantee there is that the reflection is a reflection of I and not of anything else? Unless we have a direct acquaintance with self at certain point, it would be difficult for us to determine something as a reflection of the self. Knowledge of the reflection of self falls short of a genuine case of self-knowledge. Knowing the reflection of the self is different from knowing the self itself. For a genuine case of self-knowledge to take place, the very same self that is the owner of the knowledge must be present in an act of awareness. It does not pay to claim that in self-knowledge, one-half of self knows the other half, for in that case, the knower part is knowing the known part, which is other than the knower.

The problem compounds for if in self-knowledge the self knows itself and so becomes the object, the self, in its knowing capacity, as a subject, is never known. If in the same epistemic act, the same self can become subject and object, and if this were true of object as well, then instead of saying 'I know the table', one could say 'The table knows me.' This, of course, is absurd.

Thus, Rasvihary's diagnosis is that either we have to show that 'what is known in knowledge is not always an object or that there is no absolute opposition between subject and object' (Das, n.d.: 113). As mentioned earlier, Rasvihary does not think that the place of subject and object are interchangeable. The place and the role of subject and object cannot be substituted by each other. Since we are talking about a relation between subject and object in a knowledge situation, any relation requires the *relata* to be different things. Of course, we do talk about identity relation where the *relata* seem to be the same self-identical object. Knowledge

certainly does not involve such an identity relation. 'I know the table' does not mean 'I am identical with the table.'

4.3 Metaphysics of Self-knowledge

Metaphysically speaking, one could think of self so constituted that it can perform the dual function of knower and known. But epistemologically speaking, the knower and the known can hardly be identical. Self-knowledge cannot escape the generally accepted mode of knowledge involving subject–object duality. The problem of self-knowledge, in so far as it is knowledge, should be addressed on an epistemological plain. Thus, if self-knowledge is a fact, and since it is not a usual case of knowledge, then "we must believe that what is given in knowledge need not always be an object" (Das, n.d.: 115). This is a line of argument that I would like to explore little later, although Rasvihary does not seem to be sympathetic to this trend of argument, as we shall see soon.

If the subject is to be known at all, it is to be known in its knowing capacity. And here arises the problem. Although when I know you, I can believe that you have the ability to think, but you as a subject, as knowing something cannot enter my area of knowledge in the form of a definitive content, according to Rasvihary. This, however, is not so evident to me. Imagine that you are engaged in deriving an argument from a set of premises with the help of certain rules of inference. I see you as performing the derivation. You as deducing the theorems becomes the object my knowledge. May be, I try to follow your deduction. So I know you as performing the deduction. My knowledge has a definitive content, viz. you as performing the deduction. I know you in your knowing capacity. The subject, as engaged in an epistemic act, becomes the object of my knowledge.

One could, of course, defend self-knowledge and bypass the sceptical argument by claiming that when one is aware of one's own thoughts, feelings, etc., one does not present oneself as an object (Shoemaker 2004: 82). In self-knowledge, the self is not present as an object of knowledge. If awareness of oneself is modelled after perceptual awareness, then as in perception, things are present as object; so in self-knowledge, the self is present as an object as well. Perceptual awareness of oneself when one's own self is present as an object is quite possible, like when one sees oneself in a mirror. But this involves identifying the presented object as oneself. Identification brings with it the possibility of misidentification. But the unique feature of introspective awareness is that the first person statements based on that awareness are immune to error through misidentification. I cannot misidentify myself as having a particular experience expressed in a first person statement, especially when such a statement is a result of introspection. Misidentification being ruled out, there remains little room for identification and as a consequence perceptual awareness where a thing is identified as an object present to a knower ceases to exist. Thus, awareness of oneself as an *object*, modelled after perceptual

awareness, is impossible. Here, we have an argument that defends self-knowledge, but denies that in self-knowledge self is present as an *object*.

Moving to the opposite direction, one could claim that self-knowledge is not only a case of knowledge, but it is also a perfect knowledge. In a perfect knowledge, the object merges into the knower. Here, it must be remembered that in a knowledge situation, it is true that the object must be related to the subject, but the relation must not be that of an identity. The object is known in so far as it is distinguished from the knowing subject. Knowing something means that which is known is different from the knower. Knowledge is always other directed, other than the subject.

Rasvihary, of course, concedes that the way we know ourselves is different from the way we know other things. And this is important. It is true that as we know our own mental states, we also claim to have knowledge of other people's mental states. We claim to have knowledge of other people's sensations and intentional states. But this knowledge of people's mental states require reliance on evidences that one can state independent of the ascription of the mental states. These evidences normally consist of the people's utterances and other actions. Knowing one's own mental states, on the other hand, does not require reliance of this kind of evidence. Self-knowledge is thought to be immediate. And here immediately a question crops up. There are many attributes that a subject has and can be known by that very subject on the grounds that can entitle any other person to know those attributes of that subject. If I want to know my height or date of my wedding, then the kind of investigation that I would carry would be the same kind of investigation that anyone would carry had she been interested in knowing these information about me. But why does not the same thing happen when I want to know my own mental states? I do not know my own mental states on the ground that is articulable independent of my self-ascription. The important question is as follows: Why is self-ascription of mental states different from self-ascription of other attributes?

One, however, could retain the subject–object distinction and still accept self-knowledge. One could argue that what is meant by the claim that the knower and the known are distinct is not that what is knower in one case cannot be known in another case. What is rather meant is that what is known in one case cannot be the knower in the same case. So the knower can be known, but certainly not in the same epistemic situation, it can be known in another epistemic situation. Even though it is notoriously difficult to give an account of the knowledge where the knower is known, nonetheless, our problem was to give an account of the knowledge of self in its knowing capacity. We wanted to know the self while it is engaged in knowing activity. The problem is compounded for the same act of knowing cannot apparently seem to be directed by and upon the same thing.

Viewed in this manner, the problem of self-knowledge can be analysed into three questions (Das, n.d.: 125), viz., (i) whether one can perform two acts of knowledge at the same time; (ii) whether the first act is not already past before the second act takes place; and (iii) whether we can identify the subject in one act with the subject in the other.

Rasvihary's answer to the first question is that it is a common experience to attend to two things at a time (Das, n.d.: 125). Psychologists talk about distribution of attention where, for example, I can attend to a colour and a sound at the same time. Attention does not necessarily have to be discretely linear.

Regarding the second question, Rasvihary argues that our mental states have duration (Das, n.d.: 126). They do not appear and then die after surviving for an instant. So, while a mental state lasts, another mental state can very well appear. Our mental life does not consist of discrete, completely separate states having no connection among each other. It is more appropriate to think of the mental states as having continuity where the previous state is available for observation in the latter state. Also, our mental life seems to have a volume in the sense that mental states appear in an incremental way. They are accumulative in nature. It is not that one mental state cannot appear until the previous mental state vanishes making room for the latter. It is not incompatible for a mental state to cohabit with another. While I am enjoying a good piece of music, I might also have the desire to make the music for a longer time. There is a succession in the mental states, but they may also cohabit in that succession. Succession and contemporaneity does not have to be opposed to each other when we talk of mental states.

Regarding the third question, Rasvihary acknowledges the difficulty in identifying the subject as the same if the epistemic acts are different. For if the acts are different, then the subjects as determined by those acts are also different. But then, Rasvihary argues, that we can very well talk about the same self which is the subject in different acts. Determining the same self in different acts is not a problem once we accept the incremental view of mental states that comprise our mental life.

But Rasvihary goes further and claims that in self-knowledge, there are no two separate acts, one supervening on another. In self-knowledge, it is not the case that first I know the object and then, in a separate act, I know myself. "It seems possible that I may be aware of myself as knower in the very act of knowing, in which I know some object other than myself" (Das, n.d.: 127). My seeing the table and my awareness of myself as seeing the table are not separate acts, according to Rasvihary. My knowledge of the table does not hang in the air, it is owned by me. It is my knowledge. I cannot have a knowledge of the table unless I can appropriate this knowledge to my consciousness, without realizing it is I who is having this bit of knowledge. Thus, when I know an object, I also know myself as performing that act of knowing. This is more evident when I am having the knowledge of the object, if someone asks me 'Do you know what you are doing?' I would unhesitatingly and without looking for any evidence answer 'Yes.' This only shows that I am not only aware of the object, but I am also aware of myself as the knower of that object. And this is where immediacy in self-knowledge comes in. I will return to this point later.

The doubt about our having the knowledge of ourselves while having the knowledge of the object arises only because we do not seem to realize this in our attempt to have the knowledge of the object. And the reason why we cannot realize this is because in having the knowledge of the object, our attention is focused on the object and not on ourselves. But lack of attention does not necessarily

imply the absence of those things within the range of consciousness. And since memory is conditioned by attention, we do not seem to have a memory of our knowledge of ourselves that we had in having knowledge of object.

In this context, Rasvihary distinguishes what he calls 'primary knowledge' from 'secondary knowledge' (Das, n.d.: 128). When I know an object, where the object is usually understood as being external to the body and so cannot be identified with the subject, this is a case of primary knowledge. In our common parlance, 'knowledge' is used in this sense. My knowledge of myself as knowing the object is a case of secondary knowledge. Rasvihary, of course, accepts that secondary knowledge is parasitic on the primary knowledge for its occurrence. But then, it is only through the secondary knowledge that we can be aware of something called knowing or cognitive act. Secondary knowledge is not a separate act distinct from the primary knowledge; it is the completion of the primary knowledge. Viewed in this manner the prospect of the collapse of subject–object duality does not arise, and so there does not arise any possibility of turning the subject into object. So, Rasvihary concludes that in knowledge along with the object, the knower is also revealed.

One consequence of this account of self-knowledge, Rasvihary reminds us, is that one can know oneself only as a performer of a mental act. And since all mental acts are object directed, one can know oneself only as it is engaged in a primary knowledge. Thus, it is impossible to know oneself independent of any of its conscious functions. Knowing the self independent of its mental acts referring to objects is impossible. Self bereft of its relation to mental acts eludes our cognitive grasp. So it is only through primary knowledge that self-knowledge is possible, but then self-knowledge is not an act separable from primary knowledge.

4.4 Self-knowledge and Avowal

As I have mentioned little earlier, immediacy is the mark of self-knowledge. Moreover, not only I know differently from others my own mental states, but also I regard myself as the best person to know my mental states. My knowledge of my own mental states implies that I really do have them. I am in an unassailable position regarding my knowledge of my own mental states. Also, it is held that if I have a mental state, I am expected to know it. I cannot be unaware of my own mental states. In other words, mental states are salient to the subject. These three features of self-knowledge, viz. immediacy, authority and salience have given rise to a gamut of issues in contemporary philosophy of mind. My project in the following pages is to characterize this domain against the backdrop of Rasvihary's idea of self-knowledge.

It cannot be denied that people can be wrong in their own assessments. They can be wrong in knowing their own motives, in judging their own strengths or weaknesses. But still for the vast area of the realm of the mental, it is perhaps a truism that we know ourselves best, at least better that others know us.

One simple explanation of this would be to claim that my presence is a constant factor in my having the best knowledge of myself. No one else observes me as much as I do. So I have the best evidence of my own mental states. This explanation is typically true of the knowledge of one's own mental states where one's own and another's knowledge of oneself draws on the same kind of evidence. Take, for example, some dispositions characteristics such as honesty. In this case, there is hardly any self/another asymmetry in so far as the evidence of ascription of such a property is concerned. However, in vast majority of cases, I not only know myself best, I also know myself differently from the way others know me. This authoritative, non-inferential knowledge of oneself is best manifest in the phenomenon of avowal. And one of the basic tasks of philosophy of mind is to explain this phenomenon.

One could distinguish two types of avowals: (i) 'phenomenal avowal' and (ii) 'attitudinal avowal' (Wright 1998: 14). Examples of phenomenal avowals are 'I have a headache', 'I am tired', etc. Three important features of phenomenal avowal are worth noting. First, they are groundless. The demand that somebody produce evidence behind her claim 'I have a headache' is unwarranted. In a way, there is nothing on the basis of which one can make such a claim except her having that very experience. Second, phenomenal avowals are strongly authoritative. Assuming that one understands the meaning of the claim that she makes and she is sincere in making the claim, her making the claim itself is the guarantee of the truth of the claim she makes. When I claim 'I am in pain', my making the claim itself, *ceteris paribus*, is the criterion of the correctness of the corresponding third person claim. My avowal that I am in pain must be accepted by others. Third, phenomenal avowals displays the feature of transparency. If I say 'I am in pain', it is rather absurd to say 'I don't know whether I have a pain.' The subject's ignorance of the truth/falsity regarding her phenomenal avowals is normally not entertained.

Let us now talk about attitudinal avowals. They are content-bearing states in the sense that such states are individuated in terms of the propositional content that they have. Examples of attitudinal avowals are 'I believe that the Pune seminar starts on 21 January', 'I am thinking of my mother', etc. One very interesting feature of attitudinal avowal is that they can be part of self-interpretation in the sense that we can say that we have learned about our attitudes by finding out that certain events cause us pleasure or pain. It is not an uncommon experience to have that a person does not appear much in my thoughts, but things unfolded in such a way that I realize that I have always hated that person. Notice that I do not come to this conclusion immediately after certain events took place. First, I even doubt the truth of my claim and then eventually I come to accept the truth of the avowal.

It is interesting to note that none of the features of phenomenal avowal is present in the self-interpretative case. It is perfectly sensible to ask for the justificatory ground of one's attitudinal avowal. Also, one's attitudinal avowal can be doubted for one's sincerity or understanding does not guarantee the truth of the content of the attitudinal avowal. Moreover, it is not awkward for a subject to profess ignorance about her mental states. But what is important to note here is that avowals involving self-interpretation rest on more basic attitudinal avowals. It is

only on the basis of certain avowals constructed out of certain events that I indulge in self-interpretation and then, I arrive at self-interpretative avowal. In a way, basic avowals are the datum for self-interpretation. And these basic avowals constitute attitudinal avowals.

Can we talk about attitudinal avowals having the features such as groundlessness, authority and transparency? Attitudinal avowals are not groundless, for we can very well demand that the subject produces reason for her avowal that 'I believe that the Shimla seminar starts on 9 October.' And the subject can produce some evidence that can be understood independent of her making the avowal. Attitudinal avowals, however, lack strong authority. Even if I understand the meaning of my avowal and also I am sincere in making my avowal that does not guarantee the truth of the content of my avowal, 'I believe that the Shimla seminar starts on 9 October.' I might have misunderstood or misinformed some relevant information. Attitudinal avowals can still be said to have weak authority. This weak authority might be said to consist in the presumptive acceptability of testimony in general. What it means is that comprehensive suspicion of all of my attitudinal avowals by others does not make sense. You might doubt my testimony regarding music, for I might have no sense of musicality. Or because of my bad memory, you might doubt my testimony regarding my biographical details. But if you doubt, in general, all my testimony regarding all the attitudinal avowals, then that would really clash with your thinking of me as an intentional subject and consequently your attempt to interpret my mind or mental states would not make any sense. Attitudinal avowals display transparency in the sense that, except self-interpretation, we think that a subject knows what she believes or desires, etc. In case of attitudinal avowals, subject's professed ignorance of her avowal sounds awkward.

In spite of these differences, however, both the two kinds of avowals exhibit a common feature which might be called 'immunity to error through misidentification.' In a large number of cases where the subject makes a subject-predicate claim, the subject might misidentify the subject in way that is impossible to happen in avowal. When, for example, someone walks down the road from a little distance whom I might take to be a good friend of mine, say Radhika, I say 'Radhika is going to university.' But then, I might find out that it is not Radhika, it is somebody else. So here, I am mistaken about the identity about the subject. I may also be mistaken about the predicate. Radhika may be going to see a film; she is not going to university. This kind of mistake cannot happen in avowal. If I avow my indifference to the forthcoming election, then I may go wrong in the predication part of my avowal. But, it seems, I cannot be mistaken about the subject, about which I am making the predication. Misidentifying myself is an impossibility.

The important point here is that this immunity to error rests on the ground that a speaker has for making the claim. Think of my statement 'Radhika is going to the university.' When my thought is defeated, the basis of my claim still survives as a ground of the corresponding generalized claim 'Someone is going to the university' or more generally 'Someone is walking down the road.' But in case of avowal, even if the statement in question is defeated, the ground of that avowal cannot survive as a basis of the corresponding generalization.

In the above discussion, I have talked about avowals in the form of mental states having linguistically expressed in a particular form known as avowal. One radical line of thinking would be to deny the status of assertion to avowal. Avowals are not statements, true or false. They are expressions of the relevant parts of a subject's mind. As moaning is an expression of pain, smile is an expression of pleasure and clenching of the teeth is an expression of anger, 'I am in pain' is a similar expression of pain. On this view, the avowal of pain is an acquired form of pain behaviour which we have learned to supplant the natural expression of pain.

In the present context, it would be an interesting question to see how far this expressivist account of avowal goes with the features of avowal that we explained earlier. It seems they go quite well. If the avowal is an expression of the pain behaviour itself, then it is inappropriate to ask the subject of the ground of her behaviour (groundless). Similarly, there is no question of the subject's ignorance of the truth-value of her avowal (transparency). And given that the subject is sincere and is aware of the meaning of meaning of the expression and then the subject's claim that she is in pain is authoritative in nature.

But this expressivist stance has some serious repercussions in philosophy of language, especially for people like us who defend a truth conditional theory of meaning. If expressivism is right, then the avowals do not have any truth valuable content. Here, we have to give an account of our understanding of these avowals in a way that does not cash on the idea of truth condition. And this is a way that is worth discovering.

Let us wind up our discussion by saying that we started by analysing Rasvihary's idea of self-knowledge where Rasvihary concedes that we know the self in the very act of knowing the object. Since self-knowledge is manifest linguistically in the form of avowals, a philosophy of self-knowledge would involve an account of avowals. And the present essay is an attempt to charter this domain. Against the background of Rasvihary's treatment of self-knowledge, it is incumbent on us to explain why and how the avowals exhibit the features they have, what is their subject matter and what is the special relation that the subject has to the avowals that they make.

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