What distinguishes misspeaking from lying? Not the intent to deceive. For that often causes a slip of the tongue: “Officer, I always stop when the traffic light turns green!”

Sincerity is the real difference. If the asserter connects his speech to his belief-forming processes, then he is sincere. Opening this channel may result in garbled transmission—and criticism for misarticulation. But to be guilty of lying, the speaker must connect his speech to a process governing other attitudes such as supposition. This is why correlating eye movements with mental processes (remembering versus imagining) is thought to assist lie detection.

Sincerity is a matter of connecting a speech act with the processes governing its corresponding propositional attitude. Since the connection is to the process, not the deep attitude itself, the standard of sincerity is surprisingly low.

The Moses Illusion

How many animals of each kind did Moses take on the ark? Most people answer “Two” (Erickson and Mattson 1981). Yet they actually believe that Noah, not Moses, took on the ark two animals of each kind.

Those under the spell of the Moses illusion are misspeaking, not lying. This challenges the definition of lying as asserting what you do not believe.

Or does it? When you ask a sufferer of the Moses illusion whether he really means to say that “Moses took on the ark two animals of each kind,” he will confirm that this is the intended sentence.

Cautious respondents hedge: “Well, according to the Bible, Moses took two animals of each kind on the ark.” The hedged statements are just as false as the statement they are intended to qualify. Even the phenomenalist’s all-purpose hedge, “It appears to me now that,” clearly does not work. A misspoken report of sense data is correctable (Reichenbach 1952, p. 156).

Bold sufferers of the Moses illusion bet their answer is correct. They try to collect on their wagers by consulting the sixth chapter of Genesis.

Misspeaking shades into substantive error. Consider Barack Obama’s Memorial Day (May 26, 2008) reminiscence that his uncle was among the American troops who liberated the Auschwitz concentration camp. Republican activists contended that Obama lied. After all, the Russian Red Army liberated Auschwitz, not the Americans. Bill Burton, an Obama campaign spokesman, explained that Obama meant to refer to the Buchenwald camp and to his great uncle, Charles Payne. Critics objected that this could not be a verbal slip between “Auschwitz” and “Buchenwald” because those words do not sound alike. It is
not like the April 2008, Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing in which Senator Obama said “Iraq” when he meant “Iran” (while questioning Ryan Crocker, the American ambassador in Baghdad).

But the Moses illusion shows that there are nonphonetic slips. The riddle does not work if “Nixon” is substituted for “Moses,” even though “Nixon” is phonologically similar to “Noah.” What counts is the semantic resemblance: both Moses and Noah are prominent biblical figures who performed amazing feats with water. “Auschwitz” and “Buchenwald” have the same sort of semantic similarity.

What really tells against Obama’s Memorial Day remark being a slip is his past pattern of assertions. Obama was just repeating a family story from earlier conversations and speeches. In the past someone made a “Moses Illusion” slip involving “Auschwitz” and “Buchenwald.” Thanks to fading memories, this slip led Obama to stably believe Charles Payne participated in the liberation of Auschwitz. Yesterday’s typo becomes tomorrow’s thinko.

**LINGUISTIC ORTHODOXY**

Subtle slips of the tongue threaten the transmission of knowledge through testimony. Speakers have a clear reason to correct these. But why do speakers also correct errors that are obvious to the audience?

One explanation is that although the audience knows how to correct the slip, the speaker fears that the audience does not know that he knows how to correct the sentence. When addressing a Sioux Falls audience in South Dakota, presidential candidate Barack Obama said: “Thank you Sioux City. . . . I said it wrong. I’ve been in Iowa for too long. I’m sorry.” To protect the status of the mistake as a mere slip, Obama preempts any correction by others. This race to be first to catch rogue sentences forces Barack Obama to expose many slips that would have passed unnoticed.

There is some compensation for confessing far more sins than would have been detected by others. Perfectionist intolerance of one’s own slips builds a reputation for veracity. Shame evinces subscription to norms that promote accurate testimony. People respond to the “honest signal” sent by emotions and other denizens of the autonomic nervous system.

It is also possible that memory involves some self-testimony. A diarist will correct written slips to ensure that his future self is not misled. Admittedly, testimony differs from memory in being self-addressed (Owens 2006, p. 121). This obviates the need for sincerity in the present tense. However, the analogy between our future selves and other people revives the analogy between testimony and memory. Thus, generalized punctiliousness in speech may fortify memory.

The analogy between testimony and memory is also strengthened by our alienation from slips. Slips violate their own governing intentions (the intention that initiates, shapes, and sustains the action). This is evident from the speaker being surprised by what he said. The speaker will disavow the slip. He will trace it partly to some disturbance that sidetracked him (distraction, fatigue, time pressure).

These symptoms disappear when the speaker deliberately reenacts the slip (Baars 1993, p. 94). Now the sentence conforms to its governing intention and so is expected, defensible, and experienced as issuing entirely from the speaker’s agency.

A weak-willed speaker might utter an Obamadable pun against his better judgment. In contrast, the sentence corresponding to a slip of the tongue is no more alluring than the intended sentence.

When a slip coincides with an akratic act, it stands out against the background of an otherwise fluent act. Picture President Obama (who struggles with a cigarette addiction) absentmindedly placing a pencil between
his lips and trying to light it. He can be cured of the slip just by having it pointed out. The irrationality of akrasia is recalcitrant.

Whereas incontinence poses a profound challenge to belief-desire psychology, slips merely reveal engineering trade-offs in our cognitive architecture. Given the demand for speed and accuracy, speakers must stitch together patches of automatic behavior. Their control over this quilt is at the edges and along the seams.

Disowning an assertion as a linguistic slip differs from recognizing that one correctly executed a poorly planned assertion. While campaigning in Iowa on February 12, 2008, Barack Obama said, “We now have spent 400 billion dollars and have seen over three-thousand lives of the bravest young Americans wasted.” He later characterized this as a slip of the tongue. But Obama had merely spoke too bluntly. He did not intend to unseat the consoling hope that the deaths achieved something (such as democracy in Iraq).

**Welcomed Slips**

Misspeaking is not equivalent to incorrect speech. A typist can inadvertently spell a word accurately—as evident from her subsequently crossing out the properly spelled “weird” and replacing it with the erroneous “wierd.” The typist has the overarching intention to correctly spell the word. What is crucial for a slip, however, is the violation of its immediate governing intention (to spell it in accordance with the adage “I before the E except after C”). Conformity to higher intentions (as expressed by the maxim “Spell correctly!”) is irrelevant. The slip’s governing intention need not cohere with the agent’s overall plan. Indeed, the governing intention is sometimes itself the product of a slip.

Consequently, slips can occur within insubordinate subprojects. William James describes a man who went upstairs to dress for dinner. After removing his day clothes, the man put on his nightclothes and went to bed. If the man, in haste to get to bed, put his socks back on after taking them off, then that would be a slip (even though putting on socks constitutes some progress toward dressing for dinner).

Since a slip within a side project might inadvertently expedite the larger project, we ought not define misspeaking as unwelcome speech. The most striking type of counterexample to such a definition features speakers who embrace slips as improvements over what they intended to say. The physicist Murray Gell-Mann (1994, p. 263) credits a discovery about strange particle decay to a slip of the tongue. He was presenting a conditional proof to explain why his earlier hypothesis fails. Gell-Mann intended to say “Suppose I = 5/2” but instead said “Suppose I = 1.” This should have been a nonstarter because the only admissible values for baryons were assumed to be integral values of a half such as 1/2, 3/2, 5/2, and so on. But having blurted out “I = 1,” Gell-Mann recognized its correctness. Instead of rejecting the violation of the rule, he rejected the rule.

The enlightenment caused by slips of the tongue is not entirely accidental. Slips are robotically inductive. Our default strategy is to bet in accordance with base rates. For instance, think of how many times presidential candidate Barack Obama was introduced as “the next president.” This primed Obama to announce his running mate with, “So let me introduce to you the next president—the next vice president of the United States of America, Joe Biden” (August 23, 2008). This is just one of those rare instances in which Obama lost the bet.

Imagine the conservative epistemologist David Hume reading James T. Reason’s law of error:

> Whenever our thoughts, words, or deeds depart from their planned course, they will tend to so do in the direction of producing something that is more familiar, more expected and more in
keeping with our existing knowledge structure and immediate surroundings, than that which was actually intended. (1984, p. 184)

Slips are unedited inferences. When we have been overediting, a lapse of attention sometimes allows a correct response to slip through the censors.

THE PRIMACY OF SHALLOW BELIEFS

Slips arise from shallow processing. Instead of analyzing a noun to the definitional fine print, we skim, taking in only a few semantic markers. Riddlers exploit the underspecificity of these laborsaving representations: “Can a man marry his widow’s sister?” We presume the question is a normative issue about eligible partners for remarriage, as in “Can a man marry his brother’s widow?” And so we fail to deduce that the man must be dead to have a widow.

Such mistakes are fragile; riddle victims are quickly converted by objections that do not require any significant adjustment in their beliefs. Since there was no significant change of mind after absorbing the correction, there was no significant disagreement to begin with.

The Moses illusion is unusual in that people will succumb even though they are warned that the question is a riddle and despite being given plenty of time to study the question. Some psychologists claim error increases precisely because subjects have been warned (diverting them into checking for subtle alternatives).

Most riddles are shallow; they show one of our shallow beliefs is untrue. Philosophical riddles are deep because they reveal a deep belief is untrue. A deep belief is a disposition to assent that would be revealed by a hypothetical interview. The belief attribution that would filter out “performance failures” such as insufficient working memory, fatigue, bias, and so on.

Philosophers contrast deep questions with riddles that trick us into superficial mistakes. So it is a change of pace for them to focus on shallow beliefs. The reversal is epitomized by the question of whether Pierre is lying in Saul Kripke’s puzzle about belief. Recall that Pierre is a monolingual Frenchman who reads about a beautiful city, Londres. He moves to a British city, London, and learns English by immersion. Since Pierre happens to be in an ugly section, he sincerely says, “London is not pretty.” He does not realize that London is Londres. So when Pierre is asked in French, he sincerely answers, “Londres est jolie,” which translates as “London is pretty.” Does Pierre believe London is pretty? That is a difficult question.

Here is an easy question. Was Pierre lying in either of his answers? No. How can we be so sure, given our doubts about what Pierre believes? Because lying attributions are based on attributions of shallow beliefs, not deep beliefs. Since Pierre has the shallow belief, “Londres est jolie,” and the shallow belief, “London is not pretty,” we know exactly when Pierre is lying. His deep belief is difficult to work out. Deep beliefs are not language specific; they are translatable into any natural language. Since Kripke is careful to maintain the symmetry of Pierre’s French disposition to assert and his incompatible English disposition to assert, we have trouble answering Kripke’s riddle, “What does Pierre believe?” But deep belief is irrelevant to attributions of lying. So we confidently deny that Pierre lied. And we confidently assert Pierre would have been lying if he had instead asserted, “Londres n’est pas jolie” or “London is pretty.”

AN APPLICATION TO PERJURY

Consider an excerpt from the “Judge Not” skit by John Cleese, first performed in the Cambridge Footlights review of 1963:

Bartlett: Did you or did you not throw the watering can?
Fitch: I did not!
Bartlett: Yes or no?! Did you throw the watering can?
Fitch: No!
Bartlett: Answer the question!!!!
Fitch: I didn’t throw it!
Bartlett: So . . . he denies it! . . . Very well . . .
would you be surprised to hear that you’d
thrown the watering can?
[A pause.]
Fitch: . . . Yes.
Bartlett: And do you deny not throwing the
watering can?
Fitch: Yes.
Bartlett (triumphantly): Ha!!!

Fitch first denies throwing the watering can
and then denies not throwing the watering
can. He meets the legal definition of perjury:
Fitch gave relevant testimony he knew to be
false.

How should we revise the definition of
“perjury”? Excluding misspoken testimony
would yield an overly narrow definition of
“perjury.” After all, a defendant’s lie can
contain a slip of the tongue: “My boss lied
before I shot him.”

Confining perjury to insincere testimony re-
pairs the definition of “perjury.” This revision
has the further advantage of cohering with
the long-held belief (widely shared across
diverse cultures) that lying depends solely
on the speaker’s mental state and is therefore
betrayed by anxiety and “guilty knowledge”
about the details of the crime. A machine
that reliably measures these states, while
screening out alternate sources of arousal,
would function as a lie detector. And it would
vindicate our conviction that sufferers of the
Moses illusion are not lying.

THE CONTINUUM BETWEEN
SPEAKING AND MISSPEAKING

A shallow belief is a disposition revealed
by shallow idealization—we go mostly by
what the speaker actually said. There is little
subtraction of performance error. Deep belief,
in contrast, is a disposition revealed by sup-
pressing performance errors.

What are Barack Obama’s deep beliefs?
Ignore what Obama would say after being up
for twenty-six hours, as when he asserted he
won the Michigan primary. (Obama did not
even compete!) Ignore what he asserted when
intoxicated at Occidental College in 1980.
Concentrate on what Obama would say if he
were sober, calm, attentive, literal, and free
of the penalties that deter candor.

Does Barack Obama believe that there is a
president of Canada? Like most Americans,
he frequently mis-describes the prime min-
ister of Canada as the president of Canada.
Even when we notice the slips, we ignore
them as distractions. For almost all purposes,
we attribute as beliefs only those sentences
to which the speaker would stably assent,
sentences they would stand by, reason from,
argue for, and act on.

Some speakers have enough time and
verbal skill to formulate such sentences
themselves. As the author of several intro-
spective books, Barack Obama has spent
years articulating his beliefs. When he had
trouble finishing his autobiography, Dreams
from my Father, Obama took a four-month
sabbatical in Bali to completely devote him-
self to the task.

Normally, the audience does the idealizing
on behalf of the speaker. We imagine the
speaker in some hypothetical Bali with per-
fect conditions for frank, focused conversa-
tion. A certain amount of thought experiment
is inescapable. Consider monolingual Japa-
nese. They do not share a common language
with Obama. They must imagine what Obama
would say if he were fluent in Japanese (and
yet stop short of having him assent to “I speak
Japanese”!).

The main purpose of belief attribution is to
set up explanations, predictions, and evalu-
ations. So we gravitate toward distinctive
beliefs that are apt to make a difference in the future.

Interpreters risk overrationalizing the
speaker. The policy of screening out slips
makes it difficult to attribute analytic errors. Belief in a contradiction seems impossible because contradictions rest on just the sort of linguistic errors that we aim to filter out. Linguistic omniscience means logical omniscience and logical omniscience means mathematical omniscience—and that is too much omniscience!

To get a feel for this spiral toward analytic omniscience, consider Obama’s slip about the number of states he visited on the campaign trail in May 2008:

> It is just wonderful to be back in Oregon and over the last fifteen months we have traveled to every corner of the United States. I have now been in fifty-seven states. I think one left to go. One left to go—Alaska and Hawaii. I was not allowed to go even though I really wanted to visit, but my staff would not justify it.

This slip is tortuous to untangle. Patient interpreters hypothesize that Obama intended to say “forty-seven” but his preceding utterance of “fifteen” primed him to say “fifty-seven.” Obama was trying to say that he had campaigned in all forty-eight contiguous states except for one state that was upcoming. This interpretation makes Obama’s arithmetic coherent.

Is this explanation overprotective of Obama’s rationality? Philosophers have a long history of charitable interpretation. In Plato’s dialogue *Gorgias*, Socrates argues that the tyrant Archelaus desires only what is good. Archelaus cheats, steals, and murders, but only because he ignorantly regards these deeds as steps to what is good for him.

What is really good for Archelaus is that he be punished for his crimes. Consequently, that is what Archelaus really wants—despite all his sincere denials and all his subversions of justice. Archelaus’s true desires are what he would want if he knew all the relevant facts and made all and only valid inferences. Similarly, Marxists contend that democracy is acting in accordance with what people really want (not what they sincerely say they want, as alleged by shallow capitalists who rely on how people actually vote).

**How Cheap is Talk?**

One way to damp down the distorting effect of idealization is to incorporate the cost of processing sentences. Our thought experiments, like those of economists, must preserve the fact that speakers have a limited budget (of attention).

The bulk of parsing is involuntary. You cannot refuse to understand the conversation of nearby passengers on a train. However, we can improve comprehension by allocating attention to the conversation. If one of the strangers mentions your name, you will perk up and listen more intently, trying to understand each sentence.

In this discretionary zone, speakers parse as much of the sentence as is likely to matter. They use clues such as context and precedent, transferring the burden of syntax on to pragmatics and encyclopedic knowledge. If the attention of speakers is divided by other tasks (or reduced by time pressure or disturbed by inebriants or fatigue), then they will take a greater risk of misunderstanding.

Once we tally the costs of linguistic perfection, we gain a rationale for leaving some linguistic error unexpunged. Suppose President Obama is on a panel of world leaders assembled to discuss the banking crisis. He wants to give an example of a well-informed panelist. So President Obama points to Stephen Harper and says, “The President of Canada has a master’s degree in economics.” Many people will attribute this belief to Obama, unredacted, despite the fact that Obama would be embarrassed by the realization that he has, yet again, succumbed to the American vice of referring to the Canadian prime minister as the president of Canada.

Obama’s defenders may even insist that the sentence he uttered is true. They think
the misdescription is an insignificant error (the analogue of pointing at a fly that is not exactly in the line of sight established by your finger). Obama just wanted to single out an economically well-informed world leader—and he did, namely, Stephen Harper.

There is much philosophical commentary on Keith Donnellan’s distinction between attributive and referential uses of definite descriptions. In attributive uses, our aim is to specify an object, whatever it may be, that accurately fits the description. In referential uses of descriptions, we use the description merely to fix the audience’s attention on the intended object—to single out that object from a field of candidates. The guiding description is “off the record,” a mere pointing device—meaning that the speaker is not committing to the accuracy of the description he employed as a tool. Just as a carpenter will manage to tighten a screw with a screwdriver that is too small to match the screw head, speakers will sometimes refer to an object with a description that does not quite fit.

**DEPTH CHARGE SENTENCES AND THE REFUSAL TO RECALL**

Consider a physician who warns, “No head injury is too trivial to be ignored.” His patient takes the sentence to be read as something like, “However trivial a head injury is, it should not be ignored.” But what the sentence really means is the opposite: “However trivial a head injury is, it should be ignored.” After all, the physician’s warning has the same syntax as “No missile is too small to be banned.”

Linguists describe “No head injury is too trivial to be ignored” as a depth charge sentence. After the initial splash on the surface of consciousness, the sentence penetrates to a deeper level of analysis at which its real meaning detonates in contradiction to the surface meaning.

However, some depth sentences are duds; the contradiction is not detected by some speakers. Since the speakers stand by the sentence, they are only borderline cases of misspeakers.

Does the physician who warns, “No head injury is too trivial to be ignored,” believe what he said? On the one hand, he had an oc-

Does the physician who warns, “No head injury is too trivial to be ignored,” believe what he said? On the one hand, he had an oc-
current belief that what he asserted was true. On the other hand, he would not believe the sentence if he studied it under ideal circumstances.

Suppose the physician does study the sentence, perhaps with the assistance of a linguist playing the maieutic role Plato illus-

Suppose the physician does study the sentence, perhaps with the assistance of a linguist playing the maieutic role Plato illu-
strates in the *Meno*. When Socrates elicits a tacit, geometrical belief from a slave boy, he regards this as reminding, not teaching. The enlightened physician might continue to warn, “No head injury is too trivial to be ignored” (counting on the patients to misparse the sentence). Unlike Plato’s other Noble Lies, this paternalistic lie will not be uttered with intent to deceive.

Hearers presume assertions mean something sensible. This masks the real meaning of their sentences. For instance, when a viewer of a beauty contest gushes, “Each contestant is more beautiful than the next!” we do not notice that his sentence actually means that the contestants are less and less beautiful.

Speakers parse sentences to the depth necessary for the purpose at hand. Since their audience does the same, misunderstandings will be coordinated to yield agreement on what the sentence means. Everybody will be wrong!

Pliny the Elder (AD 24–79) relates how the victorious Romans erected a sundial taken as booty from Catina, Sicily, in 264 BCE during the First Punic War. The Romans did not realize that sundials need to be calibrated to latitude (to adjust for the curvature of the earth). Catina is significantly south of Rome, so the sundial ran forty minutes slow. Since everybody had the same erroneous time, the mistake was not manifested in scheduling.
mismatches. Nevertheless, for ninety-nine years, the Romans were systematically mistaken about the time.

**Perceptual Misleading vs. Inferential Misleading**

Slips of the ear show that lying does not track hearer meaning. A true assertion of “I graduated from Howard University” is not a lie even if the speaker intends the sentence to be misheard as “I graduated from Harvard University.” Listeners gamble; “Harvard University” is far more frequently uttered than “Howard University,” so they interpolate a consonant.

Expectation affects the very perception of speech sounds. In a classic demonstration of the “phonemic restoration effect,” R. M. Warren and R. P. Warren (1970) substituted a burst of static for the “wh” sound in a recording of “It was found that the wheel was on the axle.” Subjects claim they heard the sentence as containing the missing sound (as opposed to reporting that they merely inferred the missing sound to avoid the implausible “It was found that the eel was on the axle”).

Jonathan Adler (1997) has already examined the difference between lying and misleading with respect to inference. Slips of the ear open the possibility of misleading at the level of speech perception. By cultivating auditory errors, this type of misleader can fly under the hearer’s radar screen of logical self-defense. Immanuel Kant believed that misleading people is sometimes permissible because the hearer is partly to blame for his inferences. This rationale is plausible in legal settings; lawyers are entitled to press the witness to clarify his testimony. But a clever deployment of a homophonc sentence can bypass the inferential prowess of the cross-examiner:

Prosecutor: Did you have an accomplice when you snuck into the President’s masquerade ball?

Dwarf Party Crasher: I was Obama’s elf.

If the defendant succeeds in being misheard as testifying ‘I was all by my self,’ the prosecutor will be misled without making any faulty inference.

**Is Lying Being Confused with Bullshitting?**

According to Harry Frankfurt (2005), the liar says something he believes to be false and so “is guided by the authority of the truth” (pp. 60–61). The bullshitter is un concerned with the truth-value of what he asserts. Thus, the bullshitter is a greater enemy of the truth because he lacks the liar’s concern with knowing how things are (pp. 33–34). Whereas the liar says p with the intention of deceiving his audience into believing p, the bullshitter says p with the intention of deceiving them about his personal attributes such as being patriotic or judicious or profound (p. 19). Thus, bullshitting is a personal form of misrepresentation that falls “short of lying” (p. 19). It flourishes wherever there is an incentive to talk beyond one’s knowledge.

This conception of bullshit is far too narrow: “bullshit” encompasses any debunkable presentation at all—any noteworthy violation of H. P. Grice’s maxims of cooperative conversation, not just the maxim of being truthful. Consider truthful filibusters. When opposing Caesar, the Roman senator, Cato the Younger, delayed votes with rambling speeches that violated the maxims of quantity (“Say only as much as needed”), relation (“Be relevant”) and manner (“Be clear”). As a Stoic, Cato condemned lying. This principle was not violated by him bullshitting until dusk (the time at which the Senate was obliged to conclude its business).

Bullshit does not entail indifference to the truth and is compatible with lying (Carson 2009, p. 184). An idealist may care about the truth but also care about being employed. In the privacy of his office, the dean gestures reverentially to his portrait of Ayn Rand and
asks the interviewee what he thinks of her. The idealist tells the dean that Ayn Rand is underestimated amongst academics. Indeed, his interest in ethics was inspired by Ayn Rand’s novel *Atlas Shrugged*. He would like to assign the speech by John Galt in a future course. Gambling that the dean knows little about Rand’s epistemology, the idealist makes educated guesses as to what Rand’s views are about knowledge. He presents these guesses as if they were products of a careful study of her lesser-known work. The idealist prefers that these guesses be true. He just does not care enough to hedge his remarks. After the interview, the idealist feels bad about bullshitting the dean with a pack of lies to get the ethics job. But the truth is not the only thing the idealist cares about.

Frankfurt also overstates the liar’s attachment to falsehood. The liar is not required to believe what he asserted is false: a father flips a coin and appears to peek at it (actually, he is too nearsighted to make out whether it is heads). He whispers to his son, “It is heads.” He whispers to his daughter, “It is tails.” If lying required belief in the falsehood of what one asserted, then neither of his whispers would be lies.

Liars are not fussy about whether their remarks are false or have an intermediate truth-value or have no truth-value at all. The liar is only intent on disconnecting what he asserts from what he believes.

This disconnection explains why insincere guessing resembles lying. A student who has been doing well in a course on bookkeeping may discover, to his horror, that his father has concluded that he should become an accountant. He resolves to minimize his future test grades by guessing the least likely answer. When he manages to perform much below chance, his father accuses him of answering the multiple-choice questions with lies. However, the student’s answers are not assertions. He is not representing himself as knowing the answers. His cessation of study has made him genuinely ignorant of the correct answers. The resemblance to lying springs from the student’s failure to answer in accordance with his evidence—and indeed, to answer contrary to his evidence.

**The Generality of the Shallow-Deep Distinction**

A student who is accused of insincere guessing can defend himself by claiming that he misspoke: “When I guessed that the circle is the shape that has a circumference of \(\pi r^2\), I meant to guess that the circle is the shape that has an area of \(\pi r^2\).” Our deep guesses correspond to what we would guess under circumstances that filter out performance errors. The same holds for propositional attitudes that are neutral with respect to truth such as supposition. Murray Gell-Mann meant to suppose that \(I = 5/2\) but wound up supposing \(I = 1\).

Even sentences that the speaker regards as meaningless can be misspoken. Bertrand Russell’s solution to the liar paradox is that “false” must be relativized to a language. This makes “This sentence is false” ungrammatical. The same applies to the looped versions:

A contradiction essentially similar to that of Epimenides can be created by giving a person a piece of paper on which is written: “The statement on the other side of this paper is false.” The person turns the paper over, and finds on the other side: “The statement on the other side of the paper is false.” (Russell 1951, p. 67)

Actually, Russell has misspoken. The looped liar requires that the sentences attribute opposite truth-values. Since it does not matter which sentence is corrected, the slip is not at the level of an individual sentence. Russell has misspoken without there being any specific sentence that is misspoken!

Although Russell did not realize it, his botched version of the looped liar is an interesting paradox in its own right (Sorensen...
Deep guesses are what one would guess under conditions that filter out performance errors and motives for disingenuousness. But we must not make the conditions so ideal that the guesser metamorphoses into a knower. The point of the idealization is to reveal the speaker’s competence, not increase it. Our effort to separate the noise from the signal may itself distort the signal. Since belief survives transformation into knowledge, idealization is less distortive for this propositional attitude.

Shallow beliefs interact with deep desires to produce shallow actions. When I try to open my gym locker with my bicycle lock’s combination, I act on a slip of the tongue confined to *inner* speech (Dell and Repka, 1992). Shallow beliefs and shallow desires can figure as premises and conclusions of practical syllogisms. That is how safety engineers rationally reconstruct accidents stemming from slips.

**APPLYING THE LOWER STANDARD FOR SINCERITY**

As dramatized by the Moses illusion, our actual expectations for sincere speech are modest. We merely require that the sincere speaker let his belief bubble up. We do not require that the deep belief make it to the surface. The liar interferes with this natural buoyancy.

The superficiality of sincerity entails indifference to the speaker’s theories about their beliefs. For instance, the eliminativist Patricia Churchland denies she has any beliefs. She thinks belief is like phlogiston, a refuted theoretical entity. Professor Churchland’s conviction that she has no beliefs does not make all her assertions lies.

One need not be a philosopher to have false theories of belief. Consider a preacher who mistakenly believes that knowledge and belief are incompatible. He emphatically asserts, “I do not believe that God exists; I *know* God exists.” When the preacher underscores his theism by telling his son “God exists,” the preacher is not lying.

Sincerity is a matter of connecting to belief processes, not *meta*-belief (or the analogue of *meta*-belief presented by Ridge [2006, p. 487]). And this is just what we should expect given that the relevant kind of belief is the shallow sort.

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