

**TAKE MY WORD FOR IT:  
A NEW APPROACH TO THE PROBLEM OF SINCERITY IN THE EPISTEMOLOGY OF  
TESTIMONY**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Masters in Philosophy  
Rhodes University

by Therese Dewhurst

June 2010

## **Abstract**

The epistemological problem of sincerity in testimony is often approached in the following way: We, as a matter of fact, accept utterances as sincere. We do so in the face of knowledge that people lie and deceive, and yet we still count these beliefs as good beliefs. Therefore there must be some reason or argument that we can cite in order to justify our acceptance of the sincerity of the speaker. In this thesis I will argue, contra this, that there is no reason, per se, that justifies our acceptance of a speaker's sincerity: this is because recognition of the obligation to accept the sincerity is a necessary condition on the possibility of communication and interpretation.

In the first three chapters of the thesis I will argue against three of the main approaches to the problem by focusing on what I believe to be the strongest accounts of each: Elizabeth Fricker's reductionism, Tyler Burge's non-reductionism, and Paul Faulkner's trust account of testimony. In the final chapter I will put forward my positive account. I will argue that it is a constitutive rule of language that a speaker be sincere, and then make the further claim, that it is a constitutive rule of interpretation that the hearer take an utterance as sincere. On my account, successful communication does not just depend on a speaker making sincere utterances, but, just as importantly, on the hearer recognising an obligation to take those utterances as being sincere.

## Contents

	Page
<b>Introduction</b> .....	1
<b>Chapter One</b>	
Section One: An outline of Elizabeth Fricker’s local reductionism.....	7
Section Two: The epistemological flaw in her account.....	11
Section Three: The conceptual problem in her account.....	17
<b>Chapter Two</b>	
Section One: An outline of Tyler Burge’s non-reductionism.....	21
Section Two: A criticism of his second premise.....	27
<b>Chapter Three</b>	
Section One: H.P. Grice on meaning and Richard Moran’s assurance view of testimony.....	35
Section Two: Paul Faulkner’s trust account of testimony, and an objection to it.....	37
Section Three: Angus Ross and a proposed solution to the problems facing these views.....	42
<b>Chapter Four:</b>	
Section One: The Sincerity Rules: SSR and HSR.....	50
Section Two: A defense of the obligation as epistemologically significant.....	60
Section Three: Conclusion.....	63
<b>Further research</b> .....	67
<b>Bibliography</b> .....	69

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank, above all, my supervisor Ward Jones, who has patiently advised me through all my confusions and frustrations, and helped me to articulate my ideas, whilst giving reliable and constructive criticism. I would also like to thank those who have discussed my thesis with me in depth, giving me helpful criticism and insightful comments: Jeremy Wanderer, David Ryan, John Williams, Rosa Terlazzo, and my husband, Daniel Malamis.

## Introduction

Why do we believe what we are told? How does language work as a means of communicating knowledge? How is it possible for a person's articulation of a proposition to bring a hearer to believe that proposition? What is the epistemic status of the hearer's resulting belief in that proposition? Is the belief justified *a priori*, *a posteriori* or in some other way, or not justified at all? How can we reconcile the fact that a large proportion of our beliefs are based on the testimony of others, with the knowledge that people can lie, or be mistaken. If it is possible that in any instance of testimony a speaker may be lying, why should we take her to be being sincere? These sorts of questions constitute the problems facing epistemologists of testimony.

What does not seem up for question is that we do tend to accept testimony, and we do count the resulting beliefs as good beliefs. My belief that the Earth is round, that Mount Everest is the highest mountain in the world, and that Christopher Columbus reached America in 1492 are all based on testimony. Everything that I believe about my friends and family (that I have not experienced of or with them) I believe based on their testimony. My beliefs based on testimony do not seem to be in any way weaker than my beliefs based on other sources such as memory of perception, in fact sometimes the beliefs that I have through other sources can be brought into doubt through the testimony of others. I may be sure that I saw an old friend across the street, but if I am told, later on, that she is in India, that belief will be called into doubt. It seems that testimony is a trusted source of belief.

So the job of the epistemologist is to show *why* we take testimony to be a good source of belief. The majority of the approaches to testimony so far have set out to identify the justification that we have for accepting testimony. The *reductionists* argue that our justification for accepting testimony reduces to other forms of evidence, claiming that it is inference or empirical evidence that justifies our acceptance of testimony. The *non-reductionists* argue that testimony does not reduce to other forms of evidence, and that testimony offers its own kind of justification, irreducible to other sources of belief. The *trust* and *assurance* views on testimony claim that we accept testimony as a good source of belief because of the unique nature of the act of telling and that our justification arises out of the intentions and responsibilities of the speaker.

These approaches argue that we have a positive reason to accept testimony as being both *sincere* and *accurate*. This distinction intuitively reflects the idea that in order for the proposition expressed to be true, it needs to be the case that the speaker is being sincere (not lying) and is competent (not

mistaken).<sup>1</sup> In this thesis I will be dealing specifically with the question of *sincerity*, and the epistemic status of our acceptance of utterances as sincere. What I will argue, contra these views, is that we do not need a positive justification for accepting an utterance as sincere, but instead that there is a standing defeasible obligation to take communicative utterances as sincere. I will argue that we should take a speaker as being sincere, not because we have a good epistemic reason for believing that she is not lying, but rather because we *should* presume she is being sincere, when there is no reason to doubt it, because this is required of us as language users.

I will argue that the possibility of language as a means to communication requires that its users recognise certain rules. Language only functions as a means to communication if there is a recognised common ground between its users. There are rules that must be recognised in order for it to be possible for us to communicate with one another.<sup>2</sup> My aim is to argue here that one of these rules is that we take utterances to be sincere unless there are reasons to suppose otherwise.

In the first three chapters of this thesis I will discuss a proponent of each of the major approaches to testimony – reductionism, non-reductionism, and the trust or assurance view. I will argue that there are good reasons to reject them as unsatisfactory accounts of our justification for acceptance of a speaker's sincerity. In the final chapter I will develop my own view, defending the claim that there is a standing defeasible obligation to take utterances as sincere.

David Hume is considered to be the first major reductionist about testimony. He argued:

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.<sup>3</sup>

For Hume, our justification for accepting the word of others lies in our past experience of testimony being a reliable source of belief. This justification is global, in the sense that it is a claim about the *general reliability* of testimony that justifies our acceptance of each instance of testimony. C.A.J. Coady argued comprehensively and, I think, successfully, against this kind of justification being sufficient, claiming (amongst other objections) that it is just not within the capabilities of a normal human being to check on the reliability of testimony in general (without depending on testimony to do it).

---

<sup>1</sup> Fricker 1994

<sup>2</sup> Of course there is much in the philosophy of language discussing just these ideas, but I think I can work on the basic assumption that communicative language is necessarily publically recognised – that it could not be a language if its users did not know how it was used.

<sup>3</sup> Hume 1777

It is for this reason that I have chosen Elizabeth Fricker to represent the reductionist view of testimony in my first chapter, because her claim is much more plausible than the strictly Humean view. She is what she calls a 'local reductionist', arguing that the reasons we have for accepting testimony are empirical and specific to each instance of testimony. She is a reductionist because she still holds that accepting a speaker's utterance is not justified merely in the hearing of the testimony, but rather that we require positive (non-testimonial) evidence to give us that justification. However, she avoids the problems of global reductionism by claiming that we do not need to know that testimony in general is reliable, but only that each specific instance of testimony is reliable. We need evidence to the fact that each speaker is trustworthy.

In Chapter Two I discuss Tyler Burge's non-reductionist account of our entitlement to accept the word of others. I have chosen Burge to represent the non-reductionists, because although Coady was perhaps the first recent proponent of non-reductionism, I find Burge's account more intuitively compelling. Coady, in his book *Testimony: A Philosophical Study*<sup>4</sup> argues against Humean reductionism. He argues that Hume's account is not only wrong because it requires too much of the hearer, but also because it allows for the possibility that personal investigation could reveal that testimony was in fact unreliable, and this he believes to be impossible. Instead, he argues, testimony is necessarily reliable: language could not exist if it were not the case that most utterances in a language were true.

However, I believe that Coady's story, though perhaps true, does not do the epistemological work it needs to do in order justify our acceptance of testimony. A necessary connection between language use and the truth of assertions within that language does not, I believe, establish an epistemological connection between hearing an utterance and actually *taking* it to be true. As P.J. Graham argues in 'The Reliability of Testimony'<sup>5</sup>, even if we grant that testimony is necessarily reliable, this does not justify our acceptance of it. It just does not seem to be the case that the reason I accept a particular utterance that *p* to be true is because I know that most utterances within a language need to be true in order for language to exist. It is still the case that I know that people can lie and deceive – a general reliability claim about testimony is not enough to justify my acceptance of each instance of testimony.

The question he should ask is whether *taking* an utterance as a report or an assertion and coming to *believe* something on the basis of so taking is necessarily reliable. That is, the relevant question is whether *linguistic acceptance*, and not reporting, is necessarily reliable.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Coady 1992

<sup>5</sup> Graham 2000

<sup>6</sup> Graham 2000: 707

Tyler Burge, on the other hand, argues that we are entitled to accept testimony upon hearing it because there is an *a priori prima facie* connection between an intelligible source of belief and truth. This claim is more fitting with the intuition that there is a direct connection between hearing an utterance and taking it to be sincere. Upon understanding an utterance a hearer has a reason to accept what has been said, not because of reliance on a transcendental truth about the possibility of language, but something more specific to that instance of testimony.

In Chapter Three I discuss Paul Faulkner's trust view of testimony in the most depth, but I also draw on Richard Moran's thesis on assurance and Angus Ross' theory of the rules of language use. I have chosen Faulkner as the main proponent of the trust view of testimony, because his view takes the trust account of testimony to its logical conclusion. He maintains that if taking the word of others is a matter of trusting a person, and not relying on evidence, then the reasons we have for accepting the testimony of others emerge out of a fuller understanding of what it means to trust. We trust people in an essentially different way to the way we trust objects, that is, we trust affectively. And it is understanding how this affective trust works that leads Faulkner to claim that this is the source of our entitlement to accept the word of others.

In the final chapter I defend my own view on why we should take utterances to be sincere, a view that I believe avoids the kinds of objections that face the approaches I discuss in the preceding chapters. I argue that our acceptance of an utterance as sincere is not justified with positive epistemic reasons. I argue that there is, instead, a standing defeasible obligation to take utterances as sincere. This means that when there are no reasons to think that a speaker might be being insincere, we should default to acceptance of sincerity, and that if we do *not* default to acceptance, we are doing something epistemically wrong. This obligation I call the HSR – the Hearer Sincerity Rule, it is the rule that hearers should take speakers as being sincere unless there are reasons to suppose otherwise.

The aim of this thesis is to present a different way of understanding the hearer's commitment to the sincerity of an utterance. It is to look critically at some of the views that have been put forward, and offer a solution to the problems that seem to face them. I argue that each of the approaches is unsuccessful in positing a justification for our acceptance of utterances as sincere. I hope that my theory can offer a plausible account of why we should accept utterances as sincere *without recourse to arguments that are not strong enough to justify a presumption of sincerity*. In other words, I hope that

my theory can establish that it is epistemically responsible to accept an utterance as sincere, but without depending on an argument that is insufficient to justify that acceptance.

I also hope that my theory can maintain an intuitively plausible account of the relationship between hearing an utterance and accepting it as sincere. I believe that my account reflects our intuitions regarding the testimony of others, such that we tend to recognise that a speaker's utterance puts us under some kind of obligation to believe that they are not lying. When I am told that my exam begins at eight, I feel I should accept that my exam starts at eight (or at least that the informant is not lying that it is at eight). When we take a speaker's word for it we are not being gullible, or trusting blindly, we are doing what we *should* do.

I also believe the HSR applies more widely to communication in general, and not just to testimony. I believe that we have an obligation to presume that a speaker is actually (or sincerely) asking a question, or issuing a command, upon understanding an utterance in the form of a question or a command. The obligation requires a hearer to presume that the utterance has been motivated by the relevant mental state, whether it be to inform or to inquire or to instruct. Communication of beliefs and intentions and desires requires a recognised common ground – recognised rules. And one of these rules is the HSR.

However, the standing obligation to take utterances as sincere is *defeasible*. This means that the hearer is not under a *constant* obligation to believe that a speaker is being sincere – sometimes she has a reason to think he is lying, joking, being sarcastic; sometimes, even when there is no reason to think that he is being insincere, the risk is especially high, and the obligation may not hold. The obligation cannot serve as a justification for our acceptance of utterances as sincere *when it comes into question* whether or not we should take a particular speaker to be being sincere – but it can explain why we are doing the right thing, epistemically, when we *do* take a speaker as being sincere.

This means that when we are in a situation where we are not sure whether to believe the speaker or not, the obligation to follow the HSR cannot provide the required justification. So if a neighbour swears that she was abducted by aliens, the reasons we have to doubt her sincerity will defeat the obligation we have to believe her. The obligation to take a speaker as being sincere can be defeated by context, past experience, knowledge of the speaker's untrustworthiness, pre-existing beliefs, etc. The job of the HSR is not to provide the hearer with a reason for taking a speaker to be being sincere when there is reason to think that the speaker is being insincere. Instead the HSR is just a label for the rule that all language users must and do recognise, in order to count as language users.

The HSR is a constitutive rule of language; it is not an epistemic rule. It cannot answer the question ‘What reason do I have to believe that this speaker is not lying?’ as the other approaches I discuss attempt to do. It does not offer a positive reason to believe that any particular speaker is being sincere, as opposed to lying. The HSR is the rule that a hearer should believe that a particular speaker is being sincere, but this does *not* entail that the hearer has an epistemic reason to believe that a particular speaker is being sincere. However, I believe that the HSR is epistemologically significant nonetheless. I will suggest that the HSR is consistent with the idea that taking a speaker as being sincere is epistemologically basic, and by this I mean it requires no positive justification – as long as the hearer is aware of how things can go wrong, and is sufficiently responsive to these things, then, when there is no reason to think things *have* gone wrong, she is doing the epistemologically correct thing by taking a speaker as being sincere. And correspondingly, if she were to take a speaker as being insincere, for no reason, she would be being epistemically irresponsible.

My analysis of the other approaches to testimony has led me to realise that as long as there is no reason to suppose that the speaker is being insincere, we under an obligation to presume sincerity. If we do not recognise this obligation, then we cannot take part in the process of communication. My research has led me to appreciate that once we answer the question (asked at the beginning of the introduction) ‘How is it possible for a person’s articulation of a proposition to bring a hearer to believe that proposition?’, we no longer need to offer a positive story for why we are justified in taking a speaker to be being sincere.

\*\*\*

## Chapter One

Elizabeth Fricker defends a local reductionist approach to testimony. She is a reductionist because she believes that testimony reduces to other forms of evidence – our acceptance of testimony is justified through inference and perception, rather than having its own distinct type of justification. She is a *local* reductionist because she rejects the global reductionist or Humean view of testimony that depends on sweeping claims about the reliability of testimony in general. Rather she attempts to establish why we are justified in accepting *each particular instance* of testimony. Her claim is that in order for a hearer's acceptance of each instance of testimony to be justified, he must have positive evidence for the belief that, *in that instance*, the speaker is being both sincere and competent. In this chapter I will argue that this approach, as an attempt to overcome the problems facing global reductionism, fails in its aim to offer an alternative kind of positive justification for our acceptance of utterances as sincere.

The local reductionist claim that Fricker defends is the claim that each instance of testimony is justified individually by empirical evidence. One is not epistemically justified in accepting testimony unless one has evidence that this particular speaker is trustworthy. However, the explication that Fricker offers of the kind of evidence that is available to hearers cannot do the justifying job that her account requires it to. Her account depends, in the end, on an empirically established, contingent default to acceptance. Once I have argued that this default is epistemically problematic, I then argue that the default must, instead, be *necessary* and *a priori*.

In Section One I will outline Fricker's account of the epistemology of testimony; in Section Two, I will argue that her local reductionist account cannot succeed in justifying our acceptance of testimony as sincere; and in the final section I will argue that a different understanding of the default norm of acceptance is required, such that it is not empirical, or contingent.

### *Section One*

Fricker opposes the 'Presumptive Right' thesis that holds that a hearer is entitled to accept testimony upon hearing it, without other evidence. This is essentially the non-reductionist claim – that we do not require separate positive evidence to accept an utterance as sincere. It is her view that such an approach to testimony 'constitutes a charter for the gullible.'<sup>7</sup> If we have no evidence to support the belief that the speaker is trustworthy (that is, sincere and competent), then just to accept that he is

---

<sup>7</sup> Fricker 1994: 145

trustworthy is to be gullible. She claims that it is not rational to presume that a speaker is sincere and competent without evidence; she claims:

I would not like to be obliged to form beliefs in response to others' utterances in accordance with this presumption! [The presumption of sincerity and competence in a speaker] The proportion of utterances which are made by speakers who are either insincere or incompetent is far too high for this to be an attractive policy.<sup>8</sup>

In other words, simply accepting a speaker's word for it, without evidence of this particular speaker's sincerity or competence is breaking the epistemic precept: 'If a significant percentage of Fs are not G, one should not infer that X is G, merely from the fact that it is F.'<sup>9</sup> Fricker's claim is not that we cannot gain knowledge through testimony; we can, but this knowledge is only possible once we are justified in believing the individual speaker to be sincere and competent.

According to Fricker, in order for testimony to be a source of knowledge three conditions must obtain. A speaker must utter that *p*, a speaker must be sincere as regards *p*, and a speaker must be competent as regards *p*. If these three conditions are met, then a hearer can come to know that *p*. This is because, when the speaker utters that *p*, she is not lying and is not mistaken. She sets this out in the following way:

A speaker *S* is trustworthy with respect to an assertoric utterance by her *U*, which is made on an occasion *O*, and by which she asserts *P*, if and only if

- i. *U* is sincere, and
- ii. *S* is competent with respect to '*P*' on *O*, where this notion is defined as follows:  
If *S* were sincerely to assert that *P* on *O*, then it would be the case that *P*.<sup>10</sup>

If both premises hold, (i. *S* is sincere, and ii. *S* is competent) then, when a speaker utters that *p*, *p* is true. Fricker is a reductionist because she claims that a hearer has to have evidence that both premises hold in order to accept that *p* is true. Unless the hearer has evidence that these conditions obtain, then he is not justified in accepting that *p* is true.

But the hearer must first be justified in accepting that the speaker has made an assertion. According to Fricker, a hearer is justified in accepting that a speaker asserted that *p* because she *perceives* that the speaker asserted that *p*. This is not to say that she simply hear words uttered by a speaker, but rather she experiences the utterance as a *speech act*, she interprets it as a meaningful utterance. By this Fricker means that the hearer experiences the hearing of an utterance as an intentional act on the part of the speaker:

---

<sup>8</sup> Fricker 1987: 75

<sup>9</sup> Fricker 1994: 146

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*: 147

In recognising an utterance by a speaker as a speech act of serious assertion, with a certain content, a hearer is *ipso facto* engaging in a minimal piece of *interpretation* of the speaker – ascribing to her an intentional action of a certain kind, and hence at the very least supposing the existence of some configuration of beliefs and desires which explain that action.<sup>11</sup>

The recognition of an utterance is what Fricker calls a second-level belief. The second-level belief is perceptual, and immediate. It is the level upon which Fricker claims we interpret an utterance.

The belief that the speaker has made an assertion is forced upon us, there is an ‘internal impulse’<sup>12</sup> to believe it. So there is an internal impulse to believe that the speaker has asserted that *p*, and this belief is not justified by further premises. This is, Fricker argues, analogous to other perceptual experiences. It is not that, when I perceive an apple on the table, I infer that it is on the table via premises such as ‘I saw it with my eyes, my eyes are generally reliable, I am not hallucinating etc.’ Rather it is the case that my very perceiving of it is what justifies my acceptance of it. So in the same way, when I hear a speaker utter that *p*, I perceive it as an intentional action, as a speech act that is meaningful. ‘The phenomenology of language-use obliges us to regard second-level hearer’s knowledge as perceptual knowledge, and, I have suggested, as such it cannot be *inferential* knowledge.’<sup>13</sup>

The second-level belief on its own is not enough to justify acceptance of the content of the utterance, the hearer must also have evidence that the speaker is being sincere, and is competent (as in the two premises stated above). The *first*-level belief is the belief in the content of the utterance, and this, Fricker claims, is inferential. This is because we can infer that *p* (and thus justifiably believe that *p*), upon hearing an utterance that *p*, only via the ancillary premises that the speaker is being sincere as regards *p*, and is competent with respect to *p*. If the hearer is justified in believing that the speaker is being sincere and is competent, then she is justified in accepting the first-level belief, that *p*.<sup>14</sup>

The hearer’s justification for believing a speaker to be sincere and competent is, Fricker claims, contingent. It is empirically constrained by the speaker’s behaviour. Although interpretation requires ascription of belief and intention to the speaker, it is only when the hearer has positive evidence of the accuracy of the relevant belief (competence), and the appropriateness of the intention (sincerity), that she is justified in believing the content of the utterance:

despite the conceptual constraints on interpretation it remains an empirical question whether particular speakers, on particular occasions, are either competent or sincere; one which a self-

---

<sup>11</sup>Fricker 1994: 148

<sup>12</sup>Fricker 1987: 74

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid*: 74

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid*: 74

consciously rational belief-former will wish to have positive evidence about, before he believes what he is told.<sup>15</sup>

A hearer's justification for accepting that a speaker is being sincere is dependent on positive evidence, and does not arise upon understanding alone.

In order to take a speaker as sincere and competent, under Fricker's account, a hearer must have positive evidence of these facts. This positive evidence may be in the form of 'induction from past assertions of [the speaker's] independently confirmed as accurate,'<sup>16</sup> and yet this kind of evidence is not always, or even usually, available. Fricker therefore allows that as long as the hearer is on the look out for possible clues or signs of insincerity or incompetence, she can default to acceptance. This default is sufficient to justify acceptance because it is itself justified by contingent and commonsense norms.

Ascription of sincerity and competence arises out of what she calls commonsense 'Norms of Interpretation.'<sup>17</sup> These norms are, simply put, ' i) nearly all utterances which seem sincere indeed are so; and ii) About those everyday subject matters, where there are no special circumstances, normal people are nearly always right.'<sup>18</sup> It should perhaps be pointed out here that these are not norms in the sense implying 'ought', but norms in the sense that it is normal or commonsense knowledge that most apparently sincere utterances are sincere (and most apparently accurate utterances are accurate). And although they are called 'norms of *interpretation*', they actually come into effect only once interpretation has already occurred – they do not play a role in actual interpretation: taking a speaker to be being sincere or competent is not, as she argues, part of the interpretation process.

A hearer's recognition of these 'norms' means that if there is no reason to suppose that a speaker is being insincere, and the content of the utterance is such that it requires no special competence, the hearer is entitled to default to acceptance. However, these norms are contingent and empirically established, and do not play an essential role in interpretation – one can interpret an utterance without recognition of these norms. The norms justify a hearer's default to acceptance.

So although these norms are not specific positive evidence for sincerity in each particular instance of testimony, they are justificatory for each particular instance of testimony. As Fricker has indicated in personal communication, an utterance's seeming sincerity can count as evidence for its actual sincerity because of the contingently established truth that most utterances that seem sincere are sincere. She (tentatively) defended the idea that the norms of acceptance do not *strictly* count as positive evidence

---

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*: 76

<sup>16</sup> Fricker 1994: 148

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*: 149

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*: 151-2

*per se*, and yet if it is true that ‘nearly all utterances which seem sincere are so’ then seeming sincerity is evidence for sincerity. In the next section I will argue that whichever way her account is cashed out, it fails to do the epistemic job she intends it to.

### *Section Two*

The motivating intuition for Fricker’s account is that it is gullible to accept the testimony of others without positive evidence. This means that in order for her account to succeed she must be able to show what positive evidence a hearer has at his disposal in order to make it the case that he *can* get knowledge through testimony – knowledge through testimony is not something that she wishes to deny. In this section, I will show that a simple or obvious sign of sincerity cannot be had, and thus the evidence must take an altogether more subtle form. I will then argue that this idea cannot be made sense of without a default to acceptance of sincerity, which Fricker herself allows. Lastly, I will argue that this default, which she claims is contingent, cannot do the justificatory work that she intends it to do.

Firstly, the idea of specific positive evidence for, and a simple sign of, a speaker’s sincerity cannot be had. There can be no straightforward *sign* that separates lies and sincere utterances. As Donald Davidson points out, in ‘Communication and Convention’<sup>19</sup>:

It is clear that there cannot be a conventional sign that shows that one is saying what one believes; for every liar would use it. Convention cannot connect what may always be secret - the intention to say what is true - with what must be public - making an assertion. There is no convention of sincerity.<sup>20</sup>

Although Davidson is talking specifically about signs in the context of the question on whether language is conventional, this point extends to the idea of positive evidence for sincerity as well. There cannot be a positive sign of sincerity because a liar would make use of it too. Lies and sincere utterances cannot be distinguished as simply or as obviously as this.

So if this is the case, how can a hearer get evidence that a speaker is being sincere? If a speaker has built up a track record, with a specific hearer, of being a trustworthy informant, then does this count as positive evidence for sincerity? If it was the case that the hearer knew that the speaker was a consistently sincere speaker, then he should be able to infer from this that in this *particular* instance, the speaker is being sincere. But this, even if it does count as positive evidence, can only apply to some testimony – not the testimony of strangers, acquaintances, and even friends that we have not known for a sufficient time.

---

<sup>19</sup> Davidson 1984

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*: 8

The knowledge that the speaker is generally sincere has to be established non-circularly, that is without relying on testimony itself. This, Fricker argues, can be done in the ‘approved Humean fashion’ of ‘observed constant conjunction.’<sup>21</sup> But this kind of observed constant conjunction between utterances and their veracity, or between the speaker’s utterances and her sincerity, would only be available if the hearer and speaker had known each other for a long time, and the hearer had been able to confirm a sufficient number of correlations between the speaker’s assertions and their truth, this will be a rare position to be in.

This kind of knowledge of a speaker’s past trustworthiness is not likely to characterise the majority of our experiences of testimony, and if it is not knowledge that we can generally expect to have then it cannot be necessary for acceptance of an utterance as sincere to be justified. A good explanation for why we accept utterances as sincere has to be generally applicable, and such a demanding condition – that we have extensive knowledge of a speaker’s past trustworthiness – is just not going to be able to do the job.

But if we disregard a speaker’s track record as sufficient evidence for sincerity, then what else might count as positive evidence? Once we have dismissed the possibility of a simple sign that indicates sincerity (as Davidson has done), and the adequacy of a Humean inference from past experience, we must look to more subtle alternatives. Perhaps, though there is no sign that a sincere speaker can employ, there are less obvious or involuntary signs of sincerity. These might include making eye-contact, not hesitating or mumbling, or the plausibility of the content of the utterance. Perhaps a liar will not exhibit these signs. But these ‘signs of sincerity’ when more closely examined appear to be more a *lack* of evidence for lying, than *positive* evidence for sincerity. It is not that a sincere speaker is noticeable for clear enunciation, and direct eye contact, but rather an insincere speaker is noticeable for her mumbling, and suspicious behaviour. This implies that a lack of signs of insincerity would count as signs of sincerity.

Fricker says: ‘Expert dissimulators amongst us being few, the insincerity of an utterance is frequently betrayed in the speaker’s manner, and so is susceptible of detection by a quasi-perceptual capacity.’<sup>22</sup> She also says: ‘sincerity is the default position, in assessing a speaker to be sincere, unless one observes (and one must be alert for them) symptoms of duplicity.’<sup>23</sup> These claims show that

---

<sup>21</sup> Fricker 1994: 135

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*: 150

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*: 151

Fricker's claim is that, to be epistemically responsible, the hearer must be alert for evidence of insincerity, and in the absence of this, a default to acceptance of sincerity is allowed.

So, can lack of evidence for insincerity count as evidence for sincerity? Is lack of smoke evidence that there is no fire? It is possible that it could be understood this way, and yet this cannot be what Fricker means. This is because a non-reductionist account, the PR thesis, as she calls it, holds exactly this position. For example, Tyler Burge (a non-reductionist) claims that 'A person is entitled to accept as true something that is presented as true and that is intelligible to him, unless there are stronger reasons not to.'<sup>24</sup> A non-reductionist, and indeed anyone involved in the epistemology of testimony, will deny that a hearer is entitled to accept testimony as sincere when there is evidence or reason to suppose that the speaker is being insincere.

In order for Fricker's account to be reductionist she has to maintain that there is no basic entitlement to accept an utterance as sincere – a hearer *has to* have a positive reason to think that a speaker is being sincere, as opposed to insincere. However, as shown above, she does say that a hearer can default to acceptance of sincerity in the absence of signs of insincerity. So how does she avoid what seems to be a *prima facie* contradiction? She makes two claims that are meant to separate her account from the PR thesis and establish it as a local reductionist account: Firstly, she claims that her account, unlike the PR thesis, places a certain epistemic responsibility on the hearer – the hearer must 'take a critical stance to the speaker'<sup>25</sup> at all times; and secondly that the default to acceptance is established empirically and contingently, which means that there is nothing *a priori* special about taking utterances as sincere – it is just contingently the case that we can default to acceptance in our specific community of language users. I will argue that the first claim is not sufficient to establish her account as reductionist, and that the second claim, that the default (that is established empirically and contingently) is epistemologically problematic if it is meant to be a positive reason for taking a speaker to be sincere.

Fricker claims that her account is importantly distinct in the following way:

My account requires a hearer always to take a critical stance to the speaker, to assess her for trustworthiness; while a true PR [presumptive right] thesis, as we have seen, does not. The nub of this distinction is a clear and sharp difference; on my account, but not on a PR thesis, the hearer must always be monitoring the speaker critically. This is a matter of the actual engagement of a

---

<sup>24</sup> Burge 1993: 467 (italics in original)

<sup>25</sup> Fricker 1994: 154

counterfactual sensitivity: it is true throughout of the hearer that if there were any signs of untrustworthiness, she would pick them up.<sup>26</sup>

What this claim seems to be doing is shifting the weight of epistemic responsibility from the speaker to the hearer. Under the PR thesis, if the belief I gain through testimony is wrong, it is because the speaker has done something wrong, but under Fricker's account, if I gain a false belief it is because I have done something wrong.

However, the main problem with this is that, even if true, it does not establish her account as reductionist. A reductionist, by definition, holds that our justification for accepting testimony lies outside the hearing of the testimony – that there is some other kind of evidence that we have to accept an utterance as sincere. But a critical attitude on the part of the hearer just does not count as evidence. It is an attitude. And furthermore, if this critical attitude is just, as she claims, to ensure that 'if there were any signs of untrustworthiness, [the hearer] would pick them up,' it doesn't seem that anyone would disagree with her on this point. The non-reductionists could (and they do) also claim that a hearer should be aware of defeaters in order to count as justified when accepting testimony.

Even with a critical attitude, Fricker allows that without evidence to the contrary, a hearer can default to acceptance. And if non-reductionists also argue that a hearer is entitled to default to acceptance in the absence of defeaters, she needs to characterise her account as reductionist in some other way. This brings us to the second distinction Fricker makes, that is meant to establish her account as reductionist: a hearer can default to acceptance of sincerity *not* because there is an *a priori* link between hearing testimony and its being sincere, but because of a *contingent* norm (a generally recognised fact) that is established empirically.

Fricker claims that if a hearer can conclude "Well, she [the speaker] seemed perfectly normal,"<sup>27</sup> then he will be justified taking the utterance to be sincere. She claims that a hearer can default to acceptance on recognising that the speaker is 'normal'. For Fricker, a speaker being 'perfectly normal' can count as evidence for sincerity only because of the contingently established norm that most apparently sincere utterances are actually sincere. She claims that her account is distinct from the PR thesis because there is no *a priori* link between an utterance and sincerity, and that we can default to acceptance only because there is a contingent and empirically established norm that justifies this default acceptance. Fricker claims that it is 'a contingent empirical fact, not guaranteed by any concept-

---

<sup>26</sup> *ibid*: 154

<sup>27</sup> *ibid*: 150

constituting norms of application of psychological concepts, that, in some given linguistic community, nearly all apparently-sincere utterances are so.<sup>28</sup> In other words, we can justifiably accept a given utterance as sincere because we can safely believe that most utterances are sincere through commonsense:

These practical epistemic norms for ascribing the psychological attributes of sincerity ... are justified because, and just insofar as, it is a fact, and is part of commonsense person theory, that nearly all utterances that seem sincere are indeed so.<sup>29</sup>

So, it is a fact widely known through commonsense that utterances that appear sincere, or seem sincere, are actually sincere.

This means that her claim that it is 'perfectly normal' to be sincere is known only contingently, and is not entailed in our understanding of what an assertion is. This is problematic for two reasons. Firstly, it seems to contradict her earlier claim that too many utterances are insincere for it to be epistemically responsible to take them as such without evidence. And secondly, as I will discuss in Section Three, it is conceptually problematic because if it is only contingently known that apparently sincere utterances are sincere, then it is possible for there to be language where hearers *do not* recognise that a perfectly normal utterance is a sincere one.

What is most worrying, epistemically, about this way of justifying acceptance of sincerity is that Fricker's intuition is that people often lie, and thus just taking a speaker to be being sincere is gullible. So commonsense tells us that most seemingly sincere utterances are indeed sincere, but it also tells us:

The proportion of utterances which are made by speakers who are either insincere or incompetent is far too high for [presumption of sincerity] to be an attractive policy.<sup>30</sup>

Fricker initially claims that acceptance of sincerity must depend on evidence for sincerity, but then later claims that what justifies our acceptance is the commonsense knowledge that 'nearly all' utterances that seem sincere are sincere.

Her original reason for rejecting the PR thesis as a satisfactory epistemological position is that it breaks the epistemic precept: ' "If a significant percentage of Fs are not G, one should not infer that X is G, merely from the fact that it is F." A belief so formed is not epistemically rational, which is to say it is not justified.'<sup>31</sup> If she believes that one is not justified in taking an utterance as sincere just based on its

---

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*: 153

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*: 151

<sup>30</sup> Fricker 1987: 75

<sup>31</sup> Fricker 1994: 146

seeming sincerity, then she cannot then claim that a generalisation like ‘nearly all utterances which seem sincere indeed are so,’<sup>32</sup> can serve as a justification. It is simply a contradiction.

Perhaps Fricker may claim that there is not a direct contradiction here: she claims that (i) too many utterances are insincere for it to be safe to presume sincerity, and that (ii) nearly all seemingly sincere utterances are sincere (and this is what justifies our default acceptance of sincerity). Perhaps it is the case that in the first claim she is talking about *all* utterances, (a significant portion of which are insincere) and in the second claim she is talking only about *seemingly sincere* utterances (amongst which only an insignificant number are insincere). However this would mean that she is understanding the PR thesis to be advocating presumption of sincerity *even for utterances that seem insincere*, and it is clear that the PR thesis does *not* advocate such a presumption.

The only way to interpret Fricker that would get her out of a blatant contradiction is to see her as claiming that the PR thesis (and thus non-reductionism) advocate acceptance of testimony in the face of evidence to the contrary. This interpretation would also explain why she believes a critical attitude makes an epistemological difference – she would have to be viewing the alternative as a blindness to counter-evidence. But this is just false – the PR thesis advocates acceptance of sincerity only when there is no evidence of insincerity. And furthermore, Fricker herself seems to be aware of this. Her explication of the PR thesis includes ‘the hearer has the epistemic right to assume, without evidence, that the speaker is trustworthy ... *unless there are special circumstances that defeat this presumption.*’<sup>33</sup> So it seems Fricker’s account is either committed to a fallacious interpretation of the PR thesis, or it is internally contradictory. Either way, her account cannot offer a viable alternative to global reductionism, or non-reductionism.

### *Section Three*

Fricker realised that she could not depend on specific positive evidence for sincerity in each particular instance of testimony, and was forced to allow that, without evidence to the contrary, a hearer is entitled to default to acceptance. But in order to maintain that she was not advocating a non-reductionist claim, such that hearing testimony does not require positive evidence, she had to argue that the default itself was contingent and empirically established – that there is nothing *a priori* special

---

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*: 148

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*: 125 (emphasis added)

about an utterance's being sincere. This proved to be epistemically problematic, but more than this, as I will argue in this section, it is conceptually problematic.

She claims that the default norm of acceptance is contingent, and not necessary to the functioning of language. She allows that a 'corollary of [her] account'<sup>34</sup> is that there could be a community of language users who use language successfully and yet do not recognise the right to default to acceptance of sincerity. This, I believe, is not possible. This problem is a problem that extends to any account of the epistemology of testimony that does not recognise that there has to be a *necessary* connection between hearing utterances and taking them to be sincere in order for communication to be possible. Because of the scope of this objection I will develop it in my final chapter, but it deserves a mention here, as it is Fricker who explicitly makes the claim that language would survive without a presumption of sincerity.

If the norm of acceptance is contingent, then it is possible for there to be a community of language-users who are not governed by the contingent norms of interpretation that we, in our specific community, are. In other words, the norm that claims 'nearly all utterances which seem sincere indeed are so'<sup>35</sup> is *not* recognised by the language users of this community. Hearers would not be able to default to acceptance in the absence of positive evidence. Fricker endorses this possibility. She claims that such a community would find it hard to get knowledge, and yet language 'might thrive there nevertheless.'<sup>36</sup> According to Fricker, knowledge in this community would be 'less widespread' because hearers would not be able to default to acceptance of sincerity without positive evidence. However, despite the lack of this default norm for taking a speaker to be sincere, the community might still use language successfully: 'Transmission of accurate information is not the only social role and function of the social institution of human language; from many perspectives on human life it is not even the primary one.'<sup>37</sup>

A society of 'language users' who lack a default to acceptance of sincerity would require positive evidence of sincerity in each case of testimony in order for an utterance to be taken at face value. But, as I have already argued, the idea of positive evidence for sincerity is a hard one to make sense of. These 'signs of sincerity', once we have established that a speaker's track record is insufficient to do the job, seemed to be simply a lack of signs of insincerity. And this (a lack of signs of insincerity being

---

<sup>34</sup> Fricker 1994: 154

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*: 151-2

<sup>36</sup> Fricker 1994: 154

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*: 154

evidence for sincerity) *presupposes* a default to acceptance of sincerity. Once we remove the default, as in this hypothetical community, a lack of signs of insincerity is no longer sufficient to justify our acceptance. If there is no justified default to acceptance of sincerity then (as positive evidence cannot usually be had) hearers will simply be at a loss as to how to take an utterance.

A default to acceptance is necessary if a lack of positive evidence is to count as sufficient justification for taking a speaker to be being sincere. This has drastic consequences for this community. This lack of acceptance on the part of the hearer will ultimately leave this community unable to communicate. This is for two reasons that I will expand below. Firstly, hearers will be at a loss as to how to interpret utterances. Secondly, if speakers cannot expect to be taken as being sincere, they will lack the motivation to make utterances in the first place. I believe that these consequences would disqualify this community from counting as a community of language users. There has to be a default to acceptance in order for communication to occur at all.

Without an established default to acceptance of sincerity, a hearer will not recognise utterances as expressions of the speaker's mental state. This does not only apply to assertions, but other types of utterances, such as questions and commands. A question is a question (and not simply an utterance in the interrogative) because we recognise that this is how a speaker can communicate the desire to discover something. A command is a command because we recognise that a speaker's utterance of an utterance in the imperative can be a means to communicating an intention that another person do a certain thing.

Without a default to acceptance, the hearer would not be able to justifiably believe that a speaker was sincerely asking a question, or making a request, or issuing a command. A hearer would be unable to accept an utterance at face value, the speaker's intention would not be available to the hearer. This kind of doubt, a doubt in the speaker's intention, would mean that the hearer would essentially fail to interpret the utterance. It could not be standard within a community of language users that hearers are unable to interpret utterances. There *has* to be a degree of commitment on the hearer's part to the sincerity of utterances in order for language to function at all.

If there is no default to acceptance, when a hearer hears an utterance, the hearer will not recognise that there is anything special about that utterance's being sincere. It will not be considered 'normal' for an utterance to be sincere. So, if a hearer hears the utterance 'The library closes at ten,' there will be nothing in the hearing of it that connects it with the speaker's belief that the library closes at ten. It will not be *normal* to interpret it as an assertion that reflects the speaker's belief. The hearer

will see the speaker as *trying* to communicate the information, but it will be just the same to her whether the speaker is lying, joking, practising lines from a play, or actually informing her of the time that the library closes. There is nothing special about sincerity, and so the hearer will not take an utterance to be sincere.

Furthermore, the second problem is that speakers who cannot expect their utterances to be taken at face value would not make utterances. The intention behind any communicative utterance (sincere or insincere) is to be taken to be being sincere, and if the standard response to an utterance is to remain uncommitted to the sincerity of an utterance, then a speaker cannot expect his utterance to be taken at face value. For this reason it seems that speakers would not use utterances – why would they, when the intention behind them cannot be fulfilled?

It seems that language could not ‘thrive’ under such conditions. On the contrary, communication through language could not occur: language could not fulfill its primary function of being a means to communicating. It is for this reason that I believe the connection between hearing an utterance and taking it to be sincere is not a contingent one. It is necessary that hearers recognise that they should default to acceptance in order for communication to occur.

It seems that Fricker’s account fails both epistemologically and conceptually. Her account of local reductionism suffers in that, as I argued in Section Two, it cannot be the case that commonsense tells us *both* that testimony is too often unreliable for us to safely presume sincerity, *and* that seemingly sincere utterances are generally reliable. Her account is ultimately committed to two contradictory claims. And, more than this, as I argued in Section Three (and will develop in Chapter Four), her account allows for the possibility of language without a default to acceptance, and it can be seen that such an idea is just not plausible. A default to acceptance of sincerity is *necessary*.

What my discussion of Fricker has shown is that any reductionist approach to testimony, any account that advocates the claim that taking a speaker to be being sincere is contingent on other factors, cannot succeed. Our understanding of what it is to make an assertion, to ask a question, to use language to communicate, entails a recognition of the fact that there is a necessary link between what the speaker says and the speaker’s mental state. This is not to say that we necessarily take utterances to be sincere, but that we necessarily recognise that if there is no reason to suppose otherwise, we *should* take an utterance to be sincere.

In the next chapter I look at Tyler Burge's non-reductionist account of testimony. I argue that, although his account does not suffer from the problems facing reductionism, it also fails to give a satisfactory answer to why we should take utterances as sincere. He does not depend on the problematic idea that we require positive evidence for sincerity, and yet it seems that his account relies on a narrow and unsatisfactory account of rationality being an *a priori* source of truth.

\*\*\*

## Chapter Two

In Chapter One I argued against Fricker's account of local reductionism, claiming that her account fails to offer a viable alternative to global reductionism, and the PR thesis. It seems, I concluded, that there is a flaw in the idea that the hearer requires positive evidence for the sincerity of a speaker. What I reject is the reductionist claim that our acceptance of testimony is epistemically dependent on other evidence, that we justify our acceptance of testimony through other epistemic sources, such as evidence to take a speaker as being sincere. In this chapter I look at Tyler Burge's account of non-reductionism, an account that makes no such claim.

The non-reductionist approach to testimony, holds, as I do, that testimony can count as a good source of belief without recourse to other epistemic sources. The non-reductionist argues that testimony does not reduce to other forms of evidence. Burge argues that there is a necessary connection between the intelligibility of an utterance and the rationality of the speaker, and that rationality is a *prima facie* source of truth. When we understand an utterance we are entitled to accept it because of the *prima facie a priori* connection between truth and rationality. For Burge, the justification for why we accept testimony comes from this necessary connection.

In this chapter, I will argue that there is reason to doubt the claim that there is a necessary and a priori connection between rationality and truth. Rationality, as Burge defines it, is necessarily a guide to truth. However, I believe this definition to be too narrow and, crucially, does not extend to practical rationality, in the way that Burge's argument requires it to. His account of rationality is not sufficient to entitle a hearer to accept that an utterance is *sincere*. Sincerity is a matter of intentional action, and thus not subject to the norms that guide belief formation, that is, epistemic rationality.

The fallout from this is not that we should search for some other kind of justification, but that we should question the very notion of positive justification for our acceptance of the sincerity of a speaker. In this chapter I will argue that the failure of Burge's argument to provide justification points not to a lowering of our epistemic status as regards testimony, but to a rejection of the idea that we require positive justification to ensure a good epistemic status as regards the sincerity of a speaker.

### *Section One*

Tyler Burge defends the claim that:

*A person is entitled to accept as true something that is presented as true and that is intelligible to him, unless there are stronger reasons not to.*<sup>38</sup>

This is the Acceptance Principle. He claims that in understanding an utterance, a ‘presentation-as-true’, we have a *prima facie* entitlement to accept it as true because of an *a priori* connection between rationality and truth. Because this connection is *a priori*, our justification for acceptance is *a priori*, even though the source is perceptual – we may need to *hear* testimony in order to believe it, but the entitlement we have to accept it as true is purely rational.

This distinction between perception and justification should be distinguished from Fricker’s claim that hearing an utterance is perceptual, and our justification for accepting it as true is inferential. For Fricker it is on a perceptual level that we hear an assertion as an assertion – as a proposition presented as true, and it is only once we have evidence of sincerity and competence that we can take it as true. Burge’s claim is that we hear an utterance on a purely perceptual level, that is, we hear certain noises, and it is when we *understand* it as an assertion that we recognise the source as rational. And it is this recognition that is the source of our entitlement. He is a non-reductionist (as opposed to Fricker’s reductionism) because it is in understanding a certain noise as an assertion that can justify our acceptance of it, and we require no positive evidence of sincerity or competence to be entitled to accept it.

Burge argues that once we understand an assertion we are presented with a *prima facie* rational source, and a rational source is a source of truth: ‘Intelligible affirmation is the face of reason; reason is a guide to truth.’<sup>39</sup> Simply by understanding an assertion we are entitled to accept it as true, if it is presented as true, because in understanding we accept that the source is rational, and rationality is a guide to truth. His argument runs as follows:

1. Intelligibility ‘is an *a priori prima facie* sign of rationality’<sup>40</sup>
2. ‘A source [of belief] is a guide to truth *in* being rational’<sup>41</sup>

Therefore,

3. Intelligibility is a *prima facie* source of truth

This is not an argument that hearers need to have at their disposal upon hearing an utterance, but rather it is a description of a norm ‘that indicates that recipients are sometimes entitled to accept

---

<sup>38</sup> Burge 1993: 467 (Italics in original)

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*: 473

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*: 471

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*: 471 (Italics in original)

information from others *immediately* without argument.<sup>42</sup> So the argument shows why it is rational to accept as true presentations-as-true, without it being an argument that is *used* by the hearer upon hearing a presentation-as-true. Burge defends the claim that our acceptance of testimony is justified because of this argument, but without claiming that this argument is something that hearers appeal to upon hearing testimony in order to accept what they are told.

For Burge, this argument is established *a priori*: the truth of the premises can be known *a priori*, and thus our entitlement to accept testimony is not reducible to other forms of evidence or justification. According to Burge, the premises are self-evidently true; intelligibility *just is a prima facie* sign of rationality, and rationality *just is* a guide to truth. It needs to be the case that these premises are self-evident, or can be known *a priori*; the success of the argument depends on the *a priori* connection that Burge makes between intelligibility and rationality, and rationality and truth.

So, why is intelligibility a '*prima facie* sign of rationality'? The idea is that in understanding what a person says, the hearer makes certain necessary presumptions about the speaker. Burge says:

Presentation of propositional content presupposes at least a derivative connection to a system of perceptual, cognitive and practical interactions with a world, involving beliefs and intentional activity. Belief and intention in turn presuppose operation under norms of reason or rationality – norms governing information acquisition, inference and practical activity.<sup>43</sup>

This move involves two claims. Firstly, in order for someone to present a proposition as true, it must be the case that, firstly, she has beliefs and intentions, and secondly – consequently – that she is working within norms of rationality.

The first point is also made by Donald Davidson in his paper 'Thought and Talk'<sup>44</sup>:

Someone who utters the sentence 'The candle is out' as a sentence of English must intend to utter words that are true if and only if an indicated candle is out at the time of utterance, and he must believe that by making the sounds he does he is uttering words that are true only under those circumstances. ... But though [these intentions and beliefs] may not normally command attention, their absence would be enough to show he was not speaking English, and the absence of any analogous thoughts would show he was not speaking at all.<sup>45</sup>

To speak, to make utterances, to present content as true, requires having relevant intentions and beliefs. One cannot count as a speaker, or as a language user, without them. I take this to be correct. To say something is not just to make noises. A machine that is programmed to make noises that sound

---

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*: 476 (Italics in original)

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*: 471-2

<sup>44</sup> Davidson 1984

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*: 155

like sentences, or a parrot that mimics the sound of speech would not count as language users. Talk requires thought.

So, if it is the case that talk requires thought, then an intelligible utterance is a *prima facie* sign that the speaker is a being with beliefs and intentions. In understanding an utterance a hearer recognises a speech act, and in so doing recognises the speaker as having certain beliefs and desires. So far we can see that intelligibility is a *prima facie* sign of the speaker having beliefs and intentions. If we hear an utterance, we are entitled to presume that the speaker has the requisite beliefs and intentions.

Burge's second claim is that 'Belief and intention in turn presuppose operation under norms of reason or rationality.' In other words one cannot count as having beliefs and intentions, unless one is subject to norms of rational action (practical rationality), and rational belief formation (epistemic rationality). This seems correct. The agent must recognise the norms of rational belief formation in order to count as having beliefs at all. To have a belief is to hold that something is true, beliefs *aim* at truth. This means that to have a belief is to be responsive to reasons that affirm or challenge it. This means that in order to have beliefs, one must be responsive to reasons, and this means being responsive to the norms of belief formation. To believe something requires rationality. A person is not a person (in the sense of being a rational being) if she is not responsive to reasons for belief. It might be *irrational* to form beliefs based on desire rather than evidence, but it is *non-rational* to be unresponsive to reasons for belief.

So the kind of rationality that is recognised in understanding an utterance is not rationality in the sense of a personality trait where some people are rational and others not. It is more basic than that, the kind of rationality that all believers have. To be epistemically rational in this basic sense is to have a reason for one's belief, whether it be a good reason or a bad reason. It is the kind of rationality that separates us from animals. It is a faculty or a capacity rather than a *forte*. Having the faculty of rationality means being subject to the norms of belief formation and retention. It is this that makes belief possible. And it is this rationality that we recognise in a speaker upon understanding her utterance – we recognise that she has the capacity for reason. We do not recognise rationality as a *forte*, we cannot tell if a person is particularly rational as opposed to *irrational* just by understanding their utterance, but we can tell that they are rational as opposed to *non-rational*, just by understanding their utterance.

The norms of rational *action* (not just belief) are also required to make utterances with propositional content. This is because an utterance is an action and to perform an intentional act means

to intend a certain outcome, to have a *reason* for action. The difference between an action and a simple bodily occurrence is that an action is intentional, and this means it is carried out under norms of rational action. The ability to act requires recognition of reasons for action. So to make an utterance, which is an intentional action, is to behave under the norms of rational action – to act is to do something for a reason. This too is not about good reasons or bad reasons, but simply having a reason. If one is an *agent* then one is subject to the norms of rational action, one acts for a reason. In the same way that having a belief means being responsive to reasons for belief, so acting means being responsive to reasons for action.

One can act irrationally, that is act on bad reasons. But this does not disqualify the person from being a rational actor. Objects and (more controversially) non-rational animals behave without intention. They do things, but they can't be said to do things with an aim, with a goal. To act with intention requires having an idea of the future, and this makes them subject to *reasons* for action – subject to the norms of rationality. It is this very basic idea of rationality that one recognises in a person when one understands her utterance.

For Burge, if an utterance is intelligible, if it can be understood as having propositional content, then the hearer is presented with a *prima facie* rational source. To recognise an utterance as a speech act, and not just a random noise, is to recognise that the speaker is acting under both the norms of belief formation, and the norms of action: it is to recognise the speaker is rational both practically and epistemically. It is not that the hearer infers or deduces that the speaker must be rational, but rather, experiencing an utterance as a speech act means experiencing it as a proposition put forward by a rational being, and this one is entitled to do as a result of the *a priori prima facie* connection between intelligibility and rationality.

The second premise of his argument for the Acceptance Principle, that rationality is a *prima facie* source of truth, Burge defends in the following way. He claims that rationality, *in its very nature*, is a guide to truth: 'A condition on reasons, rationality and reason is that they be guides to truth .... An epistemic reason for believing something would not count as such if it did not provide some reasonable support for accepting it as *true*.'<sup>46</sup> The link between rationality and truth, according to Burge, is analytic. What we *mean* by something's being rational is that it has this epistemic link with truth. For Burge, the rationality of a source is what makes it a guide to truth, and this is equally the case with one's own

---

<sup>46</sup>Burge 1993: 470

rationality and the rationality of another. One's own rationality is a guide to truth, and the rationality of others is a guide to truth in the same way.

According to Burge, rationality performs the function of guiding us to truth, whether it be our own rationality, or the rationality of others. Rationality has a 'transpersonal function,'<sup>47</sup> and it is defined independent of 'special personal interest.'<sup>48</sup> This means that the function of rationality is to guide us to truth irrespective of who the rationality belongs to: 'rational sources are sources that themselves are a capacity to reason *or* are rational beings.'<sup>49</sup> He equates the rational capacity of the self with that of others, claiming them both to be a source of truth in the same manner. My rationality is a guide to truth for me, and the rationality of others is a guide to truth for me in the same way: 'The Acceptance Principle and its justification are formulated so as to be neutral on whether "what is presented as true" comes from another person.'<sup>50</sup>

The function of rationality is independent of personal desire and it is this definition that allows Burge to conclude that once we are presented with a rational source we are *prima facie* entitled to take it as a source of truth. So when we understand an intelligible utterance we are presented with a rational source (premise 1) and thus we are entitled to accept the utterance as true, all things being equal. In other words, if there are no reasons to suppose that the speaker is lying or mistaken, we are entitled to accept the proposition, just by understanding it.

Burge's non-reductionist thesis is to argue that we have the same kind of *a priori* justification for accepting what people tell us as we do when we come to believe something based on our own rationality. Understanding what somebody tells us is not the same as experiencing it (the proposed state of affairs) for oneself. As Burge says: 'Crudely speaking, it involves a mind.'<sup>51</sup> His argument rests on the idea that the mind of another can offer the same justification for belief as one's own mind, as long as it is rational. In this way he moves away from the reductionist claim that a hearer must do something extra to gain access to the beliefs of others. By understanding an utterance a hearer is presented with a proposition from a *prima facie* rational source, and a rational source is a source of truth. He is thus entitled to accept the proposition as true.

---

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*: 475

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*: 475

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid*: 470 (emphasis added)

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*: 474

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*: 479

## Section Two

The problem in Burge's account arises in premise 2: 'A source [of belief] is a guide to truth *in* being rational.'<sup>52</sup> His understanding of rationality is, I will argue, too narrow to cover the problem of sincerity. The problem of sincerity only arises once it is *another* rational being who is the source of belief. Burge's account needs to show why a speaker's being rational gives the hearer a *prima facie* entitlement to accept that the speaker is sincere.

What I intend to show is that, although epistemic rationality does seem to have an *a priori* connection with truth, even, though less obviously, when it is the rationality of another, it does not seem that practical rationality has this same connection. Practical rationality, as Burge himself claims in premise one, is required for a speaker to perform a speech act. Burge needs to show that there is an *a priori* link between the practical rationality of the speaker and sincerity. It seems that once we allow that an utterance has to be motivated, a gap between rationality and truth opens up, a gap that Burge's account is unable to cross. This gap is the problem of sincerity.

What reason do we have for accepting Burge's claim that rationality is, in its nature, a guide to truth? His definition fits most snugly with our understanding of our own epistemic rationality. When I form a belief under the norms of epistemic rationality, I am recognising the value of truth. When I infer that *p*, the inference is made under the norms of epistemic rationality, and what defines the norms of rationality is that they are my guide to truth. My inferring that *p* is my coming to think that *p* is *true* based on that inference. In this case, Burge's claim that rationality is a source of truth seems spot on. There is a necessary *a priori* connection between my own epistemic rationality and truth. Without epistemic rationality I have no access to truth. By conceiving of truth, in understanding the difference between truth and falsity, I become subject to the norms of rational belief formation. I cannot have a belief and not think it is true, and I cannot think something is true without being responsive to reasons for belief – if I am not responsive to reasons, then I am not aiming at truth.

To be epistemically rational is to form beliefs under certain norms, norms that make our beliefs truth-oriented. If I believe that *p*, and then come across acceptable evidence that contradicts that *p*, I should reject my belief that *p*, or at least doubt that *p*. This is epistemically rational. If I do not respond to such counter-evidence, then it is clear that I am not aiming at truth, that my commitment to *p* is

---

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*: 471 (Italics in original)

epistemically irrational.<sup>53</sup> Being epistemically rational *means* being responsive to evidence or counter-evidence for belief – it means being responsive to evidence for the *truth*.

In this way my own epistemic rationality is an *a priori prima facie* source of truth. But how does this extend to the rationality of others being a guide to truth for me in the same way? If we accept premise one, that intelligibility is a sign of rationality, then I am entitled to presume that the speaker is minimally rational, both epistemically and practically, upon understanding the utterance. What Burge needs to show is how this presumption can entitle my acceptance of the utterance being both accurate and sincere.

In terms of accuracy, it seems that his claim might work. If a speaker is rational, then she is functioning under the same norms as myself, and I can depend on her rationality to give her true beliefs as much as I depend on my own rationality to give me true beliefs. But Burge's claim is stronger, he defends the idea that:

The Acceptance Principle and its justification are formulated so as to be neutral on whether what is "presented as true" comes from another person. It's application does not depend on an assumption that the source is outside oneself ... Many of the differences between content passing between minds and content processed by a single mind derive from differences in modes of acquisition and necessary background conditions that do not enter into the justificational force underwriting an entitlement.<sup>54</sup>

This means that it is the *kind* of justification I get from my own rational reflection is the same as from any other recognised rational source. If another is epistemically rational she is subject to the same norms that guide belief formation as myself. If she forms beliefs under that same norms, then she has the same access to truth as I do. So, if she rationally believes that *p*, and then asserts that *p*, I have the same basis or justification for believing that *p* – that is rationality. In the case of testimony, she presents her belief to me, and in recognising that she is rational (by understanding the utterance) I thereby have access to her belief, and have the same justification for believing it as I would if I inferred it myself.

However, it seems that the justification is not the same in the way that Burge implies. There is a distinction here that Burge does not make. When I hear from a speaker that *p*, it is not simply that I rationally believe that *p*, but rather I rationally believe that *p because* the person who told me that *p* rationally believes that *p*. It is not that simply by believing that *p* I am subject to the norms of belief formation, but rather, *in recognising that another is subject to the same norms* (that is, recognising that the speaker must be responsive to reasons for belief) I am entitled to accept that what she believes is true. It doesn't seem that the same entailment relationship exists in this case.

---

<sup>53</sup> See Jones 2004

<sup>54</sup> Burge 1993: 474

In the case of my own rationality, it is the norms that guide my belief formation that give me access to truth. In the case of another's rationality, it is my *recognition of her rationality* that entitles me to accept that what she says is true. What is doing the work is my entitlement to accept her as rational. This is not the case when it is *my* rationality that leads me to believe that *p*. I cannot believe that *p* *without* being subject to the norms of rationality. The possibility of one entails the possibility of the other. It is not that I believe firstly that I am rational, and thereby infer that what I believe is true, but rather just by believing that *p* is true, I am necessarily exercising my rationality. In the case of another's rationality, it is an *inference* from my recognition of the speaker as rational that justifies my presumption that what she believes is true. I can believe her to be rational and yet still take a belief of hers to be false – this is not the case when it comes to my own rationality. I must believe my beliefs to be true, that is what belief is.

However, although this shows that my access to truth through my own rationality differs from my access to truth through another's rationality, it does not show that Burge is wrong. In fact it seems perfectly plausible to argue that, if I am entitled to accept a speaker as rational, then I am entitled to presume that what she believes is true, as long as there is no reason to think that she is mistaken. If rationality is a guide to truth in my own case, then in recognising rationality in another I am entitled to accept that what she believes is true.

So what Burge's argument can tell us is that in recognising rationality in a speaker, the hearer is entitled to believe that what the speaker believes is true. If the speaker is subject to the epistemic norms of rationality, then she must have reason for believing what she does, and this means that the hearer has a *prima facie* entitlement to believe that her (the speaker's) beliefs are correct. So, to use Fricker's terms, this argument is enough to entitle the hearer's presumption of the speaker's *competence*. We are *prima facie* entitled to believe that the speaker is not in error as regards his beliefs.

The problem arises when presumption or recognition of rationality is meant to entitle the hearer to believe that the speaker is being *sincere*. The epistemic rationality of the speaker only tells the hearer that her *beliefs* are formed under the norms of rationality, and thus recognising epistemic rationality cannot entitle the hearer to accept that the speaker is being sincere. A person subject to the norms of epistemic rationality must have a reason for believing what she does, but this does not place a

constraint on what she can and cannot assert. Whether a speaker is sincere or not does not depend on her epistemic rationality – it depends on her practical rationality.

What distinguishes epistemic from practical rationality, crudely speaking, is that epistemic rationality guides our belief formation, and practical rationality guides our actions. Speaking, or asserting, is acting. A speaker can choose to assert, or not, and can choose to assert sincerely or insincerely. Burge's premise - a source is a guide to truth in being rational – has to entail (if his argument is to succeed) that recognising that a speaker makes an utterance under the norms of practical rationality entitles the hearer to presume that she is being sincere.

In Burge's first premise, he explicitly mentions that the rationality behind speakers' utterances covers not just beliefs but intentions:

Presentation of propositional content presupposes at least a derivative connection to a system of perceptual, cognitive and practical interactions with a world, involving beliefs and *intentional activity*.<sup>55</sup>

The recognition of rationality as a guide to truth means recognising both that rationality is a sign of a speaker's competence, and that rationality is a sign of sincerity. Intelligibility is a sign of epistemic and practical rationality. I have argued that recognising *epistemic* rationality is sufficient to entitle the hearer to accept that what the speaker *believes* is true, but I believe that Burge cannot argue that recognising that a speaker is *practically* rational is sufficient to entitle her to accept that what the speaker *says* is true.

Burge realises that in order to perform speech acts the speaker must not only have beliefs, but intentions. Speech acts are not just directionless expressions of belief, but *intentional* presentations as true. This means that a speaker's *desires* or *preferences* plays a role in motivating her to speak. Asserting is acting, a speaker can choose to assert sincerely, insincerely, or not to assert at all. Any of these choices could be rational. This cannot be said about belief. It would not be rational to believe something that one did not think was true – this is a contradiction. To believe *is* to believe something is true. But a rational utterance is one that is governed by the norms of action, practical rationality. Burge needs to show how such rationality is a guide to truth for the hearer. He needs to answer the question, as he puts it; 'Why is one *apriori* entitled, except when reasonable doubt arises, to abstract from the possibility that it may be in the interlocutor's rational interest to lie?'

He believes that this question can be answered by sticking to his guns on the function of rationality. He claims that rationality has a 'transpersonal function',<sup>56</sup> and that it is independent of

---

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid*: 471-2 (Italics added)

‘special personal interest.’<sup>57</sup> By defining rationality in this way, Burge is able to argue that even though it may be rational to lie, there is still something that goes against reason when one lies: ‘lying occasions a disunity among functions of reason.’<sup>58</sup> So, although it may be in the speaker’s best interests to lie, this goes against the function of rationality, which is to present the truth.

He compares lying to self-deception: ‘someone whose reasoning is distorted by self-deception is in a significant way irrational – even when the self deception serves the individual’s interests.’<sup>59</sup> So, even though lying may be rational on one level, in the fact that it serves the individual’s interests, it is irrational in an important sense, it goes against reason’s function as a guide to truth. In other words, it is because lying goes against the transpersonal function of reason that we are entitled to ignore the possibility that a speaker is lying, if there are no reasons to suppose that she is.

It seems that Burge is using the *a priori* link between *epistemic* rationality and truth to claim that practical rationality must be subject to the same norms. But once it has been admitted that it can be practically rational to lie, this *a priori* link falls away. It is simply not the case that the function of practical rationality has a ‘transpersonal function’, it is not independent of ‘special personal interest’. Indeed it seems almost the opposite: to behave under the norms of practical rationality is to behave in such a way as to fulfill *one’s own* intentions. Recognising a speaker as practically rational means recognising that she will act in such a way as to fulfill *her* intentions, and this does not exclude the possibility of lying. It is not *entailed* in the understanding of practical rationality that a person would be most likely to be sincere. Burge’s argument requires this kind of entailment relationship: his claim is ‘A source is a guide to truth *in* being rational’<sup>60</sup> - and this does not hold true for practical rationality.

Burge claims that ‘lying occasions a disunity among functions of reason,’<sup>61</sup> but what exactly does this mean? For lying to be a disunity among functions of reason, it must be a function of practical rationality to present propositions as true only when one believes them to be true. However, if the function of the practical rationality that we recognise in a speaker is that she will act in such a way as to fulfill her intentions, then there is no disunity when she lies to fulfill her intention to deceive. In this case, the norms of practical rationality allow for deception.

---

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid*: 475

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*: 475

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*: 475

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid*: 475

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*: 471

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*: 475

The practical rationality of others just does not fit into Burge's account of rationality, such that it is a source of truth. In order to defend his argument he needs to show why, *despite* it being rational to lie, we can still count the rationality of others as a guide to truth in the same way that our own epistemic rationality is a guide to truth. However, he simply claims that rationality *is* a guide to truth, and thus it *must* be irrational, in a sense, to lie. But it is the idea that rationality is a guide to truth that is being threatened here. He cannot simply deny that lying is perfectly rational *because* it does not fit into his definition of what the function of rationality is.

Burge may argue that it is more rational to be sincere for a number of reasons. Perhaps because it requires less effort, or because it means that people will trust you in the future. However, this kind of argument depends not on the basic conception of rationality as a faculty, but rationality as a *forte*. This is because when the claim is that it is *more* rational to be sincere, the idea is that there are better reasons for being sincere than being insincere. Once we start talking about good and bad reasons for action we are no longer talking about the basic kind of practical rationality that one recognises in understanding an utterance. When we recognise that a speaker is rational upon understanding her utterance, we are recognising her as rational as opposed to non-rational, not as opposed to *irrational*. To understand an utterance, and thus to recognise that the speaker is rational as opposed to non-rational, is not to recognise that this person is rational as opposed to irrational. There is no *a priori* link between intelligibility and rationality as a *forte*.

We are entitled to presume that an intelligible speaker acts under the norms of practical rationality. This means that we are entitled to presume that the speaker acts intentionally, and that the utterance in question is uttered with a specific intention, or intentions. What does not seem to be the case is that we are then entitled to presume that the speaker is being sincere. Practical rationality does not constrain the speaker to tell the truth in the same way that epistemic rationality constrains her to believe the truth. Bernard Williams makes this clear in his distinction between the role of truth in belief and assertion:

It is an objection to a belief that it is false. In fact, in the case of a belief, it is a *fatal* objection, in the sense that if the person who has the belief accepts the objection, he thereby ceases to have the belief.... But there is no comparable way in which falsehood is a fatal objection to an assertion.<sup>62</sup>

It does not seem that Burge can make the claim that there is an *a priori* connection between being practically rational and being sincere.

---

<sup>62</sup> Williams 2002: 67

Burge's account of rationality gives us a *prima facie* entitlement to accept that what another person *believes* is true. By recognising that the speaker is epistemically rational, we recognise the speaker as forming beliefs under certain norms. These norms form an *a priori* link between rational belief formation and truth. The link is not identical to the link between our own epistemic rationality and truth, because it is possible to see another as being rational, and yet not believe that what she believes is true. This is not the case when our own rationality is the source of the belief. But we are still entitled to believe that what another person *believes* is true based on the recognition that she is rational (when her utterance is intelligible) - because we recognise that she forms her beliefs under the same norms.

But it is not the case that recognition of *epistemic* rationality in a speaker entitles us to presume that she is being sincere. Nor does recognition of *practical* rationality in another entitle us to presume that the speaker is being sincere. Recognising that a person's actions are goal directed – that is, rationally undertaken in order to achieve her goals – cannot get us to the presumption that it is the speaker's intention to be sincere. This is because a speaker's goal may be to deceive. The second premise of Burge's argument for the Acceptance Principle, that a source is a guide to truth in being rational, does not seem to be true when it comes to the problem of sincerity, or as true as he needs it to be, for his argument to succeed. What is lacking is an *a priori* link between recognising rationality in another and having reason to take her to be being sincere.

Burge's non-reductionist approach to testimony is right in that it defends the idea that we do not need other kinds of evidence to justify our acceptance of testimony. There is something about testimony *per se* that makes it right that we should accept it as a source of truth. Burge, like me, believes that accepting a speaker as sincere is not contingent on other evidence, as the reductionists claim. His account, like mine, is an attempt to show that there is some kind of necessary connection between hearing an utterance and taking it to be a good source of belief. He argues, however, that there is a necessary connection between intelligibility and rationality, and between rationality and truth, and that this necessary connection gives us a *prima facie* entitlement to accept the proposition offered. I, on the other hand, believe that the necessary connection is between understanding an utterance and actually taking it to be sincere.

I want to respond to the problems I have raised with Burge's account not by claiming that our epistemic status as regards a speaker's sincerity is thus reduced, but rather by claiming that the nature of the necessary connection between hearing an utterance and taking it to be sincere is of a different

nature. The necessary connection is not that rationality is an *a priori* source of truth, because it is not, but rather a hearer must recognise an obligation to take a speaker as being sincere if communication is going to work at all.

I believe the way to respond to the problem with Burge's account is not to search for the connection between rationality and sincerity, but to reject the idea that this kind of justification or entitlement is required to make it epistemically good that one takes a speaker to be being sincere. Burge is right to claim that taking a neutral attitude towards utterances is 'unnatural'<sup>63</sup>, but this is not because speakers are rationally constrained to be sincere, but because, as I will argue in the final chapter, such an attitude in the hearer would hinder the possibility of communication through language existing at all.

The trust theorists (whom I will discuss in the next chapter) unlike Burge, draw a clear distinction between coming to believe something through one's own rationality (inference or perception) and coming to believe something based on what another person tells us. Rather than trying to blur the divide, as Burge does, the trust theorists rely on it to defend a new theory about why we should believe what people tell us. In the next chapter I will examine the strengths of this distinction, and yet ultimately reject the trust theorist's claim that trust or assurance is what entitles our acceptance of utterances as sincere.

\*\*\*

---

<sup>63</sup>Burge 1993: 474

### Chapter Three

Tyler Burge's account of testimony fails to make a relevant distinction between the testimony of others as a source of belief, and one's own rationality as a source of belief. It fails to recognise the essential role that speaker intention has to play in a hearer coming to believe what the speaker says. The third major response to the problem of testimony, on the contrary, focuses on just this distinction. This response has been called the 'assurance' or 'trust' view of testimony. This view holds that accepting testimony is about *trusting people* rather than about having evidence, it focuses on the hearer's relationship with the speaker.

The trust views ultimately derive from H.P. Grice's account of non-natural meaning, and the necessary role speaker intention plays in the possibility of communication. In Section One I will outline Grice's account, and then look at Richard Moran's assurance view of testimony, and how he uses this idea of speaker intention to develop the claim that our acceptance of testimony arises out of the speaker's intention to assure the hearer of the truth of the proposition offered. In Section Two I will look at Paul Faulkner's development of the trust view of testimony, a view which arises out of an objection to Moran's assurance view. I will argue that Faulkner's account fails because it holds that a speaker needs a positive reason to be sincere.

In the final section I will return to Moran. I will argue that his account, though it does not make the same mistake as Faulkner's, still needs to offer something in reply to Faulkner's objection to him. I will argue that something like Angus Ross' introduction of the idea of *rules of language* could be offered in response. Finally, I will argue that the rules that Ross proposes govern our use of language are constitutive rules, and thus his attempt to justify them as instrumental is unnecessary. Our obligation to take a speaker as being sincere does not arise out of respect for others (as Ross claims) but, more basically, out of the possibility of *non-natural meaning* – Moran's, Faulkner's and Ross' attempts to give further reasons for a hearer to take a speaker as being sincere are unnecessary.

#### Section One

It is Grice's account of non-natural meaning that has inspired the move towards a view of testimony that focuses specifically on the intentionality of utterances. His account of non-natural meaning shows how a speaker's intention gives utterances meaning. His theory has come under a lot of fire. For example John Searle, in 'What is a Speech Act?'<sup>64</sup> argues that intention on its own is not sufficient for meaning:

---

<sup>64</sup> Searle 1965

convention is also necessary.<sup>65</sup> Whether or not speaker intention is wholly sufficient for meaning, as Grice claims it is, is not at issue here. All that must be admitted is that speaker intention is *necessary* for meaning and communication.

*Natural* meaning is non-intentional, and is more in keeping with the idea of evidence. For example, smoke means that there is a fire, smoke is a natural sign that there is a fire, smoke is evidence of a fire. Natural meaning can be exemplified in the sentence: 'Those dark clouds mean that it is going to rain.' *Non-natural* meaning on the other hand is characterised by the intention of the speaker or sign-maker:

'A meant NN something by x' [x is an utterance] is roughly equivalent to 'A intended the utterance of x to produce some effect in an audience by means of the recognition of this intention.'<sup>66</sup>

The easiest way to understand this is by example. Naomi meant to warn George that she was going to be home late by saying 'I am going to be home late'. And this is equivalent to: Naomi intended the utterance 'I am going to be home late' to warn George that she was going to be home late, by means of his recognition of her intention to warn him. This means that Naomi not only intends to warn George that she will be late, but *she must intend that he recognise this intention* when he hears her utterance in order for her utterance to mean that she will be home late. The meaning of the utterance is not a bare fact carried on the surface of the utterance, it also depends on what the speaker intends upon uttering it. Unlike natural meaning, Grice has shown that non-natural meaning arises out of speaker intention and the hearer's recognition of that intention.

Richard Moran's account of why we should believe what we are told arises out of the distinction made by Grice. For Moran, what is important in testimony is not the hearer's acceptance of the *proposition* offered by the speaker, but the hearer's believing the *speaker*: 'its (believing's) direct object is not a proposition but a person.'<sup>67</sup> There is an essential difference, he claims, between letting someone know that *p* by producing evidence that *p* (for example, showing a photograph that depicts *p*), and *telling* someone that *p*.

For any phenomenon with some independent evidential import will naturally be one which might well be expected to induce belief without the recognition of anyone's intention. That's just what it is for a phenomenon to be ordinary evidence for something else. If his utterance is to count as an instance of telling someone something, however, the speaker must present his action as being

---

<sup>65</sup> Ibid: 120

<sup>66</sup> Grice 1957 (in1990) : 76 (where NN is non-natural)

<sup>67</sup> Moran 2005: 2

without epistemic significance apart from his explicit assumption of responsibility for that significance.<sup>68</sup>

Non-natural meaning occurs only in the latter case, and natural meaning in the showing of evidence. The speaker's intention to produce the belief that *p* in the hearer, by uttering *p*, is what gives an utterance non-natural meaning.

He argues that there is something special about testimony because it is the speaker's intention that the hearer take his utterance that *p* as a reason to believe that *p*, and that the hearer must recognise that the speaker is taking responsibility for this belief. For Moran, the speaker offers assurance that the belief offered is true, and this is where the hearer's entitlement comes in.

When someone tells me it's cold out, I don't simply gain an awareness of his beliefs; I am also given his assurance that it's cold out. ... When someone gives me his assurance that it is cold out he explicitly assumes a certain responsibility for what I believe.<sup>69</sup>

In asserting that *p*, the speaker is explicitly saying to the hearer that this utterance is a reason for you to believe that *p*. When the hearer recognises this and accepts the utterance as a reason to believe that *p*, there is harmony between the speaker's intention and hearer's acceptance:

In telling his audience something, the speaker aims at being believed, an aim which is manifest to both parties and which binds the speaker and audience together with respect to a norm of correspondence between the reason offered and the reason accepted.<sup>70</sup>

So the reason for believing *p* that the speaker *presents* to the hearer by uttering that *p* is the same reason that the hearer *takes* to believe that *p*. The speaker, by telling the hearer that *p*, takes responsibility for the truth of *p*, and entitles the hearer to believe that *p* for that reason. It is the speaker's explicit assurance that the utterance is true that justifies the hearer's acceptance of it.

## Section Two

Paul Faulkner argues that Moran's account is insufficient:

The problem is that lies purport to be sincere and an audience who was gulled by this pretence of sincerity would equally construe a speaker's lie as an assumption of responsibility. So the set of intentions Moran describes should be insufficient to move an audience to belief unless the audience further trusts the speaker not to lie. Consequently, a speaker's telling an audience that *p* gives this audience the kind of reason for belief the assurance theory describes *only if* the audience trusts the speaker not to lie.<sup>71</sup>

---

<sup>68</sup> Moran 2005: 14

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid*: 6

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid*: 25

<sup>71</sup> Faulkner 2007: 878

So it is not enough to say that the assurance justifies the hearer's acceptance, because such assurance is just as explicit in a lie. The hearer needs to be justified in believing that the speaker is not lying. This motivates Faulkner to posit *trust based reasons* for acceptance.

Faulkner believes that the hearer's trust in the speaker can provide epistemic reason to accept what a speaker asserts. He distinguishes between two types of trust: predictive trust and affective trust. Predictive trust is characterised by an expectation that things will be a certain way, but this expectation is based on evidence, or inductive inference. This is the kind of trust I have in my car to start in the morning, or in my watch to tell the correct time.

Affective trust on the other hand, is trust that we have in people, and this trust is characterised by a set of emotions, such as resentment if the trust is betrayed. This idea derives from Annette Baier's account of trust – which is reliance on another's good will.<sup>72</sup> So, for example, when I trust that a friend will keep her promise, it is not that I expect her to keep it because I have evidence that she tends to keep her promises. Rather I expect her to keep it because I know that she knows that I want her to, and I expect that this desire of mine will motivate her, out of good will, to keep her promise. If she fails to keep her promise, I will be in a position to resent her, felt let down by her. These emotions are features of affective trust.

Faulkner spells out affective trust in the following way:

A trusts S to  $\phi$  (in the affective sense) if and only if

- 1) A knowingly depends on S  $\phi$ -ing and
- 2) A expects S's knowing that A depends on S  $\phi$ -ing to motivate S to  $\phi$  (where A expects this in the sense that he expects it of S)<sup>73</sup>

It is this kind of trust, according to Faulkner, that plays an important epistemic role in our coming to believe what the speaker says.

A hearer knowingly depends on a speaker being trustworthy, and she expects that the speaker's knowing that she depends on him to be trustworthy will motivate him to be trustworthy. This is what Faulkner calls 'trust-based reasons' to believe the sincerity of others. As long as I am justified in believing a speaker to be responsive to my dependence, i.e. that he can see my dependence *and* be motivated by it, then I am justified in believing that he is being sincere. Faulkner draws a parallel between this and a case where a reformer employs a man recently released from prison for petty theft to work for her. In employing him she is dependent on him to be honest and not steal from her. He

---

<sup>72</sup> Baier 1986

<sup>73</sup> Faulkner 2007: 882

recognises her vulnerability and thereby has reason to seek to avoid hurting her and suffering her resentment by acting in a trustworthy way. She trusts him, and in trusting him she gives him reason to be trustworthy.<sup>74</sup>

So, in the case of testimony, when I ask a stranger for directions, I knowingly depend on him giving me accurate directions. I trust him to give me a trustworthy answer. The stranger recognises my dependence on him, and realises that if he were to fail to give me accurate directions, I would be warranted in criticising him. My trust in him will give him a reason to give an accurate answer to my question, he will have a reason not to lie, because he recognises that I am depending on him to be sincere. In this way, it is my trusting that gives me a reason to trust. Trusting provides the epistemic grounds for trusting.

This view means that a hearer is epistemically entitled to accept that a speaker is trustworthy without recourse to other evidence. In fact, the hearer may even have evidence that the speaker is not generally trustworthy, and yet still expect him to be motivated to be trustworthy because he recognises the hearer's dependence. A hearer is entitled to presume that the speaker will fulfill her expectations just by trusting him to do so.

The problem with this, however, is that firstly, it is not obvious that the hearer is dependent upon testimony in the affective way required by Faulkner's account. Secondly, it is not obvious that the speaker *needs* to be provided with a reason to be sincere, as opposed to insincere: whenever I make an assertion, it is not the case that I have a reason to make it a sincere one as opposed to a lie.

In order for Faulkner's account to get off the ground, it needs to be the case that the hearer affectively trusts the speaker; and for the hearer to affectively trust the speaker, it needs to be the case that she 'knowingly depends' on the speaker being trustworthy. But what is the nature of this dependence? Take, for example, an instance where a hearer is not interested in the testimony offered. Say an old friend is telling you all the news about people you have long ago, and willingly, lost contact with. This is information that does not affect you, and information the veracity of which you care very little about. In what way are you knowingly dependent on the speaker being trustworthy?

And what about a situation in which you would rather not hear the information being offered? Say I have recorded a game and am looking forward to going home to watch it. My colleague knows this

---

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid*: 885

and yet takes great pleasure in telling me the final score, thereby ruining the game for me. In what sense am I knowingly depending on him to be sincere?

Faulkner's claim is that 'in trusting a speaker for the truth, an audience does not merely expect a speaker to tell the truth, the audience expects this *of* the speaker and holds the speaker to this expectation.'<sup>75</sup> This just does not seem to describe the above examples at all. It might be the case that I expect my colleague to be giving me the actual scores of the game, but in no way is this an affective expectation, in the sense that Faulkner describes. I am not depending on his sincerity, I am not going to hold it against him if he fails to give me the correct score. Finding out that he was just teasing (being insincere) might please me rather than incur my resentment.

In the situation where one asks a stranger for directions, it is the case that the hearer is now dependent on the speaker being sincere. If the stranger were to lie, the hearer would not get the information that he needs. However, this is not the situation in all cases of testimony: a lot of what we learn about the world through testimony is not knowledge that we need or depend on. My knowledge that the blue whale is the largest animal on earth, or that David Hume went to Edinburgh University, is not useful to me in anyway, but I still accept it as true.

Against this objection, Faulkner has argued that the kind of dependence one has on the speaker in these situations is an epistemic dependence.<sup>76</sup> One is dependent on the speaker for knowing what is asserted, whether she wants to know what is asserted or not. So I am dependent on my colleague giving me the correct score, not because I need or depend on getting the correct score, but because without this testimony I could not know the score. My epistemic status as regards the cricket results depends on his testimony.

However, although this may be the case, it is hard to see how this kind of dependence could *motivate* him to be sincere in this case. A speaker is meant to be motivated to be sincere because to be insincere would be to invoke resentment on the part of the hearer: 'the betrayal of trust is strongly associated with a feeling of resentment.'<sup>77</sup> It is this kind of reactive attitude that is meant to motivate the speaker into being sincere. The speaker is meant to recognise the hearer's vulnerability, and this is what gives him a reason to fulfill her expectations. It is *affective* trust that, for Faulkner, plays the key role in the hearer's entitlement to accept what has been asserted, and this kind of trust does not seem to be in play at all when the hearer does not desire the information given. When I desire not to hear the

---

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid*: 881

<sup>76</sup> In personal communication

<sup>77</sup> Faulkner 2007: 881

cricket scores, it seems wrong to think that my colleague's sincerity is motivated by his recognition of my trust in him.

Faulkner claims that

A's affective trust will be unjustified if: either A is not justified in believing that S can recognise A's dependence on S [being trustworthy]; or A is not justified in presuming that this [his dependence] will move S to [be trustworthy].<sup>78</sup>

And it seems clear that in the examples I have given, I would not be justified in thinking that my dependence on the speaker being sincere would move the speaker to be sincere because my dependence is not of the affective kind. But what is equally clear is that I do not seem to be in an epistemically worse off position for this fact. It just does not seem that because I do not see my colleague as being motivated to be sincere by my dependence on him that I would be any less likely to trust him. Faulkner holds that the hearer's epistemic status is established through trust based reasons, and yet I still believe speakers who are maliciously sincere, and I still believe speakers who in no way believe that I depend on the information they are offering.

Although the above examples were specifically chosen for the lack of obvious dependence on the part of the hearer, I think that they reflect a certain truth about testimony in general. This leads to the second problem with Faulkner's account: it just does not seem to be the case that a speaker requires trust based reasons to be sincere. Take the null setting case of asking a stranger for directions, where the hearer *is* dependent on the stranger being trustworthy. Is it the case that this is *why* the stranger gives accurate directions? When I consider what it is to give information, to tell, to share, to inform, it seems strange to think that if I had not been motivated by the hearer's dependence on me, I would have lied. Lying takes effort and imagination: speakers don't need a positive reason to be sincere, they need a positive reason to lie.

I am not motivated to be truthful, or trustworthy, by the dependence of the person I am talking to. When I tell someone about what I did yesterday, or about an interesting fact that I read in the news, in fact in most cases when I am the source of information, it is not the fact that the hearer is depending on me to be trustworthy that gives me a reason to be trustworthy. When someone asks me for directions, and I am able to help him, I may recognise his dependence on me, and this may motivate me to be careful and explicit in my directions. I may even feel a sense of good will and a desire to fulfil his expectations of me, but is it the case that these feelings are what *motivate* me to be trustworthy? If I imagine that I do not have these feelings, that I am ambivalent about whether or not he reaches his

---

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid*: 886

destination, and that I know that if I lie to him I will not have to suffer his resentment, it becomes clear that, even then, I would not lie to him – unless I had reason to.

Faulkner's account presumes that a hearer must have a reason to think that the speaker has a reason to be sincere, in order to accept an utterance as sincere, or trustworthy. When I consider all the day-to-day situations in which I make assertions, it does not seem to be a part of my experience that I am moved to sincerity by some positive reason. I tell a stranger the time, I tell my grandmother that I will be home for Christmas, I tell my friend that I still have not seen the film *The Matrix*. In all these situations, it is not as if I would have lied if I had not had a reason to be sincere. I am sincere simply because I need to be in order to successfully communicate something to my audience. If I intend to inform, or disclose or share something with someone, my intentions entail that I am sincere about it. The idea that I have to be motivated by something like Faulkner's trust based reasons in order not to lie seems wrong.

### *Section Three*

In this section I will argue that if Faulkner is wrong that hearers require trust based reasons to accept testimony, then perhaps Moran's assurance view is not lacking in the way that Faulkner claims it is. I will then show that Moran's account *is* lacking in an important sense – namely, that he has yet to show how the speaker's assurance can play the epistemic role it is meant to. I will argue that perhaps Angus Ross's claim that there is an obligation to take others as being sincere might be able to make up for this lack. However, once we look at Ross's view more closely it seems that his rejection of Grice's account of meaning as being insufficient to provide a hearer with reason to accept testimony is misplaced. In fact, the distinction that Grice makes between natural and non-natural meaning *is* sufficient to place a requirement on the hearer to take a non-neutral stance towards sincerity. This shows that trust and assurance are not required to justify our acceptance of an utterance as sincere.

Faulkner argues that Moran's account is insufficient: simple assurance is not enough to epistemically entitle the hearer to accept the proposition because a liar offers the exact same reason for acceptance. If Faulkner is right, and we are not entitled to take a speaker as being sincere unless we have a positive reason to think they are not lying, then Moran's account of assurance is simply not enough.

But is it the case that Moran's account fails in this way? Moran holds that the kind of reason for belief that testimony offers is very different to evidence as a reason for belief. A speaker does not offer

his testimony as evidence for the truth of the proposition, but rather takes responsibility for the truth of the proposition, and by doing so invites the hearer to believe the proposition *on that basis*. Faulkner's objection questions whether *that basis* is sufficient to entitle acceptance, given that a liar invites the hearer to believe a proposition on the same basis. Why should the speaker's assurance that  $p$  is true be reason for me to believe that  $p$ , given that whether a speaker is lying or being sincere, he will offer me the same assurance?

This objection is a rejection of Moran's main point, that a speaker's asserting that  $p$  can count as a reason for the hearer believing that  $p$ , just because that is how the speaker intends to be understood. Moran's central aim is to defend the idea that a speaker's assertion can count as a reason to believe, because in making an assertion the speaker takes responsibility for his utterance being a reason to believe that  $p$ . Faulkner's objection claims that a speaker's assertion *cannot* count as a reason to believe, unless the hearer has reason to suppose that the speaker is not lying. So on Faulkner's account, when presented with an assertion, the hearer is faced with two possibilities: the speaker is being sincere, or the speaker is lying. It is only when the hearer has (trust based) reason to suppose that the speaker is not lying that she is justified in accepting the proposition.

In order to answer this objection, Moran would need to show that there is something about hearing an assertion that justifies a hearer's acceptance of it without requiring a positive reason to suppose that the speaker is being sincere. He needs to show why a speaker's assurance is epistemically relevant in the face of the fact that a lie is offered with the same assurance. Why is a speaker's assurance meaningful despite the fact that it does not apply only to their sincere utterances?

I believe that Moran could defend his view on the epistemic importance of assurance only if he establishes a necessary connection between assurance and sincerity, such that there is something special about sincerity, as opposed to insincerity. In other words, he needs to show why a speaker giving his assurance that  $p$  'confers' epistemic value on the assertion that  $p$ . Moran believes that the connection between a speaker's assurance and the sincerity of the utterance is something like the recognition of a contract, where the speaker has certain responsibilities, and the hearer recognises this:

If it seems difficult to see how anything, even someone's words, could acquire some epistemic value through something like *conferral*, perhaps because this suggests something too arbitrary or ceremonial to constitute a genuine reason for belief, it should be remembered that for both parties [speaker and hearer] this conferral is by its nature an overt assumption of specific responsibilities on the part of the speaker. This is no more (or less) mysterious than how an explicit agreement or

contract alters one's responsibilities, actions which are also within the capacities of ordinary speakers.<sup>79</sup>

So the epistemic status of an assertion is conferred upon it by a speaker, and the hearer, in recognition of this fact, recognises an assertion that  $p$  as a reason to believe that  $p$ . What still needs to be shown is why it is the case that when the speaker intends to confer epistemic value on the assertion, the hearer comes to recognise it as having legitimate epistemic value. Why does the speaker's assurance have epistemic weight for the hearer?

It seems to me that the way to do this is by claiming that the hearer's response to an assertion is *necessarily* non-neutral, that there is something in the nature of hearing and understanding an assertion that places a requirement on the speaker to recognise it as having a certain epistemic value. The epistemic status of an assertion is not just conferred upon it by the speaker, but also by the hearer: the nature of an assertion is such that it binds the speaker to take responsibility for the truth of it, and *it also binds the hearer* to recognise it as having epistemic value.

This idea, that a certain *requirement* is placed on the hearer in hearing an utterance, is, I believe, the HSR (the Hearer Sincerity Rule). The hearing of an utterance puts the hearer, all things being equal, under an obligation to presume that the speaker is being sincere. However, I am not the first to claim that there is a rule binding hearers to an acceptance of a speaker's assertion. Angus Ross, in his paper 'Why do we Believe what we are Told?'<sup>80</sup> argues for something similar. He claims that not only do language rules require a speaker to be sincere, but they also require that a hearer presume others to be being sincere, all things being equal:

to knowingly and openly perform an action that is permissible only if a certain condition obtains is to place witnesses under a *prima facie* obligation to assume that the condition in question does indeed obtain.<sup>81</sup>

Ross' account is also derived from Grice's account of non-natural meaning – in uttering that  $p$ , it is the speaker's intention to communicate that  $p$  by getting the hearer to recognise that this is her intention. Ross recognises that communication occurs when the hearer accepts that  $p$ , based on the recognition of the speaker's intention to communicate that  $p$ . And yet, he claims, 'We need to be told *why* the

---

<sup>79</sup> Moran 2005: 16

<sup>80</sup> Ross 1986

<sup>81</sup> Ross 1986: 78

knowledge that the speaker wants him to believe something should make the hearer inclined to believe it.<sup>82</sup>

Ross' response to this is to claim that language is rule-governed, and that it is a rule to make true assertions. It is then the responsibility of a hearer to take assertions as true, because to not do so would be to not recognise that speakers as obeying the rules.

It is a feature of one we might call 'normal life' in a rule governed community that each is not only entitled but under a certain obligation to assume, in the absence of definite reasons for believing otherwise, that his fellows are acting in accordance with the rules. To be counted a full, adult member of such a community on an equal footing with other members is not merely to be required to observe the rules; it is to be trusted to exercise this responsibility for oneself.<sup>83</sup>

The hearer's entitlement to accept the proposition is something 'akin to moral entitlement.'<sup>84</sup> It is not that the hearer is justified in accepting it based on evidence, but rather is entitled to accept it because the hearer recognises that the speaker is taking responsibility for the truth of the proposition: we must 'respect ... others as fellow judges of correct action' and as 'responsible for the propriety of their own actions.'<sup>85</sup> Not only must one follow the rules, but one must trust others to follow the rules. In this way, upon hearing an utterance, or an assertion, the hearer must trust that the speaker is following the rules, and saying what she believes to be true.

For Ross, there is an *prima facie obligation* to accept that others are following the rules of language because we must treat each other as equals, and 'full, adult members'<sup>86</sup> of a community. This entails assuming that others are playing by the rules, unless there is reason to suppose otherwise. So our entitlement or obligation to accept what we have been told arises out of recognising the speaker as a responsible member of the community, who recognises and plays by the rules.

Ross's account seems to provide something that Moran's lacks, namely making the link between hearing an utterance and presuming it to be sincere without having positive reason to take it as such. Ross claims that we should accept what people tell us because to do so is to respect speakers as 'fellow judges'. To presume that others are 'acting with propriety'<sup>87</sup> is part of the responsibility of living in a rule governed community. Ross' account, unlike Moran's, shows how a speaker making an utterance can place the hearer under a certain obligation to take the utterance in a certain way. He does this

---

<sup>82</sup> Ross 1986: 74

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid*: 78

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid*: 78

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid*: 78

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid*: 78

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid*: 78

without recourse to the type of affective trust based reasons that Faulkner argues are necessary to bridge the epistemic gap.

However, although I agree with Ross that hearing an utterance places the hearer under a certain obligation to take it as sincere, I do not believe that this obligation arises out of respect for others, or out of propriety. Ross, like Moran and Faulkner, is of the view that Grice's account of non-natural meaning does not, on its own, provide the hearer with a reason for accepting a speaker's utterance as sincere. I believe, on the contrary, that Grice's account places on the hearer the kind of obligation that Ross argues arises out of being a responsible member of a rule governed community. I believe that the very possibility of communication places the hearer under an obligation to take a speaker as being sincere – that the HSR arises out of the possibility of communication through language.

Ross claims: 'We need to be told *why* the knowledge that the speaker wants him to believe something should make the hearer inclined to believe it.'<sup>88</sup> It is a similar question that motivates Moran's assurance view of testimony, and Faulkner's trust based reasons. All three attempt to show how it is that a speaker's intention to be believed can result in the hearer coming to believe what the speaker says. However, they all seem to miss what is an essential part of Grice's account: the means by which this intention is meant to be fulfilled. As Mark Platts makes clear in his book *Ways of Meaning*:

It is not sufficient for me to mean by my utterance of sentence *s* that *p* that I intend to induce in my audience the belief the *p*, or the belief that I believe that *p*, or the belief that I have said that *p*. Grice's distinctive contribution is to have seen that it is also necessary that I have a further (higher level as it were) intention to induce that belief through the audience's *recognition* of that first intention.<sup>89</sup>

What is important here is that the speaker does not just intend to be believed, but intends to be believed via the hearer's recognition of this intention. Take the example that John Searle uses to make the distinction. On the one hand, I can try to get you to believe that I am French by 'speaking French all the time, dressing in a French manner, showing wild enthusiasm for de Gaulle',<sup>90</sup> etc., and on the other hand I try to get you to believe that I am French by telling you that I am French. In both instances it is my intention that you believe that I am French, but in the second it is your recognition of that intention that is meant to bring you to believe it.

The difference lies not just in the explicitness of the speaker's intention, but in how that intention is meant to be fulfilled. It is fulfilled *via the hearer's recognition of it*. The speaker's intention to

---

<sup>88</sup> Ross 1986: 74

<sup>89</sup> Platts 1979 (1997): 87

<sup>90</sup> Searle 1965 (1985): 119

communicate that  $p$  is fulfilled *when the hearer recognises that this is the speaker's intention*. In other words, the hearer's recognition of the speaker's intention can serve as a means of communicating. For this to be possible the hearer's acceptance of the speaker's utterance as sincere cannot be contingent on other factors. In other words, if recognising the speaker's intention *can* be a means to coming to believe what the speaker says, then it is a means in its own right. And if it is such a means, then it *requires* that the hearer recognise it as such. If the hearer recognises that a speaker telling him that  $p$  is a means to coming to believe that  $p$ , then the hearer recognises that taking the speaker to be being sincere is not contingent on other considerations. If taking a speaker to be sincere requires recognising trust based reasons, or a speaker's assurance, then it is not the case that simply recognising a speaker's intention *can* be a means to coming to believe what is said.

One cannot ask, as Ross does, why the hearer should be inclined to accept an utterance based on the recognition that the speaker intends to inform her of something. If she is *not* inclined to accept it (as sincere at least) based on recognition of the speaker's intention, then she will not be able to communicate. Communication is possible just because recognising intention can be enough for a hearer to accept a speaker's utterance. Non-natural meaning is possible because it is possible that the speaker's intention can be recognised by the hearer as a means to coming to believe what is said.

Naomi's utterance 'I will be home late,' can mean that she will be home late only if George recognises that hearing the utterance can be a means to his coming to believe that she will be home late. This does not mean that George has to believe Naomi, only that he has to see the utterance as a means of communicating belief. The meaning of an utterance is not only dependent on the speaker's intention, but also the hearer's recognising the speaker's intention *as* a means to coming to believe what the speaker says. George must recognise that there is an obligation to take Naomi as being sincere unless there is reason not to – if recognising the speaker's intention is a means to coming to believe what she says then there must be a recognised and necessary default to acceptance of sincerity. Although Naomi's utterance 'I will be home late' will not necessarily induce the belief in George that Naomi will be home late, it will still count as a means to getting him to believe that she will be home late. In order for recognition of this intention to have this epistemic value for George, there must be a necessary connection between hearing her utterance 'I will be home late' and taking her to mean that she will be home late – that is, that she is being sincere.

Communication through language is special because it is possible for a speaker's intention to be recognised by the hearer as a means to coming to believe what she, the speaker, says. The possibility of

such communication depends on language users sharing a common recognition of the rules. A hearer cannot hear and understand a communicative utterance without recognising it as being a means to communication, and thus must recognise the rule that, all things being equal, he should take the speaker as being sincere. In other words, if an utterance that  $p$  is recognised as a means to communicating  $p$  then the hearer must recognise that the speaker believes or knows that  $p$  unless there is some reason not to. This is the subject of my next chapter, but it is important at this stage to draw the distinction between the rule I am defending - the Hearer Sincerity Rule, and that which Ross describes.

I believe that the obligations Ross believes to supervene on language are in fact intrinsic to it. Language and communication would not be possible if the hearer was *not* moved to believe the speaker just upon hearing it. The point can be made best by appealing to the distinction Searle (and others<sup>91</sup>) makes between regulative and constitutive rules. Constitutive rules are the rules that 'create or define new forms of behaviour,'<sup>92</sup> whereas regulative rules are those that regulate behaviour, such as rules of etiquette. The rules that state that speakers be sincere and hearers trust speakers to be sincere are not a regulative rules, as Ross seems to see them. Rather the existence of the rules define the nature of linguistic communication; without them, communication would not exist.

For Ross, the rules apply because of some further value that language users should aspire to, such as respect for others, or counting as a 'full, adult member' of a community. The nature of constitutive rules is that their existence constitutes or defines the behaviour in question, and are not and do not need to be justified by some further aim or goal. The activity of communication is logically dependent on hearers recognising the utterances of speakers as a means to coming to believe what is proposed. This means that the rule to take speakers as sincere is not regulative, it is necessary for linguistic communication to get off the ground.

It is for this reason that I believe that Grice's account of communication *can* furnish the hearer with a motive for believing what is said. More specifically, it entails within it a requirement that hearers recognise the function of utterances as a means of communication, which in turn entails that, when there is no reason to suppose otherwise, the hearer must take a speaker as being sincere.

Through the course of this chapter I have shown how Moran and then Faulkner have attempted to show how the Gricean distinction between natural and non-natural meaning can lead to the hearer being

---

<sup>91</sup> Williamson 2000; Glüer, Kathrin, Wikforss, Åsa 2009

<sup>92</sup> Searle 1965 (1985): 116

epistemically justified in taking a speaker's utterance that  $p$  as a reason to believe that  $p$ . However, it has become clear that just making the distinction places certain requirements on the hearer, namely that in order for an utterance to be a means of communicating, it cannot be that the hearer does not recognise an utterance that  $p$  as a means for coming to believe that  $p$ . This means that there *has to* be a default to presumption of sincerity on the part of the hearer, and any attempt to justify the presumption of sincerity via trust or assurance is superfluous.

\*\*\*

## Chapter Four

The discussions in the preceding chapters have been an attempt to show that some of the main approaches to the problem of testimony have not been successful. In this chapter, I will clarify what I mean when I claim that there is a standing defeasible obligation to take utterances to be sincere, and will attempt to defend my view as a legitimate response to the epistemic problem of sincerity.

Firstly, in Section One, I will outline the Sincerity Rules and explain how they are constitutive to the possibility of communication through language. I will argue that it is a constitutive rule of language that we recognise an obligation to take speakers as being sincere unless there is reason to suppose otherwise. In the Section Two I will defend the idea that an obligation can be epistemologically significant, and in the final section I will look at how my claim has arisen out of the other major approaches to testimony, and yet withstands the kinds of objections that face them.

### *Section One*

Language has many functions, but its primary function is to communicate. Communication is the means by which we *share* knowledge of ourselves and the world, and the means by which we can *gain* knowledge about the mental states of others, and about the state of the world. We can come to know about the world through perception and inference, but we can also come to know about it through communication with others. Communication gives us access to the state of the world: when speakers make assertions about how things are, we can come to know that this is how things are. It also gives us access to the minds of others: when speakers make requests, ask questions and issue commands we can come to know what they intend or desire.

The fact that we can gain knowledge in this way is a contingent fact. It might have been the case that we could not come to know things through language and that our only access to truth was through perception and memory, for example. But the fact is that we can come to know things through language, and therefore there must something about the communication process that allows for this possibility. I intend to argue that the possibility of communication being a means to gaining knowledge is dependent on certain constitutive (necessary) rules, and that the recognition of those rules (amongst others) makes it possible for us to come to know things based on the utterances of others. These rules are: that the speaker assert what he believes to be true (is sincere) and that the hearer presume that the speaker is being sincere, unless there is a reason not to.

As I explained in the previous chapter, a constitutive rule is a rule that is necessary, a rule that defines or allows for a certain behaviour. In a game, a constitutive rule is a rule that is necessary for the possibility of that game being played. It is not necessary that the players obey the rules at all times, but it is necessary that the players recognise what the rules are. As Timothy Williamson analogously puts it ‘when one breaks a rule of a game, one does not thereby cease to be playing that game.’<sup>93</sup> What is necessary about a constitutive rule is that the players are *aware* of the obligation to comply with the rule, and recognise when the rule is being broken. If the players are not aware of the rules, then the game is no longer being played. So if we, as language users, fail to recognise the constitutive rules of communication, the possibility of communication as a means to coming to know about the world and others, will break down.

Although I am using an analogy with games, I am not arguing that communication is some kind of game, or that we, as communicating agents, have a rule book to which we can refer. Nor does the analogy mean that there is a way to win or lose. I am simply making the claim that, if communication of information is possible, then this is because there are certain things that we all accept: if knowledge via communication is possible it is *because* we accept the following rules.

#### *The Speaker Sincerity Rule*

The ‘Speaker Sincerity Rule’ (SSR) is the rule that communicative utterances<sup>94</sup> should reflect the actual beliefs or mental states of the speaker. Sincerity covers not just assertions, but questions, commands, and other expressions of intention, such as apologies, condolences, etc. The SSR is that assertions should be sincere assertions, questions should be sincere questions, and so on. So if I assert that *p*, I must know or believe<sup>95</sup> that *p*; if I command H to  $\phi$ , it must be because I desire or intend for H to  $\phi$ ; if I ask whether *p*, it must be because I want to know whether *p*. Communicative utterances must, by this rule, be an accurate reflection of the utterer’s belief, intention or desire.

This rule seems obvious enough. How can one successfully communicate to another her desire for the peas without her utterance being something similar to ‘Please pass the peas’? In order for a speaker’s communicative intention to be fulfilled, the utterance she makes must reflect that intention. For example, if I wish to discover the time, the utterance I make, ‘What is the time?’ must reflect that

---

<sup>93</sup> Timothy Williamson 2000: 240

<sup>94</sup> It may be that not all utterances are communicative, for example jokes. These utterances may not result (directly) in a hearer coming to believe anything about the speaker or about the world.

<sup>95</sup> According to Williamson, the constitutive rule of assertion is that it is warranted only by knowledge.

desire. I cannot use words that do not in some way correspond with my mental state, and still hope that my intention to communicate my mental state be fulfilled.

A person who does not recognise this rule will lack the ability to communicate. This person does not realise that it is appropriate to make utterances that reflect her desires or beliefs, and that it is inappropriate to do otherwise. She does not recognise that there is a necessary connection between her mental states and her utterances, such that if she desires to know the time, it is correct to ask 'What is the time?' She will not be able to distinguish between lying and making sincere assertions, which means that if she believes that Mount Everest is the highest mountain in the world, it will be all the same to her whether she utters 'Mount Everest is the highest mountain,' or 'Mount Kilimanjaro is the highest mountain,' or even 'Pigs fly on Sundays.' This person does not have the ability to communicate because she simply cannot tell what communication is for. She might not even count as having the ability to use language, because language use implies function, and it is this that she lacks the ability to conceptualise.

Consider the case of the perpetual liar, a person who lies as a matter of habit. Could one not argue that this person fails to recognise the rule that one should be sincere, and yet still has the ability to use language? I do not think so. Either the perpetual liar recognises the rule, and continues to flaunt it, or she fails to count as a language user. This I believe to be an analytical truth for the following reason. To make an assertion is not simply to utter a sentence in the declarative, it is to make a claim. It is to present oneself as believing (or knowing) the proposition uttered.<sup>96</sup> A person who does not know this cannot make an assertion, all she can do is make utterances that sound like assertions.

All one needs to know, in order to count as a language user, is that assertions are claims or presentations of belief. A perpetual liar will know this – a person who does not know this would not qualify as a liar. She will know that when she says "I was abducted by aliens last night," she is making the claim that she was abducted by aliens. She is presenting herself as believing that she was abducted by aliens. This means that she knows that there is a necessary connection between utterances and sincerity. The necessary connection does not mean that she cannot choose to be insincere, but that there is a standing obligation to be sincere, an obligation that arises out of the possibility of utterances counting as assertions at all.

---

<sup>96</sup> Mahon 2008

To lie, most basically, is to make an insincere assertion with the intention to deceive,<sup>97</sup> and this would simply not be possible if there was no rule connecting assertions and sincerity. How could a speaker intend to deceive a hearer if it were not a recognised rule that utterances be sincere? It would be a case of 'anything goes' and a speaker could no more intend to deceive with an insincere assertion than to communicate with a sincere one. A person who does not recognise the rule to be sincere does not recognise assertions as what they are: presentations as true. The same is true for other communicative utterances. A person who does not recognise that questions should be an expression of a person's intention to discover something does not know what a question is.

It is not the case that questions simply *are* an expression of a desire to discover something, and assertions simply *are* expressions of a belief, or knowledge. This would mean that an insincere utterance would not count as an assertion. This is why it is a rule and not simply a matter of fact. A person can choose to be insincere, can choose to make an assertion that is not a reflection of her belief, but she *must* recognise that to make an assertion is to present herself as believing (or knowing) the proposition offered. This means that she must recognise that there is a standing obligation to make sincere utterances, whether she chooses to act in accordance with the obligation or not.

Is there a contradiction in claiming both that there is an obligation to be sincere, and yet one is free to be insincere? What work is the obligation doing, if one can choose whether to abide by it or not? What the obligation does is distinguish between correct and incorrect use of language. It is true that one can lie, can choose to be insincere, but it is also true that lying is a *misuse* of language. If it were not the case that lying was a misuse of language, language as a means to communication would collapse. If it were the case that it did not matter whether one's assertions were sincere or not, then language would no longer be a means to communication.

I am not claiming that lying is morally wrong, although it often can be. It is wrong in the sense that it goes against a *constitutive* rule of language. Sometimes lying is amoral, and perhaps sometimes even morally good. Sometimes the instrumental value of lying outweighs the obligation to be sincere. It is not necessarily immoral to lie to children about Father Christmas, or to lie as a means of consolation or comfort. But lying is always wrong in the overarching sense that language requires its users to be sincere in order for it to exist at all.

Another reason to avoid the claim that being insincere is immoral is that breaking the sincerity rule is not always a matter of lying; sarcasm and metaphor, for example, are common features in

---

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid*

language and often just as communicative as sincere utterances, and yet instances of such are not reflections of the speaker's actual mental state. But these uses, like lying, depend on the existence of the rule to be sincere. If it were not the case that utterances were meant to be sincere, sarcasm would no longer be sarcasm, and metaphor no longer metaphor. If it were not the case that utterances were meant to be sincere, sarcasm would not be a *distinct* type of utterance. What distinguishes it from sincere utterances is that it is a deliberate breaking of the rules (with the intention of this being recognised by the hearer) and *not* that, by mere happenstance, the utterance is not a reflection of the speaker's mental state. My sarcastic utterance 'I could do with a roaring fire and a cup of hot chocolate' on a hot summer's day, obviously does not reflect my true desires. However, if it were not the case that it was a recognised rule that my utterances be sincere, then such a statement would not be essentially distinct from utterances that were sincere. Hearers would have no access to a speaker's mental state. If there was no rule to be sincere, then an instance of sarcasm would be an utterance like any other utterance, with no connection to the speaker's mental state.

This Speaker Sincerity Rule or something similar has been recognised as important in a number of different contexts: H.P. Grice's maxims, in 'Logic and Conversation', include 'Do not say what you believe to be false'<sup>98</sup>; Timothy Williamson, in *Knowledge and its Limits* argues for the Knowledge Rule – 'One must: assert *p* only if one knows that *p*'<sup>99</sup>; John Searle, in 'What is a Speech Act?' claims that one of the constitutive rules of assertion is that the speaker must believe the proposition asserted<sup>100</sup>; and there are others.<sup>101</sup> The idea that there is a rule connecting utterances and sincerity is not a new idea, and it plays a key role in theories of meaning, assertion and truth. What I want to argue in the next section is that there is a corresponding rule connecting *hearing* utterances and *taking* them to be sincere.

### *The Hearer Sincerity Rule*

None of the approaches so far discussed would deny the existence of the SSR. To deny it would be essentially to deny that language can function as a means to communication. It simply must be recognised that utterances are meant to be sincere in order for communication to occur, in order for utterances to be able to transfer information from one person to another. The question that most

---

<sup>98</sup> Grice 1975: 46

<sup>99</sup> Williamson 2000: 243

<sup>100</sup> Searle 1965 (1985): 125

<sup>101</sup> Platts 1997, Austin 1962, Davidson 1984, Dummet 1959, etc

epistemologists ask is how, given that speakers are meant to be sincere, is a hearer entitled to accept that a particular utterance will be sincere?

Fricker argues that a hearer must have positive evidence of sincerity to take an utterance as sincere. Burge argues that if we recognise that a speaker is rational we are *a priori* entitled to presume that she is being sincere. Moran argues that a speaker offers her assurance of the truth of an utterance and thus the hearer can trust that the hearer is being sincere. Faulkner argues that we are entitled to presume that a speaker is being sincere because simply by trusting her we give her a reason to be sincere. Ross argues that we have an obligation to take the speaker as being sincere, because to not do so would be to disrespect her judgment. Each of these approaches aims to bridge the gap between hearing an utterance and taking it to be sincere. Each of them offers a positive reason to believe that, even though it is always possible that a speaker could be lying, we are in fact entitled to presume that she is not.

What I want to argue is that there is no positive reason or justification for taking a particular speaker as being sincere. I want to claim that there is a *necessary* link between hearing an utterance and taking it to be sincere: that a hearer must recognise that he should take an utterance to be sincere if there are no reasons not to. I want to argue that just as there is a correct way to make utterances, there is a correct way to understand them. The hearer is not merely entitled to accept the sincerity of an utterance, but is obliged to. In order for a person to count as a language user, it is not only true that she recognise the obligation to be sincere when making an assertion (or other communicative utterance) but that she recognise the obligation to take speakers as being sincere when there are no reasons not to.

I argued, in Section Three of Chapter One, that the default to acceptance of sincerity cannot be contingent, language requires a default to acceptance. What my objection to Fricker's contingent default showed was that if the default to acceptance was removed (which would be possible if the default was only contingently available) then communication through language would break down. Hearers would be at a loss as to how to interpret utterances. They would not recognise anything special about an utterance's being sincere. And if there was no default to acceptance of sincerity, speakers would not make utterances, because their intention to communicate (which entails being taken to be being sincere) could never be fulfilled. So it is necessarily the case that if language is to be a means of communication, there is a default to acceptance of sincerity.

But one might ask, why does a necessary default to acceptance place an obligation on the hearer to take utterances as sincere? One might argue that even if it is true that language as a means to communication would not not succeed if there was no default to acceptance, this does not mean that the hearer is under an obligation to default to acceptance in the absence of defeaters. Could it not be possible for language to require this default, and yet hearers not recognise that they ought to default to acceptance?

This would mean understanding the default as a matter of fact rather than a rule. It would mean that it is just a necessary matter of fact that hearers default to acceptance in order for language to survive, and this places no requirement on the hearer. Perhaps a good analogy is a different kind of survival. It is necessary for an animal's heart to be beating in order for it to be alive. This is a necessary matter of fact. It cannot then be said that animals *ought* to 'beat their hearts' in order to be alive. So in the same way, language as a form of communication can only survive with a default to acceptance, without it being the case that hearers *ought* to default to acceptance.

However, there is an important disanalogy here. Hearers can *choose* not to default to acceptance. Animals cannot choose whether to beat their hearts or not. If taking an utterance as sincere was a matter of cause and effect – if hearers were simply *caused* to accept a speaker as being sincere – then perhaps the necessary default could be understood without introducing the idea of obligation. But this is not the case. Hearers do not simply accept utterances as sincere upon hearing them. They are presented with a seemingly sincere utterance, and they are free to accept or reject it as a sincere utterance.

But the default to acceptance is *necessary*. This means that when a hearer hears an utterance there must be something that links hearing it with taking it to be sincere. And this, I believe is the HSR. It is the rule that one should take an utterance to be sincere if there are no reasons not to. It is a rule that is necessarily recognised by all language users, though not necessarily followed at all times. This rule is what makes communication possible. It makes it possible for a speaker's intentions to be available to the hearer upon hearing an utterance.

Communication depends on the hearer recognising the intention of the speaker. It is not only that recognition of intention is necessary for communication to occur, but also that recognition of intention *constitutes* communication, in successful cases. In hearing an assertion, the hearer's recognition of the speaker's intention to inform is what constitutes the process of informing. The speaker can only *tell* the hearer that *p* if the hearer recognises that he is being told that *p*, and recognising that one is being told

means recognising that the speaker is being sincere as regards his assertion. For example, the utterance 'It is four o'clock' will only communicate to the hearer that it is four o'clock if he recognises that the speaker intends to inform him that it is four o'clock (which entails that he take the speaker to be being sincere). Successful communication depends on the hearer's recognising the speaker as being sincere.

If communication is to be a means of gaining knowledge, then a hearer of a communicative utterance must see it as such. This means that, upon hearing a communicative utterance, a hearer must realise that they are under an obligation to presume the speaker to be expressing a belief or desire, all things being equal. When I hear my grandmother say 'Please pass the peas,' I must recognise that I am under an obligation to presume that this utterance reflects my grandmother's desire to have the peas passed to her. When I ask someone the time, and they say, 'Four o'clock' I must recognise that I am under an obligation to presume that this utterance is an expression of his belief or knowledge that the time is four o'clock, unless there are reasons to suppose otherwise (for example, if the speaker does not look at his watch).

I must be clear that I am *not* claiming that it is necessary that a hearer presume an utterance to be sincere, even when there is no evidence to the contrary. I am claiming that a hearer *necessarily recognises the rule* that she should take an utterance as sincere when there is no evidence to the contrary – it is always possible to break the rules. A hearer cannot hear a communicative utterance without realising that, all things being equal, she is under an obligation to presume that the speaker is being sincere. This is a necessary feature of language use. If she did not realise this then she would not be understanding the role of language in communication.

Consider the game analogy again. The speaker must recognise the rule to be sincere in order to be 'playing the game' of communication. And the hearer must recognise the rule to take the speaker as following the SSR in order to 'play the game.' In a game of poker all players must recognise the rule that they should presume that the others are playing by the rules if the game is to work. One cannot play the game if it is not a recognised rule that players should presume others to be playing by the rules – that is, not cheating. How could one understand the moves of her opponent if she did not recognise that she was meant to presume that he was playing according to the rules?

If we consider a person who does not recognise the HSR, we soon find that this person, as much as the speaker who fails to recognise the rule to speak sincerely, does not count as having the ability to take part in the communication process, or, more specifically, to interpret. A person who does not recognise the HSR will fail to see a relevant difference between utterances that are sincere, and those

that are not. Upon hearing an utterance she will be as likely to see a speaker as expressing a desire or belief as not. For this hypothetical hearer, if there is no recognised rule connecting hearing utterances and taking them to be a reflection of a speaker's mental state, then, essentially, the hearer has no access to the speaker's mental state.

The claim I am making is not that the hearer who does not recognise the HSR would not be able to tell if the speaker was lying or being sincere, but rather that she would not be able to conceptualise a relevant difference between lies and sincere assertions. She might know that some utterances reflect the mental states of the speaker, and some do not (that is, she may be able to conceptualise of a difference between sincere and insincere utterances), but this is not enough. In order to be able to communicate, she must recognise that there is something *special* about sincerity, such that she *should* take an utterance to be sincere, all things being equal.

If it were the case that she did not know this (that sincerity was special, and that she should therefore take an utterance as sincere) she would not be able to recognise communicative utterances for what they are. Interpretation of communicative utterances is a recognition of a speaker's meaning via the hearing of those utterances. If a hearer fails to recognise the rule that utterances *should* be interpreted as reflections of the speaker's mental state, then the hearer fails to interpret. This is not to say that a person who does not think that a particular utterance is a sincere expression of the speaker's belief fails to interpret. We can interpret utterances as lies. Remember, it is recognition of the rule that is required for interpretation, but this does not mean the rule cannot be broken.

When a person who does not recognise the HSR hears an utterance she cannot assign speaker meaning to it. The words will never mean what they are being used to mean. If she hears a person ask 'What is the time?' she will perhaps understand the words, but will not realise that she *should*, all things being equal, interpret the words as meaning that the speaker wishes to know the time. When she hears 'Mount Everest is the highest mountain in the world,' she will not recognise that she *should* interpret it as an expression of the speaker's belief that Everest is the highest mountain. Not recognising the HSR means not being able to gain knowledge through communication, and it means not being able to interpret communicative utterances as such. As John McDowell claims, 'The ability to understand a language is an ability to know what people are doing, in the way of performing significant speech acts, when they speak in it.'<sup>102</sup> And this is the ability the hypothetical hearer lacks.

---

<sup>102</sup> McDowell 1980: 124

What the other approaches to testimony seem to miss is that once we accept that there is a SSR, that speakers should be sincere, we must realise that there is a corresponding rule – that hearers should take utterances to be sincere. If it is true that communicative utterances should reflect the beliefs or mental states of the speaker, then the hearer must realise that upon hearing an undefeated utterance, she *should* accept it as a reflection of the speaker's belief or mental state. It is unnecessary to argue for a positive justification for taking speakers to be being sincere, because as long as we are taking part in the communication process there is a standing defeasible obligation to take speakers as being sincere.

This rule is defeasible – there are times when there is reason to take a speaker as being insincere, just as there are times when we have reason to suspect that a poker player is cheating. If we have reason to think that a player might be cheating, then perhaps one would require positive evidence to the contrary. If a particular player has been known to cheat before, or is behaving in a suspicious way, then perhaps the other players will require positive evidence that he is playing according to the rules (as Fricker might argue). They may expect him not to cheat because they put their trust in him and expect him to be motivated by that trust to avoid cheating (as Faulkner may argue). But in the case where there is no reason to think that a player may be cheating, the other players are under an obligation to assume that he is not cheating in order for the game to be played. Recognising that one should presume others to be playing by the rules is necessary in order to count as playing the game at all. In order for the game to work, all the players need to recognise the rules and to presume that the others are going to play by the rules.

As with the SSR, the hearer can fail to presume sincerity, without threatening the existence of the obligation to presume sincerity. Upon hearing an utterance the hearer might choose to presume that the speaker is being insincere, may have good reason to take a speaker as being insincere. But the obligation to take the speaker as being sincere must stand when not defeated. In the same way that language as a form of communication would collapse if it was not wrong to be insincere, it would collapse if it were not wrong to presume insincerity for no reason. If hearers did not realise that they should take utterances to be sincere, then communication could not occur – hearers would not take utterances to be communicative.

A poker player can still play the game of poker if he suspects the others of cheating without evidence for it (that is, if he breaks the HSR) but he *cannot* play the game of poker if he does not realise that *he is meant to* take the others as playing by the rules. Not taking a player to be playing by the rules

is not the same as not being aware that one should take a player to be playing by the rules. If he does not realise this, then he cannot understand the moves of the players, because he does not realise that he is meant to see their moves as following the rules of the game. Not realising that he should take the others to be playing by the rules would disqualify him as a player. He has not understood how to play.

The freedom that hearers have to break the rule allows for the complexities of language. Sarcasm depends on the possibility of hearers not taking a speaker to be sincere, and yet recognising sarcasm means recognising that the speaker is breaking the sincerity rule, it does not mean simply choosing, *ad hoc*, not to take the utterance as a reflection of the speaker's belief. When a hearer takes an utterance to be an insincere reflection of the speaker's mental state, it is because the standing obligation has been defeated by context, history, the speaker's tone or body language, or pre-existing beliefs. The hearer is free even to doubt sincerity when there is no positive reason to do so. But what she cannot do is doubt that she is *meant* to take utterances as sincere.

These rules, on their own, are not sufficient for language to be a form of communication. For example, for 'It is four o'clock' to communicate the time, it is not only necessary that the speaker is sincere, and that the hearer presume she is sincere, but also that the speaker is speaking the right language, using the words correctly, and, of course, that the speaker *knows* the time. So the importance of the sincerity rules is embedded within a context of other necessary conditions for successful communication. However, the aim of this chapter, and this thesis, is to show how the hearer's epistemic status as regards the sincerity of a speaker is not established through arguments or evidence for the sincerity of the speaker, but by the fundamental rules of language.

The rules are fundamental to the possibility of communication, and yet they are defeasible. Speakers can be sarcastic, can lie, tease, deceive, and speak in metaphors. Hearers can appreciate sarcasm or can suspect a speaker of lying. But all of these possibilities do not deny the existence of the rules. Rather they depend on them. Without the sincerity rules, language users would not be able to be sarcastic, not be able to lie. These deviations from the rules are distinct *exactly because* they are deviations from the rule.

What these two rules show is that language depends on speakers and hearers recognising that there are certain rules. The very possibility of language being a means to communication requires this of its users. There needs to be a communion of recognition of the rules of language in order for it to function, and this means that a hearer does not require epistemic justification to take a speaker as being

sincere. It is not the case that a hearer has to have evidence or an argument to justify her acceptance of an utterance as sincere, because just by counting as a language user she recognises that there is an obligation to take utterances as sincere.

The epistemic gap between hearing utterances and taking them to be true reflections of the speaker's mental states that the epistemologists of testimony have attempted to cross is non-existent. We don't need positive justification to ensure that our beliefs gained via testimony are good beliefs, because it is the essential nature of testimony, and of language as a whole, that all language users recognise that utterances are meant to be sincere, and are meant to be taken as sincere.

### *Section Two*

The role of a justification is to make a belief a good belief. In arguing against the views of testimony that seek to find positive justification for our acceptance of it, am I doing away with the idea that the beliefs that we gain through testimony are good beliefs? Would not the philosophers who I have argued against claim that if I fail to offer positive justification then I fail to answer the epistemic problem of sincerity? And furthermore, if knowledge is justified true belief, and I am arguing that there is no positive justification for accepting testimony as sincere, am I not then eliminating testimony as a possible source of knowledge? In this section I am going to suggest that perhaps it *is* possible for an obligation to play an epistemic role: not that of positive justification, but that it is epistemically basic to take speakers as being sincere. By epistemically basic I mean that it requires no positive justification, only an awareness of how things go wrong and a responsiveness to evidence that things have gone wrong. If it is epistemically basic to take utterances as sincere, then all that is required to make a belief that an utterance is sincere a good belief is that it is undefeated – and the hearer must be aware when it is defeated.

Perception is often seen as epistemically basic in the sense that we do not need to infer from other premises or other beliefs that what we believe through our senses is justified. So, for example, if I see an apple on the table, I justifiably believe that there is an apple on the table without first having to show that my senses are reliable etc. The justification is defeasible in the sense that if I have some reason to think that my seeing an apple on the table is *not* indicative of there being an apple on the table (for example, if I have been taking hallucinogenic drugs) then I am no longer justified in believing

it.<sup>103</sup> I believe that our acceptance of utterances as sincere is also epistemically basic like this, though not in the same way.

Perception differs from testimony in a very important sense: hearing from someone that *p* involves recognising the speaker's intention to communicate that *p*, seeing that *p* involves no such intention. This fundamental difference is what has led some epistemologists to claim that testimony is *not* epistemically basic. Fricker claims that because we don't experience the proposition offered 'as obtaining' we require other evidence to justify our acceptance of its veracity. Paul Faulkner, in 'The Social Character of Testimonial Knowledge'<sup>104</sup> argues that this difference means that we require 'appropriate supporting beliefs'<sup>105</sup> in order for our acceptance of testimony to be justified. However, my claim is that this fundamental difference between perception and testimony does not necessarily mean that our acceptance of the sincerity of an utterance is *not* epistemically basic.

In fact, it is this difference, coupled with the fact that it is possible to gain knowledge through testimony, that shows that acceptance of sincerity is epistemically basic. If it is true that we can get knowledge through linguistic communication, then it is true *because of* the constitutive rules of language. Recognising the rule that one should take others to be sincere, when there are no reasons not to, is what *allows* for communication of information to occur. Taking a step back, and claiming that we require positive reason to accept a speaker as being sincere is to deny that saying that *p* is a means to telling someone that *p*, or to claim that saying that *p* is only conditionally or contingently a means to communicating that *p*.

In the case of perception, our taking seeing that *p* as reason to believe that *p* might be considered to be established naturally; in the case of testimony, our taking a speaker as being sincere is established *non-naturally*, through recognition of the constitutive rules of language use. When I believe that *p* because I have seen that *p*, there is what Fricker calls an 'internal impulse to belief',<sup>106</sup> I have experienced *p* 'as obtaining'.<sup>107</sup> For example, tasting that an apple is sweet means experiencing it as being sweet; being told that an apple is sweet does not carry that same 'internal impulse' to believe that the apple is sweet. There is a natural connection between perceiving that *p* and believing that *p*. It is naturally the case that seeing that *p* is evidence for *p*. This is not the case when I hear from someone

---

<sup>103</sup> Graham 2006: 93

<sup>104</sup> Faulkner 2000

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid*: 590

<sup>106</sup> Fricker 1987: 74

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid*:74 (italics in original)

that *p*. To hear from someone that *p* involves recognising what it means for someone to assert that *p*, it requires recognising the rules of language use.

It is possible for a speaker's utterance that *p* to be a means to a hearer's coming to know that *p* only because these rules of language use are recognised by both speaker and hearer. The rules are what make communication possible. This means that taking a speaker to be being sincere is epistemically basic, hearing from someone that *p* can count as a reason to believe that *p* *only because* the hearer recognises the constitutive rules of language, including that there is a standing defeasible obligation to take the speaker as being sincere. It is a necessary (though not sufficient) condition on being able to come to know that *p* through hearing that *p* that the hearer recognises the rule that utterances should be taken as sincere, all things being equal.

This means that it is epistemically correct to take utterances as sincere, without it being justified *per se*. There is no epistemic reason that justifies our acceptance of sincerity, there is no argument that shows that it is epistemically *responsible* to take utterances as sincere, there is no argument that entitles us to believe that a speaker is being sincere as opposed to lying. There is no argument or positive evidence that gets us from hearing an utterance to entitling our acceptance of it as sincere. My claim does not build a bridge to cross the gap between hearing an utterance and taking it to be sincere, instead it closes the gap. I claim that we simply *should* take speakers to be being sincere, when there is no reason to suppose otherwise.

The other approaches to testimony take it as necessary to give a positive justification for why we accept testimony as sincere in order for it to be possible that we can count as getting knowledge from others. Without offering a positive justification, we cannot have *justified true belief* through testimony: we cannot have knowledge. However, this presumption depends on knowledge being defined in such a way, and I believe there are good reasons to reject that account of knowledge as satisfactory. It is not within the scope of this thesis to argue for this, but it is worth pointing out that John McDowell takes a different approach altogether.

He argues:

although it is obviously doxastically irresponsible to believe someone about whom one has positive reason to believe he is not trustworthy, or not likely to be informed about the subject matter of the conversation, doxastic responsibility need not require positive reasons to believe that an apparent informant is informed and speaking his mind,<sup>108</sup>

---

<sup>108</sup>McDowell 1994: 211

McDowell's claim is that making it a requirement of knowledge (or justified belief) that the believer have positive justification at her disposal means that much of what we take to be knowledge in everyday life will no longer qualify as such. Any argument that leaves it open whether or not the conclusion (the resulting belief) is true cannot give the belief the status of knowledge. He says:

Whatever plausible candidates we pick as the available starting-points in the space of reasons, and whatever we think about whether they are, as it were, absolute starting-points, or themselves mediated, to be given parallel treatment at a different point in one's overall epistemology, the basic conception of mediated standings is epistemologically disastrous.<sup>109</sup>

So McDowell argues that knowledge cannot depend on the strength of its justification for its counting as knowledge. Instead, knowledge is available to us as long as we are 'doxastically responsible' – that is, aware of how things can go wrong.

McDowell's aim is to present a different understanding of knowledge to the 'governing conception', one that does not depend on the hearer having positive evidence in order for her to count as a knower. His project helps me to show that for a source of belief to be epistemically sound it need not depend on positive reasons or justification. By starting from the presumption that it is true that we can get knowledge through testimony, it becomes clear that it is not sufficient to offer non-conclusive arguments that are meant to give the 'standing in the space of reasons' the status of knowledge. If we do gain knowledge through testimony, it cannot depend on a justification that does not guarantee that the proposition is true. As McDowell says: 'it had better not be the case that the best argument [the hearer] has at his disposal leaves it open that things are not as he believes them to be. ... The argument would need to be conclusive: if you know something you cannot be wrong about it.'<sup>110</sup>

It seems that the approaches to testimony that I have discussed thus far *do* leave it open whether or not a speaker is being sincere. Even if we have positive evidence for sincerity, an *a priori* entitlement, or trust based reasons for accepting the sincerity of a speaker, it is still possible that the speaker is lying. Even if we have positive evidence of sincerity (as Fricker argues is a requirement) this does not rule out the possibility that the speaker is lying. Even if we do recognise a speaker as rational (which Burge argues is sufficient to give the hearer entitlement) it is still possible that this speaker is lying. And even if we trust the speaker, and thereby believe that he will be motivated to be sincere (which Faulkner claims will justify our acceptance) the speaker may still have a reason to lie. This means that the justifications offered leave it open whether or not a particular speaker is being sincere.

---

<sup>109</sup> McDowell 1994: 196

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid*: 200

This means that the status of our beliefs based on testimony cannot count as knowledge if this status depends on these justifications. A justification that leaves it open whether or not a particular speaker is lying is not sufficient to give the hearer *knowledge* that the speaker is not lying. What McDowell's arguments show is that in order for a 'standing in the space of reasons' to count as knowledge, its status as knowledge cannot be constituted by the strength of its justification. This seems to me a plausible reason to reject the 'justified true belief' understanding of knowledge – because we *can* know things through testimony. I believe that in arguing, as I have done, that a hearer is simply under an obligation to presume sincerity, this problem does not arise.

By claiming that taking an utterance to be sincere is epistemically basic, I avoid the problems that face the other approaches to testimony that I have discussed. A hearer does not need to cite positive justification for accepting an utterance as sincere. Instead, accepting an utterance as sincere is epistemically correct as long as there are no defeaters, and the hearer is aware when there are defeaters. This is essentially the claim that hearers must be 'doxastically responsible'<sup>111</sup> in order for the belief that the speaker is being sincere to be a good belief. If there are reasons to suppose that a speaker may be lying then it is no longer epistemically responsible to take him as being sincere, and one cannot get knowledge from him.

The claim that taking a speaker to be being sincere is epistemically basic also entails that not only is it irresponsible to believe that a speaker is being sincere in the face of contrary evidence, it is also doxastically irresponsible to presume that a speaker is being insincere, when there is no reason to. It is epistemically *blameworthy* to doubt a speaker's sincerity when there is no reason to. If the bus conductor tell you that the next stop is London Bridge, you are under an obligation to believe that the conductor believes that the next stop is London Bridge. To doubt this, and consequently to doubt that the next stop is London Bridge, is epistemically irresponsible. It is to not believe something that you *ought* to believe. It is similarly doxastically irresponsible to doubt what one sees when there is no reason to think that anything has gone wrong. If I have seen that fire causes smoke, it would be epistemically reprehensible to doubt that fire causes smoke.

### *Section Three*

My claim that there is a standing obligation to take utterances as sincere has grown out of recognition of the strengths and weaknesses of other approaches to the problem of testimony. In this concluding

---

<sup>111</sup> McDowell 1994: 200

section I want to examine what my claim owes to the theories that I have discussed in previous chapters.

My first intuitions when approaching the epistemology of testimony were similar to those of Elizabeth Fricker. Her local reductionist account of testimony at first sat very well with my feelings that the testimony of others was not to be trusted unless we were in a good position to believe that the speaker is both sincere and competent. I felt, like she did, that people often lie and are mistaken in their beliefs, so taking someone's word for it without evidence did seem gullible.

There is a lot of my theory that I owe to Fricker's account. She claims that interpretation requires recognition of the speaker's intentions and beliefs. This seems right to me – interpretation requires certain commitments on the part of the hearer to the mental states of the speaker. Understanding could not occur without this. She argues, however, that this commitment is minimal, and commitment to the speaker's sincerity occurs only once there is evidence for that fact, and not before. My claim differs in that I believe interpretation also requires a commitment to the sincerity or insincerity of the speaker.

She also claims that there is a default norm of acceptance, and this is something like my main claim. She believes that in cases where there is no positive evidence for sincerity, we can default to acceptance because of a contingent norm. The difference between her norm and mine is that she believes the norm to be contingent, and established empirically, whereas I believe it to be necessary and established *a priori* as a constitutive rule of communication. Fricker's claim that taking a speaker to be being sincere is external and unnecessary to the functioning of language seemed to make the gap between hearing utterances and taking them to be sincere too wide. Although her approach at first sounded like it was taking the epistemically responsible route, I soon became convinced that such a sceptical stance would interfere with the process of communication.

Once I realised that my intuitions no longer lay with Fricker's reductionist account of testimony, Tyler Burge's non-reductionist account seemed more attractive. Burge claims that understanding alone can provide us with an entitlement to accept what we are told. Like me, he argues that taking a speaker's word for it is epistemically independent of external evidence. From Burge I took the idea that hearing and understanding a speaker's utterance can provide the hearer with a source of belief without reference to positive evidence or reason for belief.

His non-reductionist approach is more similar to mine than the others in the sense that he defends the idea that our access to the beliefs of others is not obstructed by lies and deception, but

made plainly available through intelligible expression. Unlike Fricker, Burge realises that there was something about understanding alone that puts us in a position to know what the speaker believes. Taking a speaker's word for it is not a matter of establishing or recognising other epistemic reasons that support the idea that the speaker is saying what she believes; there is a rather more direct route.

However, Burge's account is an attempt to blur the distinction between testimony and other sources of belief, by claiming that rationality plays a kind of transcendent role in justifying belief. The strength of his argument depends on the idea that the entitlement we have for accepting what we are told is essentially the same as the entitlement we have for accepting our own rationality as a source of belief, that is, an *a priori* entitlement.

This blurring of the divide between one's own rationality and the rationality of others as a source of belief seems wrong. How can the rationality of another have the same epistemic force of one's own rationality if it can be rational to lie? The important difference seems to lie with the intentionality of speech acts – there is something special about a speaker's *telling* one that *p*, as distinct from coming to believe that *p*, based on one's own rationality.

Rather than returning to the idea that this distinction undermines our entitlement to accept testimony, as Fricker believes, the trust and assurance theorists believe that this distinction can actually be *the source* of our entitlement. This I found the most attractive idea. It embraces the fundamental distinction between testimony and other sources of belief, and yet does not lead to scepticism about the possibility of testimony being a source of knowledge in its own right. By focusing on what it means for a speaker to tell a hearer something, to make an utterance with the intention that that utterance bring about a belief in a hearer, the trust and assurance views of testimony open up a whole new dimension to the debate.

Taking the agency and the intentionality of the speaker as central in the debate seems to address more directly the nature of testimony as a source of belief. Making utterances is acting intentionally, and a satisfactory account of why we believe others must involve recognition of how the speaker's intention can be a source of belief for the hearer. Paul Faulkner's account made it clear that there is something essentially distinct about trusting affectively as opposed to trusting predictively. Trusting a person involves recognising her agency, and her ability to fulfill your expectations depends upon her will.

What Faulkner seems to get wrong is that he believes that a speaker has to have a positive reason to be sincere, and like Fricker's account, this makes the gap between hearing an utterance and taking it

to be sincere too wide. Accepting a speaker's word becomes dependent on a kind of altruism which means that Faulkner's claim wouldn't apply to all cases of testimony – some testimony involves no feelings of altruism, and some the opposite. So Faulkner has the basics right, but his positive account seems unsatisfactory.

Angus Ross, on the other hand, concludes that the rules of language put the hearer under a kind of obligation to assume that others are being sincere, and this fits almost perfectly with the claim I wanted to make. It recognises the importance of speaker intention, and the limits of an account that treats testimony as evidence. It also recognises that language is rule governed, and that these rules define the nature of language. It was Ross' account that made me think that I need look no further for a satisfactory account of why we believe what we are told.

But it is lacking in one respect. The obligation that Ross claims we have to accept the word of others is justified by the further aim of respecting others as fellow judges – it is a regulative rule. A regulative rule is not necessary to the functioning of language, and thus his account allows for the possibility of a community of language users who do not respect others, and thus do not recognise the rule that one should accept their word. And, as I have argued, this does not seem possible. Even children who are not 'full, adult members' of a community of language users are still under some obligation to accept the word of others – a child must still understand that when his mother says 'Eat your vegetables' he should interpret her utterance as a sincere expression of her desire that he eat his vegetables. The rule that we should accept the word of others and take them to be being sincere, is not a rule that supervenes on language use, but is a rule constitutive to its functioning as a means of communication.

I have taken elements from each of the approaches to the problem of testimony that I have discussed. I have depended as much on positive lessons I have learnt from them as I have on making objections to them in developing my own theory of why we believe what we are told. The objections that I have raised against these other approaches have not necessarily been damning, but they have all pointed in a similar direction. The epistemic gap between hearing an utterance and taking it to be sincere cannot be successfully bridged with positive evidence; it cannot be bridged with an *a priori* link between rationality and truth, and it cannot be bridged with affective trust.

A rejection of these attempts to bridge the gap does not mean that there is not another argument that may successfully do the job. And yet what seems to me to be a more promising approach is to

argue, as I have, that there is no epistemic gap to be bridged, and that our acceptance of an utterance as sincere is epistemically basic. Rather than search for another justification for why we should take an utterance to be sincere when there is no reason not to, perhaps it is just the case that we simply should, because that is how the possibility of communication gets off the ground. And perhaps that is enough to answer the question of why it is epistemically good to take a speaker as being sincere, when there are no reasons not to.

\*\*\*

## Bibliography

Adler, J. 2002 *Beliefs Own Ethics*: MIT Press, Massachusetts

Adler, J. 2008 'Epistemological Problems of Testimony', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2008 Edition)*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2008/entries/testimony-episprob/>>.

Audi, R. 2006 'Testimony, Credulity, and Veracity' *The Epistemology of Testimony*, Jennifer Lackey and Ernest Sosa (eds.): Oxford University Press, Oxford

Baier, A. 1986 'Trust and Antitrust' *Ethics*, 96:2, pp 231-260.

Bok, S. 1978. *Lying, Moral Choice in Public and Private Life*: The Harvester Press, Sussex

Burge, T. 1993 'Content Preservation' *The Philosophical Review* 102:4, pp 457-488

Burge, T. 1996 'Interlocution, Perception and Memory' *Philosophical Studies* 86:1, pp 21-47

Chisholm, R. 1982 *The Problem of the Criterion*, reprinted in *Reason and Responsibility* 2002, Feinberg, J., and Shafer-Landau, R. (ed.s): Wadsworth, Belmont, pp 159-165

Christensen, D. and Kornblith, H. 1997 'Testimony, Memory, and the Limits of the a Priori' *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition* 86:1, pp 1-20

Coady, C.A.J. 1992 *Testimony: A Philosophical Study*: Oxford University Press, New York

Davidson, D. 1980 *Essays on Actions and Events*: Oxford University Press, Oxford

Davidson, D. 1984 *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation*: Oxford University Press, Oxford

Davidson, D. 1984 'Communication and Convention' *Synthese* 59:1, pp 3-17

Dummett, M. 1959 'Truth' *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 59, pp. 141-162

Faulkner, P. 2000 'The Social Character of Testimonial Knowledge' *The Journal of Philosophy* 97:11, pp 581-601

Faulkner, P. 2007 'On Telling and Trusting' *Mind* 116(464), pp 875-900

Fricker, E. 1987 'The Epistemology of Testimony' *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volumes* 61, pp 57-83

Fricker, E. 1994 'Against Gullibility' *Knowing from Words*, B.K. Malital and A. Chakrabarti (eds): Kluwer Academic Publishers, Dordrecht

Fricker, M. 2007 *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*: Oxford University Press, Oxford

Glüer, K., Wikforss, Å. 2009 "The Normativity of Meaning and Content", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Summer 2009 Edition)*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2009/entries/meaning-normativity/>.

Graham, P.J. 2000 'The Reliability of Testimony' *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 66(3), pp. 695-709

Grice, H.P. 1957 'Meaning' *Philosophical Review* 66, pp 377-388

Grice, H.P. 1975 'Logic and Conversation' *Syntax and Semantics* 3, pp 41-58

Horwich, P. 2005 *Reflections on Meaning*: Oxford University Press, Oxford

Hume, D. 1777 *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals*, reprinted from 1777 edition, Third Edition, L. A. Selby-Bigge (ed.), Clarendon Press, Oxford

Jones, W. 2004 'Pragmatic believing and its Explanation' *Critica* 36(108), pp 3-36

Lackey, J. 2006 'It takes two to Tango: Beyond Reductionism and Non-reductionism in the Epistemology of Testimony' *The Epistemology of Testimony*, Jennifer Lackey and Ernest Sosa (eds.): Oxford University Press, Oxford

Lehrer, K. 2006 'Testimony and Trustworthiness' *The Epistemology of Testimony*, Jennifer Lackey and Ernest Sosa (eds.): Oxford University Press, Oxford

McDowell, J. 1980 'Meaning, Communication and Knowledge' *Philosophical Subjects: Essays on the Work of P. F. Strawson* (Zak van Straaten, ed.): Clarendon Press, Oxford

McDowell, J. 1994 'Knowledge by Hearsay' *Knowing from Words*, B.K. Malital and A. Chakrabarti (eds): Kluwer Academic Publishers, Dordrecht

McDowell, J. 1998 *Meaning, Knowledge and Reality*: Harvard

Mahon, J. E. 2008 'The Definition of Lying and Deception', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2008 Edition)*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2008/entries/lying-definition/>>.

Malpas, J. 2009 'Donald Davidson', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2009 Edition)*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2009/entries/davidson/>>.

Moran, R. 2005 'Getting Told and Being Believed' *The Philosopher's Imprint* 5:5, pp 1-29

Moran, R. 2005 'Problems of Sincerity' *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 105:3, pp 341-361

Owens, D. 2006 'Testimony and Assertion' *Philosophical Studies* 130, pp 105-129

Pagin, P. 2008 'Assertion' *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2008 Edition)*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2008/entries/assertion/>>.

Platts, M. 1997 *Ways of Meaning: An Introduction to A Philosophy of Language*: MIT, Massachusetts

Pritchard, D. 2004 'The Epistemology of Testimony' *Philosophical Issues* 14, pp 326-348

Ross, A. 1986 'Why Do We Believe What We Are Told?' *Ratio* 28:1, pp 69-88

Searle, J. 1965 'What is a Speech Act?' *The Philosophy of Language* (1990), Martinich, A.P. (ed): Oxford University Press, Oxford

Strawson, P.F. 1969 'Meaning and Truth' *The Philosophy of Language* (1990), Martinich, A.P. (ed): Oxford University Press, Oxford

Taschek, W. 2002 'Making Sense of Others: Donald Davidson on Interpretation' *The Harvard Review of Philosophy*: (<http://www.hcs.harvard.edu/~hrp/issues/2002/Taschek.pdf>)

Wallace, R. J. 2009 'Practical Reason' *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Summer 2009 Edition)*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2009/entries/practical-reason/>>.

Williams, B. 2002 *Truth and Truthfulness: An Essay in Genealogy*: Princeton University Press, Princeton

Williamson, T. 2000 *Knowledge and its Limits*: Oxford University Press, Oxford