

MARTIANS AND MEETINGS: AGAINST BURGE'S NEO-KANTIAN APRIORISM ABOUT TESTIMONY

Elizabeth Fricker

ABSTRACT

Burge proposes the “Acceptance Principle”, which states that it is apriori that a hearer may properly accept what she is told in the absence of defeaters, since any giver of testimony is a rational agent, and as such one can presume she is a “source of truth”. It is claimed that Burge’s Principle is not intuitively compelling, so that a suasive, not merely an explanatory justification for it is needed; and that the considerations advanced by him are too weak to constitute a persuasive case for the Principle. It is further argued that Burge’s apriorist, neo-Kantian approach to testimony is mistaken, and that testimony is best understood by examining the detailed context of the human socio-linguistic institutions of language, including the speech act of telling. Normally socially skilled human adults have a background of relevant knowledge about human nature and social roles, which they deploy in assessing the likely veracity of particular acts of testimony, and its epistemology is to be understood by focussing on this.

1. Preconditions for Reasoning: Memory and Testimony

Tyler Burge is a deeply original philosopher, one whose work has had a major impact bringing about fundamental changes in how we think about the mind. His series of seminal articles developing persuasive arguments for the “externalist” individuation of the content of many mental states have changed the framework within which philosophers of mind approach issues.¹

This being so, one would expect a contribution from him on the epistemology of testimony to be of no less interest. This expectation is not disappointed by Burge’s writings on testimony, most notably

¹ These began with Burge (1979).

‘Content Preservation’ (Burge, 1993), henceforth CP. Burge approaches testimony via a suggestive analogy with the role of preservative memory in reasoning. He develops parallel positions concerning each which amount to a form of neo-Kantian rationalism about the nature and source of a subject’s entitlement to – as he sees it – unreflectively trade, in her intellectual activity, upon the reliability of her memory, in a piece of reasoning, and upon the trustworthiness of her sources, as a recipient of testimony.

I think that Burge’s approach is exactly right, regarding the role of memory in reasoning. His extension of the same approach to testimony is a deeply interesting move. In Burge’s conception, testimony functions to make available known content across minds – rational subjects – in the same way that memory enables the trans-temporal availability of knowledge within a given mind. On Burge’s account it is equally true both of memory and of testimony, that their reliability is a presupposition – an entitled one – of the intellectual activity of a rational agent, not a specific premiss within it.²

I shall argue below that Burge’s move – the extension to testimony of a compelling view about memory – is a mistake. Burge’s apriori-driven conception of transfer of content between minds – rational ends in a kingdom of ends³ – as psychologically and epistemologically on a par with the preservation of content within a mind by memory is wrong-headed. But it is an interesting mistake, the kind that engenders progress in philosophy. Burge’s idea, though misconceived, is a fertile one, and examining his view of testimony assists our understanding of its nature as an epistemic source for an agent. Burge’s proposal about how testimony transfers knowledge of content from one agent to another is an application of a broader idea, encapsulated in his Acceptance Principle (AP; see below). The application of AP to testimony is mistaken, I shall

² In a longer discussion, one would distinguish short-term memory which subserves bouts of reasoning and thinking more broadly, from experiential and factual memory. Their nature and roles are different, and their epistemology may be a little different.

³ Burge’s appeal to the functions of reason, and resources for reason, including transfer of content *across* minds, brings to mind Kant’s conception of thinkers, rational subjects, as a “kingdom of ends” – entities of value in themselves; all equally so, and rationally constrained in their actions by their acknowledgment of each other as such. See Kant (1948).

argue; but the broader programme in epistemology which inspires AP has much that is of interest and merits exploration.

2. The Character of Burge's Theory

Burge's distinctive and novel account of the epistemology of testimony consists centrally in his proposal of, and supporting argument for, an epistemic principle named by him the Acceptance Principle:

AP "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 do so." (CP, p. 467)

The principle is re-stated a few pages later with an accompanying justificatory gloss (the "general form of justification associated with the principle"):

AP: "A person is apriori entitled to accept a proposition that is presented as true and that is intelligible to him, unless there are stronger reasons not to do so, because it is prima facie preserved (received) from a rational source, or resource for reason; reliance on rational sources – or resources for reason – is, other things equal, necessary to the function of reason." (CP, p. 469)⁴

The AP has a strictly and doubly apriori status: first, its application is not empirically limited, it applies without restriction to all persons, that is rational agents; second, the principle itself holds (in Burge's view) apriori (and presumably is necessary) – since the arguments offered by Burge in support of it are apriori, appealing not to any contingent features of human nature or social situation, but instead to the entirely

⁴ Regarding the potential range of application of AP, Burge is less than explicit. However, AP's abstract formulation suits it to apply to memory, and perhaps also even perception, as well as to testimony, and it is plausible that Burge intends at least the first of these. Memory, perception and testimony are all epistemic sources – "resources for reason" – which endow their subject with a "presentation as true" of a content, though in different – in my own view crucially different – ways. See Fricker (forthcoming).

general notions of a rational agent, of how reason does and must function, and of “rational sources” and other “resources for reason”.⁵

This being so, AP, with Burge’s supporting case, is entirely different from any externalist-reliabilist account of the epistemology of testimony. A reliabilist might maintain a principle that coincides in its upshot with AP, for domains where testimony is – for whatever reason – generally reliable. But this coincidence masks an entirely different explanatory justification. Burge’s account coincides in its result with various other accounts of testimony all of which yield what we may call the Presumptive Right (PR) Thesis: A hearer is epistemically entitled to believe what she is told as such, so long as this entitlement is not cancelled by her awareness of defeaters of her presumption of the teller’s trustworthiness.⁶ The more general point to notice is that very different theories may all have this upshot. This being so, the label “anti-reductionism” about testimony, if applied to all those accounts which

⁵ “Apriori” is inserted into Burge’s second statement of the principle. The syntax leaves its purport unclear. However, I take it the insertion is intended to signal both that the principle itself has apriori status; and also, that a person’s supposed entitlement to accept at face value any “presentation as true” is “apriori” in the sense that this is not conditional on her possession of any empirical warrant for doing so. (To see how these two senses come apart, consider that a reliabilist account of testimony might underwrite the second sense, but only dependent on the contingency that testimony is highly reliable, and only in situations where this were so.) Burge also claims that, where the “presentation as true” is an “intellectual” one, as he maintains is so for some testimony (see CP, pp. 482–3), this renders the item of knowledge acquired through properly accepting as true that presentation as itself in some worthwhile sense apriori knowledge. My response, like that of several other commentators on Burge, is that the acquisition of knowledge from testimony always involves perception of the speech act (whether written or spoken) of the testifier, and so is never thus apriori; but I will not address this issue further in the present discussion. See Christensen and Kornblith (1997).

⁶ This label is coined in Fricker (1994). I there argue for the unsoundness of a supposed transcendental argument in favour of the PR Thesis. The AP’s formulation is very abstract, and much needs to be said about how its various key phrases are to be interpreted. I am here assuming that “...unless there are stronger reasons not to do so...” in effect constitutes a no-defeaters clause of the kind specified in the PR Thesis. The PR Thesis as formulated invokes doxastic defeaters; there are of course other ways of framing a no-defeaters clause.

maintain the PR Thesis, potentially includes very different theories under its umbrella – ones, that is, with very different explanatory-justificatory stories about why the PR Thesis holds.

Burge's account is thus entirely different from Thomas Reid's naturalist-reliabilist account of testimony. Reid's account upholds the PR Thesis. He grounds his anti-reductionist account in the contingencies of human nature, in our complementary inborn pair of dispositions to trustfulness, and truthfulness.⁷ In contrast, Burge's approach is heroically apriori – the justification Burge offers to support AP is not from any broad features of human nature, but instead invokes the entirely general notion of a rational agent, and of "resources for reason". Hence the argument for AP, if successful, would apply to any possible rational agent within a community of rational agents, who attempts communication – the transfer of content from one mind to another, as Burge theorises it.

To my mind it would also be wrong to describe Burge's account as an externalist one. The internalist/externalist divide in epistemology is an intuitive one whose precise meaning and extension is up for clarification. But if internalism is captured by the slogan that features which render an agent justified in relying on the truth-conduciveness of a transition, or source, must be in some way internal to her epistemic perspective, not just brutally outside it;⁸ then I think one can see Burge's account as a species of internalism. In Burge's account, it is the very nature of reason itself which provides the explanatory justification – offered in defence of AP by the epistemologist explaining why the subject is entitled unreflectively to take the presentations of memory, or testimony, at face value. So the entitlement Burge argues to hold does so in virtue of the nature of the reasoning subject; it is thus in a deep way internal, not external, to the subject. Again, this contrasts with a reliabilist account on which the PR Thesis holds for domains in which, as a matter of contingent fact, testimony is highly reliable – this contingency, unlike

⁷ See Reid (1970). The gap between Burge's theory, and a reliabilist one such as Reid's, would begin to narrow if the reliabilist offered an apriori argument for the necessary reliability of testimony, rather than treating this as contingent and aposteriori.

⁸ See Bonjour (1985).

Burge's supposed necessary features of reason, would indeed be brutally external to the subject's own perspective.⁹

3. The Acceptance Principle: Critique

The AP is not a proposition, but an epistemic principle concerning when it is epistemically legitimate to accept something "presented as true". Thus it is not itself a candidate for truth or falsity. Nonetheless the plausibility of the claim that it is apriori correct, ties in with the truth or otherwise of a closely related proposition:

PropAP: If something is presented as true, then it is true.

We have already observed (see note 5) that the notion of a "presentation as true" is very broad. In the case of testimony it concerns speech acts of assertion. Thus PropAP in relation to testimony amounts to the proposition:

PropAPT: If something is asserted to be so, then it is so.

But this is palpably false – our commonsense understanding of the nature of the speech act of assertion, and our everyday knowledge of human mendacity and folly, shows it to be so. This being so, just as PropAPT (and hence also PropAP) is not an apriori truth, but an empirical falsehood, so AP is not a self-evidently correct epistemic principle, but one which seems first-off unwarranted, at least in its application to testimony. (In general it is plausible that an epistemic principle is correct only if it is sound, or at least truth-preserving to a sufficiently high degree.) Burge is entirely aware of the falsity of PropAPT.¹⁰ But in CP he develops a line of argument intended to show that, despite the falsity of

⁹ A theory according to which a hearer is entitled to rely on individual testimonies if, and if so because, she possesses an adequate empirical basis to believe the generalisation: 'testimony is highly reliable' is of course an entirely different, reductionist – and internalist – account of testimonial warrant.

¹⁰ See CP, pp. 468, 470 & 473.

PropAPT, AP is nonetheless a correct epistemic principle describing our epistemically proper response to instances of (apparent) testimony.

Burge's second statement of AP quoted above includes a "general form of justification" for it proposed by him. Further supporting justification is developed in the subsequent argument in CP. Summarising a discussion developed in the preceding pages, Burge writes:

We are apriori prima facie entitled to accept something that is prima facie intelligible and presented as true. For prima facie intelligible propositional contents prima facie presented as true bear an apriori prima facie conceptual relation to a rational source of true presentations-as-true: ...both the content of intelligible propositional presentations-as-true and the prima facie rationality of their source indicate a prima facie source of truth. (CP, p. 472)

Reformulating somewhat, this passage offers a supporting defence of AP applied to testimony via this route:

If you in some manner receive and apprehend what seems to be a message that M, an attempt at assertoric communication of information,¹¹ then:

- (i) you can presume it really is such a message; hence
- (ii) you can presume the sender is rational; hence
- (iii) you can presume she is a "source of truth".

This last, we may gloss, involves the twin presumptions that she is sincere – seeking to convey truth-by-her-lights; and that she is competent: she is such that her own belief is almost certainly true, indeed knowledge.¹²

¹¹ As already observed, AP is formulated in very abstract terms; what it means depends on how one understands the idea of a "presentation as true". I take it that as applied to testimony this means: someone's asserting or telling one that p – such a speech act being precisely the presentation of p as true by the teller, who by her act vouches for its truth. See Fricker (2006).

¹² See Fricker (2006). Lackey (2006) has ingeniously contrived certain cases where someone may be a reliable testifier on some topic, though not in virtue of having these twin epistemic virtues of sincerity and competence about it – her

These three entitled presumptions underwrite the principle:

APT In the absence of defeaters, you can just believe what seems to be conveyed in an apparent attempt at assertoric communication.¹³

Moreover Burge makes it clear that APT is to be read not merely as sanctioning some positive degree of belief in the message *M*; apprehending a “presentation as true” of *M*, in the absence of defeaters, is sufficient to confer knowledge of *M*.¹⁴

In effect, (i)–(iii) spell out the presumptions implicit in APT: (i) presumes an apparent speech act of assertion really is such; (iii), as we have glossed it, specifies the conditions for its non-flukey¹⁵ truthfulness. The role of (ii) is to link (i) to (iii), supposedly spelling out a link in virtue of which (iii) is warranted. The passage from CP just quoted does not overtly state (i)–(iii), but spells out linkages which Burge puts forward as underwriting as epistemically legitimate these three presumptions.

What is the nature of Burge’s case for the epistemic legitimacy of (i)–(iii), and hence of APT? Burge spends some time defending (i) – the license to treat an apparent speech act of testimony to some fact as indeed being one. I shall not pause on this, but grant this part of the work to underwrite APT. My concern is with (ii) and (iii) – the linkage from: is an intentional speech act, to: its source is a rational agent; and then from: source is a rational agent, to: source is a “source of truth”.

cases are of someone who reliably speaks what is true, though does not know, in one case does not even believe, what she states. I do not think this is what Burge has in mind, and in my own view these are deviant peripheral cases, not conforming to the core mechanism of how knowledge is passed on through trust in testimony.

¹³ APT is equivalent to Burge’s AP as applied to testimony; it is equivalent to the PR Thesis formulated above, except that the latter takes it as fact that what has been received is a genuine assertion. “Defeaters” will be defeaters of the presumptions of sincerity and competence of the presumed source of the message. “Can” as I have used it in this formulation means: can with epistemic propriety.

¹⁴ CP, p. 485: “Other things equal, ordinary interlocution suffices for knowledge.”

¹⁵ A would-be liar also misinformed might inadvertently convey a true message; as might a non-knowing true-believer.

We have already noted the falsity of PropAPT. Burge is well aware that in the real world speakers often fail, for one reason or another, to speak the truth. His case for the epistemic legitimacy of (i)–(iii), and hence of APT, does not rest on statistics. As the passage quoted above reveals, Burge’s case appeals to supposed apriori conceptual linkages between first, the idea of an intelligible speech act, and the rationality of its source; and second, between being rational, and being a “source of truth”.

But this case is a weak one. Burge does not attempt to argue, implausibly, that there are apriori entailments from speech act to rational agent as source, and from rational agency to invariable truth of assertion. His case is that there is some conceptual linkage between these related concepts, although one which yields only a prima facie and defeasible connection between them. But such prima facie, defeasible links do not seem strong enough to underwrite a claim to knowledge.¹⁶

Moreover if we reconstruct the intended argument in detail, we can identify a fallacy. We can concede to Burge that there is a relatively thin sense of rational, such that an event’s being an intentional speech act of assertion does indeed entail that its agent is rational. An agent is a subject of propositional attitudes, and – as has been made familiar by Donald Davidson – this entails some degree of rationality in both action and belief-formation.¹⁷ But that an agent is rational in this thin sense is entirely consistent with her being honestly mistaken, regarding the content of her assertions – even the most epistemically capable and cautious agent will sometimes form beliefs that are false, or anyway fail to be knowledge, due to bad luck regarding her environment; and it is certainly consistent with her lying. Burge addresses this obvious weak link in his argument: the fact that it is often in an agent’s rational self-interest to lie. (CP, p. 474). On the thin notion of rationality entailed by

¹⁶ I myself find this much weaker epistemic principle plausible: *If you know that someone has asserted that p, and that is all that is of relevance to p, and the likely veraciousness of the assertion, that you know; then this fact should increase, not decrease, your degree of credence in p.* I think this is the strongest principle in this area that has any prima facie plausibility; equally, I think it is the strongest principle which one might be able to defend from considerations regarding the entailed rationality of speakers, or considerations about interpretation, or about the nature of linguistic practices, etc.

¹⁷ See Davidson (1984).

an event's being a speech act, contra Burge, there is actually a conceptual connection between it, and a rationale for lying! Addressing this problem Burge appeals to a rich notion of rationality and reason: reason, he says, is in conflict with its basic function of seeking truth, when an agent lies (CP, p. 475). But, we may now diagnose: what is wrong with the argument offered by Burge to underwrite (i)–(iii), is that it involves an equivocation on the notion of rationality. The thin sense of rationality in terms of which the linkage underwriting (ii) holds, is nowhere near strong enough to sustain the linkage needed to underwrite (iii). Rational = subject of propositional attitudes falls far short of the much richer notion of: rational = wholly impartial and disinterested speaker only of truth.

One may well puzzle at why Burge maintains APT, when the case he offers for it is so weak – so unconvincing. In the next section I make a suggestion which helps us to understand the intended force of Burge's case for APT, and explains the puzzle.

4. Persuasion versus Explanation

Michael Dummett draws a useful distinction, amongst justifications for a principle of inference, between suasive versus explanatory justifications.¹⁸ A justification for a principle R which is offered as suasive is intended to be such that it will persuade someone hitherto unconvinced of the validity or epistemic soundness of inferences in accordance with R, that it is epistemically sound to employ R. A justification which is intended only to be explanatory has an important, but less demanding role: given that we are already convinced that inferences in accordance with R are epistemically sound, we want some explanation of why this is so. Dummett observes that, if a justification of R needs to be suasive, then it will fail if the justificatory material itself employs R in its setting out. But this is not an objection if its role is merely explanatory. (Hence, justifications of deduction which *per necessitas* employ it may yet serve as legitimate explanatory justifications.)

¹⁸ See Dummett (1991).

Now, in the case of AP and the acceptance of testimony without empirical evidence of trustworthiness of the speaker, the analogy with the justification of deduction is not perfect. (I shall not suggest that Burge's defence of AP itself invokes testimony, but that this is not a problem, because it does not need to be *suasive*, only *explanatory*!)

Nonetheless, we can usefully invoke Dummett's distinction to explain the role Burge sees for his proposed AP, and its status. We do not actually doubt the validity of deduction; we merely want some explanation of why deduction is, as we already are convinced, a good way to make inferences. Similarly, I suggest: Burge takes it to be pretty much an epistemological datum that a hearer is entitled, in the absence of defeaters, to believe what she is told as such. He thinks the fact of this entitlement registered in AP is just that – an epistemological fact. The task for the epistemologist of testimony, as Burge conceives it, is not to offer a *suasive* argument to establish, in the face of real doubt, that we are entitled to believe what we are told as such; rather, it is to offer some further explanation of this datum.

If that is the dialectical situation, then the standard for providing considerations adequate to support AP is much less onerous than if the task were to establish, by compelling *apriori* argument, a contentious or implausible epistemic entitlement for ordinary hearers. I think Burge's advocacy of AP, and the supporting considerations he offers in favour of this principle, need to be seen in this light. If one interprets Burge's supporting materials for AP as an attempted *suasive* argument for it, they can only look pathetically and implausibly weak. Viewing them as considerations offered to explain the obtaining of an independently plausible principle makes much more sense.

Burge finds AP – i.e. that, absent defeat, a hearer is entitled to just believe what she is told – intuitively plausible on its own terms. Moreover he is further motivated by another thought, which he finds compelling. Burge believes to be sound what I have elsewhere identified as a transcendental argument for the existence of a presumptive right on the part of a hearer to believe what she is told just as such (the PR Thesis).¹⁹ This argument runs thus:

¹⁹ In CP, note 13, p. 473, Burge states: "I think that empiricism cannot possibly explain all our justified acceptance of what we read or hear. The idea that we should remain neutral or skeptical of information unless we have empirical grounds for thinking it trustworthy is, I think, a wild revisionary proposal."

- (1) There is knowledge from testimony;
- (2) If hearers could not with epistemic propriety believe in what they are told by a speaker, in the absence of specific empirical warrant to trust her, there could be no such knowledge (since adequate non-circular warrant to do so is not to be had); hence
- (3) There must be, and is, a general entitlement to believe what one is told as such, without need of empirical warrant to trust the speaker.

I do not share Burge's favourable intuitions about the intrinsic plausibility of AP. It strikes me as an unsafe policy for forming belief in response to testimony, and as such an invalid epistemic principle – a charter for gullibility. Nor do I believe the transcendental argument just stated to be sound. A case against it is developed at length in Fricker (1994). If I am right about these two matters, then an argument whose dialectical force is merely explanatory, not persuasive, is not sufficient to establish AP, thereby underwriting the epistemic practice of believing what they are told in the absence of defeaters which it licenses in speakers. But viewed as an attempted suasive justification, not merely an explanatory one, the considerations offered in favour of AP in CP are, as already noted, just much too thin to come anywhere near to doing the job. As a suasive argument they are a complete failure. They are however an interesting failure; enlightenment in philosophy comes no less often from seeing why a position or argument does not work, than from finding one that does. And while I have argued that the approach of AP is misapplied to testimony, I agree with Burge that it is exactly right about preservative memory. This is indeed a resource for reason which any thinker must primitively rely upon, and its epistemology starts from and rests on that fact. Where I disagree with him is over his view that transfer of content between rational minds is in deep ways analogous to the inter-temporal transfer within a mind effected by memory.

The fact that the arguments for AP canvassed by Burge in CP are unpersuasive leaves the dialectical situation indeterminate. There could yet be other, more compelling arguments for AP and the PR Thesis – a stronger argument from considerations of the fixation of meaning; an argument from the norms governing the practice of assertion; or one from the psychology of the mental event of understanding an event as a speech

act of assertion.²⁰ In my final section I will argue that, even if there were a convincing argument to establish AP in relation to testimony (APT), this is largely irrelevant to explaining the basis of our right to accept most of the testimony we, mature adults, receive in everyday life. It is irrelevant because a mature and normally cognitively equipped adult is usually amply furnished with relevant empirical evidence concerning the likely reliability of most of the testimony she encounters in her daily life, and this swamps the significance of any supposed on-no-evidence entitlement to believe what she is told.

5. Understanding Human Testimonial Exchange

Whether AP holds is a critical issue for the legitimacy of our everyday acceptance of testimony, only if we are sufficiently often in the position about which it pronounces – that is, we have no defeaters regarding the trustworthiness of the testifier. But more than this: the correctness or otherwise of AP is critical for the propriety of our everyday response to testimony only if we are frequently in a position where we have no positive empirical basis to trust a testifier. If the typical position of a mature adult faced with a piece of testimony is that she has in her cognitive background, and brings to bear, a wealth of empirical knowledge relevant to the assessment of that testimony, then she does not need recourse to a default principle licensing its acceptance in the absence of such relevant empirical information. I have argued elsewhere that mature adults do typically possess and form belief in the light of such relevant background information.²¹ If I ask the receptionist at my hotel when breakfast is served, I do not need to trust her on no evidence; my background knowledge about hotels, and the role of the receptionist, furnishes me with good empirical grounds to trust her. On the other hand, background knowledge of the variety of taste may lead me to be skeptical of her recommendations of a local entertainment venue. I do not need an on-no-evidence entitlement in order to have a basis to trust what she tells me about breakfast, and it is defeated about the entertainment. Of course these facts are consistent with AP holding; but whether it does so is of

²⁰ See Fricker (1994), (2006) & (2007).

²¹ See Fricker (2002).

little significance in explaining the everyday epistemology of testimony.²²

If this is so, then a resolutely apriorist approach to explaining the *actual* epistemology of testimony – what epistemic principles are relevant to understanding how we properly respond epistemically to testimony in everyday life – is largely irrelevant.

This is my main charge against Burge’s approach in CP. As observed earlier, Burge’s approach is heroically apriori, appealing to the entirely general notions of a rational agent, and of resources for reason. Consequently, the AP applies to a rational agent amongst other rational agents as such. No appeal to more embedded, contextual features of our human psychology, individual and social is made. But an illuminating account of human testimony – its nature, and as a corollary its epistemology – must start from the actual social institutions of language-use, and the social norms and conventions governing human linguistic exchange; not from an utterly abstract conception of the commingling of rational minds. Burge’s abstract formulation in terms of an apparently-intelligible “presentation as true” to me conjures up the idea of a message beamed in, as it were from Mars; received in abstraction from any social context of real-life everyday communication. – It seems intelligible, so maybe it’s from an intelligent being who speaks truth – is his reconstruction of the basis of entitlement to believe it. But this is utterly remote from the embedded social engagement of our actual everyday testimonial exchange. And Burge’s approach, as it were reconstructing our right to trust and understand attempts at communication from Martians, does not help with understanding the basis on which we properly trust what we are told by those individuals, familiar or in

²² There are subtle and difficult issues to be pursued here concerning the nature of the entitlement posited in AP. Does it invoke an entirely different and positive source of entitlement? Or is it rather to be construed negatively – licensing a hearer in believing what she is told when she has no evidence. If the former, then someone who forms belief in what she is told because she has evidence that her source is trustworthy has a belief which is justificationaly overdetermined – it has both an empirical and an apriori warrant. Her position is like that of someone who believes a mathematical theorem both on the basis that an expert she trusts has told it to her, and because she has proved it for herself. I do not think one can make much sense of AP as invoking an independent source of apriori warrant in this manner; see Fricker (*forthcoming*), and Graham (2006).

familiar roles, with familiar competences and weaknesses, that we encounter in our everyday lives.

Contrary to Burge's approach, to understand and give a good philosophical theory of how knowledge is actually shared in the vast majority of situations between adult humans, normally socialized and socio-cognitively skilled, what is needed is to look at how their background of folk-psychological knowledge, and interpretative skills, actually and properly mediates their doxastic responses to testimony. In this project we need to examine the roles both of folk social knowledge and expertise (individuals lacking in these are unable to interpret utterances correctly); and we need to embed our account of testimony within a theory of the pragmatics and semantics of our various communicative speech acts including that of telling. Testimony is one part of our complex human language game; one part of the multi-faceted social practices of human language-use. We will understand how it can spread knowledge amongst those who enjoy the resource of a common language only if we locate our theory in these basic facts.²³

University of Oxford
Email: lizzie.fricker@magd.ox.ac.uk

REFERENCES

- Burge, T. (1979). "Individualism and the Mental" reprinted in: D. Rosenthal, ed., *The Nature of Mind*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1991, pp. 536–67.
- Burge, T. (1993). "Content Preservation", *Philosophical Review* 102, pp. 457–88.
- Burge, T. (1997). "Interlocution, Perception and Memory", *Philosophical Studies* 86, pp. 21–47.
- BonJour, L. (1985). *The Structure of Empirical Knowledge*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass.
- Christensen, D. & Kornblith, H. (1997). "Testimony, Memory and the Limits of the Apriori", *Philosophical Studies* 86, pp. 2–20.
- Davidson, D. (1984). *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

²³ See Goldman (2002) & Fricker (2006). An earlier version of this material was presented at a conference in Social Epistemology at the University of Stirling in August 2006, and I am grateful to Duncan Pritchard for organizing this event, and to my audience for much useful discussion.

- Dummett, M. (1991). "Circularity, Consistency and Harmony" in his: *The Logical Basis of Metaphysics*, Duckworth, London, pp. 200–220.
- Fricke, E. (1994) "Against Gullibility" in: B. K. Matilal & A. Chakrabarti, eds., *Knowing from Words*, Kluwer, Dordrecht. Reprinted in: S. Bernecker, ed., *Reading Epistemology: Selected Texts with Interactive Commentary*, Blackwell, Oxford, 2006.
- Fricke, E. (2002). "Trusting Others in the Sciences: Apriori or Empirical Warrant?", *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science* 33, pp. 373–83.
- Fricke, E. (2006). "Second-Hand Knowledge", *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 73, pp. 592–618.
- Fricke, E. (forthcoming). "Testimony and Perception: A Contrast", *Royal Institute of Philosophy Proceedings*.
- Goldman, A. (2002). "Experts: Which Ones Should You Trust?", *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 63, pp. 85–110.
- Graham, P. (2006). "Testimonial Justification: Inferential or Non-inferential?", *The Philosophical Quarterly* 56(222), pp. 84–95.
- Kant, I. (1948). *The Moral Law*, trans. H. Paton, Hutchinson, London.
- Lackey, J. (2006). "It Takes Two to Tango: Beyond Reductionism and Non-Reductionism in the Epistemology of Testimony" in: J. Lackey & E. Sosa, eds., *The Epistemology of Testimony*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 160–189.
- Reid, T. (1970). *An Enquiry into the Human Mind*, ed. T. J. Duggan, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.)