

# Testimony as Speech Act, Testimony as Source

*Peter J. Graham*

How should we individuate testimony-based beliefs? And how should we individuate testimonial knowledge? What are testimony-based beliefs and what is the scope of the so-called “epistemology of testimony”?

I advance three theses:

- (I) ‘Testimony’ and ‘testify’ name more than one category of speech act. The verb ‘to testify’ is polysemous; it has more than one meaning or sense. ‘Testimony’ can be used broadly for the whole category of constative speech acts, or more narrowly for two different subcategories: confirmatives and informatives. ‘Testimony’ has even more uses.
- (II) “Testimony-based” beliefs are beliefs based on a Gricean handshake: a speaker offers (a reason for) a belief through a constative (assertive) speech act, and the hearer comprehends and accepts the offer. Testimony-based beliefs are distally based on “testimony” and proximally based on comprehension and acceptance. Every testimony-based belief is then a comprehension-based belief, but not vice versa: there are comprehension-based beliefs that P not based on testimony-that P.
- (III) The scope of the “epistemology of testimony” is the broader category of comprehension-based beliefs; the “epistemology of testimony” is not restricted to the epistemology of testimony-based beliefs. The so-called

“epistemology of testimony” asks why and when comprehension-based beliefs are warranted or justified, and why and when comprehension-based beliefs are knowledge.<sup>1</sup>

Sections §§1-3 sketch a Gricean theory of linguistic communication and speech acts.

Section §4 advances thesis (I). Section §5 advances (II). Sections §§6-7 advance (III).

## 1. The Gricean Handshake

When we do one thing we often do a number of things, one act nested in another. When I arrive at your door I press the button to ring the bell to draw your attention to bring you to the door to join you for the evening. I do one thing—press the bell—to do another—ring the bell—to do a third—draw your attention—to do a fourth—bring you to the door—to do a fifth—join the party. When I pressed the button, I intended to do all five, doing one by doing another. In the good case I do all of these things when I press the button.

J.L. Austin famously argued that when uttering words we often perform a number of nested acts. Besides the utterance act, we perform locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts. The locutionary act is what we say in making an utterance. In the standard case, this is the propositional content of the utterance. The illocutionary act is the speech act: by uttering words and sentences we assert, surmise, command, question,

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<sup>1</sup> For an introductory survey, see Adler 2012. For two recent book-length introductions to the epistemology of testimony packed with references, see Gelfert 2014 and Shieber 2015. My writings on the topic include Graham 2000a, 2000b, 2000c, 2004, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c, 2010 and 2012b.

request, apologize and aver. Perlocutionary acts are further acts we intend in virtue of our utterance, locutionary and illocutionary acts. I might utter “dinner is ready” to express the proposition that dinner is ready (locutionary act), to assert that dinner is ready (illocutionary act), to get you to believe that dinner is ready (perlocutionary act), to bring you to the table (a further perlocutionary act).<sup>2</sup>

We can make utterances without locutionary intentions; we’re just making noises. We can express propositions without illocutionary intentions; we’re just talking to ourselves. And we can make assertions without further perlocutionary intentions; we’re just passing the time. But in many cases, when we make utterances we express propositions to make speech acts to change other people’s minds.

Grice’s analysis of speaker-meaning forms the basis of a full-blown theory of communication that fits within Austin’s overall framework.<sup>3</sup> What is Grice’s analysis?

Imagine a time before the development of language among humans. As a social, cooperative species, we would want to share our beliefs and knowledge about the world with others. We could do that by presenting them with the evidence we have for our beliefs, either by taking them to the evidence or bringing it to them. But that is not always possible. Sometimes we can’t take other people to the evidence, or bring it to them, or carry it around. Perhaps it no longer even exists.

Another strategy would be to present our friends with evidence that we have the belief we want them to have. We would rely on their ability to reason that *if* we have the belief *then* we must have a reason for believing it ourselves. They could infer that there is

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<sup>2</sup> Austin 1975. Bach & Harnish 1979.

<sup>3</sup> Grice 1957, Strawson 1964, Bach and Harnish 1979.

a reason for the belief. So if we could get other people to believe that we believe something, then the fact that we believe it would be their reason for believing it. Language eventually emerges as a solution to the problem of sharing our beliefs and knowledge with others having to provide the evidence that led us to form our beliefs in the first place.<sup>4</sup> Grice's analysis of speaker-meaning is an analysis of this mechanism—an analysis of what a speaker intends when a speaker tries to share a belief.

Here's a standard formulation of Grice's analysis:

In uttering X towards his addressee A, utterer S means that P iff:

- (1) S intends to bring it about that A believes that P
- (2) S intends to bring it about that A believes that S intends to bring it about that A believes that P, and
- (3) S intends that the fact, recognized by A, that S intends to bring it about that A believes that P provides A with a reason, or part of a reason, to believe that P.

Or, more briefly:

- (1) S intends that A believes that P
- (2) S intends that A recognizes (1)

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<sup>4</sup> Colin McGinn (2015: 199-200) motivates Grice's analysis this way. See also Korta and Perry 2011, Tomasello 2008. For opposition to this approach, see Millikan 1984, 2004, Bar-On 2013. For rejoinders, see Orrigi & Sperber 2000, Sperber & Orrigi 2010, Scott-Philips 2015.

(3) S intends that (1) because of (2).

For a speaker to pull this off in uttering X, he needs to choose an X that provides evidence of his intentions: the more transparent the connection between utterance and intentions the better.

The first intention is the informative intention. If fulfilled, the speaker will have informed the hearer. The second is the communicative intention. If fulfilled, the speaker will have communicated that he has an informative intention to the hearer. The third intention means that the speaker intends for the hearer to reason from the utterance to a belief in a certain way. The speaker intends the hearer to reason that she should believe P because the speaker wants her to, not because of some independent evidence for the conclusion. Call the package of (1)-(3) *the Gricean intention*, and call the act backed by all three *the Gricean act*.

There are many objections to Grice's analysis. He discussed some of them and offered some modifications in response.<sup>5</sup> My aim is not to discuss and defend Grice, or to advance a superior analysis. Rather my aim is to illustrate how a broadly Gricean theory of communication works. Grice's analysis serves just fine for that purpose.

If (1)-(3) is what a speaker intends when addressing an audience, how is the hearer supposed to react? Since the speaker makes an utterance intending that the hearer respond a certain way, on the hearer's side we should expect to find that the hearer reads

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<sup>5</sup> Grice 1969 and 1982 (Reprinted in Grice 1989). For criticisms, revisions and rival theories, see Strawson 1964, Searle 1969, Schiffer 1972, Vlach 1981, Avramides 1989, Davis 1992, Siebel 2003, Green 2008, Kemmerling 2001, 2013.

the speaker's intentions and (in at least standard cases) does what the speaker intends.

Here's a common reconstruction of the hearer's side:<sup>6</sup>

1. S has done X (in such and such circumstances).
2. If S does X (in such circumstances), then S wants me to come to believe P.
3. S thus wants me to believe that P.
4. If S wants me to believe P, then S must believe P. [S is honest, helpful.]
5. If S believes P, then there is a reason to believe P. [S is competent, rational.]
6. So there is a reason to believe P.
7. So P.

If the hearer gets to step 3 via 1 and 2, let's call that *Gricean comprehension*, for then the hearer has understood the speaker's meaning or intent: communication has occurred and the speaker's second intention is fulfilled.

Does communication require that the hearer get to the last step? Not at all. I might say "the cat is on the mat" intending that you believe the cat is on the mat. You may full well recognize my intention without believing me at all. "I understand you alright," you may say, "but there is no way the cat is on the mat."

If the hearer goes to the last step via 4, 5 to 6 let's say that the hearer *believes the speaker* (for the hearer believes, presumes or "takes for granted" that the speaker is sincere and honest, competent and rational). The hearer then, as it were, has a reason to

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<sup>6</sup> My presentation follows **Kemmerling** 2013, following Bennett 1976. See also Bach and Harnish 1979. For a different reconstruction, see Sperber and Wilson 1995, 2002.

believe that P. If the hearer then believes that P on that basis, let us say the hearer accepts the speaker's offer. Let's call moving to the final step *Gricean acceptance*.

The Gricean handshake then consists in a speaker *offering* (a reason for) a belief and the hearer *comprehending* and then *accepting* that offer. A speaker offers up a belief through an utterance (a Gricean act), backed by three intentions. The hearer comprehends the offer (Gricean comprehension), fulfilling the speaker's second intention. If the hearer then forms a belief on that basis (Gricean acceptance), the speaker's first intention is fulfilled via the third. The speaker sets out to "shape" the hearer's mind and the hearer changes her mind by reading the speaker's mind.

## 2. Ostensive-Inferential Communication

The Gricean theory of communication is one example of an "ostensive-inferential" theory of communication. On an ostensive-inferential theory, the speaker "clearly or manifestly demonstrates" (that is what 'ostensive' means) her intentions when making her utterance and the hearer infers her meaning. Ostensive-inferential theories all insist that human communication, especially human communication involving conventional verbal and non-verbal signs, involves our distinctively human abilities to read and shape each other's minds.

The major alternative is the code-model of communication. According to the model, to communicate a sender "selects" a piece of information and "encodes" it into a signal that a receiver then "decodes" to recover the piece of information. Both the sender and receiver share a code. Comprehension is then just decoding the meaning of the signal. This model, though a natural and common view, which may be true of various

forms of communication including non-human animal communication, is now widely discredited as an account of human communication involving language. Nearly every textbook on human communication begins with a chapter full of counter-examples. The main stumbling block is the pervasive extent to which speaker-meaning is underdetermined by linguistic meaning. The conventional code radically underdetermines what speakers can and do mean in using the code.<sup>7</sup>

It is natural and common to object that ostensive-inferential theories over-intellectualize a process that just feels so darn easy. We communicate so quickly, so fast, without any awareness of the explicit reasoning ostensive-inferential theories seem to require. Comprehension often seems automatic, without any conscious reflection. And can't very young children and serious autistics communicate just fine, without all of this mind-reading and mind-shaping mumbo jumbo?

I am deeply sympathetic with this point. And so I intend my reading of ostensive-inferential theories to be as consistent as possible with this sentiment. Please take a very broad view of 'inference' and a generous view of the psychological processing required, for what seems easy and fast might for all that still be very complicated once we look beneath the hood (compare vision and digestion).<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Atlas 2005, Carston 2002a, 2002b, Recanati 2002, Scott-Philips 2015. Sperber & Wilson 1995, 2002.

<sup>8</sup> Unfortunately I cannot pause here to examine some of the important psychological issues involved in comprehension and acceptance. Here are some of them. The steps from 1 to 2 to 3 may be modular or may involve extensive cognitive penetration. So too the moves from 3 to 4 to 5 to 6. I remain silent here on many natural questions that arise. How "inferential" is the process, really? What are the different kinds of inference involved? To what extent is



The Gricean theory just sketched is but one theory in the family of ostensive-inferential theories. It is not even fully sketched. It has lots of room to fill in, and lots of places to object. The most detailed version is due to Bach and Harnish (1979). Serious rival **ostensive-inferential** theories include Sperber and Wilson’s elaborately developed “post-Gricean” relevance theory.<sup>9</sup> But whatever we say about the details—and however we address the numerous challenges to Grice’s theory that have been much discussed in the literature over the years—the spirit of Grice’s theory reigns supreme. Whatever you think of the details of Grice’s theory or any of its rivals, nearly everyone agrees that the true theory of *human* communication is an ostensive-inferential theory.<sup>10</sup> Though I

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comprehension modular? How much is learned, how much is innate? Is the processing serial or parallel? How extensive are top-down effects? Does communication and comprehension utilize a “dual-process” structure? Are different aspects of speaker-meaning processed by the hearer in different ways? For some discussion of the psychological processing involved in comprehension and acceptance, see **Apperly & Butterfill 2009, Audi 2011, Bach and Harnish 1979, Baillargeon, Scott & He 2010, Caruthers 2013, Csibra 2010, Firth 2010, Gilbert 1991, 1992, Jaszczolt 2005, Kissine 2014, Mercier and Sperber 2011, Orrigi and Sperber 2000, Recanati 2002, Scott-Phillips 2015, and Tomasello 2008**. I discuss some of the literature in Graham 2010. I intend to further pursue these issues at length on another occasion

<sup>9</sup> Sperber and Wilson 1995, 2002, Wilson and Sperber 2004, Orrigi and Sperber 2000, Sperber & Orrigi 2010, Carston 2002a, 2002b, Scott-Phillips 2015. For another rival in the spirit of Millikan and Stalnaker, see Kissine 2014.

<sup>10</sup> There are broad cases of human communication that do not rely on conventional signs (words, hand gestures, nodding up and down for yes, etc.) and those that do, what many would call linguistic (using conventional signs) communication. Both involve ostensive-

recognize full well the host of objections philosophers and linguistics have lodged at the details of Grice's theory, and the modifications and reformulations they have proposed, I won't pause to discuss any of them or take a stab at providing my own account. Instead I shall presume that since the true theory of human communication is an ostensive-inferential theory, a Gricean or neo-Gricean theory is good enough for our purposes.

### 3. A Taxonomy of Speech Acts

Could one use an ostensive-inferential theory of communication to individuate and classify speech acts, the speaker's side of the communication equation? Yes. In their landmark 1979 book *Linguistic Communication and Speech Acts*, Kent Bach and Mike Harnish do just that.

Bach and Harnish use "expressing an attitude" as their cornerstone for classifying and individuating speech acts. For Bach and Harnish, to express an attitude by an utterance is to produce the utterance because of a Gricean intention; Gricean acts *express attitudes*.<sup>11</sup> To express an attitude is for the speaker to intend for the hearer to take the speaker's utterance as a reason to think that the speaker has that attitude or those attitudes. An utterance "expresses" the speaker's Gricean intention, and in so doing

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inferential communication. Using linguistic signs often makes human communication much easier. We can make statements (make assertions) by pointing or raising an eyebrow (given the right contexts), by nodding our head, by drawing a picture, or by using words. Using words makes it easier, but statements and other communicative "speech" acts do not *ipso facto* require speech (spoken or written words), *pace* Lackey 2008: 25-26.

<sup>11</sup> Though they prefer the reflexive intention formation of speaker-meaning.

provides the hearer with evidence of the speaker's attitudes and intentions; the utterance "represents" the speaker as having beliefs, intentions, plans, and so on. To express an attitude is to intentionally provide evidence, overtly and demonstratively, that we have such an attitude. Different Gricean intention, different attitude or attitudes expressed. Gricean acts express attitudes.

Bach and Harnish then individuate and classify speech acts in terms of attitudes expressed. This is not an unusual way of talking. We often think of communicative speech acts as ways of expressing our thoughts and feelings. Think of apologies. Saying 'I am sorry' is usually as a way of expressing regret. Regret is a kind of propositional attitude, along with belief, desire, intention and so on. **Speech acts are ways of expressing beliefs, desires, intentions, feelings, emotions, and other mental states. Assertions express beliefs; they represent the speaker as having one set of propositional attitudes (beliefs and intentions). Questions represent the speaker as having another set of attitudes, and so on.** Communicative speech acts just are Gricean acts.<sup>12</sup>

"Express" in this context does not entail that the speaker has the attitude(s) expressed. I may communicate regret without being sincere. So I can express regret, and you may correctly take me as expressing regret, but I may not be sincere, and you may

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<sup>12</sup> I am fully aware of other theories of speech acts, especially those that see speech acts as moves in a "game" of giving and asking for reasons, or moves in a "game" **constituted** and regulated by "rules" or "norms." These theories are associated with Pierce (1934), Toulmin (1958), Alston (2000), Brandom (1983), Rescorla (2009) and many others. I shall not discuss these theories here except to point out that they tend to presume a theory of speaker-meaning and a theory of hearer comprehension **(a theory of communication)**; they tend to it for granted that the speaker meant that P and the hearer understood the speaker's meaning.

not actually believe me. Expressing an attitude is one way of providing evidence that you have that attitude. But providing evidence of an attitude is one thing, and having the attitude is another. Not everyone uses the word ‘express’ this way, but so be it. It’s a typical use in the speech act literature.<sup>13</sup>

With attitudes expressed as their key idea, Bach and Harnish then categorize communicative, non-conventional speech acts. On their taxonomy, there are four major categories: *constatives*, *directives*, *commissives* and *acknowledgements*.<sup>14</sup>

- **Constatives:** express the speaker’s belief
- **Directives:** express the speaker’s attitude towards some prospective action by the hearer
- **Commissives:** express the intention to do A and the belief that one’s utterance commits one to doing A

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<sup>13</sup> Could speech acts express attitudes (and so exist as a type of human activity) if they were never sincere? I seriously doubt it. See Graham 2000c and 2010 for some discussion. For factive uses of ‘express’, see Owens 2006. See also Green 2009 for more on speech acts and expressing attitudes.

<sup>14</sup> They borrowed the terms ‘constative’ and ‘directive’ from Austin and ‘directive’ from Searle. They use ‘acknowledgement’ instead of Austin’s ‘behabitive’ and Searle’s ‘expressive’ for apologies, greetings, congratulations and so on. The term ‘constative’ hasn’t really caught on, but it is usefully broader than ‘assertion’ in its connotation. ‘Assertion’ is now the preferred term by many philosophers, but I fear it is too narrow. ‘Statement’ was previously the preferred term, which exploited the ambiguity between stating something (a speech act) and the proposition stated.

- **Acknowledgements:** express certain feelings towards the hearer.

Since our topic is testimony, I'll table directives, commissives and acknowledgments and elaborate on constatives.

For the category of constatives, Bach and Harnish identify a number of subcategories. For each subcategory, they provide a general, abstract definition in terms of attitudes expressed and a list of common speech act verbs that fall under the subcategory. First I'll give their list of subcategories and corresponding verbs. Then I'll give their definitions of a few of the subcategories. Doing both should engender an appreciation for the plurality of speech act verbs and undermine any fixation on just one constative speech act category or verb in particular.

Here is their list:

- **Assertives:** affirm, allege, assert, aver, avow, claim, declare, indicate, maintain, propound, submit
- **Predictives:** forecast, predict, prophesy
- **Retrodictives:** recount, report
- **Descriptives:** appraise, assess, call, categorize, classify, date, diagnose, evaluate, grade, identify, portray, rank
- **Ascriptives:** ascribe, attribute, predicate
- **Informatives:** advise, announce, apprise, disclose, inform, insist, notify, point out, report, reveal, tell, testify

- **Confirmatives:** appraise, assess, bear witness, certify, conclude, confirm, corroborate, diagnose, find, judge, substantiate, testify, validate, verify, vouch for
- **Concessives:** acknowledge, admit, agree, allow, assent, concede, concur, confess, grant, own
- **Retractivives:** abjure, correct, deny, disavow, disclaim, disown, recant, renounce, repudiate, retract, take back, withdraw
- **Assentives:** accept, agree, assent, concur
- **Dissentives:** differ, disagree, dissent, reject
- **Disputatives:** demur, dispute, object, protest, question
- **Responsives:** answer, reply, respond, retort
- **Suggestives:** conjecture, guess, hypothesize, speculate
- **Suppositives:** assume, hypothesize, postulate, stipulate, suppose, theorize

Here are the characteristic attitudes expressed for five familiar subcategories:

- **Assertives:** In uttering u, speaker S asserts that P if S expresses (1) the belief that P and (2) the intention that hearer H form the belief, or continue to believe, that P.
- **Predictives:** In uttering u, S predicts that P if S expresses (1) the belief that it will be the case that P and (2) the intention that H believe it will be the case that P.
- **Informatives:** In uttering u, S informs H that P if S expresses (1) the belief that P and (2) the intention that H will form the belief that P.

- **Confirmatives:** In uttering *u*, *S* confirms (the claim) that *P* if *S* expresses (1) the belief that *P*, based on some truth-seeking procedure, and (2) the intention that *H* believe that *P* because *S* has support for *P*.
- **Suggestives:** In uttering *u*, *S* suggests that *P* if *S* expresses (1) the belief that there is a reason, but not sufficient reason, to believe that *P*, and (2) the intention that *H* believe that there is a reason, but not sufficient reason, to believe that *P*.<sup>15</sup>

These classifications in terms of attitudes expressed may not always suffice to distinguish speech act types fully. Other conditions, either in the intentions, strength of the intentions, the context, or the propositional content, may also be relevant to classifying speech act types. Compare threats, for example.

## 4. Varieties of Testimony

In 1992 Tony Coady published *Testimony: A Philosophical Study*. In the second chapter, he offered the following analysis:

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<sup>15</sup> Epistemologists fascinated by assertion: Do you use ‘assertion’ for the whole category of constatives, for a wide or narrow range of subcategories, or do you slip and slide as the occasion demands? Are predictives assertions? What about suggestives? If I remind you of something I think you already know because I believe you asked me to remind you, but in fact you never knew it, have I asserted that such and such? If I made a prediction based on excellent evidence that turned out to be false, did I violate “the norm” of assertion? (cf. Weiner 2005).

S testifies that P by making some statement that P if and only if:

C1. S's stating that P is evidence that P and is offered as evidence that P.

C2. S has the relevant competence, authority, or credentials to state truly that P.

C3. S's statement that P is relevant to some disputed or unresolved question (which may or may not be P) and is directed at those who are in need of evidence on the matter.

In the spirit of a taxonomy like Bach and Harnish's, we can read Coady as providing the additional conditions that distinguish testimony in particular from the category of constatives in general. To *testify*, for Coady, is to *constate plus*. **Coady's analysis is an example where additional conditions are required.**

In 'What is Testimony?' (1997) I criticized this analysis. Against (C1), I argued that someone can testify that P even if their constative isn't evidence that P (in the senses of *evidence* discussed by Coady): the speaker may not be reliable on the subject, and the hearer may not take the speaker to be reliable on the subject. Against (C2), I argued that someone incompetent can testify that P. The speaker may unknowingly lack the competence, authority, or credentials to state truly that P, or the speaker may simply be out to deceive. Against (C3), I argued that the issue may be resolved, and no one may be in need of evidence, but the speaker can still testify that P.

I offered the following weakening:

S testifies that P by making some statement that P if and only if:



- G1. S's stating that P is offered as evidence that P.
- G2. S intends that his audience believe that he has the relevant competence, authority, or credentials to state truly that P.
- G3. S's stating that P is believed by S to be relevant to some question that he believes is disputed or unresolved (which may or may not be P) and is directed at those in need of evidence on the matter.

On my analysis, S's constative speech act that P need not be evidence; the speaker need not have the relevant competence; and the issue need not be disputed and no one may need evidence on the matter.

When I wrote the paper I relied upon "speech act intuitions." I described cases and asked whether it would be true or false to say that the speaker *testified* that such and such. I set out to provide an analysis of what it is for a speaker to *testify* that P.

Though I did not realize it at the time, I was explicating testimony as a confirmative. That should be no surprise, given that my account grew out of Coady's account, and Coady's account grew out of accounts of testimony commonly found in law textbooks on evidence, where testimony is paradigmatically a confirmative speech act.

And now we have reached an important observation: there is at least one sense of 'testimony' and 'testify' where it names a *confirmative* speech act. Graham 1997 is a decent stab at getting this sense right, **if I say so myself.**

What Bach and Harnish's taxonomy also clearly reveals is that there is another sense of 'testimony' and 'testify' where it names an *informative* speech act. 'Testimony' and 'testify' as speech act names have more than one sense.

For Bach and Harnish informatives differ from assertives in that when making an informative speech act the speaker intends the hearer to form a belief (to provide the hearer with the information that P), and so believes the hearer does not already have the belief, but when making an assertive speech act the hearer simply intends that the hearer have the belief. That may require that the hearer form the belief or to simply continue to hold it. Confirmatives differ from informatives in that the speaker need not intend, as the case may be, that the hearer form the belief, but rather that the hearer hold the belief because the speaker himself holds the belief on especially good, truth-seeking grounds.<sup>16</sup>

Most words are polysemous—they have many overlapping, related meanings, and so more than one sense listed under their dictionary entry—and so it should be no

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<sup>16</sup> A note on implicatures: implicatures are speech acts too; they are indirect speech acts performed by direct speech acts (Bach & Harnish 1979). (I am aware not everyone agrees. See Pagin 2014 for discussion). Grice's examples mostly involve indirectly asserting one thing (you can buy gas around the corner) by directly asserting something else (there is a gas station around the corner). Implicatures in general may be cancellable, but that just means the speaker can block the move from the direct speech act to the indirect speech act. Without blocking the move, the implicated assertion has been made. Implicatures are just as much a part of what the speaker means as what the speaker directly means. So a speaker can directly state (assert) that P (and so also testify that P) in order to indirectly state (assert) that Q (and so also testify that Q), so that the content of the speaker's testimony is both P and Q, even though the content of the utterance is just P, *pace* Lackey 2008: 26.

surprise that ‘testimony’ and ‘testify’ have more than one sense.<sup>17</sup> ‘Testify’ names both an informative and a confirmative speech act. A speaker might testify in one sense on an occasion without testifying in the other sense on that occasion. A speaker might do both on one occasion. A speaker might confirm that P while also informing that P in one utterance.

There is a third, broader use of ‘testimony’ and ‘testify’. This is actually a family of broader uses. Some use ‘testimony’ and ‘testify’ to cover assertives, confirmatives, informatives, predictives, retrodictives, etc., but would not cover suggestives or suppositives. Others would use it even more broadly, to cover suggestives and suppositives as well. That is, they might use ‘testimony’ interchangeably with the whole category of constative, communicative speech acts. Some might even go further and include any utterance act that represents the speaker as believing that such and such, even if the speaker does not intend to communicate with anyone at all. Depending on the degree of generality, ‘testimony’ can have a number of uses when it comes to classifying speech acts.

Many authors choose different speech act verbs to convey the category they have in mind. Many use ‘assert’ or ‘state.’ Some use ‘report.’ Others use ‘attest’. Many use

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<sup>17</sup> Textbook discussions of polysemy include Elbourne 2011, Hurford 2007 and Reimer 2010. Polysemy is one of two kinds of ambiguity. Homonymy is the other, as in ‘bank’ (river) and ‘bank’ (money) or ‘bark’ (dog) and ‘bark’ (tree). Here are some other polysemous terms: *Chair*: a device for sitting; a person in charge of a committee; the head of a department; a university professorship. *Paper*: material made from wood pulp; newspaper; money. *Table*: dinner table; graphic representation of columns and rows. Polysemy is widespread. Analysts ignore it at their peril.

‘tell’ and even some use ‘inform’. Almost no-one uses ‘confirm’, but many use ‘assure’ or ‘vouch’. Burge (2013) uses the neologism ‘present-as-true’ to convey what he has in mind. Are these different names for the same category of speech acts, or do these authors have different or crisscrossing categories in mind? The answer to this question varies from author to author.

Let us introduce a broad use where ‘testimony’ denotes the whole category of constative speech acts. There are thus at least three senses of ‘testimony’ and ‘testify’ when it comes to speech acts: the *confirmative*, the *informative*, and the *constative* sense.

There are even more senses. We can use ‘testify’ to mean assertives (and/or other subcategories as well). There is a very narrow sense where ‘testimony’ names something that only occurs in courtrooms. And there is a use that goes beyond speech acts where it overlaps with ‘evidence,’ as in the phrase ‘the testimony of the senses’. The attentive analyst will keep all of these senses clearly in mind.

This completes my case for my first thesis. I now turn to my second thesis.

## 5. Testimony-Based Belief: The Consensus View

I believe there is a consensus view in the literature, at least implicit, of when a belief is “testimony-based.” It has two necessary, jointly sufficient conditions. It will come as no surprise that a belief is testimony-based when it results from a Gricean handshake. The belief must be caused by a Gricean act, and it must result from Gricean comprehension and acceptance.

### 5.1 A Distal Cause Condition

It's hard to deny the idea that a *testimony*-based belief that P is a belief based on *testimony* that P, a belief that has testimony as its distal cause. Isn't that self-evident? But how we to individuate "testimony" as a distal cause so as to individuate testimony-based beliefs? For we've just seen a number of ways to do this.

Should we restrict testimony-based beliefs to beliefs caused by confirmatives, informatives, or the whole category of constatitives? What should we mean by 'testimony' in the phrase "testimony-based belief"? 'Testimony' in the confirmative, informative, or constative sense? Should we go even further?

Soon after publishing 'What is Testimony?' I remember being asked what my view of testimony was. I would then rehearse my analysis only to be rebuffed for giving an account that was too narrow. "But we form testimony-based beliefs from all sorts of utterances, not just utterances that count as "testimony" in your oh-so-narrow sense."

"Oh, I misunderstood your question," I would reply. "I thought you were asking about my analysis of the speech act called 'testimony' or 'testifying,' one particular assertive (or constative) speech act among many. But in fact you were asking about my view of the epistemology of so-called "testimony-based beliefs." I misunderstood because in philosophy we use 'testimony' in at least two ways. We sometimes use it narrowly to denote a sub-category of assertive speech acts. And we sometimes use it broadly to denote a broad category of beliefs caused by any of a broad range of constative speech acts. So if we were to rely on my analysis of the sub-category to classify a belief as "testimony-based" then you are right to object that my account of "testimony-based belief" would be way too narrow for our epistemological purposes;

it would not capture the class of beliefs we are intuitively interested in when we discuss *the epistemology of testimony*. So it is a good thing I don't intend my analysis of testimony *as a speech act* as an analysis of testimony *as a source of belief*."

When we are classifying beliefs to discuss the epistemology of testimony, we are typically and intuitively interested in a broad class of beliefs, not just beliefs caused by one of the subcategories of constative speech acts, and so not just confirmatives or informatives. We are interested in beliefs that have, as their distal cause "constative" speech acts. We are interested in beliefs caused by testimony *in a broad sense*.<sup>18</sup> This point forms one half of the consensus view of when a belief is testimony-based.

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<sup>18</sup> Jennifer Lackey misrepresents my view of testimony as a source of belief in her 2006 'The Nature of Testimony'. She says I intended my 1997 analysis of testimony as a speech act to "capture what it is to testify for the purposes of theorizing in the epistemology of testimony" (2006: 178), to give an account of testimony-based belief (testimony as source). She provides no textual evidence in support of this interpretation. And it is clearly not my intent. I did not intend my account of testimony as a speech act to do double duty as an account of testimony as a source of belief. The former is narrow; the latter is broad. (Andrew Cullison (2010) and Axel Gelfert (2014) repeat her mistake, without discussion). A cursory reading of my other papers would reveal the mistake. For example, in "Transferring Knowledge" (2000) I open with: "Most of what we know we know because we accept the word of others. Why is communication or interlocution—testimony in the broad sense—a source of knowledge?" And then in the first footnote to "Conveying Information" (2000) I wrote: "...there is an ambiguity in the word 'testimony'. It refers both to the particular speech act, testifying that P, and to the process of forming beliefs on the basis of what other people say. For some

A belief that P is testimony-based only if H's belief that P is distally caused by testimony (in a broad sense, viz. speech acts that fall within the category of constatives) that P.

According to the consensus view, a testimony-based belief is a belief based on testimony in the broad sense: constative speech acts. And all constatives involve the expression of belief, the speaker's side of the Gricean handshake. Constative communicative speech acts involve speakers overtly and demonstratively providing evidence of their intentions, intending to shape another's mind. And so according to the consensus view, a belief that P is testimony-based only if based on the speaker's expression of belief that P.

## 5.2 A Psychological Processing Condition

I now turn from the speaker's side of the equation to the hearer's side in classifying beliefs as testimony-based. To convey the consensus view, recall the Gricean reconstruction of the hearer's response:

1. S has done X (in such and such circumstances).
2. If S does X (in such circumstances), then S wants me to come to believe P.
3. S thus wants me to believe that P.

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discussion of the former, see my 1997. What is under discussion here is why testimony in the latter sense is a source of knowledge.”

4. If S wants me to believe P, then S must believe P. [S is honest, helpful.]
5. If S believes P, then there is a reason to believe P. [S is competent, rational.]
6. So there is a reason to believe P.
7. So P.

Every step represents a belief (or representation or presumption or “taking for granted”) in the hearer’s psychology. If a hearer responds to a speaker’s statement that P in this way, we have a paradigm case of a testimony-based belief. **I will say that if the hearer goes all the way, from Gricean comprehension to Gricean acceptance, then the hearer believes the speaker. Believing the speaker is the hearer’s side of the Gricean handshake.**

Here are a some standard kinds of cases discussed in the literature of beliefs caused by testimony that are not “processed” and so not “based” *in the right way* to count as testimony-based beliefs. Though the hearer forms the belief the speaker offers, the hearer does not *believe the speaker*. These cases should convey why there should be a “standard processing” condition on testimony-based beliefs.

#### SPEAKING GERMAN

A speaker utters something in German. Suppose the hearer recognizes the accent but has no idea what the utterance means. So the hearer can get to step 1, but no further. So the standard procedure is short-circuited at an early stage. However, suppose the speaker asserted in German that she speaks German. Suppose, in addition, that the hearer inferred, from his understanding of the accent, that the speaker speaks German.



Then it is both true that the speaker asserted that she speaks German and the hearer formed the belief, as a result, that the speaker speaks German.

The distal cause condition is met; the distal cause of the hearer's belief that P is the speaker's informative that P. But the psychological transition in the hearer's mind from representation of the utterance to the belief is intuitively the wrong kind; advocates of the consensus view do not classify these kinds of beliefs as "testimony-based" even when they have the right distal cause. The consensus expects that the hearer also comprehend and believe the speaker. The belief is then, according to the consensus, not testimony-based. Right input, right output, but wrong intermediate steps. Not every belief that P a hearer forms as a causal response to a speaker's testimony that P is a testimony-based belief.

#### COUNTING SPEAKERS

A hearer is listening to a series of speakers at an event, one after another. To pass the time, the hearer counts the number of speakers as they stand to speak. When the tenth stands up, she opens with "I am the tenth speaker today." Though the hearer understands her utterance just fine and recognizes her communicative intention, the hearer does not believe that the speaker is the tenth speaker today because of the speaker's assertion, but rather because he has been counting. The hearer gets to step 3, but skips 4, 5, and 6, relying on his own reason—his own evidence—to believe what the speaker asserted, and not recognition of the speaker's intentions. (Sosa 1994, Graham 2000a)

Here again the distal cause condition is met, but the standard processing condition is not. Though the hearer need not believe that the speaker is a liar or a fool, **and the hearer does indeed believe what the speaker said**, the hearer does not *believe the speaker*. Though occasioned by an accurate representation of a speaker's testimony that P, the belief was not based on that representation in the right way to be a testimony-based belief. The hearer *makes use* of the speaker's report; he does not *accept* the speaker's report.

#### DOUBLE BLUFF

Nick wants to mislead Oscar. Nick thinks Oscar knows this; Nick thinks that Oscar will think Nick is lying when Nick tells Oscar that P. Nick thinks that if he asserts that P to Oscar, that Oscar will form the belief that not-P. Nick wants Oscar to believe not-P (for Nick believes P and wants to mislead Oscar), so he asserts P, thinking that will lead Oscar to believe not-P. But Oscar knows Nick thinks Oscar knows Nick wants to mislead him. So when Nick asserts P to Oscar, Oscar infers that Nick is asserting P hoping to get Oscar to believe not-P. But since Oscar knows better, Oscar instead forms the belief that P, frustrating Nick's plans. Oscar gets to step 3 in a standardized way, but then does not really believe 3, and certainly does not believe 4.

Though the distal cause condition is met in this case too, the standard processing condition is not. The hearer definitely does not believe the speaker.

In all three cases people agree that the belief is not "testimony-based" for it is not formed in the right way from the representation of the speaker's utterance, even if the

speaker is asserting (testifying, informing, telling, presenting-as-true, etc.) that P.

Meeting the distal cause condition is one thing; meeting the “standard processing” condition is another.

A belief that P is testimony-based only if H’s belief that P is psychologically caused by standard processing; the hearer must believe the speaker.

Putting these two conditions together, the consensus view then holds that a hearer’s belief that P is “testimony-based” iff:

- (1) H’s belief that P is distally caused by testimony (in the broad sense) that P;
- (2) H’s belief that P is psychologically formed through the standard process.

And (1) and (2) are just the two sides of the Gricean handshake. So on the consensus view, a hearer’s belief that P is testimony based iff:

- (1) The speaker expresses the belief that P; the speaker “offers” the belief that P.
- (2) The hearer believes the speaker in forming the belief that P; the hearer “accepts” the offer.

A testimony-based belief is then a belief formed through a Gricean handshake.

If you want to get the “metaphysics” of testimony right before turning to the epistemology of testimony, turn to the theory of communication. And if you want to get

the theory of communication right, there is no better place to start than with Grice and the theorizing he inspired.

This completes my case for my second thesis. I now turn to my case for my third thesis, that the scope of the “epistemology of testimony” is the broader category of comprehension-based beliefs.

## 6. Varieties of Miscomprehension

I think it is pretty obvious that the two conditions for testimony-based belief can pull apart. We’ve just seen three cases that meet the distal cause condition without meeting the processing condition. In this section I’ll describe cases that meet the standard processing condition—the hearer’s psychology is type-identical to instances of genuine testimony-based beliefs; everything “inside” the hearer is held constant—but the hearer’s belief that P does not have testimony that P as its distal cause.

### 6.1 Misunderstood Content

Begin with a veridical case. Agnieszka says to Colleen ‘John is speaking first at the faculty meeting today’. Colleen correctly takes Agnieszka’s utterance as intending Colleen to believe that John Fischer is speaking first. Colleen then believes Agnieszka in the standard way.

Now take a non-veridical variant: Though Colleen responds in a type-identical way to Agnieszka’s speech act, Agnieszka did not intend for Colleen to believe that John *Fischer* was speaking first, but rather than John *Perry* is speaking first. (John Perry

almost never speaks at faculty meetings—he’s the quiet type—so Colleen was naturally confused.) Colleen has misrepresented or miscomprehended Agnieszka’s intentions, and so miscomprehended the content of her speech act; her psychological state of comprehension—her psychological representation of Agnieszka’s utterance as a speech act—*misrepresents* the content of Agnieszka’s act.<sup>19</sup>

But otherwise her psychological processing from her comprehension state to belief is type-identical with the veridical case. Colleen’s belief that P in both the veridical and the non-veridical case meets the standard processing condition. But in the non-veridical case it does not meet the distal cause condition. For though Colleen’s belief that P has *testimony* as its distal cause, it has testimony *that Q* as its distal cause.

Let us say her belief in both cases is based on her capacity to comprehend (represent) constative speech acts (in each case she forms a comprehension-based belief), but only in the veridical case is her belief *that P* based on testimony *that P*. Her comprehension-state is type identical (modulo different causes) in both cases; type identical comprehension-states include *veridical comprehension* and *non-veridical miscomprehension*.<sup>20</sup> Her comprehension-based belief that P is based on *testimony*, but

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<sup>19</sup> ‘Comprehend’ and ‘comprehension’ are reasonably read as factive words, like ‘perceive’ and ‘perception’. But like ‘perception’ and ‘perceptual state,’ ‘comprehension’ and ‘comprehension-state’ have non-factive readings, where one may miscomprehend a speech act by being in a comprehension-state that misrepresents the act.

<sup>20</sup> Now I know its fashionable to go “disjunctivist” at this point. So I would not be surprised if right now you are denying that there could be type identical comprehension-states, one veridical and the other not, or two comprehension-states with a fundamental element in common (especially a representational element). I shall not take up this issue here.

not testimony *that P*. She forms a comprehension-based belief *that P* that is not also a testimony-based belief *that P*.

## 6.2 Misunderstood Force

Begin with a veridical case. Agnieszka softly utters “John is coming to the party” to tell Colleen that John is coming to the party. Colleen correctly represents Agnieszka’s act as the assertion that *P*. Colleen believes Agnieszka and forms the belief that *P*. Her belief that *P* is clearly testimony-based.

Now for a non-veridical variant. There are times when we use sentences in the indicative mood to ask a question. In English that usually involves a rising intonation at the end. (In Korean, the grammar for questions is the same as statements; questions always involve rising intonation.) So I might assert that John is coming to the party by uttering “John is coming to the party” or I might ask whether John is coming by uttering the same sentence, but with rising intonation at the end.

Suppose Agnieszka asks Colleen if John is coming to the party by uttering “John is coming to the party” but with a barely noticeable rising intonation. Suppose Agnieszka’s rising intonation is so barely noticeable that Colleen fails to notice it. Then Colleen takes Agnieszka to have asserted that John is coming to the party. Her comprehension-state misrepresents Agnieszka’s speech act as a constative (an assertion), when in fact it was a directive (a question). Suppose she goes on the same way she did in the veridical case. She then forms a belief based on her capacity to comprehend constative speech act; she accepts what she took to be an offer of belief, when in fact it

was a question. Colleen has misrepresented or miscomprehended Agnieszka's intentions, and so miscomprehended the force of her speech act.

But otherwise her psychological processing from her comprehension state to belief is type-identical with the veridical case where Agnieszka asserts that P. Colleen's belief that P in both the veridical and the non-veridical case meets the standard processing condition. But in the non-veridical case it does not meet the distal cause condition. For though Colleen's belief that P has an act with the *content* that P as its distal cause, it does not have *testimony* as a distal cause. Though all testimony-based beliefs are comprehension-based, her *comprehension*-based belief is not *testimony*-based.

### 6.3 Non-Communicative Utterances

Veridical case: Colleen asserts that John is hilarious by uttering "John is hilarious" to Agnieszka. Agnieszka correctly takes Colleen to have asserted that John is hilarious. This is news to Agnieszka. But she believes Colleen, and so forms the belief that John is hilarious, looking forward to running into John to witness his witty banter. She correctly comprehends and then accepts Agnieszka's testimony. Her belief is both comprehension and testimony-based.

Non-veridical case: Colleen is practicing her English and utters "John is hilarious" within earshot of Agnieszka. Colleen is thinking about John and may even believe he is hilarious. But she does not overtly and demonstratively intend to make public evidence of her beliefs. She's just practicing her English (it's gotten a little rusty). Colleen has no informative or communicative intentions.

Agnieszka, however, takes Colleen to have asserted that John is hilarious. Agnieszka responds in exactly the same way. In this case her belief meets the standard processing condition, but not the distal cause condition, for though Colleen has made an utterance using a sentence that is often used to perform communicative speech acts, Colleen has just performed a locutionary act. Agnieszka's comprehension-based belief is not testimony-based.

In another version of the case, Colleen is just uttering the sentence (maybe she's having a spasm), but is not expressing a proposition, and so is not even performing a locutionary act. No illocutionary act that P, no testimony that P. Still Agnieszka takes her to assert John is hilarious, and so forms the belief in the same way. She forms a comprehension-based belief, but not a testimony-based belief.

Agnieszka in the non-veridical cases has misrepresented or miscomprehended Agnieszka's intentions, and so misread Colleen's mind. But otherwise her psychological processing from her comprehension state to belief is type-identical with the veridical case where Colleen asserts that P. Though distally caused by an utterance that semantically expresses the proposition that P, Agnieszka's comprehension-based belief that P is not caused by a speaker's testimony (in the broad sense) that P, and so is not testimony-based.

## 6.4 Illusory Speech Acts

Veridical case: **Stranded on an island, Dennis** lit up driftwood to read "S.O.S". A pilot saw the fire and formed the testimony-based belief that someone was in need of help on the island.



Non-veridical case: Lightning simply hit some driftwood that formed a type-identical pattern on the beach. The pilot saw the fire and formed the same belief in the psychologically type identical way. Though there was an “utterance” there was no utterer, and so no one to believe. Even so the pilot’s psychology was type-identical to the first case where Dennis was the utterer. In the second case the pilot’s belief met the standard processing condition, but not the distal cause condition. There are plenty of cases like this that we can imagine. Wind blows through the trees and it sounds exactly as if your friend you are walking with has just whispered a secret.

## 6.5 Hallucination

Take any testimony-based belief where the hearer correctly represents a speaker’s utterance, and then forms a belief in the standard way by believing the speaker. Then imagine that the hearer has hallucinated a speaker’s utterance and then the hearer’s psychology goes through type-identical steps. We would then have a belief that meets the standard processing condition without meeting the distal cause condition (there may even be no distal cause at all). Type identical comprehension-states include veridical comprehension and non-veridical hallucination. Comprehension-based, the belief is not testimony-based, for no one performed any speech act at all.

**The** idea behind all of these examples is to take a veridical case of a constative that P that a hearer accepts (i.e., a paradigm case of a testimony-based belief). Then cut off or modify the speaker’s side of the equation, but keep the hearer’s side exactly as before. Then we have a comprehension-based belief—a belief based on the standard processing of a representation as of a speaker’s constative speech act that P—that is not a

testimony-based belief that P. Either the content is different (misunderstood content), the force is different (misunderstood force), the utterance is not a constative (misunderstood force again), the “utterance” is not even an utterance (illusion), or there was no utterance at all (hallucination). The category of comprehension-based belief is then broader than the category of testimony-based belief. It includes the category of testimony-based beliefs, but goes beyond that category in allowing for a wider range of distal causes, or even no distal cause at all.

## 7. The Epistemology of Comprehension-Based Belief

I believe the so-called “epistemology of testimony” is really the epistemology of comprehension-based beliefs. There are two issues here, one about justification and the other about knowledge.

Here is the question about justification: when it comes to justification, is there a real epistemological difference we should mark between comprehension-based beliefs that are also testimony-based and those that are not? That is, when we theorize the justification of testimony-based beliefs, does our theory include or exclude comprehension-based beliefs that are not also testimony-based? In other words, are there justified comprehension-based beliefs that are not testimony-based?

And here is the question about knowledge: when it comes to knowledge, is there a real epistemological difference we should mark between comprehension-based beliefs that are also testimony-based and those that are not? When we theorize “testimonial knowledge” does our theory include or exclude comprehension-based beliefs that are not

also testimony-based beliefs? In other words, are there cases of “testimonial knowledge” that are not cases of knowledge based on testimony?<sup>21</sup>

I think the second question is the more interesting question, for it is the harder question to address. But since I have already gone on too long, and addressing the second would take way too long given the degree of difficulty, I will focus on the first to advance my third thesis and leave the second for a later date.

Here is another way of posing my question about justification. When we theorize the justification for testimony-based beliefs, are we theorizing the narrower category of testimony-based beliefs, or also the broader category of comprehension-based beliefs? To answer this question, I shall compare the “epistemology of testimony” with the epistemology of perception.

I begin with an “internalist” theory of perceptual justification. On the standard and very popular moderate foundationalist, internalist view, perceptual beliefs are justified by the perceptual experiences (the perceptual representations) that they are based on. In short, experiences justify perceptual beliefs. Though most experiences are veridical, experiences justify perceptual beliefs on the standard, moderate foundationalist, internalist view, even if the experiences are not veridical. Indeed, on many moderate foundationalist, internalist views, perceptual experiences justify perceptual beliefs regardless of the reliability of the perceptual experience. Perceptual justification goes beyond the narrow category of beliefs based on veridical perceptual representations to include beliefs based on veridical and non-veridical perceptual representations. On the standard popular internalist theory of perceptual justification, it is the “inner” psychology

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<sup>21</sup> For a “no” answer, see Fricker 2006, 2015.

that fixes whether a belief is justified, and not its distal relations to worldly events. So when it comes to the question of the justification of perceptual beliefs on a standard and popular internalist theory, the relevant category is not the category of beliefs distally caused by worldly events and psychologically based on veridical perceptual representations, but rather the broader category of beliefs psychologically based on perceptual experiences. The “epistemology of perception” includes both beliefs based on perceivings (veridical perceptual representations), misperceivings (errors and referential illusions) and some hallucinations.

If this is how many internalists categorize perceptual justification, why not categorize the “epistemology of testimony” in similar fashion so that it includes both beliefs based on testimony that P (veridical comprehension), miscomprehension (errors in content, errors in force, and referential illusions) and some hallucinations? Why not suppose that all of the comprehension-based beliefs in the previous section that are not testimony-based are still accounted as justified or not on the same grounds as genuinely testimony-based beliefs? Why not suppose that comprehension-states justify both the narrower category of testimony-based beliefs and the broader category of comprehension-based beliefs in the same fashion?<sup>22</sup> On a standard internalist view of justification, there is little basis to mark a real difference between the category of testimony-based beliefs and the broader category of comprehension-based beliefs.

We can reach the same general conclusion from an “externalist” theory of justification. On the standard and very popular reliabilist theory of justification, perceptual beliefs are justified by perceptual experiences because the experiences are

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<sup>22</sup> I sketch such an internalist theory in Graham 2006a.

reliable in normal conditions when the perceptual system is functioning normally. In short, reliably veridical perceptual experiences justify perceptual beliefs.<sup>23</sup> So when it comes to the question of the justification of perceptual beliefs on a standard and popular externalist theory, the relevant category is not the category of beliefs distally caused by worldly events and psychologically based on veridical perceptual representations, but rather the broader category of beliefs psychologically based on perceptual representations reliably veridical in normal conditions. The “epistemology of perception” includes both beliefs based on perceivings (veridical perceptual representations), misperceivings (errors and referential illusions) and some hallucinations.

So why not type the “epistemology of testimony” in similar fashion, so that it includes comprehension-based beliefs based on testimony that P (veridical comprehension), miscomprehension (errors in content, errors in force, and referential illusions) and some hallucinations, provided that comprehension-based beliefs are reliably true in normal conditions? Indeed, in normal conditions the vast majority of comprehension-based beliefs are testimony-based beliefs, for our capacity to comprehend assertive speech acts is very reliable, and the vast majority of testimony-based beliefs in normal conditions are true. Comprehension-states are reliably veridical in normal conditions when the capacity to comprehend constative speech acts is functioning

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<sup>23</sup> Though justification requires reliability in normal conditions, it does not require veridicality in every case, nor need it even require that the subject be in normal conditions. A massively deceived brain-in-a-vat outside of normal conditions might have justified beliefs, provided its psychological capacities are reliably veridical in normal conditions. See Graham 2010, 2012a, and forthcoming.

normally. Hence, the vast majority of comprehension-based beliefs in normal conditions are true, and so justified on a standard reliabilist view.<sup>24</sup> On a standard externalist view of justification, there is little basis to mark a real difference between the category of testimony-based beliefs and the broader category of comprehension-based beliefs.

Whether internalist or externalist, the theory of justification for a kind of belief does not require veridicality in the inner, antecedent psychological basis (either the perceptual representation or the comprehension-state). Just as the theory of perceptual justification does not restrict itself to perceptual beliefs based on accurate perceptual experiences, so too the epistemology of testimony does not restrict itself to comprehension-based beliefs based on accurate comprehension-states.

That concludes my case in this paper for my thesis (III), for thinking that the so-called “epistemology of testimony” includes the broader category of comprehension-based beliefs. I think once the parallels with the epistemology of perception are made explicit, it is obvious that when we think about the justification for “testimony-based beliefs” what we really have in mind is the broader category of comprehension-based beliefs. Showing that the same is true for knowledge, however, is tougher row to hoe.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> I sketch such a view in Graham 2010.

<sup>25</sup> I presented a much earlier version of some of this material to an audience at Northwestern University. I am grateful to Robert Audi, Richard Fumerton, and Lizzie Fricker for comments that led to improvements. The research for this essay was made possible through the support of a grant from the John Templeton Foundation. The opinions expressed in this essay are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the John Templeton Foundation.

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