Trusting Teachers Within Reason: Education and the Epistemology of Testimony

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Declaration

I, Graham Nutbrown, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

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2

Abstract

The epistemological concept of "testimony" refers to the social practice of acquiring beliefs and knowledge from what others tell us. Disparaged by philosophers as incompatible with rational autonomy and by educationalists as a passive form of learning, it is nevertheless a source we rely on for formative learning as children and throughout our lives. Both traditionalist and progressivist educationalists have underestimated the cognitive achievement involved in comprehending and learning from testimonial speech acts and also the role such speech acts play in argumentation.

Since the Enlightenment debates about testimony have distinguished between reductionist and non-reductionist justifications for accepting beliefs from testimony. These, like the more recent trust-based theories of testimony, tend to conflate different testimonial speech acts, and fail to reconcile a notion of trust in epistemic authority with a convincing account of rational autonomy.

The thesis confronts epistemological conclusions concerning rational trust in the epistemic authority of others with Austinian pragmatics and Bakhtinian dialogism to produce an account of responsible pedagogy as valuing both the repertoire of informative speech and the virtues and commitments inherent in producing and responding with epistemic and linguistic discrimination. Dialogistic and sociocultural theories of pedagogy need to be informed by a socialized epistemology that: a) is responsive to the pragmatics of language, b) incorporates a notion of autonomy founded on self-trust and integrity, c) emphasizes the role of intellectual conscientiousness and virtue in epistemic and linguistic achievements.

Theories of dialogic pedagogy should recognize that valuing discussion and "student voice" requires us to acknowledge the importance, as a prerequisite of classroom dialogue, of teachers responding sensitively to students as knowers and testifiers with complex rational commitments of their own.

Acknowledgements

4

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Table of Contents

Yu Tzu said, "To be trustworthy in word is close to being moral

in that it enables one's words to be repeated".

Confucius, *Analects* §13.

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Introduction: Why Understanding Testimony Matters

Much of what we know has come from the words of others. Parents, teachers, friends and strangers have given us information and some, but not all, of this information counts as knowledge. "Testimony" is what epistemologists call these "transmissions" of knowledge from person to person. When testimony occurs in classrooms it is a form of, or at least a component of, teaching: children learn from what their teachers tell them. However, both epistemologically and pedagogically testimony is controversial. It is often regarded as a "secondhand" source of knowledge and as a "second best" form of learning.

Theories of human knowledge are central to questions concerning the curriculum and pedagogy. In his influential book on curriculum theory, A. V. Kelly argues that curriculum design and styles of pedagogy reflect and represent particular ideologies: ideologies not only of knowledge but also of humanity and society (Kelly, 2009, p. 56). One of these ideologies, he writes, is reflected in the "curriculum as content and education as transmission" approach – what is often classified as the "traditional", as opposed to the "progressive" (or "progressivist") and "liberal" tendencies:

> The idea of education as transmission or of the curriculum as content…is simplistic and unsophisticated because it leaves out of the reckoning major dimensions of the curriculum debate. In particular, it does not encourage or help us to take any account of the children who are the recipients of this content and the objects of the process of transmission, or of the impact of that content and that process on them, and especially their right to emancipation and empowerment. Their task is to learn as effectively as they can what is offered to them. If the effect of the process on them is of any significance, this model offers us no means of exploring or

evaluating that effect, beyond assessing the extent of their assimilation of what has been fed to them, any other consequences of learning being beyond its scope. (Kelly, 2009, p. 63)

I argue that it is characterizations of the transmission of knowledge such as Kelly's that are simplistic and unsophisticated. The account of the person-to-person transmission of knowledge that I offer does not fail to take account of the recipients, nor does it characterize them as objects rather than as active subjects and participants in an inter-subjective process. What children learn, and how they develop as a result of participating in exchanges of knowledge, goes beyond learning the factual content of the current exchange, in much the same way as does the learning gained from dialogic inquiry or critical reasoning. If we mischaracterize the nature of knowledge transmission as a kind of passive "feeding", we are in danger of misrepresenting essential and ineliminable features of human language and learning, and therefore of individual "empowerment" and of society.

The repertoire of pedagogic styles employed by teachers, in this country and worldwide, is dominated by direct teacher instruction and exposition (Alexander, 2001). The voice of the teacher is heard much more than the voices of the children, and when children's voices *are* heard it is very often to display what they have learned from the teacher's words. Sometimes this form of learning is described as "memorization" or it is associated with rote learning. Not everyone is unhappy with this situation. Memorizing "facts" has its advocates as a form of learning – as, in fact, a prerequisite of thinking and reasoning (Peal, 2014; Christodoulou, 2014; Willingham, 2009). These advocates appeal to John Hattie's evidence concerning the importance of teacher instruction in accounting for variations in students' achievement (Hattie, 2009; discussed later in §7.4). But "mainstream"

educationalists (what Christodoulou and Peal, and commentators such as Toby Young, like to call the "education establishment": Michael Gove's notorious "Blob") are said to be in thrall to an alternative theory of education, a "progressive" or 'child-centred" theory that disparages both facts and memory. In fact, so it is said, the progressivist approach disparages knowledge and direct teacher instruction, promoting instead skills, discovery learning, group work and dialogic inquiry. There is some truth in this. There is a tendency for this approach, but also for the traditionalists, to misrepresent knowledge and its transmission from person to person.

I do not think we should be happy with a pedagogy that is *dominated* by teacher talk. On the other hand, I do not think we should disparage teacher talk or direct instruction for the wrong reasons. On both sides there is a polarization of alternatives, a caricature of the other's position (and possibly of their own) that glosses over the epistemological and linguistic processes and practices involved in learning from others. For their part, the "progressives", including sometimes the advocates of dialogic pedagogy, disparage learning from direct instruction as *passive*. They reject the epistemological assumptions inherent in the notion of a teacher transmitting knowledge to students in a "lecture" or "monological" style. In doing so, they sometimes come close to rejecting the validity of epistemological concepts such as knowledge and truth, as well as the validity of such speech acts as assertion and assurance – presumably because they do not think these can be reconciled with dialogistic or constructivist theories of learning.

I argue that traditionalists who favour direct teacher instruction, on the one hand, and progressivists who advocate child-centred and/or dialogic pedagogical styles, on the other, misrepresent the speech acts associated with the

11

epistemological concept of testimony. A proper understanding of these speech acts has the potential to refresh pedagogical and curricular theorizing and research: a) by clarifying the moral and epistemic expectations and responsibilities of teachers and students as conveyors and receivers of knowledge, b) by emphasizing the importance for teaching and learning of particular kinds of interpersonal trust and respect, and c) by enriching our understanding of "student voice" with the notion of testimonial justice.

I believe that philosophers of education and educational researchers of all stripes should pay closer attention to the educational, social and ethical importance of testimonial speech acts. We are "dependent rational animals" (MacIntyre, 1999). We rely on others for a great deal of our knowledge and beliefs, but this reliance need not be either passive or irrational. We can, within reason, trust each other for the truth, and what makes our trust in the assurances, assertions and tellings of others rational (or reasonable) is not that it is grounded in evidence we possess for the likely truth of the factual claim, nor in evidence for the trustworthiness or reliability of the speaker (or writer) – although these are of course factors that come into play in some of our rational deliberations – but, rather, in the normative nature of the speech acts involved. It is the intersubjectivity and mutually recognized expectations and responsibilities of both speakers and hearers that both constitute the testimonial speech acts and legitimate the conveying, comprehending and accepting of the testimony. This is what raises, or contributes to raising, what the hearer accepts from information to knowledge that adds to the hearer's coherent and consistent understanding of the world.

I bring together in a dialogic but risky encounter epistemological theories (of testimony and coherentism), theories of language-in-use (specifically Austinian

pragmatics and Bakhtinian dialogism) and theories of pedagogy. "Risky" because there will be some friction and resistance. But the aim, appropriately enough, is fruitful dialogue rather than convergence. I hope to persuade the reader that we, as educators and educationalists, should take speech acts such as assertion and assurance seriously, and not dismiss or ignore them as inherently inferior forms of teaching and learning. I do not favour either pole of the traditionalist/progressivist dichotomy. Indeed, I regard it as false. I propose an approach that emphasizes the intellectually responsible nature of teaching and learning. Students are right, within reason, to trust teachers for the truth, but if their teachers do not watch their words, or do not speak responsibly and with the appropriate epistemic authority, the bonds of mutual trust will sever and the classroom will no longer be an epistemic safe haven. (Safe, that is, relative to many other sources of information in children's everyday experience.)

Trust is a recurring theme. Teachers sometimes support what they tell students with evidence, providing them with reasons for accepting the information as true. But sometimes no reasons are provided and the students are expected to "take it on trust" that what their teacher tells them is true. But why should they? There are powerful reasons, both epistemological and pedagogical, why expecting students to learn from the testimony of teachers is imprudent and why modes of learning and inquiry that seem to demand more active critical thinking and judgement should be preferred. I agree that on many occasions other modes of teaching and learning *should* be preferred, but this preference should not be based on a misunderstanding of the more direct transmission of knowledge.

Philosophers find reasons for scepticism concerning sources of knowledge such as perception, inference and memory, and testimony especially has provided

them with a rich supply. No-one denies that we are *reliant* on testimony, but why, and when, if ever, are we entitled to take on trust information provided by others? We will encounter several alternative responses to this question. I argue for a modified trust-based theory but also that both trust-based theories and their alternatives wrongly conflate different speech acts as the speech act of providing testimony. Testimony is an epistemological category, not a viable linguistic category. I differentiate, as an example, the speech act of assurance from the speech act of assertion and argue that different epistemological and linguistic considerations apply in the two cases. In noting that as a promise of truth and truthfulness, testimony "always goes hand in hand with at least the possibility of fiction, perjury and lie" (2000, p. 27), Derrida states that every testifier posits herself as truthful. There are occasions when testimony requests belief by foregrounding the speaker's sincerity and/or trustworthiness rather than the truth of what is asserted. I contend that no one epistemological analysis can satisfactorily account for the reasonableness, or rationality, of the various ways and contexts in which we exchange and acquire information and knowledge. Furthermore, to testify is to *say* something and determining what has been said is often extremely challenging. Accounts of intellectual virtues, critical thinking and sensitivity to language usage need to take account of this.

Austinian pragmatics is useful in considering individual utterances and the relations that each kind of speech act implies between the speaker and the audience, in terms of their mutual recognition of the expectations and responsibilities on each side; but it does not extend to a theory of discourse and for this I turn to a Bakhtinian account of speech genres and dialogic encounters. Although trust-based theories of testimony are epistemologically promising, I think they give too thin an

account of the contextual features involved in communicative encounters compared with what we can derive from pragmatics and dialogism.

Towards the end of the thesis, in the light of the philosophical and linguistic approach I have argued for, I revisit the arguments for and against alternative styles of pedagogy. I conclude that "teacher talk" that incorporates a degree of felicitous testimony and also "student voice" and "dialogue" have to be understood in the light of the epistemological commitments and intersubjective trust they implicate and anticipate. One of the principal pedagogic responsibilities of teachers is to maintain epistemic justice in the classroom by ensuring that all speakers, including themselves, are listened and responded to as conscientious knowers and testifiers.

Chapter 1: Educational and Epistemological Anxieties

In this chapter I consider anxieties concerning testimony and the rationality or legitimacy of claiming to have acquired knowledge from speech acts such as telling, assertion and assurance. I start by developing my criticism of educationalists who misrepresent the nature of learning from the words of others. I examine the position of Guy Claxton, an influential educationalist who comes close to discarding any notion of truth and epistemic authority playing a role in the transmission of knowledge. I argue that he misrepresents both the nature of knowledge and, by ignoring the role of testimony and interpersonal trust in classroom talk, the nature of the dialogical pedagogy that he favours.

In later sections of the chapter I argue that liberal educationalists and philosophers, including R.S. Peters and Paul Hirst, and others who have worried about the distinction between education and indoctrination, also reveal an anxiety about the rationality of students learning from testimony. I argue that these anxieties are exaggerated, not least because any account of intellectual autonomy has to accommodate itself to our reliance on testimony. I go on to show how reliant we are on testimony in general and in the classroom, and to discuss classrooms as distinctive epistemic environments. I end the chapter by setting out some of the arguments associated with the epistemology of testimony that are to be explored in more detail in later chapters.

§1.1 Guy Claxton's Anxieties Concerning Authority and Trust

Even when it is not conflated with rote learning or indoctrination, direct teacher instruction (in which I am assuming there is a proportion of testimonial speech acts) is sometimes represented as embodying an outdated conception of knowledge and of learning. Sometimes it is associated with "nineteenth century pedagogy" or with a "monastic" epistemological viewpoint that represents knowledge, in Guy Claxton's words, as "handed down by unimpeachable Authority…mined and purified, once upon a time, by men (mostly) who were much cleverer than both the students and the teacher (2008, p. 74).

Claxton goes on to describe how the teacher's and the student's role would fit into this conception of knowledge and learning:

> The teacher's job was to understand this knowledge…and explain [it] clearly. The students' job was to understand what they were told and remember it. They had done their job well if they could recall it, write it down and manipulate it in a limited number of prescribed ways…If students dared to ask questions (other than to correct their understanding) the Right Answer was repeated and they were told they weren't there to "reinvent the wheel", and anyway there wasn't time. (Claxton, 2008, p. 74)

In contrast to this view of knowledge Claxton opposes a pragmatic and dialogical view. Knowledge is always "provisional and up for reappraisal. It is made up by people to explain puzzling things and to help get things done" (2008, p. 76). He cites evidence that students' personal epistemologies can influence the quality of their learning:

In one recent experiment, two Greek psychologists checked to see if fifteen-year-olds' attitudes to "knowledge" influenced how they went about learning Newton's Laws of Motion. Somewhat to their surprise, they found that the students who saw knowledge as a provisional, human construction, constantly open to question and change, showed a deeper and more accurate understanding of Newton than did their peers who believed that Science was Eternal Truth. (*Ibid*., p. 76)

Claxton draws the conclusion that "training students to think of knowledge as fixed makes them less smart – even when they are dealing with something as venerable and time-worn as Newton's Laws".

The view that knowledge is not what is true but what works or helps, that it is situated and contingent, is associated by Claxton with the advocacy of dialogical teaching and collaborative, investigative learning, on the basis that these provide the right kind of "epistemic apprenticeship" (*ibid*., p. 92). In my view, both an association of testimonial teaching with the epistemological theory that Claxton caricatures, and the association of the pragmatic view with dialogical, collaborative and investigative learning, are misrepresentations that reinforce false dichotomies.

Is there not a paradox in Claxton's account of the Greek psychologists' findings? They "found that the students who saw knowledge as a provisional, human construction, constantly open to challenge and change showed a deeper and more accurate understanding of Newton". But what is *accuracy* in this context? The reason why "knowledge" is constantly open to challenge and change is that we are constantly finding that what we thought was knowledge was inaccurate, and if a belief is not accurate enough for given purposes, if it is not *true* enough, it is no longer to be counted as knowledge. Claxton makes a distinction between "education", which provides the right kind of epistemic apprenticeship, and "schooling", which passes on a set of fixed beliefs, but he should also make a

distinction between "knowledge" in the sense of a socially agreed body of beliefs and "knowing" in the sense of a cognitive state that achieves the status of being both true and justified or rational. While it may be true that most of the beliefs that we hold as individuals are potentially open to challenge, it need not be the case that most of the beliefs we are justified or reasonable in holding are untrue. When we discover that they are inaccurate, or fundamentally untrue, we discard them, for to maintain a belief that we believe to be untrue is irrational. Epistemic terms play a role in our attempts to formulate a coherent or harmonious conceptual scheme. We cannot eliminate truth and truthfulness from an understanding of rationality any more than we can eliminate them from an understanding of what it is to know. But a theory that retains the idea of utterances having an appropriate degree of accuracy, of being true, must not be conflated, even for rhetorical purposes, with a theory that retains a metaphysical notion of (in Claxton's words) Eternal Truth.

The Russian philosopher and literary theorist, M. M. Bakhtin (about whom I write more in Chapter 6), thought that every utterance makes a claim to justice, sincerity, beauty and truthfulness. He recognized, as did Wittgenstein, that the concepts of truth and truthfulness apply to *utterances* and the meaning of any utterance is highly contextualized. Knowledge, therefore, is not what is stored in books or hard drives: it is exchanged in utterances between individuals. It does not exist by itself but always with somebody; it is always personified, authored, situated and embodied. It is better to think of it as an activity than as an object, as "knowing" rather than as "knowledge". We can agree with Claxton that teachers should not be thought of as voicing abstract Truths, but that does not entail that they do not communicate truths. Communication is always risky, and testimonial communication, in which people exchange beliefs and expect to be trusted for the

truth, is no exception. How to frame what we want to communicate, how to interpret what has been said to us, whether or not to *accept* it, are risky judgements. In subsequent chapters I will make clearer what kind of judgements they are.

Claxton's account of knowledge opens the door not only to a form of relativism but also to subjectivism. He argues:

> [W]e need people who are willing and able to critique, integrate, elaborate, challenge and work on and with the knowledge [*sic*] they come across. They need to see themselves less as nervous supplicants at the altar of knowledge, and more as confident critics and creators. And they need to be skilled at doing it well. (2008, p. 77)

This is odd. We critique beliefs, claims, theories, opinions that *purport* to be knowledge. If we are told them by an authoritative source then we may judge them to be true on the basis (at least in part) of trusting the source, or we may choose to interrogate and challenge them. They become *knowledge* for us when we accept them in an epistemically reasonable or appropriate way. Claxton has left his confident, creative critics with no criteria for assessment other than that their conclusions "work" or "help", and therefore with the possibility of claiming that "it works for me". We should not conflate recognition of the intersubjectivity and context-sensitivity of truthful utterances with either relativism or subjectivism concerning truth and/or knowledge.

What lies behind Claxton's account, presumably, is an ideal of epistemic autonomy. But this ideal must accommodate judgements about, and trust in, the expertise and authority of others. Autonomy can only be a plausible ideal if it permits responsible judgements concerning whether or not others should be trusted for the truth. I cannot see why evaluating claims as ones that "work" or do not

'work" discourages epistemic conventionalism or complacency more effectively than does evaluating them as truthful and accurate. If we want students to be confident critics and creators, we should want them to be good judges of claims to truth and of the people who make them, and the way they will achieve this kind of judgement is by being exposed to a range of dialogic encounters, including those in which the teacher and peers speak from knowledge. In implying a pedagogical choice between education as critical, creative, challenging and collaborative, on the one hand, and education as treating students as "nervous supplicants at the altar of knowledge", on the other, Claxton is misrepresenting the practice of learning on the basis of trust in teachers and other authoritative informants.

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The notion of education as dialogue is appealing. According to Tasos Kazepides, "The prerequisites of education are also the prerequisites of dialogue, although here the moral and intellectual virtues and the diverse 'language games', as Wittgenstein called them, take a more prominent place" (Kazepides, 2010, pp. 5 - 6). There is an interesting parallel between Wittgenstein's "language games" and the "speech genres" of Bakhtin, the most influential theorist of dialogism (discussed in Chapter 6). In affording a key cultural role to dialogue, Bakhtin connects himself with a tradition that extends from Plato, through Hegel and Marx, to Buber, Wittgenstein, Gadamer, Habermas, Freire, Foucault, Oakeshott and Rorty – all of whom in their different ways have seen philosophy, culture and pedagogy as importantly dialogical. These writers do not, of course, share a settled understanding of what dialogue is. It is especially difficult to construct a general account of dialogical

<div align="right">21</div>

pedagogy. For some dialogue is a moral and political concept, promoting egalitarianism, epistemic equality or mutual respect, for others it is a literary concept; for some "dialogue" is synonymous with "conversation", for others it is synonymous with "negotiation". For Bakhtin the concept underlies a substantial theory of language, of the social world and, ultimately, of selfhood (Holquist, 2003).

What many accounts of dialogical pedagogy, including Claxton's, seem to share is an advocacy of pedagogic practices that shift the focus from instilling in students a pre-determined set of beliefs, skills and attitudes to supporting students in "finding their voices" and building confidence in challenging and responding to others. A dialogical classroom is one in which there will be discussion, collaborative investigation and an ethos of democracy, where each student is listened to and responded to with respect and where no-one, including the teacher, is unchallengeable.

This is in no way incompatible with what I have to say about testimony and trust. In fact, the *absence* of trust in speakers, including as testifiers, and the absence of respect for people who speak with epistemic authoritativeness, would be odd in a dialogic classroom. The giving and taking of true beliefs is an essential component of any conversation, discussion, collaboration or presentation, whether or not it involves the teacher. Testimony is embedded in all kinds of discourse. There will be things the teacher says that should provoke a sceptical appraisal or challenge, but not everything she tells the students should, or could, be challenged. Some information will be essential background information to a claim that *does* merit appraisal or challenge. The same goes, of course, for what a student tells the class, group or individual peer. She may, for example, be giving a talk on one of

her hobbies or special interests, something about which she is a relative expert. It would be an odd dialogic classroom that promoted a default *sceptical* response to this student's information-giving speech: it would hardly help her to "find her voice" and become confident in a range of discourses, speech acts and speech genres.

I argue (in Chapter 6) that one of the features of testimonial speech acts is that they anticipate belief, and the concomitant of this is that disbelief can cause offence or resentment, although this depends on the precise nature of the speech act concerned. Dialogic classrooms that aim to promote mutual trust and respect between teachers and students must be classrooms in which individuals trust others for the truth without subjecting everything they say to sceptical scrutiny. However, this does not mean that evaluative judgement is absent in those cases, for reasonable trust in another person is founded on responsible judgement concerning the person and the context, and also on judgements concerning the speech acts employed. If students did not relate to one another in this way, and respond to language with sensitivity, they could never become the confident, self-aware, independent thinking, creative critics that Claxton quite rightly wants them to be.

§1.2 Liberal Anxieties Concerning Testimony

As we have seen, there are longstanding anxieties concerning the rationality or legitimacy of expecting children to acquire knowledge merely by hearing their teachers' assertions of fact. Many of these anxieties are misplaced, not least because the nature of person-to-person knowledge exchange has been

misrepresented by educationalists, including those we think of as liberal philosophers of education.

It would certainty be a mistake to associate testimonial teaching with rote learning or the cramming of facts into children's minds in such a way that their capacity for independent or critical thinking is weakened. John Stuart Mill, whose own early education could be described as an experiment in indoctrination, wrote this at the start of his *Autobiography*:

> Most boys or youths who have had much knowledge drilled into them, have their mental capacities not strengthened, but overlaid by it. They are crammed with mere facts, and with the opinions or phrases of other people, and these are accepted as a substitute for the power to form opinions of their own; and thus the sons of eminent fathers, who have spared no pains in their education, so often grow up mere parroters of what they have learnt, incapable of using their minds except in the furrows traced for them. (*Autobiography*, Chapter 1)

A hundred years later, Paul Hirst is also concerned about teaching pupils as if they were parrots:

> What then are we after in teaching a subject? What does learning it involve? In all subjects surely, we do not just want the learning of a string of propositions. If that were all, we could quickly set out what has to be learnt and find by empirical investigation how best to teach it. But even when handing on information, we want pupils not to become like parrots but to understand the information, and, as soon as we say that, difficulties arise as to what exactly we mean by this term and how we would know pupils had understood what was presented to them. (Hirst in Peters, 1967, p. 45)

The concern of Mill and Hirst with independent thinking and understanding is central to a liberal conception of education. They both imply that giving pupils information by merely *telling* it to them is not a rational way to share knowledge. Mill talks about pupils being "crammed with facts" and Hirst talks about them "learning a string of propositions" and about teachers "handing on information". As testimony is often represented as a transmission of factual beliefs from the speaker to the audience, its epistemic status is clearly relevant to the distinctions Mill and Hirst are making. However, there is nothing necessarily *parrot-like* about the way in which knowledge is acquired testimonially from the words of others. If someone has learned a "string of propositions" parrot-fashion they have "learned" only in the sense of *memorizing* a number of sentences. Someone who has learned from the words of another in the sense that we might call "testimonial learning" has not just memorized sentences but *comprehended* the utterance and located the information within their existing conceptual scheme. He is in a position to convey the information to a third person using a different form of words than that used by his own informant. It is a different kind of cognitive achievement from that which Mill and Hirst have described.

In relation to the distinction between memorizing a form of words and understanding a proposition, Gilbert Ryle says:

> If [a pupil] can only echo the syllables that he has heard, he has not yet taken in the information meant to be conveyed by them. He has not grasped it if he cannot handle it. But if he could not even echo things told to him, *a fortiori*, he could not operate with, from or upon their informative content…So we see that even to have learned a true proposition is to have learned to do things other than repeating the words in which the truth had been dictated. (Ryle in Peters, 1967, p. 112)

The distinctions that Mill, Hirst and many others imply, between the non-rational memorization of facts and the rational processes of understanding, begin to blur. Such blurry distinctions feature prominently in discussions of pedagogic styles.[1] Doubts about the epistemological and pedagogical status of testimony is apparent in R.S. Peters' essay "What is an educational process?" in the influential book he edited in 1967, *The Concept of Education*. Peters criticizes progressive educators who disparage teachers telling pupils things, and he thinks teachers do and should pass on knowledge (in order to teach understanding), but he is critical of what he sees as the human tendency uncritically to *trust* what others tell us. He thinks there is no innate tendency to think critically: "Indeed as Bacon argued, it goes against the inveterate tendency of the human race, which is to believe what we want to believe and to accept on trust things that we are told (Peters, 1967, p. 19).

These doubts about the rationality of trusting others' testimony lurk beneath the surface of much of the liberal philosophy of education of the 1960s and 1970s. On the one hand, children need to be *given* the knowledge that makes understanding and the grasping of principles possible, but on the other hand merely accepting what people (even teachers) tell us is viewed with suspicion. Peters could be assuming a distinction between justifiedly believing what someone tells us and merely trusting her for the truth: an assumption that we have good inductive reasons for believing some people in some situations and bad inductive reasons for believing others at other times. In the latter case, if we do believe them we would be trusting them "uncritically". But because Peters does not make this explicit,

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[1] In fact, even Ryle, having warned against becoming "unwittingly enslaved by the crude, semi-hydraulic idea that in essence to teach is to pump propositions, like 'Waterloo, 1815' in to the pupils' ears, until they regurgitate them automatically", does not go on to develop an account of testimony that is non-hydraulic, although it would have helped him to make the case that teachers can only open gates for children, not herd them through.

there is a degree of hesitancy in his analysis of acceptable and unacceptable educational processes.

Uncertainty concerning the epistemic status of testimony is evident also in the Peters-influenced worry about the distinction between education and indoctrination. Does the distinction lie in the content of the beliefs the teacher wants pupils to accept, or in the pedagogical methods used, or in the teacher's intentions, or in some combination of these possibilities? One significant contribution to this debate was *The Concept of Indoctrination* (1972), edited by I. A. Snook. Published in Peters' *International Library of the Philosophy of Education* series, this included essays by, among others, John Wilson, Antony Flew and John White, and reference is made to earlier papers by Peters himself and by R. M. Hare.

By 1972 progressive and child-centred approaches, and publications by Paulo Freire and Ivan Illich, had begun to influence educational thinking in the U.K. Most of the contributors to Snook's collection are defending a liberal approach to education and none of them views schooling as *necessarily* oppressive. But they accept that there are some pedagogical methods that are closer to indoctrination than to education. Education, or, more specifically, schooling, they see as a set of practices that leads to the acquisition of significant and valuable skills, knowledge and understanding. A distinction that appears in several of the essays is between "rational methods of teaching" and "non-rational methods of teaching". Often it is not clear which pedagogical procedures should be allocated to each of these categories, nor exactly what the criteria for each would be, but providing reasons and evidence for claims, and the opportunity to reflect on the reasons and evidence, are generally cited as features of rational teaching procedures.

The contributors to Snook's collection do not discuss testimony explicitly, and this contributes to the uncertainty in the way the rational and non-rational teaching distinction is drawn. In fact, the epistemology of testimony is highly relevant to the education/indoctrination debate because it does seem to involve hearers accepting the word of another without any independent rational support. If education is distinguished from indoctrination by the degree of control the learner exercises over his or her acceptance of ideas, information or beliefs, how can expecting children to accept testimony be a respectable, non-indoctrinatory form of teaching?

To the extent that the liberal position advocates teaching that promotes independent rational thought and associates this with the use of argument and dialogue, the provision of reasons and evidence, opportunities for critical reflection and "intelligent inquiry", it seems that a liberal position should reject testimony outright as a rational mode of knowledge acquisition, or at least regard it as epistemically inferior. However, this position rests on two weak assumptions: firstly, that we can, and ought, in due course free ourselves from the need to trust others for the truth; secondly, that engaging in practices such as argument and dialogue somehow avoids accepting the word of others on trust. Reliance on testimony is an inevitable feature not only of life in general but also of teaching, dialogue and argument, and these depend on trust - the mutual trust, for example, that participants speak sincerely and with competence, as when they make unsupported knowledge claims *on the way to* an argued conclusion. Its relevance to liberal accounts of education and indoctrination provides another reason why the epistemic status of testimony and the role of trust in learning from others should be of interest to educators and educationalists.

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It is my contention that it would be a mistake to assume that neither testimony nor interpersonal trust has a place in classrooms where dialogue and argument play a large part. I contend that they are integral to dialogue, intelligent inquiry and even to intellectual autonomy. There is another consideration that supports this contention. Responsibility, rationality and autonomy in our doxastic lives is not just a question of how we *acquire* beliefs in the first place: it is also a question of how we sustain and maintain our beliefs. An epistemic community that persuaded young people with arguments and evidence to believe a certain doctrine or system of beliefs but denied them opportunities to revise or reject them upon reflection and in the light of experience or subsequent evidence or discussion, would be as guilty of indoctrination as an epistemic community that "implanted" the doctrine non-rationally. So a liberal interest in autonomy and intelligent inquiry has to come to terms with the fact that however our beliefs are formed initially there will always be a need for responsible epistemic housekeeping. It must take account of the fact that people can be persuaded by rational arguments to hold unpleasant, extreme and implausible beliefs. How can this be when rational argument depends on good reasons and evidence? Will not reason and evidence, properly deployed, reveal such doctrines and ideologies to be irrational or incredible? Clearly not, if the reasons and evidence come, coherently, from within that system of belief. What *counts* as reasoning and as good evidence is likely to be a fundamental belief from deep within the doctrine itself. We might still feel justified in condemning some ways of "implanting" religious and political beliefs, on the ground that they do not

appeal to *any* kind of reasons and evidence, but most arguments attempt to persuade by citing reasons and evidence that count as such because of values intrinsic to the doctrine or ideology.

Foundationalism concerning beliefs and ways of reasoning leaves us with a set of unjustified basic beliefs, so it cannot avoid the problem. An alternative approach is to focus on how the beliefs are *maintained*. People who have been taught a coherent system of thought can still reflect critically on the validity of particular beliefs within the system and on alternative beliefs from outside the system. They will, inevitably, use the critical tools available to them, and their background beliefs will bias and prejudice them, but nevertheless what they are doing is *rational* reflection. From an external perspective it might seem that what they are doing is merely *reinterpreting* particular beliefs, making adjustments of understanding in order to sustain and reinforce the system of thought. This, surely, is exactly what liberal educationalists want to encourage children to do: to reflect on particular beliefs and to make adjustments or reinterpretations that make their overall "framework of understanding" more coherent. The aims of "critical reflection" or "intelligent inquiry" in some ways are quite modest: housekeeping rather than reconstruction.

Liberal educationalists might be happy to concede that their emphasis on particular kinds of reasoning and particular notions of good evidence and critical reflection represents an adherence to norms from within a particular system of thought. In the end, perhaps, it is not the methods of belief acquisition, nor the nature of belief maintenance, that distinguishes liberal from non-liberal epistemic communities, but the degree of unorthodoxy that is genuinely tolerated. This has little to do with debates about rational and non-rational methods of teaching and

learning, and much more to do with the advocacy of methods of teaching in which differences of belief and understanding are openly explored and discussed. Dialogue and argument appear to promote intellectual virtues, such as open-mindedness and the courage to voice unorthodox ideas, virtues that, as J. S. Mill argued in *On Liberty*, promote a "free trade in ideas", progress towards truer beliefs, a respect for others and a toleration of difference that fosters creativity. If high quality talking is fundamental to learning, dialogical classroom practices are likely to be effective in nurturing appropriate cognitive and intellectual virtues. But this does not justify an assumption that interpersonal trust and the speech acts associated with testimony have no place in classrooms where dialogue and argument play a large part. I contend that they are not only integral to good discussion and argument, but also to the longer-term maintenance of a consistent and coherent set of beliefs and preferences, and this must depend to some degree on accepting claims that refresh or challenge one's existing beliefs.

§1.3 Reliance on Testimony Inside and Outside the Classroom

The epistemological problem of testimony embraces the everyday practice of telling things to other people and more dramatic forms of "bearing witness" to experience. Testimony is an important, an ineliminable, feature of our lives, including those parts spent in formal education. We share both important and trivial information with friends and relatives, sometimes with complete strangers, and sometimes anonymously. In the classroom teachers and pupils exchange information in a variety of contexts. Of course teachers should allow children to research and to investigate, to discover connections as they go, to forge their own

ways of understanding, including by collaborating in groups, but it is often overlooked that whatever the classroom activities involve it is likely that the students will be receivers and providers of information. The teacher will not always be the authoritative source of knowledge: books, other students, family members, Internet sites such as Wikipedia, Facebook and Twitter, newspapers, TV programmes are all sources of testimony. We depend on each other for knowledge, and the nature of that dependency goes deep into our social practices and self-conceptions. This is another reason why philosophers and educationalists should take an interest in the epistemology of testimony and the variety of speech acts associated with it.

Our epistemic environment changes all the time as new sources and technologies of information provision become available. We should bear in mind that a school's practices occur in a particular socio-historical context. For most of history, most people have not learned what they needed to know to function in their society in the context of a school classroom, with all that that entails: a specialized location, a time-tabled day, learning related to children's ages, institutional rules, and specially trained, professional teachers to provide the prescribed information, skills and norms of behaviour. Mass schooling has shifted the frame of reference of the concept of learning, and especially of learning in the sense of knowledge acquisition. But universal schooling (in the West) arose in the particular socio-historical context of modernity, in which the processes of industrialization, mechanization, intensified capitalism, global markets, the erosion of traditional (e.g. religious) authorities played a part, along with the intellectual influence of Enlightenment notions of rationality, objectivity and the methodologies of science. One of the many implications for learning was the need for a more literate

population to acquire more abstract knowledge, the kind that can be obtained from the words of others. It took until the twentieth century for the Enlightenment focus on autonomy to filter through to educational practice in any substantial way, and it took until the latter part of the century for modernity's increasing instability and fragmentation to lead to a state of uncertainty in schools concerning the role of teachers and the status of knowledge. Now the "progressive" ideas of Dewey, Froebel, Montessori, Piaget, Vygotsky and Bruner are seen as competing with calls for a "return to traditional values". But neither traditionalists nor progressivists have fully heeded what writers from various disciplines have argued, that communication and, therefore, individual identity, depend on our trust in each other as knowers and testifiers.

In *How Conversations Work* (1985) Ronald Wardhaugh, a professor of linguistics, comments on the ineliminable role of trust in social living. We could not cope with life, he says, if we could not trust people not to deceive and harm us. Trust makes communication possible, but it must be tempered with caution and sound judgement with regard to the multiple possibilities of meaning and intention that are inherent in any act of communication. Luckily,

> Certain basic principles that prevail in most conversations help you to narrow down the possibilities to a manageable set: mutual trust, the sincerity of participants, the validity of everyday appearances, and "common sense". A certain scepticism may obtain in our views of life and of human motivation, but it must have healthy limits. We cannot question and doubt everything or suspect every motive and still insist that we be regarded as normal people. We must seriously restrict such questioning, doubt, and suspicion; they are indicators, or markers, of very special kinds of conversation…and such special activities must be clearly "framed" in some way to indicate their special character. (Wardhaugh, 1985, p. 7)

33

Despite this, trusting others for knowledge continues to be disparaged by educationalists. Perhaps for some this is not so much scepticism or cynicism as a kind of epistemic risk avoidance, for in trusting others for the truth we expose our vulnerability as social beings. Not everything we are told is true and not every informant is sincere or competent. Perhaps children need to be protected from their own gullibility? If this is our concern, our response should not be to disparage learning from others but to think more about how to educate children to make sensitive and sophisticated judgements about informants, and this means educating them not only about critical thinking but in appropriate ways about language and communication. We should not pretend that children can avoid these judgements by, for example, always coming to a consensus opinion about what to believe, through discussions with peers in the same epistemic position as themselves. I argue (in Chapter 5) that the reasonableness of judgements about tellers and tellings, as conveyed by contextualized utterances, depends ultimately on the reasonableness of our trust in our own doxastic housekeeping, for that is where the trail of epistemic and linguistic rationality must end.

I believe that anxiety about our reliance on others for knowledge rests on misunderstandings about language in general and information-giving speech acts in particular. The approach I argue for embraces contextualism and an acceptance of epistemic *trust* in others (rather than mere *reliance* on them), albeit a trust that is based ultimately on trust in one's own judgements. It is not an approach that offers guarantees of infallibility, or even reliability: acquiring knowledge from others is risky; but it is not so risky as to be irrational. Its riskiness is part of the human condition.

Philosophical attention has focused more on perception, inference and memory as sources of knowledge than on testimony, but even our perceptual knowledge depends in some ways on knowledge we have learned from others – because, for example, perception is recognition and categorization as well as sense-experience. Take away the knowledge we have acquired from others, rather than witnessed for ourselves, and what do we have left? But we know that information we receive from others can be false, incomplete, deceitful, misleading and irrelevant, and this awareness prompts questions concerning what kind of reasons we need for believing what we are told, and about how sceptical we should be about testimonial beliefs qualifying as knowledge. As with perceptual beliefs, if we cannot tell the true ones from the false ones how can we claim to have acquired knowledge? Without good grounds for belief, are not children especially prey to gullibility and vulnerable to exploitation? Any acquaintance, relative or teacher can impress us with their articulacy, efficiency, confidence and apparent command of information…yet misinform us. They can even give us false information that *works* in the sense of getting a job done, such as the job of having something, anything, to pass on as relevant information. This happens in school sometimes. Consider the difference between the teaching styles of Hector and Irwin in Alan Bennett's play *The History Boys*. Despite his own genuine interest in history, as a teacher Irwin's focus is on the boys passing the Oxbridge entrance exams, so he encourages them to make their answers original and spicy regardless of accuracy and sincerity. For Hector sincerity is a *sine qua non* and a disposition to speak with sincerity (and accuracy) is part of the tradition that he seeks to "pass on". What a teacher like

Hector passes on is not just knowledge and understanding (and definitely not isolated "gobbets"), but intellectual virtues and integrity.

Much of the learning we do in school requires us to be able to articulate it, to be capable of framing what we know in words to share with others. This is not just a question of passing on a parcel of facts. It would be a mechanical process if it were. Teaching is most successful when the learner's interest is aroused, his imagination or emotions stirred, and parcels of information cannot do this outside of a context that encourages the learner to wonder, question, speculate, hypothesize, plan, discuss, experiment, explore. Information needs a context in order to be *comprehensible* before it needs a context in which to be either interesting or believable. We need to consider what is achieved in *comprehending* testimonial speech acts as well as how beliefs formed from testimony are justified, and we need to consider the relation between these two processes. The nature of this relation is one of the reasons why learning from the words of others is not a passive process.

§1.4 The Epistemic Environment of the Classroom

A classroom is an epistemic environment in which scepticism and credulity, autonomy and trust in the epistemic authority of others, as well as trust in our own ability to achieve a consistent and coherent set of beliefs and preferences, are, ideally, harmoniously maintained. It should be a (relatively) safe epistemic environment, but this does not mean that it is not a challenging environment that promotes active thought and understanding.

John Passmore differentiates between "picking up" and "studying" as modes of acquiring information. "Studying" is systematic and involves skills of listening, reading, selection, argument; these are skills, he says, that require formal training. "Picking up" is more unreliable but also requires training in order to assess reliability and unreliability. Passmore comments on the importance of children learning to assess reliability:

> [O]nly a foolish teacher will wholly condemn the flood of information which will continue to pour in upon his pupils during their whole life. Hume sometimes writes as if it would be better for people to believe nothing except what they have learnt for themselves from experience – in his rather special sense of "experience" – but it would be absurd to carry experiential puritanism that far. To prepare them to learn from, to cope intelligently with, picked-up information, is certainly one of the most valuable tasks the teacher can undertake. His problem, as so often, is to teach his pupils to be cautious and critical but not cynical. And he can best accomplish this by getting them to see for themselves the degrees and kinds of unreliability possessed by different sources of information. (Passmore, 1980, p. 76)

Finding the right balance between scepticism and credulity, avoiding both gullibility and cynicism, is certainly a difficult and important task, and sensitivity to the different dangers inherent in the various sources of information is something a curriculum must encourage. In secondary schools, subjects such as English, Media Studies, History, Critical Thinking, Religious Education and Citizenship can incorporate a wide range of information sources so that students can discuss and assess their relative reliability or trustworthiness. Passmore is no doubt thinking especially of the type of learning that benefits from critical thinking skills such as inductive and deductive inference. But not all learning from others, including from

written sources, requires thinking skills of that kind. Some, perhaps most, involves the exercise of reasonable interpersonal trust and linguistic competence rather than the inferential assessment of empirical evidence.

Passmore was writing in 1980, before many of the sources of information that make up a contemporary child's epistemic environment existed. The point he makes is to some extent reinforced by the rapid rate of change in the technology of communication. It is interesting, however, that when discussing the acquisition of information from *reading*, rather than assimilating this to testimony, he compares it with learning by observation and with learning from, through and by experience (which he distinguishes from each other). He concludes that it is a unique mode of learning. I think it is more likely that the epistemic, linguistic and cognitive issues raised by reading as a mode of learning from others are continuous with those raised by verbal testimony. Certainly, communication via texts, tweets and messaging combines aspects of speech and reading and writing. Electronic messages can be almost as instant and as informal as verbal messages can be, as casual and as unchecked.

Children experience a range of complex epistemic environments. A classroom is a special one. Unlike much of the information children pick up, what they are told in the classroom is directed quite deliberately at *them*. The repertoire of discourses is (or should be) adapted to their capacities and knowledge, and by and large the information proffered is manifestly relevant to them, to their studies at least, if not to their personal plans and futures. So, although there will be information that children pick up casually in school, the comprehension and acceptance of much of what they are told will be assisted by its clear contextual relevance to the lesson and the curriculum. Sometimes what they are told might tax

their interpretative capacities, by making them search harder for relevance, perhaps by employing irony or metaphor that delays comprehension or permits a degree of personalization or creativity in interpretation.

Another feature that makes a classroom a special learning environment is its relative epistemic safety. This in itself could prompt a suspicion of passive learning. The safety comes from the likelihood of the information children are given in class being credible or true. Their vulnerability to misinformation (without correction) and to lies is relatively restricted. As long as teachers are teaching within their areas of expertise, and exercising basic intellectual virtues and linguistic sensitivity, the information the children are exposed to will generally be relevant and "true enough" (Elgin, 2004) for their purposes. Other sources of information in the children's lives – family, friends, social networks, TV and radio, magazines - are likely to be more variable in epistemic quality and to contain a greater proportion of unstable, unchecked, less cautious information.

But if the classroom is a relatively safe epistemic environment, does that mean that the children accept what they are told too readily, too unquestioningly? As we shall see in Chapter 3, Sanford Goldberg has argued (2010, 2013) that it is only because young children at school are in a safe epistemic environment that they can be said to learn from testimony, for they are too "cognitively immature" to monitor what they are told for inaccuracy or insincerity. Whether this is so or not, it seems safe to say that the younger the children are, the greater their cognitive effort spent in comprehension rather than in epistemic vigilance, and the older they are, the greater can be the pedagogical emphasis on epistemic vigilance and critical assessment of what they are told. This means that although it will still form an inevitable part of teacher-pupil communication in older years, testimony can play a

reduced role compared with speculation, argument, inference, debate and criticism. On the other hand, the more complex the debates and discussions are, the more likely it is that they will incorporate the kind of information that has to be accepted on trust from one kind of source or another. A senior classroom need not be a less safe epistemic environment than a junior one, but it can be a more doxastically challenging one, for teachers and students. Whatever the age of the students, the teacher need not bear the whole responsibility for safety of the epistemic environment if she has prepared her pupils to take responsibility for the accuracy and sincerity of the information and beliefs they endorse and communicate. But as learning from others is not always of the kind that involves critical assessment, it is as important to promote trust and trustworthiness, relevance and appropriateness to children of all ages as it is to teach them critical assessment and inferential skills.

Truth telling is important because it has the capacity to lead us away from conventionalism and to take us out of the here and now. Children cannot begin to make sense of their world just by acquiring knowledge through skill in inferential reasoning. They need a much broader cultural repertoire, different modes of thinking, of responding, of generating understanding: narrative, moral, aesthetic, practical modes, for example. Learning from the words of others, from informative communication, makes demands on us other than our acceptance of the truth of the claim being made. It also demands reasonable judgements of relevance, trustworthiness, appropriateness, as well as sensitivity to contextual features, and any theory of testimony and any account of the associated speech acts and discourse, has to take account of these communicative and interpersonal features. These interpersonal features are no doubt present in a whole range of speech acts,

but when we have seen them at work in testimonial exchanges I think it will be easier to see them at work in other kinds of communication and collaboration.

§ 1.5 Testimony, Trust and Comprehension

One way in which epistemological theory can decrease the epistemic load that children are expected to bear in acquiring knowledge from the testimony of teachers is to take better account of the *comprehension* of informative communications. Much of the cognitive processing that makes the acceptance of a piece of testimony rational has already been done in the course of comprehension, and this might lead us to wonder whether the fact that one comprehends the utterance is a reason for accepting the claim it makes. Furthermore, communication and comprehension involve dispositions on the part of speaker and hearer that are more usually considered to be epistemic; and these are not always dispositions to be cautious, critical or sceptical. Both comprehension and belief depend primarily on a disposition to *trust* the speaker, and this disposition would clearly be irrational or unreasonable if speakers were not generally disposed to be trustworthy.

The communication of information is a social practice with multiple functions. For the receiver, the function is to provide him with new information, with a claim that he can both comprehend and accept as true. Additionally, the communication may help the receiver to make a judgement about the communicator, about her competence, appropriateness, sincerity and trustworthiness: a judgement that may be useful on future occasions as well as on the present one. For the communicator, the function is to have an *effect* on the addressee, to influence his views or to persuade him to accept something she wants

him to believe, and this is sometimes as much about herself as it is about the content of the information proffered.

It is conceivable that these functions are governed by a stable social or epistemic norm, such as a norm of truthfulness or a principle of cooperation, but this cannot be assumed. The interests of the two parties do not necessarily coincide. For one thing, it is not always in the communicator's immediate interest to tell her audience the truth. She hopes that her audience will be trusting and the audience hopes that she will be trustworthy, but neither a norm of trust, on the part of the audience, nor a norm of trustworthiness, on the part of the communicator, can be assumed to be a default standard. If this is true of one-to-one, face-to-face communications, it is true to at least an equal extent of less direct and more widely distributed communications, such as those that are published, broadcast or distributed via the Internet.

We might speculate that satisfactory cooperation between the two parties can be justified on the ground that over a period of time cooperation works to the benefit of both sides. The idea here would be that although each participant has to give up some potential advantages, the losses are minimized so long as non-cooperators are constrained by the threat of social penalties. However, this assumes that each player's motive is to gain as much advantage as possible, and, therefore, that it is in each player's interest to be seen as cooperating trustworthily but to exploit this perception when the opportunity arises. This makes it very hard to see how, on any particular occasion, trusting one's informant could be warranted on game theoretic grounds, for informants whose tactics are to *appear* reliable and trustworthy might always be about to exploit their audience's credulity. The fact (if it is a fact) that credulity or trust works out satisfactorily in the majority of cases, is

not sufficient for warranting testimonial belief: firstly, because it provides the audience with no protection, on particular occasions, from the charge of gullibility or epistemic irresponsibility and, secondly, because it contradicts our experience of certain classes of communication, where greater epistemic vigilance is quite clearly prudent. It may well be that most informative communications *are* reliable and truthful only because most are trivial or straightforward assertions - about where to find the station or the keys, who won the match, whether or not it is raining. In many cases these are communications that can be corroborated immediately by other means, such as seeing for oneself whether or not it is raining. The *general* reliability of communications should not blind us to the potential for error and malicious misinformation when it might matter most.

One response to this situation is to argue, as non-reductionists about testimony do, that although we have a default entitlement to believe information we are told by others, we have also an epistemic *duty* to be alert enough to the possibility of error and deception to filter out suspect communications. "Filtering" here indicates a fairly passive practice. It can be contrasted with the "monitoring" that "reductionists" insist on as our epistemic duty, where "monitoring" implies a more active assessment of the source and the content of the communication. For non-reductionists the filtering process is intended to alert one to potential defeaters of belief, whether these are facial indications of insincerity (such as a reluctance to make eye contact) or facts that contradict an existing background belief. Our response to a defeater alert is not necessarily immediate rejection of the information, nor distrust of the speaker; rather, the alert triggers the same process of critical reasoning that we employ in other types of communicative situation, such as argument. We are now looking for specific *reasons* to believe the proffered

information, articulating to ourselves why we should trust or distrust the informant or why we should accept or reject the content: articulations that will render one's response to the communication rational in a way that it would not have been if the filtering process had failed and we had relied purely on a general entitlement to believe. If we had overlooked the potential defeater, we would have been guilty of gullibility, of epistemic irresponsibility. On the other hand, if we employ this critical reasoning process when the filtering has not triggered an alarm, we appear to be distrusting our informant for no reason, and if we make this distrust known to her, she may well feel entitled to take offence or express resentment.

The reason why we tend to feel resentful when hearers do not simply "take our word" is that communication is connected to many of our most sensitive reactive attitudes. We expect to be believed when we offer information sincerely, and we hope to be believed when we do not, and even when we have given false or incomplete information, we can feel resentful when it is ourselves rather than what we are saying that is distrusted. Typically, in a testimonial situation, we offer ourselves as authorities on the topic in hand. We are claiming to *know*, not offering an opinion or inviting a debate. If we were offering an opinion or speculating we would generally indicate that with a phrase such as "I think" or "It could be that...". To *assert* something or *tell* someone something is to claim that one knows it to be true. In due course I will be examining an argument to the effect that knowledge is the norm of assertion, which is to say that one is entitled to assert only what one knows to be true, and that receivers who recognise the speech act as an assertion are entitled to accept the content as true on the expectation that the speaker speaks with appropriate epistemic authority – that is, from knowledge. What goes for the

speech act of assertion goes also for closely related speech acts, such as assurance, but with some differences in the constitutive expectations and responsibilities.

The fact that disbelief can trigger negative reactive attitudes lends support to the claim that we have a general *expectation* that we will be believed when we testify to knowledge. Non-reductionists have to justify the claim that we have a general entitlement to believe information given to us by others, whereas reductionists have to justify the claim that testimonial knowledge reduces to a more basic kind of knowledge and/or that testimonial warrant for a testimonial belief reduces to a more basic kind of warrant.

To claim that we have a general entitlement to believe what others tell us is to claim that testimony is a unique source of knowledge with its own kind of justification. According to non-reductionists, being at what Bernard Williams calls a "positional disadvantage" in not having direct (e.g. perceptual) access to certain information, we are justified in believing what an informant tells us, all things being equal, because we have a *general entitlement* to believe testimony. We have this, non-reductionists argue, not on the basis of empirical evidence but on the basis of some unique feature of human rationality, cognition or communication. If the non-reductionists are right about this, it means that on any particular occasion when an informant tells us something, as long as there are no alarm signals that we would be epistemically culpable in ignoring, we do not require a particular reason for believing what we are told. A default, possibly *a priori*, reason is provided by the nature of human rationality, cognition or communication (according to the particular version of non-reductionism adopted).

I will argue that the reasonable acceptance of any testimonial belief requires a particular kind of vigilance and responsibility, or integrity, and I will also argue

that the same attribute is required for responsible comprehension. Non-reductionists are right in claiming that a reason for belief is provided by the nature of human cognition and communication. It is provided, in part, by the cognitive processes involved in comprehension and in part by the mutually recognized expectations and responsibilities that constitute the particular kind of testimonial speech act under consideration, although these are clearly linked in that to properly comprehend the utterance one has to recognize the speech act and what it entails. Comprehension is an achievement, and can fail on particular occasions, so the fact that one has comprehended the utterance gives one a (defeasible) reason for accepting it.

Non-reductionists and advocates of trust-based theories argue that the kinds of reasoning and vigilance that reductionists claim is necessary for testimonial warrant, or justification, impose too great a cognitive and epistemic workload on us, on top of the work we have already done in comprehending the utterance, and our rational and cognitive processes are such that very often the epistemic assessment can take a free ride on the back of the comprehension process. This is especially important when we are thinking about the epistemic burden that reductionism would otherwise impose on younger children, and, as philosophers and educationalists with an interest in the learning of younger children, we should consider the developmental as well as the epistemological implications of the theories on offer. I contend that children learn the normative expectations and responsibilities of information-giving speech acts as they learn to speak.

It is clearly wrong to think that either *all* knowledge from testimony reduces to inferential knowledge or *no* knowledge from testimony reduces to inferential knowledge. It is important from both an epistemological and an educational point

of view to recognize that some of our knowledge from testimony *is* inferential and some is of a more distinctively testimonial or interpersonal kind that is not so influenced by traditional critical thinking skills and in which interpersonal trust is central. However, to complicate the issue further, comprehension itself typically involves inference - as when in order to understand what the speaker is saying by her utterance we have to infer the assumptions and commitments she intends to implicate - so in this sense inference is *involved* in coming via testimony to believe a proposition, even when it would not be correct to say that the belief itself was arrived at inferentially.

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This chapter has provided a preliminary outline of some of the philosophical and educational anxieties and challenges associated with testimony. They will be explored in more depth and detail in subsequent chapters. In this chapter I have been concerned to persuade the reader that testimony is a topic for education theorists and philosophers of all persuasions to take seriously. I have argued that we do in fact acquire a good deal of our knowledge, both inside and outside the classroom, by way of testimony, and that it plays a role in all kinds of discourse that are commonly seen as pedagogically preferable to a teaching style dominated by teacher talk and direct instruction. Some of the anxieties are based on misconceptions and misrepresentations. A proper understanding of the speech acts associated with testimony, of their comprehension and of the expectations and responsibilities associated with them, will relieve some of the doubts and anxieties. However, philosophical anxieties concerning learning by way of testimonial speech acts are deep-rooted and although the ubiquity of this form of belief-acquisition is

evident, our entitlement to claim the status of *knowledge* for beliefs acquired in this way is not so evident. In the next chapter I provide an historical account of how philosophers from Plato to Locke, Hume and Reid have responded to doubts about testimony's epistemic propriety and rationality. This will serve to provide a fuller introduction to the philosophical problems before (in Chapters 3 and 4) we delve deeper into contemporary debates concerning the justification of beliefs acquired by way of testimonial speech acts.

Chapter 2: Historical Themes and Debates

This chapter prepares the way for the arguments of subsequent chapters. It surveys Ancient, Medieval and Early Modern attitudes to testimony before examining in more detail Locke and Hume's arguments for justified assent to testimony being based on inductive inference and the calculation of probabilities. Thomas Reid's non-reductive approach anticipates the modern interest in the intersubjective *linguistic* nature of testimonial knowledge exchange. Authority and autonomy emerge as awkward bedfellows in any account of testimony that seeks to provide room for both.

Reid describes testimony as a distinctive kind of speech, in a way that resonates with recent trust theories of testimony (discussed in Chapter 4). He seems to conceive of the capacity to learn from testimony as what Stephen Darwall and Benjamin McMyler have called "a second-personal epistemic capacity" (Darwall, 2006; McMyler, 2011). It is epistemically second-personal, and irreducibly social, in that the relationship between testifier and audience plays a fundamental role in the justification or rationalization of testimonially-acquired beliefs.

However, such a view raises the possibility that our reliance on testimony is incompatible with the goal of epistemic autonomy. It suggests that the epistemic responsibility for the belief is at best *shared* between speaker and audience. How can we be epistemically or cognitively autonomous when the responsibility for so many of our beliefs is shared with others and when the "operation of the mind" concerned could not take place at all without social interaction with other people? That is a question I address in Chapter 5.

§2.1 Ancient, Medieval and Early Modern Attitudes to Testimony

Scepticism concerning knowledge based on testimony appears early in the history of philosophy. Plato appears to discount testimony as a source of knowledge on the ground that it is not in itself a *logos (Theaetetus,* 201cd)*.* In other words, the fact that someone has testified, made a factual claim, does not in itself provide rational grounds for counting the belief thus acquired as knowledge. Here, appearing to support the *Meno'*s recognition of first-hand experience as a *bona fide* source of factual knowledge, Plato compares testimony unfavourably with perception. It seems that knowledge is an all-or-nothing matter: there is no question of it having any relation to probability. The *truth* of the belief is insufficient for knowledge; a *logos* is required, and this is not simply a reason but, as McMyler puts it, "a systematic explanatory account of the phenomenon in question" (McMyler, 2011, p. 17). The knower is required to be able to assemble a proof or explanation: a teacher can only help the student see the connections for himself. This means that knowing is a kind understanding, but whereas our conception of understanding allows for it to be a matter of degree, subject to development and accommodation to new experience, for Plato one either knows or does not know, understands or does not understand – for example, what a triangle is - and when one *does* know or understand, it is because one has an "explanation" derived ultimately from clear definitional knowledge (knowledge of Forms).

Philosophers, such as Plato, whose main interest is in distinguishing knowledge from what they regard as lower forms of belief, especially those who want to set the bar high in terms of certainty and clarity, are always likely to disparage testimony as "second-hand", as "hearsay", and as the weapon of wily

orators or authoritarian pedagogues whose intention is indoctrination rather than education. For Plato, there is no way that a hearer's acceptance of a proposition proffered testimonially can acquire the extra ingredient, the "explanation" or theoretical rationality. The hearer can acquire a true belief but he cannot understand or account for why it is a true belief and therefore his belief cannot amount to knowledge.

Plato would disagree with Edward Craig's (1990) and Bernard Williams's (2002) claim that the first epistemological question to ask is not *What is knowledge?* but *What is a good informant?* Williams sees a good informant as intellectually virtuous: she is conscientious in being accurate and sincere in what she tells us. Craig explains the value of good information: it benefits us by aiding our survival. We need to be able to distinguish good information from bad; therefore, given that we are not always in a position to judge the quality of the information itself, we need to be good at telling good informants from bad. However, as the Road to Larissa story in *The Meno* demonstrates, Plato recognized that there is more to being a good informant than providing a true belief.

The question of the rationality of belief, what provides that additional feature, divides into accounts that emphasize reasons that might or might not be known to the subject and those that emphasize reasons of which the subject is necessarily aware. The former path leads us towards epistemic *externalism*, where rationality or justification is located in the properties of the content of the testimony and/or of the testifier, whether or not the recipient is aware of these. The other path leads towards epistemic *internalism*, where rationality or justification is located in qualities displayed by the recipient. Epistemic vigilance and a capacity to trust wisely are internalist properties, properties of the recipient, as are intellectual

virtues such as open-mindedness. A hybrid account of epistemic rationality or justification is also an option, where a combination of externalist and internalist properties is required for the recipient's belief to be deemed rational, warranted or justified, and for the belief acquired to amount to knowledge.

If the internalist's question, concerning the kind of responsiveness to testimony a hearer needs in order to acquire a reasonable or justified belief, is a question with obvious relevance for education, we should not forget that speakers have requirements and responsibilities, too, and these must be included in any account of the epistemic and linguistic responsibilities of teachers, and also of epistemic justice in the classroom.

The earlier mention of virtues hints at another theme that we will encounter later. Virtue epistemology, with its emphasis on the character of believers and knowers, speakers and audiences, and with it roots in Aristotle's philosophy, is associated especially with the trust-based theories that I will look at in Chapter 5. One of the strengths of virtue epistemology is that it allows us to take a *developmental* approach to epistemic rationality: we can become more epistemically virtuous; we can learn to be better testifiers and recipients of testimony. A developmental approach is important, too, because it acknowledges the role of testimony in the formation of other kinds of rationality. What we have learned from others is what allows us to recognize what we see and also to reason. Whatever we may decide about its legitimacy in certain high-stakes situations, we must at least recognize that testimony plays a key role in getting us ready to employ our senses as eye-witnesses and to practise inductive reasoning in ways we know to be reasonable because we have been *told* that they are. Without it we could not begin to make the explanatory connections that Plato requires for *episteme*.

This line of thought should lead us to agree with Craig and Williams that perception and reasoning cannot claim logical or chronological priority over testimony. In holding perception and, especially, reasoning to be superior sources of belief, Plato ignores the developmental role teaching and testimony have played in preparing us to make sound perceptual, deductive and inductive judgements.

<div align="center">***</div>

In the thirteenth century, Aquinas denied testimonial beliefs the status of knowledge but regarded our reliance on testimony as necessary for human society, and as a kind of *faith*, positioned between opinion and knowledge. Some contingent facts "remote from our senses" can be ascertained only by reliance on the word of others: "Hence it is that in human society faith is necessary in order that one man give credence to the words of another, and this is the foundation of justice" (*Commentary on Boethius's De Trinitate*, qu.III, art. i.3; cited in Coady, 1992, p. 16).

So, like Plato, Aquinas does not allow beliefs formed on the basis of testimony the status of knowledge, but he differs in according them a significant role in a just society. If we want to replace the cognitive attitude of faith that Aquinas employs here with a secular concept, surely the kind of attitude that could replace it is interpersonal trust, trust in the testifier herself, in her virtues of truthfulness and trustworthiness. This is not the trust we show when we *trust that* the plumber (because she is a plumber) will repair our boiler safely, but the kind when we trust her to have the virtues or character to fulfil our expectations and her

commitments. This is a distinction that will feature again in Chapter 5's discussion of trust-based theories of testimony.

In effect, as Coady points out (1992, p. 17), Aquinas is providing, in the modern epistemological idiom, an internalist account of justified belief. Such accounts have been the target of criticism, especially those labelled "intellectualist" (which include Descartes's). Coady detects a tension in Aquinas's epistemology and in other Medieval theories, including St Augustine's. On the one hand, they want knowledge to be a question of rational intuition; on the other hand, they have to acknowledge that perception, first-hand experience and testimony can be reliable sources of *useful* true belief. Augustine even admits that in common usage, we can be said to know "what we perceive by our bodily senses and what we believe on the authority of trustworthy witnesses" (*Retractationes*, I. xiii. 3; cited in Coady, 1992, p.19). In common usage, Augustine suggests, the word "know" is benignly misapplied, but it is not appropriate when "we keep to the proper acceptation of the term" (*ibid*). In *De Trinitate*, he states:

> Far be it from us […] to deny that we know what we have learned by the testimony of others: otherwise we know not that there is an ocean; we know not that the lands and cities exist which most copious report commends to us; we know not that those men were, and their works, which we have learned by reading history; we know not the news that is daily brought us from this quarter or that, and confirmed by consistent and conspiring evidence. (*De Trinitate*, XV. Xii. 21; cited in Coady, 1992, p. 20)

But Augustine does not supply an account of the qualities that distinguish justified or reasonable testimonial belief and Coady suggests that he is assuming a kind of intellectual *insight*. If this is true, it would make his theory either an internalist one

54

or an externalist/reliabilist one, depending on whether the knower is required to be aware and in control of how he exercises this insight.

The internalism/externalism distinction and debate connects with one of the key questions that make the epistemology of testimony relevant to education theory. In order to acquire knowledge, or at least a reasonable belief, what *kind* of responsiveness to testimony is required of a student? Claxton's dismissive account of truth and knowledge (discussed in Chapter 1) opened the door to relativism and subjectivism. What would close that door is clarity about what is to be expected of speakers in relation to responsible and rational testimony, and of hearers in relation to responsible and rational acceptance of testimony. Forms of contextualism, that take account of the characteristics and circumstances of particular encounters, discourses or speech situations, are not precluded by a refusal to embrace relativism.

If, as teachers and educationalists, we can become clearer about the epistemic and linguistic commitments and responsibilities of speakers and hearers, we can begin to think more practically about how to teach children to make sound judgements as speakers and hearers in relation to their schooling and to other aspects of their lives, including their use of social media. We can become clearer, too, about the responsibilities of teachers as guardians of just and safe epistemic environments.

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In the first half of the seventeenth century Descartes, continuing with the scholastic tradition of conferring the status of knowledge only on beliefs that achieved a

special clarity, rejected reliance on the expertise and authority of others on the ground that opinions differ around the world and seem equally well supported within their own terms (Descartes, 1954, p. 19). He regards his own *reasoning* not as a personal or culture-specific mode of thinking but as a universally valid and consistent human attribute, a gift (he later suggests) from a non-deceiving divinity. He puts his trust in reason but also in his own skill in exercising it, and he trusts his strength of will in following his strict methodology for avoiding any unconsidered assumptions. It is ironic that at the dawn of the modern era in science and mathematics, one of its chief theorists presents knowledge as an *individualistic* achievement. As many writers have pointed out, science is a paradigmatic case of a discipline in which practitioners are reliant on the testimony of others. Coady provides several examples of scientific collaborators who have had to trust each other's testimony, and comments:

> Reliance upon previous experimental work in science can, of course, go seriously astray but it seems also to be a condition of progress since even where results are theoretically 'replicable' it would be a practical absurdity for any given worker to replicate all the experimental and observational work upon which his own investigations depend. Indeed, it would often be literally impossible to do so, either because of an inevitable lack of time or lack of competence. (Coady, 1992, p. 10)

Descartes would not have been impressed by Thomas Reid's observation that even mathematicians nervously await the corroboration of their results by trusted colleagues:

> Here I ask again, Whether the verdict of his friend, according as it has been favourable or unfavourable, will not greatly increase or

diminish his confidence in his own judgement? Most certain it will and it ought. (Reid, *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*, VI, ch v.)

The corroboration of one's judgements by others is no part of Descartes's methodology. Objectivity is achieved by individual reason and its hallmark is clarity.[2]

What invalidates testimony for Descartes is the fact that reliance on it leaves the believer vulnerable to fashion, error and deceit. The foundations of a scientific belief system must rest, he insists, on beliefs that are invulnerable to error and even to the trickery of a demonic deceiver. It is clear, however, that when he comes to derive the self-evident truths that will be his system's foundations, he has not escaped the traditions of Catholic France: these are apparent in his assumptions about the *res cogitans* self and about the nature of God, as well as in his acceptance of a particular method of reasoning. To use his own metaphor, he builds his new house with at least some of the old materials and not entirely to a new design (see *Discourse on Method*, Part III. 1954, p. 24).[3]

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[2] Reid's conception of objectivity will be familiar to a modern social or communitarian epistemologist, but even Bertrand Russell says 'I mean here by "objective" not anything metaphysical but merely "agreeing with the testimony of others"' (*The Analysis of Matter*, 1927, p. 150. Cited by Coady, 1992, p. 13). Of course, If Descartes's solitary meditator had had some friends, they could have told him when he was hallucinating, dreaming or misperceiving – unless, that is, we are prepared to concede to him that his and our companions could all be figments of our imaginations and any corroboration by others of our judgements could be demonic deceptions; in which case, the language(s) in which the meditator thinks and reasons could be, too, and then he is truly trapped in the pit of scepticism, for not even the *cogito* argument will be available to him.

[3] According to Popkin (1997, pp. 180-181), the Cartesian project was stimulated by the case of a priest who was tried in 1634 for infecting a convent with evil spirits. This raised the question of whether testimony given under oath by demons could be true. As Wittgenstein argues in *On Certainty* (1999), scepticism and knowledge require the possibility of both truth and falsity. Descartes' fear of systematic demonic delusion is unfounded.

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Benjamin McMyler summarizes the position of testimony up to the latter half of the seventeenth century as follows:

> Learning from testimony was typically conceived as a capacity for basing beliefs on theoretical authority. The proper exercise of this capacity produced beliefs that amounted to faith or opinion, not knowledge, but nevertheless this capacity for basing beliefs on testimony was excluded from the category of knowledge, but this was because they enjoyed a category of their own, a category that was of the utmost importance for the conduct of ordinary life. (McMyler, 2011, p. 20)

There is an interesting implication in this: that the concept of *learning* extended to both the acquisition of knowledge and the acquisition of beliefs through faith (or trust) in authoritative informants. As the seventeenth century advanced and the ties between knowledge and demonstrative reason loosened under the pressure from experimental science, testimony began to lose its association with tradition, authority and faith, and instead became one of the considerations that made the truth of a particular belief more *probable*. Contingent facts were knowable, and what upgraded a belief to knowledge was the kind of evidence that proved it, "proof" now beginning to embrace probabilities as well as deductive demonstrations.

Arnauld and Nicole, the Port Royal logicians, writing in 1662, acknowledge that one can derive *knowledge* from authority, albeit of a different "kind" from that derived from trust in one's own capacities of reason and perception. They make

significant points about the rationality of forming testimonial beliefs, including that circumstances pertaining both to the fact itself and to the person whose testimony is being considered are relevant. They further maintain that in many cases, in everyday life, we ought to be satisfied with whichever judgement as to truth or falsity has the greatest *probability*. In other words, they are asserting the relevance of inductive inference to judgements concerning the probability of a claim being true.

Whereas "probability" had once meant "approvability by authorities" (Coady, 1992, p. 15. See also Shapin, 1994, p. 198), it was now beginning to incorporate a wider range of factors affecting the likelihood of truth. This contributed to the casting of doubt on the rationality of testimonial chains that stretch back in time to an original reasoner or eye-witness. How did this originator ever earn the approval of authorities, and who approved the authorities? By the time Hume was writing a century after the Port-Royal logicians, the idea that a person should accept the authority of a tradition, especially one that seems to have uncertain origins, without conducting his own process of inductive inference, was anathema to many philosophers and scientists. But, as we shall see, Thomas Reid countered that rejecting *all* tradition and authority is to go foolishly from one extreme to the other.

The explanation for why the emergence of a modern concept of probability led to a widespread rejection of the rationality of reliance on testimony and authority lies with uncertainty concerning the testifier. Very often we have only limited evidence that the speaker (or writer) is credible, and what evidence we have seems unreliable: testifiers who *seemed* credible sometimes turn out to have been incompetent or deceitful. Such considerations threaten to leave us knowing much less than we thought we knew. On the other hand, they motivated a search for other

arguments to justify our willingness to accept that testimonially-acquired beliefs can amount to knowledge and led to the more optimistic arguments of Thomas Reid and his modern non-reductionist counterparts.

§2.2 John Locke: Reluctant Reliance

Reid's position was that all things being equal we have a general entitlement to believe what other people tell us. This is a response to the sceptical approach of his fellow British empiricists, John Locke and David Hume. Locke's view is summed up in the following memorable passage:

> …I hope it will not be thought arrogance, to say, That, perhaps, we should make greater progress in the discovery of rational and contemplative *Knowledge* if we sought it in the Fountain, *in the consideration of things themselves*, and made use of our own Thoughts than other Men's to find it: for, I think, we may as rationally hope to see with other Men's Eyes as to know by other Men's Understanding […] The floating of other Men's Opinions in our brains makes us not one jot the more knowing, though they happen to be true. What in them was Science is in us but Opiniatrety. (*An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Nidditch, 1975, I, iv, p. 101. Italics as printed.)

This expresses Locke's epistemological individualism, which implies that the ideal state is to be epistemically self-reliant rather than to risk acquiring false beliefs from others. False beliefs can result not only from the speaker's incompetence or dishonesty, but also from our own misunderstanding of what has been said; and Locke emphasizes especially the decreasing probability of truth arising from subsequent citations:

> [N]o Probability can arise higher than its first Original. What has no other Evidence than the single Testimony of only one Witness, must stand or fall by his only Testimony, whether good, bad, or indifferent; and though cited afterwards by hundreds of others, one after another, is so far from receiving any strength thereby, that it is only the weaker. Passion, Interest, Inadvertency, Mistake of his Meaning, and a thousand odd Reasons, or Caprichios, Men's Minds are acted by (impossible to be discovered), may make one Man quote another Man's Words or Meaning wrong. (Locke, 1975: IV, xvi, p. 664)

Here Locke is writing about the kind of truths for which we are entirely dependent on testimony. He is directing a broadside against tradition: only claims that are confirmable by observation can properly be attested to; otherwise, they are speculation or conjecture. (However, he goes on to say that his remarks relate only to observable matters of fact and not to truths that are outside the scope of our senses.)

Locke's main concern is with what he calls "rational and contemplative knowledge": high-stakes, high-probability, non-demonstrative knowledge. He advocates "the consideration of things themselves"; we should use our own judgement rather than attempt the impossible feat of sharing another person's understanding. In his conception of communication as the attempted transfer of what is in one person's mind to the mind of another person, we see the connection between his semantics, his psychological theory and his epistemology. Given these connections, it is no surprise that he has a low regard for testimony in cases where the stakes are high. But philosophers and educationalists in our own time who do not (knowingly) share Locke's individualism need a different set of reasons from Locke's for continuing to think, as we saw in Chapter 1 some do, that testimonial communication is not a shared achievement but a passive transfer of information from one mind to another.

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Chapter xv of Book IV of Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* is entitled "Of Probability". Locke considers the various forms and degrees of assent that we give to propositions that are probably, rather than demonstratively, true. These beliefs cannot be entirely certain, although "some of them border so nearly upon Certainty that we make no doubt at all about them". Degrees of assent, Locke says, range from full assurance and confidence down to conjecture, doubt and distrust. The grounds for a judgement of the probable truth of a proposition concerning a contingent matter of fact are, first, "the conformity of any thing with our own Knowledge, Observation, and Experience and, secondly, the Testimony of others, vouching their Observation and Experience":

> In the Testimony of others is to be considered, 1. The Number. 2. The Integrity. 3. The Skill of the Witnesses. 4. The Design of the Author, where it is a Testimony out of the Book cited. 5. The Consistency of the Parts, and Circumstances of the Relation. 6. Contrary Testimonies. (*Ibid.,* p. 656)

Locke then asserts that to proceed rationally in such cases, where there is no infallible intuition to "determine the understanding", we ought to examine all these grounds of probability and "see how they make more or less, for or against any probable proposition", and "upon a due balancing the whole, reject, or receive it, with a more or less firm assent, proportionately to the preponderancy of the greater grounds of Probability on one side or the other" (*ibid*). He then gives the example of testimony concerning a man walking on ice. This is plausible to a hearer who has previously seen it for himself but when the Dutch Ambassador tells the King of

Siam how in his country the weather is so cold that water becomes hard enough to bear the weight of an elephant, the King replies: "Hitherto I have believed the strange Things you have told me, because I look upon you as a sober fair man, but now I am sure you lye" (*ibid.*, p. 657). So Locke is suggesting that one can only make an assessment on the basis of one's own experience. Judgements of plausibility will vary and it is for each person to judge responsibly, with integrity, within the bounds of his own experience, although he is permitted to take into account the number and credibility of testimonies that corroborate it. At this point he says something that seems strangely contradictory:

> There is another [ground], I confess, which though by it self it be no true ground of *Probability*, yet is often made use of for one, by which Men most commonly regulate their Assent, and upon which they pin their Faith more than any thing else, and, that is, the *Opinion of others*; though there cannot be a more dangerous thing to rely on, nor more likely to mislead one; since there is much more Falsehood and Errour amongst Men, than Truth and Knowledge. And if the Opinions and Perswasions of others, whom we know and think well of, be a ground of assent, Men have reason to be Heathens in Japan, Mahumetans in Turkey, Papists in Spain, Protestants in England, and Lutherans in Sweden. (*Ibid.,* p. 657)

The apparent contradiction is resolved when we realize that Locke is making a distinction between the testimony of an eye-witness and the opining of others on the veracity of the testimony. To receive testimony first-hand, as it were, from an original observer, and to make one's own responsible assessment of it, is one thing; to accept opinions on the claims from others who have themselves received them from others, or who offer an opinion on the testimony, is simply to accept the traditions of the local culture rather than to exercise autonomous judgement. As we

63

have seen, and the next quotation reinforces, Locke thinks that each passing on

further weakens the credibility of the original report:

> [A]ny Testimony, the farther off it is from the original Truth, the less force and proof it has. The Being and Existence of the thing it self, is what I call the original Truth. A credible Man vouching his Knowledge of it is a good proof; but if another equally credible do witness it from his Report, the Testimony is weaker: and a third that attests the Hear-say of an Hear-say is yet less considerable. So that *in traditional Truths*, *each remove weakens the force of the proof:* and the more hands the Tradition has successively passed through, the less strength and evidence does it receive from them. (*Ibid*, p. 664.)[4]

Is the distinction a valid one? We are as reliant on the reports of those who

have themselves received the belief from others as we are on the testimony of first-

hand witnesses. Can we not exercise our judgement in a similar way in both cases,

taking many of the same considerations into account: the conformity to our existing

knowledge, the consistency of the parts, the circumstances of the relation, the skill

or expertise of the speaker, and so on? In both cases, the assessment will be our

own, autonomous judgement will have been exercised. Locke appears to overstate

his case. He can plausibly maintain that eye-witness testimony is epistemically

stronger than subsequent passings-on, but not that the one is a responsible,

autonomous judgement and the other, necessarily, an unthinking acceptance of

tradition and authority. In n*either* case need assent be unreasonable.

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[4] Locke is generalizing a concern that Laplace had expressed concerning historical reports: "The action of time enfeebles then, without ceasing, the probability of the historical facts just as it changes the most durable monuments" (Pierre, marquis de Laplace, *A Philosophical Essay on Probabilities*, trans. F.W. Truscott, and F.E. Emory. New York, 1951. Quoted by Coady, 1992, p. 199). Shapin (1994, p. 232) notes some contrary opinions concerning time, and others concerning the multiplicity of testimonies: standing the test of time could be a positive feature and being a commonly held ("vulgar") opinion a negative one.

In focusing on the question of rational assent Locke was attending to a question that exercised others who were also attempting to come to terms with the discovery that there really were more things in heaven and earth than philosophy had previously dreamt of. Which reports of natural wonders, from travellers and scientists equipped with telescopes and microscopes, were to be believed? Exciting as these discoveries must have been, they had the potential to undermine epistemic confidence (Shapin, 1994, p. 194). Trust and responsible assent to testimony were urgent concerns and Locke's philosophical, rather than practical, thoughts about them in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* were influential. Empirical discoveries and the erosion of traditional certainties, along with an expansion of the social groups making knowledge claims, meant that "new and modified forms for the making and warranting of empirical truth had to be proposed and put in place" (Shapin, 1994, p. 195). [5]

In the sixteenth century one response to travellers' tales had been Montaigne's Pyrrhonism. Montaigne was especially fond of describing the customs and beliefs of "strange lands". In his essay "Of Custom" he says: "Habituation puts to sleep the eyes of judgement […] Human reason is a tincture infused in about equal strength in all our opinions and ways, whatever their form: infinite in substance, infinite in diversity" (2003, p. 96). But Montaigne's scepticism about

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[5] In *Of the Conduct of the Understanding* Locke emphasizes the importance of cautious and responsible assent, but, oddly, in a book largely devoted to advice on how to be an epistemically responsible student, he does not discuss the difficulty of making judgements concerning testimony. He has many things to say here (and also in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*) about developing good habits as a student and thinker, but he does not tackle the problem of distinguishing good from bad testifiers. He mentions alertness to the "correspondence in things" and to "the agreement and disagreement in ideas" (p. 210), and he advises impartiality and caution in all judgments of matters of fact, but otherwise he is vague about how the novice can make good judgements about whose, or which, reports to trust.

the possibility of disinterested judgement was unacceptable to Locke and his English contemporaries, such as the founders of the Royal Society (motto: *Nullus in verba* – "On no man's word"). They needed to extend the scope of trusted testimony both socially and geographically; the association of credibility and the virtues of truth with gentlemanly manners and reputation required modification. A decorous theory would value first-hand, individual experience above authority and tradition and would not regard the novelty of a factual claim as a reason for disbelief. Individualism had to be balanced by a proper appreciation of the testimony of experts who were slaves neither to their preconceptions nor to their senses. Credible eye-witness testimony was incorporated into the category of "experience". Although claims had to be greeted with discretion and discrimination, and not all reports of natural marvels could be credited, for *some* kinds of knowledge testimony provided the best available warrant and made assent rational.[6]

Assent to testimony was a matter of rational judgement, of "moral certainty", rather than absolute certainty. This implies personal integrity in making one's beliefs coherent, consistent and reasonable. Such an approach permits the integration of epistemic autonomy with trust in the authority and integrity of informants.

Factors that for Locke and others could feature in discriminating judgement of testimony included its internal consistency and its consistency with one's

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[6] Where individual reason or direct observations are unavailable, Robert Boyle admitted, "Humane Testimony is of great and almost necessary use in natural Philosophy" (*Boyle Papers*, Vol. 9, f. 25v. Cited by Shapin, 1994, p. 203). For each generation to warrant for itself each item of knowledge would be absurd, John Wilkins agreed, and for matters transacted before he was born, each man had to rely upon "the credible testimony of others…'tis not possible to know them any other way". If a man believed nothing but what he had seen for himself, he would be "an incredulous fool" (Wilkins, *Principles and Duties of Natural Religion*, 1668, p. 124, 230. Cited in Shapin, 1994, p. 204).

existing beliefs. Other factors were its plausibility – that is, the likelihood of the claim being true – and the number of credible people testifying to it (not in a bucket-chain through time but as individual witnesses).[7] Ancient historical records were more credible if they had been written immediately after the event, because, as Robert Hooke said, "of the Frailty of the Memory" (Shapin, 1994, p. 218). The "skill" or expertise of the testifier was also a relevant consideration, especially when compared with uninstructed sense perception.[8]

Anticipating Hume's argument in "On Miracles", Locke argues that rational assent depends on a proper "balancing" of the grounds of probability (*An Essay*, Bk IV, ch 15, §5. Nidditch, 1975, p. 656). His advice is to assent to testimony from people who are disinterested and unbiased, who have a reputation for integrity and truth-telling, together with previous points about expertise and unprejudiced

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[7] A recent example of an argument from authority, where the weight of expert of opinions is appealed to, appeared in the magazine *Prospect* in June 2012. Reviewing E. O. Wilson's *The Social Conquest of Earth* Richard Dawkins takes exception to its rejection of evolutionary "kin selection" theory and its replacement with a revival of "group selection" theory. Dawkins justifies his vehemence as follows: "I would not venture such strong criticism of a great scientist were I not in good company. The Wilson thesis … provoked very strong criticism from more than 140 evolutionary biologists, including a majority of the most distinguished workers in the field… These may not all be household names but let me assure you they know what they are talking about in the relevant fields". It is worth recalling J. S. Mill's contention (in *On Liberty*) that "If all mankind minus one, were of one opinion, and only one person were of the contrary opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person, than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind."

[8] As recent writers on expertise, such as Goldman, have observed, the non-expert's identification of genuine experts, and the difficulty of choosing between disagreeing experts (as a member of a jury, for example), makes this a tricky criterion to employ. Goldman observes that sometimes all we have to go on is the putative expert's manner and confidence in speaking. Some seventeenth century writers, Steven Shapin tells us, thought a plain style was best for engendering trust; and some thought an element of imperfection in the internal consistency of the ideas bespoke sincerity and the absence of collusion (Shapin, 1994, pp. 222 - 233). These are calculating, prudential considerations concerning the rhetoric that will win assent rather than epistemic standards applying to testifiers and witnesses.

perception.[9] The evaluation is of reliability, rather than of trustworthiness, and is as relevant to impersonal sources of information, such as newspaper reports, as it is to an individual informant. The aim of such an evaluation is the avoidance of gullibility, but also to make rational, or reasonable, one's reliance on the source.

The challenge for any trust-based account of testimony is to show how trust in the person testifying (rather than reliance based on inferred reliability) need not be blind or irrational. The problem for Locke's and similar accounts, is that the "weighing" of the considerations that contribute to an inference concerning the probability of the testimony being true, cannot be independent of the audience's background opinions (concerning, for example, what should count as expertise) or of other testimony (concerning, for example, the informant's reputation or track record). For Locke, the harmony of the testimony with one's existing knowledge and firmly held beliefs is just one consideration. For the proponents of trust-based theories of testimony, especially those coherentists whose bottom-line is self-trust (Lehrer, 1997; Zagzebski, 2012), it is the source of epistemic integrity and responsible judgement.

The difficulty in judging the integrity of one's own judgement of others, the trustworthiness of one's trusts, is underestimated by Locke. Indeed, he is extremely optimistic about the acuity of God-given reason.[10] The circularity that threatens to undermine trust in our own reasoning is shielded from Locke by his confidence that certain intellectual virtues will protect us from false reasoning. Despite all those travellers' reports of cultural diversity, he thinks reason is a natural, universal

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[9] This resembles the mnemonic RAVEN used in A Level Critical Thinking textbooks to help students assess the credibility of sources: **R**eputation, **A**bility to See, **V**ested Interests, **E**xpertise and **N**eutrality. In both cases, the advice concerns certain characteristics of the source without requiring the assessor to trust or distrust the speaker or writer herself.

[10] See, for example, *Of the Conduct of the Understanding,* § 3, ed. Grant and Tarcov, pp. 169 -171.

attribute of humankind and that no virtuous individual should have trouble trusting it. I will argue that we have as much reason to be as distrustful of our own intellectual authority as we do of the testimony and authority of others, and, ultimately, the same reasons to be trustful of both (see Chapter 5). Nevertheless, there are some points of similarity between the self-trust theories that I will be discussing and the attitude of prudence and pragmatism that Locke and his contemporaries advocated in the management of testimony and its associated risks. Noting that the specification of "credible persons" was not systematically spelled out, Shapin observes that:

> [T]he management of testimony was accomplished by mobilizing prudential maxims whose force and reference were well understood in the local culture – maxims of wise action whose challenge carried with them known costs…What was epistemically expected of those assessing philosophical testimony was what was morally expected of participants in gentlemanly civil conversation: the exercise of decorum, the prudential adaptation of mean to ends, displaying due regard to the continuance of that conversation as a good in itself. (Shapin, 1994, p. 240)

This gentlemanly approach to testimony and to conversation prefigures to an extent the Gricean maxims of cooperation and politeness that feature in twentieth century pragmatics, and to that extent at least we might say that Locke had some notion of the social nature of informative communication and of its participants' mutually recognized responsibilities and expectations.

§2.3 Hume on Testimony Concerning Miracles

In moving to Hume's and Reid's theories of testimony we are moving towards the rival theories that dominated discussion when testimony re-emerged in the early 1990s, after years of neglect, as a major topic in epistemology. I introduced these in §1.5. They are *reductionism*, which follows Hume in arguing for inferential justification for trusting testimony, and *non-reductionism*, which follows Reid in arguing for a default entitlement to trust testimony.[11] The modern versions of these approaches will be discussed in the next chapter. The main considerations that motivate each approach are manifested in their eighteenth century versions.

Hume's account appears in his essay "On Miracles" (Section 10 of *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*). Hume acknowledges the prevalence and usefulness of testimony and goes on to argue that our "assurance" is derived from our observation that testimony tends to be true. He starts with the famous statement about the wise man's proportioning of belief to the evidence, the weighing of "experiments" on either side, and the fixing of his judgment where the weight of probability lies. "In all cases, we must balance the opposite experiments, where they are opposite, and deduct the smaller number from the greater, in order to know the exact force of the superior evidence" (*A Enquiry*, §10.4. Beauchamp, 1999, p. 170). Despite the reference to the "wise man", this sounds even more like a mathematical calculation than a Lockean prudential "assay".

As Hume's topic is the probability of reports of miracles being true, he is especially keen to seem disinterested. In this context, Hume wants to show that assenting to testimony concerning the occurrence of miracles is unjustified and

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[11] Not all writers agree that Hume's account is reductionist. See, for example, Pritchard and Richmond (2012) and Fogelin (1990).

therefore he needs to make clear what would make (other) testimonially-acquired beliefs justified. He says:

> It will be sufficient to observe, that our assurance in any argument of this kind is derived from no other principle than our observation of the veracity of human testimony, and of the usual conformity of facts to the reports of witnesses. It being a general maxim, that no objects have any discoverable connexion together, and that all the inferences, which we can draw from one to another, are founded merely on our experience of their constant and regular conjunction; it is evident, that we ought not to make an exception to this maxim in favour of human testimony, whose connexion with any event seems, in itself, as little necessary as any other. *(An Enquiry*, 1999, §10.5, p. 170)

What experience teaches us, Hume says, is that human nature tends towards trustworthiness:

> Were not the memory tenacious to a certain degree; had not men commonly an inclination to truth and a principle of probity; were they not sensible to shame, when detected in a falsehood: Were not these, I say, discovered by experience to be qualities inherent in human nature, we should never repose the least confidence in human testimony. A man delirious or noted for falsehood and villainy has no manner of authority with us. (*Ibid.,* p. 171)

It is because we are accustomed to finding conformity between testimony and reality that "we place any credit in witnesses and historians" (*ibid.*, p. 172). Hume's approach to testimony mirrors his approach to the laws of nature: we can rely on them to the extent that the reliance is backed by experience. Where testimony conflicts with our experience of the laws of nature, we have to ask which is more probable. How often has the reported phenomenon been observed? If the answer is

"never" (which, according to Hume, it is in the case of "miracles" such as a dead person coming back to life), crediting the testimony is irrational.

Hume's argument illustrates the difficulty of establishing a case for a strict form of rational autonomy, for his argument for what distinguishes rational from irrational belief in testimony itself relies on testimony. Our personal observations of human nature, of the inclination to truth, of probity and tendency to shame when detected in falsehood, are too limited to explain our trust in some, and distrust in other, kinds of report. It is what we have learned from others, and the conformity of that with our own limited experience, that gives us confidence in the conformity of testimony with reality. Furthermore, how could we possibly know what in nature has never occurred and what occurs frequently unless we accumulated this knowledge from the reports of others (and found it conformable with our own limited experience)?

It seems that we must rely on testimony in order to be in a position to form the inductive generalizations that might justify a general reliance on testimony; and things are no less complicated if we attempt autonomous verification of an individual testifier's credibility. Not only do we not have access to anything like the amount of information that could justify our reliance on most testifiers (without relying on further testimony), but also the criteria we would use in such an assessment would themselves have been learned from others. If we felt that we had adopted them for ourselves on the basis of autonomous reflection, this would surely be a delusion: we could not filter out from all the knowledge and understanding of the world that such reflection would employ what we have not observed for ourselves. Our utter reliance on testimony, not least in our acculturation and

education, appears to undermine any attempt to establish epistemic autonomy on the basis of (non-question-begging) inductive inferences.

Hume could respond to these criticisms by arguing that the conformity he is referring to operates between *kinds of reporter* and one's observations of reality and reliability, which reduces the experience required for justified assent in particular cases. But this does not help, for a) we cannot possibly have had the personal experience to know what kinds of reporter are reliable on particular topics in particular circumstances without relying on what we have learned from others, and b) we cannot (usually) know whether a particular reporter fits a particular profile - has the required kind of expertise, authority or reputation - without relying on the testimony of others. Any suggestion that we have all personally observed all the relevant correlations would just be implausible.

It would be even more implausible to suggest that children could have the requisite experience to infer the credibility of kinds of reporters (or of kinds of report). With children, it is even more evident that their judgements of testimony and of testifiers cannot be completely autonomous (which is not to deny that children's judgements concerning testimony can become more autonomous as they mature). An important question in the epistemology of testimony is how, at any age, our trusting what others tell us can be reconciled with responsible judgement, and I contend that in order to answer this we need a different understanding of autonomy from Locke's or Hume's.

Coady raises a fundamental objection to Hume's account of testimony, which is that the practice of reporting depends on a certain degree of correlation or conformity between reports and reality (1994, pp. 85 – 100). Hume's idea that we place credit in "witnesses and historians" because we find this conformity implies

that witnesses and historians *could* be reporting with zero conformity, but clearly such a hopeless social practice could not survive for long. In fact, it is doubtful whether any kind of communication could survive in this situation, for all communication relies on speakers being generally accurate and sincere in what they say. It is not so much that words and phrases could not have stable, learnable meanings in the absence of reliable reporting and "the virtues of truth", as Bernard Williams (2002) calls accuracy and sincerity, as that language users could not have consistent experience in interpreting each other's utterances in context. This means that generally accurate testimony is a prerequisite of communication. To put it another way, most testifiers' reports are constrained by epistemic standards or norms, such as knowledge, truth or justified belief. If testifiers typically asserted what they did not know, or what they did not believe to be true, or what they were not rationally entitled to believe, there could be no such social practice as testimony or assertion, and (plausibly) no verbal communication of any kind.

This kind of argument has featured in several more recent non-reductionist theories of testimony, and we will meet it again in the next chapter.

§2.4 Thomas Reid: Pledging Veracity

Thomas Reid (1710 - 1796) is known as a "commonsense" philosopher and as one of the leading philosophers of the Scottish Enlightenment. His arguments concerning testimony are remarkable for their sensitivity to the pragmatics of informative linguistic encounters and for his recognition of their essentially *social* nature. Reid calls speech acts such as testifying, promising, questioning and commanding "social operation of the mind" and maintains that they are not

reducible to "solitary operations" - that is, to judgments or inferences - because they are "original parts of our constitution". What he means by this is that they are expressive of our desires and feelings and are not completely truth-evaluable. Questions, commands and promises may have some intellectual content, some "assertoric force" and truth-evaluable propositions embedded in them, but they do not *express* propositions. If we think of testimony as constituted by straightforward assertions, it would seem wrong to associate it with questions, promises and commands, but Reid wants to restrict the scope of the term "testimony" to something more like assurances or affirmations than assertions:

> Testimony is a social act, and it is essential to it to be expressed by words or signs. A tacit testimony is a contradiction: but there is no contradiction in a tacit judgement; it is complete without being expressed…In testimony a man pledges his veracity for what he affirms, so that a false testimony is a lie: but a wrong judgement is not a lie; it is only an error. (*Essays on the Intellectual Powers*, Essay VI, ch. 1. Beanblossom and Lehrer (eds.) 1983, p. 252)

Reid is making a distinction between judgement on the one hand, which is *truth* evaluable, and affirmation on the other hand, which is *truthfulness* evaluable. A false judgement is in error; false testimony is a lie. Whether or not Reid is right to narrow the reference of "testimony" to such affirmations or assurances (or any other speech act in which the speaker is not merely reporting her judgement of a contingent matter of fact but vouching for its truth), the distinction is an important one, and it is one to which I will return in Chapter 6, where I argue that testimony is not a single speech act but encompasses a range of speech acts which anticipate distinct responses.

Part of what Reid means by calling testimony "a social act" is that there is a special *intersubjectivity* involved. In pledging the truth of that to which she testifies, the speaker is vouching for her own sincerity and/or trustworthiness. She therefore expects the hearer to believe what she says in a different way from how he comes to believe the truth of an asserted judgment. He believes it because he believes *her* - that is, he believes it because she has given him a special kind of reason to believe it. It is an interpersonal reason, as it were, concerning her own character, rather than an inductive inference concerning the contingent fact itself. Whereas "judgement" involves a weighing of evidence *a propos* the truth of a proposition, and need not be communicated, testimony is necessarily a social expression of a subjective attitude, conveyed in the mutually recognized commitments of particular speech acts.

Reid is aware of some of the linguistic implications of the distinction, including the fact that although the same form of words can express either a judgement or testimony, "from the matter and circumstances, we can easily see whether a man intends to give his testimony, or barely to express his judgement" (*ibid.*, p. 253). In other words, Reid is introducing a form of pragmatics or discourse theory into the discussion by recognizing that the meaning and implications of an utterance are not encoded in the meanings of the words themselves but implicated in the contextual features of the communicative exchange.

Reid's distinction between testimony and judgement requires some evaluation. It seems to be similar to the distinction between fact and theory, which, as Coady points out, is a philosophically contested distinction that relies on further distinctions, such as those between observation and inference or the sensory and

the intellectual (Coady, 1994, p. 59). It certainly seems appropriate to talk of "expert testimony" in circumstances where the testifier is not an eye-witness but someone whose expertise consists in a certain kind of theoretical competence. The fact that she offers her expert opinion or judgement does not preclude the possibility of the hearer placing trust in her truthfulness or sincerity rather than more directly in the truth or reliability of what she says. But I am not as inclined as Coady is to reject Reid's distinction entirely; or, more precisely, I see the distinction as pointing toward a range of speech acts, and I do not see why the word "testimony" cannot be used to embrace the whole range, as long as we bear in mind that it must also embrace a range of anticipated and appropriate audience responses.

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Reid's argument for a default entitlement to accept beliefs on the basis of testimony is what defines him, in modern terminology, as a non-reductionist. Reid's view is that we have a natural disposition to form beliefs on the basis of testimony, to believe what we are told, to learn from what others tell us. Long before children know what a promise is, they rely on testimony and, therefore, on the natural veracity of speakers and stability in how language is used (*ibid.*, p. 93). Reid invokes God's purposes in creating humans as social creatures and proposes his two principles of testimony. The key passage is worth quoting fully, for its intrinsic power and because it raises so many central issues:

> The wise and beneficent Author of Nature, who intended that we
> should be social creatures, and that we should receive the greatest

and most important part of our knowledge by the information of others, hath, for these purposes, implanted in our natures two principles that tally with each other.

The first of these principles is, a propensity to speak truth, and to use the signs of language so as to convey our real sentiments […] Another principle implanted in us by the Supreme Being, is a disposition to confide in the veracity of others, and to believe what they tell us. This is the counterpart to the former; and, as that may be called *the principle of veracity*, we shall, for want of a more proper name, call this *the principle of credulity*. It is unlimited in children, until they meet with instances of deceit and falsehood; and it retains a very considerable degree of strength through life. (*Ibid.*, pp. 94 – 95)

It is interesting that Hume and Reid both maintain that people have a tendency to tell the truth. For Hume the tendency is linked to shame at being caught lying; for Reid it is an innate disposition. God has planted in us dispositions to tell the truth and to believe what we are told. Reid's two principles lead him to espouse a theory that critics regard as licensing gullibility. If it is true that we have these natural propensities, that in itself does not amount to a general justification of assent to testimony, nor does it help us on particular occasions. We know (and Reid knows, as his reference to children shows) that we sometimes encounter "instances of deceit and falsehood": so what we require from a theory of testimony is an account of justified or reasonable assent on *particular* occasions. We have to interpret Reid as providing the *backdrop* to the epistemic assessments that are required on particular occasions. If it is the case that most people tell the truth – and recall that according to Reid if they are testifying they are *pledging* that they know what they say to be true – then, all things being equal, there is a probability that on this occasion the testimony will be true. So the principle of credulity does not license gullibility at all, for the disposition to believe what we are told is backed by the probability of truth on particular occasions, *all things being equal*.

If it were not the case that speakers naturally incline to tell the truth and hearers naturally incline to believe rather than to disbelieve, then:

> [N]o proposition that is uttered in discourse would be believed, until it was examined and tried by reason; and most men would be unable to find reasons for believing the thousandth part of what is told them. Such distrust and incredulity would deprive us of the greatest benefits of society, and place us in a worse condition than that of savages. (*Ibid*., p. 95)

Reid notices a problem for the Humean account of testimony: by making the hearer's justified assent a matter of inductive inference and weighing of probabilities, which require considerable experience, it leaves the beliefs formed by immature and inexperienced people exposed to the accusation that they are epistemically unjustified, for those beliefs cannot have been reliably formed in that way. Furthermore, because for Hume the disposition to speak the truth is based on the avoidance of shame, children (lacking a tendency to shame) would be as likely to lie as to tell the truth, thus putting each other at further epistemic risk. Reid avoids these problems by claiming that children's natural credulity and veracity is shared by adults, both groups having an entitlement, *ceteris paribus*, to believe what they are told.

Reid is also claiming that trusting one another for the truth is a hallmark of a civilized community and brings great social benefits, a point that he surely intends to apply to children's trust in adults and in each other. A culture of distrust, on the other hand, makes belief impossible, especially for those incapable of inductive inference, as he believes children are:

Children, on this supposition, would be absolutely incredulous, and, therefore, absolutely incapable of instruction: those who had little knowledge of human life, and of the manners and characters of men, would be in the next degree incredulous: and the most credulous men would be those of greatest experience, and of the deepest penetration; because, in many cases, they would be able to find good reasons for believing testimony, which the weak and the ignorant could not discover. (*Ibid.*, p. 96)

This is a very interesting passage. Reid recognizes the significance of testimony for education and for social justice. Children need to trust their teachers (instructors) in order to learn from them. If children and less educated adults have to rely on inference, based on experience, reasoning and existing knowledge, in order to learn (to acquire knowledge) from others, they are at a social disadvantage compared with well-educated adults. Reid clearly implies that inductive inference *is* one way to acquire knowledge from others. This is important for those occasions when things are not equal and the hearer is alerted to the need to assess the testimony rather than accept it by default. But his emphasis is different from Locke's and Hume's in this respect. He mentions "knowledge of human life, and of the manners and characters of men", suggesting that for him the most relevant kind of judgement concerns not so much the probability of the fact attested to being true but the trustworthiness and/or sincerity of the speaker. This is one factor among many for Locke and Hume, but for Reid, with his understanding of testimony as a pledge, as a personal assurance of truthfulness, this kind of judgement of character has a supporting role within a social practice that is already predisposed to be positive and optimistic. Bob Plant (2007, p. 43)) sees "clear resonances" between Reid and the Wittgensteinian idea that both knowledge and scepticism function against a backdrop of trust (1999, §115, §509)), and also, despite the naturalism,

with Derrida's insistence that there can be neither truth nor society without trust in the other (1997; 2000).

In 1764, two years after the publication of Rousseau's *Émile*, which had presented a rather different account of natural child development, Reid argues that Nature clearly intends children to be guided by the authority and reason of others until they have matured sufficiently no longer to need guidance:

> The infant by proper nursing, and care, acquires strength to walk without support. Reason hath likewise her infancy, when she must be carried in arms: then she leans entirely upon authority, by natural instinct, as if she was conscious of her own weakness; and, without this support, she becomes vertiginous. When brought to maturity by proper culture, she begins to feel her own strength, and leans less upon the reason of others; she learns to suspect testimony in some cases, and to disbelieve it in others; and sets bounds to that authority to which she was at first entirely subject. But still, to the end of life, she finds a necessity of borrowing light from testimony, where she has none within herself, and of leaning, in some degree, upon the reason of others, where she is conscious of her own imbecility. (*Ibid*., p. 96)

This remarkable passage anticipates psychologists such as Piaget, Vygotsky and Bruner in recognizing that a child is not just a small and ignorant version of an adult. A child's cognition and reason (interestingly feminized) matures under the guidance of more knowing others. Unlike Rousseau's Émile, Reid's child naturally relies at first on authoritative adults but becomes progressively more capable of exercising epistemic autonomy, to the extent that she is able to judge for herself whom to trust and which testimony to doubt, without ever becoming, or wishing to become, wholly self-reliant. Eventually her reliance on testimony and her reliance on reason combine to support each other:

81

For, as we find good reason to reject testimony in some cases, so in others we find good reason to rely upon it with perfect security, in our most important concerns. The character, the number, and the disinterestedness of witnesses, the impossibility of collusion, and the incredibility of their concurring in their testimony without collusion, may give an irresistible strength to testimony, compared to which its native and intrinsic authority is very inconsiderable. (*Ibid.*, p. 97)

So, a child's trust in testimony is justified by a default entitlement to assent that derives from the innate trustworthiness and trustfulness of human nature, but subsequently the older child or young adult will be able to support this natural propensity with reasons that can support particular judgments. When such reasons are not available, the "native and intrinsic authority", the default entitlement, is still sufficient if "there is nothing in the opposite scale".

Reid touches on several of the themes that have been developed by modern philosophers and educationalists. He shows an interest in children's learning from others, in children's cognitive development, but he also shows an awareness of testimony (assurance) as a speech act and as a discourse with contextual features, of the social and cultural importance of trust in testimony, and of the place of character judgments in the social practice of learning from others. He is committed to epistemic autonomy, and yet, as we have seen, he maintains that some "operations of the mind" are social rather than solitary, distinguishing the capacity of learning from testimony from both inference and perception, which are solitary "operations of the mind" to which it cannot be reduced. He suggests that it is its interpersonal and cooperative nature that makes testimony an irreducibly social form of learning. He recognizes, for example, that the second person form of verbs, and the second person pronoun *you*, are "appropriated to the expression of social operations of mind, and could never have had a place in language but for this

purpose" (Reid, 2002, p. 70). Testimony, like promising, requesting and commanding, requires an audience to be addressed by a speaker, and for the audience to recognize that it is being addressed in that way – that is, to recognize the speech act - and therefore the entitlements, expectations and responsibilities (of both speakers and hearers) that constitute the speech act.

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In subsequent chapters I will develop Reid's insight that our capacity to learn from testimony is an irreducibly social, second-personal capacity in which the relationship between the speaker and the audience is fundamental, both epistemically and linguistically. I will also address the possibility that our reliance on testimony is incompatible with an educational goal of epistemic autonomy. If the epistemic responsibility for the hearer's testimonially-acquired belief is at best *shared* between speaker and audience and if the "operation of the mind" involved could not take place at all without social interaction with others, what constitutes intellectual autonomy?

Chapter 3: Recent Debates in the Epistemology of Testimony

We saw in the last chapter that Reid stands out as a philosopher who sees the acquisition of knowledge from testimony as an essentially social process. Locke and Hume see it as an individualistic achievement on the part of the receiver. It is part of my argument that it is indeed a social process and that the mutual recognition by speaker and audience of their respective expectations and responsibilities is constitutive of the speech act employed. In order to develop this argument, and to incorporate it into a broader conception of pedagogic dialogue, I need to demonstrate the limitations of alternative accounts of testimony. I will begin this demonstration by picking up Reid's discussion of younger children's capacity for justified testimonial belief and comparing alternative responses (by Anthony Quinton and Sanford Goldberg) to the problem Reid raises. I will proceed to other themes raised by recent epistemologists in order to argue, in due course, that epistemic considerations are intertwined with linguistic considerations: we exercise rational responsibility in comprehending or interpreting utterance before we exercise it in doxastic assessment. Theories of intellectual autonomy need to take account of the implications of this, as do pedagogical and curriculum theories.

§3.1 Quinton and Goldberg: Children Learning From Testimony

In a contribution to an issue of the *Journal of the Philosophy of Education* in 1972, the Oxford philosopher Anthony Quinton acknowledges the social character of testimony. Without testimony, Quinton says, we would be epistemic Robinson Crusoes. However, children have to rely on a different source of justification for

their beliefs from those that adults have access to. Until we are mature enough to have acquired the skills of inference we need in order to evaluate sources of information, we are simply *caused* by others to believe certain things. Much of the time we cannot even identify the external source of our beliefs, still less critically assess them. Quinton seems to echo not only Reid but also the words of St Paul: "When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me" (1 *Corinthians*, 13).

Quinton goes on to ask: "Is the fact of the predominantly and ineliminably social character of our knowledge incompatible with the individualistic assumptions customarily made by theorists of knowledge?" (p. 205). Quinton thinks not. Belief is historically prior to knowledge: "To start with very few of our beliefs are justified, at all times many are not and many again are justified only precariously and indirectly" (p. 206). Justification is historically secondary to the testimonially acquired beliefs but it is logically primary. In due course the development of cognitive autonomy allows us to justify, or to make rational, beliefs that were previously caused in us by external authorities. In Quinton's words: "We become able to discharge the debts we have incurred, that stock of borrowed beliefs which enable us to get started" (p. 207).

But in contesting Karl Popper's view (in *Conjectures and Refutations,* 1963) that epistemology should concern itself neither with justification nor the sources of knowledge but only with the validity of beliefs and the methods by which they are criticized, Quinton is forced to recognize a problem. The feasibility of individualistic justification by way of an assessment of the general reliability of the testifier is threatened by a *prima facie* incompatibility between recourse to our

"instruments of criticism" and the fact that they themselves are provided by authority, through testimony. We acquire them from other people through the "observation language" that makes usable perception possible, through the logic we use to criticize and develop beliefs, through the methodology that specifies the degree of support given to theory by observation. "We can weigh the purported pound of sugar only on the scales the grocer himself has provided" (p. 208).

This moves the problem of justifying the acceptance of testimony to new ground and puts in question the genuineness of the cognitive (or intellectual) autonomy that is supposed to solve it. If the rationality of our reliance on others depends on the rationality of our reliance on our own critical resources, such as our inductive reasoning, and they themselves derive from what we have learned from others and from our cultural traditions, the justificatory process is circular.

Quinton argues that the reason why most testimony must in fact be reliable is that unless reports were predominantly true, what witnesses say could not be understood and thus identified as testimony.[12] We understand other people's utterances by becoming aware "of a regular correlation between a given repeated pattern of utterance and a repeated kind of observable situation which usually accompanies it" (p. 211). From observing the correlation between utterance patterns and situation-types, we move on to non-observation statements, understanding them in terms of previously understood statements of observation. Quinton concludes that "…either a language we do not know is intelligible to us, in which case most of what it is used to say must be true, or it is not intelligible to us

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[12] The best-known version of this argument is Donald Davidson's in *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation*, Oxford University Press, 1984. Coady echoes it in the criticism of Hume previously mentioned (p. 72).

at all" (p. 211). This applies also within our own language community for when we are children we acquire language by imitating the practices we find going on in it. Most of the statements we heard as children must have been true (or true enough,) or we simply could not have attached meaning to them. Without veracity predominating over falsity, there could be no language and therefore no community.

Quinton's ground for the general acceptance of testimony has direct application only to observation statements. In order to extend it further he makes a distinction between, on the one hand, non-observational beliefs which are about situations that are observable but by the believer unobserved, and, on the other hand, beliefs that are logically general or about unobservable theoretical entities. The latter are trickier to accommodate within the "predominance of veracity" rule than the former. But, Quinton argues, with observation language in place, and with a minimal endowment of deductive logic, we have sufficient means for a critical assessment of theoretical testimony. With this we can avoid both definitely false items of belief and dependence on ungroundable assumptions about the reliability of authorities. Were this not the case, our dependence on our parents and others for language and critical assessment practices would undermine our acceptance of all testimonial beliefs.

Quinton sees himself as presenting an alternative to the approaches to testimony of Locke and Hume, which, as we have seen, justify the acceptance of testimony on the basis of inductive generalizations about the likelihood of particular speakers or types of speaker, or types of report, being true. In other words, they are reductive accounts, reducing the rationality of our reliance on testimony to the rationality of our reliance on our own reasoning. The alternative

non-reductive view, Reid's view, of which Quinton's is a version, argues that, all things being equal, we are generally entitled to believe what others tell us. There is a default entitlement to believe rather than a default duty to subject every testifier and every report to active appraisal. However, Quinton, addressing a readership interested in education, is at pains to emphasize in his conclusion that once the capacity for the criticism of authorities has been developed, fostered by good teaching and justified by the non-reductive *a priori* arguments concerning language and the acceptability of our basic instruments of criticism, cognitive autonomy *can* be achieved. Individuals can then make rational their acceptance of beliefs from others by the exercise of their critical reasoning skills.

Quinton clearly accepts the view that the fostering of intellectual autonomy is an important and achievable aim of education. He has argued that our reliance on testimony as children is compatible with this aim and that in the course of our education we are (or ought to be) relieved of the reliance and allowed to assume direct responsibility for all our beliefs.

I will comment on Quinton's account after I have outlined Goldberg's argument. This tackles the same problem, and shares some of Quinton's assumptions, but introduces additional considerations.

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Goldberg's (2013) paper also appeared in an issue of the *Journal Of Philosophy of Education,* one devoted to themes in social epistemology[13]. Goldberg initially

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[13] Between Quinton's 1972 paper and Goldberg's 2013 paper few papers in the *Journal of Philosophy of Education* have discussed testimony explicitly, but it lies behind many discussions of indoctrination, traditional instruction and religious education.

presents the problem of young children's reliance on the testimony of adults as arising from their lack of sufficient cognitive maturity to make autonomous rational judgements concerning the reliability of what they are told; therefore (given that we accept a version of the Justified True Belief notion of knowledge) young children can not *learn,* in the sense of acquiring knowledge from what adults tell them. This is an unacceptable conclusion, so something must be wrong with the problem as it is framed. Young children are eliminated from the class of people who can acquire knowledge via testimony because the kinds of reasons they have available to them are just not sufficient to render their testimonially-acquired beliefs rational – if, that is, we insist on a strong ("Cartesian") notion of intellectual autonomy. Even if strong enough reasons were available, it is doubtful whether young children could bring them to bear appropriately on the rationality of their own belief. So, as long as we think the justificatory reasons have to be available to children, it seems that they are not in the right epistemic situation to acquire knowledge via testimony.

Goldberg has recourse to a version of epistemic externalism in order to produce a more acceptable conception of autonomy. Reasons other than those available to the child himself can be accepted as contributing to the rationality of the acquired belief, and therefore to the belief qualifying for the epistemic status of knowledge. We are forced into this acceptance by the fact that it is simply implausible and unfair to say that young children cannot learn from what adults tell them. Goldberg mentions two external sources of reasons. One is the reliable epistemic status of the teacher's beliefs and testimony and the other is the nature of the epistemic or informational environment. Although the child has the potentially cognitively unsafe disposition to trust what adults tell him, the school classroom is

an environment in which the teacher has good reasons supporting what she teaches him and misconceptions and false information are generally corrected. Goldberg argues that reasons other than those available to the recipient are always relevant, always capable of supporting or undermining any (third-person) claim to the recipient's belief amounting to knowledge. A strong Cartesian or internalist notion of autonomy and rationality is wrong in any case, for adults as well as for children.

So Goldberg's solution to the problem of the cognitive immaturity of children is the reliabilist and externalist one that it is the quality of the teacher's testimony and of the informational environment of the classroom that underwrites the child's claim to knowledge. In fact, Goldberg says, if the child were to aim at independence his education would be dramatically hindered: his chances of acquiring knowledge independently are lower than his chances of acquiring knowledge by reliance on the teacher.

Adults, too, are always reliant on others, not only for particular bits of information, but for the reinforcement of epistemic norms and the "cleaning" of our epistemic environments – many of which (including universities, scientific associations, journals, press media and publishing) are "epistemically engineered" to be self-cleaning. Goldberg observes:

> [A] hearer's reasons for regarding a source as credible do not exhaust the considerations that bear on the rationality of her acceptance. Rather the context of acceptance is one in which the task of monitoring testimony is itself distributed. (Goldberg, 2013, p. 181)[14]

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[14] We might well wonder whether Goldberg is right to be so sanguine about the epistemic safety of the classroom. Surely whether or not it is safe depends on several variables, including the curriculum and the pedagogical practices employed by the teachers, some of which may tend towards indoctrination, some towards a more dialogic openness. Goldberg's epistemological optimism rather begs the questions that educationalists, as we saw in Chapter 1, are concerned about.

My comparison of Quinton's and Goldberg's responses to the situation of young children will prefigure the case I will make in due course concerning the rationality of acquiring knowledge directly from others' speech acts.

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Quinton refers to the *social* character of our knowledge, Goldberg to our epistemic reliance on others. They are both concerned about how the requirement for beliefs to be backed by reasons positions younger children, given that we want to be able to say that they can learn from what their teachers tell them. How *can* they if they do not have sufficiently robust reasons? Quinton rejects Popperian pessimism about the recipient's scope for justifying his testimonially acquired belief: he wants to retain faith in individual justification, but he accepts that in the case of young children the justification is "postponed" until the child has accumulated enough knowledge and reasoning ability to justify the beliefs that he has accumulated and that are held on trust *pro tem*. However, the child is *not* excessively vulnerable because, necessarily, true beliefs must predominate over false ones, otherwise language learning would not be possible in the first place. Goldberg, on the other hand, does not argue for an *a priori* justification for trusting testimony but for a reliabilist point concerning safe epistemic environments, and this also reassures us that children can be said to acquire knowledge from adults and are not especially vulnerable to mischief or misinformation. Quinton, therefore, retains some confidence in an individualistic/internalistic account of epistemic justification, and therefore of intellectual autonomy, as he conceives it, whereas Goldberg rejects that in favour of an externalist/reliabilist account of justification and of a notion of

autonomy that is accepting of our reliance on others. It is worth exploring the assumptions in these arguments.

Quinton and Goldberg both accept that what one acquires from testimony is a *belief* that can only be counted as knowledge, or as rational, if it is backed by reasons, either just by reasons available to the recipient (Quinton) and/or by external reasons that include those pertaining to the speaker's belief and to the circumstances of the testifying, such as the informational environment (Goldberg). They therefore both make knowledge from testimony an indirect process: the recipient's knowledge is mediated not just by the words of the testimony but by a belief that needs the "added extra" of sufficiently robust reasons to support it. An alternative view is that knowledge is generally not indirect at all, that we can acquire knowledge directly from testimony just as we can from perception. This is the view of John McDowell, which I examine in Chapter 4.

Another assumption that applies to both accounts is that our main interest is in what makes a belief acquired from testimony achieve the status of knowledge, and they both agree that the belief has to be rational. Whereas Quinton thinks rationality is an individual attribute, Goldberg thinks it is a distributed quality, shared between participants, speakers and hearers, and the environment. However, although they both accept autonomy as an aim of education, they do not directly ask when and why is it reasonable to accept what another person tells us. On the one hand they seek to locate justification in generic features of testimonial practices, and on the other to locate autonomy in a series of individual judgments. They are writing for an audience interested in education, and they raise the issue of young children's inability to hold adequate reasons, but their perspective on justification and/or rationality is essentially that of epistemologists who are

interested in what kinds of reason underwrite the epistemic status of knowledge, rather than in what makes the recipient's acceptance of the testimony reasonable and responsible. The implication is that rational acceptance of testimony depends on the nature of knowledge, rather than, as Williams (2002) and Craig (1990) maintain, in part determining it.

I think Quinton and Goldberg both underestimate the complexity and variety of testimonial contexts. There are for children, as for adults, situations when what they are told is not true, or it is incompetently expressed, or it is said teasingly or ironically, or it is said with disguised intentions. There can be no *automatic* entitlement to accept what one is told in any epistemic environment. There are always judgements to be made, which are *our* judgements even though the cognitive tools we use to make them are socially distributed and policed. Furthermore, epistemic judgements have to take their place alongside *other kinds* of judgement. The acquisition of knowledge is not the only consideration, whether in the flow of a classroom conversation or of a busy life. The judgements that make acceptance, further scrutiny, outright rejection or "let it go" reasonable responses in the context of a particular dialogue are complex and the purely epistemic aspects of them are intricately mixed with linguistic, ethical and affective aspects.

Autonomy must largely be a matter of maintenance or housekeeping. We comprehend and assess testimony against the backdrop of our existing knowledge and assumptions and something that we first accept on trust may subsequently be rejected when thought, evidence or further testimony casts doubt on it. We do this continuously, a constant monitoring and adjusting of acceptances and preferences, with the aim of achieving a satisfactory cohesion or harmony (Lehrer, 1997; Zagzebski, 2012). Quinton and Goldberg misrepresent autonomy when they

represent it as a series of independent and purely intellectual decisions, rather than the exercise of those intellectual virtues that ensure we are worthy of trusting our own judgements. (This is the theme of §5.6.)

We could concede to Quinton that there is something in the idea that it is necessarily the case that most knowledge claims the child encounters are true, otherwise he could not learn language. We could concede to Goldberg that if we were interested in a third-person assessment of whether a child has acquired *knowledge* from the testimony of his teacher, externalist considerations such as the speaker's reasons and the epistemic environment would be relevant. After all, the testimony has in any case to be *true*, and whatever we may decide to say about truth, it is not a subjective feature of the recipient's mind. But we do not, I think, have to concede that a young child has no capacity for making judgements that relate to what he is told. He has to *comprehend* or *interpret* what the adult says and that always entails making judgements that are in part epistemic judgements and in part linguistic judgements. Take for instance, what the child achieves when he distinguishes leg pulling from genuine telling by interpreting the verbal and non-verbal clues correctly. Take, also, the child's ability to distinguish fact from fiction, the plausible from the fantastic, when looking at a picture book, willingly suspending disbelief in the process. Also as a *producer* of teasing and fictitious utterances, the child makes linguistic choices that have epistemic features. My point here is that these abilities are aspects of learning a language, learning to comprehend and to produce speech, to exercise expertise in employing and recognizing a repertoire of speech types and purposes. Furthermore, the child, like the adult, has to be capable of autonomous housekeeping, maintaining a coherent and cohesive set of concepts, acceptances and preferences (including by responding

to corrections), for not to do so would be to lack the ability to comprehend consistently, to achieve successful communication, to make choices and to act with any steadiness of character. These are all claims that will be supported by the argument of subsequent chapters.

Of course, children are more prone than adults to errors of various kinds, to inconsistency and contradictions, but that is largely because they are relatively inexpert at social, including verbal, interactions. They are developing. Quinton and Goldberg gesture towards the idea of development, but they tend to see it as purely intellectual or cognitive development, as when we improve our critical reasoning skills. I think we need to see it as more intimately related to *linguistic* development and to development in social interaction. Linguistic development is not only the gradual extension of vocabulary and grammatical competence, but also sophistication and sensitivity - wise judgement, we might say - with regard to speech utterances, genres and types of discourse. We have to look much more at the nature of the interaction between participants and at the child's maintenance (with adjustments) of his understanding of his world. We need to locate the development of intellectual autonomy within the development and maintenance of the child's overall conceptual scheme, linguistic competence, social interaction skills and character.

§3.2 Reductionism and Non-Reductionism

The previous section revisited some of the themes and distinctions that we encountered in Chapter 2. Quinton argued for a non-reductionist account of testimony, similar to Reid's, but saw it as a kind of epistemic safety net prior to

schools developing the child's critical thinking skills, which, for Quinton, are central to intellectual autonomy. Goldberg presented a form of externalism, whereby the rationality of a belief acquired from testimony could be achieved (from a third-person perspective) by factors such as the safety of the epistemic environment. I argued that these accounts beg the question about autonomy that educationalists need to be most interested in: what on particular occasions entitles or justifies our acceptance or rejection of what another person tells us? In the rest of this chapter I will look more closely at recent versions of reductionism and non-reductionism and at alternative conceptions of epistemic quality.

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Given that we must acquire many (perhaps most) of our beliefs from what others tell us, what do we have to be, or do, to make sure that we judge well which to accept and which to reject? From a pedagogical point of view, it is important that even when a student's testimonially-acquired belief fails to qualify as knowledge, it could still have been acquired reasonably and responsibly. A failure to acquire knowledge can nevertheless be a success in terms of exercising or developing epistemically and linguistically reliable or virtuous dispositions.

Reductionists, following in the footsteps of Locke and Hume, see testimonial knowledge as a form of inductive knowledge. They argue that without inductive inference to warrant his testimonially acquired belief, a hearer is guilty of credulousness. Several characteristics of the communication might count as providing epistemic support for its acceptance, including contextual features such as the speaker's tone of voice and body language, as well as those connected more

directly with the "propositional content", such as its consistency with relevant beliefs that the hearer already holds, and facts connected to the speaker's track record or reliability. It is not enough to offer a psychological explanation of why the hearer believes on the basis of the testimony (the speaker's voice reminding him of a much-loved teacher would not be a relevant reason): the reasons have to be epistemically relevant and sound ones; for example, the general reliability of people with this speaker's academic qualifications might be an epistemically relevant factor in certain cases.

One difficulty for the reductive account is that if the justification for testimonial beliefs depends on the quality of the believer's inductive reasoning, it faces the hurdle of explaining how, before he can apply inductive generalizations to particular cases, the believer can determine the relevant categories of experience. If he has evidence of the amateur entomologist's reliability or reputation as an informant on insects, does he have good reason to trust her on all species of animal, on other topics in biology, on environmental issues, on science generally? Can he infer her *general* reliability as an informant from her specific reliability on topics of a particular type, given that he knows many people are narrow in their range of expert knowledge? Surely he needs to know more about the informant before making such an inference, and this itself would almost certainly involve relying on testimony concerning the informant's experience and reliability. So now he has other testifiers to assess using inductive reasoning.

Despite these ramifications, we often do rely on support of this kind. We research and assess the general credibility of informants, accumulating evidence that is itself, if we have to be scrupulous, in need of support. Much of our critical thinking is of this kind. But it cannot be the case that testimony in general is

warranted either in this way or by extension from sample cases, because the fact that we sometimes go to such trouble shows that there is a good chance of the assessment being negative. Some informants are unreliable; some testimony is false. It is true, of course, that we are aware of the reputations of certain categories of people who are considered to be more, or less, reliable as informants in certain situations. It might be prudent to be suspicious of the salesman's testimony concerning the car he is selling at a "bargain price", or the defendant's uncertainty about his whereabouts on the night of the crime. These are situations in which a certain degree of scepticism and cross-examination is expected, when evidence should be weighed, vested interests and reputations taken into account, norms of trust partially or wholly suspended. They are cases of testimony but the particular speech acts involved are distinct and the mutually recognized expectations and responsibilities define the precise epistemic context. Such occasions are in contrast to the occasions when assessment of another person's credentials as an informant is likely to cause resentment. That is surely a sign that there are norms attached to some forms of testimony, to some testimonial speech acts, that do not sanction the withholding of trust without good reason.

Reductionism's problem is that the limited scope of our personal observations seems to preclude a purely internalist justification, one based solely on the believer's judgement or mental state. However, a contribution to epistemic warrant could derive from testimony of *certain types* having a probability of truth. The problem with this is that typologies are indefinite. Coady argues (1992, p. 84) that the likelihood of a piece of testimony being true can vary with how we categorize it, and that seems a very insecure basis for a reason based on truth-probability. Coady's example is a report of a sick lion at Taronga Park Zoo. If this

is an *existence* report, then I might have good reason to believe it, for I have in my experience many instances of existence reports proving reliable; but if it is a *medical* report my belief is on weaker ground because I have personal experience of far fewer correlations between medical reports and medical facts. The security of the inference I make concerning the reliability of this report will depend on how I classify it.

This problem with type-identities undermines not just testimonial beliefs but *any* beliefs based on inductive inference, and yet these beliefs do play a part in our everyday lives and in the exercise of expertise, so perhaps we should be wary of being too pessimistic about our ability to select relevant typologies. To avoid circularity or infinite regression, generalizations about the credibility of testimonial types would have to be autonomous, grounded on personal observations; and in particular cases these generalizations would form the basis for individual judgements that track the objective probability of truth. We would need, therefore, a reliable process for tracking truth-probability. This presents this form of reductionism with a problem that also faces reliabilist arguments, such as Goldberg's concerning classrooms as reliably safe epistemic environments.

Reductionism and reliabilism depend on our ability, as either first-person subjects or as third-person observers, to identity reliable belief forming processes; but our limited experience of precise types, and reliance therefore on broader types, undermines inferences about truth-probability. The broader the types, the more difficult it must be to assign the right probability, and the less accurate and objective judgements about reliability will be. Reductionism and reliabilism are badly undermined if they depend on assumptions about the truth of testimony being uniformly probable across quite different types.

One response to this difficulty comes from Peter Lipton, an early exponent of inference to the best explanation (IBE). He argues that if we can accept that people do generally try to tell the truth, we have the basis for an inference on particular occasions (all things being equal) that the truth of the information given by the speaker is the *best explanation* of her testimony, and therefore the audience is warranted in believing it, just as we are in perception-based IBE cases (Lipton, 1998). This is made plausible by the fact that (as Locke and Hume recognized) there are good practical reasons for telling the truth, such as fear of disapproval, sanctions and professional scrutiny, and also by the argument's advantage over other inferential arguments that it does not require such an extensive and varied range of evidence and experience to support the inference. Once the *general* tendency to tell the truth has been established, the inference can be applied quite broadly. However, the IBE theory faces the objection that whatever the statistical probability of truth telling may be, on any particular occasion the possibility of dishonesty or error remains. Any statistical probability of truth telling might stem from the nature of the tactical games we play with each other, and informants who are generally truth tellers might always be looking out for opportunities to score well through unanticipated deceit. Such considerations seem to take the justification of testimonial beliefs into the realm of game theory, but they surely do play some part in our practical reasoning concerning who and what to believe, both in general and on particular occasions. It is a compelling objection to IBE that it leaves the hearer too much at epistemic or doxastic risk on particular occasions.

There are a number of argument strategies we can use concerning the risk of believing false testimony. To reason from a premise concerning evidence of a general disposition to tell the truth is one. To reason from the probability of

testimony of particular types being true is another. A third is to rely on our capacity for *monitoring* speakers for reliability or trustworthiness. It would surely be irresponsible to ignore whatever sensitivity we have to indications that the speaker is insincere or incompetent as an informant. This capacity is not an infallible one, for misjudgements are common enough, but perhaps we do possess a reasonably reliable capacity for monitoring informants for "defeaters".

Defeaters are of two kinds. We are sensitive (to some extent) to *psychological defeaters* such as the speaker's doubts or discomfort concerning what she is saying. If the hearer is aware of these, his acceptance of the speaker's testimony cannot be epistemically warranted, at least not until he has reasoned his way to a sound inference from other available evidence (that is, until he has defeated the defeater). Secondly, there are what Jennifer Lackey refers to as *normative defeaters* (2008, p. 45). These are doubts or beliefs that the speaker, given certain available evidence, *should* have. "The underlying thought here is that certain kinds of experiences, doubts and beliefs contribute epistemically unacceptable *irrationality* to doxastic systems and, accordingly, justification and knowledge can be defeated or undermined by their presence" (Lackey, 2006, p. 4. See also E. Fricker, 1987 and 1994).

Whether or not we do in fact have a reliable capacity to monitor speakers for these two kinds of defeater is an empirical question; there is also the normative question concerning whether or not a speaker's insecurity about what she is saying *should* undermine the epistemic status of the belief the hearer forms from it. These questions have significance for pedagogical and curriculum theory – for example: to what extent should students be taught to respond to their *doubts* about the truth

of what they are told? What factors might influence the appropriateness of a particular form of response?

The empirical question is complicated by the fact that the monitoring capacity is evidently not always an entirely conscious one. Sometimes I just do not believe an informant and it transpires that I was correct not to, but I could not have said why I distrusted her or her testimony. But if we assume for the moment that there is such a faculty, even if we are not always aware of it, and speculate further that it is one that develops with experience, forming part of the cognitive processes at work in communication, it would appear to be a faculty that carries a heavy epistemic burden. This would be especially so if the claim is that the faculty is *entirely* responsible for guaranteeing that testimonial beliefs are warranted. There would be difficult implications for teaching and learning, one being the issue raised by Quinton and Goldberg (see §3.1) concerning children whose monitoring capacity is undeveloped. Does this mean that they cannot be counted as learning (acquiring knowledge) from informants such as parents and teachers? The argument here would be that given the lack of a reliable capacity to monitor testimony for defeaters, there would be the constant possibility, even a likelihood, of these individuals forming beliefs, credulously, from testimony that a more mature student would reject. On the assumption that epistemically insecure beliefs cannot count as knowledge, the audience could not be said to have learned the information, even if it happens to be true. This is counter-intuitive. Quinton argues that the non-reductionist's default entitlement to believe testimony can hold the fort whilst children develop the cognitive and epistemic capacities to make more autonomous judgements based on inductive inference. But it is not altogether clear

why the fort needs to be held, pending the development of autonomous judgments, if naïve belief is justified in any case by a default entitlement.

Given that the capacity for monitoring defeaters is put forward in support of *reductionist* arguments concerning justified uptake, it seems peculiar that it should be to some extent an unconscious or intuitive one. It would be difficult to use its promptings in an inferential argument unless there was strong evidence in support of the reliability of intuitions of this kind, which, considering the kind of evidence Daniel Kahneman (2011) provides for the effectiveness of "fast thinking", there might be. But even if intuitive choices in some contexts are as successful as reasoned ones, it hardly seems a good basis for a theory that reduces testimonial knowledge to *inferential* knowledge. Intuitions about the competence and sincerity of informants would appear to be more at home in non-inferential theories.

In fact, non-reductionists *have* argued for a monitoring or "filtering" faculty. Testimony, they say, is a distinctive source of knowledge with unique epistemic principles and we have "a special presumptive right to trust, not dependent on evidence" (E. Fricker 1994, p. 128). The difficulty faced by non-reductionists is to avoid a charge of condoning gullibility: this filtering capacity provides, in their view, sufficient vigilance. We are warranted in the uptake of testimony if there are no undefeated defeaters to interfere with the otherwise very simple epistemic process. Once a defeater is "detected" the uptake of the belief must be interrupted. A comparison could be made with a computer scan that operates in the background but issues an alert when a virus is detected. Although the same *empirical* doubts apply here as with the reductionist monitoring capacity, as non-reductionists do not require the belief to be warranted by a process of inferential reasoning, the potential unavailability of the filtering process and its alerts for *conscious* deployment is less

of a problem for them, as long as it is sufficiently reliable. In the context of a non-reductionist default entitlement to believe, individual epistemic warrant amounts to the avoidance of irresponsibility in responding to alerts.

So one way to characterize the difference between reductionism and non-reductionism is to say that reductionists think that in the context of a high degree of probability of any testimony he is offered being true, a student is rationally justified in accepting it as long as he is vigilantly on the look-out for defeaters and responds appropriately to them, whereas non-reductionists think that in the context of a general *a priori* entitlement to believe testimony, the student needs only to be responsible in responding to doubts that actually occur to him.

It is difficult to disagree about the need for hearers to be alert to indications that the speaker might be incompetent or insincere, but I contend that this is not principally, or at least not purely, an epistemic requirement; rather, it is a condition of the hearer's *comprehension* or *interpretation* of the utterance. It is at least plausible that the principal role of any capacity for monitoring or filtering we may have is to scan the utterance for the purposes of comprehension or interpretation rather than for epistemic uptake. In most cases, the uptake or epistemic acceptance can take a free ride on the back of the comprehension process. This contention is supported by the fact that alerts in most cases do not initially trigger the suspension of belief, but, rather, further attempts to comprehend. In the context of a particular type of discourse, such as most pedagogic discourses, if the teacher tells her students something that clearly contradicts their existing beliefs or knowledge, the expected (normatively entitled) response is not disbelief or epistemic assessment but reinterpretation: what does she mean? What is she *doing* in telling us this?

In any case, the monitoring or filtering process can have no role in warranting the recipient's testimonial belief, rather than a role in justifying his acceptance or uptake of it. It is a significant fact that *another person* is involved. The hearer is dependent on the speaker for the belief; therefore we have to consider the possibility that the epistemic status of the *speaker's* belief and testimony is significant for the status of the hearer's belief. If this is a condition for epistemic warrant, it is an externalist one: it relates to facts that may well be beyond the hearer's ken, beyond anything that could be detected. This means that regardless of the hearer's reasons for believing the speaker, his belief (if not his uptake of the belief) can be considered warranted or justified only if the *speaker's* belief or communication is reliable. This transfers at least some of the epistemic burden from the hearer to the speaker. In relation to schooling, the student acquires his knowledge from the teacher and in virtue of the teacher's reliability in possessing a justified belief. If knowledge is "transmitted" from teacher to student, what are the teacher's responsibilities (and expectations) in this process, and would it remove the requirement for the student's uptake to be (first-person) justified?

I argue that the teacher does share responsibility with the student for the student's belief and that this comes about through their relationship of mutual trust, but I also think this applies to the communication itself before it applies specifically to the question of epistemic warrant or justification. Comprehension and belief are both collaborative achievements and the epistemic status of the belief "borrows" qualities from the quality of the speaker's communication and the hearer's comprehension. This point will be developed in Chapters 5 and 6. But before I can support the contention I need to examine some further epistemological questions concerning learning from the words of others, and I turn now to an

influential argument from Jennifer Lackey (2008). Lackey supports a hybrid

position and rejects the "transmission of belief" approach in favour of what she

calls the "statement view": it is not the quality of the speaker's belief that the

hearer inherits but the quality of her *words*, the testimony itself. This has something

in common with my argument, but it does not acknowledge the variety of speech

acts covered by the epistemological category of testimony. This last point is what

motivates my discussion of Austinian pragmatics and Bakhtinian dialogism in

Chapter 6.

§3.3 Lackey's Rejection of the Transmission Thesis

Lackey's "dualistic" theory of testimony takes something from both the

reductionist and non-reductionist arguments concerning testimonial warrant. She

argues that the hearer's justification for uptake, grounded as it is in limited

observations of the truth of testimony, must be supplemented by the reliability of

the testimony itself in order for the belief to be warranted and to acquire the status

of knowledge. "It takes two to tango": the speaker and the hearer share the

responsibility for the hearer's acquisition of knowledge. The hearer's responsibility

is to ensure that his uptake is at least not irrational, as it would be, for instance, if

he ignored indications of insincerity or weakness in the speaker, whether these

came from her behaviour or from the content and implications of her testimony, or

if he ignored an inconsistency with his own existing beliefs. The absence of such

defeaters gives a positive reason for uptake. So Lackey's dualism supports a rather

weak version of the reductionist's demand for internalist justification for uptake,

but it also accepts the non-reductionist's claim that testimony offers a distinctive kind of epistemic warrant and knowledge.

The distinctiveness comes from the reliability condition on the speaker's communication, which clearly cannot be a feature of other kinds of knowledge. It means that we are dependent on other people for testimonial knowledge in more than just the sense that we rely on them for information. We rely on them to communicate truths reliably.

So, where teachers are testifying, giving information to students without explicit supporting reasons for belief, or providing reasons that are themselves examples of testimony, the belief acquired by an individual student is warranted if and only if two conditions are satisfied: 1) the requirement that the student forms his belief in a rational (or "not irrational") manner, and 2) the requirement that the teacher has communicated the information in an epistemically sound manner. Some educationalists seem to reject the idea that students' learning should be epistemically sound, preferring to think of learning as memorization, but it is difficult to reconcile this position with an interest in critical thinking skills or with a concern about students' undiscriminating acceptance of information. If educationalists and educators are interested in these issues, they need to engage with the questions raised by epistemologists such as Lackey.

What is most notable about Lackey's dualism is that she rejects the view that it is the *transmission of knowledge* that makes testimony a distinctive source of warrant and knowledge. That is, she rejects the view that what gets transmitted is the belief itself, along with all its epistemic qualities - hence, in the best cases, *knowledge*. In some versions of the view that she rejects every link in the testimonial chain must hold the justified belief in order for transmission to reach

the latest recipient; in other versions, the chain needs only to have commenced with a justified belief or to have featured a justified belief at some point. Versions vary also in whether they hold transmission of justified belief to be necessary or sufficient for the hearer to acquire knowledge.

Lackey's arguments are supported by a consideration of fictitious cases. One of these is the Creationist Teacher case, in which the teacher is a devout Christian, committed to creationism, who nevertheless teaches the theory of evolution by presenting the scientific evidence scrupulously and asserting to her class that "modern-day *homo sapiens* evolved from *homo erectus*" (Lackey, 2008, p. 48). Although she herself does not believe what she teaches, the students form a true belief from her testimony. She is a reliable testifier but not a reliable believer. Such cases show, Lackey claims, that testimony can be reliable even when belief is not reliable, and, as it is the truth-reliability of testimony that matters, it cannot be the case that the transmission of belief via testimony is either necessary or sufficient for testimonial knowledge. That is, it is *not* the case that: (1) a hearer knows *that p* on the basis of a speaker's testimony *that p* if and only if the speaker herself knows *that p*; nor that (2) if a hearer comes to believe *that p* on the basis of the testimony of a speaker who herself knows *that p*, and he has no undefeated defeaters for believing *that p*, then the hearer knows *that p*.

These are the "necessity thesis" and the "sufficiency thesis" and Lackey opposes them both. She claims that the sufficiency thesis was accepted by, amongst others, J. L. Austin. In his paper "Other Minds" Austen says that "where someone has said to me 'I know,' I am entitled to say I know too, at second-hand. The right to say 'I know' is transmissible, in the sort of way that other authority is transmissible" (Austen, 1979, p. 100. See also Lackey, 2008, p. 42). Lackey rejects

this thesis because it does not require the hearer to have *positive reasons* for the uptake of the speaker's testimony, which means his belief could be as epistemically irrational as is belief in the face of counter-evidence.

I think Lackey may be misrepresenting Austin here. He is making a point about the recipient's correct interpretation or recognition of the speaker's speech act, which, given that it is an *assurance* of knowledge, not just an assertion, *does* provide the recipient with a positive reason for trusting the speaker to be speaking from knowledge. This distinction will become significant in my argument for a theory that recognizes the distinct epistemic implications of different testimonial speech acts (see Chapter 6).

Be that as it may, in order to press her claim that the speaker's belief is not what gets transferred to the hearer, Lackey goes on to describe cases where the hearer is said to believe *that p* on the basis of the speaker's belief *that p*, possesses no relevant defeaters for believing *that p*, and yet still has a significantly different epistemic relation to *p* from the speaker. One such case features Compulsively Trusting Bill. Bill can never bring himself to distrust Jill's testimony. So when Jill tells him, correctly and with her usual epistemic reliability, that yesterday while on a boat trip she saw an orca whale, he believes her. But he would believe her even if he had ample evidence to the contrary. So, is Bill justified in believing that there was an orca to be seen on Jill's boat trip? Lackey says the answer should clearly be no. Bill's true belief is irrationally, and therefore unreliably, formed.[15]

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[15] Recalling Quinton and Goldberg's questions (in §3.1) about young children's credulity, it would be easy to transfer this example to an educational setting. Of course, we might wish to avoid exaggerating the credulity of young children and maintain that, as a matter of fact, children *do* question information that does not fit with their observations and conceptions of the world. Lackey herself refers to her three-year-old daughter challenging her reassurance that houses without chimneys do not pose a problem for Santa Claus as no children live in a chimneyless house (2008, p. 67).

Any of us can be insensitive to the presence of defeaters on occasion, through carelessness or bias, but Bill is *incapable* of sensitivity. He is, Lackey says, "no better epistemically than a subject who has been brainwashed or programmed to accept any report that Jill makes" (2008, p. 67). The case shows, in Lackey's view, that when a belief with excellent epistemic qualities is conveyed to another person, the epistemic qualities do not simply "come along for the ride". It is not that the epistemic qualities are transmitted and then defeated by Bill's credulousness: his incapacity is such that they are not transmitted to him at all. However, for this case to yield the conclusion that Lackey wants to draw from it, we surely have to assume that Bill's uncritical acceptance of Jill's testimony is genuinely uncritical, and this would be hard to establish if she has never been unreliable. As Lackey seems to be happy with the non-reductionist notion of a capacity for unconsciously or passively filtering reports, she needs to rule out the possibility that there are no alerts because Jill just is a consistently reliable testifier. There is only a problem if Bill definitely would continue to trust Jill if she proved herself to be consistently unreliable. Similarly, there is not a problem if young children trust their teacher completely unless their trust is consistently abused by the teacher's insincerity or incompetence. What this case shows is that reliability and rationality can come apart, but it does not completely support Lackey's view about what is or is not "transmitted". It is not possible to say that Bill's trust is unreliable but it is, perhaps, possible to say that it is irrational.

Lackey may be right to say that the hearer needs to have a positive reason for thinking that his belief is epistemically sound, but I am not convinced that her cases demonstrate that the epistemic status of the speaker's belief is irrelevant to the hearer's acquisition of knowledge. I think it is still an open question whether a

teacher who does not believe what she tells the students, as in the creationist teacher's case, can be regarded as having transmitted knowledge via her words. Would a third-party observer who knows about the deceit credit the students with knowledge? Of course, teachers do disguise their own beliefs sometimes, and we would often consider it responsible of them to do so. I acknowledge, too, that it is possible to represent the teacher as reliably teaching a rigorous scientific model of inquiry and reasoning, and that this is the core content of her lessons. However, I think Lackey's view needs to be more robustly contextualized. For example, we might speculate that speakers must display some kind of sincerity, or some kind of epistemic responsibility, the kind depending on the context, including the exact nature of her role and purposes as a provider of information to the particular audience. The problem with these fictitious cases is that they are designed to test our intuitions but they need to be more detailed in order to capture the way in which ideas are exchanged in highly contextualized utterances.

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Lackey has rejected the proposition that the transmission of the belief from speaker to hearer is not *sufficient* for the hearer's knowledge, because the epistemic qualities of the speaker's belief do not automatically get carried across with it, and therefore the hearer's uptake is not warranted automatically, but there remains the possibility that the transmission of belief is at least *necessary*. The thesis claims that somewhere along the testimonial chain there has to have been a testifier whose true belief *that p* was warranted.

It might seem obvious that *all* prior speakers in the testimonial chain, including the most recent one, should have been warranted in their belief *that p*. This is what the necessity thesis should claim, according to Lackey's interpretation, and she employs the creationist teacher again to argue that it is false. The creationist teacher's testimony puts her pupils in a position to know facts about evolution even though she does not recognize them as facts herself. She does not know them because she does not believe them. The necessity thesis must be false, Lackey says, because no one could reasonably claim that the pupils' learning is epistemically unsound. Their belief has not been tainted by her disbelief, nor, we might add, undermined by the insincerity with which she has testified.

Again, I question whether this case achieves what Lackey intends. If it works at all, it works against the thesis that the most recent link in a testimonial chain must have warranted belief, but it does not work against the thesis that there has to have been a warranted belief somewhere in the chain. The necessity thesis is not threatened by gaps in the chain of testimonial warrant. Lackey believes that the final link, the creationist teacher herself, must be the source of the pupils' knowledge, but, as Paul Faulkner argues (2011, p. 73), the teacher can be the source of their belief *that p* without being the source of their knowledge, even though their belief *that p* qualifies as knowledge. It qualifies as knowledge because the teacher's testimony has "put them in touch" with someone else, a prior speaker, who knew *that p*. If this is correct, testimony is indeed a distinctive source of knowledge, for the audience's testimonial knowledge is *necessarily* dependent on another person's knowledge; but it is not dependent, necessarily, on the knowledge of the person from whom the testimony was received.

This would have implications for the epistemology of teaching and learning. It would mean, for example, that epistemic warrant could leapfrog epistemically unreliable or incompetent teachers and the children could still be said to learn from them by acquiring the information from them. We can imagine a case where a careless teacher acquires information from an unreliable website, one which has no epistemic safeguards in place and which completely fails to differentiate between good quality and bad quality information, as does the teacher. On one occasion, however, the person who has posted the information that the teacher relies on is epistemically sound, so the teacher's belief is (arguably) warranted; it is also true and it is communicated accurately. According to this version of the necessity thesis, there is nothing in this situation that prevents the pupils from acquiring knowledge from the careless teacher's testimony. However, a less satisfactory outcome would result if the person who posted the information did so mischievously, believing he had invented false information when it is in fact true; then, because there is no epistemically warranted believer in the testimonial chain, the children have acquired a true but unwarranted belief and therefore could be said not to have learned (in the factive sense) from the testimony of their teacher. As the children would not be able to distinguish the unfavourable epistemic position from the more favourable one, the significance of the internalist condition that hearers form their beliefs in epistemically responsible ways appears to have been undermined. What is the point of their monitoring of their immediate informant for signs of insincerity or incompetence if her sincerity and competence are potentially irrelevant? Either the immediate testifier must be the one that really matters or the unsatisfactory implication concerning the internalist condition shows that the necessity thesis is false, as Lackey herself thinks.

Another case that leads Lackey to conclude that the necessity thesis is false

concerns a Consistent Liar. I will simplify this somewhat. A teacher suffers from a

neurological condition that leads her to believe that dogs are cats and cats are dogs.

Now, after surgery, whenever she decides to make a statement about what she

believes are dogs, she says "cats", so her statements refer to the animals that really

are cats. So although she *believes* something different, her statements put her

audience in a position to learn from her about cats and dogs. Her statements about

these animals are consistent and reliable, so there is no problem in reductively

inferring knowledge from her reports. Faulkner argues (2011, p. 74) that this is

only inconsistent with the transmission thesis (that the epistemic qualities of the

speaker's belief are transmitted to the hearer's testimonially-formed belief) if we

regard such inferential knowledge as testimonial knowledge. It is acquired from the

teacher's words but not from her testimony, Faulkner claims. The fact that the

teacher's beliefs about cats and dogs and her statements about them come apart,

albeit consistently, just shows that her statements cannot be testimonial. They are

"virtually lies". This teacher, like the creationist teacher, is not testifying in what is

the paradigmatic sense of telling her audience what she believes to be the case.

Faulkner concludes that "…what this case does establish is that the acquisition of

testimonial knowledge is responsive to defeaters that need not undercut the

acquisition of inductive knowledge from testimony" (2011, p. 74). Faulkner is

making a distinction between knowledge acquired by inference from a statement or

assertion, and knowledge acquired testimonially – that is, from a speaker who

sincerely tells you what she believes to be true and whose words say what she

means. This is not a distinction that Lackey recognizes, but it is one that has

relevance to trust theories of testimony (such as Faulkner's own) and to my own

argument in Chapter 6. Lackey's view, as we shall see in the next section, is that it is the speaker's words rather than her beliefs that are epistemically significant, therefore whether or not the speaker conveys a sincere belief is irrelevant, so the distinction between testimonial knowledge and inductive knowledge from testimony does not arise. My view differs from both Faulkner's and Lackey's. It is that whether a speaker is offering an assertion or an assurance that such and such is the case is governed by what the speaker and the hearer mutually recognize to be their respective responsibilities and expectations. Thus, for the hearer even to comprehend the assertion or the assurance, is for him to recognize it for the speech act that the speaker intends it to be, and it is the nature of the speech act (in the context of the particular discourse) that provides the speaker with a positive reason to trust what the speaker tells him. This is significantly different from Lackey's statement view.

§3.4 Lackey's Statement View of Testimony

Having dismissed the transmission view that a speaker's belief is transmitted to the hearer, along with its epistemic properties, Lackey argues that a hearer forms his belief on the basis of understanding and accepting the statement the speaker has offered: "Statements are not, therefore, merely vehicles for expressing beliefs but, rather, they are the central bearers of epistemic significance themselves (2008, p. 72).

The consequences of rejecting the transmission view and accepting the statement view include the possibility of testimony generating new knowledge (which is not an option for the transmission view) and the possibility that the

hearer's belief could fail to be as justified as the speaker's. Another consequence is that the sincerity of the speaker is not essential; only her competence as a testifier is essential – that is, her statement must be reliable or truth conducive. A speaker's insincerity and doxastic incompetence would only be relevant if it made the testimony itself unreliable.

In Lackey's dualistic account the reliability or truth-conduciveness of the speaker's testimony is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the hearer's acquisition of knowledge: it has to be supplemented by conditions that the hearer must satisfy. He must come to believe *that p* on the basis of "an appropriate connection" with the content of the speaker's statement, and he must have no undefeated defeaters for believing *that p* (2008, p. 75).

So, Lackey's view is that we do not learn from the speaker's beliefs but from her words. Therefore, there is no problem associated with the creationist teacher's testimony. The teacher is a reliable and competent testifier; her personal disbelief in evolution is not relevant to the students' beliefs formed on the basis of her testimony. Had they known about her creationist beliefs, they might have had a psychological defeater, but she does not give them an indication of her epistemic discomfort. To Audi's objection (2006, p. 30) that the teacher suffers from a cognitive malfunction that clearly undermines her reliability, Lackey responds (correctly, in my view) that it is not necessarily the case that someone who sticks to a belief in the face of powerful evidence is cognitively malfunctioning; also any malfunctioning relates to the teacher's *belief* rather than to her testimony. Her *statements* about evolution are grounded in evidence that she accepts on its own terms, but these are not the terms to which she personally subscribes. Audi also claims that the teacher has shown a willingness to *deceive* her students, so on

possible future occasions she might deceive them with information that is not only false but which she does not believe is supported by evidence. This makes her present testimony unstable. To this Lackey replies that if, as is plausible, the teacher's commitment to testifying on the basis of available evidence is highly stable, particularly when teaching science, her testimonial practices would be sufficiently reliable for the pupils to have acquired knowledge from her.

In fact, Lackey rejects the idea that the teacher is deceiving her pupils. It is difficult to agree with this assessment. She has taught her pupils to form beliefs responsibly, on the basis of available evidence, but she has implied that she accepts the evidence. This is certainly misleading. If the students get wind of her creationist beliefs and realize that the implication was false, they will possess relevant psychological defeaters and their (factive) learning will have been undermined, even if their ability to pass the exam is unimpaired. So it is not clear either that the Creationist Teacher case is successful against the transmission of belief view or that it convincingly supports the statement view. In Chapter 6 I will discuss the implicatures of speech acts and take a different approach from Lackey's to the significance of the utterance or speech act (rather than the "statement") itself.

Lackey rejects objections to the statement view that purport to show that testimonial knowledge can be acquired through testimony that is unreliable, insensitive and unsafe (2008, pp. 79 – 93). She insists that the content of the speaker's testimony must be epistemically responsible for at least some of the epistemic properties of the hearer's belief. If this were not so, the hearer's belief could be merely *triggered* by the speaker's testimony, rather than being epistemically based on it. For example, if I glance at my shoes because you tell me that my shoelace is undone, my subsequent belief is not a testimonially based one,

even though it was triggered by your words. Only testimonially based knowledge is relevant to the statement view of testimony. The upshot of Lackey's argument is that epistemic value can come only from the testimony itself and from the recipient's vigilance in comprehension and uptake. If the testimonial statement is valueless, the student cannot have learned from it.

One type of case that might undermine this position involves hearers who form high quality beliefs from unreliable testimony by virtue of an *instinct for the truth*. These are not inferential cases involving sensitivity to indications of one kind or another, nor examples of non-inferential "filtering", but cases where the hearer has an extraordinary non-inferential sensitivity to truth. Lackey's response to cases of this type is to dismiss them as non-testimonial. Although the hearer's truth-locating ability is non-inferential and not based on any kind of perceptual or memorial input, and it does require testimony to "trigger it" (Lackey's phrase), it is not based on the content of the speaker's unreliable statement, and therefore it is not a counterexample to the reliable statement view. Lackey clearly sees this type of case as being altogether different from the Creationist Teacher case, where she judges the teacher's statement to be reliable. However, in both types of case, the hearer's confidence in the belief he has formed could plausibly be said to come from something other than the testimony itself. In the Creationist Teacher case, the students' confidence in the truth of what they are told might come from their trust in *her* or (as in Goldberg's argument in §3.1) from their trust in the epistemic environment of the classroom. Furthermore, the knowledge the students acquire from the creationist teacher is surely as dependent on their trust in their own cognitive capacities as an intuitive believer's knowledge would be. The crucial epistemic role of self-trust is one of the themes of Chapter 5. I argue there that all

118

judgments about whom and what to trust rest ultimately on reasonable trust in

one's own capacity for maintaining a coherent set of acceptances and preferences.

Lackey's statement view has no place for trust: trust is epistemologically

irrelevant. If knowledge can be acquired from creationist teachers and consistent

liars, why should trust matter? Whether the students trust the creationist teacher

makes no difference as long as the testimony is reliable. There is no reason why

knowledge gained through trust would be epistemically superior to knowledge

gained from the testimony itself, from a reliable statement.

Elizabeth Fricker, who endorses a version of the transmission view, rejects

this dismissal of trust:

> When I take another's word for it that P, I trust her in a way that
> makes my relation to her different from when I treat the fact of her
> apparent confident belief that P as one piece of evidence to be
> weighed with the rest. I take her utterance at face value, as nothing
> less than what it purports to be, an assurance that P, and an
> expression of knowledge. I treat my teller with respect in a way
> that I do not when I treat her expressed belief merely as defeasible
> evidence. One might say that I treat her as an end, not merely as a
> means. (2006b: p. 607)

Lackey's response to this is still to deny that these considerations have any

epistemic import. Whether I take your word at face value or use your words as

evidence, whether or not I show you respect by trusting you, matters not at all from

an epistemological point of view. If the creationist teacher and an evolutionist

teacher offer statements that are equally reliable, what relevance could there be in

the fact that one is based on trust and the other is not? "Why does trust in this sense

carve out a domain that is of any epistemological interest?" (2008: pp. 100 - 101).

In any case, Lackey continues, why should the creationist teacher's students *not*

119

trust her testimony? What she has told them is worthy of being trusted. Her doxastic state is irrelevant. In fact, Lackey is perfectly happy to adopt the description "knowledge gained through trust in testimony" for her reliable statement thesis. A statement's *reliability* makes it trustworthy.

I think what is wrong with Lackey's response to Elizabeth Fricker is that she thinks the alternative view to her own has to relate to the hearer's trust in the speaker's *beliefs*. But trusting others for the truth need not equate to trusting their beliefs. There is a third alternative, one that makes much better sense of Fricker's point about treating the speaker with respect, as an end and not just as a means. It is that the person *herself* is trusted – trusted, for example, not just to believe reliably but also to *intend* what she says or implicates.

Although one interpretation of Lackey's claim that the hearer's knowledge must be based on the speaker's statement is that it must derive in part from his comprehension of her words, this would be a misleading way of expressing an important point, for it is not just the speaker's words that the hearer comprehends but her communicative intentions, including the implicatures of the utterance in context. The kind of trust required for comprehension already involves an interdependence between speaker and hearer that Lackey, in her insistence that the creationist teacher's words are "trustworthy', does not recognize. The interdependence arises from the fact that both parties to the communicative exchange trust the other for something. The speaker trusts the hearer to comprehend her communicative intentions and the hearer trusts the speaker to have the communicative intentions that she implicates herself to have. These points will be developed in Chapter 6 when I bring pragmatics and dialogism to bear on the question and argue for a variety of testimonial speech acts.

Lackey has not made her case for learning from the words, as opposed to the beliefs, of the testifier. In part this is because she is too lenient in what she regards as reliable testimony; and in part it is because her employment of the term "statement" does not allow her to distinguish between speech acts and utterances with different commitments and implicatures. She tolerates consistent liars, would-be liars and non-believers, not because she thinks warranted belief can be transmitted from prior speakers but because she does not think their testimony is relevantly unreliable. She underestimates the role of personal responsibility and consistency in the employment and comprehension of testimonial speech acts.

§3.5 Justification, Warrant, Entitlement

Before proceeding in the next chapter to an examination of a particular version of non-reductionism, John McDowell's, I want to clarify the various ways of referring to an acceptable epistemic status. Some writers distinguish the terms "epistemic warrant" and "epistemic justification" as follows: when the considerations concerning the epistemic status of a belief are externalist ones, lying outside of the believer's judgement, the belief is said to be "warranted", and where the considerations are internalist ones, involving the believer's own reasons, the belief is said to be "justified". So if the members of a jury believe an expert witness because they judge her to be knowledgeable and trustworthy, their belief is *justified* (or not) by internalist considerations. But the beliefs they acquire from her testimony might also be considered (on a third-person view) to be *warranted* by the

witness's track record and reliability, about which the jury members could be ignorant.[16]

This distinction between justification and warrant is a useful one in that it reinforces the idea that what makes the acceptance or uptake of an asserted proposition rational or justifiable for the subject is not necessarily the same as what would make it warranted from the point of view of a third-party assessment of the relevant considerations. I want to develop the topic of the hearer's belief formation and make further distinctions between types of justification and rationality. This will help me to make my case concerning the respective responsibilities and commitments of speakers and hearers, and, ultimately, my case concerning the responsibilities of teachers for ensuring epistemic justice in the classroom.

Even when we are considering only the hearer's side of the exchange, there is a distinction to be made between what he could cite to justify his testimonially-acquired belief and what could be cited on his behalf by a philosophical advocate, as either generic or specific considerations. The reasons the hearer could advance himself might include reasons for trusting the particular speaker, or speakers of that kind, on topics of that kind. They might include results of his monitoring of the speaker's verbal delivery or body language; and they might include inferences that

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[16] An indication of the significance of the distinction can be glimpsed from the example of the "cognitively immature" young children discussed in §3.1. If the children do not have the capacity to make good judgements about the reliability and trustworthiness of their informants, the beliefs acquired could be deemed (internalistically) unjustified; however, the safety and reliability of their epistemic environments, their classroom, for example, are such that they are not exposed to unreliable or dishonest informants, so the beliefs they acquire from their informants are (externalistically) warranted, and (if they are true) may count as knowledge. If the externalistic warrant is sufficient for knowledge then young children can learn (in the factive sense) from teachers whose reliability and trustworthiness they are currently incapable of judging responsibly and reliably. This is Goldberg's argument (2013, 2010). Lackey, of course, would reject it on the ground that testimonial knowledge is dualistic: the hearer must play his part. Quinton thinks a general entitlement to believe will hold the children in good epistemic stead until they have developed the cognitive capacities to make autonomous inductive inferences.

draw on his own background beliefs or "common knowledge" beliefs of various kinds. I propose to restrict the term "justification" to assessments of first-person judgement.

First person judgements that are justified are also "rational" or "reasonable" if they do not permanently disrupt the subject's epistemic equilibrium. It is perfectly *reasonable* for someone to hold a belief that is justified when a wider (third-person) perspective on it might judge it to be unwarranted. But a belief cannot be held reasonably if the believer is aware of a conflict with other beliefs that he is not prepared to relinquish. A belief that is epistemically irresponsible cannot be reasonable. So epistemic justification, reasonableness and responsibility go hand-in-hand. Furthermore, first-person justification is a matter of degree in that more and better reasons provide stronger justification; and reasons need not be limited to the kind of empirical evidence that features in inductive inference. I contend that a positive reason for accepting a belief can be derived from the testimonial speech act itself.

In many ordinary circumstances we would struggle to say why we accepted someone's testimony. Perhaps we do not need to justify our belief because what made it a testimony *that p* in the first place was that it successfully connected with truth. (We will meet an argument of this kind, from John McDowell, in the next chapter.) Either we need a good argument for making a distinction between beliefs formed on the basis of testimony and some (or all) other types of belief or we have to accept that we are as *entitled* to believe on the basis of testimony as we are on the basis of perception. We can use the term "entitlement" to refer to the kind of justification beliefs enjoy as a result of the principles that apply to their source in

the cognitive faculties of the believer – whether in introspection, deductive reasoning, inductive reasoning, memory, perception or the uptake of testimony.

This leaves the term "warrant" to apply to the overall epistemic status of the belief, which in the case of testimony could include not only the hearer's end of the process but any epistemically relevant features of the *speaker's* belief-formation and speech act, and also other external factors that could support or undermine the testimonial belief, such as the "informational environment". Third-person assessment of whether a belief is warranted or not must take into account specific and local factors such as might produce a true belief that is only luckily or accidentally true. These might influence a belief's overall warrant, but they will not necessarily have any influence on the reasonableness, rationality or first person justification of the hearer's uptake of the belief.

According to the hybrid or dualistic view, we are generally entitled to believe something on the basis of a particular source of belief, such as perception, memory or testimony, but in particular cases our belief can be unwarranted due to general flaws in the belief forming process or to local or particular features of the case; and yet we could still be justified and reasonable to some degree in forming the belief. I think this coheres with our ordinary ways of thinking about learning from others. When we make a mistake and accept as true something that turns out to be false, we sometimes plead that we "were not to know", but we sometimes hold ourselves to have been culpable in not taking sufficient account of features of the case that should have weighed more heavily with us. Importantly for our understanding of intellectual autonomy, this retrospective reasoning and epistemic "housekeeping" is something we can get better at by becoming more aware of the relevant features.

Deductive and inductive reasoning skills are important aspects of intellectual autonomy. For Quinton it is important that students move beyond reliance on a general entitlement to believe on the basis of testimony towards greater independence. The non-reductionist position is that we are *prima facie* entitled to accept as true any beliefs formed responsibly on the basis of testimony. This means we do not need first person reasons for believing. But *prima facie* entitlement is defeasible entitlement, and defeat can come both from reasons available to the subject and from factors that are unavailable. Education, acculturation and cognitive development make some previously unavailable factors available, and then some forms of ignorance and poor reasoning become culpable and justification is undermined. There comes a point at which "doxastic equilibrium" cannot be used as an excuse for ignorance, gullibility and false belief.

Strong non-reductionists appear to be offering scant help to the subject who has to distinguish sincere from insincere, competent from incompetent, testimony. An account is required from non-reductionists concerning the relationship between entitlement and reliability, for it seems reasonable to expect epistemic principles to deliver beliefs that are reliably connected to *truth*, to expect a high proportion of good quality beliefs to be true. What could motivate an interest in forming beliefs conscientiously if they were unreliably connected to truth? So truth-reliability is a criterion that we can expect to feature at some point in any account of epistemic quality, in testimonial as in other kinds of belief.

Non-reductionists argue for a *conceptual* connection between a true state of affairs and a reliably formed belief, via the speaker's act of testifying and the hearer's comprehension. The upshot of such an argument is that, *ceteris paribus*, if a hearer has successfully comprehended the speaker's informative utterance he has

a *prima facie* but defeasible reason to believe it to be true. A moderate non-reductionist might claim that there is a generic entitlement to believe, based on conceptual connections between truth, testimony and comprehension, but concede that it is vulnerable to weakness (unreliability) at any point in the relevant processes, not just to psychological and normative defeaters at the hearer's end. What, for her, count as the relevant processes will depend on arguments independent of her non-reductionist ones. This makes the milder non-reductionist effectively a dualist or hybridist. For her, entitlement is necessary but not sufficient for warranted belief.

A strong reductionist, on the other hand, will not accept the distinction between entitlement and justification because for her there is no such thing as default or general entitlement to believe a speaker, there is only justification on the basis of inferences that draw on other beliefs, beliefs that were formed non-testimonially. A reductionist can be either a foundationalist or a coherentist about what experiences can or cannot justify beliefs, but she will not accept that there is any relevant conceptual link between truth and intelligible assertion or comprehension, such that intelligibility or comprehension justifies or entitles one to believe the proposition attested. She might accept that there is a *contingent* link, and that there are etiological, evolutionary or genealogical explanations for such a link, based on accounts of how the reliance on honest and reliable sharing of information arose in human societies, such as the genealogical accounts provided by Edward Craig (1990) and Bernard Williams (2002), but she cannot accept that these links confer any kind of epistemic quality on testimony-based beliefs.

Although the reductionist will not accept the entitlement/justification distinction, she might accept the justification/warrant distinction. In some cases

there is no support available from perceptions, background beliefs, evidence concerning the trustworthiness or expertise of the speaker, or from any other source. The reductionist then has to choose between being an epistemic Scrooge about the scope of testimonially-based justified beliefs and looking for a *global* justification of testimonial beliefs, for an argument that shows not that there is a general *a priori* entitlement to believe testimony but that our reliance on testimony is globally warranted by the *evidence* of its reliability in producing true beliefs. The crucial difference between this and entitlement is that there can be only a contingent connection between truth and testimony, a *de facto* reliability that is vulnerable to changes in social practices and which in any case needs to be localized, or relativized, to particular communities or disciplines, to the standards of reliability that each group finds acceptable and to the proportion of competent to incompetent assertions present in each group. Whether or not we agree that knowledge based on a global inference of this kind yields distinctively testimonial, rather than inductive, knowledge, we can all agree that such considerations are relevant to both what counts as critical thinking and intellectual autonomy in particular communities, and to their development in young people.

This emphasis on *de facto* reliability relativized to particular social groups and practices, if extended to all sources of belief, lends itself to a form of epistemic pragmatism, whereby high quality beliefs are those that aim to fit local standards. In some versions, truth itself, along with knowledge, reality and objectivity, are ultimately to be defined by community norms.[17] But if the non-reductionist's claim is the *prima facie, pro tanto* entitlement claim that recognizes that it sometimes

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[17] Michael Welbourne (1993) and Martin Kusch (2002) are two exponents of this "communitarian" version of a socialized epistemology.

requires support from other sources to raise entitlement to warrant, she can also entertain such *de facto* considerations as the reliability of particular sources and groups as testifiers.

As Thomas Reid recognized, the epistemology of testimony is always *social* epistemology, for giving and accepting information from other people involves practices and norms that are socially acquired. According Robin Dunbar (1996), it is central to social bonding. It facilitates the formation of larger social groups by allowing us to exchange information about social matters. Burling agrees: "Thanks to the eagerness of people to display their knowledge, we are able to learn important things from conversation and it is people that we learn most about" (Burling 2005, p. 196). What we learn from testimony is not just the factual content itself. It is a source of learning about our informants and our community and it binds us to others in a network of reciprocal reliance. The best way to describe this social relationship is in terms of trust and one way to differentiate reductionism and non-reductionism is in terms of whom, what and how the hearer trusts, and of the type of trustworthiness expected of the hearer and the speaker.

In Chapter 5 I argue against the idea that the only rational form of trust is a reliance that is supported by inference, but I turn now to John McDowell's particularly powerful version of non-reductionism, which presents testimony as paralleling perception and memory as an *unmediated* source of knowledge. If McDowell's argument fails any argument for non-reductionism is likely to fail, so this is an important step in the movement toward an alternative kind of theory.

Chapter 4: McDowell on Knowledge from Testimony

In this chapter I present a version of the non-reductionist claim that there is a general entitlement to believe testimony due to an *a priori* conceptual link between truth, testimonial speech acts and the hearer's cognitive achievement of comprehension. In Chapter 2 we met Reid's early version of non-reductionism. More recently Donald Davidson and Tyler Burge have advanced sophisticated versions, and philosophers such as Michael Dummett (1993) and Peter Strawson (1994) have also contributed arguments in support of non-reductionism and general entitlement. Coady (1992) developed a version related to Davidson's interpretationism. My focus is the argument developed by John McDowell in his 1993 essay "Knowledge from Hearsay" (reprinted in McDowell, 1998), and I will also discuss David Bakhurst's (2013) application of McDowell's account to education. I will consider two counterarguments to McDowell's account. The chapter generates further reasons for examining more closely (in subsequent chapters) the kind of interpersonal trust involved in the range of speech acts associated with testimony - an examination that will lead to my conclusions concerning responsible pedagogy and the teacher's role in ensuring epistemic justice in the classroom.

§4.1 McDowell's Non-Reductionism

McDowell takes from Wilfred Sellars the idea that knowledge is a particular "standing in the space of reasons". This is the space constituted by concepts, the realm not only of understanding and justification but of sense experience itself.

Whatever we see or hear cannot be an immediate "given" as it is already conceptually mediated; otherwise it could not be an item in our experience. Whereas most writers on testimony are interested in the topic for the sake of justifying our reliance on the word of others, McDowell is motivated by the opportunity to undermine a general misconception about epistemic justification, namely that "if a satisfactory standing in the space of reasons with regard to a proposition is mediated rather than immediate, its standing is constituted by the cogency of an argument which is at the subject's disposal" (1998, p. 415). McDowell describes this as a "disastrous" view, not least because it implies that there might *be* immediate standings, since either the justificatory arguments must start somewhere with a reason that is immediately "given" or we must embrace coherentism, the view (as McDowell conceives it) that only other beliefs can justify beliefs. We can take his position to be opposed to reductionism's view that testimonial beliefs are justified by inferential arguments and as an argument in support of a general entitlement to believe testimony.

The epistemic standing of a belief (or "fact", as McDowell puts it) acquired through hearing and comprehending someone's utterance is a mediated one in the sense that we have to have heard and understood the remark. We might assume, therefore, that an inferential argument could raise the belief's epistemic standing to one of justification. But this would be a false assumption. When a tourist asks a stranger the way to the cathedral there is no argument available to him that could be compelling enough to produce a conclusion that amounts to knowledge. Premises concerning the informant's trustworthiness and competence would be needed, but they are not available to the tourist. The informant could be lying, bluffing, in error. Any body language or vocal signs that the tourist might be able

to monitor are not sufficient to support the argument. Even in the most favourable case, where evidence about the speaker's sincerity and competence *is* available, it is still possible that she is speaking in some way untypically.

Any argument would need to be conclusive, McDowell says, or the conclusion could not amount to knowledge. As long as there is a possibility of one or more premises being false, the hearer could not claim to know. Knowledge is not "some region at the high end of a scale of probabilification by considerations at the knower's disposal" (1998, p. 422). If there was just a 1:100 chance of a roulette ball landing on white rather than red, still we could not claim to *know* that it will land on red.

If we reject the idea of knowledge being mediated by arguments based on sound premises, what other option, other than scepticism about mediated knowledge, is available? McDowell turns to *retained* beliefs to find a parallel. I believe that at this moment David Cameron is the Prime Minister, but there is the possibility that my belief has become false since I last checked the news this morning. My belief is sustained by such considerations as an expectation that I would have heard, somehow, if Cameron had resigned or been killed. My intuitions tell me that this is epistemically acceptable but that if I left too long a period between confirmations of this belief – say, by not checking any news for several weeks and switching off all forms of communication – I would be guilty of doxastic irresponsibility in retaining my belief. So retained beliefs carry a risk, even when they are rationally acceptable. The alternative to this position would be that our entitlement to belief lapses between confirmations, and therefore that we have much less knowledge than we think we have. However conscientious we are regarding our retained beliefs there is the constant possibility of their falsification.

We cannot apply precisely the same set of considerations to all kinds of belief. For example, beliefs about situations that are known to change rapidly demand more frequent confirmations and accommodations. If a politician is known to be dangerously ill, it would be irrational or unreasonable to claim to know several hours after we were last in a position to hear otherwise that she is still alive. The possibility of falsity is just too great.

McDowell's point in raising retained knowledge as a parallel to testimonial knowledge is to demonstrate that no *argument* for what one has between confirmations could be sufficient to serve the purposes of the standard view of mediated justification, for no argument could be cogent enough. As with the roulette case, although very unlikely, the falsity of the claim remains a possibility. But if we are prepared simply to insist that one's continuing knowledge is itself the relevant standing in the space of reasons, the difficulties disappear. An epistemically satisfactory position persists between injections of nourishment. Our reason for still believing that David Cameron is PM is that we remember he is, and remembering, like perception, is an excellent reason for taking it that things are that way. It does not need to be supplemented by an argument that at best could yield only probability. When we claim to know that Cameron is PM, we are not claiming that he is *probably* PM. Nevertheless, inferential arguments can become relevant: we have to be sensitive to the requirements of doxastic responsibility and doubts could lead us to deploy evidence to support or discard a belief. Rationality involves sensitivity to relevant considerations. The rational force of surrounding considerations mediates epistemic satisfactoriness, and someone could not lay claim to the standing who was not responsive to reasons, but that is not the same as constructing an argument out of them. The reasons that an inductive argument

might employ are there, in the background. Our entitlement to knowledge is not constructed out of them, but it could be undermined by our insensitivity to them.

What rational sensitivity enables is the factiveness of beliefs in the space of reasons. Language initiates us into this and puts us in possession of the world, allowing us to take *that*-clauses seriously. The factiveness comes not from arguments but from doxastic responsibility with regard to how one takes the world to be. If I have been told that Cameron is no longer the PM, then I am entitled as a rationally responsible person to believe it, indeed to claim to *know* it, given that my surrounding beliefs prevent me from being blindly credulous, though they cannot prevent me from sometimes being wrong. Just as one can capture a knower's justification for believing as he does by saying that he sees (or remembers) that things are thus and so, so one can capture his knowledge-constituting standing in the space of reasons by saying he has *heard from* someone that things are thus and so.

For McDowell, acquiring knowledge by testimony is "not a mindless reception that has nothing to do with rationality" (p. 434). It yields a standing in the space of reasons. Doxastic responsibility includes being aware of how knowledge can be had from others *and* of considerations that could undermine it. The hearer's belief formation must be shaped by an appreciation of the risks involved in accepting what people say. But positive reasons are not required in order to believe that an apparent informant is speaking his mind and is well informed. Here as elsewhere it is not doxastically irresponsible to run known risks in taking things to be thus and so.

So the tourist can learn where the cathedral is. If a knowledgeable informant gives intelligible expression to her knowledge, she puts it in the public domain

where it can be picked up by those who can understand her utterance, as long as the opportunity is not closed to them because it would be doxastically irresponsible to believe the speaker. If we have been told that Cameron is no longer the PM we are entitled as rationally responsible knowers to believe it, indeed to claim to know it, given that our surrounding beliefs (including those concerning the credibility of particular sources of information) prevent us being blindly credulous and make us vigilant in avoiding risks. It is our initiation into a culture (*bildung*) that makes us rational and it is the conscientiousness with which we maintain and monitor our rationality that provides the context for our learning on particular occasions.

McDowell's account of testimony is richly suggestive. It does not restrict the subject's moves and positions in the space of reasons in the way that Lackey's dualism does. Dualism holds that attributable informational states, and what could be inferred from their contents, is part of what constitutes a subject's epistemic standing but does not *suffice* for knowledge: we need to appeal also to facts in the world outside the subject's moves and positions in the space of reasons in order to finish the job of constituting his epistemic standing. For McDowell, the subject's standing is constituted simply by his having heard from his informant that things are thus and so, therefore there is no constitutive work to be done by external conditions. It is already a standing in the space of reasons in its own right, not a position that one can only be in when things are indeed thus and so.

Dualism's externalist condition is motivated by the idea that no policy or method of having one's belief formation determined by reasons available to one is free from the risk of falsity. Whether what one has is knowledge can be a matter of luck, outside the control of reason. First-person justification cannot yield knowledge, but we can claim some epistemic credit for it. However, McDowell

points out, this view seems to leave us in doubt as to whether we have knowledge even in favourable cases. It means that two believers on a par with respect to their exercise of reason might differ in whether they know because of factors outside of their control. Two children, for example, hearing the same information from different teachers in different schools, could enjoy different epistemic standings through no fault of their own. Such considerations could lead us to embrace outright externalism and abandon the interest that dualists retain in the subject's epistemic or doxastic responsibility.

McDowell concedes the role of epistemic luck but locates it at an earlier stage. We do not have full control even in the space of reasons; we are already at risk from an unkind world. Positions such as *seeing that…* and *hearing from someone that…* are standings in the space of reasons in their own right, even though there is an irreducible element of luck in whether one occupies them. Rather than think we have to choose between scepticism and dualism, we should just admit that epistemic luck lurks even in the space of reasons.

McDowell's direct realism reflects Thomas Reid's ideas to some extent. Here is what Reid writes (in 1764) about justifying belief by an argument:

> It is evident in the matter of testimony, the balance of human judgement is by nature inclined to the side of belief; and turns to that side of itself, when there is nothing put into the opposite scale. If it were not so, no proposition that is uttered in discourse would be believed, until it was examined and tried by reason; and most men would be unable to find reasons for believing the thousandth part of what is told them. (Reid, 1983, p. 197)

As long as relevant reasons are restricted to those available to the believer, there will be no way for an argument to be constructed that yields anything like a

compelling case for believing. The restriction leaves only the choice between general entitlement and first-person justification by individual inductive argument. It excludes justification, or warrant, by third person assessment, such as a externalist/reliabilist or hybridist might find acceptable.

McDowell's argument is aimed at ruling out an epistemological position that allows a belief to be justified and yet false, and which therefore requires a further truth conducive condition. McDowell's reason for adopting this stance is that fallible inductive arguments allow the possibility that some factor not cognitively accessible to the believer can make the difference between knowledge and ignorance. But anyone who is in the epistemic position of "hearing from someone that things are thus and so" is not susceptible to this possibility. If you hear that things are that way then you *learn* (in the factive sense) that things are that way. It is rational to claim knowledge in these circumstances because just as a perception that things are thus and so is inconsistent with things not being that way, so hearing that things are thus and so is inconsistent with them not being that way. Seeing *that p* and hearing *that p* are both experiences that enable "the layout of reality itself to exert a rational influence on what a subject thinks" (McDowell, 1994, p 26).

What we acquire from testimony is not a belief but knowledge, except when we have been misled; but when we have been misled we have not seen *that p* (in the case of perception) or heard *that p* (in the case of testimony): we have only seen an appearance *that p* or heard the speaker say *that p.* The fact that we can sometimes be misled has to be taken account of by doxastically responsible subjects and should lead us to exercise vigilance so far as we can; however, it is in the nature of experience that it sometimes plays us false through no fault of our own. Knowing this is part of what is involved in claiming to know as a result of

such experiences as perception and comprehending testimony. A belief is not something that has to be justified by an inductive argument in order to attain the status of knowledge; rather, a claim to knowledge is something that can be *undermined* by reasons and argument. One is *entitled* to claim knowledge but a challenge to such a claim must be *justified*. It is only in this way that knowledge is a standing that is "mediated" by reasons.

Still a suspicion remains that McDowell's account, like Reid's and other non-reductionist accounts, leaves the testimonial audience *too* exposed to error and to the charge of credulousness. Has he taken the problem of non-cooperation in communication seriously enough? If one cannot tell a case of "hearing that…" from one of "hearing someone say that…" it can only be a matter of luck that one acquires knowledge, and if that is so, are not all cases, even favourable ones, undermined? McDowell denies this, of course. As David Bakhurst writes, citing Sebastian Rödl (2007):

> It can be true that when I am mistaken, I do not know that I am. But it does not follow that when I am not mistaken, I do not know that I am not. As Rödl would put it, knowledge is a self-conscious act; so if you know, you know that you know, even though it is sometimes true that you think you know when you don't. (Bakhurst, 2013, p. 194; Rödl, 2007, p. 158)

Bakhurst also cites Rödl's comparison of a knower with a juggler. We do not have to deny someone the capacity of knowledge on the ground that they are fallible in their knowledge, anymore than we have to deny a juggler the capacity to juggle ten balls at once, even though she occasionally drops one. "Possession of the capacity is compatible with the possibility of occasional error. Indeed, that's just what it means to say the capacity is fallible" (Bakhurst, 2013, p. 193). Given that defective

exercises of a capacity can usually be discriminated from non-defective ones, arguments from illusion or deception are unpersuasive.

But there remains a strong case for demanding something more – especially if, as educators, we are concerned above all with young people's judgements concerning what, when and whom to believe. McDowell might argue, as we have heard Quinton and Goldberg argue, that we must teach children to be vigilant and doxastically responsible, but are we not entitled to demand more from a theory of testimony, such as the additional requirements a) that the hearer should have *positive reasons* for belief and/or b) that the whole process of transmission of belief and warrant should be *truth-reliable*? McDowell's own requirement that the speaker should *know* that to which she is attesting has already introduced a factor outside the cognitive control of the hearer. But if we re-enter these hybrid regions of positive reasons and reliabilism, we are moving away from McDowell's non-reductionism, and we are not yet ready to do that.

§4.2 David Bakhurst and Education

David Bakhurst's 2013 paper on McDowell's "Knowledge from Hearsay" was published in the same special issue of the *Journal of the Philosophy of Education* as Goldberg's paper discussed in §3.1, and Bakhurst is keen to relate McDowell's account of testimony to educational matters. He sees it as making several points that have special relevance for philosophers of education. The first is that it provides an account of *fallibility* that is more satisfying than the one that generally features in philosophy of education. McDowell "sees fallibility as a characteristic of people and their powers of knowledge, rather than of knowledge itself"

(Bakhurst, 2013, p. 200). Bakhurst cites Harvey Siegel as someone who holds the latter view and quotes him as writing that "all knowledge is fallible" (Siegel, 2003, p. 308; cited in Bakhurst, 2013, p. 192). This, Bakhurst suggests, is tantamount to someone who claims knowledge adding the rider that for all she knows she may be wrong. In acknowledging that it is our capacities that are fallible, we draw attention to the importance of the *development* of capacities such as speech comprehension and epistemic vigilance. This acknowledgement of the importance of development is significant as a satisfactory account of testimony must recognize that children get better at making linguistic and epistemic judgments and that this is incorporated into our understanding of what it means to learn rationally.

The second point from McDowell's account of testimony that Bakhurst thinks is of special relevance to the philosophy of education concerns the worry of many educationalists that the "transmission" of knowledge by teachers is a passive form of learning. Bakhurst points out that for McDowell "acquiring knowledge by testimony is not a mindless reception of something that has nothing to do with rationality" (McDowell, p. 434). The learner needs concepts, needs to *understand*. This is a key theme of my own argument (see Chapters 6 and 7).

The third point of relevance to philosophy of education concerns the possible conflict between epistemic dependence on others and epistemic autonomy. There is no conflict, however, Bakhurst thinks, because McDowell is clear that "active empirical thinking takes place under a standing obligation to reflect about the credentials of the putatively rational linkages that govern it" (McDowell, 1994, p. 12; cited by Bakhurst, 2013, p. 195). Attempting to achieve complete epistemic independence is impossible, for we will always need to rely on sources of information of one kind or another (such as textbooks). Bakhurst provides two

reasons why there is no conflict. Firstly, we are always responsible for meeting any challenge to our beliefs, no matter how we acquired them. Secondly, we must all settle for ourselves the question of what to believe. Each belief one accepts becomes a component of a conception of the world, "allegiance to which is partly constitutive of one's identity" (p. 196). We are responsible for keeping our own epistemic house in order and there is no reason why we cannot draw on other people's knowledge in doing so. Furthermore, even when I defer to others, I am still settling for myself what to think. In fact, "believing someone who knows is a perfectly good way to decide what to think….if she can tell me how things are, then believing her is a good source of knowledge" (Bakhurst, 2013, p. 196). With reference to the metaphor of Neurath's boat, Bakhurst says: "We should remind ourselves that none of us built our boats from scratch. Indeed, we found ourselves afloat. And while each of us is responsible for keeping our boat from sinking, we may rely on others to furnish us materials and to show us what to do with them" (2013, p. 197). Although there are limits to our control of our epistemic fate, there is still enough room for us to operate as epistemically autonomous beings, and we would have much less autonomy if we lacked the means provided for us by others.

This is a strong argument for a modified account of autonomy. It recognizes, for example, that (as Quinton pointed out) we reason with "materials" we have acquired from others. However, I think we need to be careful not to view autonomy just from the point of view of intellectual or epistemic autonomy. Bakhurst makes a point about how beliefs help to constitute identity and how they need to be part of a well-kept, coherent system. This is true, but that system is only a truly coherent one if other attitudes about which we deliberate are incorporated: preferences, emotions

and desires, for example. I discuss this in detail in the next chapter, in relation to Lehrer's theory of self-trust (§5.6).

Bakhurst also has some interesting points to make in relation to trust theories of testimony, and these points lead him to make a distinction between the kind of telling (teaching) that teachers employ in the classroom and genuine testimony. His conclusion is that the epistemology of testimony may have less to offer philosophy of education than we might have hoped. He draws attention to the distinction between believing what someone has said or written and believing the person herself. She may have "given her word" or asked the hearer to "trust her for the truth" (Anscombe, 1979) rather than simply to have asserted a proposition. This is a difference that motivates the trust-based accounts of testimony that we will meet in the next chapter, but it is not a distinction that Bakhurst thinks is relevant to the justification of testimonial beliefs. His view is that trust of some kind is central to the interpersonal relations that mediate communication and the ethics of conversation, but that is not *epistemic* trust. He rejects Anscombe's view that students accept the knowledge they are offered by the teacher because they trust her for the truth. The teacher does not speak in her own voice but, as it were, in the voice of the subject she is teaching, she "speaks for the subject matter itself" (p. 198). She is initiating students into the "conversation" of the subject, which is part of the "conversation of mankind" (Oakeshott, 2001). The students "look through her" to the shared subject of their inquiries; she is a facilitator or conduit.

On the face of it, this seems too strong a claim. Surely students are expected to believe what their teacher tells them? But Bakhurst supports the claim with three reasons. Firstly, whereas in testimonial cases the recipient can support his claim to knowledge from testimony by citing the speaker's authority, a student is not

expected to cite the teacher as the source of his belief (for example, in an exam). Secondly, students are not tested on what they have been told; they are tested on their knowledge of the subject matter. Thirdly, Lackey's creationist teacher is redeployed: a teacher can teach the subject matter successfully even if she does not personally believe it. If the students knew her true beliefs, they could still *rely* on her for the truth, without trusting her for the truth – that is, she can be reliable without being trustworthy in the relevant sense. Bakhurst's point is that teaching is more than telling and learning is more than believing; teaching also includes modeling styles of thinking, presenting evidence and arguments. This is what the creationist teacher does conscientiously. If a student initially acquires a belief by accepting it on the teacher's authority, it can in some circumstances be the end of the matter, but, Bakhurst thinks, it cannot be the end of the matter in an educational context. In this sense, Bakhurst admits (p. 199), Siegel might be right to argue that we are not truly dependent on testimony in that we can critically evaluate reasons and arguments that support the beliefs we have initially acquired testimonially. Nevertheless, Bakhurst does not think this yields complete intellectual autonomy because (as Quinton pointed out in 1972) we are dependent on the general conceptions of our epistemic community that we "pick up", often without being told them explicitly. Young children especially are dependent on the authority of their teachers in initiating them into ways of thinking and reasoning, and this imposes certain constraints on the notion of epistemic autonomy:

> Such initiation aims to equip students so that they are able, in the course of time, to subject any part of their world-view to critical reflection, but all we can reasonably ask is that they be ready critically to reflect on beliefs that have been thrown into

reasonable doubt, not that they actually aspire to some kind of epistemic independence. (Bakhurst, 2013, p. 199)

I think Bakhurst is right to draw attention to these constraints on the notion of autonomy, but, as I have mentioned and will develop in the next chapter, autonomy has to be seen as an integration of various considerations, not confined to epistemic or intellectual considerations. What matters in the end is that we make wise judgments that are optimal in the circumstances. This is why we have to take account of the nature of speech acts and discourses, of factors other than truth and knowledge, of relationships, purposes and preferences. Bakhurst is clearly aware of this insofar as he recognizes that the circumstances surrounding teaching affect the nature of the discourse and of the relationship between participants, but his description does not take appropriate account of the variety of kinds of testimony in classrooms and therefore of the subtlety of the epistemic and linguistic judgements that children make as they learn - and that they can learn to make better.

What Bakhurst claims is that students do not learn, in the relevant sense, from being told things by their teacher, or if they *do,* that can only be the start of the process, for the learning is subsequently reinforced by reasons and critical assessment. He implies that this contrasts with simply accepting a belief on the basis of someone's testimony. But does it?

I do not think it does, for two reasons. Firstly, we can *always* expect that what we have learned via testimony will be reinforced or corroborated subsequently, even if that amounts only to not hearing otherwise or to a potential defeater not coming to light. If something more substantial emerges which reinforces the original testimonial belief, so that it can no longer be counted as a testimonial belief, that in no way either invalidates or re-characterizes the original

belief. In any case, many of the subsequent reasons and corroborations that a teacher offers, or that a student locates, will themselves have a testimonial character. For example, if the student finds confirmation of what the teacher has told him in a textbook, he is still in a position of reliance or trust, or if the student challenges the teacher for evidence and she gives him some supporting information, that is still a piece of testimony. Not all reinforcement will be like this, but some will be, especially as testimonial exchanges in education include those between students who collaborate and swap information. McDowell emphasizes that accepting information on the basis of another's testimony does not free us from the responsibility of keeping our epistemic house in order, and that surely includes not just doxastic responsibility in being alert to potential defeaters but also looking for confirmation when it is optimally responsible to do so. To recognize that one should confirm a belief does not necessarily imply that one acknowledges that what one has is somehow less than knowledge; only that one is in a circumstance where something additional is required for optimal autonomy.

My second response to Bakhurst's doubts about the relevance of testimony to teaching, and about the role of trust in testimony, concerns the variety of kinds of telling in the classroom. Bakhurst adopts the following definition of testimony:

> A person, A, gains testimonial knowledge from another person, B, just in case (i) B, knowing that p, informs A that p in order that A, be believing B, should come to believe that p, and (ii) B thereby entitles A to invoke B's authority to justify p. In short, B gives A her word that p and A believes that p on B's authority. (Bakhurst, 2013, p. 199)

This seems to me to conflate a number of speech acts, with potentially different epistemic and linguistic implications. In Chapter 6 I examine in some detail the

distinction between assertion and assurance. The point I make in that chapter concerns the difference the specific speech act makes to the hearer's relationship with the content of the testimony. The speech act of assertion directs the hearer to the content itself, whereas the speech act of assurance directs the hearer to the speaker's intentions and expectations: she invites the hearer to trust her for the truth. This distinction is lost in Bakhurst's formulation above, where "inform" could refer to either assertion or assurance, and, in the summary form, "B gives A her word" does seems to imply a direct invitation to trust. It seems that Bakhurst is suggesting that teachers do not generally invite students to trust them, so, in my terms, he suggests that teachers do not generally offer *assurances* of the truth of what they tell students. I would agree that they do not *always* do so, and I do not think that straightforward assertions are invitations to trust the speaker herself, but: a) I disagree with Bakhurst's narrow definition of testimony, and see it as motivated by the notion that testimony is itself a unitary speech act rather than a set of speech acts with differing epistemic and linguistic characters; and b) I disagree about the extent to which teachers invite students to trust them for the truth and about the epistemic relevance of trust. It is wrong, for example, to think about what teachers tell students only in terms of specific factual content. To some extent Bakhurst recognizes this when he talks about young children being dependent on their teachers for concepts, ways of reasoning, conversational and intellectual virtues (p. 201). But teachers can also offer assurances when they talk from personal experience, when they "bear witness" to the kinds of knowledge that can help us to make sense, say, of poems or of relationships in novels and plays, or in relation to topics in Citizenship or Religious Education. Furthermore, it is surely precisely this kind of "telling" that underpins the more general trusting relationship

that Bakhurst acknowledges is significant in the classroom. It is by trusting each

other as knowers and testifiers that a class is bound together as an epistemic

community. The importance of students themselves being trusted as knowers and

testifiers is a theme I take up in Chapter 7.

It is worth pointing out that Bakhurst's point about the more complex nature

of teaching and learning has the potential to undermine his acceptance of

McDowell's reliance on the factive entailment of the word "learn" in his account of

knowledge. To use Bakhurst's own examples: if Jamie *learns* from his teacher that

Jane Austen was the author of six novels and from his biology textbook that the

structure of DNA is a double-helix, then, according to Bakhurst and McDowell,

Jamie has acquired knowledge. If there was some error in Jamie's comprehension,

or if he was doxastically irresponsible in some way, this not only undermines the

knowledge ascription but also the appropriateness of cognate terms such as

"learns". But Bakhurst also says (p. 199) that when a student acquires a belief by

accepting his teacher's word for it, "the student is accepting what she is told rather

than learning what she is taught". So it appears that Bakhurst is relying on the

simple, factive idea of learning in his exposition of McDowell on testimony but

requiring a richer concept in relation to teaching.

§4.3 Challenging McDowell (1): Gradability and Development

McDowell's position is interestingly different from that of Tyler Burge. Both allow

that knowledge is transmitted from speaker to hearer but according to Burge the

evidential warrant for the speaker's belief is "inherited" by the hearer as a

consequence of his entitlement to believe the speaker, and where the warrant is

sufficient to support knowledge the hearer can be said to have inherited the speaker's knowledge. According to Faulkner (20011, p. 110), Burge's account of transmission makes his theory of testimonial knowledge and warrant a *socially externalist* account, as the relevant epistemic properties are socially distributed rather than properties of the recipient's mental states alone. For McDowell, testimony transmits knowledge because it puts the hearer in the same state as to the facts as the speaker, which is either one of knowledge or one of ignorance. Where it is one of ignorance, the recipient's state is unwarranted, even though he may be doxastically and rationally irreproachable.

As I mentioned previously, MacDowell's account of the transmission of knowledge does imply an external dimension to testimonial knowledge: truth. The speaker's evidential warrant or state of informedness, however, does not feature, as it is not introspectively available to the hearer. So in holding to the idea that testimonial knowledge is an individualistic standing in the space of reasons, McDowell downplays the social dimension of testimony. He does not want to acknowledge a distinction between warranted belief and knowledge. The hearer inherits knowledge or he inherits ignorance from the speaker. McDowell does not allow *beliefs* of indeterminate status, whose epistemic standing might be determined by a third-party assessment of factors outside of the hearer's judgement. So it seems that he is taking little account of the fact that testimonial knowledge comes about through interpersonal communication, communication that sometimes spreads back along a chain of informants who each contribute and re-combine elements to produce information for which no one person is responsible. A number of things can be less than ideal in any episode of informative communication, including the clarity of the speaker's utterance and the hearer's

comprehension of the utterance; and the speaker's knowledge of the topic on which she speaks might be less than secure. There could have been some degradation of the content communicated along the way, as in Chinese Whispers. These are *social* facts about the process of communication and the transmission of knowledge that McDowell disregards.

But if we want to allow scope for epistemic assessment that is more gradable than McDowell allows, we have to allow assessment of beliefs whose warrant supports a knowledge claim to a greater or lesser extent. And once we allow that for the hearer's belief, we have to consider the possibility that his belief is put in question by the gradability of the belief the speaker attests. This means that a notion of transmission different from McDowell's emerges, one closer to Burge's: that the hearer inherits from the speaker the evidential warrant for the belief attested, the epistemic status of which is an ineliminable element in the overall standing of the hearer's belief, along with the entitlement that is itself defeasible by doxastic irresponsibility on his part. If we accept this account of transmission, we are left with an account that is neither externalistic in the manner of reliabilism nor purely internalistic. What it retains of McDowell's account is the notion of a general entitlement that does not have to be supported by inductive inference, and the necessity of the hearer's rational responsiveness to reasons, of doxastic responsibility or vigilance. What is different is that these alone are no longer sufficient to ground a claim to knowledge from the testimony.

Another significant reason to look for alternatives to McDowell's approach is that he does not seem to cater sufficiently for the possibility of cognitive development. In his account, a subject is either doxastically responsible or not, either rationally mature or not, either in a position to deploy the reasons that might

undermine his title to knowledge or not. For example, body language, facial gestures and tone of voice are all potential signs of insincerity or incompetence on the part of the speaker, to which a hearer should be sensitive. But to hold a child to the same standards of sensitivity as an adult seems counter-intuitive. Allowance must be made for cognitive development and maturity. McDowell could respond that such allowance has already been made in assuming that the hearer has properly *comprehended* the speaker's utterance. I made a similar point myself (in §3.1) in response to Quinton and Goldberg. Comprehension (which depends on sensitivity to implicatures, speech acts and genres: see Chapter 6) is certainly one process where cognitive maturity plays a part and where achievement can be a matter of degree, but it is not the only process. Responsiveness to psychological and normative defeaters is surely something one gets better at, and which knowledge and experience (and teaching) play a part in developing. A satisfactory account of the epistemology of testimony must be appropriately attuned to children's cognitive and linguistic development.

§4.4 Challenging McDowell (2): Positive Reasons and Trust

I want to look now at arguments (in opposition to McDowell, Burge, Reid, and any version of the non-reductionist/general entitlement thesis) in favour of the view that on any particular occasion hearers need *positive reasons* for believing the speaker. This takes us deeper into McDowell's reasons for rejecting externalist considerations and further towards the trust theories that are the focus of the next chapter. I draw here especially upon the work of Paul Faulkner (2011).

Testimony involves communicative interactions between two or more people. All the participants have their own interests and needs. For example, the tourist wants to know where the cathedral is, or which road leads to Larissa, but his informant may have no particular interest in giving an accurate response to the tourist and may even have reasons for deceiving him, or she may be well motivated but not well informed. The tourist's request is risky and whether he acquires knowledge is partly a matter of luck. Even school students, in what is probably a reasonably benign epistemic environment, are to some extent vulnerable to deceit and error.

McDowell's position is that the question of luck does not come in at the point where externalists, such as reliabilists, or hybridists who concede the need for an externalist element, would bring it in, but at an earlier stage. He denies the need for any "externalist admixture" in order to escape Cartesian or sceptical "shrinking from what can be known" (McDowell, 1998, p. 440). How can it make sense for two people who are equally vigilant and virtuous to face different epistemic outcomes, knowledge or ignorance, according whether external factors are or are not favourable?

> If two believers are on a par in respect of the excellence of their exercises of reason, how can we make sense of the idea that only one of them is a knower, on the basis of the thought that, in a region we are invited to conceive as outside the reach of reason, things are as he takes them to be, whereas the other is not so fortunate? Are we really giving any weight to the idea that knowledge has something to do with standings in the space of reasons? Would it not be more honest to embrace the outright externalism that abandons that idea? I doubt that anyone would take the hybrid conception seriously if it did not seem to be the only hope of keeping the space of reasons relevant while making room for knowledge in the problematic areas. (McDowell, 1998, p. 442)

McDowell goes on to describe an alternative position. He says the hybrid conception makes its concession to luck at the wrong point. If we are prepared to abandon the "philosophers' fantasy" of reason having such absolute control over its region that it is secure from risk from an "unkind world", then:

> [W]e have no reason not to allow that positions like seeing, or hearing from someone, that things are thus and so are standings in the space of reasons in their own right, even though there is an irreducible element of luck, of kindness from the world, in whether one occupies them…In trying to avoid the threat of scepticism, the hybrid conception makes it hard to see how what it depicts as knowledge can deserve that title. (*Ibid*., p. 442-443)

The world can mislead us, but this element of bad luck enters into the space of reasons and determines whether one is occupying the position of one who sees *that p*, or hears from someone *that p*, or whether they occupy the position of one who sees an *appearance* that such and such is the case, or hears *that someone says* that such and such is the case. It is not that one has a perception or receives testimony and then one's testimonial belief can be infected by elements of luck; rather, the world has already imposed itself on experience, which has already infiltrated the space of reasons. This means the two believers never were in comparable informational states or epistemic positions.

McDowell thinks the only genuine alternative to this picture is scepticism. There cannot be a satisfactory response to the argument from error, to the fact that we cannot securely tell good testimony from bad. He rules out the possibility that reasons can make an epistemic difference because in the case of the two believers who are on a par with respect to the excellence of their reasons there was nothing

available to either believer to distinguish the informative case from the other. So if we insist on believers needing positive reasons for believing, sceptical doubt will always accompany them, for the believer could never rule out the possibility that it is an unfavourable case. McDowell's radical proposal for avoiding the sceptical conclusion is that we drop the condition prohibiting question-begging reasons for belief. In other words, we should just allow the believer's reason for belief to be that what he gets from his informant is knowledge. For this to be the case, the informant must know what she testifies to. The reason for belief is the cognitive state the believer is put in by the testimony and this is determined by the nature of the testimony. This is indeed question-begging, and it remains the case that the cognitive state the believer is in might not be introspectively identifiable by him. But any other account of his position would leave him worse off because it would leave him in a state of ignorance, for no reasons could rule out the possibility of error, deceit or luck. McDowell's account *guarantees* that the believer gets knowledge from the informant when the informant testifies accurately to something that she herself knows.

What externalists, sceptics and hybridists get wrong, according to McDowell, is the nature of the reasons for belief. They look for evidence of competence, sincerity and trustworthiness, whereas for McDowell these are rational *constraints* on belief but not the kind of reasons that *entitle* belief. If what one receives from the testifier is knowledge, and knowledge entails belief, then one has a reason to believe. There is an *a priori* link. Therefore, if overall warrant requires that one has a reason to believe, then all non-deceptive testimonial cases are warranted. Scepticism is thus avoided without help from externalist elements other than that entailed by the condition that the testifier is a knower.

It seems a truism to say that we are entitled to believe what we know, so it is not surprising that McDowell's account is challenged by Faulkner on the ground that we need more *substantive* reasons for belief, such as would be provided by other beliefs we might hold concerning the informant's communicative intentions or her having a reliable track-record. Faulkner employs two arguments in support of this challenge.

McDowell's argument hinges on the question of the different states his two believers are in when they have comprehended the testimony. One is in the state of knowing *that p* and the other is not. What kind of states are these? They are mental states, presumably, but they are not introspectively distinguishable. Faulkner points out (2011, p. 131) that internalism expects reasons to be available to the subject, within his ken, but McDowell is proposing that the subject's reason for belief is the *fact* that is made manifest to him - an external factor. The experience itself is indistinguishable from the non-factual experience, the testimonial equivalent of a perceptual illusion, and yet McDowell wants to claim that "the obtaining of the fact is precisely not blankly external to his subjectivity" (1982, pp. 390-1). The world appearing to be this way is epistemically inconsistent with its being any other way. It explains the subject's belief, and it is this that makes it a satisfactorily *internalistic* phenomenon.

Faulkner's point is that there is insufficient phenomenological difference here between the "true" and the "false" situation. With perceptual illusions one generally has enough phenomenological difference to avoid being deceived for long, but in the testimonial equivalent there is no phenomenological difference. We can slip a lie in between several truths and our audience has no chance of distinguishing the lie phenomenologically (Faulkner, 2011, p. 132). There is

nothing to trigger doubt apart from other beliefs, but they do not come into this scenario. This means that what McDowell takes to be a trivial reason for belief just cannot do the job it is required to do, which is to save us from scepticism about knowledge acquired through comprehending testimony. Faulkner concludes that non-trivial, more substantial, reasons are required.

More substantial reasons could include other beliefs, of course: the kind of beliefs that reductionists invoke. Reductionists believe that what justifies the hearer's testimonial belief is inductive inference drawn from evidence available to him. If we followed this path, we would not yet be straying into the externalist regions that McDowell thinks undermine the rationality of believing and knowing, but we would certainly be straying away from non-reductionism. However, there are alternatives.

Let us consider the issue from a student's perspective. A student's learning from the teacher's testimony is an interactive social event, one feature of which is the process involved in the student's comprehension of the teacher's utterance. A potential problem arises when the teacher is insincere and her communicative intention is not to inform but to deceive. This means that when the student comprehends her utterance, and believes that he has recovered her communicative intentions, he has *not* done so. If comprehension were the student's correct interpretation of the teacher's true communicative intentions, we could say that the student has failed to comprehend her utterance. Generally we do not say this, however. We make a distinction between incorrect comprehension, where the student fails to interpret the utterance in the way the teacher intends him to, and cases where the student *does* interpret her utterance in the way the teacher intends him to, but he has been deceived by her as to her true intentions. If he realizes that

she is deceiving him and successfully interprets her true (deceitful) intentions, then we might say he has grasped or comprehended her true intentions. Therefore there is a *phenomenologically* different mental experience involved in comprehending in the one case from in the other, for not only is the content of the belief that the student ascribes to the teacher different but the attitudes he ascribes to her, and his reactive attitudes to her (resentment, for example, rather than gratitude) are different. Clearly, it is important that the student has learned to attend to a range of rather subtle phenomenological differences. There is a kind of *introspective* vigilance involved.

We can use these points to build on McDowell's trivial reason to believe. The world can be unkind to us at the point of comprehension. All the contextual factors, background beliefs, monitoring of body language, sensitivity to tone of voice and to implicatures, including non-literal ones, can fail to prevent the student from being deceived by the teacher as to her real intentions. Because of this he can fail to realize that he needs to question the utterance further, to deploy inductive reasoning on what he has heard and interpreted. But his mental state of feeling that he has comprehended the utterance– that is, of feeling that he has recovered the teacher's true communicative intentions – gives him a *prima facie* entitlement to believe it. It is a different state from when he is suspicious about her true intentions, but to be in *either* state is a rational state to be in, for the process of comprehension is a practically rational one. The process calls upon the student's semantic understanding, and also upon such pragmatic processes as consistency monitoring, contextual awareness, and character judgement. Vigilance is not something that is postponed until the utterance has been comprehended. As I have argued previously, our first response to a statement that it is inconsistent with existing beliefs is not to

disbelieve it but to try to reinterpret what the speaker intends to convey so as to make it consistent. This is especially so in an educational context. In this sense Reid is right to say that we are by nature inclined to believe, for comprehension requires that we be so. If our first instinct were to dismiss any statement that does not immediately seem consistent with what we already believe, we would never comprehend utterances that are the most useful to us, nor learn anything unexpected. Therefore, to reinforce the educational as well as the epistemological implication, the interpersonal interaction between the student and the teacher, including his interpretation of her intentions, is an essential factor – initially in relation to comprehension and subsequently in relation to belief or knowledge acquisition.

If comprehension demands a degree of credulity - which is, nevertheless constrained by vigilance - it also demands a kind of rational trust. Not a kind that is based on a calculation of interests, but a kind that is a recognition and acceptance of our fundamental reliance on, and responsibilities towards, one another. This is more than an epistemological point. Our reliance on others is a condition of our personhood and selfhood, of our having a world to inhabit. Near the beginning of his essay, McDowell quotes Gadamer: "Language is not just one of man's possessions in the world, but on it depends the fact that man has a world at all" (cited by MacDowell, p. 415, fn 3; see Gadamer, 2004, p. 443). To this we can add that our possession of language depends on our trusting others for the truth: hence, our possession of a world depends also on that.

The requirement that we are credulous to a degree and the requirement that we are trusting are connected, of course, because to be credulous is to trust that the speaker is communicating something relevant, intelligible and sincere, that any

156

apparent problems or inconsistency with existing beliefs will evaporate when comprehended better or when subsequent utterances have brought more clarity. And if we cannot dissociate trust from trustworthiness, as for the hearer to trust the speaker is for him to account her trustworthy, we cannot dissociate her trustworthiness from her willingness to put her trust in him, for speakers trust hearers to take their meanings and intentions appropriately, to not willfully misinterpret or misrepresent them, for example.

So I think that McDowell's focus on the internal rationality of the hearer leads him to overlook the interactive, practical rationality involved in testimony and therefore to propose a trivial, question-begging reason for belief - the cognitive state the believer is put in by the testimony, which is determined by the nature of the testimony and which might not be introspectively identifiable - when an alternative is available that is certainly less trivial and less question-begging. Feeling that we have comprehended another person's testimony is a *prima facie,* but defeasible, reason for believing it. But there are other dimensions to comprehension that we will need to consider, for what we learn to comprehend are not just Lackeyan "statements" but speech acts, and this dimension of comprehension takes us further into the nature of the intersubjective trust involved in learning from the words of others. The next two chapters will develop this point in detail.

To the argument I have presented we could add additional considerations with educational implications: considerations concerning the general reliability of comprehension and the general reliability of teachers in communicating sincerely. Even if we felt that a non-reductionist *prima facie* and *pro tanto* entitlement to believe testimony had been established, we might still feel that other considerations

are relevant to overall warrant. They could feature in judgements of individual teachers and students as testifiers, as comprehenders and as responsible believers. In fact, even if the notion of overall warrant were to be rejected, reliability considerations could still be relevant to the hearer's responsiveness to reasons – relevant not just to his responsiveness to introspectively available alerts but also to what he has available to him to trigger alerts. How well informed the hearer is concerning the track record of particular sources of information – different news media, say – might be relevant to how doxastically responsible he is. If he is not very well informed, perhaps he *should* have been. This is a curriculum issue: what sources of information does a student need to pay attention to and what does he need to know about those sources?

McDowell does not allow reliability considerations a place in testimonial warrant, but whether or not we agree with him on that, there is still the question of the *trustworthiness* of the testifier to consider, trustworthiness being a different attribute from reliability. Trust on the part of the hearer is the corollary of trustworthiness on the part of the speaker. McDowell's focus is the rationality of the hearer's side of the testimonial exchange, and he does not recognize the relevance of reciprocal trust and trustworthiness. He admits that things can go right or go wrong in the transfer of knowledge between speaker and hearer, but not that the relationship of trust between the participants is relevant to the rationality of the hearer's belief or to the act of testifying. Given our doubts about the cogency of McDowell's arguments, we need to explore more fully whether a student's trust in the trustworthiness of his teacher's testimony *is* relevant to the rationality of the belief he acquires and therefore to his achievement of knowledge.

Chapter 5: Trust, Authority and Autonomy

In the previous chapters I have discussed the reductionist and non-reductionist accounts of testimony, McDowell's being an example of the latter, and looked at Jennifer Lackey's hybrid or dualistic account, which concedes that reductionists are right to demand that the hearer has positive reasons for accepting what the speaker tells him. I have also attempted to distinguish and to clarify the concepts of epistemic warrant, justification and entitlement. I concluded the last chapter by supporting Paul Faulkner's argument against McDowell's resistance to the requirement for positive reasons. Faulkner's own theory is a version of the trust-based theories of testimony that are the subject of this chapter. Trust-based theories emphasize the intersubjective nature of the employment and comprehension of testimonial speech acts, and they take us closer to the position that I will argue for in Chapter 6.

§5.1 Feminist Epistemology

I have used the term "trust" quite loosely so far. In everyday speech if we say we trust someone for the truth we might mean either that we put our trust in the speaker herself or in what she says. We might mean merely that we are *relying* on what she says being true. Trust theories of testimony put the emphasis on the intersubjective and interdependent nature of communication: the participants trust *each other*. In *Learning from Words*, Jennifer Lackey identifies Ross (1986), Hinchman (2005) and Moran (2005 and 2006) as advocates of this approach. I

think the originators also include feminist epistemologists such as Lorraine Code (1991), Annette Baier (1985), and Mary Field Belenky (1986), insofar as they share a similar conception of the intersubjectivity in knowledge and communication.

Lorraine Code argues that epistemic paradigms, such as objectivity and rational autonomy, lead to a privileging of certain ways of knowing, thereby distorting social practices such as parenting and education and producing social structures that are unevenly responsive to human interests. In her discussion of "second persons" she rejects the idea of people as separate, self-contained, mutually opaque and alien. Rejecting individualism but not individuality, she sees creativity, uniqueness and accountability as continually reinforced by interdependence and an epistemology that acknowledges our mutual dependencies as emancipatory.

Testimony is central to this interdependence. Mutual trust and everyday knowledge, exemplified by conversation rather than by scientific knowledge and autonomous reason, should be the paradigms. I have argued in the previous chapter that epistemologists should take account of cognitive development and of children's developing knowledge and understanding of what to expect from other people. Code argues similarly. She represents knowledge claims as communal activity, as forms of address, speech acts, moments in a dialogue that assume and rely on the participation of other subjects. A knowledge claimant positions herself within a set of discursive possibilities that she may accept, criticize, challenge. She positions herself in relation to other people, to their responses, criticisms, agreements, contributions. Like Bakhtin (see Chapter 6), Code describes even apparently solitary thinking as constructed on a conversational model. She echoes Hannah Arendt in arguing that thinking is a dialogue between "me and myself", a

friendship rather than a selfhood, and Vygotsky in maintaining that talking with others precedes talking with oneself (Vygotsky, 1962; Mercer, 2000).

Three themes in Code's work that are especially relevant are: (1) her emphasis on the importance of learning how to achieve an appropriate interplay between autonomy and solidarity; (2) her analysis of "judicious trust" in relation to authority and expertise; and (3) her emphasis on epistemic justice – the need for all to be recognized as persons with knowledge to share and for all voices to be heard. Knowledge empowers only if it is acknowledged. As Code observes (1991, p. 259), the discussion of epistemic justification risks deteriorating into an empty exercise if it is not grounded in a broader discussion of the nature of knowledge and, crucially, the nature of knowers.

I support Code's characterization of humans as conversationalists, discursive knowers who need to share what we know and learn new things from each other. Given that our practices as conversationalists and sharers of knowledge are constrained by epistemic and linguistic norms, these practices could, and should, be more central to theories of education, and especially to pedagogic theory and practice. Young people cannot thrive on epistemic autonomy alone; they also need to be judicious trusters of the epistemic authority of others and the recipients of trust as authorities in their own right. This is one of the claims I develop in Chapter 7, when I relate my account of testimonial speech acts and discourse specifically to schooling.

§5.2 Assurance and Trust Views of Testimony

Jennifer Lackey argues that trust-based theories of testimony can be either epistemologically potent or genuinely interpersonal but cannot be both. Her critique focuses on Richard Moran's "Assurance View" and Edward Hinchman's "Trust View". Like the feminist accounts, such as Codes's, these belong to a family of views which a) emphasize the interpersonal relationship between the participants, b) locate epistemic value in certain features of the relationship, such as trust or assurance, and c) reject any implication that a speaker is a mere "truth gauge" whose words are all that counts. This family of views is incompatible with both reductionism and non-reductionism, and also with Lackey's dualism.

According to Moran, a speaker's testimony is not to be treated as *evidence* for believing *that p.* Rather she should be understood as having offered an *assurance* that *p* is true. Assurances are freely given, so the speaker is freely assuming responsibility for the truth of what she asserts, providing the hearer thereby with a reason for believing *p.* What makes it a reason is that it is *presented* as a reason. It has the force of the speaker having given her word. "The epistemic value of [the speaker's] words is something publicly conferred on them by the speaker, by presenting his utterance as an assertion" (Moran, 2006, p. 288). The speaker offers a kind of guarantee of truth. In Lackey's view, such a guarantee can have only *moral* value; epistemically it is worthless if the speaker is sincere but incompetent or unreliable. When an unreliable speaker assumes responsibility for her assertions, it does not make them more truth conducive. Assurance or the assumption of responsibility will always be trumped by undefeated defeaters and therefore cannot do very much to render the hearer's belief more rational. In other

words, the assurance principle is epistemologically impotent. Lackey's dualism places more "potent conditions" upon both parties.

In the next chapter I will attempt to delineate different kinds of testimonial speech act according to the relationship, responsibilities and expectations implicated. Such distinctions are relevant at this point, however, for Lackey refers to Hinchman's distinction between telling someone *that p* and asserting *that p*. Hinchman (2005) argues that the speaker whose utterance is the speech act of *telling* implicates to the hearer who understands the act that she performs thereby an entitlement to believe *p*. Someone who merely asserts *that p* implicates only that *p* is true.[18] The teller, on the other hand, invites the hearer to trust her and thus offers, not to take responsibility for the truth of the utterance, but to share with the hearer epistemic responsibility for the hearer's belief. This view takes account of the point I raised in the last chapter: comprehending an utterance must involve recognizing the speaker's communicative intentions, commitments and expectations.

But Hinchman's view cannot satisfy Lackey or anyone who insists on further conditions. Hinchman himself adds the conditions a) that the hearer's trust must be reasonable, not undermined by undefeated defeaters, and b) that the speaker's testimony has to be a reliable guide to the truth. Lackey insists that the addition of these conditions threatens to make the trust itself "epistemically superfluous" (2008, p. 238). So, Lackey concludes, Moran's is a genuinely interpersonal but

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[18] This is not the only implicature, surely, for someone who takes herself to be telling another person *that p* believes that the other person does not already know *that p*. We might say that she believes she is teaching him something. This is not necessarily the case with assertion.

epistemologically impotent account, whereas Hinchman's is more potent but is not genuinely interpersonal.

Consider the case of an eavesdropper who hears some gossip in which one person, a shopkeeper, says something true to another person, a customer. Does the eavesdropper have an epistemic position inferior to the customer's? Is the shopkeeper entitled to feel slighted if the intended recipient of the gossip, the customer, does not believe her testimony, but not if the eavesdropper does not believe it? The shopkeeper has not offered an assurance to the eavesdropper, nor invited his trust: does this mean that the eavesdropper is not *entitled* to accept the belief on the basis of the shopkeeper's communicative intention and expectation? Lackey's view is that the epistemic position of the two hearers is the same. If the gossip had been false, both would have been misled. She also says that the feelings of the participants are beside the point. If a speaker feels slighted by disbelief or the hearer feels insulted by being misled, these feelings are epistemically irrelevant. She thinks there is nothing necessarily wrong in treating speakers as "truth gauges" (2008, p. 249). So, the customer's and the eavesdropper's relationship with the shopkeeper's testimony is one of reliance, rather than one of trust.

My intuitions about the shopkeeper case are different from Lackey's and I think she is mistaken in thinking that the communicative intentions and expectations that a speaker implicates to her intended audience, and the feelings or reactive attitudes associated with them, are epistemically insignificant. Moreover, I contend that trust itself is not a feeling or an emotion but a *cognitive attitude* that can be either rational or irrational, justified or unjustified. I will defend this claim in the next section.

§5.3 Trusting Persons

We cannot always assess other people's reliability by reading them like thermometers; we often have to trust them for the truth. This is part and parcel of living in solidarity as interdependent social beings. Lorraine Code makes use of the notion of a second person perspective (§5.1). David Bakhurst (2011) refers to the same idea. In presenting his case, based on McDowell, for the irreducibly social nature of the conditions for the development of a child's rational capacity, he employs the Aristotelian concept of "second nature", whereby personhood emerges from our animal first nature as a result of social (principally, linguistic) interaction, and he also employs the German concept of *Bildung* (education or upbringing). He writes:

> The second-person perspective already embodies recognition of the subjectivity of the other and, it might be argued, simultaneously contains the presentation of self in a way that warrants reciprocal recognition from the other person. Implicit in addressing another as "you" is the recognition of him or her as a rational agent, an inhabitant of the space of reasons. *Bildung* brings this vividly into view, in part because the reciprocal recognition of subjectivity contained in the second-person perspective is a precondition of the possibility of education, in the fullest sense of that word, and in part because at the earliest stages of the *Bildungsprozess* the elders' commitment to the recognition of mutual subjectivity is so obviously an assumption warranted by the child's potentiality rather than his or her capacity. At this stage, the child is addressed as a "you" so that he or she might become an "I" that can return the compliment. (2011, p. 63)

This recalls comments Thomas Reid made on the second-personal relationship (see §2.4). Reid recognized that it is its interpersonal and cooperative nature that makes

testimony an irreducibly social form of learning. He notes that the second person form of verbs, and the second person pronoun *you*, are "appropriated to the expression of social operations of mind, and could never have had a place in language but for this purpose" (Reid, 2002, p. 70). As with promising, requesting, commanding and apologizing, testimonial speech acts require an audience to be addressed by a speaker, and for the audience to recognize that it is being addressed in a particular way – that is, to recognize the speech act and the kind of response appropriate to that speech act. A plausible interpretation of Reid (one that repositions somewhat him in relation to non-reductionism) is that he thinks of learning from testimony as what Stephen Darwall (2006) and Benjamin McMyler (2011) have called "a second-personal epistemic capacity". It is epistemically second-personal, and irreducibly social, in that the relationship between testifier and audience plays a fundamental role in the justification or rationalization of testimonially-acquired beliefs. It is a view that suggests the incompatibility of our reliance on testimony with an insistence on a traditional notion of epistemic (or rational, intellectual or cognitive) autonomy. It suggests, *contra* McDowell, that the epistemic responsibility for the belief is *shared* between speaker and audience.

McMyler argues that when a speaker *tells* another person something she is already recognizing his personhood or humanity, and he, in comprehending her utterance, recognizing it for the speech act that it is and responding appropriately, is recognizing hers - a reciprocity that establishes them in a second-personal relationship. This description applies not only to testimony cases but also to cases involving such speech acts as promises and commands. In a second-personal communicative relationship the speaker presents herself either as *an* authority or as *in* authority and the hearer recognizes that and judges the speaker on that basis to

be worthy of his trust. It would be irrational or unreasonable of a hearer to place his *trust* in a testifier if he doubts her status as an authority on the issue at hand. In trusting her for the truth he is not merely *relying* on her because he has no alternative. Rather, he is according her an epistemic status that is central to the rationality of his trust in her. The belief he acquires from her words is a second-hand one, not because of the role inference has played in its acquisition, nor because the acquisition has been mediated by his comprehension, but because he has deferred to her as someone who knows what he does not know and he is acquiring the belief directly from her. It is this second-handedness that raises questions concerning the hearer's rational or epistemic responsibility for her belief, and therefore the doubts about autonomy. We might be reminded here of Plato's Divided Line in *The Republic*, where second-hand opinions are placed at the bottom of the epistemic hierarchy. In order to present a case for promoting these "shadows" to a higher epistemic standing, we need to think of trust as an evaluable cognitive attitude, rather than as a feeling or *emotional* attitude (which is what Lackey implies it is).

How can we characterize interpersonal trust as an evaluable cognitive attitude? Russell Hardin's "encapsulated trust" model (Hardin, 2006, pp. 18-23), applied to testimony, suggests that if you trust me for the truth then you do so because you believe my interests "encapsulate" your interests, that it is in both our interests to maintain a relationship. My recognition (or belief) that you are depending on me for the truth, and my giving you the truth out of goodwill towards you, is matched by your recognition of my goodwill and also of my authority as someone who is knowledgeable on this topic; and your goodwill towards me is demonstrated by your acceptance of what I say. Either of us can be wrong in our

judgments, and either can end up feeling injured: in my case, if I am not believed, and, in your case, if I mislead you. Trust has correlative "reactive attitudes" (Strawson, 1974).

It is important to make a clear distinction between trusting the other person herself and trusting (or relying on) her role in the situation. McMyler (2011, pp. 115-121) distinguishes between trusting someone *to* do something and trusting *that* they will do something. The former is more direct, more second-personal. In the former the trusted and trusting persons are "located in an interpersonal space characterized by reciprocal normative relations" (*ibid*). The truster recognizes the trusted as having a certain competence and authority; she is responsible for doing what he trusts her to do; and if she does not do it he will be entitled to adopt second-personal reactive attitudes, such as resentment, towards her. This does not apply to "trusting that…" cases. If the audience trusts *that* the speaker will speak truly, he is not, in Hardin's words, encapsulating his interests in hers in the way that he is when he trusts her *to* speak truly. Both are judgements of a kind, but one is a judgement concerning what may be relied upon and the other is a judgement about the relationship.[19]

The essential point in trust-based theories of testimony is that to recognize the speech act as testimonial is to recognize that the speaker is inviting your trust. There are risks, of course. You are vulnerable to the limitations of her goodwill, and you may well feel betrayed or resentful if she lets you down, which is not so

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[19] Paul Faulkner's parallel distinction is between *predictive trust*, where one is depending on an expected outcome, and *affective trust*, where one is expecting the other person to see things as one does oneself and to act accordingly (Faulkner, 2011, pp. 144-150). The latter is a normative expectation concerning the trusted's motivations and resulting in certain reactive attitudes if disappointed. Martin Hollis' s distinction, in *Trust Within Reason* (1998), is between trust based on an expectation that the other *will* do something, and trust based on the belief in a mutual recognition that she *should* (p. 11). Whether these different kinds of trust are ultimately both normative and predictive is one of Hollis's main themes.

with more impersonal kinds of evidence, but the fact of her testifying amounts to a genuinely epistemic reason for your belief. It is evidence of the speaker's willingness to enter into a particular kind of relationship with you.

For McMyler, the speaker's trustworthiness provides merely a background condition for the audience's belief (2011, pp. 136-137): evidence for her trustworthiness is much like evidence for her reliability or for any other characteristic, and a belief in her trustworthiness is likewise much like other beliefs about her. But in trusting her to speak truly one believes that she is speaking truly, and this is grounded not in the hearer's judgement of her trustworthiness but in the fact that the relationship is based on authority and responsibility. It is an irreducibly second-personal reciprocal relationship in which epistemic responsibility is shared.

McMyler does not want to make trustworthiness too epistemically weighty, otherwise it will be required to do so much of the epistemic work that the theory will become a form of reductionism, so he keeps trustworthiness in the background, a necessary but far from sufficient condition. This is a reasonable position: we cannot trust someone we have reason to believe is untrustworthy, but whether we actually do put our trust in her if we judge her to be trustworthy is a further step. What motivates that extra step, the trust itself, is the recognition of the intentions, expectations, and commitments implicated in the speech act.

McMyler's use of the term "trustworthy" might be questioned on the ground that it hardly distinguishes trustworthiness from reliability or dependability. Also, a doubt remains about the compatibility of this notion of trust in testimony with the educational aim of fostering epistemic (or rational or cognitive) autonomy. As Stephen Darwall puts it, it seems to deny the believer the opportunity to "come to his own conclusion" about the proposition involved (Darwall, 2006, p. 5). But this

doubt can be dismissed. If the hearer has to judge whether he *can* trust, and, further, whether *to* trust, the point is less undermining of autonomy as these are evaluable judgements. We can make them well or badly, and we can get better at making them, not least by getting better at appreciating what is implicated in different kinds of speech acts, and by becoming more sensitive to the contextual features of particular utterances. So, although responsibility for his belief is shared with the speaker, the hearer's judgements and understanding are his own. Furthermore, someone who trusts a speaker for the truth has not relinquished all responsibility. If the speaker is not available to meet any challenges, the hearer can conduct an inferential assessment, if evidence is available, or give up the belief. He is still responsible for meeting any challenge concerning the way in which he formed his belief. This could involve him in defending his acceptance of the speaker's trustworthiness and/or in defending his interpretation of the speaker's utterance or speech act. Where the speaker *is* available to meet any challenges, the hearer is entitled to defer them to her (she has implicated her acceptance of this commitment) and he is then in a position to assess her response.

As will become clear in due course, these points relate especially to the speech act of assurance, which I see as one of the principal members of the range of testimonial speech acts. It is the speech act that McMyler and other trust theorists seem to have in mind. Following Moran, McMyler uses Paul Grice's distinction between allowing someone to know something and telling it to him (Moran, 2006, pp. 284-286; Grice, 1957, in Strawson, 1967, pp. 45-46). Grice compares allowing someone to know something to showing him a photograph, and he compares telling it to him to drawing a picture for him. The teller intends the audience to recognize her intention to *assume responsibility* for the belief. She is

offering a guarantee of the statement's truth and assuring the audience that she will be responsible for any challenges. She expects the audience to accept that as a reason for belief. To tell someone something is to perform a speech act that conveys, as promising does, an assurance of accountability, an assumption of epistemic responsibility. In acknowledging this, the hearer gains a positive reason to trust the speaker - and thereby a belief that is, *certeris paribus*, reasonably held.

The epistemic burden placed on the speech act (of assurance) and its illocutionary features prompts the question of whether we can acquire a justified belief from a speaker whose speech act is faked – from an *insincere* testifier, for example. McMyler remarks:

> Insincere testimony is testimony in which a speaker merely purports to assume the epistemic responsibilities involved in testifying, and according to the second-personal model testimonial knowledge cannot be acquired through the purported assumption of such responsibilities. (McMyler, 2011, p. 103)

The issue at stake is whether the speaker's assumption of responsibility is "psychological" or illocutionary. If the latter – that is, if the speaker's obligations derive solely from the nature of the speech act – it would appear that an insincere testifier has the same epistemic responsibilities as the sincere testifier: she must respond to any challenges, for she has performed the same act as the sincere speaker, conveying the same expectations and commitments. In rejecting the possibility of acquiring testimonial knowledge from an insincere speaker, McMyler rejects the illocutionary view. If, on the other hand, the assumption of responsibility is more directly psychological, the speaker's intentions or motivation become all-important for the epistemic status of the hearer's belief and to his

entitlement to defer challenges to her. In this case McMyler's second-personal view begins to look less like a trust account and more like a version of either reductionism or dualism, in which *evidence* of the speaker's state of mind, her sincerity or reliability, is a positive requirement rather than just a background condition.

In fact McMyler does eventually accept that the speaker must actually be "competent and reliable" (p. 162). It is not sufficient that she is judged to be so by the hearer and that this judgment operates as a background condition. Presumably McMyler wants to rule out the possibility of knowledge being acquired from speakers who are unreliably in touch with the truth. He presents his theory as a species of non-reductionism (with positive reasons deriving from the nature of the speech acts) but by suggesting that both favourable external factors and internal judgements are required for epistemic warrant he seems to have made the second personal account into a hybrid. A hybrid account that includes a general entitlement based on *contingent* factors, such as the norms associated with particular speech acts, rather than on conceptual preconditions, raises the possibility of alternative contingent factors that produce, or contribute to, a general entitlement.

Paul Faulkner (2011) has an alternative contingent factor. He argues that as encultured speakers and hearers we have internalized the social norm "tell the truth informatively". From a subjective perspective, the hearer has the resources (if called upon) to reason as follows: *The speaker can tell I need information, she will have internalized the norm that she ought to tell the truth and so will recognize that she has a reason to tell the truth; therefore, she will tell the truth. I will trust her to tell the truth.* This kind of trust, Faulkner says, is a normative expectation, a presumption rather than a prediction. It is also probabilistic; trust is always risky.

The problem with this account is that it is not clear that trust is required at all. As Lackey argued concerning Moran and Hinchman's assurance and trust accounts, the epistemic work seems to be done elsewhere, in this case by the way speakers are *reliable* in obeying the social norm to tell the truth informatively. In other words, a reliabilist account of testimony can be built on the contingent fact of obedience to social norms. The intersubjective ingredient of trust is redundant. If I need a reason for trusting this particular speaker, I have one without the need to presume the reciprocal trust relationship. I just need to have no reason to distrust her.

Trust theories such as Faulkner's and McMyler's are significant in inviting us to probe more deeply the nature of testimonial speech acts, but they are wrong to put all the testimonial eggs in one basket – that is, in the speech act of assurance and its specific set of commitments and expectations. Nevertheless, our interest as educationalists should certainly embrace speech acts, such as assurance, that are most closely associated with interpersonal trust, as well as those that require alternative kinds of reasoning and justification. Nor should a focus on trust exhaust our interest in the nature of informative speech acts in the context of pedagogic discourses. These points are developed in the final two chapters. If as educationalists we are interested in the distinctions between different kinds of testimonial speech acts, we must also be interested in developing children's ability to distinguish them and make appropriate judgments in response to them.

We have still to determine whether trust theorists are correct in arguing that testimonial knowledge cannot be acquired when social norms associated with a testifier's sincerity and reliability are broken, and the speech act does not implicate what the hearer reasonably interprets it to implicate. We would not defer challenges

to an insincere testifier if we knew or suspected that she was insincere, for then we would have a psychological defeater in any case and could not think her trustworthy, but is the epistemic status of the belief we have acquired necessarily affected if we do not know that her utterance is insincere? This is the issue Lackey raised with the Creationist Teacher case. That case is complicated by the fact that the teacher is sincere and conscientious in some ways (professionally, perhaps). The motivations and pedagogical intentions of teachers and other speakers are often highly complicated in this way, so if we want to avoid scepticism, the kinds of psychological fact that are relevant to the rationality of the hearer's understanding and belief must be at the very least *limited*. Lackey and McDowell both deny their relevance completely (when they are undetectable by the audience).

It is possible that Lackey's dualism has the right epistemological structure after all; but I think it provides an incomplete account of the linguistics or pragmatics of testimonial exchanges. Her view is that the hearer inherits the epistemic properties of the *statement*. My view is closer to the idea that the hearer inherits the epistemic properties of the *utterance*. This is a significant distinction and it is central to my thesis. It means that the important judgements that the hearer makes are in the first place, as the second-personal model suggests, interpretative and contextualized. To develop this point I need to examine in more detail the discourse features, or pragmatics, of testimonial utterances. The speaker's communicative intention is relevant because the hearer cannot fully comprehend the utterance without recovering this, even if he does not have to recover every detail of her motivation or pedagogic intention. In Chapter 6 I will discuss in more detail the pragmatics and "dialogics" of speech utterances. Two key questions to be

asked there are: What is it to *say* something*?* and What is it to *grasp* what has been said?

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In conceding the need for some kind of hybrid account of the epistemology of testimony, we are rejecting a purely reliabilist account, one that rules internalist considerations to be at best supplementary. We are rejecting, too, a theory solely based on intersubjective trust. Instead, we are accepting the necessity of both "objective" warrant and "subjective" justification. The subjective or internalist element is the rationality or reasonableness of the way in which the hearer interprets and judges the speaker's utterance. This is significant, from an educational perspective, because it reinforces the belief in the importance of students becoming increasingly epistemically responsible in how they interpret and accept what they are told. The judgements involved in the interpretative aspect and in the conscientiousness, vigilance or responsibility the hearer employs in how he trusts the speaker to be saying what she believes to be true, integrate the epistemological and the linguistic. They are also deeply connected with the question of why it is sometimes rational to trust another person *more than oneself* – and therefore with issues relating to epistemic *authority* and the limits of autonomy.

§5.4 Linda Zagzebski: Why Trust Someone Else More Than I Trust Myself?

Philosophers writing about testimony often seem to rely on trivial examples, such as McDowell's tourist asking for directions, and untypical cases, such as Lackey's Compulsively Believing Bill. It is important to remember that there are serious issues at stake and that the arguments have far-reaching implications about how to conduct our lives and how to thrive as social beings. Implications for education include those pertaining to epistemic justice in the classroom. These are implications that are suppressed when education debates operate with crude notions of pedagogy and the transmission of knowledge. The arguments concerning self-trust that I look at in this section reinforce this point. If they are correct, not only are we justified in accepting beliefs on the basis of our trust in authoritative individuals, we are epistemically or doxastically irresponsible if we do not trust them.

Linda Zagzebski's and Keith Lehrer's arguments concerning authority, self-trust and autonomy, discussed in the next three sections, are persuasive in suggesting that the only feasible account of autonomy is one that makes us responsible for the conscientious way in which we maintain the systems of beliefs and preferences that form the rational backdrop to our decisions to place trust in the authority of others rather than to rely on our own resources. But we will see that from both an epistemological and an educational perspective these accounts give rise to a doubt about whether they provide hearers with sufficient motivation to understand for themselves, to educate themselves in order to achieve the expertise or authority that the teachers (and others) they choose to trust already have.

Meeting this challenge will lead us, in the next chapter, to examine more closely the nature of dialogue and the kinds of discourse in which knowledge is shared.

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Testimony is a special case of accepting a belief on the basis of another person's authority. It appears, therefore, as we have seen previously, to conflict with rational autonomy. The apparent conflict applies also to non-testimonial situations in which one acquires a belief by accepting the epistemic authority of another person. Testimonial cases are those where the authority tells the audience something verbally. Other ways of finding out what another person believes include observing her behaviour and following her lead, acquiring thereby her belief about the proper way to do something or the right way to get to a particular place. The essential difference here is between accepting the belief on the basis of irreducibly first-personal reasons and accepting the belief for third-personal reasons, such as reasons derived from inductive inference.

The claim that acquiring beliefs on the authority of others clashes with autonomy depends upon the assumption that epistemic self-reliance is both a feasible and a superior means of acquiring beliefs. Whether self-reliance *is* a superior means of acquiring *true* beliefs is an empirical question, and, crucially, in particular cases it will depend on the believer's cognitive faculties and conscientiousness. If this were the only issue, evidence of the superior success of testimony in a particular domain of knowledge would make epistemic self-reliance in that domain indefensible. If other people are very frequently in a better position to acquire true beliefs in that domain than oneself, the scope for successful

177

epistemic self-reliance would be restricted (assuming the more authoritative people are prepared to share their knowledge).

However, the truth of beliefs is *not* the only issue when we want to acquire knowledge. From a third-person perspective, the perspective of objective warrant, beliefs need to be backed by evidence, not all of which need be available to the believer. From a first-person perspective, the believer has to have good reasons for accepting the belief. If good first-personal reasons are those available only to the believer it would seem that from a first-person perspective the justification, rationality or reasonableness of one's beliefs is a matter purely for oneself, and self-reliance or autonomy, therefore, would appear to be purely a first-personal, individual achievement. But this view is undermined by any account of testimony that sees the acquisition of knowledge by the receiver as an intersubjective, shared achievement.

For some philosophers and educationalists, conscious perhaps of how vulnerable we are when we rely on others for knowledge, the ideal state of affairs for an individual is never having to accept beliefs from another person without justifying them independently for oneself. Why should we trust other people's intellects more than we trust our own, or trust their conscientiousness, accuracy or integrity more than our own? There seems to be something very fundamental about trusting one's own intellectual faculties: fundamental to many intellectual traditions, if not to human nature. Could it be so fundamental that no argument for trusting others could defeat it? Where would an acceptance that *self-trust* is a bedrock belief take us? Might it be possible to reconcile this with some degree of reliance on, or trust in, the authority of others?

Linda Zagzebski (2012) argues that such reconciliation is indeed possible. Rationality, she says, is a pre-reflective capacity for resolving doxastic dissonances, thereby producing "harmony" in the soul. The "rational self" only exercises its executive function when the adjustment is not automatic and a judgement has to be made. A self-conscious being has an executive function in virtue of being a self, and in this sense it has authority over itself. The desire for true beliefs is a pre-reflective one, and most beliefs arrive without our exercising our reflective capacities; therefore we must either have a degree of trust in our pre-reflective capacities or accept that most of our beliefs are fundamentally ungrounded. Zagzebski claims that we do in fact have a basic trust in their reliably satisfying our desire for true beliefs. This self-trust entails trusting aspects of our environment, too, and an awareness of our vulnerability to epistemic harm.

Keith Lehrer (1997) claims there is no non-circular way of telling that our belief forming capacities are reliable as a whole. Richard Foley (2001) also recognizes that, given the failure of foundationalism and the lack of sound responses to scepticism, we can have no absolute assurance that our beliefs are true. We have to retreat to a position of self-trust and to practices of self-criticism, self-reflection, conscientiousness. William Alston (1986, 2005) argues that all sources of belief (perception, for example) are ultimately grounded on themselves and are therefore circular. We are "driven back" to a reliance on self-trust – that is, trust in our own cognitive faculties and judgments. This might be thought to lead to scepticism, but Zagzebski argues that self-trust *precedes* scepticism; it is "pre-reflective". When we confront circularity and become reflective, only trust ends the process of reflection. It is bedrock.

Being self-reflective, Zagzebski says, means avoiding doxastic dissonance. Even if we had non-circular reasons for relying on our senses and cognitive capacities, we would still have to trust that there was a connection between them and truth. All reasons, of whatever kind, require us to have a basic trust in their connection with truth. We have to trust our self-reflection and use our faculties to the best of our abilities. Epistemic conscientiousness is the self-conscious equivalent of what we do pre-reflectively. We trust that it is an improvement and that there is a connection between conscientious self-reflection and succeeding. Conscientiousness comes in degrees of awareness and self-monitoring. We can get better at it, for example, by paying closer heed to evidence. Evidence is what we *trust* to be indicative of truth. Intellectual virtues arise out of conscientiousness but we would not value them if we did not already trust our cognitive and sensory faculties to be generally trustworthy.

Trusting our faculties conscientiously, Zagzebski writes, just *is* rationality. Trust in one's faculties is always more basic than reasons or evidence. Conscientious self-reflection plays the key role: *surviving it* is the only test we have of truth. Self-trust is a key reason for belief, because if a reason for belief is something in virtue of which it is rational to believe *that p,* then it is in virtue of self-trust that I conscientiously believe that my reasons to believe that *p* are truth-indicative. Either self-trust is a reason or there are no reasons.

So where does this leave the reasonableness of acquiring beliefs from others? Zagzebski refers to someone who holds extreme epistemic self-reliance to be the ideal as an "epistemic egoist" (2012, pp. 52 – 55). Such a person can only accept beliefs acquired from others if he is convinced by evidence or reasons available to his evaluation. He is prepared, therefore, to miss out on acquiring some true beliefs,

but he feels that the beliefs he *has* acquired are secure ones, posing less of a risk than accepting them on trust from others would pose. He would have to concede, surely, that he has acquired the language and reasoning skills he requires for his evaluation from others (pre-reflectively), but he can go on to argue (similarly to Quinton's argument – see §3.1) that having acquired them he can now use them reflectively and self-reliantly. As we begin to ride freely around the doxastic countryside, we have to cope without the training wheels we needed to steady ourselves and get started.

So thinks the epistemic egoist, but in Zagzebski's view this position is incoherent. If there are no non-circular arguments for self-trust, there are none for trusting oneself more than others, and therefore no reason to believe that another person's intellectual capacities differs substantially (in reliability, for example) from one's own. Given the principle that like cases should be treated alike, which, she claims, is available to us *a priori*, our default position with regard to the intellectual capacities of other people should be one of trust, for consistency requires a presumption in favour of people who have the same faculties as oneself. We should believe that others are generally trustworthy, feel trusting of their faculties and treat them as trustworthy. Therefore, their testimony *that p* counts positively in my deliberations about whether *p*. Extreme epistemic egoism must be rejected. Furthermore, just as we have self-reflective self-trust when we are exercising our faculties conscientiously, and this allows us to distinguish between cases, so we acquire beliefs about particular persons, and we can place particular trust in people whose own conscientiousness we discover when we are being especially conscientious. The *prima facie* trust I owe to others is raised to a more secure epistemic level when I conscientiously judge that the other person's belief

will have been formed conscientiously. Zagzebski writes: "The general principle is that insofar as I trust myself in virtue of having certain properties, I owe the same trust to others whose possession of those properties is something I discover when I am behaving in a way I trust" (2012, p. 57).

We could choose to ignore these considerations and to stick to our guns about being self-reliant, but this would be a foolhardy piece of stubbornness if our aim is to have true beliefs. If others are to be taken as epistemically trustworthy, and if they are frequently better placed than we are to acquire true beliefs, only an insistence on being self-reliant or autonomous *for its own sake*, whatever the consequences for the accuracy of our beliefs, could make it reasonable, and even then, surely, at the expense of a degree of epistemic consistency or "doxastic harmony".

Zagzebski concedes, nevertheless, that in one sense epistemic egoism is unavoidable, for these considerations concerning the trustworthiness of others stem from one's own conscientious reflection and observation. One's trust in oneself is more basic than one's trust in particular others. I can think of myself as untrustworthy in respect of particular domains of knowledge, but it is not open to me to think of myself as *generally* untrustworthy. This is not the case in respect of other individuals: there is no inconsistency in a judgement that another person is generally unreliable epistemically or doxastically.

Trust in oneself and in others counts as a reason for belief, for it is required in making the connection between what I am doing when I deploy my cognitive capacities conscientiously and success in reaching the truth. This goes both for reasons that consist of shareable factual evidence and for first-person reasons, including emotions and experiences that are available only to me. Trust is first-

personal because only I can determine the similarity of other persons to me. Therefore, third-personal factual evidence can neither exhaust the evidence for a particular belief nor be the most basic reason for believing it. The most basic is my trust in my own deliberations.

Given this, if I conscientiously trust you, the fact that you believe *p* can be a reason for me to believe *p*. If only factual evidence were relevant to the reasonableness of the belief I have acquired from you, the mere fact that you believe it could not be a factor for me, just as the fact that I believe that *p* cannot add to my reasons for believing *p*, but my trusting your epistemic conscientiousness means that the fact that you believe *p* can be decisive for me. Whether it *should* be will depend on several factors, one of which is whether I recognize your authority in this particular domain - that is, whether I believe that trusting you for a belief on the question is more likely to get me to the truth than relying on my own capacities is, even if it is a question on which I have opinions and some background knowledge. Furthermore, if the fact that you believe *that p* can be a reason for my accepting that belief from you, the fact that many people have (independently) accepted the belief from you can further strengthen my belief. This is not a case of it not being possible for so many people to be wrong, for clearly the belief could be wrong however many people believe it, nor of a "wisdom of the crowd" phenomenon (Surowiecki, 2004), but of my having a defeasible reason to trust people who are trusted by people I trust, and therefore there can be additional epistemic security (reasonableness) in numbers. When we disagree with someone we trust and admire, or whose authority we recognize, we are obliged to reflect further. This additional degree of conscientiousness is demanded by our desire to resolve the dissonance caused by the conflict between

our trust in our own beliefs and capacities and our trust in our trust in certain other persons.

My summary of Zagzebski's argument so far might suggest that we have to relinquish autonomy as a desirable aim, and that we are *forced* in some way to accept beliefs from authoritative others. But this is not the case. If we exercise a reflective control over our beliefs as a whole and the norms we adopt in forming them, we sustain the only kind of autonomy that is available to us. If our norms allow us to take beliefs from certain others more or less on command, then we can (and do) do this. This is what it means to recognize others as epistemic authorities. Their beliefs, often conveyed via testimony, have a "pre-emptive power" for us in the domains of knowledge in which we recognize their authority (Zagzebski, 2012, p.113 – 116).

We have moved on from the position where another person's belief merely *counts in favour* of my adoption of the same belief to the position that the other person's belief should *pre-empt* other considerations. Recognizing the other person's epistemic authority means that we ought to allow her to represent us epistemically. So, what is Zagzebski's argument for pre-emption? Why should I, as a conscientiously self-reflective believer, treat another person's beliefs (within the relevant domain) as having a pre-emptive power over my own, even regardless of their content? Adapting Joseph Raz's justification thesis for political authority (in *The Morality of Freedom*, 1988), Zagzebski argues that the authority of another person's belief is justified by my conscientious judgement that I am more likely to form a belief that survives my conscientious self-reflection if I believe what the authority believes than if I try to figure out what to believe myself. The point of epistemic authority is to help me to believe conscientiously.

We are discussing the question of taking a belief on authority, not (yet) the question of testimony. If I come to trust another person's way of forming a belief whether *p*, I have a reason to take her belief on authority. If I already have a belief on the matter it may affect my judgement whether taking a belief on authority will survive my conscientious self-reflection better than forming a belief on my own. Zagzebski's principle is: *trust your conscientious judgement about what will survive conscientious self-reflection*. An epistemically conscientious person who adopts beliefs that are likely to survive conscientious self-reflection is more likely to adopt beliefs from others that do not conflict with his existing ones, or which are independent or inconsequential for him, but sometimes he will allow the authority's conflicting belief to have more than *prima facie* credibility for him, and allow their pre-emptive power to override other considerations and existing beliefs.

Zagzebski recognizes the *emotional* dimension of our epistemic lives. We sometimes react to what others tell us by feeling that it is ridiculous, or by feeling indignant that anyone could expect us to believe such a thing. Many emotions, she says, can withstand conscientious reflection. We simply have to trust them, in conjunction with our other faculties, or we are forced into moral and epistemic scepticism. A conscientious person who trusts her decision to act in a certain way, needs to trust the emotions that form part of the basis for the decision. If the emotion is not appropriate, that must be established by the failure of the emotion to satisfy the demands of conscientious self-reflection.

The emotion that plays the key role in Zagzebski's argument is *admiration*. To find someone admirable in particular respects is to find her worth imitating in these respects, and to trust such a judgement is to believe that the person is worth imitating. So to find someone *epistemically* admirable, either in a particular domain

or more generally, is to believe either that you should imitate her beliefs or that insofar as you trust your feeling of admiration you have a *prima facie* reason for trusting her beliefs over your own beliefs. If we trust our feelings of admiration then we are committed to trusting those we admire. We may well choose to imitate their intellectual virtues, and so boost our own moral and intellectual development, but Zagzebski's claim is stronger than this: we also have a *prima facie*, defeasible reason to imitate their *beliefs*. This does not mean that we do not deserve credit for the true beliefs we acquire, for trusting the right people for the truth is a meritorious achievement (*ibid*., p.118). Furthermore, trust in our feelings of admiration commits us to trusting the emotions of others whom we trust and admire, and therefore to trusting those whom *they* admire. This greatly expands the scope of our epistemic trust and therefore of our reasonable beliefs. Applying this reasoning to testimony means that beliefs acquired at the end of long testimonial chains are perfectly reasonable as long as one conscientiously believes that the person one has trusted for the belief would not herself have accepted it unconscientiously from someone she did not trust to have herself have acquired it conscientiously, and so on along the chain.

§5.5 Zagzebski on Testimony

I have referred at various points to the range of speech acts that I consider to be testimonial in character. A key feature of Zagzebski's account, and one with important educational implications, is that it emphasizes the hearer's achievement in judging the pragmatics of apparently informative utterances. Less attractive in my view is the way Zagzebski confines testimony to a particular kind of speech act,

thus lessening the hearer's achievement. It is important to recognize that the account of testimony that is motivated by Zagzebski's argument concerning trust and authority is *not* one that includes assertion as a testimonial speech act. Accepting a belief *that p* on the basis of another person's assertion *that p* is one way of finding out what the speaker's belief is; but equally we might find that out by *overhearing* her assertion *that p*, and we might take that assertion to be authoritative, in much the same way as might find her confident striding towards the right platform at the railway station authoritative and so follow her. The assertion, like the behaviour, is taken as evidence for the belief. For Zagzebski, testimony differs from assertion in that A telling B *that p* is an invitation from A to B to trust A for the truth – and perhaps an *expectation* that B will trust A for the truth. A intends B to trust her for the truth and assumes responsibility for the belief itself and for B's acceptance of it. There is therefore an interpersonal "contract" established between the testifier and the audience (whether the audience is an individual in face-to-face communication with the testifier or a community of believers distanced from her in time or space).

As we have seen, Moran's assurance model of testimony and McMyler's second-person trust account make similar points. They see the fact that the testifier intends the audience to trust her for the truth as essential to the nature of the relationship and to the audience's reasons for accepting the belief. Therefore, the audience has a right to defer subsequent challenges to the testifier and also to feel aggrieved, indignant, resentful or betrayed if the belief turns out to be false, especially if the testifier is revealed to have been unconscientious in some way, or insincere. If testimony were a kind of evidence, reactive attitudes such as resentment would not be appropriate. There is an implicit *moral* commitment,

similar to a promise, that the testifier makes when she tells the audience *that p* and invites, or expects, their trust. A crucial difference from Lackey's account is that for Zagzebski there is no possibility of a testifier simply being a source of evidence, as a clock or thermometer is; rather, the testifier is someone who invites, and to whom the recipient extends, trust. In some cases, for example where the social context is not appropriate to trust, the audience might refuse to trust and therefore treat the testimony as evidence in an attempt to infer its reliability; but in favourable contexts the audience has a reason to believe a speaker whom he conscientiously trusts to be epistemically conscientious and sincere. Trust in the testifier's sincerity is as important as trust in her conscientiousness. The two are distinguishable, for we could quite easily consider someone to be epistemically conscientious, trust them to hold accurate beliefs, but doubt their sincerity as testifiers.

As in other trust-based accounts of testimony, in Zagzebski's account the expectations the speaker has of the hearer are relevant: she expects him to trust her for the truth. If this is refused, the testifier is entitled to feel aggrieved or resentful towards the hearer. For example, if she knows that the hearer generally believes her to be trustworthy, she is entitled to feel resentful that on this occasion, when in her judgement the context is appropriate for trust, the hearer withholds trust. The fact that we *do* sometimes feel resentment in such circumstances, suggests that we expect the default response of audiences to whom we conscientiously testify to be trusting belief. The exchange of information is not the only purpose served by these trusting relationships between testifiers and audiences, for clearly they are social bonds and importantly constitutive not only of epistemic communities but also of communities more generally.

So what is it that makes the audience's belief a justified or reasonable belief? He is not treating the testimony as evidence of the truth of the proposition expressed, not inferring its accuracy or reliability, but, rather, basing his trust on an irreducibly first-person, deliberative reason, one that can be a reason for him alone – that is, his judgement concerning the trustworthiness of the testifier as both a believer and a testifer. In trusting the testifier for the truth, the audience is making the judgement that he is more likely to get a true belief, or a belief that will withstand his conscientious self-reflection, if he believes what she says, than if he relies only on his own cognitive resources.

Informative utterances come in many forms. They are not always testimonial in Zagzebski's rather narrow sense, nor are they always intended to be sincere or literal. They may be, for example, ironic, although in my view this need not preclude their being testimonial. The hearer has to make a judgement about the speaker's reasons for saying what she says, about her communicative intentions. It is for this reason that the boundary between comprehension and belief is blurred. Judgements based on trust enter at the comprehension stage, before the question of reasons for belief arises, for the hearer has to trust his own judgement concerning the speaker's trustworthiness in communicating what she intends to communicate, and to trust his judgement concerning the nature of the speech act.

With regard to the debate concerning the relative weight of internalist and externalist justification or warrant, we are able to conclude, according to Zagzebski, that third-person warrant for the authority of testimony follows from the first-person judgement. The *fact* (rather than my conscientious judgement) that I am more likely to get a belief that will survive my conscientious self-reflection, or satisfy my desire to get true beliefs, if I believe what the authority tells me rather

189

than if I try to figure out by myself what to believe, means that I can justify to others, and they can justify to me, that I should accept a belief on authority with only third person reasons. So, for Zagzebski, as for Faulkner, objective warrant and subjective justification are achieved by the same set of considerations viewed from different perspectives.

It is the risk of deceit and manipulation that makes the acquisition of beliefs via testimony the object of scepticism, but instead of setting the justificatory and/or evidential bar impossibly high, we can try to understand better the nature of trustworthy authority. This is an important task not only for epistemology but also for political philosophy, for there are implications for social cooperation and social justice, and for philosophy of education. Zagzebski comments:

> Epistemic authority is important in teaching and training, as well as in enterprises that involve cooperative effort. The person in authority and the persons who are subject to the authority count on each other to do their part in a communal undertaking that includes authoritative testimony as a necessary component. The strength of the authority and its depth in the lives of the subjects vary enormously from one community to another because of the nature of the goals that hold the community together and the degree of trust between the members. I think these differences can affect the way authority is justified in a community. (Zagzebski, 2012, p.144)

The educational and social justice implications of our trust in testimony are socially and pedagogically significant, but they are also controversial, especially if we accept the full implications of Zagzebski's arguments concerning the authority of the traditional beliefs (including religious beliefs) of one's community.

§5.6 Reflective Judgement and Self-Trust

In this section I return to the idea of "conscientious self-reflection". It carries a good deal of the burden of Zagzebski's argument and it is closely related to the idea of epistemic vigilance that has cropped up in at various points. But Zagzebski does not develop it in detail. She claims that first person judgments that are rational, reasonable, justified or virtuous have been constrained by a cognitive capacity for self-reflection that scanned them for coherence and consistency. But coherency and consistency with *what* exactly? With each other, perhaps? What are the relevant constituents of our subjective lives?

Keith Lehrer does analyze in detail what is involved in trusting the reflective evaluation of one's beliefs and, importantly, desires. His coherentism resonates with Zagzebski's notion of harmony and dissonance - that is, the psychic states associated with a sense that one's "acceptances and preferences" either are or are not fully coherent and self-supporting. The following exposition of Lehrer's explanation of reasonable self-trust may seem a diversion from our focus on testimony and education, but it is important for my argument. The rationality or reasonableness of an acceptance of a belief on the basis of our trust in a speaker's authority depends on the reasonableness of one's trust in the trustworthiness of one's own judgements. If I find myself trustworthy in my evaluations then I must find myself trustworthy in my evaluation of the trustworthiness of others for me, and if these others are trustworthy for me, then I am trustworthy and reasonable in accepting or preferring what they accept or prefer.

Lehrer likens reflective judgement to *acceptance* of a belief one holds. But if one holds a belief, surely it has already been accepted? For Lehrer the distinction

between belief and acceptance is a function of our capacity for what he calls "metamental ascent". We can continue to hold a belief even after we find that it has no basis, but if we do we have not *accepted* it. To accept a belief is to believe it on the basis of indications that it is true. Acceptance is a second-order psychic state. What Lehrer calls "belief" is our characteristic attitude towards information from our senses and from other people: typically, we receive the information and believe it. It is then available for evaluation.

Acceptance is paralleled in the conative domain by *preference*. When we reflect on a desire, and evaluate it positively, it becomes a preference. Acceptance and preference go beyond mere belief and desire because they are concerned with what is *worth* accepting and *worth* preferring. These judgements, intellectual and practical, need not be the result of deliberation or ratiocination, but it is when they *are* that they are most worthy of our trust. When we justify a belief, what we are justifying, ultimately, is the trust we place in our own capacity for second-order deliberative judgements.

What makes these second-order judgements (acceptances and preferences) reasonable? First-person appeals seem doomed to circularity, for they are bound to justify acceptances and preferences by reference to acceptances and preferences concerning starting points. For Lehrer, as for Zagzebski and for Richard Foley (2001), self-trust is the starting point. This is the only alternative to scepticism. Lehrer agrees with Thomas Reid that Humean reductionism leads to scepticism because inductive inferences are ultimately ungrounded. Scepticism can be avoided, however, for if we are worthy of our trust concerning our acceptances and preferences then we can find arguments for their reasonableness. Self-trust exorcises scepticism if our deliberations tell us that sceptical doubts are less worthy

of our trust than such simple beliefs as that I exist or that I am holding up my hand. Such beliefs are *exemplary* rather than foundational: they show us a path of reasonable belief. If I am worthy of my trust in my acceptance of such propositions, and my aim is to accept what is true, then I am surely reasonable to trust my acceptance and therefore reasonable to accept the proposition.

But how can I justify the claim that I am worthy of my trust in my acceptances? Any argument advanced in support of that premise would rely on my trustworthiness concerning its own premises, and thus lead to a regress. To avoid this, Lehrer applies the original argument to the trustworthiness premise (1997, pp. 9-11). The "keystone" claim, that I am worthy of my trust in what I accept, applies to the acceptance of this claim itself. What makes it a keystone rather than a foundation stone, Lehrer says, is that other things I accept support and confirm it. Just as a keystone supports other stones, and yet is held in place by them, so the premise that I am worthy of my trust in what I accept both supports other claims and is supported by them. This in itself might not be sufficient to justify a high stakes knowledge claim, but, Lehrer insists, having taken this modest step towards reason we can proceed further, in the first place to towards claims concerning my *preferences*. These depend on the acceptance argument because of the need to accept the truth of the premise that I am worthy of my trust concerning what I prefer.

My acceptance that I am worthy of my trust is backed by all my efforts concerning my acceptances and preferences. I am concerned in evaluating my desires and beliefs to ensure that I am worthy of my self-trust: to be so is one of my strongest preferences. Thus my trustworthiness depends on a *loop*, whereby the reasonableness of my preferences depends on the reasonableness of my

acceptances (specifically, the truth of the premise that I am worthy of my trust concerning what I prefer), and the reasonableness of my acceptances concerning my worthiness depends on my having a preference for being worthy of my trust concerning what I accept and what I prefer. In Lehrer's words: "My preference and acceptance concerning my trustworthiness in what I accept and prefer form a loop which is the keystone supporting the structure of reasonable acceptance and preference within my evaluation system" (Lehrer, 1997, p. 15).

Lehrer confronts the objection that though I may in general be worthy of my trust in my preferences and acceptances, sometimes I am not: sometimes I am too ignorant or unfamiliar with the domain to do anything other than abstain from forming any acceptances or preferences. So how do I know when I know enough to evaluate in a trustworthy way, and how, when I know I am often tempted to form beliefs and preferences about things I know little about, can I have enough confidence in my practices of self-restraint? I may have made misjudgements concerning the domains in which I am worthy of my trust concerning what I accept. If I cannot be sure about this, *all* my worthiness is undermined.

Lehrer responds to this by arguing that I remain my own best guide, despite my errors in particular cases, so long as I remain trustworthy in how I reason and reflect. Reasoning is to acceptance and preference as inference is to belief and desire: it is a higher order capacity deployed in evaluation. It is part of the loop - in fact, it is the knot that ties the loop:

> It is the knot that solves the general problem of induction...Induction is reasonable if I am worthy of my trust in how I reason. The problem of the choice of rules and principles remains, but unless I am worthy of my trust in how I reason, my efforts to defend reasoning will fail. (*Ibid.,* p. 20)

I must be worthy of my trust in how I reason in order to sustain the reasoning that led me to the conclusion that I am worthy of my trust in what I accept and prefer. The argument for the reasonableness of my trust in my reasoning parallels those for the reasonableness of my trust in my acceptances and preferences. With that in place, we close the keystone loop whereby each component - acceptance, preference and reasoning - support each other.

Lehrer's argument is not intended to be a *proof*. If it were, it would be guilty of assuming what it sets out to prove, the reasonableness of accepting that we are trustworthy. Rather, it is intended as an explanation. The reality of our trustworthiness explains the reasonableness of accepting that we are trustworthy. Explanations that end with a loop leave nothing unexplained; the alternative is an explanation that is simply a dead end.

Lehrer's explanation of our evaluative system, incorporating desires and emotions as well as beliefs, provides us with a reason for trusting our own judgments as recipients of testimony. Unless my evaluative system works well, I cannot be worthy of self-trust. The trustworthiness of our self-reflective acceptance of what we believe on the basis of being told it by another person provides a basis for justification and knowledge.

Lehrer's is a coherence theory, a theory without first premises. Personally justified acceptance is acceptance that coheres with an evaluation system that includes preferences, and personally justified preference is preference that coheres with an evaluation system that includes acceptances. My evaluation system must take account of my states of preference and acceptance and not just of the content of the acceptances and preferences. Coherence yields reasonable acceptance, not knowledge. Knowledge requires external constraints, such as truth, that coherence

and personal justification do not require. What coheres within my personal evaluation system is the whole range of justified acceptances, from moral beliefs to perceptual beliefs, but still the truth of the beliefs is required for them to count as knowledge. On the other hand, no further justification is required beyond personal justification.

Lehrer's notion of comparative reasonableness necessarily remains vague. He can provide only a relativistic explanation in terms of one's preferences concerning the relative importance of, for example, truth and explanatory power. He prioritizes truth as his personal fundamental objective of acceptance but implies that other priorities could also be reasonable. Once again, preferences and acceptances are mutually supporting, for one's preferences concerning intellectual objectives will influence one's preferences concerning competing propositions. One's worthiness of self-trust concerning preferences is an essential component of the system, as is the worthiness of self-trust concerning one's *acceptance* of preferences. Whether one is worthy of self-trust depends ultimately on one's success in achieving one's intellectual objectives, such as truth.

Lehrer's keystone loop not only makes self-trust and all that follows from it reasonable, it also makes it justified, for there is no alternative to it. If I judge myself to be untrustworthy in my acceptances and preferences, then I have to judge myself to be trustworthy in respect of *that* judgement at least, a judgement which itself will depend on the whole mutually supporting structure of my evaluation system. The distinction between reasonable acceptance and justified acceptance is that although an acceptance might be reasonable it is not necessarily immune from objections, from competitors. Such an acceptance cannot have the justification that is necessary for knowledge, even if it is true. To revert to Zagzebski's

characterization, conscientious self-reflection on reasonable but unjustified belief would lead the subject to be aware of its status and so more cautious in the way she expressed her belief. She could not, for example, express the contested belief as testimony, for to offer testimony is to take responsibility for its status as a justified true belief. She could express the belief more responsibly as a hypothesis, opinion or speculation.

For Lehrer, it is undefeated justified acceptance that amounts to knowledge and undefeated justified preference that amounts to wisdom. The transformation is effected by the defeat of sceptical doubts. Such doubts must themselves by subject to the subject's evaluation system if they are to be considered reasonable, and the subject must defeat them in order for her original acceptance or preference to be personally justified. If the doubt wins, the error defeats the justification. My acceptances include one concerning the merit of being trustworthy in what I accept as true and so I prefer to be trustworthy in what I accept. Justified preference rests on acceptance of my trustworthiness in what I prefer and justified acceptance rests on my preference for being trustworthy. Thus the keystone loop ties knowledge and wisdom together (Lehrer, 1997, pp. 43-50).

To be worthy of my trust in my preferences, acceptances and reasoning, I must also be worthy of trust in my way of *changing* them when it is appropriate to do so, in order for it to be reasonable for me to accept corrections I make to my method of reasoning. I must find both my ends and my methods of pursuing them worthy of trust; however, we are all fallible and vulnerable to deception and error. Reasonableness and trustworthiness can come apart. A false assumption of trustworthiness blocks justification, and therefore knowledge and wisdom.

Knowledge requires that the things I think are worth accepting really are worth accepting, but there is no natural feature that necessitates that I am trustworthy in what I accept, and there is no natural feature in what I accept that makes it worthy of acceptance. All the relevant features are epistemic features. Any naturalistically backed success in acquiring true beliefs could be accidental or lucky, and therefore would not be worthy of acceptance. Lehrer observes: "Nature tells us what will be, but about what is worthy of being, she is silent as a stone" (*ibid*., p. 73).

Autonomous choice is at the centre of Lehrer's keystone loop (p. 103). Taking us from beliefs and desires to acceptances and preferences, metamental ascent enables us to re-spin our web of evaluation, to resolve conflicts among our beliefs and desires by a process of higher order evaluation. It aims at coherence, or in Zagzebski's terms, harmony. When conflict arises between higher order strategies, it is autonomous choice that resolves them. It frees us from our first order conflicts, by choosing between the options that higher order evaluation has made available to us. Unless I am the author of my acceptances and preferences I cannot be worthy of my trust. If I am not autonomous how can I begin the sequence of self-trust, and if I do not trust myself how can I be worthy of my trust? Autonomous acts and beliefs are those we prefer and accept as a result of a process of higher order evaluation, and we escape thereby from bondage to first order promptings.

So, the rationality or reasonableness of an acceptance of a belief on the basis of our trust in a speaker's authority depends on the reasonableness of one's trust in the trustworthiness of one's own judgements. If I find myself trustworthy in my evaluations then I must find myself trustworthy in my evaluation of the

trustworthiness of others for me, and if these others are trustworthy for me, then I am trustworthy in accepting or preferring what they accept or prefer. This has ramifications throughout my evaluative system. My positive evaluation of the trustworthiness of others can lead to a change in what I accept and prefer and can make me more trustworthy, both for myself and for others. If others evaluate my trustworthiness positively and change their acceptances and preferences as a result, this can produce a change in their trustworthiness for themselves and for me. I will weight the trustworthiness of myself and others differently for different subjects and domains and this will help me to resolve conflicts when trusted persons, including myself, disagree. My preferences become more worthy of my trust as the result of my aggregating the preferences of others in terms of my evaluation of their trustworthiness. If I am a member of a group of people who have all increased their trustworthiness as I have, conflicts of acceptances and preferences are likely to decrease and knowledge and wisdom will become increasingly likely. We will be constantly updating our mutual evaluations of each other's trustworthiness and therefore of our acceptances and preferences. In effect, a group averaging will produce a consensual measure of the trustworthiness of each member. If all members of the group are connected by positive respect and trust, given a reasonable degree of constancy in our evaluations, our aggregations will converge on consensus concerning preferences and acceptances.

When educationalists have talked or written about the importance of autonomy, self-reflection, intellectual virtues and critical thinking, they have seldom tracked back to the source of the kind of independence they think students should aspire to. That source is the students' judgements about their own conscientiousness and integrity in maintaining and refreshing a coherent set of

beliefs and desires, preferences and acceptances, including their judgments concerning the epistemic authority of others and their decisions to trust them for the truth rather than to rely on their own resources. In this context, the traditionalist/progressivist binary has little epistemological traction.

§ 5.7 Beliefs on Authority

In his *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* (1785/1983) Thomas Reid argued that a balance has to be struck between accepting beliefs on authority and rejecting authority for the sake of autonomy. He wrote:

> Here, perhaps, it will be said, What has authority to do in matters of opinion? Is truth to be determined by most votes? Or is authority to be again raised out of its grave to tyrannise over mankind? I am aware that, in this age, an advocate for authority has a very unfavourable plea; but I wish to give no more to authority than is its due. Most justly do we honour the names of those benefactors to mankind who have contributed more or less to break the yoke of that authority which deprives men of the natural, the unalienable right of judging for themselves; but, while we indulge a just animosity against this authority, and against all who would subject us to its tyranny, let us remember how common the folly is, of going from one faulty extreme into the opposite. (1983, p. 262)

Lehrer and Zagzebski do not want to deprive us of the right of judging for ourselves. Indeed, their argument is that judging for ourselves is unavoidable, even though the judgement might be to accept the authority of a person who is better placed for knowledge than we are.

Lehrer's coherentist account of reasonable and justified belief through trust in one's own capacity for conscientious self-reflection, and consequent trust in the

beliefs of others whom one conscientiously trusts, complements Zagzebski's argument that the conscientiously self-reflective person is committed to belief on authority. Not to accept beliefs on the authority of people we trust causes "dissonance" and incoherence. It would be inconsistent with our own self-trust. If what we want is true beliefs and we trust our faculties to judge well when others are in a better position to know than we are, it would be irresponsible and unreasonable not to accept their authority on the matter at hand. If what they say conflicts with beliefs we already hold we have to resolve the conflict. For Lehrer, in situations where alternatives are evenly balanced, this resolution comes down to an exercise of autonomous preference. For Zagzebski, an individual should accept the word of the authority if he conscientiously judges that he is more likely to form a belief that survives his conscientious self-reflection if he believes what she believes (or testifies to) than if he tries to figure it out for himself. In the case of testimony, there is the additional issue of the possibility of the speaker's inaccuracy or insincerity. But, again, trust in one's own capacities and motivations as a testifier, and the recognition that other people are relevantly similar to oneself, makes reasonable and responsible one's trust in others as testifiers.

There are several points at which we might wish to take issue with Lehrer or Zagzebski. For example, the conclusion Zagzebski draws concerning the acceptance of beliefs on the basis of the authority of one's community, including moral and religious beliefs expressed in holy scriptures (to which Reid alludes), is clearly controversial. For Zagzebski and Lehrer, autonomy is exercised in making judgements about what and whom it is best to trust for the truth, for the sake of maintaining doxastic harmony or epistemic coherence. But does this provide sufficient *motivation* to understand for ourselves, to educate ourselves in order to

achieve the expertise or authority that the trusted other already has? Is not doxastic harmony most easily achieved by the doxastically complacent? To meet this challenge we need to be sure that such complacency would be inconsistent with genuine conscientiousness and integrity in keeping one's intellectual house in order. The challenge highlights the importance of dialogue with others, dialogue that provides the epistemic tension or resistance that provokes us to undertake conscientious self-reflection. To use a term from architecture and structural engineering, dialogue with others creates the necessary *tensegrity.*[20]

In the next chapter I explore some of the questions about dialogue and the pragmatics of speech that have arisen in the context of the theories discussed in the last two chapters. These may seem like questions for linguistics and the philosophy of language rather than for epistemology, but the speech acts that constitute testimony are located within discourses or speech genres of various kinds, and are partly constituted by their contexts. The linguistic and the epistemological are intertwined and there are important implications in this for education.

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[20] This is a "portmanteau" term, combining "tension" and "integrity", and is applied to self-sustaining structures.

Chapter 6: Varieties of Testimony: Pragmatics and Dialogism

In this chapter I argue that theories of testimony have tended to conflate different speech acts and have therefore failed to do justice to the richness of the process by which we share knowledge. This conflation applies to the trust theories as well as to the reductionist, non-reductionist and hybrid theories. I will concentrate on the distinction between assertions and assurances, but these are not the only relevant speech acts. A confession, for example, is also a specific testimonial speech act: its purposes and ramifications are distinctive. We have not comprehended a confession if we have not recognized its pragmatic implicatures.

This chapter takes us, firstly, into the realms of pragmatics, the branch of linguistics that is especially concerned with contexts of utterance. Pragmatics is relevant to the epistemology of testimony, and to questions of trust and authority more generally, in two ways. The first connects with the work of J. L. Austin (and later John Searle) on speech acts. The second concerns the work of Paul Grice and others on the distinction between *implicatures* and *explicatures* – that is, the distinction between what is encoded in the semantics of the sentence and what is communicated contextually in the saying. In later sections of the chapter I connect speech acts with Bakhtin's notion of speech genres in order to extend the discussion of testimonial utterances to more extended classroom dialogues or conversations.

Speech act theory helps us to identify different kinds of telling and to recognize that all successful communication entails the hearer responding appropriately to the specific speech act. It helps us to appreciate how closely linked comprehension and epistemic response are: considerations that are generally

viewed as epistemic, such as the hearer's assessment of the sincerity or trustworthiness of the speaker, enter first at the point of comprehension. Another way in which they interconnect is in the roles played in both by background knowledge, contextual features and inferences. For example, in both cases judgements concerning the speaker's intentions are relevant.

If I am correct in arguing that a variety of speech acts populate the epistemological category of testimony, and if the epistemic considerations concerning the normative commitments undertaken by the participants vary accordingly, it would seem that a search for a unitary account of the justification of testimonial belief is misguided. This is an important point in relation to the pedagogical and curricular implications that I discuss in the next chapter.

Austin, like Wittgenstein, thought that philosophers had exaggerated the propositional, or descriptive, aspects of statements and neglected the *uses* to which they are put in ordinary speech.[21] Since Austin's death, in 1961, other philosophers have developed this focus on the pragmatics of speech utterances and the social or interpersonal aspects of communication. I have already mentioned Searle and Grice; another is Robert Brandom, who sees the speech act of assertion as the one against which other illocutionary acts must be understood. However, in relation to testimony, I will be arguing for a distinction between the speech acts of assertion and assurance, and urging the special significance of the speech act of assurance. What makes these *testimonial* speech acts is that in transmitting information from speaker to audience they both invite trust, although the nature of the trust and the

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[21] A related point can be made concerning accounts of children's language learning, their "learning to mean". Michael Halliday emphasizes the semiotic functions of the earliest protolinguistic expressions and sees use, and subsequently more complex and abstract functions, as critical in the transition to adult language (Halliday, 2003).

implicated commitments in is different each type of speech act.

§6.1 Speech Acts

Having argued in the first part of *How To Do Things With Words* (1962) for a sharp

distinction between *constative* (declarative) utterances, that can be true or false, and

performative utterances, such as promising, Austin came to realize that the

distinction is imprecise. A promise can be infelicitous if, for example, the speaker

is insincere, but it cannot be true or false. A declarative utterance, on the other

hand, is either true or false; but Austin came to see that it too can be infelicitous if

the speaker is insincere. Furthermore, declaratives can be used in practice to

suggest promises and orders: for example, "I will do the washing up later". This

introduces Austin's distinction between a) the *locutionary* act, the speaking of the

sentence, b) the *illocutionary* act, which is an act with a certain *force* or purpose,

such as asserting, promising or ordering, and c) the *perlocutionary* consequence of

the illocutionary act, its effect on the audience.

Asserting a proposition is certainly a way of making a knowledge claim. If a

speaker asserts "David Cameron attended a dinner last night at Eton College" she is

making a claim that is truth-assessable (although, as we shall see later, the context

or situation of utterance has to be taken into account in order to make judgements

of truth and falsity). Austin came to see that *all* speech acts convey commitments

and expectations. In an assertion the speaker implies (or *implicates*, to use Grice's

terminology) that she not only knows this proposition to be true but also intends

her audience to expect it to be true.

This basic idea can be elaborated in a number of different ways. For example, for Searle (1969) an assertion is characterized by the fact that the speaker undertakes that the proposition expressed represents an actual state of affairs. For Grice (1989), the hearer's r*ecognition* of the speaker's attitudes and intentions is also necessary. In asserting *that p* the speaker intends the hearer to take her utterance both as a reason to believe that *she* believes *that p* and as a reason to believe it himself. The hearer's belief (or non-belief) *that p* is the perlocutionary effect of the speech act, but it is not constitutive of it, whereas his recognition of the speaker's attitudes and intentions *is* constitutive of the speech act. Sperber and Wilson (1986) emphasize the *informative* function of assertion. Although assertions can fail to be informative, the audience's recognition of the informative intention is important. Alston (2000) states that the speaker takes responsibility only for the proposition made explicit by the utterance; other propositions may be implicit in the utterance but the speaker is not responsible for them.

Robert Brandom (2000) argues that a speaker who asserts *that p* undertakes a responsibility to justify the assertion if challenged. The speaker assumes an authority, the right to pass on to the hearer the entitlements of the assertion. She could justify the assertion by reference to a perceptual experience, by offering further assertions as reasons, or by deferring to a previous asserter who passed his commitments on to her. Assertions therefore can both *require* reasons and *be* reasons in support of other assertions. When we offer a second assertion as a reason that supports our first assertion we endorse the inferential relation between the two, and a hearer who accepts the reasons endorses both the inference and our entitlement. The propositional content of the assertion is best characterized as the relation of compatibility between commitments, rather than in terms of truth

conditions. Judgements of truth are themselves best assessed in terms of inferential commitments and entitlements. Unlike other philosophers I have mentioned, such as Sperber and Wilson, Brandom does not employ psychological attitudes, such as intentions and beliefs, in his account of assertion. Rather, assertion is described as taking place "in the context of a set of social practices with the structure of (in Sellars's phrase) *a game of giving and asking for reasons*" (Brandom, 2000, p. 189).

The important point for us at this point is that these philosophers have sought to describe assertion in terms of the commitments undertaken by speakers and assumed or passed on to hearers. For assurance to be a speech act distinct from assertion it will have to be distinguished by a different set of commitments and expectations. These differences will be discussed in §6.4.

§6.2 Saying Something

What is it to say something? This is an important question in the context of a discussion of testimony because it subsumes the question: What is it to *tell* someone something? Paul Grice makes a distinction between what the speaker literally says in the utterance and what she intends to communicate by using just those words in that situation. In distinguishing between *explicatures* and *implicatures*, he draws attention to the contextual features of the communication and to certain conversational conventions or principles. We are ignoring the contextual implicatures of the utterance - that is, what the speaker implicates but does not explicitly state - if we assume that what a speaker says is determined by just the conventional or encoded meaning of the grammatical sentence, plus such

contextual features as help to fix reference and to disambiguate. The fact that the same form of words, the same grammatical sentence, can convey different meanings in different circumstances demonstrates the significance of implicatures.[22]

Grice's implicatures are governed by his famous conversational maxims:

1. *Quantity*: make your contribution as informative as is required for the current purposes of the exchange; do not make them more informative than is required.

2. *Quality*: try to make your contribution one that is true; do not say what you believe to be false, not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

3. *Relation*: be relevant.

4. *Manner*: Be perspicacious; avoid obscurity and ambiguity, be brief and orderly; frame what you say in the form most suitable for an appropriate reply.

In *Studies in the Way of Words* (1989) Grice argues that these maxims are derived from principles governing rational cooperative behaviour. They are intended to help us to define and interpret conversational implicatures, therefore they play a part in determining the audience's interpretation of the speaker's

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[22] I do not engage directly with the debate concerning the relative importance of semantic or "encoded" features, on the one hand, and pragmatic or contextual features, on the other. Integrationists, such as Roy Harris and Michael Toolan, who argue that all meaning is pragmatic, outflank semantic minimalists, such as Robyn Carston. However, I acknowledge that my argument draws heavily on the contribution of pragmatic elements.

meaning, of what she intends to communicate above and beyond the literal or encoded meaning of the sentences she has spoken.

Reference has been made in previous chapters to the trustworthiness and sincerity of the speaker, but to what does "sincerity" refer? If it is to what the speaker has *said,* rather than to her beliefs, then getting clearer about what it is to say something will help us to be clearer about what we mean when we describe a speaker as sincere or insincere. For example, can we talk about what is said, and about sincerity, without considering the speaker's intentions?

Jennifer Mather Saul (2012) discusses Bill Clinton's famous denial (in a television interview) of an "improper relationship" with Jennifer Lewinski. Clinton's exact words were: "There is no improper relationship". What has he said? What has he *told* the audience? To anticipate a later argument, there is nothing passive about an alert audience's interpretation of such an assurance. If "meaning" is "what is said", and if this is simply a matter of what is encoded in the words and syntax, then Clinton has not told a lie, nor even *said* anything misleading. It was probably true when he uttered the words (in the present tense) that there was no improper relationship. But surely he *has* intended either (or both) to mislead by allowing the audience to think he is denying that there ever had been an improper relationship or to implicate that, as a trained lawyer and a wily politician, he is not going to be trapped into either an outright lie or a confession. So what *has* he told us? We have to interpret. We have to process his remark with the help of our accumulated knowledge and experience of communication and people. This is not a passive process, if we are paying attention. To "pay attention" we have to deploy our understanding of conversational conventions of the kind discussed by Grice.

Grice says of assertion that the speaker's intention is that the hearer should think that she, the speaker, believes something. The speaker wants the hearer to know that she believes and is committed to the proposition expressed. Writers such as Sperber and Wilson (1986/1995) and Robyn Carston (2002) argue that Grice's account does not completely capture the nature of assertion because it does not take into account how underdetermined by the syntax the proposition itself is. The proposition is not simply encoded in the grammatical sentence. It can be recovered only from an interpretation of the utterance by the hearer, who needs to take further contextual features and shared background assumptions into account. This suggests that assertions are more fundamental than beliefs and they are essentially interpersonal. Similarly to Brandom, Dummett (1991, 1993) argues that the notion of belief relies on the notion of truth, which itself relies on the practice of "treating as true", and this includes demonstrating a grasp of the practical and inferential consequences of maintaining the proposition, a practice exemplified by assertion: assertion is the practice by which we show that we grasp and accept many of the practical and inferential consequences of a belief.

Whether assertion is cognitively more fundamental than belief is a different question from whether it is conceptually more fundamental. According to Mark Jary (2010, p. 36), "There is no conflict between the view that the notion of assertion is conceptually prior to the notion of belief, and the view that assertoric utterances derive their content from the beliefs they express". He goes on to suggest, nevertheless, that in practice we come to understand the notions of truth and falsity that underlie a conception of belief, by acquiring a competence in assertion. This suggests that linguistic competence contributes to a grasp of epistemic concepts. This competence would have to relate to both sides of

communication, the speaker's and the hearer's sides, and this has clear implications

for the range of experiences that children need to have in order to grasp the

epistemic concepts and to assume epistemic responsibilities. In the next chapter I

argue that children need experience of speaking as knowers and as testifiers, of

being trusted as epistemic authorities, and that this goes beyond having a right to "a

voice".

The issue of the priority of assertion and belief reflects the division between

conceptual explanations that look for conditions, norms or criteria, and empirical or

psychological explanations that seek to explain specifically human, or cultural,

practices, as with Sperber and Wilson's Relevance Theory. It is a distinction that is

relevant to testimony, and to all aspects of social epistemology, for to explain the

conceptual or normative conditions for particular social practices is different from

analyzing them as they occur in particular cultures.

Where do trust theories of testimony fit into this? I think they are best seen as

describing cultural practices with specific epistemic and linguistic norms, and as

supporting a belief-based or intention-based approach. Zagzebski's and Lehrer's

versions of coherentism do suggest a culturally-specific set of practices concerning

testimony, trust and authority. This is not to preclude the possibility that practices

based on trust are prerequisites of society and communication, nor to deny that the

rewards and hazards of trust help to define the general human condition.

§6.3 Interpreting Speech Acts

The implication of Gricean accounts is that assertion is a source of information

about the speaker's beliefs and intentions rather than a source of information about

the world. This is close, therefore, to those accounts of testimony that a) associate testimony with assertion and b) argue that we infer facts about the world indirectly by inferring facts about the reliability or trustworthiness of the speaker's belief. For Grice assertion is invited belief attribution. This suggests that once we have acquired the information that S believes *that p*, we have a separate process to go through in order to acquire the knowledge *that p*. One alternative to this is the non-reductionist view that comprehension is an *a priori* reason for acceptance; another is Sperber and Wilson's theory, in which belief attribution is replaced by the attribution of the overt intention on the speaker's part to let the hearer know the information. But Sperber and Wilson's account has a problem reconciling a conventional understanding of assertion with the idea that the transfer of information about the world is secondary to information about the speaker's state of mind. Comprehending and epistemic response seem to be more closely connected in the case of some speech acts than is the case with assertion. In comprehending a promise, for example, one understands and forms a belief that S is promising *p*, but with assertion the receiver seems to be responsible for the further step of accepting the *content* for himself.

Let us look again at the question of the demands on young children's cognitive capacities. For McDowell the ability of assertions to represent reality must come before their ability to express beliefs, both conceptually and in terms of the child's cognitive development (McDowell, 1980/1998, p. 48. See also Jary, 2010, p. 43). In order for children to interpret utterances with assertoric force *as expressing the speaker's beliefs*, they need to be capable of making judgements about plausibility, reliability, sincerity and trustworthiness, and capable of sometimes withholding judgement. They need to be able to recognize their

teacher's intention to persuade or to speculate rather than to inform, and to recognize the invitation to connect the new information with previous information. All this is very demanding. However, given the wide range of utterances with assertoric force that a child encounters in the course of a school day, the degree of linguistic sensitivity required is already hugely demanding. The need to interpret utterances cannot be avoided, even if the requirement to evaluate beliefs can be. This means that children who have not yet acquired skill and sensitivity in interpreting utterances - inevitably complicated by a range of contextual features - are especially vulnerable to error, even when they inhabit relatively safe epistemic environments such as school classrooms.

So either way there seem to be considerable cognitive demands on children, whether we favour a Gricean belief-attribution account, a Sperber and Wilson intention-attribution account or (given that utterances need interpretation) McDowellian directness. Mark Jary proposes a hybrid approach whereby although complex intentions are made manifest in acts of assertion, a representation of the intentions does not *necessarily* play a part in interpretation: children do not necessarily have to *recognize* the communicative intention, but for adults and older children they can play a part when something goes wrong in the basic interpretive process:

> [N]ovice competence in assertion, of the sort developed by young children, is indeed a form of perception by proxy in which comprehension and acceptance coincide. The onset of the ability to attribute beliefs allows the child to conceptualize assertions as expressions of belief, and as attempts to cause beliefs. This is the ability to attribute Gricean-style intentions to communicators. However, this new insight does not result in the wholesale rejection of the interpretive procedures that have served the child well up to that point. Rather, these are augmented by the child's

213

new capacities, and these are brought to bear on the interpretive process only when needed, such as when the speaker is judged to be incompetent, unreliable or untrustworthy, or when, for example, the nature of the interaction makes it obvious that the speaker is not intending to inform, but to persuade, as in academic discourse. (Jary, 2010, p. 45)

So, for the most part, children and adults can accept the information in the process of comprehending the utterance. It is only when something other than straightforward information-giving is suggested by the nature of the interaction that we need to employ, if we can, the belief-evaluating capacities that we have acquired through experience and cognitive development. This involves us in adopting a "meta-communicative" stance.

Jary's account, like Quinton's and Goldberg's that we met in Chapter 3, underestimates the cognitive and linguistic achievement involved in interpreting the utterance in the first place, which must rely to some extent on the ability to distinguish between *different kinds* of information-giving speech act. Any account of epistemic justification in relation to testimony has to have something more to say than this about naïve and straightforward cases, where no suspicions have been aroused. The assumption in Jary's account (and also in Sperber and Wilson's) is that only assertion aims at the transfer of knowledge from speaker to audience. Can it really be the case that it is only when viewed from a meta-communicative stance that knowledge transfer is taken as belief-expression, and therefore only then that questions of epistemic justification and truth arise? If so, the "meta-communicative stance" is one that we adopt regularly rather than exceptionally, for we would be adopting it whenever we assess testimony for credibility and consistency, and testifiers for expertise, reliability, sincerity or trustworthiness. It is more likely that a greater degree of (interconnected) linguistic and epistemic sophistication is

required for successful communication *from the start* and that this includes the ability to recognize, and respond differentially to, a variety of information-giving speech acts. Linguistic and epistemic judgement develops in tandem.

Jary's separation of comprehension and acceptance is too extreme. Credibility, consistency, reliability, sincerity and trustworthiness must feature in responsible comprehension or interpretation. How can we detect when something has gone wrong unless we are already filtering utterances in some way for epistemic danger signs? Epistemologists insist on this in relation to testimony, as we have seen, but all communicative utterances, not just direct assertions, demand some kind of filtering, for most will have a degree of assertoric force, explicit or implicit propositions that are truth-apt. Jary underestimates, as we have seen others do, the cognitive and linguistic demands on listeners *of any age* who comprehend and learn from what others say to them.

To see this more clearly, consider the relationship between what is asserted in an utterance and the *main point* of the sentence spoken. We would normally expect the main point to be what is being asserted, and for this to be conveyed by the syntax, in the main clause:

a)   *On Monday Richard spent the whole day at Lords.*

But we can see that even in a fairly straightforward example such as this, the context could override the syntax and separate the point of the utterance from the syntactic main point. This would be the case, for example, if the speaker and the hearer are colleagues of Richard, or his bosses, and they know that on Monday Richard had phoned in sick, so the information that it was on Monday that Richard

spent the day watching a cricket match is not an additional piece of information but integral to the message. If we now add words and phrases such as "apparently" or "Rosemary suspects" we can see that, again, the actual point of the utterance needs further interpretation.

(b) Apparently, on Monday Richard spent the whole day at Lords.

(c) Rosemary suspects that Richard spent the whole day at Lords on Monday.

(d) *On Monday Richard spent the whole day, Rosemary suspects, at Lords.*

In all these examples the hearer is expected to recognize that the speaker is distancing himself, to a degree, from the (putative) main point and shifts what he accepts responsibility for – that is, the assertoric point that he could be challenged on. Also, in (d), the repositioning of the subordinate clause "Rosemary suspects" changes the main point, even though syntactically the main clause stays the same. Nevertheless, the point of the *utterance*, the reason why the speaker has chosen at this moment to tell the hearer this information, and what she expects him to recognize as the relevance of what she is saying to their conversation, could stay the same in (d) as in (a), (b), and (c), depending on contextual features such as who Rosemary is, her relationship to Richard, their shared background knowledge of Richard's requests for leave, his past record of reliability and honesty and any previous conversations they may have had about him.

What this shows is that the interpretation of even quite mundane statements makes considerable cognitive, linguistic and epistemic demands on the hearer, and these are interconnected in complex ways. For example, the hearer may have been sceptical about the evidence for (a) but not for (c) because of what he knows about Rosemary, Richard and the speaker, but in order for this epistemic difference to register with him he has to be sensitive to the linguistic differences. There is complexity, too, in the way the illocutionary point of the utterance, the implicature, coincides with the main point or assertion of the sentence, is subordinate to it, overrides it, or reconfigures it. The information conveyed by the implicature sometimes undermines the information contained in what is, grammatically, the main point or assertion. All these considerations further add to my claim about the complexity involved in interpreting what someone is (really) saying and therefore to the complexity in *accepting* some or all of the information directly stated and indirectly implicated.

For Sperber and Wilson the complexity involved in communication is lessened by the fact that we are programmed to minimize (or optimize) processing effort. Every utterance conveys a presumption of its own relevance. Interpretation involves inferring how the presumption is to be fulfilled – that is, interpretation (or comprehension) requires us to recognize what the point of the utterance is. Identifying its relevance, in context, allows us to maximize effect while minimizing cognitive effort. We select the optimal "assumption" (or proposition) from all the possible assumptions the context and the grammatical sentence allow. Some of the effects are grammatical entailments; others involve the triggering of background assumptions (information recovered from memory) and contextual inferences. Verbal utterances allow for phonology, intonation and rhythm, to make a difference

to the hearer's interpretation, shifting the point from what might otherwise seem like a syntactically straightforward main point and assertion.

A teacher will very often give young children information in utterances that are formed from straightforward, simple declarative sentences, which linguistically mark the main point and what is being asserted. We can think of this as the default mode of testifying, of telling. But even in these cases interpretation is complicated by context, differences in background knowledge and assumptions, linguistic sensitivity and experience, including the capacity to infer syntactic and semantic entailments. A neglected aspect of the hearer's linguistic (and therefore epistemic) sensitivity is his capacity to recognize different speech acts. I do not mean, of course, that he needs to be able to name the speech acts, only that he is tacitly aware of the different commitments and expectations implicated by them. The speech acts most relevant to testimony and the epistemic and pedagogical issues connected with it, are assertion and assurance.

§6.4 Assurance and Assertion Revisited

Is testimony a speech act in its own right or are there a number of speech acts that fall under that epistemological title? If the latter, and speakers and hearers are subject to different normative commitments and expectations when information is exchanged via different speech acts, in what ways will we have to adapt the approach to epistemic justification I outlined in the last chapter? Furthermore, with regard to classroom dialogue and learning, how significant are the differences between speech acts? In this section I examine assertion and assurance from the perspective of Austinian pragmatics, but this does not fully incorporate all the

features of speech that affect what is conveyed from speaker to hearer, so in the next section I outline how Bakhtin's broader dialogistic approach can contribute to an understanding of informative classroom discourses.

I have described some of the complexities involved in interpreting verbal exchanges in which the point of the utterance differs from the "main point" or propositional content. Part of the complexity concerns the interpretation of the speech act: the interpretation of the commitments and expectations implicated by the utterance. When a speaker prefaces her statement with a phrase such as "I hear that…", I believe that…" or "I expect that…" the propositional content of the main clause is generally said to stay the same, but the speaker is said to be indicating that she has a particular attitude towards it. In these examples she is *reducing* her commitment to the truth of the proposition, implicating that it is possibly or probably true and therefore that she is not taking full responsibility for its truth. The hearer has to recognize that the utterance is not a knowledge claim, or, if it is, the knowledge claimed does not relate to the proposition expressed in the main clause but to herself, the speaker, to what she has heard, what she believes or what she expects. A speaker implicates an *increased* commitment to the truth of the proposition, both by prefacing the main clause with a phrase such as "I know that…" or " I promise you that …" and, more demandingly from the hearer's point of view, by relying on pragmatic features of the utterance, including intonation. In other words, the same locutionary act can have different illocutionary force (and, it may be, different perlocutionary consequences). The hearer has to be sensitive to the nature of the speech act in order to interpret the utterance correctly, or at least reasonably, and this means that he has to recognize the commitments and expectations the speaker intends or that the illocutionary act implicates. If the

speaker's intentions do not match the implicatures of the speech act that the hearer has reasonably interpreted the utterance to convey, then she has spoken infelicitously in some way, and may be at fault epistemically as well as linguistically. She may, for example, have overestimated her audience's linguistic sophistication or cognitive development, or she may be assuming an epistemic authority to which she is not entitled.

When philosophical discussion of testimony abstracts the words spoken from the interpersonal contexts in which they are uttered, as if they were simply grammatical or logical sentences, it fails to capture the nature of the rationality involved in the hearer's responding to what the speaker has said. Any evaluation of whether a speaker has acted rationally, reasonably or responsibly in testifying and believing as she has must take into account not just the propositional content of the locutionary act but what has been implicated by the pragmatic features of the speaker's utterance, including the commitments and expectations made manifest to the hearer. Were these features not to be taken into account, the evaluation would relate to some abstract notion of what has been spoken rather than to what has been *said*. Equally, an evaluation of whether the hearer has responded reasonably in accepting (or not accepting) the information conveyed by the utterance has to take into account whether or not he has been sufficiently sensitive to the relevant pragmatic clues to the speaker's intentions, commitments and expectations, and especially to the normative commitments and expectations of the specific speech act. We cannot hold the hearer to be *epistemically* at fault if he is *linguistically* at fault, unless he is linguistically at fault due to some current or previous epistemic failing or intellectual carelessness.

Assurance is one of the speech acts with which a speaker's personal commitment to the knowledge claimed is emphasized and made manifest. Here are some examples:

a) *I know for sure that the Prime Minister personally authorized the attack.*

b) *The dinosaurs were definitely wiped out as a consequence of a massive asteroid hitting Earth.*

In (a) the main clause is preceded by a clause that draws attention to the speaker's avowal of knowledge. She is emphasizing that she is not reporting a belief, opinion, suspicion but what she knows. She is offering an assurance of knowledge. In (b) the word "definitely" is embedded in the main clause and again serves to raise the epistemic claim to an assurance that the speaker knows whereof she speaks (although "definitely" does sometimes serve either as a kind of "filler" or as an relatively weak intensifier, as "really" sometimes does: a further complication that has to be interpreted in context).

According to Krista Lawlor's Austinian account of the speech act of assurance, when a speaker offers an assurance *that p* she is offering a guarantee comparable to that offered by the speech act of promising. She vouches for the truth of the claim and undertakes to defend the claim if challenged. This distinguishes it from assertion insofar as the guarantee is exceptionless or unlimited (Lawlor, 2013, p. 12). Whereas an assertion can often be made in a context where the speaker expects disagreement, an assurance tends to be made where she does not expect disagreement; rather, she expects her utterance, her assurance, to be deemed epistemically acceptable to the audience because she is representing herself

as holding the proposition to be true on the basis of reasons that would satisfy any responsible and reasonable person. In both speech acts, assertion and assurance, the speaker vouches for the truth of the claim, but in the case of assertion she conveys that her claim is fallible, whereas in the case of assurance she conveys that she thinks the truth of the claim is not vulnerable to further evidence or circumstance. "In making an assertion, the asserter represents herself as having reason to think *p*, or perhaps as having more reason to think p than think *not p*, while in offering an assurance, the assurer represents herself as having conclusive reasons to think *p*" (Lawlor, 2013, p. 15).

Lawlor's Austin-influenced account of assurance draws also on the work of William Alston. Alston agrees that assurance is an illocutionary category in its own right ("assuritives") with aspects of both promising and assertion built into it. He argues that we can use an understanding of this speech act in order to understand better what knowledge is, by looking at how we use the word "know" in particular sentences. He says that sentence meaning is "illocutionary act potential"; for individual components of sentences, such as words, to have meaning is for them to have the potential to affect illocutionary act potential. In other words, "know" has meaning by virtue of its potential to make a contribution to the meaning of sentences that make knowledge claims, where the sentence meaning is fixed by its illocutionary act. The rules or conventions governing illocutionary acts such as assurance fix the meaning of "knows" and its cognates. "Knows", Alston says, means something like "has conclusive reasons for believing what is in fact the case" (Alston, 2000, p. 68; Lawlor, 2013, p. 42).

Alston's approach to word meaning here seems compatible with such Wittgensteinian pronouncements as "We are asking ourselves: what do we do with

a statement 'I know'? …And *that* is how one must decide whether something is knowledge or not" (Wittgenstein 1953, §230). However, although it may be true that we use the word "know" to modify the illocutionary force of an utterance, we do not always have to employ the word itself in order for a similar effect to register. An assertoric sentence can become an assurance when the force of the word "know" is implicated tonally or contextually. For example, if at a crucial point a doctor who is a top authority on a particular medical procedure asserts a proposition about the best way to proceed, this could have the force of an assurance if it is evident that she is offering a conclusive or exclusionary reason for the audience to accept the proposition by taking her word, trusting her for the truth. In a different context – a ward round, perhaps – a similar pronouncement could implicate that she expects the junior doctors present to challenge or question her, in which case it is a different speech act.

In one sense, of course, prefacing an utterance with "I know that…" adds nothing to the proposition asserted in the main clause. But it adds significantly to the pragmatically recovered meaning of the utterance, and therefore to what is said. It turns the assertion into an assurance and therefore changes the speaker's commitments and expectations. The utterance now has something of the character of a promise and therefore the speaker and the hearer are both permitted by convention to feel aggrieved or betrayed if the other defaults on his or her commitments – one by speaking falsely, insincerely or in some other way infelicitously, the other by a reluctance to trust the speaker.

Assertions and assurances both aim to effect the sharing of knowledge, but assurance has an additional function as a vital component of the network of social practices that depend on interpersonal trust. Lawlor argues that an assurance

represents the speaker as having reasons that should satisfy everyone, whereas with assertion the guarantee is not so whole-hearted. If hearers are offered "exclusionary reasons" for believing *that p* they can put aside doubts and proceed with any plans that depend on the truth of *p*. Assurances implicate the speaker's willingness to shoulder the epistemic burden of any challenges. This is what makes an assurance a shortcut to knowledge for the audience. He has only to trust the speaker. Once he has recognized the speech act to be assurance, and accepted it to be genuine, or sincere, he has reason enough to accept the information offered as knowledge.

So should we simply identify testimony with assurance? While assurance is certainly better suited than assertion is to *trust theories*, I do not see a good reason for a restriction of this kind. Assertions, and other speech acts, such as confessions, also represent the speaker as transmitting knowledge without offering *overt* reasons for acceptance. The quest for a unitary account of testimony seems to me to be misguided, especially as it distracts attention from important epistemic differences. It is part of our linguistic and epistemic sophistication or sensitivity to distinguish between different kinds of information-giving speech acts and to recognize that they require different epistemic responses.

It is partly a matter of epistemic authority. A speaker who offers an assurance implicates a greater degree of epistemic authority than one who makes an assertion: she *knows* and she has reasons that would meet any challenge: an eyewitness, for example, who testifies on the basis of what she has seen for herself or someone who "bears witness" on the basis of personal experience. An expert witness might offer assurances, too, for the fact that she represents herself as an expert implicates her authority and confidence that she can meet any challenges. When she is less than certain about the truth, it would be irresponsible of her not to indicate this by

her phraseology or prosody. An assurance is like a promise because the speaker effectively promises not just that she will attempt to answer any questions or challenges but that the reasons she has in reserve will satisfy any responsible and reasonable interlocutor. Because she accepts this responsibility, if she fails, or if she is proved wrong, she is both linguistically and epistemically blameworthy, for either she should not have offered the information at all or she should have offered it in a more cautious speech act.

Someone who offers an assurance rather than an assertion is inviting the audience to take her word at face value and to rely on it. She is inviting the audience's trust in a rich sense of "trust", one that goes beyond reliance. Therefore, although the speaker accepts responsibility for the truth of the proposition, she does not *expect or invite* an epistemic challenge. What is implicated in an assurance is not an invitation to challenge but an invitation to trust the speaker, or, stronger, an expectation of trust in the speaker. This is different in cases of assertion, for then the speaker is not offering an "exclusionary" or sufficient reason for believing the proposition and she is not implicating that she expects the audience's total confidence in her own authority and trustworthiness. That is not to say, of course, that the audience cannot *choose* to trust her or judge her to be trustworthy; it is only to say that she is not intending to bring about the perlocutionary effect of audience trust in her. She is providing the audience with a reason (one of many, possibly) for believing what she has asserted.

The distinction between assurance and assertion has implications for the question of chains of testimony. Exclusionary reasons can be passed along a chain of assurers, and at each link the hearer has a sufficient reason to accept the information on trust, whereas each hearer who is offered an assertion has not been

freed from the obligation to infer his own reasons for belief, the assertion itself being one, but not necessarily a sufficient, reason for acceptance. The receiver of an assertion has different work to do from the receiver of an assurance: a different kind of judgement to make, and one where the linguistic and epistemic aspects are more distinct than is the case with assurance.

Assertions and assurances can both fail epistemically, and they can also both fail linguistically, for reasons, as Austin puts it, of infelicity. Speech acts can be infelicitous for a number of reasons. For example, imperatives or directives must be issued by someone with the appropriate authority, otherwise there is a "misinvocation". Similarly in cases of testimony, but especially in cases of assurance, the speaker needs appropriate authority and/or expertise. There are also "abuses", where the speaker does not have the right thoughts, attitudes or feelings required of someone employing the particular speech act, as when someone makes a promise or offers an assurance with her fingers (literally or metaphorically) crossed behind her back. With regard to sincerity, it is clear that sincerity is a more essential constituent of assurance than it is of assertion. The receiver of an assertion is not relying on the speaker's sincerity in the way that a receiver of an assurance is. The assurer must be sincere not just in the sense that she truly believes what she avows but sincere in her commitment to honouring her implicatures.

These considerations suggest that a speaker who offers responsible testimony has to be more than epistemically conscientious. She must also be conscientious in employing the appropriate speech act, and this requires linguistic sensitivity and skill. One implication of this is that critical thinking, effective reasoning and wise judgements depend on linguistic capacities that can be developed, and which can be incorporated in curriculum planning. When we think about "language across the

curriculum" or "thinking skills across the curriculum", we should also be thinking about the very close relationship between the two. Similarly, when we think about classroom dialogue and dialogic teaching, we need to think about the linguistic and epistemic responsibilities and commitments involved in using particular speech acts. We sometimes make good and sometimes bad judgements with regard to speech acts but there are learnable and teachable processes involved in speaking and responding conscientiously: we can get better at conscientiously sharing knowledge with others and at receiving knowledge from others. There is a developmental aspect to our role as rational and conscientious providers and receivers of information and knowledge and this has implications for the prerequisites of effective teaching and of effective classroom dialogue.

§6.5 Austin: Knowledge and Truth

Drawing on Austin's early essay "Other Minds" (1946), Lawlor argues for a *relevant alternatives* account of knowledge, whereby knowledge "requires one to be in a position to eliminate all the relevant alternative propositions to the proposition one knows" (Lawlor, 2013, p. 46). This looks highly demanding, but for Austin relevant alternatives are *reasonable* alternatives. If we tell someone that a certain bird is a goldfinch and are challenged to "prove it", there must be some limit to what we are required to produce as reasons, on what would count as a sufficient response, as enough to show that (*within reason,* and for present intents and purposes) it 'can't' be anything else, there is no room for a competing description of it. We wouldn't have to rule out, for example, that it isn't a stuffed goldfinch (Austin, 1946, pp. 154 – 155; cited in Lawlor, 2013, p. 46). We are

required to eliminate only the alternatives that are reasonably susceptible to elimination and that are contextually relevant. Lawlor argues (p. 47) that what counts as *elimination* and what counts as *reasonable* is also to be thought of flexibly, depending on contexts. While it may be difficult to draw a line between a reasonable consideration and an unreasonable one, this is the kind of difficulty that any account of knowledge faces. There are always nuanced judgements to be made.

So, the Austinian view is that when we assure another person that we know *that p* we are implicating that reasonable alternatives have been eliminated. Assuring is like promising, for promises are similarly constrained by an implicit reasonableness clause. Some circumstances are too disruptive for the speaker to be required to fulfil her promise; complaints by the receiver of the promise have to be assessed against considerations of reasonableness. Epistemic vigilance, conscientiousness, responsibility (or whatever we call the disposition to be alert to relevance and reasonableness) therefore enters at the point of utterance for the speaker, and at the point of comprehension for the audience, for what has been said, or implicated, can only be understood in terms of these reasonableness considerations. The key point here is that epistemic responsibility and communicative responsibility are intertwined.

One objection to Austin's comments on assurance, and to Lawlor's development of the distinction between assurance and assertion, is that knowledge is already to be thought of as the defining characteristic, the constitutive rule, of *assertion*, and therefore there is no room for a speech act of assurance with the same defining characteristic.[23] But Lawlor argues that assertion and assurance do

[23] Sanford Goldberg's (2015) *Assertion: On the Philosophical Significance of Assertoric Speech* argues that a robust epistemic norm of one kind or another is constitutive of

not share identical defining characteristics. She agrees with Bernard Williams's description of assertion as "ground level telling that" (Williams, 2004, p. 78). In other words, it is a basic speech act for which the speaker does not requiring special authority, whereas assurance is defined by the implicating, not of knowledge as such, but of the speaker's possession of exclusionary reasons, and therefore it *does* require special authority (Lawlor, 2013, p. 78). It therefore requires special reflection on the part of the speaker: a point that has implications for classroom talk, regardless of whether the person offering the assurance is a teacher or a pupil.

One way in which assertions and assurances can both fail is by not being true. They are true, we might say, when they correspond to the facts. Lawlor presents this apparent truism, with which Austin concurs, as a significant insight. She interprets Austin as suggesting that "a knowledge claim is true only in light of the situation about which it is made (Lawlor, 2013, p. 55). A "situation" in this context is an epistemic one, "comprising not just elements of the world, but also what we reasonably believe to be live options" (*ibid*). If a claim to know is a play in a conversational game, which all speech acts *are*, then the conversational rules governing *situations* are some of the most fundamental rules of the conversational game. Taking a *statement* to be whatever is expressed or conveyed by an utterance, we can say that a statement is true when its descriptive content and the situation to which the speaker refers, as determined by the conventions of language, correspond or match. This foregrounds contextualism, for it suggests that statements that make claims to knowledge have context-sensitive-truth conditions.

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assertion, but it is context-sensitive, so whether the norm is knowledge, justified belief, rational belief, truth, or any other appropriate alternative, depends on the precise context.

The position Lawlor adopts is contextualism about truth but invariantism about knowledge. "Know" always means the same. To know is always to be in a position to rule out alternatives to what is claimed (and for it to be true); whereas to be true a statement has to satisfy the truth requirements for the particular situation in which it is uttered. So, "S knows *that p*" has context-sensitive truth-values, even though the meaning of "knows" is invariant. This is compatible, I believe, with the account of what it is to say something that I outlined earlier.

To employ the metaphor of a conversational *game* is to suggest that a conversation has rules and scorekeeping (Lawlor, 2013, pp. 66 – 69).[24] The rules are those such as the Gricean maxims that specify salience and reference, and that also limit situations and the permitted moves or alternatives. For example, most conversations do not permit sudden changes of topic, nor cross-purposes with regard to situations. The participants keep score, following each other's moves and choosing whether to accommodate each other's contributions in order to keep the conversation going well. What is on the scoreboard affects whether a move (an utterance) is true or false. But keeping track of the scoreboard is tricky. Judgements concerning reasonable alternatives, for example, are difficult; it is not always easy for the participants to coordinate their judgements concerning the situation. This affects the course of the conversation, what each will say, for example, about the other's statements. Crucially, for our purposes, it will affect how one responds to a knowledge claim about which one is uncertain. If the hearer is not confident that his judgement concerning the situation coincides with the speaker's, he is more likely to try to find out more about the speaker and her judgement of the situation

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[24] Lawlor traces the metaphor of conversational scorekeeping to David Lewis's (1983) "Scorekeeping in a Language Game", *Philosophical Papers 1*, pp. 233- 249. It has some similarity with Robert Brandom's notion of deontic scorekeeping in *Making It Explicit,* Harvard University Press, 1994.

than he is to dismiss or challenge the claim outright. It is not generally permitted to challenge a claim when one suspects cross-purposes. This echoes a point I have made previously concerning testimony that we cannot immediately accept: that our first response should be to try to *comprehend* it better. We now understand this as requiring an interpretation of the implicatures of speech acts.

§6.6 Conscientious Judgement

From the argument so far I think we can draw some conclusions about what is involved in being an alert, reasonable and conscientious receiver of assertions and assurances. There is no reason to exclude either from the epistemological category of testimony. All things being equal, the receiver of an assurance, assuming he has been sensitive to the implicatures of the utterance, will trust the speaker for the truth, and therefore will accept the proposition offered. By "all things being equal" I mean to acknowledge that there are factors that can intervene and make trust unreasonable in the circumstances. These would include a suspicion on the hearer's part that he and the speaker do not share an understanding of the "situation" and therefore are linguistically or epistemically at cross-purposes. This might be because the hearer judges that the speaker has made a linguistic or epistemic misjudgement by offering an assurance (when her authority to do so is in questionable) or it might be that he is not confident enough that he actually comprehends the utterance well enough to accept the implicated proposition on trust. Infelicity in the speech act is sufficient to undermine trust, and therefore acceptance. So, all things being equal, acceptance follows from comprehension because comprehension itself incorporates accepting the utterance as an assurance

– that is, as providing an exclusionary, or sufficient, reason for acceptance. If the hearer cannot accept it as an assurance because he suspects some kind of infelicity, he still has the option of evaluating it as he would an assertion. Inferences of the kind suggested by reductionists therefore apply to assertions and to infelicitous or rejected assurances. An alert, reasonable and conscientious receiver of assertions employs a range of capabilities in evaluating the epistemic status of the proposition asserted, including skill in inductive inference about the plausibility of the proposition, which depends also on his knowledge of the topic, as well as about the credibility or reliability of the speaker (and speakers of this kind). Inductive inference and critical thinking skills are relevant to testimony because they could be required at any point in a conversation, and judgements about when to deploy them are linguistic as well as epistemic judgements.

Utterances occur in the context of a particular kind of discourse or conversation. Whether an utterance is an assurance or an assertion (or another kind of testimonial speech act, such as a confession) is influenced to some degree by the nature of the conversation in which it occurs. There are conversations or discourses where every act of telling is contextually marked as an assurance, others where they are all assertions; but, most commonly, I suspect, there is a variety of types of "telling" to which participants must be alert, and conscientious in responding to them appropriately and reasonably. We begin to acquire skill and sensitivity in recognizing and responding appropriately and reasonably to speech acts as we acquire language as a young child and as we experience a wider range of conversations and discourses, including, of course, in educational contexts. Unfortunately, curriculum guidelines on the development of children's "speaking

and listening" have not been interested in the kinds of distinction I am suggesting are significant.

§6.7 Bakhtin's Dialogism

The account of testimonial speech acts I have outlined does not take full account of what Mikhail Bakhtin calls "addressivity". Utterances are addressed by particular individuals to a particular audience: people who have a particular kind of relationship to sustain in a particular social context. Grice's Cooperative Principle recognizes that conversations rely on the participants following the conventions that keep it going, but neither Grice nor Austin fully acknowledged, as Bakhtin does, a) the extent to which the conversational situation is part of what constitutes the utterance, and b) how an utterance anticipates its response.

In turning to Bakhtin we are moving from pragmatics to discourse theory. There are overlaps, as shown here by Jaworski and Coupland's summary of ideas to which discourse theorists are committed (2006, p. 11):

1) The meaning of an event or a single utterance is only partly accounted for by its formal features.
2) Our interpretation of discourse relates far more to what is done by the participants than what is said.
3) Attributing meaning to discursive acts is never a value-free process.
4) Linguistic expression itself (as speech or writing) often needs to be interrelated with other physical, temporal and behavioural aspects of the social situation: discourse is more than language itself.

There is no explicit mention here of epistemic considerations. I have argued that epistemic evaluation is integral to comprehension and therefore that it is an ineliminable feature of communication and of social relationships. The conventions surrounding trusting others for the truth, inferring credibility, deploying words such as "know" and "true", are crucial constituents of the social practices concerned with exchanging information and learning from others. Therefore, discourse analysis should concern itself with epistemology as well as with pragmatics.

Bakhtin's writings are seminal in the development of several disciplines, including discourse theory and argumentation theory.[25] I will draw on his notion of speech genres in order to sketch an approach to the epistemological issues raised by informative utterances located in different types of discourse. This will allow me to bring the strands of my argument together when I return to classroom dialogue in the final chapter.

"Each separate utterance is individual," Bakhtin writes, "but each sphere in which language is used develops its own *relatively stable types* of these utterances. These we call *speech genres*" (1994, p. 81. Original italics). There is not one speech genre for each sphere of human activity but an ever-changing repertoire. Speech genres are heterogeneous. Relations between utterances, such as the relation of question and answer or assertion and objection, are part of the pattern that indicates the speech genre and therefore guides the behaviour of the participants. Speakers choose a speech genre on the basis of their *speech plan*, their overall intentions, which they adapt to the conventions of the genre.

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[25] For example, it influenced the account of audience in Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca *The New Rhetoric* (1991). See also: Tindale (2015).

The range of speech genres is extensive but we are so skillful in adapting to them that we are hardly aware of them, having acquired them along with the lexis and grammar of our language.[26] The speech genre – the particular style and composition of utterances – conveys meaning as much as the words used. It is a way of orienting oneself in the relationship between participants and between contributions to the dialogue. The speech genres that are generated between the participants are drawn from the social and institutional discourses available to them. Some discourses are more "monological" than others, in the sense of being authored by an authoritative single voice; others are more "internally persuasive" and are characterized by dialogues of exchange and challenge. Matusov (2009), a prominent advocate of dialogic pedagogy, argues that teachers need to engage actively with both the internally persuasive and the authoritative discourses as both are necessary components of pedagogy. Pedagogy cannot but be dialogic, Matusov claims, in the sense that to speak to another person is to bridge a gap between two consciousnesses that are non-transparent to one another.

Bakhtin attends to the developmental aspects of language in a way that anticipates the sociocultural accounts of language learning of later writers, such as Halliday (2003). Bakhtin writes: "To learn to speak is to learn to construct utterances. The forms of language and the typical forms of utterances, that is, speech genres, enter our experience and our consciousness together, and in close connection with one another" (1994, p. 84). Learning to speak cannot be a matter

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[26] Wittgenstein remarks that there are "countless kinds" of sentence (1953, § 25). Speech acts are not sentence types: if there were countless kinds of speech act we would never know what was expected of us as hearers, nor what to expect from speakers; comprehension and appropriate response would be impossibly complicated. The same applies to speech genres: the range is extensive but there are not countless kinds.

of learning to speak in words and sentences - because we do not *speak* in words and sentences:

> The sentence, like the word, has a finality of meaning and a finality of grammatical form, but this finality of meaning is abstract by nature and this is precisely why it is clear-cut…Like the word, it belongs to *nobody,* and only by functioning as a whole utterance does it become an expression of the position of someone speaking individually in a concrete situation of speech communication. This leads us to a new…feature of the utterance – the relation of the utterance to the *speaker himself* (the author of the utterance) and to the *other* participants in speech communication. (Bakhtin, 1994, p. 84)

We respond to utterances, not to words and sentences. Utterances connect us not only with the other current participants in the dialogue but with our culture and speech community:

> Each utterance is filled with echoes and reverberations of other utterances to which it is related by the community of the sphere of speech communication. Every utterance must be regarded primarily as a response to preceding utterances of the given sphere…Each utterance refutes, affirms, presupposes them to be known, and somehow takes them into account. (*Ibid*., p. 85)

Each utterance occupies a definite position within a given sphere of communication and it is impossible to determine its position without correlating it with other positions, so each utterance reverberates with reactions to other utterances of the given sphere. An utterance, whether highly structured and specialized or occurring in casual dialogue, and however monological it may seem to be, is always a rejoinder of some kind, oriented both to how it may influence the audience and to previous utterances. It is a link in a chain, a responsive position

under the complex conditions of speech communication in a particular cultural

sphere. Whatever the topic of the utterance, it has already been articulated,

disputed, elucidated and evaluated in various ways. Various viewpoints,

worldviews and trends cross, converge and diverge in it.

For Bakhtin, as for Vygotsky, meaning is socially constructed. The audience

is active. The speaker anticipates an active responsive understanding. "The entire

utterance is constructed, as it were, in anticipation of encountering this response"

(1994, p. 87). The composition and style of the utterance are dependent on those to

whom the utterance is addressed, on how the speaker (or writer) senses and

imagines his addressees, and the force of their effect on the utterance. The

utterance is enriched by the support or resistance it encounters. Each speech genre

in each area of speech communication has its own typical conception of the

addressee, and this helps to define it as a genre.

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This summary of Bakhtin's notion of speech genres shows how his dialogism

articulates with pragmatics.[27] I will attempt to draw out some of the strands from

the preceding sections of this chapter that I think are most relevant to the discussion

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[27] Bakhtin's dialogism also connects to some extent with Wittgenstein's later work, speech
genres being similar to language games and both emphasizing meaning as use. Bakhtin's
essay "The Problem of Speech Genres" was published in the same year (1953) as the
posthumous *Philosophical Investigations*, and Bakhtin's older brother, Nicolai, who was a
professor of linguistics at Birmingham University, was a close friend of Wittgenstein. See
Terry Eagleton's "Wittgenstein's Friends" (*New Left Review* I/135, 1982; reprinted in
Against The Grain: Essays 1975 – 1985, Verso, 1986). Eagleton's novel *Saints and
Scholars* (Verso, 1987) imagines Wittgenstein and Nicolai Bakhtin travelling together in
Ireland, in 1916, and encountering Leopold Bloom and James Connolly.

of testimony and learning from the words – the utterances, as we should say - of others.

Bakhtin's theory is incompatible with any account of testimonial speech acts which depicts the testifier as the possessor of a piece of knowledge that she then couches in words, in a proposition, and the receiver as taking the content to be an input into the process of forming a belief and as having acquired thereby a piece of knowledge.[28] In such an account, the receiver deliberates about the propositional content. Bakhtin would reject this because for him the speaker's knowledge cannot be abstracted from the utterance. The proposition that the recipient is said to deliberate about would be a philosophical abstraction. In the actual situation of a live communication, what the recipient accepts is what is communicated in the utterance. Austin emphasizes that this depends on features of the situation the participants share. Bakhtin emphasizes that the utterance itself is positioned in a speech genre characterized by certain kinds of utterance, rejoinders and relationships and positioned in a discourse, the form and scope of which is constrained by social and institutional conventions. Therefore to describe the recipient's "deliberation" only in terms of epistemic evaluation greatly underestimates the resources he brings to bear on its evaluation. He brings to bear all his understanding of language as it is used in his culture and, specifically, as it is used in this particular discourse and "cultural sphere". Whatever the claim contained in the main clause may be, it is only in specific kinds of discourse, and in specific circumstances of doubt or scepticism, that we attempt to isolate it for the kind of epistemic assessment that draws on evidence.

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[28] This is what Michael Welbourne calls the "evidence theory" (Welbourne, 1993, pp. 34/35. See also Kusch, 2002, p. 56. Welbourne and Kusch are both critical of this approach).

Bakhtin and Austin encourage us to think of knowledge in terms of activity, of verb forms, such as "I know that…". The verbs play a role in the articulation or positioning of the discussants with one another and with their cultural inheritance, in what Welbourne (1993) calls "the community of knowledge". It has a social status that we learn as we learn how and when to use it. It plays a role in inquiries that the non-factive verb "to believe" cannot play. We begin to learn this as we begin to learn our language, just as we begin to learn the contexts in which we ought to trust and ought to challenge. We begin to learn these things and subsequently we come to understand them better and to deploy our words more sensitively.

A key point is that recognizing the utterance to have the meaning it has, in the context of a specific speech genre and discourse, does not release us from a normative requirement to be epistemically responsible or vigilant. On the contrary, epistemic responsibility extends to recognizing and comprehending the utterance, with all its commitments and implicatures. Sometimes this leads us to infer that further epistemic evaluation is called for, either because the speech act implicates that or because there is something infelicitous, unrecognizable or incomprehensible that triggers a different kind of response, rejoinder or deliberation. But the epistemic response itself, including trusting the speaker for the truth, is constitutive of the utterance and speech genre or discourse. Sharing knowledge is always dialogic, even when the recipient's voice is not currently heard, and even when it is teachers talking informatively.

Chapter 7: Teaching Matters

§7.1 Fruitful Encounters

One of the few educationalists who has discussed the epistemology of testimony in relation to schooling is Padma Sarangapani, whose book *Constructing School Knowledge* (2003) is an ethnographic and epistemological study of children's experience of schooling in a government primary school in India. This location is significant because modern Indian philosophers contributed to the renewal of interest in the epistemology of testimony in the 1990s. Philosophers such as B. K. Matilal and A. Chakrabarti (who together edited the 1994 collection of essays on testimony, *Knowing From Words*) were able to draw on a long and rich tradition of interest in testimony, especially stemming from the Advaita and Nyāya traditions of Hindu philosophy, some of whose central tenets the non-reductionists and trust theorists have echoed. Sarangapani quotes Matilal: "Words plus trust generate knowledge directly" (Matilal, 1990, p. 62; Sarangapani, 2003, p. 187). The Nyāya thinkers argued that knowledge can be acquired directly from the words of others, provided we are sure the speaker is trustworthy (Jha, 2005; Bilimoria, 1988). Bilimoria's detailed study puts *śabdapramāna*, words as knowledge, in the context of Indian linguistic philosophy and the wisdom and authority of Vedic scriptures. Other writers emphasize the importance of *śabdapramāna* as a source of knowledge in everyday life (Satprakashananda, 1974). Padma Sarangapani is influenced by these Indian writings on testimony but also by one of the other books that stimulated a new interest in the epistemology of testimony, the British

philosopher Michael Welbourne's *The Community of Knowledge* (1993). Sarangapani quotes Welbourne:

> To speak from knowledge in the most complete sense is to say something which you know to be the case and to say it intending that your utterance be received as grounded on and thus expressing knowledge. (Welbourne, 1993, p. 19; Sarangapani, 2003, p. 190)

Sarangapani goes on to emphasize the importance of children being in a position to trust the teacher, of having good reason to trust her authority, authenticity, sincerity and competence, and, equally, the importance the children themselves place on authenticity and authority in their own acts of "speaking from knowledge". I see this as the children recognizing the epistemic, linguistic and social difference between voicing an opinion and speaking from knowledge. As we shall see later, this has relevance for the debates concerning "student voice".

Sarangapani brings Indian philosophical traditions and Western epistemology together in a risky but fruitful encounter. In this final chapter I bring the epistemology of testimony together with Bakhtinian and sociocultural perspectives on pedagogy in what is also a somewhat risky and tense encounter that is nevertheless, I hope, fruitful.

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We have learned from Bakhtin and others that when children learn to speak they learn much more than how to string lexemes together more or less grammatically. In learning to communicate dialogically they develop their capacity to learn.

241

Bakhtin's dialogism has close links with the sociocultural analysis of speaking and thinking that is most associated with the work of Vygotsky.[29] Jerome Bruner, from a similar perspective, employs an apt metaphor for the child's entry into a speech community:

> When we enter human life, it is as if we walk on stage into a play whose enactment is in progress – a play whose somewhat open plot determines toward what denouements we may be heading. Others on stage already have a sense of what the play is about, enough of a sense to make negotiation with a newcomer possible. (Bruner, 1990, p. 34)

This captures the non-deterministic nature of sociogenesis. A child enters a world where the people she encounters, especially those who care for her, make use of, and help her to make use of, the "psychological tool" of language. It is not so much that she inherits this tool as that it is what makes her an individual self at all, a distinct consciousness with a conceptual scheme that enables, but is itself constituted by, meaning-making and the sharing of knowledge. It enables her to find or improvise a role for herself, to position herself in relation to the props and characters she encounters and to develop a degree of autonomy through their mediation in her learning. She will spend her life improvising in communication with other people who are also "winging it". But this does not mean that anything goes, that any move or line of dialogue is permitted. The play fails, the cast

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[29] Just as Bakhtin's intellectual world overlapped (through his brother) with Wittgenstein's, it must also have overlapped in the Soviet Union with Vygotsky's, although there is no evidence that they ever met (John-Steiner, 2007, p. 147; Van der Veer and Valsiner, 1991, p. 371).

members "corpse", if the wrong words are spoken in the wrong way at the wrong time. We have to learn to speak and think felicitously.

The relationship between speaking and thinking is the subject of Vygotsky's most famous work. Like Bakhtin, Vygotsky argues that language is central to human consciousness: consciousness develops in the coming together of thought and word in meaning. This is echoed in Michael Halliday's (2003) and Michael Tomasello's (1999) sociocultural accounts of child language development. John-Steiner and Tatter summarize the process thus:

> From birth, the social forms of child-caretaker interactions, the tools used by humans in society to manipulate the environment, the culturally institutionalized patterns of social relations are used by the child in cooperation with adults to organize behaviour, memory and complex mental processes. For children, the development of language is a development of social existence into individuated persons and into culture. (John-Steiner and Tatter, 1983, p. 83. Cited in John-Steiner, 2007, p. 148/9)

Meaning is created through interaction with others, through speaking. The languages we learn in childhood "are not neutral coding systems of an objective reality. Rather, each one is a subjective orientation to the world of human experience, and this orientation affects the ways in which we are speaking" (Slobin, 1996, p.83; cited by John-Steiner, 2007, p.149). We might quibble with the word "subjective", but the main idea is surely correct. What we can say, how we can say it, what we can think and how we convey our thinking, how we complete thoughts in words, are constrained (if that is the right word: "liberated" might be better) by the conventions of our language and social interactions – and by our personal linguistic skill, sophistication and sensitivity.

243

My aim in the previous chapter was to show that communication is not something that can be looked at one-sidedly. Dialogue is Janus-like. The hearer's role in making the meaning that the participants share is crucial. Whether we look at speech from the point of view of a single utterance or from the point of view of an extended dialogue, it is in the interaction between the speaker and the audience that meaning emerges. Therefore, it is in the dynamics of this interaction that we must locate the knowledge that is "transferred" in speech acts that have assertoric force. This is especially true in the case of speech acts such as assurance, where the speaker is avowedly "speaking from knowledge", implicating that his *śabda* is *pramā* , that it is the word of a trustworthy person (*apta vakya)* (Sarangapani, 2003, p. 188).

While both Vygotskian sociocultural theory and Bakhtinian dialogism emphasize the social nature of experience, and the importance of speech for human consciousness, meaning and thought, the latter pays special attention to the role of context and genres in allowing participants to interpret intentions, and therefore has more to say about this aspect of the inherently intersubjective nature of language and thought. For Bakhtin even private thought, or inner speech, is dialogical and conforms to learned generic and semiotic patterns; therefore, there is always an implicit reciprocity or mutuality. The epistemological and pedagogical implications of Bakhtin's theory are summarized by White as follows:

> [T]he intended outcome of education for Bakhtin can be viewed as a quest for alterity – the transgradient relations between self and other that constitute aesthetic activity and are manifest in utterance… Knowledge is therefore recognized as experienced gestalt rather than a neatly packaged set of goals to be achieved. (White, 2014, p. 229)

This suggests that it is not consensus or epistemic agreement that is the goal of dialogic or pedagogic encounters but, in White's phrase, "mutual enrichment through difference". She cites Sullivan, Smith and Matusov (2009, p. 375), who suggest that dialogic pedagogy should "risk genuine encounters of a multiplicity of others". There is an ethical and political dimension to Bakhtinian dialogism and to dialogical pedagogy that could be compared with the ethics of responsible testimony, and also with the notion of integrity suggested by the account of self-trust and autonomy I outlined in Chapter 5.

In bringing different traditions together in potentially fruitful encounters I am not anticipating a complete convergence but, rather, I am aiming (appropriately enough) for mutual enrichment through difference and dialogue.[30]

§7.2 Perspectives on Dialogic Pedagogy

Sociocultural approaches to thought and speech are closely associated with dialogic pedagogy, as espoused by educationalists such as Robin Alexander (2006), Neil Mercer (2000), Gordon Wells (1986), Rupert Wegerif (2012) and Robert Fisher (2011), and by philosophers of education such as Tasos Kazepides (2010). Like them, I am an advocate of dialogical practices in the classroom, but I have some misgivings concerning how their ideas are filtered down to teachers and student teachers. For example, Neil Mercer's emphasis on "common knowledge" and

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[30] Other potentially fruitful encounters, given the key role that testimonial speech acts play in argumentation, is with Habermasian communicative rationality (Habermas, 1984) and with writers in the New Rhetoric tradition instigated by Chaim Perelman (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca, 1991; Tindale, 2015).

"interthinking" are, I believe, completely compatible with my argument. Nevertheless, I think we need to contest the conclusion often drawn from, or implied by, work on classroom dialogue that testimony, in the guise of "teacher talk" or "didactic teaching", is (in the relevant sense) *monological* and that acquiring knowledge in this way is necessarily a *passive* form of learning.

Oga Dysthe (2011, p. 97) argues that the problem with monological talk is that it "allows authority to present itself as a bearer of a truth that has not been the result of intersubjectivity". This sounds potentially critical of direct teacher instruction or exposition, but, as I have argued, informative speech *is* intersubjective in that its success depends on the recognition by both sides (speaker and audience) of a shared set of assumptions, commitments and expectations, and by the recipient's interpretation of the speaker's communicative intentions. Matusov, a leading advocate of a Bakhtinian approach to pedagogy, acknowledges that "teacher talk" can be dialogical and draws attention to the tension inherent in schooling. On the one hand, the realization that the meaning-making process is inherently dialogical has important consequences for education, in three ways:

> First, since learning is the transformation of a student's meaning, it is unpredictable, undetermined, and cannot be designed or controlled by the teacher…Second, learning is always discursive, that is, the process and product of a new meaning always exists among diverse, real or virtual, consciousnesses. Third, learning is always mediated by the students' questions (explicit or tacit). (Matusov, 2009, p. 3)

On the other hand, teaching is a goal-directed activity:

> It has its curricular endpoints that the state or even an individual teacher often tries to prescribe, "By the end of the

lesson/term/year/education, the students will know, be able, master…” These endpoints of education seem to be anti-dialogical. Dialogue is impossible if a participant knows its endpoint in advance. It is, at best, skillful manipulation or leading a dialogic partner to the known endpoint or, at worst, violent imposition of the teacher's knowledge, skill, attitude on the student. In both cases, it is not a genuine dialogue. (*Ibid.*)

So, there appears to be a contradiction. Teaching is necessarily dialogical because it involves communication, but it does not involve genuine dialogue because it is necessarily goal-directed. A distinction exists between the *practice* of education, which is inherently dialogical, and the conventional *project* of education, which is anti-dialogical insofar as it specifies the knowledge to be learned, the outcomes to be achieved. Matusov goes on to argue, somewhat in the manner of writers from the critical pedagogy tradition, for as open-ended an approach to education as possible. Similarly, Nicholas Burbules (1993) argues for a non-teleological conception of dialogue, without predetermined outcomes. Equality and reciprocity are present in all dialogues. Therefore "dialogue", as Burbules uses the term, is not defined by terms such as "conversation", "discussion", "debate" or "inquiry" but by the nature of the social relationship between the participants, a social relationship involving respect, trust, patience and the ability to listen. For Burbules, a dialogue simply cannot be assymetrical, monological in the sense of one person doing all the speaking, a one-way flow. For Matusov the kind of "conversation" children are likely to encounter in the classroom is, though necessarily dialogical in one way, essentially *monological* in terms of who does the talking and what its goals are.

Differences in how terms such as "dialogic" and "monologic" are used present problems for a discussion of information-sharing speech in the classroom.

247

On some accounts such talk is simply monological, for others it is dialogical because all speech is dialogical, and for some it is both monological and dialogical. But it is not surprising that there are differences of opinion concerning the dialogicity of teacher-dominated informative classroom talk, given the range of influences on dialogic pedagogy. For example, one important influence on theorists, Martin Buber's analysis of the *I-Thou* relationship, emphasizes the existential status of reciprocal relationships, and provides a further potential criticism of non-reciprocal classroom encounters (Buber, 2004).

The implication of my account of Bakhtin's theory of speech genres is that a teacher's talk is always potentially dialogical. Even when teaching is monological in the sense of one person doing all the talking, it can be dialogical in the sense of being intersubjective, with meaning emerging from the interaction of participants rather than being "passed on" in prepackaged units. It is the *utterance*, not an abstract proposition, that is the basic linguistic unit, and this is always directed towards a response that is mutually recognized. It is the audience's acceptance of an utterance as, for example, an assurance that provides a positive reason for trusting the speaker for the truth. The utterance is embedded in a speech genre (discourse, language game, conversation game) and this, too, is mutually recognized as involving speaker and audience in reciprocal commitments and responsibilities. For example, within the wider discourse of the classroom, there is often the sub-genre of argumentation, in which it is mutually recognized that the audience is required to interpret, reason, make connections, compare, evaluate, construct understandings and arguments, and which typically incorporates speech acts such as assertion and assurance. In this context, what the teacher has to tell the students, the subject knowledge that she (dialogically) shares with them, is just one

aspect of a wider communicative achievement and relationship. It is a relationship achieved through mutual trust, as all successful communicative relationships are.[31]

If speech is inherently dialogical in that there is a kind of reciprocity built into it, it does not follow that it is always ethical. The dialogicity of teaching permits indoctrination, manipulation and distortion. Furthermore, dialogicity cannot guarantee that what a student takes from a teacher achieves the social and epistemic status of knowledge, nor even that it is "true enough" (Elgin, 2004) for his purposes. But we can claim that the dialogical nature of speech incorporates a set of enduring social norms that we learn as we learn to speak, norms which constitute speech acts and genres that implicate that the speaker speaks from knowledge. As we become more skillful and sophisticated in using language and in making meaning with others, we learn when to be more cautious, even sceptical, in relation to certain topics, sources and types of speaker. We learn when to be prepared to interrupt the conversation, to step back and challenge, question and critically assess how justified or reasonable we might be in accepting the information proffered as knowledge.

What this line of thought suggests is that dialogical teaching need not involve equal participation in speaking but that there must be a relationship between teachers and students that permits reasonable responses and rejoinders, questions, clarifications and challenges. The *absence* of such a relationship should be criticized from both an epistemological and a dialogical perspective (and also from the point of view of epistemic justice that I discuss in §7.6).

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[31] For discussions of the role of trust in dialogue, see the contributions to P. Linell and I. Markova (eds) (2014) *Dialogical Approaches to Trust in Communication*, Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing Inc., especially "Trusting for Learning" by Tania Zittoun, pp. 125 – 153.

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Research into classroom dialogue and theorizing about dialogical pedagogy have drawn on Vygotsky and Bakhtin, and on Buber, Gadamer, Habermas, Bruner, Halliday and others. Dialogical teaching is said (with good reason) to stimulate thinking together, reasoning, learning and the collaborative construction of knowledge. It provides "cognitive challenge" and "interthinking" (Mercer, 2000). It promotes Habermasian "communicative rationality" (Fisher, 2011, p.92). Barnes (2008) distinguishes "exploratory talk" in the classroom from "presentational talk" and associates the former with "working on understanding".

But I contend that the tendency to place "dialogical teaching" in opposition to "traditional teaching", and/or "transmissive teaching", which are said to be characterized by "teacher talk" and the "imparting of knowledge", and the occasional conflation of these with rote learning (Fisher, 2011, p. 91), is supported neither by the theoretical base claimed nor by epistemological considerations. Significantly different utterances, speech genres and discourses are conflated and the opposition does not take sufficient account of how informative utterances are generally embedded in complex developmental discourses.

What do these writers mean by "dialogic teaching"? Robin Alexander argues that "teaching which is dialogic rather than transmissive" meets five criteria (Alexander, in Mercer and Hodgkinson, 2008, p. 105). These are:

- *Collective* in that teachers and children address learning tasks together, whether as a group or as a class;

- *Reciprocal* in that teachers and children listen to each other, share ideas and consider alternative viewpoints;

250

• *Supportive* in that children articulate their ideas freely, without the fear of embarrassment over "wrong" answers, and help each other to reach common understanding;

• *Cumulative* in that teachers and children build on their own and each other's ideas and chain them into coherent lines of thinking and enquiry;

• *Purposeful* in that teachers plan and steer classroom talk with specific educational goals in view.

My complaint with this set of principles is that the dialogic/transmissive opposition (like the progressive/traditional opposition) misrepresents classroom discourse. In acknowledging the importance of a variety of kinds classroom talk, including structured and less structured group work, discussions, debates and conversations, we should also acknowledge that sharing knowledge via testimonial speech acts can be both as dialogical and as apt for successful teaching and learning as other kinds of discourse.

§7.3 Rejecting the Transmissive/Dialogic Opposition

The opposing of "dialogic teaching" to "transmission" and "traditional teaching" reflects the horror of Gradgrindism that is pervasive in education theory. But tarring "teacher talk" and direct instruction with a Gradgrindian brush is a conflation of very different processes and discourses.[32] Why should a teacher's

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[32] In satirizing Gradgrind's insistence on "facts", Dickens could hardly have been disparaging speaking from knowledge, given that his own eye-witness testimony, concerning such issues as public hangings and the conditions in workhouses, powerfully influenced public opinion and government policy. We can say the same about many writers who have borne witness to social realities and customs. Montaigne, George

testimony be described as "the *imparting* of facts" but students' as "sharing knowledge" (Fisher, 2011, p. 92)? The sharing of knowledge is a component of teaching and of classroom discourse in general as it is of speech genres such as conversation and dialogue. Advocates of critical reasoning should recognize the extent to which testimony is a crucial component of argumentative discourses (Tindale, 2015, pp. 126 -147). Furthermore, informative teacher talk can be as varied and engaging as any classroom activity or discourse. This is not to deny that teachers sometimes speak dully and ineffectively: of course teachers need to communicate felicitously and to consider conscientiously the needs and nature of particular audiences. They also need to help those audiences to respond sensitively to a full range of speech genres or discourses.

Gradgrindian "facts" are incomprehensible when they are isolated from a living context, from a conversation or dialogue. Comprehension, and therefore reasonable acceptance, requires utterances to have relevance to a discourse in which the participants are both comfortable and engaged. In *Hard Times* Sissy Jupe cannot understand what is required of her because her first-hand knowledge of horses prevents her from connecting with the type of "facts" Gradgrind wants her to recite. She has never learned these in class (memorized them) because she she could not see what relevance the utterances that contained them, or that kind of discourse, had to her experience of horses and to her feelings concerning them. The kind of teaching approved by Gradgrind and M'Choamumchild *is* monological in the sense of being decontextualized, non-reciprocal, insensitive and unempathetic. What can you *do* with Gradgrindian facts except memorize and recite them? The

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Orwell and Primo Levi, for example, understood the importance of bearing witness to what they knew from experience, of testifying to knowledge.

aptly named Bitzer, who recites that a horse is a "graminivorous quadruped", has bits of terminology, not knowledge.

The mirror image of this polarization is reflected in books associated with the British policy think-tank Civitas: books such as *Progressively Worse* (2014) by Robert Peal, and *Inside the Secret Garden* (2007) by Tom Burkard, and also by the influential *Seven Myths About Education* (2014) by Daisy Christodoulou, published by the Curriculum Centre, an organization which, like Civitas, campaigns for a knowledge-based curriculum and against a progressivist pedagogy it claims has been imposed on generations of teachers by an educational elite whose real interest is egalitarianism and social engineering. Influenced by American educationalists such as Dan Willingham (2009) and E. D. Hirsch (1987), these writers all refer to the false identification by progressivists of traditional instruction with the rote learning of facts. Here is Robert Peal:

> The perception of a school's mission as the transfer of knowledge is deeply mistrusted by today's profession. Such a standpoint is seen as unforgivably old-fashioned and draws comparison with Thomas Gradgrind in Charles Dickens's *Hard Times*…"Education is not the filling of a vessel, but the lighting of a fire." Such thinking has entered the received wisdom of the modern teaching profession, where it is generally assumed that focusing lessons on "mere knowledge" and "rote learning" is poor practice, whilst developing greater powers, such as critical thinking, transferable skills or creativity is good practice. (Peal, 2014, p. 197)

Christodoulou also mentions how frequently teacher education literature associates knowledge-based teaching with Gradgrindian rote learning and the filling of "empty vessels" (2014, p. 13). She describes this as a progressivist prejudice traceable to the influence of Rousseau, Dewey, Freire, Piaget and Vygotsky. Three of the "myths" about education that she identifies are: 1) facts

prevent understanding; 2) teacher-led instruction is passive; 3) teaching knowledge is indoctrination.

Some of the points made in these books are trenchant, but when their criticisms are said to be supported by evidence from modern cognitive science on the nature of memory, they take for granted an underlying theory concerning epistemic terms such as "fact", "truth", "understanding" and "knowledge". Implicitly they associate learning with memory, thereby appearing to validate one pole of the dichotomy they claim to reject. Christodoulou quotes Dan Willingham:

> Data from the last thirty years lead to a conclusion that is not scientifically challengeable: thinking well requires knowing facts, and that's true not just because you need something to think about. The very processes that teachers care about most – critical thinking processes such as reasoning and problem solving – are intertwined with factual knowledge that is stored in long-term memory (not just found in the environment). (Willingham, 2009, p. 28; cited in Christodoulou, 2014, p. 21)

These writers are right to oppose a significant trend in schooling and in educational theory. As I showed in Chapter 1, the idea has been promoted that processes of learning and intellectual development are more concerned with "learning skills" and "competences" than with knowledge. However, the characterization of knowledge as *facts*, even when they are said to join together somehow to form a *schema* (Christodoulou, 2014, p. 20), and the identification of knowledge "acquisition" with memorization, is a serious misrepresentation of the kind of achievement that learning represents. Teachers have important and powerful knowledge to share with students and children *can* come to know by being taught – that is, by participating in a variety of ways in classroom discourses of various kinds. Learning cannot be a question of memory only, as Willingham

254

seems to suggest it is. Epistemological and linguistic considerations have to be brought into the discussion, including the sociocultural considerations that Christodoulou, Peal and others would presumably dismiss as "progressive". The idea that thinking well requires knowing "facts" requires a much more theoretically informed understanding of what might be meant by "knowing facts" in this context. A richer account of knowledge, knowing, comprehending, believing, language and communication requires a recognition that coming to know, for example on the basis of responding to the words of a teacher, is not just an individualistic feat of memory but an interpersonal achievement with normative criteria. Achieving knowledge and understanding is at the heart of education, but it is not a game of pass the parcel: it is an interpersonal social practice with linguistic and epistemic norms and conventions that we begin to learn as we begin to learn to speak.

§7.4 The Repertoire of Dialogic Pedagogy

Talk that is principally informative can engage our attention, our imaginations, our memories, our beliefs and our evaluative systems just as much as other kinds of talking and learning can. Criticisms of direct teacher instruction on the ground that it reinforces the teacher's authority as a transmitter of "received wisdom" is misdirected for several reasons: 1) because epistemic authority is a vital component of communication, 2) because knowledge is not "transmitted" in the way the criticisms imply, and 3) because the assumption that direct teacher instruction is inevitably accompanied by student passivity is false.

In his analysis of 800 meta-studies of the importance of direct teacher instruction, John Hattie discusses the value of direct teacher instruction, which he describes as follows:

> The teacher decides the learning intentions and success criteria, makes them transparent to the students, demonstrates them by modeling, evaluates if they understand what they have been told by checking for understanding, and re-telling them what they have been told by tying it all together with closure. (Hattie, 2009, p. 206)

According to Hattie's findings, 30% of the variance in students' achievements is due to differences in what teachers do, know and care about.[33] Hattie does not refer explicitly to the nature of teacher/student verbal interaction, but his description of direct teacher instruction is clearly multi-faceted; there is scope in it for student participation, clarification, questioning and challenge. There is no suggestion that the whole lesson is taken up with teacher exposition. Group work, open-ended discussion and inquiry could very well follow on from the platform provided by the teacher's initial talk, and it is clear that students' role during teacher instruction or exposition is not passive. As I have argued, comprehension/interpretation and epistemic acceptance require alert listening and sensitivity to what is implicated in the teacher's speech. This point is developed in the next section.

A Bakhtinian perspective on classroom talk suggests that whatever modes of interaction a teacher chooses, she exerts a measure of control over the structure and organization of discourse, with an orientation toward controlling what knowledge

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[33] 50% of the variance is due to students' prior cognitive abilities, disposition to learn and other attributes; and the remainder is due to home factors and to school policies and procedures.

is produced or toward structuring the ways in which knowledge is produced. Nystrand tells us that different modes of interaction position students as learners in different ways:

> Specific modes or genres of discourse engender particular epistemic roles for the conversants, and these roles, in turn, constrain, and empower their thinking. The bottom line for instruction is that the quality of student learning is closely linked to the quality of classroom talk. (Nystrand, 1997, p. 29)

Nystrand warns that it is not enough to code interactions as "teacher recitation" or "group work", or questions as "authentic" or "display": evaluating the quality of classroom talk demands detailed analysis of transcripts. Although he affirms the importance of more open and dialogic interactions, he acknowledges a role for teacher exposition to serve as platform for later activities.

Many studies have emphasized the potential of dialogic styles of pedagogy to enrich students' learning. Wells (1999), for example, emphasizes the potential of the teacher's feedback response in I-R-F (initiation-response-feedback) exchanges. These are sometimes disparaged as too teacher-led and inquisitorial, reinforcing "the teacher's authority as the transmitter of received wisdom" (Skidmore, 2007, p. 507), and restricting the scope for more thoughtful talk; but a teacher's response, Wells shows, can develop or clarify what the student has said. There can be further exchange of knowledge in a context of trust and reciprocity. So any questioning of the teacher's representation of herself as an authoritative knower in this context is beside the point. She *has* to be, and the nature of the dialogue would be different if she were not. The question should not be whether the teacher has epistemic

authority but whether she allows the students to represent themselves as having it when they speak from knowledge. This is a point that I will return to in §7.6.

In his international comparison of primary education, Robin Alexander (2001) analyses types of classroom discourse by considering:

a) classroom organization (whole class, group, individual);

b) pedagogic mode (direct instruction, discussion, monitoring);

c) pedagogic function (rote learning, instruction, scaffolding, assessment, information sharing, problem solving, supervision);

d) discourse form (interrogatory, expository, evaluative, dialogic).

Dialogic classroom discourse is distinguished from conversation by its *purposeful* questioning and pursuit of enquiry. Unlike direct teacher instruction, Alexander says, it recognizes students as thinkers in their own right. It does not treat them as "empty vessels" to be filled with received wisdom but fosters a "pedagogy of mutuality". In advocating this alongside interactions such as "scaffolded dialogue", Alexander underpins his analysis, and his conclusion that teachers need to be able to draw on a repertoire of approaches and discourses, with both Bakhtinian and Vygotskian theory.

Hattie shows that good teaching matters, Nystrand, Wells and Alexander argue for a more dialogical style of pedagogy, and they all acknowledge that teachers need a repertoire of approaches. Nevertheless, I think there is a tendency to underestimate the linguistic and epistemological achievement in learning by talking and listening. As I have shown in previous chapters, authority and trust are connected as ineliminable features of informative speech acts and genres. When the

teacher tells students things, when students tell the teacher things, and when students tell each other things, their exchanges take place in an epistemic environment where, when things are going well, there is an ethos of trust, reciprocity and challenge, where students speak and listen with the skill, sensitivity and sophistication appropriate to their cognitive and linguistic development, exercising optimal vigilance in the way they interpret and respond to what others tell them. Writers who draw on sociocultural and dialogistic theories that emphasize the social nature of speaking and thinking should also recognize the epistemic and linguistic commitments and responsibilities of all the participants. This is important if what we want is for students to be conscientious, rational *knowers* as well as confident believers.

Dialogistic and sociocultural theories of pedagogy need to be informed by a socialized epistemology that: a) is responsive to the pragmatics of language, b) incorporates a notion of autonomy founded on self-trust and integrity, c) emphasizes the role of intellectual conscientiousness and virtue in epistemic and linguistic achievements.

§7.5 Contesting the Passivity Criticism

Passivity is a common criticism of pedagogy characterized as consisting predominantly of informative "teacher talk", whereas dialogical teaching is commended for being active. Dialogical teaching, Tasos Kazepides writes, is the most suitable manner of educating the young because "it engages and energizes the students and makes them active participants – not passive receivers" (2010, p. 89). My contention is there while there may well be a valid distinction between active

and passive teaching and learning, it does not lie between telling and discussing. When teachers drone on while students allow the words to pass by without alert comprehension, there is not passivity but an utter failure of communication. Successful communication of any kind implies both comprehension and sensitivity to what is being said, and this cannot be a passive process on the receiver's part because it involves layers of judgement. If it is an information-giving communication there are epistemic and interpretative judgements to be made, about the plausibility of the content or the trustworthiness of the speaker, or both. We consciously separate these judgements only when we are aware of some infelicity or are alerted to some potential defeater.

Learning achieved via the social practice of exchanging knowledge through verbal utterances, where the speaker sensitively adapts what she wants to say to the addressee, taking his existing knowledge into account, speaking sincerely and as accurately as the context demands, and where the hearer comprehends the utterance through, perhaps, a degree of semantic decoding but very largely through contextual interpretation, processing it for optimal relevance, in many cases making a judgement about whether or not he trusts the speaker to be offering an authoritative and sincere assurance of the truth of the utterance – is the result of intersubjectivity. We "find our voice" as testifiers, in a community of testifiers, by learning to trust others, and by being trusted ourselves to make sense, to mean what we say, to say what we mean, to speak the truth. In fact, sharing knowledge is a paradigmatic intersubjective social practice. The fact that teachers sometimes dominate classroom discourse in an irresponsible and insensitive fashion does not justify the characterization of testimonial practices in the classroom as essentially monological and their reception as passive. A conversation between friends is not

monological when one person "holds the floor" and the others pay attention, comprehend and participate as active listeners, "back-channeling" through eye-contact and body-language – and especially when the potential for interruption, turn-taking, questioning and challenging are implicated by the context and the style of dialogue.[34] The same is true in the classroom.

An important reason why it is misleading to disparage learning from testimony as passive is that (as we saw in Chapter 6) there is a plurality of testimonial speech acts, so the identification of the particular speech act employed, and therefore the recognition of the expectations and commitments it implicates, is key to the interpretative and epistemic evaluations and judgements the hearer is required to make. If meanings were straightforwardly encoded in words and sentences, and if "tellings" were always simple assertions indicated by the use of the declarative mood, their comprehension might be regarded as relatively straightforward and passive, a kind of programmed decoding; but that is not how communication works.

In the context of the classroom and of a lesson taught by a conscientious specialist with a sensitivity to the background knowledge and linguistic competency of her students, it will generally be the case that the teacher speaks from knowledge and offers the students assurance that they can trust her for the truth – trust, that is, that what she tells them is both relevant and true enough for their current purposes. Crucially, the conscientious student's comprehension cannot be passive because he has to grasp what the teacher is really *saying*, what her point or meaning is. In the case of "tellings" of one kind or another, he has to grasp what the teacher is really *telling* him. As meaning is not simply a matter of what is

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[34] See Goffman (1981), especially chapters 1 - 3, for a perceptive account of these and related features of speech. The book also includes an interesting chapter on lectures.

encoded in the words and syntax, the student always has to interpret, to process the teacher's utterance with the help of his accumulated knowledge and experience of communication, contexts and people (including this teacher). *This* is not a passive process, but if the student is passive in the sense of not paying sufficient attention, if he is linguistically or epistemically passive, communication and learning will be impaired and may fail completely.

A good teacher interacts with her audience, even when mainly sharing information or knowledge, for she is conscientious in implicating ways in which she expects the audience to respond to her. If she *asserts*, the expectation is acceptance or belief of the content; so it is with *assurance*, but by a different route, with additional personal commitments and guarantees. If the students are paying attention, given an appropriate degree of sophistication and sensitivity in their use and interpretation of language, their processing of the talk will be both epistemically responsible and cognitively engaged. Implicitly or explicitly they are in a dialogue with the teacher. It is not the case that teacher exposition or instruction, what Skidmore dismisses as "monologic recitation…with the aim of transmitting knowledge" (2007, p. 504), requires the students to memorize rather than to think.

Classroom talk and activities of all kinds are infused with tellings, with informative utterances, with examples of participants speaking from knowledge. In group discussions, for example, students explore ideas but they also share information. One person will tell another something that he did not previously know. Each instance will be a speech act of a particular kind. The hearer interprets the utterance in context. He may have to make an epistemic judgment, whether to believe it or not, which may involve a judgement concerning the speaker's

reliability and/or trustworthiness; and he may also have to make a judgement about whether, in the context, it would be appropriate to question or challenge the speaker. Sometimes it is better not to interrupt the conversation, or better not to trigger the reactive attitudes (resentment, for example) that questions, challenges and disbelief can trigger. Once again, sensitive judgement is required. We cannot restrict notions of epistemic and linguistic responsibility in responding to others to isolatable knowledge claims. The development of sensitive and responsible *judgement* in responding to informative speech acts and genres is, or should be, an important curricular aim: it is one of the aims, surely, of the study of literature and drama, and of the whole range of classroom discussion and group work.

§7.6 Student Voice and Epistemic Justice

My argument suggests we all need to be acknowledged and trusted as knowers, as competent tellers of truths and "speakers from knowledge". For children this is important for their development as conscientious, rational thinkers and communicators, people capable of making not only autonomous but also informed and wise judgements. It is therefore the responsibility of teachers to ensure that *epistemic justice* is achieved in the course of a continuing dialogue. Pedagogic styles and a school's curriculum should aim at developing the cognitive and linguistic capacities, and the intellectual virtues - sensitivity to language, integrity in communication, responsibility and consistency in epistemic judgement - that allow students to talk and learn successfully in dialogue with others.

The idea of epistemic justice has been explored by philosophers such as Miranda Fricker (2007) and José Medina (2013). My argument connects epistemic

justice with both virtue epistemology and the concept of student voice. Epistemic justice in the classroom is not just a question of whether the "voices" of students are *heard* sufficiently: it is a question of acknowledging all students as knowers and testifiers in their own right. We have seen how successful communication depends on speakers being sensitive and responsible in their choice of speech acts. It is important that they implicate the commitments and expectations that will allow their hearers to comprehend and accept what they are saying. We have also seen that hearers too have responsibilities, both linguistic and epistemic, and that their role is not passive. The speaker is entitled to feel resentful when a hearer disrupts the conventions of the speech act or genre to challenge or reject what she has assured him she knows. Miranda Fricker identifies this as a particular kind of epistemic injustice: "testimonial injustice". This occurs when a hearer fails to grant the speaker the credibility she deserves. Often such failures are relatively minor, but sometimes they are significant and are due to prejudice. Fricker makes her case with examples from literature, including the account in Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mocking Bird* of the injustice suffered by Tom Robinson, a black man accused of assaulting a young white woman. The men on the all-white jury reject Tom's testimony: they are unable to bring themselves to assign greater credibility to a black man than to a young white woman (who herself would come low down in the hierarchy of credibility in this small town). This is a case of systematic testimonial injustice because the prejudice concerns the individual's social identity. Fricker also discusses cases that are based on sexism and on other kinds of prejudice. She argues that identity-based prejudice is especially pernicious because it "renders one susceptible not only to testimonial injustice but to a gamut of different injustices, and so is systematically connected with other kinds of actual or potential injustice"

(Fricker, 2007, p. 27). Testimonial injustice leads to the victims of identity prejudice not being given a fair hearing, but it can also lead to a systematic undermining of victims' self-confidence and trust in their own epistemic judgements. Also, where there is epistemic injustice there is epistemic privilege, the overestimation of a speaker's credibility due to their social or occupational position.[35]

In *The Epistemology of Resistance: Gender and Racial Oppression, Epistemic Injustice, and Resistant Imaginations* (2013), José Medina emphasizes also the epistemic loss to the *perpetrators* of the injustice. When victims of identity prejudice suffer systematic epistemic injustice as speakers they can actually end up in a better position epistemically than the perpetrators. They are oppressed, but at least they are likely to know that they are: resistance is possible. The perpetrators, on the other hand, are unknowing victims – victims of "active ignorance" and a set of epistemic vices that they have absorbed from their upbringing and education: epistemic arrogance, laziness and closed-mindedness.

In a way, the perpetrators of epistemic injustice suffer from Fricker's second variety of epistemic injustice, "hermeneutical injustice", where victims suffer an *intelligibility deficit* that stems from belonging to a particular social group or point in history that does not have access to the interpretive resources required to make sense of certain social experiences. Speakers, such as teachers and students, are undermined in the case of testimonial injustice as givers of knowledge; in the case

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[35] This was, for example, the case in the England of Locke and the early days of the Royal Society, when, according to Shapin (1994), norms governing scientific credibility were based on codes of honour current among "gentlemen". Richard Holmes (2008) recounts how the astronomer William Herschel, a lowly organist at a chapel in Bath, suffered epistemic injustice in struggling to get his scientific claims taken seriously by the epistemically arrogant gentlemen in London, including his claim to have discovered a "new" planet (Uranus). After his eventual acceptance, his sister Caroline, who contributed to the discoveries, continued to be disregarded.

of hermeneutical injustice, they are undermined in their capacity for intelligible social experience.[36]

These arguments from Fricker and Medina have powerful pedagogical implications. It may seem exaggerated to think of school students (and sometimes school teachers) as victims of epistemic injustice, but I think this *is* one of the implications of my account of testimony in relation to education. I do not just mean that teachers should enhance the development of intellectual virtues such as epistemic humility, curiosity/diligence, and open-mindedness, although I think this would contribute to overcoming prejudices in relation to credibility deficits and surfeits. I mean, also, that ethically, epistemically and pedagogically students should be given a variety of opportunities in which to be both receivers and producers of testimony. I see this as an extension of the notion of student voice.

I will say a little more about intellectual virtues before I develop the point about student voice. Philosophers who have written on intellectual virtues include Linda Zagzebski (1996) and Jason Baehr (2011). They tend to present intellectual virtue as having an epistemological role, albeit as one with close links to character-based ethics. This is true also of philosophers of education, such as Hugh Sockett (2012), who have written about intellectual virtues in relation to teaching.

Sockett categorises intellectual virtues as virtues of character (trustworthiness, sincerity), of intellect (truthfulness, clarity, impartiality), of care (tolerance, tact, compassion, civility) and of personhood (integrity). It is important,

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[36] A dystopian account of systematic epistemic injustice is depicted in George Orwell's novel *Nineteen Eight-Four,* in which only the "proles" are permitted any capacity to exchange information with a degree of confidence, but they are victims of a systematic intelligibility deficit and are unable to frame questions about their present situation or about the past. The disintegration of trust and free discourse has led to the distortion of the concepts of truth and knowledge shown in O'Brien's attempt to "persuade" Winston to love Big Brother.

Sockett argues, that teachers both exemplify and teach intellectual virtues. I agree; however, I do not see the importance as purely to do with the virtues' role in epistemic justification (Zagzebski), or, in a weaker version, epistemic reliability or evidentialism (Baehr). Intellectual virtues relate to our orientation to other people, especially with regard to information-providing communication. They apply to comprehension and interpretation as well as to acceptance or belief. They also apply to our dialogues with ourselves, our reflections on self-trust and the coherent integration of our acceptances with our preferences (discussed in in Chapter 5 in relation to Lehrer's coherentism). Integrity is the virtue of responsible integration, bringing various considerations together in a reasonable and responsible judgment. Many of these judgements are judgements concerning trust and credibility. An aspect of integrity not to be overlooked is the integrity we display in the way we formulate and communicate our thoughts, ideas and knowledge.[37]

The relevance of these ideas to education, and specifically to schooling, is clear. A teacher who promotes or tolerates epistemic injustice, or who displays epistemic arrogance, is not a teacher in whom a student can have complete trust. It is a contradiction of the role. Nor is an education system that does nothing to counter credibility deficits one that puts students in a testimonially or hermeneutically just position. But the relevance of the idea of epistemic injustice goes beyond points about how vices such as epistemic arrogance and closed-mindedness restrict one's chances of learning from others, thereby weakening potential social bonds, although these are certainly important questions. The

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[37] For a detailed discussion of whether or not integrity is an epistemic, rather than a moral, virtue, see Scherkoske (2012). For a discussion of virtue epistemology in relation to the philosophy of education, and especially to the Hirst/Carr debate concerning philosophical knowledge about teaching, see MacAllister (2012.)

relevance extends also to the *developmental needs* of children as speakers and thinkers. If children are denied a voice as knowers and testifiers their intellectual and linguistic development is put at risk. This point can be approached by way of the debate concerning "student voice".

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Madeleine Arnot and Diane Reay remark: 'The umbrella of student voice hides a diverse and complex alliance of reform agendas" (2007, p. 311). Their own perspective is sociological and they are interested in what they call, following Bernstein (2000), "the sociology of pedagogic voice", and in "the elicitation of suppressed, inner and outer voices". They conclude that whatever the types of talk in the classroom, students speak in "the voice of pedagogy". They recommend researchers to discriminate more subtly types of talk and the relationships between pedagogic voices and social identities. The communicative procedures embedded in teaching create the pedagogic voices that pupils employ. Like other researchers of student voice, Arnot and Reay urge caution in relation to the potential for student participation and consultation, as exemplified by school councils, to overcome the strong boundaries between teachers and students.[38] The process of consultation is not substantially different from other pedagogic encounters, and students who have a "voice", who are the ones consulted and listened to, are "well-behaved", "ideal" students, who in the context of a dominant regulative discourse become enlisted in the project of social control. There is a danger, therefore, that the process of pupil consultation is one that hides the social stratificational aspects

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[38] For similar points with regard to student voice, see: Whitty and Wisby (2007), Ruddock and Flutter (2000), Thornberg (2010), Fielding and McGregor (2005).

of schooling. The mask of neutrality repositions responsibility for learning with the pupil rather than with the teaching. Thus, although student consultation appears democratic, it is a clearly bounded pedagogic event (Arnot and Reay, 2007, p. 322).

Arnot and Reay's caution about student voice, participation and consultation is reflected in other studies. For example, Whitty and Wisby (2007) discuss the various drivers of student voice policies and practices, such as the requirement to respect children's rights, encouraging active citizenship by participation in democratic practices, promoting school improvement by consulting pupils, personalization and consumer choice. While many schools see student voice, and school councils, as *empowering* students, teachers commonly cited improvement of the school facilities and environment as the main driver.

Student voice has fallen short of its potential to transform relationships within schools. Michael Fielding (2003) sees student voice as having the potential to contribute to "a future that is more engaging, more imaginative, more just, more democratic" (p. 296), but he warns of the danger of reducing big questions about the nature of education and the good life to narrow questions about effective schooling. Writers who claim to speak about or for a particular social group need to be aware of the danger of "the extent to which social location or identity shapes the way they see and understand the world " (p. 299). Drawing on Alcoff (1991/92) and Lincoln (1993), Fielding argues that traditional epistemologies cannot capture minority voices. "We can only hesitantly speak on behalf of others significantly unlike ourselves because we lack, not only understanding, but the means to understand those whose interests and causes we would represent" (p. 300). Alcoff herself draws on Foucault's attention to the "rituals of speaking", the different aspects of social reality that constitute the discursive context in which meaning is

made. "Who is speaking for whom turns out to be as important for meaning and truth as what is said; in fact what is said turns out to change according to who is speaking and who is listening…How what is said gets heard depends on who says it, and who says it will affect the style and language in which it is stated, which will in turn affect its perceived significance" (Alcoff, 1991/2, pp. 12/13; cited by Fielding, 2003, p. 300). Social location, or identity, may not determine meaning and truth, Fielding says, but it has a bearing on both. One of his fears is that student voice policies and research may simply reinforce the status quo. "There are some voices we wish to hear and others we do not and in dismissing those that seem to us too strident, too offensive or too irresponsible we may often miss things of importance and of a deeper seriousness that our first impressions allow" (p. 303).

Fielding goes on to discuss what he calls the "dialogic alternative". Simply to allow students to speak for themselves is to treat the inclusion of students' voices as "unproblematically insightful and liberating" (p. 305). Instead we need to explore the possibility of constructing new opportunities for "dialogic encounter", taking students into genuine partnership as collaborators and researchers, with, ideally, the students identifying issues for investigation. "The strength of dialogue is in its mutuality. Its transformative potential lies in its reciprocity because it is in these kinds of person-centred…arrangements that trust and creativity are most likely to grow" (p. 308).

The potential of student voice to bring about more equal relationships is not realized when it fails to transcend embedded power relationships concerning who says what to whom, when and how, especially when it has been conscripted in the cause of school effectiveness. I think, however, that there is an important dimension that is missing from this debate: the students' epistemic right and

developmental need to be trusted as knowers. Fielding anticipates a dialogic

alternative in which trust and creativity can grow, but trusting students as speakers

must go beyond seeking their opinions or perspectives. It must include their being

trusted to be speakers from knowledge, speakers who frame what they say

reasonably, responsibly and sensitively, in utterances that allow their hearers to

comprehend their commitments and responsibilities, and to respond appropriately.

How else can the discourses of school life, and of the classroom, give young people

the experience of trust and mutuality that underpin the practices of learning from

and with others? Except by taking epistemic risks in a potentially challenging but

supportive arena, how can they rehearse and develop their rational commitments,

their conscientious responsiveness to reasons, their integrity in maintaining a

coherent, harmonious, trustworthy scheme of acceptances and preferences? How

else can they come to trust their own judgments about whom to trust for the truth

and their own trustworthiness as testifiers?

No doubt giving students opportunities to speak from knowledge does not

provide all the answers to the concerns raised by Fielding and others; my claim is

that this is a dimension of student voice that demands attention, especially in a

context of a concern for democracy and justice.

Paul Standish (2004), commenting on the "oddity" of the term "student

voice" (rather than "my voice", "her voice", etc.), suggests that "voice" is a

metonym for "something like authenticity": I would add "something like

authority". The student's authenticity lies, in part, in what she can authoritatively

give voice to, what she can expect others to accept from her assertions and

assurances: her knowledge. Not all such verbal exchanges will be comfortable or

consensual: genuine dialogue requires challenge and resistance as well as trust and reciprocity.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

Let us return now to Fricker's account of epistemic justice and see if we can find further support for my argument in her approach to testimonial justice and intellectual virtue.

Fricker refers to the primary and secondary practical and epistemic effects of testimonial injustice. The primary effect is *dishonour*: "When one is wrongfully mistrusted, regardless of whether it is one's competence or one's sincerity that is being impugned, one is dishonoured" (M. Fricker, 2007, p. 46). To have one's competence or sincerity impugned is a personal insult, and in cases where the injustice is due to a prejudicial stereotype, it is degradation of our social identity.[39] Fricker refers to cases where testimony is offered but not trusted; I think we can extend that to cases where testimony is not *sought*. I am thinking, of course, of the pedagogical situation where students are not required to be knowers – knowers, that is, not just in the limited sense of people who are asked to display what they have learned, as exam candidates are, but in the sense of people who can testify to things that others do not know, who have an authority or expertise in respect of a

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[39] Fricker finds support in Hobbes's *Leviathan*:

> When wee believe any saying whatsoever it be, to be true, from arguments taken, not from the thing itself, or from the principles of natural Reason, but from the Authority, and good opinion wee have, of him that hayth sayd it; then is the speaker, or the person we believe in, or trust in, and whose word we take, the object of our Faith; and Honour done in Believing, is done to him onely. (Hobbes, 1991, Chapter 7, pp. 48-49; cited in M. Fricker, 2007, p. 46)

certain topic, and whose knowledge might contribute to further collaborative exploration. To be wronged in this way is to be wronged as an informant and potential provider of knowledge.

Fricker's secondary effects relate to the harm done to a person whose confidence is so undermined that he ceases to satisfy the conditions for knowledge, or, longer-term, whose experience of persistent testimonial injustice leads her to "lose confidence in her general intellectual abilities to such an extent that she is genuinely hindered in her educational or other intellectual development" (*ibid.*, p. 48). Someone who is caused to suffer prolonged self-doubt, and thereby loses the confidence that is a condition of knowing, is undermined not only as a testifier to knowledge but also as an acquirer of knowledge. From the point of view of the account I have offered in Chapters 5 and 6, I would relate this point to the "keystone" role of self-trust in epistemic justification and to the role of reciprocal trust in successful speech and comprehension of any kind. Students who are undermined as knowers are undermined as rational (reasonable and responsible) thinkers, capable of achieving an optimally coherent conceptual scheme and of framing thoughts in optimally relevant and efficient utterances. Their integrity, authenticity and autonomy are undermined.

Interestingly, Fricker herself refers to Lehrer's coherentism and to self-trust as equivalent to epistemic confidence (*ibid.*, fn 20, p. 49). She also develops her account of how a general loss of epistemic confidence might lead to a persistent failure to gain knowledge due to its effect on the development of virtues such as epistemic courage. Commenting on the extensive epistemic harm that the loss of such a virtue could do, Fricker says:

> The value of an intellectual virtue is not reducible to the value of those particular items of knowledge it might bring, but derives also from its place in the harmony of a person's overall intellectual character, a harmony which is spoiled by the loss of intellectual confidence that persistent intellectual injustice can cause. (*Ibid*, p. 50)

This is close to what I understand by "integrity". Fricker relates it to the process that Bernard Williams calls "steadying the mind". It is by a process of mutually trustful dialogue with others that the mind becomes settled:

> The basic mechanism depends on the fact that there are others who need to rely on our dispositions, and we want them to be able to rely on our dispositions because we, up to a point, want to rely on theirs. We learn to present ourselves to others, and consequently also to ourselves, as people who have modestly steady outlooks or beliefs…[The subject] is engaged in trustful conversation with another who relies on him, and the question is whether he can give that person to believe his proposition. In doing that, he may well, in such a case give himself to believe it as well. It is the presence and needs of others that help us to construct even our factual beliefs. (Williams, 2002, p. 194. Fricker, p. 52)

This connection of knowledge with trustful dialogue takes us back to Bakhtin and to dialogic pedagogy. Dialogic encounters include those in which knowledge is shared by a process of mutual trust. Teachers need to monitor the rationality and consistency of their students' rational commitments and claims, and to help them (by sensitive questioning and skillfully devised tasks) to recognize their implications and ramifications. But teachers *also* need to develop students' rational, conscientious self-trust as both providers and receivers of testimony. To undermine this self-trust is to disturb the steadying of the mind, to inhibit learning and the process of identity-formation, of achieving authentic selfhood. Fricker observes:

274

"The process by which the mind is steadied is the process by which we may become who we deeply, perhaps essentially, are" (p. 53).

§7.7 Concluding Remarks

My argument has emphasized the linguistic and epistemic commitments and responsibilities of teachers as providers of knowledge via testimonial speech acts. A conscientious teacher has the responsibility to ensure more than that the classroom is a reliable epistemic environment in terms of what the students hear from her and of how they learn to respond to the range of sources of information.[40] She also has the responsibility to ensure that the classroom is an epistemically just environment for all students. This should be seen as a precondition of dialogic practices, including group discussions and enquiries. Such a conclusion takes us some way beyond the sterile traditionalist-progressivist debates about the curriculum and toward a pedagogy that confidently embraces a wide range of speech acts and genres and that emphasizes the developmental role of students learning to respond with linguistic and epistemic sensitivity, self-trust and responsibility to the authoritative testimony of teachers and fellow students.

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[40] As David Coady discusses in his 2012 book, *What To Believe Now,* rumour-mongering, whistle-blowing, the leaking of classified information and conspiracy theories are features of the epistemic environment in which children are coming to maturity as knowers and testifiers. I think my strategy of bringing the epistemology of testimony into a dialogic encounter with pragmatics and dialogism has the potential to make a useful contribution to the discussion of the implications for education of new technologies and information sources.

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