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ARTICLE

Beyond testimony: Sharing epistemic resources

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Abstract

We acquire from others many of our epistemic resources – individual items of propositional knowledge but also evidential standards, perceptual sensibilities, and the overarching perspectives that include beliefs, standards, and sensibilities together. Knowledge from testimony, which is one category of acquisition of epistemic resources from others, has been studied extensively by epistemologists. We can begin to explore the wider realm of epistemic sharing by varying the characteristic features of testimony. Eleven dimensions of variation provide some structure to this domain. The interactive complexity of the dimensions suggests a virtue epistemological approach to the evaluation of patterns of receptivity to the variety of sharings that we confront as knowers.

Keywords: Social epistemology; testimony; epistemic virtue

Recent work in social epistemology, much of it stemming from feminist or anti-racist starting-points, has emphasized the extent to which our lives as knowers are informed by others. Gaile Pohlhaus uses the term 'epistemic interdependence' for the ways in which our knowledge depends on relations with others:

> In addition to analyzing how social relations affect *what* we are likely to know, feminist epistemologists have also argued that relations with others are necessary for providing and maintaining epistemic resources *with which* we know. Knowers are situated insofar as they are confronted by a world from particular positions within it. In contrast, knowers are *interdependent* insofar as the epistemic resources or tools *with which* we know operate collectively, not individually. This aspect of the knower contrasts directly with the self-sufficient knower of classical epistemology. (Pohlhaus 2012, pp. 717–718)

Listing some of the resources she has in mind, Pohlhaus notes that 'Knowing requires resources of the mind, such as language to formulate propositions, concepts to make sense of experience, procedures to approach the world, and standards to judge particular accounts of experiences' (p. 718). These, she argues, are in their very nature interpersonal. But of course, the resources we use to make sense of experience and to

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judge particular accounts also include individual beliefs.[1] And the kind of interdependent knowing most studied in epistemology is testimonial knowledge,[2] which involves the transmission via assertion of individual beliefs. In this simplest form of epistemic resource-sharing, you assert something that you know, and I hear you and come to know the proposition that you asserted.

Between the retail scale of individual beliefs and the community-wide scale of languages is a large and varied domain in which we share the resources with which we 'make sense of experience and judge particular accounts of experience'. In spite of the recent prominence of social epistemology, the variety within this domain has not been systematically explored. One way to approach the task is to note some of the distinguishing features of testimonial sharing of individual beliefs, and see what happens when these features are varied. That procedure will generate a series of examples which will suggest further dimensions of variation. The outcome will be a partial map of interactions that pervade our epistemic and social lives. And with that in place, we can begin to consider ways of doing well or poorly in this sort of epistemic environment.

1. Special features of testimony

So, here are a few features of testimonial sharing in its narrowest form:

(1) what's offered for sharing is a doxastic condition (belief),
(2) it is centered on a single focal proposition (or a small set of focal propositions),
(3) it recommends a level of confidence in the focal propositions that's high enough for knowledge, and
(4) it doesn't communicate the informant's *evidence* for the focal propositions, relying instead on the recipient's confidence in the informant as a knower.

For getting started, most of these require little comment. (1), (3), and (4) are parts of the concept of testimony that's familiar in the philosophical literature.[3] (2) is a consequence of the facts that the vehicle for testimonial sharing is assertion, and that assertions are made one at a time. (We can treat something like an assertively narrated story either as a sequence of linked testimonial sharings or as a single extended one. In the first case there will one focal proposition per sharing, and in the second a small set of focal propositions, one for each sentence asserted in the narration.)

This concept of testimony makes a good starting-point because of its familiarity and because its components indicate interesting dimensions of variation. Some of the variations build on testimonial sharing in ways that might suggest a particularly fundamental role for testimony itself in the constellation of forms of epistemic sharing. A better sense of the whole constellation might be expected to provide resources for exploring such questions of priority, but that's not something I'll be doing here.

1.1. Variation 1: Adding some evidence to bald assertion

Sharing that conforms to (1)–(3) might be termed 'assertion-sharing', since assertion is the speech-act that expresses full belief in an asserted proposition. A lot of assertion

[1]If concepts are intrinsically interpersonal, so too will be the beliefs that make use of those concepts.

[2]In the somewhat peculiar sense familiar to philosophers; see the features noted below.

[3]This of course differs from more colloquial uses of the terms 'testimony' and 'testimonial'. The philosophical literature is canvassed and discussed in Leonard (2023).

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sharing differs from pure testimony by communicating some portion of the informant's evidence for the proposition asserted. If one accompanies the assertion of a mathematical theorem with its proof, the recipient receives essentially the very same evidence as that on which the informant bases her belief. A version involving a different sort of evidence occurs if I say something like 'There's an ibis in the yard. Look!' In these cases the recipient can acquire knowledge of the focal proposition from the evidence even if she distrusts the informant's veracity.

A wide range of communication falls between this extreme and the pure testimonial one. In a typical published research report, there's enough information that we're not being asked to accept the conclusion on the unsupported word of the authors, but a degree of trust is nevertheless required; we're not in a position to fully assess the evidence for ourselves. Casual conversation is full of this sort of 'augmented testimony': 'I could see from her gait that she was impatient', 'I saw an ibis in the yard. I didn't even know there *were* New World ibises, but the curved bill was a clear giveaway', and so on. As we assign credibility to assertions, we typically have a range of handles other than just the bare reliability of the source on which to exercise our critical sensibilities and faculties. And requests for evidence or more information are very common conversational moves: 'What makes you think that?' 'Did she tell you that herself?' 'Don't some egrets have curved beaks?' So navigating the plethora of proffered assertion-sharings involves a lot more than just deciding to extend or withhold trust in connection with bald assertion; at minimum it may involve assessing both the sources of assertions and the kinds of evidence offered in support.

1.2. Variation 2: Shifting the confidence-level of the offering

If we drop the requirement of a level of confidence suitable for knowledge, we get another set of cases. In the version most closely analogous to the simplest cases of testimony, the recipient has little or no evidence relevant to the proposition in question, the (presumably better-informed) informant communicates some level of confidence in the proposition, and the recipient adopts that level of confidence. And there will be variants in which more or less of the basis of the informant's confidence-level is communicated, and in which the recipient begins with more or less relevant evidence of her own.

This expands and shifts the focus of consideration in several ways. The simplest testimonial cases involve a shift on the receiver's part from having no opinion about the proposition in question to believing it with the high confidence characteristic of knowledge. But the more general phenomenon can shift the learner's confidence among intermediate levels as well. Moreover, such learning can induce uncertainty as well as removing it. If I learn that you're doubtful about something that I feel sure about, I might appropriately come to join you in your doubt, particularly if I think you're well informed on the matter.

Our assessment of sources may vary depending on whether what's offered is full conviction or some degree of doubt. A source we judge to be over-credulous may be unpersuasive in assertions but extremely persuasive in expressions of doubt. This will be reversed for sources deemed over-sceptical. And if we know something about the evidential basis of the assertion or doubt, that too can figure in: you may think I'm over-credulous or over-sceptical not in general but with respect to some particular sorts of evidence.

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1.3. Variation 3: From beliefs to evidential standards

Some of the most interesting cases of deference (which are explored in Matheson 2015) involve situations in which the protagonists differently evaluate *the very same* first-order evidence concerning the proposition (i.e., evidence that doesn't include other agent's beliefs about the proposition). This last class of cases introduces an element that isn't just a matter of propositional knowledge or informed levels of propositional confidence. If I learn that you assign a different probability than I do to some proposition on the same evidence, I might adjust my assignment. But I might also generalize the lesson to appropriately parallel cases, taking it as a lesson on *how to assess evidence* of the relevant kind.

Once we note this possibility, we can see that it includes a wide range of versions. One set involves explicit teaching. Just as I can share propositional knowledge by assertive utterance, I can share epistemic savvy by imperative utterance, offering explicit advice on matters evidentiary. At least some of our epistemic development as children is facilitated by such explicit advice. ('Don't believe what people say in commercials!') But such advice also extends to casual exchange among adults ('Jill knows what she's talking about') and explicit methodological and statistical instruction. As with sharing of propositional knowledge, such advice may be accompanied by various degrees of higher-order evidential support. (Consider the difference between rote instruction and more thoughtful presentation of methodology and statistical tools.)

This kind of advice is, like testimonial sharing, focused on a single focal proposition or small set of propositions, albeit communicated with imperative rather than assertive force. In general, procedural instruction comprises a domain of sharing parallel to that of testimony (with or without the inclusion of relevant evidence), substituting imperative for assertive illocutionary force. But when the procedure in question is an *epistemic* procedure (where instruction consists of imperatives concerning response to evidence), there's a special connection to testimonial sharing. If testimonial sharing is the sharing of doxastic attitudes, epistemic procedural sharing is the sharing of ways of regulating doxastic attitudes. The propositional/procedural distinction is here also a distinction between the sharing of first-order and higher-order epistemic resources.

1.4. Variation 4: Vectors of sharing other than language

There's a strong connection between sharing which is centred on a single focal proposition (or small set of such propositions) and the use of language as the vehicle of sharing. Testimony itself, telling someone what you know, is a discursive activity by definition. The same goes for explicit instruction and advice. And levels of confidence or doubt short of the conviction required for knowledge are again typically communicated by telling.

The connection doesn't amount to entailment in either direction; proposition-focused informing or instructing can be accomplished by non-linguistic means, and when we discuss non-proposition-focused sharing, we'll see that discourse can be the vehicle of such sharing. But propositional knowledge and specific instruction inherently involve broadly sentence-shaped contents, which can be extracted from the other forms of communication pretty easily.

To start with an intermediate case: you ask me how many eggs we have, and I show you the open carton. Here the information I share is the number of eggs. I don't share it by telling, but you identify it by asking, so language retains a central role. Had you asked whether our eggs are white or brown, the same gesture would have been focused on the sharing of a different proposition. And the question itself indicates what kind of

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sentential vehicle could have been used to share the proposition in question: 'We have n eggs' or 'They're brown'. Meanwhile, appropriate non-linguistic stage-setting can accomplish a similar result. I'm watching you cooking a dish we're both familiar with. You've gotten to the point where the eggs go in, and I see you looking around searchingly. So I point to the eggs, which are partly hidden from your view. Again, it's easy to identify a sentence that would convey the requisite proposition: 'The eggs are behind that bowl' (or maybe just 'The eggs are over there'). I didn't *use* a sentence to share the information, and there wasn't another kind of utterance (like a question) that zeroed in on the proposition. The contextual stage-setting did the work. But it took quite of a lot of stage-setting, and I think that cases like this will be pretty rare, at least outside the context of multiply-repeated common activities. Meanwhile, though the sharing may be focused on answering one question rather than another, a look at what's shown can also yield lots of additional information (including answers to other possible questions). In addition, of course, this sort of sharing will in its very nature provide evidence beyond the authority of the informant in support of the shared proposition (and any other information obtained).

(Again, there will be parallel cases in which propositionally pretty specific instructions are conveyed non-linguistically; lots involving demonstrations prompted by specific questions, and the possibility in suitable circumstances of contextual stage-setting taking the place of the question.)

1.5. Variation 5: From propositions to perspectives

Under appropriate conditions, showing can take the place of telling as a vehicle for conveying propositionally fairly specific information or instruction. But showing can also be the vehicle for a quite different kind of sharing, which isn't centred on focal propositions to be conveyed. I see our cat doing something I don't understand. So I call your attention to it ('Look what Coalson is doing!'). I may not know what aspects of what he's doing will be the informative ones for figuring out what's up; there aren't particular features of the situation that I'm trying to get you to notice. I want you to see Coalson's doing and make of it what you can. The epistemic resource I'm sharing is a look at what's going on.

So there's a kind of epistemic sharing that isn't focused on particular propositions. This is a sharing of more-or-less open-ended sources of information. Again, this kind of sharing can take many forms. Sharing photographs as sources of information is a simple version. (In the last example, instead of inviting you to look at Coalson, I might have taken a photo, or a video recording, and shown it to you later.) This sort of sharing happens on a larger scale with the publication of photographs in books, magazines, newspapers, and journals, and in the sharing of photos and video recordings on the internet. Some such publication is aimed at conveying specific focal propositions, but much of it is intended, and received, more open-endedly. Such sharing is often accompanied by spoken or written material (captions, voice-over narration) that conveys propositionally focused information about the subject of the photograph or video. In these cases a combination of propositionally focused and open-ended information is offered.

One outcome of exposure to photos, videos, or first-hand experience with the actual situations in question can be the acquisition of discrete beliefs about noticed aspects of the situation. 'Make of it what you can' can be an invitation to draw such discrete, propositionally focused conclusions. But such exposure, especially across a number of instances, can also produce a more inchoate sort of informed familiarity with the situation or kind of situation in question, a sense of what these situations are like, what's

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to be expected (and not expected) in such situations, and so on. In this way, it can inform the recipient's overall perspective and sensibility towards these and a potentially wide range of other related matters.

Our perspectives and sensibilities also develop in response to sharing of a very different sort. Consider the sort of testimonial sensibility that Miranda Fricker has discussed (most directly in Fricker 2003; see also 2007 chapter 3). We all more-or-less spontaneously and unreflectively accord greater credence to some informants regarding some matters in some contexts than to others. For example, most of us, regarding most matters in most contexts, accord more credence to assertions made by adults than to those made by children. These sensibilities are in part the object of explicit advice ('Don't believe what you hear in commercials!') and in part the product of our own first-hand experience with the reliability of different informants or classes of informant. But they're also elements of communal practice which are communicated more diffusely. For example, there's evidence that over a wide range of contexts and recipients, informants from socially privileged groups are accorded greater credence than informants from marginalized groups. Explicit instruction can certainly play a role in this, but there also seems to be a large element of more general social contagion, picking up for ourselves the tendencies of those around us (especially, though not at all exclusively, in childhood). In addition to direct emulation of our fellows, the judgements of those around us, especially those we trust, will create a body of second-hand experience with the 'reliability' of different informants or classes of informant which will influence our testimonial sensibility in the direction of conformity with the sensibilities of its sources. Here, one set of parties share an epistemic resource (a testimonial sensibility) by serving as examples, whether or not they regard their activity as educative 'modelling'. And while the exemplification in question may sometimes be centred in particular role-models, it can also be widely diffused through a social milieu. Different sensibilities can be characteristic of different communities; indeed, this is one way in which there can be such things as epistemic communities. Social locational epistemic standpoints (such as feminist or proletarian standpoints) are in part the product of such communal perspective-development-by-exemplification.

The exemplification of perspectives and sensibilities is apt to include linguistic, propositionally focused components (assertions, comments, questions, and such) as well as non-linguistic responses (for example, following or not following advice or instructions). Among the linguistic component is apt to be some proportion of justificatory material; the perspective- or sensibility-driven moves may be accompanied with some degree of commentary. And the sharing of community-wide sensibilities also includes patterns of media representation the can be visual as well as verbal.

What I'm here calling perspective and sensibility includes what Pohlhaus classifies as languages, concepts, procedures, and standards. Elements of all of these are picked up from their exemplification in communities to which the receiver belongs, with additional elements being conveyed in explicit, propositionally focused instruction.

In some cases, a perspective is communicated with exclusively verbal means. Books often work this way. They may be filled with individual assertions, but the upshot may be not just the absorption of each nugget of information but an overall grasp which can be expressed with a Wittgensteinian 'Now I can go on!' Put another way, books can be vehicles of perspectival *influence* as well as sources of discrete information.

One way I can share my perspective is by writing a book. Another way someone can share that kind of resource is by *lending* someone a book. (This is in some ways analogous to sharing a photograph or recording.) A still more open-ended way of sharing this sort of resource is by giving somebody access to my *library* of books. Here, the open-ended 'make of it what you can' element is especially prominent, but the

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ultimate vehicle remains linguistic (apart from illustrations in the books). A collective version of this kind of sharing is the creation of public libraries (and similar kinds of archives and internet resources).

2. Eleven dimensions of variation

At this point we're in position to identify several dimensions of variation among kinds of epistemic sharing. Some of these correspond to the features of simple testimony that we noted at the outset and identified in explicit variations, while others have emerged in the subsequent discussion. (In the following list of eleven, the first five dimensions correspond to the variations, albeit in different order. The last six can vary within testimonial practice itself, as well as in forms of sharing that vary from testimony in other dimensions.)

(1) *First order/higher order resources shared.* Sometimes what's shared is information (knowledge, degrees of credence, open-ended information sources). In other cases, what's shared are ways of responding to potential evidence (instructions, exemplified perspectives, and sensibilities and imaginaries).
(2) *Level of conviction conveyed (or level confidence attached to higher order advice).* Sometimes what's shared are items of confident knowledge or evidential know-how, while other forms of sharing involve more diffident suggestions.
(3) *Inclusion of justificatory material/non-inclusion of such material.* Some assertion, instruction, and such is accompanied by reasons for the assertion or instruction or whatever. In other cases, the resource shared must be taken strictly on the trusted authority of the provider. The inclusion of evidence applies most straightforwardly to propositionally focused resources, though it can also apply to more open-ended ones, as with the provision of authenticating information for photographs.
(4) *Linguistic/nonlinguistic vehicle of sharing.* Sometimes the sharing is accomplished by telling or explicitly instructing or advising or by the provision of more open-ended spoken or written material (e.g., access to libraries). In other cases, the vehicle of sharing is a perceptual opportunity (showing, directing attention, providing photos, and video and audio recordings).
(5) *Sharing directed to a focal proposition or small set of propositions/sharing of open-ended sources of information or perspective.* Some resources are focused on conveying one particular proposition (as the object of assertion or instruction or definition) or a small set of discrete propositions. Others, ranging from (some uses of) photos to books that convey an author's overall perspective, are not thus focused.
(6) *Sharing by an individual agent/sharing by a collective agent.* Some resources are shared by individuals, as in testimonial assertion. Others are shared culturally, as with widely exemplified perspectives or sensibilities, the components of school curricula, and also such resources as public libraries, organizational archives, and such.
(7) *Level of social privilege or prestige of the informant.* This actually comprises a whole set of dimensions, corresponding to the various different dimensions of privilege and prestige. Noting this dimension centered on the social position of the informant suggests a further dimension centered on the relation of positions of informant and recipient:

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(8) *Social distance between informant and recipient.* From the perspective of the recipient, is the source 'one of us' (for any of the potentially relevant 'us'es)? If not, how are the positions related? Here again we have variants for the different components of informants' and recipients' positions, as well as different sorts of relations between positions.

(9) *Single recipient/multiple recipients.* Parallel to the distinction between individual and collective informants, the sharing may be directed to an individual recipient (as in many testimonial assertions) or a multiplicity of recipients (testimonial assertions in public speeches, posting photos and videos to the internet, creating public libraries and such).

(10) *Occasional offering/standing provision of resources.* Sometimes a resource is provided in a brief event like a spoken testimonial assertion. In other cases, including many that involve collective agents of sharing (ambient commonly exemplified perspectives, school curricula, public libraries), the resource is available in an ongoing way over a long period of time.

(11) *Deliberate sharing/incidental sharing.* Some sharing, as in testimonial assertion or explicit modeling of responses to evidence, is deliberately intended. In other cases, like the ongoing exemplification of perspectives or sensibilities that may be emulated, the sharing is incidental. Often both kinds of sharing are present, as reflected in discussions of tacit vs. explicit lessons learned in school.

3. But it's even more complicated

That's a lot of dimensions along which epistemic sharing can vary, and the list is surely not complete. Responding appropriately to epistemic offerings is likely to require locating them along most or all of these dimensions, as location along any of them might be quite relevant to the question of what to make of the offering. Some of this is a matter of understanding the generic intent of the provider, some is a matter of understanding the content of the offering, and some is a matter of assessing its reliability in a variety of relevant respects.

To complicate matters further, individual offerings often inhabit a combination of positions even within single dimensions. Examples that have already come up include photos with captions and perspectives or sensibilities conveyed by exemplification in series of assertions and/or instructions. And offerings appear not one-by-one but in a context of potentially complementing or conflicting other offerings, including higher-order advice regarding the reception of particular offerings or kinds of offering, and actions that exemplify receptive sensibilities.

4. Doing well as epistemic recipients and providers

Philosophical discussions of testimony and probabilistic deference focus on the recipient of the sharing, characterizing her epistemic situation vis-à-vis the information shared and/or recommending particular doxastic responses to the sharing. So discussions of testimony tend to concern either the nature of knowledge acquired through testimony or the conditions under which it's rational to believe others' assertions. And discussions of probabilistic deference tend to address the task of specifying what degrees and forms of deference might be rational under what conditions. If we generalize this across the many and various forms of epistemic sharing, and their many and various combinations, we can consider whether there's anything general that we can do by way of characterizing

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epistemically optimal reception. One common element is of course the balance between the goals of, on one hand, knowing a lot, and on the other hand, not holding false beliefs. So we want to avail ourselves of the benefit of our fellows' knowledge, but we don't want to be taken in by their errors or lies. We want productive procedures for generating information from evidence, but we don't want to jump to mistaken conclusions. We want perceptual situations that are informationally richly suggestive but not misleading.

In the simple case of testimony, this balance aligns with another, between receptive openness and critical distance. It seems natural to associate openness with richness of acquired information and critical distance with avoiding error. But in the more general case, the distinctions cut across one another. One can be receptive to the influence of more sceptical peers, and explicit epistemic advice can be critically conservative ('Watch out for colour distortions under fluorescent light!'). Some such advice is sound whereas some undermines an appropriate confidence in one's own conclusion-drawing. (Gaslighting includes an extreme version of this kind of undermining.) And of course there's second-order advice against first-order testimonial credulity ('Don't believe what you hear in commercials!', 'Never trust anyone over thirty!').

The literature on testimony and on probability-adjustment suggests that some productive work can be done at the level of articulating and defending what might be called rules of receptivity (by analogy to the rules of evidence of traditional epistemology). But the complex interplay of competing and complementing offerings that we confront in the normal course of events suggests that thinking of desiderata for receptivity in terms of rules will get us only so far. One problem is that the rules will always be subject to ceteris paribus clauses, and in the complex interweaving of variously ordered informational, methodological, and perspectival offerings from a wide variety of sources, cetera will never be pare.

That suggests that the application of rules will require informed good judgement as to how best to use rules that don't strictly apply to the situations at hand. And that in turn suggests a virtue-theoretic approach to the characterization of better and worse receptive dispositions. Fricker's concept of testimonial sensibility can be generalized to cover patterns of receptiveness to proffered epistemic sharing of all kinds. In addition to thinking about potential rules of receptivity, we can follow Fricker (2003, 2007) in considering virtues and vices that might attach to such sensibilities. The virtue of reflexive critical openness identified by Fricker, the kaleidoscopic consciousness advocated by Jose Medina (2012), and the vice of wilful hermeneutical ignorance described by Gaile Pohlhaus (2012), are examples in this domain which focus on the dimensions of variation that involve the privilege or prestige of informants and the relative social positions of source and recipient in epistemic sharing. Fricker, Medina, Pohlhaus, Charles Mills (2007), and others emphasize social barriers to fair reception of contributions from sources that are socially other, or socially subordinated, or both, and the attendant epistemic and social harms (including such phenomena as white ignorance which, for the privileged, couple epistemic harm with the social benefit of helping to preserve their privilege).

The examples emphasized by these authors suggest that the virtues of appropriate receptivity to contributions from subordinated others are what might be called virtues of veristic prudence. Resistance to good sources of information perpetuates false beliefs and blocks potential knowledge. Achieving the best balance of the goals of knowing a lot and of minimizing false belief requires a balance of receptivity and critical distance that isn't distorted by identity prejudice. (If we think that truth and falsehood don't exhaust the possibilities for the informational value and disvalue of beliefs, perspectives, or sensibilities, veristic prudence won't exhaust the kind of virtue in question here. One use of the term 'information literacy' focuses more generally on the effective identification

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and evaluation of potential sources of information, and that's very much what's at issue here. But it's also worth noting that many of the examples emphasized by the mentioned authors do clearly involve the perpetuation of false beliefs and resistance to true ones.)

In the examples emphasized by these authors, virtues of epistemic justice and veristic prudence are aligned. But there are aspects of the justice-oriented virtues that go beyond veristic prudence narrowly construed. Our receptive sensibilities are a component of our overall comportment towards our social fellows. On one hand, there's something especially bad about errors and lost opportunities that embody and reinforce identity prejudice and unjust subordination and privilege. On the other hand, there's something especially important about understanding as best we can the perspectives of our fellows, which mandates attending particularly to the contributions of those whose perspectives are distant from our own, regardless of whether the outcome of our attention is our adoption of elements of those perspectives. Epistemic sharing is not just a vehicle of information-transfer but also a domain of interpersonal connection. As Medina emphasizes, 'kaleidoscopic consciousness' is a virtue of both informational perspicacity and of social solidarity.

These considerations regarding receptivity reappear in the obverse domain of epistemic offering. Parallel to the receptive virtues of information literacy are those involved in contributing informatively to others' knowledge and perspectives. Parallel to injustices of reception are injustices of provision. Virtues and vices of epistemic provision are obviously especially relevant to parenting and pedagogy, but also to educational funding and policy, the location of public libraries and access to electronic resources, and so on. The relations of social location and receptive sensibility are mirrored in ways that teachers approach students from different social locations than their own. Indeed, teachers' *receptive* sensibilities are deeply involved in our comportment as epistemic *providers*; how we listen is a central part of how we teach.

It's plausible to think that, like virtues more generally, virtues of epistemic reception and provision are often acquired in large part by emulation of role models. This is one of the reasons that teachers' receptive sensibilities are so important. But it also means that acquisition of these virtues is itself an exercise of epistemic receptivity.

5. Conclusion

A narrow concept of testimony has proven philosophically rich and interesting in itself, but it also provides a fruitful starting-point for exploring the wider range of kinds of epistemic sharing. Eleven dimensions of variation provide some structure to this domain. The interactive complexity of the dimensions suggests a virtue epistemological approach to the evaluation of patterns of receptivity to the variety of sharings that we confront as knowers.

Meanwhile, our lives as knowers are part and parcel of our lives as social beings. Interpersonal reception and provision of information in its myriad forms permeates our lives, our relationships, and our social and institutional environments. Testimonial assertion and its reception is just one small corner of a world of immense richness and complexity, offering many and varied opportunities and dangers, ways of doing well or poorly, that are at once social and epistemic.

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