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ON DREAMING AND BEING LIED TO

ABSTRACT

As sources of knowledge, perception and testimony are both vulnerable to sceptical arguments. To both arguments a Moorean response is possible: both can be refuted by reference to particular things known by perception and testimony. However, lies and dreams are different possibilities and they are different in a way that undercuts the plausibility of a Moorean response to a scepticism of testimony. The condition placed on testimonial knowledge cannot be trivially satisfied in the way the Moorean would suggest. This has substantial implications for any non-sceptical epistemological theory of testimony.

"A wise man", Descartes advises, "never entirely trusts those who have once cheated him."[1] This advice is given to those who think it is obvious that knowledge can be acquired "by means of the senses". However, the senses rarely deceive us and dreams are ordinarily recognisable. Descartes' doubt is pure hyperbole. But this same hyperbole seems better grounded in application to testimony. As a way of acquiring knowledge, testimony can fail its recipient in more ways than perception and the frequency of 'deceptions' is consequently greater. Sometimes the deception is unwitting — as audiences we can fail to discern irony and speakers can prove all too fallible — but other times the deception is not metaphorical: speakers can intentionally deceive. So were Descartes wise to treat beliefs he acquired by means of the senses as "wholly false and imaginary", shouldn't we be wise to treat testimonial beliefs likewise?

In this paper I should like to present a sceptical argument against testimony. Just as a sceptical argument directed against perception concludes that perception is not a way of acquiring knowledge, so this sceptical argument against testimony concludes that testimony is not a way of acquiring knowledge. And I should like to argue that a certain way of responding to scepticism of perception *ceases to be plausible* as a response to scepticism of testimony. The way of responding I have in mind is Moore's, namely to cite particular instances of perceptual knowledge and on this basis to conclude that scepticism either straightforwardly fails or in some way begs the question. It might seem that to aim for this as an anticipated conclusion is lacking in ambition since very few epistemologists have been convinced by Moore's response to scepticism. However, this is not quite right. Even if few have been convinced by Moore's response, many have felt that there is something right about it and Moore's response has continued to attract advocates. McDowell argues "one's good reason to believe that one is not dreaming can reside in all the knowledge of the environment that one's senses are yielding".[2] And Sosa has recently issued a defence of Moorean Common Sense.[3] Without wanting to arbitrate on the success of these Moorean responses to scepticism, I hope to show that such responses are *not* plausible for a sceptical argument directed against testimony. Since a Moorean response to scepticism of perception presupposes a certain epistemology of perception, the implausibility of this response for scepticism of testimony has implications for the epistemology of testimony.

The rest of this paper is divided into four sections. Section one details a sceptical argument against perception and a Moorean response to this argument. Section two outlines a sceptical argument against testimony. Section three explains why a Moorean response to this argument fails. Section four then considers the implications of this failure for the epistemology of testimony.

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1. Scepticism of Perception and a Moorean Response

For a sceptical argument directed against perception consider Stroud's reconstruction of Descartes' argument from dreaming.[4] The conclusion of this argument is that perception is not a way of acquiring knowledge. So the target is beliefs reached via perception or, more precisely, beliefs formed through accepting what is taken to be a perceptual appearance. Descartes, for example, considers his belief that he is sitting in his dressing gown by the fire formed because that is how things appear to him. For any such state of affairs *p*, the argument then runs:

(1) If I know that *p*, then I know that I'm not dreaming that *p*.
(2) I do not know that I'm not dreaming that *p*.
(3) I do not know that *p*.

In logical notation:

(1) $Ka(p) \rightarrow Ka(\sim Da(p))$	Premise
(2) $\sim Ka(\sim Da(p))$	Premise
(3) $\sim Ka(p)$	

The ordinary, what might be called commonsense, response to this argument is to claim the second premise preposterous. And this is essentially the Moorean response to be considered shortly. However, the sceptic would assert that the truth of the second premise follows once one understands what is being claimed in first premise, and this premise can itself be considered as the conclusion of an argument with two further premises.

The first of these premises is, quoting Stroud, "If somebody knows something, *p*, he must know the falsity of all those things incompatible with his knowing that *p* (or perhaps all those things he knows to be incompatible with his knowing that *p*)."[5] This is a principle of epistemic closure: if we know and we know that our knowing implies something, we know that thing. It could be formalised as:

(C) $(Ka(p) \,\&\, Ka(Ka(p) \rightarrow q)) \rightarrow Kaq$

As a principle, Stroud claims that (C) captures something intuitive about knowledge. We know that we make mistakes, and we know the kinds of mistakes we make so *if* we know, then at least we know that we haven't made these mistakes. For example, we know that we'd be mistaken to believe that a wall is red because it appears red if we had reason to believe that the wall was illuminated by a red light, because we know that its being so illuminated is incompatible with our acquiring knowledge that it is red from its appearing red.

The second premise is that we know that dreaming that *p* is incompatible with our knowing that *p*. Dreaming that *p* need not be incompatible with *p*; thus Stroud cites the story of the Duke of Devonshire who dreamt he was speaking in the House of Lords only to wake up and find that he was speaking at the House of Lords.[6] Nor need our dreaming that *p* always be incompatible with our knowing that *p*: one could dream something one otherwise knows.[7] But our dreaming that *p* is incompatible with our knowing that *p* when the belief that *p* is formed through accepting what is taken to be a perceptual appearance. Were this appearance a dream, the belief that *p* would not be knowledge since it should be the merest chance were it true. And we know this to be the case.

Given this principle of closure and our knowledge that dreaming is not a way of acquiring knowledge, the first premise above can be reached by the following argument.

(1.a) If I know that *p* and I know that my knowing that *p* implies I am not dreaming that *p*, then I know that I am not dreaming that *p*.
(1.b) I know that my knowing that *p* implies I am not dreaming that *p*
(1) If I know that *p*, then I know that I am not dreaming that *p*.

In logical notation:

(1.a) $(Ka(p) \,\&\, Ka(Ka(p) \rightarrow \sim Da(p))) \rightarrow Ka(\sim Da(p))$	From (C)
(1.b) $Ka(Ka(p) \rightarrow \sim Da(p))$	Premise
(1) $Ka(p) \rightarrow Ka(\sim Da(p))$	From (1.a) & (1.b)

A belief acquired by perception would not be knowledge if we possessed any reason for believing that we were mistaken in accepting

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appearances in this case. It would be mistaken to accept appearances were these dreamt. Thus, the sceptic interprets premise (1) as: *in order* to know that *p*, we must know that we are not dreaming that *p*. And once (1) is interpreted in this fashion the second premise (2) above that we do not know that we are not dreaming that *p* follows. For how could we know that we are not dreaming? Subjectively our dreaming that *p* can be indistinguishable from our perceiving that *p*. But if we are to infer that we are not dreaming from other instances of perceptual knowledge, we must equally know that we are not dreaming in these cases. So the sceptic concludes that we do not know that *p* where that *p* is any proposition believed on the basis of what we take to be perceptual appearances. With the requirement that we must know we are not dreaming if we are to know anything about the world around us, the sceptical conclusion follows.[8]

"If I know that *p*, then I know that I am not dreaming that *p*; I don't know that I'm not dreaming that *p*; therefore I don't know that *p*." Moore's (in)famous response to such sceptical arguments is that he is certain that he has two hands because he can see them. Further, he is more certain of this everyday piece of commonsensical knowledge than he could ever be of any abstract principle that the sceptic used to try and demonstrate that he should not be so certain. In particular, his certainty that here are two hands is sufficient to rebut any argument to the conclusion that the external world does not exist. So, Moore concluded, sceptical arguments will always fail to establish their conclusions. Following this (in)famous response I would like to identify Moorean responses to scepticism as those which assert our possession of particular perceptual knowledge and use this assertion to draw anti-sceptical conclusions. In Sosa's terms, but referring to the three line sceptical argument above, where the sceptic asserts (1), (2) and therefore (3), the Moorean asserts (1), not-(3) and not-(2).[9]

That there is something attractive to the Moorean response might be brought out in the following way. First, there is the obvious point that the sceptical conclusion is massively implausible. Accordingly, Moore is right that sceptical arguments will never establish their conclusion at least in the psychological sense that we will never believe these conclusions.[10] Our 'commonsense', to use Moore's term, is not open to rational dismissal. Second, and still speaking psychologically, insofar as the sceptical conclusion is highly counter-intuitive, there is equally the parallel intuition that the sceptical argument must employ some sleight of hand. What is further attractive about the Moorean response is that it goes some way to substantiating this intuition. The sceptic asserts that I have a reason for thinking that my perceptual belief that *p* is not knowledge, namely my inability to rule out the possibility that I'm dreaming that *p*. On this basis the sceptical argument concludes that perception is not a way of acquiring knowledge. However, if it is asserted that I do have particular perceptual knowledge, then it need not be the case that I have a reason for thinking that my perceptual belief that *p* is not knowledge. This is because the possibility that I'm dreaming that *p* will be incompatible with my perceptual knowledge that *p*, and it might well be incompatible with other things that I know by way of perception. Of course, the sceptic will question whether I know these things, but at this juncture the Moorean response is that such questions carry force *only if* it is supposed that I am not in a position to rule out the possibility that I am dreaming. But to suppose that I am not in such a position is already to suppose that perception is not a way of acquiring knowledge. So the Moorean contends that the sceptical argument only establishes its conclusion by presupposing it. In short, by a sleight of hand the sceptical argument begs the question.

Something like this Moorean response to scepticism is offered by McDowell. According to McDowell, as a way of forming belief perception should not be described as 'accepting what is taken to be a perceptual appearance', rather in perception one either accepts perceptual appearances or one accepts mere appearances. Scepticism, for McDowell, only gets started when this distinction is not recognised because a reason for believing that the perceptual belief that *p* was not formed on the basis of dreaming that *p* which starts from one's fallible judgement as to appearances is non-conclusive. But a non-conclusive reason fails to eliminate the possibility that the perceptual belief was in fact a product of dreams and, therefore, leaves a reason for thinking

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that this perceptual belief is not knowledge. However, scepticism doesn't get started once it is recognised that in perception "an appearance that such-and-such is the case can be *either* a mere appearance *or* the fact that such-and-such is the case making itself perceptually manifest".[11] It does not get started because one can make the following Moorean response:

> *Only if the veil [of appearances] is supposed to be in place can it seem that one would need to establish … that one is not dreaming before one can be entitled to take one's apparent perceptions at face value. Once the veil is lifted, things can be the other way round; one's good reason to believe that one is not dreaming can reside in all the knowledge of the environment that one sense's are yielding one — something that does not happen when one is dreaming.*[12]

That is, scepticism is pressing only if our reasons for thinking that we are not dreaming are restricted to our knowledge of appearances characterised as what is common between dreaming and perceiving. In McDowell's terms the sceptical sleight of hand is getting us to accept this restriction when to accept this, he would claim, is already to presume that perception is not a way of acquiring knowledge. Certainly we are not *always* in a position to know that we are not dreaming — we are in no such position when we are dreaming — but our possession of particular perceptual knowledge allows us to know, *on occasion*, that we are not dreaming. Where the sceptic goes wrong is in presupposing symmetry between the case of being deceived by one's dreams and the favourable case of veridically perceiving. However, McDowell contends, there is a fundamental asymmetry between the justifications available in these cases. When one veridically perceives "one's good reason to believe that one is not dreaming can reside in all the knowledge of the environment that one sense's are yielding one". This is a *Moorean Response* as I am using the term because it thereby dismisses sceptical worries by reference to particular things we (are assumed to) know.

At this juncture I should like to offer three clarifications. First, the claim is only that there is something attractive to the Moorean response to scepticism. It provides a simple rebuttal and goes someway to account for the intuition that scepticism must rest on a sleight of hand. So, second, I am not claiming that the Moorean response to scepticism is successful. The general reservation with such responses is that in assuming particular perceptual knowledge any reply they offer to scepticism is straightforwardly question-begging. Even if the Moorean can demonstrate scepticism to be question-begging, arguably this is an inadequate response to scepticism if the Moorean's demonstration is itself equally question-begging. Moreover, an adequate response to scepticism must arguably be non-question-begging since any failure to adequately justify rejecting the sceptical argument allows the second-order sceptical conclusion: perception might indeed be a way of acquiring knowledge but we are not justified in believing that it is so.[13] Further, it may be that the sceptic has resources available to provide a non-question-begging rationale for denying any presumption of particular perceptual knowledge. Arguably, this follows from scepticism being not a simple paradox but the product of a general epistemological investigation into our sources of knowledge, in this case the attempt to understand how it is that we possess *any* perceptual knowledge.[14] And third, I am not claiming that the Moorean response is the best response to scepticism. The number of responses to scepticism is legion and the particular sceptical argument presented depends on a strong principle of closure where the use of such principles in sceptical arguments has been questioned time and time again.[15]

2. Scepticism of Testimony

Testimony, we believe, is a way of acquiring knowledge. As with perception this belief can be targeted by a sceptical argument. Of course, scepticism of perception implies scepticism of testimony, but that testimony is a way of acquiring knowledge can be uniquely targeted. The target here is those beliefs formed solely through the acceptance of testimony. This class of belief extends over most of what we take ourselves to have learnt. So whilst the ensuing sceptical conclusion is obviously more limited than that reached by a

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sceptical argument directed against perception, the conclusion that we cannot really trust anything we've learnt is still genuinely sceptical.

The cornerstone of any sceptical argument is a sceptical possibility — like Descartes' dream possibility — which is such that if it obtained the putative way of acquiring knowledge would not be such and which unless eliminated acts as a reason for thinking that beliefs formed in this way are not knowledge. Thus a sceptical possibility is needed for beliefs acquired by way of accepting testimony. In later rejecting Moorean responses to scepticism of testimony I will argue for a fundamental difference between testimony and perception as ways of acquiring knowledge, however for the sake of argument suppose that testimony is epistemically similar to perception and functions to simply extend an individual's faculties. On this supposition, if a speaker sees that *p*, the speaker can pass on this knowledge by telling that *p* and receipt of this testimony puts an audience in the same position to know that *p* as the speaker's seeing that *p*. That is, and for the sake of argument, suppose that testimony *functions to transmit knowledge*. On this supposition, and considering a testimonial chain with only one link, an audience acquires testimonial knowledge that *p* by accepting a speaker's testimony to *p* only if the speaker knows that *p*. Call this condition on the acquisition of testimonial knowledge the *speaker-knowledge condition*. Given this condition, the acceptance of testimony to *p* would fail to be a way of acquiring knowledge were its speaker not to know that *p*. The needed sceptical possibility can then be generated simply by generalising this possibility in the first person and supposing that most communication is either non-informative or deceptive in that speakers who purport to be informative in what they say largely lie. Further, it seems possible for speakers to have conspired to act in this way and so ensure that their lies cohere with one another. In short, the following seems to be a sceptical possibility: *most of the time speakers do not believe what they say and have massively conspired in order to agree in their lies*. The idea of this possibility should be clarified and fleshed out in four key respects.

First, this possibility is, of course, massively implausible. It is a *sceptical possibility* whose supposition is intended to be part of a sceptical argument against testimony, which is parallel to the sceptical argument against perception in section one. That is, the possibility is raised as part of a sceptical challenge to the claim that testimony is a way of acquiring knowledge.[16]

Second, like the supposition that one might be a brain-in-a-vat, the supposition that one might be the victim of a conspiracy of liars is essentially first personal. It is so because the focus, in both cases, is an individual's acquisition of knowledge by means of a certain method. So the focus is an individual audience's receipt of testimony and the worry for an audience is that others could conspire and lie. The possibility is not that speakers largely do not believe what they express, which may be incoherent, but that speakers largely do not believe what they express when they address a particular audience: oneself.[17]

Third, it is not the case that speakers never express a belief. On occasion, speakers' utterances are sincere. On occasion, we observe the truth of testimony. This must be the case if the sceptical possibility is to be phenomenologically indistinguishable from what we take to be our actual situation. Speakers *only* lie when they can get away with it. This is not to suggest that speakers lie for the crazy fun of it, which is arguably problematic.[18] It is to say that if speakers lie as part of a conspiracy, then the success of their deceptions depends on their only lying about matters for which the audience does not have contrary (non-testimonial) evidence.

Finally, fourth, if most purportedly informative utterances are to be lies and the audience is not to tell otherwise, then most lies must largely, though they need not entirely, corroborate one another. This could not be done without planning, forethought and the careful articulation of a fictional possibility. Further, lies need not only be consistently told, they need to be maintained. This should require a centrally organised and *massive* conspiracy. Such a possibility is dramatically illustrated in the film *The Truman Show* that employs the supposition of the existence of such a massive conspiracy as its backdrop.[19]

Given this possibility, a sceptical argument parallel to the argument from dreaming can be given. For any proposition *p* presented by testimony and which the audience has no other reason to believe, the argument runs:

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(1) If I know that *p*, then I know that testimony to *p* is not a lie.
(2) I do not know that testimony to *p* is not a lie.
(3) I do not know that *p*.

In logical notation (with '*a*' referring to the audience and '*s*' the speaker):

(1) $Ka(p) \longrightarrow Ka(\sim Ls(p))$	Premise
(2) $\sim Ka(\sim Ls(p))$	Premise
(3) $\sim Ka(p)$	

Again the first premise can be supported by a further argument starting from Stroud's closure principle (C) that "if somebody knows that *p*, she must know the falsity of all those things she knows to be incompatible with her knowing that *p*".

(1.a) If I know that *p* and I know that my knowing that *p* implies testimony to *p* is not a lie, then I know that testimony to *p* is not a lie.
(1.b) I know that my knowing that *p* implies testimony to *p* is not a lie.
(1) If I know that *p*, then I know that testimony to *p* is not a lie.

Again, in logical notation:

(1.a) $(Ka(p) \,\&\, Ka(Ka(p) \longrightarrow \sim Ls(p))) \longrightarrow Ka(\sim Ls(p))$	From (C)
(1.b) $Ka(Ka(p) \longrightarrow \sim Ls(p))$	Premise
(1) $Ka(p) \longrightarrow Ka(\sim Ls(p))$	From (1.a) & (1.b)

The conclusion (3) of this sceptical argument is that we cannot acquire knowledge from testimony expressing propositions we do not otherwise know. On the assumption that the closure principle (C) is acceptable, this conclusion rests on two premises (1.b) and (2). Premise (1.b) states that we know that a speaker's lying prevents our acquisition of knowledge when the only reason we have for believing the proposition presented is the speaker's testimony. This follows from the speaker-knowledge condition. Thus, once the closure principle is assumed this argument, like the parallel argument for perception, rests on the moot premise (2): "I do not know that the speaker did not lie that *p*."

How could we know that the speaker did not lie that *p*? We could not know this on the basis of our already knowing that *p* because *ex hypothesi* we have no reason to believe that *p* other than the speaker's testimony. Nor could we know that the speaker did not lie on the basis of perceiving signs of insincerity because any putative sign could be aped by a liar.[20] Nor could we rely on other testimony to determine whether this speaker lied because this should simply raise the concern that these speakers lied. But if we have no reason for believing that the speaker did not lie, then the sceptical argument concludes: we do not know that *p*, where that *p* is any proposition believed solely on the basis of another's testimony.

3. A Moorean Response to Scepticism of Testimony

A Moorean response to this sceptical argument directed against testimony would assert that premise (2) is false: we can know that testimony to *p* is sincere. We can know that testimony is sincere because other things we know by way of testimony enable us to know when testimony is sincere. At this juncture the Moorean could refer to contemporary psychological theory describing how the face and behaviour of liars always leaks clues of their deceit.[21] These studies tell us how to perceive signs of sincerity and deceit. So the sceptical premise that we *cannot* know that the speaker lied is incompatible with other things that we know by way of testimony. A parallel pattern of argument is then played out. Of course, the sceptic will question whether the Moorean can know that signs of sincerity are perceptible when this knowledge is testimonial. And the Moorean response is that the question of whether we know this is worrying only to the extent that it is supposed that we cannot rule out the possibility of lies, but to suppose that we cannot rule this possibility out is already to suppose that testimony is not a way of acquiring knowledge. So, the Moorean contends, the sceptical argument only establishes its conclusion by presupposing it. Since the sceptical conclusion strikes commonsense as preposterous and the Moorean response bolsters this conviction by presenting it as begging the question, there remains something attractive to this response. However, this attractiveness is superficial; on closer examination, the Moorean response lacks any plausibility for scepticism of testimony.

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The problem is that features particular to perception as a source of knowledge ground the plausibility a Moorean response to scepticism of perception. In the case of perception, the starting premise of the sceptical argument is that 'If I know that *p*, then I know that I'm not dreaming that *p*' where this should be read as imposing a necessary condition on the acquisition of perceptual knowledge, which the Moorean claims is trivially satisfiable. One can know that one is not dreaming on the basis of other things one knows by way of perception. The obvious problem with this strategy *as a response* to scepticism of perception is that arguing that one can know that one is not dreaming on the basis of particular perceptual knowledge is arguing in an *epistemic circle*.[22] The problem here is that epistemically circular arguments cannot raise one's confidence because one is justified in believing their premises only in so far as one is already justified in believing their conclusion. Thus, this strategy of responding to scepticism deserves to be called Moorean because it is grounded by an established confidence in perception as a source of knowledge. In Moore's example, the response to scepticism *starts from* confidence in the proclamation 'here are two hands'. However, anyone who takes scepticism seriously will presume that the sceptic has thrown into doubt exactly such propositions and, therefore, the plausibility of a Moorean response turns on the question of whether this doubt is possible. A Moorean response to scepticism of perception then derives its attractiveness from perception possessing features that make it plausible to claim that *such doubt is not a genuine epistemic possibility*. There are, I think, two features of perception that make it plausible to claim this. First, the *phenomenology* of perception is *authoritative* in the sense that when one sees that *p* part of the phenomenology of seeing is that there is a compulsion to believe that *p* and that one is seeing that *p*. Second, perception is our *primary* source of particular empirical knowledge in the sense that no particular empirical claim could be knowledge if perception were not a source of knowledge.[23] So holding our hands up in front of us we feel compelled to believe the proclamation 'here is a hand'. And if we cannot offer this perception as evidence that we are not dreaming, then there is *nothing* we could offer. Thus Wittgenstein claimed that with Moore's demonstration we have "arrived at the rock bottom of [our] convictions".[24] The sceptic retort that this might itself be dreamt then simply provokes the incredulous, "What would it be like to doubt now whether I have two hands? Why can't I imagine it at all? What would I believe if I didn't believe that?"[25] It is these two features of perception that thereby motivate Moore's *inversion of the sceptical argument*. Since we could have no other evidence that we are not dreaming than the truth of what we perceive and since we do not feel the demand for other evidence, this demand must be misguided: it must be acceptable to establish that we are not dreaming simply on the evidence of what we can perceive.

Testimony can be contrasted to perception in terms of both of these features. The phenomenology of testimony is *not* authoritative because testimony does not transparently reveal the world in the manner of perception. Unlike perception, testimony represents the world without making it phenomenally apparent. So when one receives testimony to *p* from a speaker who knows that *p*, there is no compulsion to believe that *p*. We do not have a confidence in the truth of what knowledgeable speakers do tell us that is anything like the confidence we have in the truth of what we see. Doubt over particular testimony is a genuine epistemic possibility and can be generated without any sceptical argument. It follows from the recognition that a speaker's provision of testimony is intentional and that speakers are not solely motivated by the desire to be informative. However, given this difference between the *phenomenology* of testimony and perception, the doubt exploited in generating scepticism of testimony is not assuaged by an epistemically circular argument. So it will not be possible to respond to scepticism of testimony with the assertion that particular testimonial knowledge provides evidence that we are not being lied to. However, and again in contrast to perception, this should nevertheless not prompt the incredulous reply 'What would I believe if I didn't believe that?'. Since testimony is not our primary source of particular empirical knowledge, scepticism of testimony is far less radical. Thus, it is not the case that if we cannot offer testimony-based beliefs as evidence that testimony is not a lie, there is no

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further evidence we could offer. Rather, in the case of testimony there is precisely something that we could offer and that is the evidence of our personal observations. We might have observational evidence that testimony is sincere and, indeed, it can be exactly this kind of observational evidence we appeal to when ordinary doubts about the sincerity of testimony are raised. This opens the possibility we could satisfy the requirement that we know that testimony is not a lie *without* begging the question against the sceptic. Thus, in sum, the plausibility of a Moorean response to scepticism to perception rests on the unreality of doubting what we see and there being no non-question-begging way of satisfying the sceptic's demand for evidence. These considerations do not hold with respect to scepticism of testimony and a Moorean response to this sceptical argument is correspondingly implausible.

4. The Epistemology of Testimony

It is possible to give a *reductive* theory of testimony. According to this view, testimony is not a unique source of knowledge. We acquire knowledge from testimony because we have established that on many occasions testimony is evidence for its truth in the same way that we have established that one natural phenomenon is evidence for another. There is no significant *epistemic* difference between acquiring the knowledge that there is a fire in the town centre on the basis of testimony to this fact and acquiring this knowledge by inference from the plume of smoke over the town centre. Moreover, this reductive view of testimony can be motivated by the internalist demand that one is epistemically responsible for what one believes. One demonstrates epistemic responsibility in believing that *p* only to the extent that one possesses evidence that *p* is true and, where that *p* is believed on the basis of testimony to *p*, this amounts to the requirement that one possess evidence that testimony to *p* is true. Reductive theories of testimony thereby imply that testimony should be doubted unless one possesses non-testimonial evidence that it is true. Thus the explanation outlined in the last section as to why a Moorean response to scepticism of testimony is implausible could be expressed as the claim that *a Moorean response to scepticism of testimony is implausible because it is possible to give a reductive account of testimonial knowledge.*

This is not to suggest that reductive theories of testimony constitute a response to scepticism of testimony (through showing how one can acquire knowledge from testimony on the basis of one's own personal observations). Certainly, the explanation of our acquisition of knowledge from testimony outlined by reductive theories is different from that presumed in setting up the sceptical argument. Testimonial knowledge is not transmitted knowledge but merely a species of inductive knowledge. The speaker-knowledge condition is false.[26] Testimonial knowledge that *p* can be acquired from testimony to *p* that is a lie. All that matters is that testimony to *p* be evidence that *p* and that personal observation lets an audience know this. Reductive theories of testimony thereby explain an audience's acquisition of knowledge from a speaker's testimony to *p* not in terms of the speaker knowing that *p* and testimony functioning to transmit knowledge but in terms of the audience knowing that the testimony is evidence that *p*.[27] However, this *evidence condition* equally supports the above sceptical argument. As it stands, the argument for the starting premise (1) rested on the further premise (1.b) that we know that a speaker's lying prevents our acquisition of knowledge when the only reason we have for believing the presented proposition is the speaker's testimony. This follows from the speaker-knowledge condition. And it equally follows from the evidence condition if lies present falsehoods. The truth of the reductive claim that we can acquire knowledge by accepting lies depends on our being fallible as liars. However in the carefully orchestrated sceptical possibility hypothesised lies can be presumed to be false and premise (1.b) and so (1) thereby follow from the evidence condition.

So the point is not that reductive theories offer a response to scepticism of testimony. Equally, it is not that reductive theories offer the best explanation of our acquisition of knowledge from testimony.[28] Rather, the point to be made concerns the very possibility of a reductive theory of testimony. It is common to compare testimony to perception and memory. This comparison is used to support a certain explanation of our acquisition of knowledge from testimony — that provided by the idea that testimony functions to

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transmit knowledge — and this comparison is used to support the claim that as with perception and memory it is epistemically appropriate to accept appearances given only an absence of reasons for doubt, where 'appearances' in this case are instances of intelligible testimony. This is the 'anti-reductive' view of the epistemology of testimony and it is clearly articulated by Tyler Burge. When Burge considers our *entitlement* to rely on testimony it turns out that:

> *Many of the differences between content passing between minds and content processed by a single mind derive from differences in modes of acquisition and in necessary background conditions, that do not enter in the justification force underwriting entitlement.*[29]

This distinction — between a belief's genesis and its justification — allows Burge to drain our distinctive scepticism of testimony of any epistemic significance. Reliance upon testimony, as with reliance on memory or perception, is simply reliance upon a "resource for reason". However, the implausibility of a Moorean response to scepticism of testimony illustrates a limit to the extent to which testimony can be compared to other 'resources for reason'. The very possibility of a reductive theory of testimony shows the nature of this limit. We do not take testimony to be authoritative in the way that we take perception to be so. Doubt, reductive theories claim, is the epistemically responsible attitude once it is recognised that testimony cannot be a wholly reliable sign mediated as it is by a speaker's intentions. From this perspective, credulity is taken to be a weakness and our concern that we might demonstrate it is sharpened by our recognition that "no weakness of human nature is more universal and conspicuous".[30] Moreover, reductive theories tap into ordinary scepticism of testimony; fearing that speakers might lie or otherwise fail to express knowledge, we do seek reasons to support our acceptance. So, one could say, that there is some truth to scepticism. Not the truth the sceptic suggests but that the demand that acceptance of testimony be supported by evidence is both plausible and not open to trivial satisfaction. To ignore this is to fail to recognise the epistemic distinctiveness of testimony as a source of knowledge.[31]

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Notes

1 Descartes (1641), p.62.
2 McDowell (1995), note 19.
3 Sosa (1999).
4 Stroud (1984).
5 Ibid., pp. 28-9.
6 Ibid., p.14
7 See Rosenberg (2002), p. 50.
8 See Stroud (1984), ch.2.
9 See Sosa (1999), p.144. This should *not* suggest that the Moorean does *modus ponens* to the sceptic's *modus tollens*. Rather our particular perceptual knowledge shows the illegitimacy of the sceptic's use of premise (1).
10 This is just Hume's observation that "Most fortunately it happens, that since reason is incapable of dispelling these clouds, nature herself suffices to that purpose, and cures me of this philosophical melancholy and delirium, either by relaxing this bent of mind, or by some avocation, and lively impression of my senses, which obliterate all these chimeras. I dine, I play a game of backgammon, I converse, and am merry with my friends; and when after three or four hours' amusement, I would return to these speculations, they appear so cold, and strained, and ridiculous, that I cannot find in my heart to enter into them any farther." Hume (1740), ch. 36, §7.
11 McDowell (1982), p.472.
12 McDowell (1995), note 19.
13 This is claimed by Wright (1991).
14 This is argued by Stroud (1989).
15 See for instance Nozick (1981) and Dretske (1970).
16 Moreover, this sceptical possibility is more plausible as a supposition than that one is a brain-in-a-vat in the sense it is actually believed: that there is a conspiracy with oneself as victim is a common schizophrenic delusion.
17 Coady argues for the incoherence of supposing that speakers largely do not believe what they express. See Coady (1992), pp. 85-96.
18 See Burge (1993), p. 474.

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[19] "Every second of every day, from the moment he was born, for the last thirty years, Truman Burbank has been the unwitting star of the longest running, most popular documentary-soap opera in history. The picture-perfect town of Seahaven that he calls home is actually a gigantic soundstage. Truman's friends and family - everyone he meets, in fact - are actors." From 'http://www.truman-show.com/'.

Compare the sceptical hypothesis suggested by Feldman: "a world designed by an Orwell influenced by Kafka, where one never can be sure whom to trust, where one's memories and perceptions are under constant social challenge and political scrutiny, where betrayal is commonplace and where conformity is the highest social value". Feldman (1997), p.82.

[20] That is, testimony is at best a semi-sorting equilibrium; see Bacharach and Gambetta (2001).

[21] See Ekman (1988). The point made in note 20 is therefore merely 'theoretical': in practice our ability to ape sincerity is as limited as our acting skills and we can learn to recognise these limits.

[22] See Sosa (1994) and Alston (1986).

[23] It is difficult to formulate these claims precisely. Certainly we can doubt what we see. And it would be wrong to regard perceptual knowledge as independent from knowledge from other sources; in this regard see Strawson (1994) and Coady (1992), ch.8. However, these claims are precise enough to draw the contrast with testimony.

[24] Wittgenstein (1969), §248.

[25] Ibid., §247.

[26] This is argued by Lackey (forthcoming).

[27] Knowing that a testimony is evidence for its truth is, for a reductionist, just a matter of having undefeated reasons, based on experience, for believing that the testimony is true. These reasons determine that the audience's acceptance of this testimony, in these specific circumstances, is a reliable way of acquiring belief and so, in conjunction with the truth of the accepted proposition, explain the audience's acquisition of knowledge.

[28] In fact I am of the view that testimonial knowledge is transmitted knowledge and reductive theories of testimony fail *because* they do not recognise that the acquisition of knowledge from testimony individuates this distinctive epistemic kind. See Faulkner (2000).

[29] Burge (1993), p. 474. See also McDowell (1994), Dummett (1993), Audi (1997) and Coady (1992) amongst others.

[30] Hume (1777), §88, p.111.

[31] Thanks to Matt Soteriou, Jennifer Lackey, and the audience at Mental Phenomena VI, Inter-University Centre, Dubrovnik 2003 — in particular Barry Smith and Ciara Fairley.

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