Knowing and Trusting:

The Medieval Social Epistemologies of Augustine and Aquinas

by

Matthew Kent Siebert

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Abstract

This dissertation is an introductory exploration of two influential medieval thinkers, Augustine and Aquinas, on the topic of testimony. I explain how Augustine’s view that testimony is a source of knowledge (notitia) developed through four stages, and argue that on Augustine’s view testimonial belief is justified inferentially. I argue that Aquinas thinks some testimonial belief is justified inferentially, and some is justified by adhering to the speaker as the formal object of one’s belief, on the grounds that the speaker is truthful. I argue that these provide knowledge when they provide cognitio. And I argue that Aquinas’s view can be developed into a plausible account of testimonial trust and trustworthiness.
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Introduction

In epistemology, ‘testimony’ refers to the practice of believing on the say-so of others. Testimony is incredibly important. Without it, you wouldn’t know about anything outside your experience. You wouldn’t know about events in Syria, or world events generally. You wouldn’t know anything about the middle ages, or other historical periods. You probably wouldn’t have friends, because you wouldn’t be able to find out what anyone thought of you, or let others know what you think of them. You wouldn’t even know who your own parents are, since you don’t remember your birth. It would be the end of human society. Testimony is fundamental.

This dissertation is an introductory exploration of medieval social epistemology, a topic that has been almost completely neglected. The study is focused on two pivotal medieval thinkers, Augustine and Aquinas, and is focused on their epistemology of testimony. If we can understand their interests, their terms, and the positions they take on issues concerning testimony, we will be in a good position to understand what other medieval thinkers in the Latin tradition, and later philosophers influenced by that tradition, had to say on issues of social epistemology. This will put us in a position to draw new insights into social epistemology from Augustine, Aquinas, and other medievals.

Augustine (354-430) is an appropriate starting point, as he seems to have been the first philosopher in the West to argue that we can have knowledge from testimony. He consciously broke with the schools of ancient philosophy on this topic, and this made his defense of testimonial knowledge a real turning point in the history of philosophy. And looking ahead, Augustine was extremely influential in the Latin philosophical tradition. Many passages from his writings, including some key texts about testimony, found their way into Peter Lombard’s Sentences, which for centuries was a required text for medieval scholastics. So it is important to
get his view right. A very few brief and tentative studies have been made of Augustine on testimonial knowledge;¹ the present study is more thorough.

In this introductory work, I will draw the trajectory of medieval social epistemology with a broad stroke, beginning with Augustine. An appropriate second point is Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274). Aquinas arrives on the scene when translations of Aristotle and of Aristotelian commentators had become fairly well known, and the state of debate on issues relevant to the epistemology of testimony was neither formless nor rigidly ramified, but well under way. The terms and contexts within which Aquinas developed his ideas on testimony were common to most of the scholastics after him. His works were frequently criticized or defended by scholastics in the century after his death, and frequently commented on by scholastics of the Renaissance and later. So a study of Aquinas on testimonial knowledge opens a door to understanding much of the history of social epistemology. I indicate how in some more detail in the Conclusion.

0.1 How Testimony Works: The Basics

Let’s start by getting a bit clearer on what testimony is. Most epistemologists today agree that testimonial knowledge can be narrowed down to a subset of the knowledge we gain from certain speech acts, either assertions generally or tellings in particular.² For example, I could give testimony to my mother that it is raining outside my window by telling her over the phone that it is raining outside my window. Arguably, in such cases the speaker who tells someone that \( p \) presents herself to that person as knowing that \( p \).

Now, since our concern is with testimony as its own knowledge source, we should distinguish knowledge that is testimonially based from other kinds of knowledge merely prompted by testimony. Suppose upon meeting you I tell you that I

¹ I have in mind King and Ballantyne (2009) as well as passages from Coady (1992: chap. 1), and McMyler (2011: chap. 1).
² Fricker (1995: 397) says that ‘tellings generally’ are the relevant category. But others distinguish tellings from ‘mere’ or ‘bare’ assertions, arguing that tellings provide a special reason to believe that mere assertions do not. See Hinchman (2005), Moran (2005b), Fricker (2006), and Zagzebski (2012: chap. 6) for various ways to draw this distinction. Graham (2000) focuses on ‘perceptual reports’. Lackey (2008: 39, cf. chap. 1) prefers to focus on ‘statements’ or ‘acts of communication’.
am happy by singing “I’m happy!” in a baritone voice, and you astutely infer from my singing that I sing baritone. Your knowledge that I sing baritone in this case is not testimonially based, since it is not in virtue of the content of my telling you that I am happy that you know that. 3 Or suppose that you are staring blankly out a window and I say “That’s a blue jay!”, thereby prompting you to notice for yourself that the bird just outside the window is a blue jay. Having your attention drawn to something by testimony, which you then know by some non-testimonial means (in this case, sense perception) does not make your knowledge testimonially based. 4 (This distinction will be important for understanding some key passages in Augustine.)

Nailing down testimony as a source of knowledge any further is tricky, in part because there is a vibrant debate about how testimony works. Three major schools of thought on the justification of testimonial belief have recently emerged, which I call the Default, Reductive, and Assurance views. 5

On the Default view, when someone says that $p$, all the audience requires for being justified in believing that $p$ is that the audience not have any defeaters for believing $p$. 6 On this view, the testimony of others is a sui generis ‘rational source’, analogous to but not reducible to other rational sources like memory, perception, and inference. Just as beliefs based on memory, 6

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3 This is a modification of an example from Lackey (2006) which she gets from Audi (1997).

4 The same is true when a telling merely reminds you of something you know, or when a mathematician tells you all the steps in a mathematical proof, and you are thereby prompted to deduce the conclusion for yourself. Thus it is not sufficient for knowledge to be testimonially based that it be based on the content of a telling or assertion. See Lackey (2006) and (2008: 24, 42ff, 80ff) for discussion and a different view on this topic.

5 For the sake of simplicity I have not surveyed all the contemporary views on testimony. For example, there are important hybrid views, which combine aspects of different views, like those of Lackey (2008) and Faulkner (2011) on which testimony is a sui generis source of knowledge, but requires ‘positive reasons’ for rational uptake. Another interesting hybrid view is Gerken (2013). For overviews of the literature, see Kusch and Lipton (2002), Lackey (2006), Goldman and Blanchard (2012), Adler (2014), and Gelfert (forthcoming, 2014).

6 This view is commonly called the ‘anti-reductive’ or ‘non-reductive’ view, because it denies that testimony is ‘reducible’ to a kind of inference. I prefer to call it a ‘Default’ view, to distinguish it from Assurance views which also deny that all testimony is reducible to inference. Tyler Burge (1993: 467ff) is a well-known Defaultist who argues for ‘the Acceptance Principle’ that “A person is entitled to accept as true something that is presented as true and that is intelligible to him, unless there are stronger reasons not to do so.” Burge argues that memory’s role in a mathematical demonstration is not ‘justificatory’ the way conscious inference from premises is, but is rather ‘preservative’ (1993: 461-3). He then argues that testimony is also preservative. Dummett (1993) likewise draws an analogy with memory and argues that ordinary testimony immediately provides us ordinary knowledge, in the absence of defeaters. See also Coady (1992), Foley (1994), Goldberg (2007: esp. 144ff). See Lackey (2006: 444, n. 21) for more references to Default views.
perception or inference should be accepted when there is no sign of dysfunction, so should beliefs based on testimony.

A Reductive view, by contrast, holds that testimony is reducible to inferential belief, and so requires the audience to have some ‘positive reason’ for justifiedly believing testimony. Typically, this includes reasons the audience has for thinking the testifier is both sincere (she is expressing her belief that $p$), and competent (she knows $p$ or at least is strongly justified in believing $p$). Then this account ‘reduces’ testimonial transfer to an inference such as: “$S$ stated $p$; $S$ is sincere in stating $p$ and competent on $p$; therefore $p$”. Elizabeth Fricker has argued that, even if not every case of justified testimonial belief is so reducible (e.g., if language acquisition in children requires Default acceptance of others’ testimony), and so it is not ‘globally’ true that testimony is reducible to inference, mature audiences ordinarily should consider whether the speaker is trustworthy, or at least ‘monitor’ speakers for trustworthiness. So ordinarily testimony is reducible ‘locally’.

Finally, on an Assurance view, at least some testimony is a sui generis source of knowledge, namely, when an audience’s belief that $p$ is justified by accepting a speaker’s ‘assurance’ that $p$. An assurance is an invitation for the audience to let the speaker take responsibility for justifying her belief that $p$. The offering and accepting of an assurance is a voluntary exchange, analogous to the giving and accepting of a promise. An assurance gives the

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7 See Fricker (1994), (1995), (2006) and (2012). See also Lyons (1997), Thagard (2005), and Fumerton (2006). Reductivists typically admit that our habitual ‘default’ in ordinary situations is to believe what others say to us, and that we reflectively infer the truth of what they say only when we have some reason for doubt. See Lackey (2006: 445, n. 27) for further references to Reductionist views.


9 See Moran (2005b) and McMyler (2011). Faulkner (2011: chapter 6) incorporates some aspects of the Assurance view into his hybrid view. Zagzebski (2012: chapter 6) incorporates assurances into her pluralist view. Hinchman (2005) and (2012) argues that assurances (‘tellings’) provide one with default entitlement to believe $p$. Precursors of the Assurance view include Cavell (1976), Austin (1979a), Anscombe (1979), and Hardwig (1991). Williamson (2002: 268-9) does not explicitly endorse an Assurance view of testimony, but he does say that “To make an assertion is to confer a responsibility (on oneself) for the truth of its content; to satisfy the rule of assertion, by having the requisite knowledge, is to discharge that responsibility, by epistemically ensuring the truth of the content”.

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audience the right, when challenged about \( p \), to defer challenges to the speaker, and gives the audience the right to complain should the speaker not live up to her responsibility.\(^{10}\)

After I explain in chapter 1 how Augustine’s views on testimonial knowledge developed, I will argue in chapter 2 that he thinks of testimony as a branch of inference. Thus his view is closest to the Reductive view. In chapter 3, I will argue that Aquinas is a pluralist. He thinks some testimonial beliefs are justified by inductive inference, like the Reductivists, but also thinks that there is a special way of believing the speaker which is not merely inferential, like those with an Assurance view. (Pluralist and hybrid views should not be confused. Aquinas does not have a hybrid view, i.e., one that combines elements from different views into one way that testimonial beliefs are justified. He thinks there are two distinct ways testimonial beliefs can be justified.)

0.2 Testimony and Knowledge

But do we even have testimonial knowledge? How we answer this question will depend on our theory of knowledge. There are a number of ways one might be motivated to build a ‘rigorist’ theory of knowledge that excludes the possibility of testimonial knowledge.\(^{11}\) One might think that real knowledge should be secure against every possibility of error; or that it should be a supreme cognitive achievement; or that it should be reflectively self-aware, such that if one knows then one knows that one knows; or that it should be derived from direct acquaintance of the objects one knows about. On John Locke’s view, for instance, knowledge is limited to sensation, intuition and demonstration (Essay IV.ii.14). “And herein lies the difference between probability and certainty, faith and knowledge, that in all the parts of knowledge, there is intuition; each immediate idea, each step has its visible and certain connexion; in belief not so”

\(^{10}\) For example, Moran (2005b: 18) says “the mutual recognition of intention can play the role for the audience of providing him with a reason for belief, because he sees the speaker as presenting himself as accountable for the truth of \( P \), and asking, through the recognition of his intention, that this offer of his assurance be accepted.” See McMyler (2011: chap. 2) on the practice of deferring to a speaker. McMyler (2011: 50, 109) claims that beliefs not based on assurance are not testimonially based.

\(^{11}\) Zagzebski (1999) differentiates between ‘rigorist’ and ‘lenient’ ways of defining knowledge. See also above, pp. 166-167.
(IV.xv.3). Hence testimony is not a source of knowledge, even though testimonial belief with extremely high probability justifies us in acting as if we had knowledge.

Our knowledge, as has been shown, being very narrow, and we not happy enough to find certain truth in everything which we have occasion to consider; most of the propositions we think, reason, discourse, nay act upon, are such, as we cannot have undoubted knowledge of their truth: yet some of them border so near upon certainty, that we make no doubt at all about them; but assent to them as firmly, and act, according to that assent, as resolutely, as if they were infallibly demonstrated, and that our knowledge of them was perfect and certain. (Essay IV.xv.2)

This approach to knowledge is often represented in the history of philosophy by theories of epistêmê or scientia.

On the other hand, if one looks to ordinary language as a starting point for one’s theory of knowledge, one quickly notices that every day we say we ‘know’ things in ways that miserably fail to live up to Locke’s standards for knowledge. We think we know many things in ways that do not rule out the possibility of error, represent no exceptional cognitive achievement or understanding, and need not imply any direct acquaintance with the objects of our knowledge. We ordinarily say we ‘know’ something when our method of assenting to it was safe, apt, or epistemically good enough to act on. This way of approaching knowledge is represented in the history of philosophy by theories of gnôsis, cognitio or notitia.

If we approach medieval epistemology thinking that their theories of knowledge are to be found in their theories of scientia, we can easily miss what medievals have to say about testimonial knowledge, since they typically deny that human testimony is a source of scientia. So I have focused on what they say about notitia and cognitio. A problem for this approach is that, while it is obvious that scientia is a kind of knowledge, it is less obvious that cognitio and notitia are. So I will devote some time to explaining what Augustine means by ‘notitia’ (in

12 There have been many different attempts to explain how everyday knowledge works. Here I allude to just a few of the most recent. Sosa (1999) and Williamson (2000) favour what they call ‘safety’. Sosa (2011) favours ‘aptness’. Pritchard (2012) favours a view that combines safety and aptness. Hawthorne (2004), Stanley (2005), and Fantl & McGrath (2009) favour a view on which practical considerations determine whether an agent has knowledge.
chapter 1), and to explaining what Aquinas means by ‘cognitio’ (in chapter 4), and arguing that these are kinds of knowledge. The moral to draw from these chapters is that Augustine and Aquinas were neither ‘rigorist’ nor ‘lenient’ about knowledge, but rather were pluralists who cared about different kinds of knowledge for different reasons. Augustine recognized the pull of the ordinary language approach to knowledge, so notitia was important for him; I argue that notitia is obligated belief (in a sense of ‘obligated’ to be explained), and suggest that it corresponds to what we would call knowledge with good enough epistemic standing to act on (chapter 2). Aquinas likewise felt the pull of ordinary language in describing cognitio. I argue that some cognitio is naturally apt belief, and that propositional cognitio corresponds to what we would call propositional knowledge (chapter 4).

0.3 Testimony and Trust

Medieval social epistemology has a lot to offer, and I describe various topics and possible avenues for further research in the Conclusion. In chapter 5, I also give an illustration of the richness of medieval social epistemology, by drawing on medieval insights to illuminate the role of trust and trustworthiness in the epistemology of testimony. There I argue that the testimonial trustworthiness of a speaker should be thought of as an Aristotelian virtue of truthfulness, along lines developed by Aquinas, and I compare Aquinas’s notion of adhering to the speaker with current accounts of how one trusts a speaker for the truth.

0.4 Summary

As an introductory work, this dissertation covers a broad range of topics. But each chapter is also focused on a particular thesis. In chapter 1, I argue that Augustine’s epistemology of testimony developed through four distinct stages. In chapter 2, I argue that he thought of testimony as an inferential source of knowledge. In chapter 3, I argue that Aquinas recognized two distinct testimonial sources, opinion and faith. In chapter 4, I argue that testimonial cognitio is, for Aquinas, testimonial knowledge. And in chapter 5, I argue that testimonial trust and trustworthiness should be thought of as what Aquinas called ‘adherence’ and ‘truthfulness’.
0.5 The Difficulties and Rewards of This Dissertation

One difficulty in studying medieval social epistemology is that there is very little secondary literature to respond to. Another is that, as important as testimony is to Augustine and Aquinas, they have no treatises devoted to testimony alone. Rather, they discuss testimony while discussing faith, education, science, friendship, lying, and a host of other topics. Thus understanding their views on social epistemology will sometimes involve some speculative reconstruction. But there are rewards for studying Augustine and Aquinas with a view to understanding their social epistemology. Many aspects of their epistemologies, and of the epistemologies they have influenced and continue to influence, can be appreciated in a new light. And we can glean new insights into how members of human society manage to share their knowledge.
Chapter 1
Augustine’s Development on Testimony
From Opinion to Knowledge

1.0 Introduction

Augustine is, as far as I can tell, the first philosopher in Western philosophy to claim that we can know something on another person’s testimony.1 “If we didn’t believe any of the things we neither sense with the body nor the mind,” he says

how would we know about cities we’ve never been to …. How would we know who our parents or ancestors are? Since we obviously know many things of this sort …

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1 Akṣapāda Gautama (c. 200) a Hindu philosopher, already thematized testimonial knowledge (knowledge from ‘word’) in the Nyaya Sutras at least a century earlier (see Phillips 2012, especially chapter 6. (I’m grateful to Jennifer Nagel for pointing me to the literature on Indian epistemology.) But as far as we know, Hindu philosophy had no influence on the philosophical traditions with which Augustine was familiar, on the topic of testimony. In the West, some Jewish and Christian philosophers preceded Augustine in claiming that divine testimony yields knowledge, but to my knowledge no one claims that we gain knowledge from merely human testimony. Rather, they saw divine testimony as an exception. For example, Philo of Alexandria (d. 50 CE) said “Hearing holds second rank to seeing …. It is possible to hear the false and take it for true, for hearing is deceptive, but sight, by which existing things are truly apprehended, does not lie” (De Fuga et Inventione 208, quoted in Winston 1981: 147). See also Theophilus of Antioch (d. c. 184 CE), Ad Autolycum I.8; Origen (d. c. 254 CE), De Principiis 1.1; Hilary of Poitiers (d. c. 368 CE), De Trinitate 9.64. Clement of Alexandria (d. c. 215) argues that faith in God gives us knowledge (in the form of Epicurean prolépseis). Lamont (2004: 34) says “Clement’s view that faith is an autonomous source of knowledge on a par with demonstration, and not merely a source of true belief, is a radical departure. However, it should be noted that he did not go so far as to claim that faith in testimony generally could provide knowledge that was on a par with that provided by other basic principles of demonstration; as the passage cited above [Stromateis II.4] makes clear, he thought that it was only God’s testimony that could provide such knowledge.” Did Pythagoreans or Epicureans affirm a notion of testimonial knowledge by saying that followers should learn the sayings of Pythagoras or Epicurus by rote in order to be happy? Even if they encouraged the use of testimony, they seem not to have claimed explicitly that there is testimonial knowledge. Even if not the first to mention testimonial knowledge, Augustine is the first in the West to thematize testimonial knowledge and to categorize it as a distinctive source of knowledge alongside the intellect and the senses.
we know these things on the word of others, and we have concluded that their testimony … is not to be doubted.² (ep. 147.5)

You won’t find such a claim in any previous school of thought: Platonist, Aristotelian, Stoic or Epicurean. Following the presocratic dichotomy between doxa (opinion or belief) and epistêmê (knowledge or understanding), they all say testimony is merely a source of doxa.³ Plato, for example, in the course of arguing that ‘true belief’ is not a good definition of epistêmê, claims that ordinary court testimony fails to transmit knowledge (Theatetus 201a-c).⁴ As far as I know, ancient philosophers did not even say that one could have gnôsis or cognitio by means of testimony.⁵ Testimonial knowledge was not an important theme in ancient philosophy, which focused on the difference between sensory and intellectual knowledge.⁶ In his own life,
Augustine went from arguing that testimony could not possibly yield knowledge (\textit{mag} 10.36 ff) to arguing that it would be ‘absurd’ to deny that we have testimonial knowledge (\textit{trin} 15.12.21). The latter claim is both a significant innovation in the history of philosophy, and a surprising reversal in Augustine’s own views. He changed the epistemological dialectic by positing not two but three sources of knowledge: intellect, sense, and testimony.

This essay is the story of that dramatic shift. First I discuss some elements Augustine took from the Platonic and Stoic schools which led Augustine initially to deny that knowledge can be had on the basis of testimony, but which surprisingly also contributed to his later account of testimonial knowledge. Then I identify four stages in the development of Augustine’s epistemology of testimony: the Platonist, Particularist, Ordinary Language, and Compromise stages. The stages came roughly in decades.\footnote{We could think of the Platonist stage as starting in 386; the Particularist stage as starting with his statement that history gives us \textit{cognitio} around 396; the Ordinary Language stage as starting with his arguments that testimony is a source of \textit{scientia} around 414; and the Compromise stage as starting with his distinction between a proper and an ordinary way of using ‘\textit{scientia}’ in 426.} Augustine’s story follows this dramatic arc: starting from a commitment to Platonism, Augustine begins to recognize how it is in tension with Christianity’s emphasis on faith, especially as he argues against the rationalism of Manicheanism. Under the influence of Stoicism, he accepts sensory \textit{cognitio}, and on his own takes the further step of admitting testimonial \textit{cognitio} as well. At the climax, he attempts a radical revision in his epistemology, based on everyday and Biblical Latin, and says that testimony gives us \textit{scientia}. But the tension resolves itself as he finds a compromise that recognizes testimony and the senses as sources of one kind of knowledge (\textit{notitia}), while preserving the preeminence of reflective intellectual knowledge (\textit{scientia}).\footnote{Near the end of the chapter, I explain in more detail the difference between \textit{notitia} and \textit{cognitio} on the one hand, and \textit{scientia} on the other.}

### 1.1 Platonic and Stoic Elements

In his first book, Augustine says he is confident that he will come to understand the truths of Christianity by studying the Platonists (\textit{Acad.} 3.20.43). But while Plato occasionally says that...
belief on another’s testimony is ‘right’, or ‘beautiful’, or an excellent guide to action, he refrains from calling it ‘knowledge’ (epistêmê or gnôsis). Why? Some passages in Plato suggest that this is because knowledge is a matter of (i) ‘seeing’, and (ii) having a kind of techne.

(i) A jury which has been justly (dikaiôs) and rightly (ortha) persuaded (peisthentes) of some matter in which seeing is required for knowing (peri hôn idonti monon estin eidenai) can, at best, judge ‘without knowledge’ (aneu epistêmês) and achieve ‘true opinion’ (alêthê doxan) (Theatetus 201b-c). Arguably Plato doesn’t here mean to endorse bodily seeing (or any kind of aisthêsis) as a way of having knowledge (epistêmê), since his explicit epistemology treats knowledge as the grasp of intelligible form. But Plato makes use of ‘seeing’ as a metaphor for the clear and immediate first-hand grasp a knower must have of what she knows. A geometer, for example, who accepts axioms but hasn’t seen why they are true for herself is a mere ‘dreamer’ unable to ‘see with awakeness’ the things she studies. Only the dialectician, who

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9 In the case Socrates considers, the jury has been justly (dikaiôs) and rightly (ortha) persuaded (peisthentes) (Theatetus 201b-c). In the Meno, Socrates argues that true opinion is just as good a guide to action as knowledge (97a ff), but is not ‘abiding’ (monimos, 98a). True belief is ‘beautiful’ in contrast with ‘ugly’ error (Theatetus 194c). See Burnyeat (1980) and Stramel (1989) on Theatetus 201.

10 “[S]uppose a jury has been justly persuaded of some matter which only an eye-witness could know, and which cannot otherwise be known; suppose they come to their decision upon hearsay, forming a true judgment: then they have decided the case without knowledge, but (granted they did their job well) being correctly persuaded.” (Theatetus 201b-c, trans. Levett and Burnyeat, in Cooper. Οὐκοῦν ὅταν δικαίως πεισθῶσιν δικασταὶ περὶ ὧν ἴδων μόνον ἔστιν εἰδέναι, ἅλλως δὲ μὴ, ταῦτα τότε ἔξ ἄκοις ἑρώτησις, ἀλήθη δόξαι λαβόντες, ἄνευ ἐπιστήμης ἐξώνων, ὁρθὰ πεισθέντες, εἶπερ εὐ ἐξ ἐκδικασσάντων. Burnyeat (1980: 180) notes that Plato’s jury examples need not rule out the possibility of knowledge from testimony. For example, Socrates implies that given more time, a lawyer’s speech could give the jury knowledge. Nevertheless, this looks like an ad hominem point Socrates is making to convince Theatetus. Socrates is not thereby committing himself to the possibility of knowledge from testimony. See Stramel (1989).

11 Stramel (1989: 8-10) argues that here, as so often, Socrates’s argument is ad hominem. Theatetus thinks that knowledge is possible by means of sensation, so Socrates can use eyewitnessing as a counterexample to Theatetus’s hypothesis that justified true belief is knowledge. A notable passage where Plato denies that bodily seeing produces knowledge is Republic VII, 529b: “I [Socrates] for my part am unable to hold that any study makes a soul look upward other than the one that concerns what is and is invisible. And if a man, gaping up or squinting down, attempts to learn something of sensible things, I would deny that he ever learns – for there is no knowledge of such things …”. See also Timaeus 37b5-c3. For an explanation of Plato’s denial of sensory knowledge, see Gerson (2009: 56ff). On the other hand, see Fine (2003) for an argument that Plato does allow for sensory knowledge.

12 “And as for the rest, I mean geometry and the subjects that follow it, we described them as to some extent grasping what is, for we saw that, while they do dream about what is, they are unable to command a waking view of it as long as they make use of hypotheses that they leave untouched and that they cannot give any account of.” (Republic VII, 533b8-c3, Grube and Reeve trans.: ὁρῶμεν ὡς ἀνειρούμενοι μέν περὶ τὸ ὄν, ὑπὸρ δὲ ἀδύνατον αὐτὰς, ἵδειν, ἔως ὃν ὑπόθεσις χρῶμαι ταῦτας ἀκινητούς ἔως, μὴ δυνάμεναι λόγον διδάσκαι αὐτῶν...). Earlier in Republic VII Plato has used the metaphor of ‘dreaming’ to refer to taking images to be reality.
sees the first principle of all for herself, has knowledge (*epistêmê*), properly speaking. Plotinus later makes similar claims for the dialectician. Whatever Plato’s own view on the matter, such passages could be used to take a Platonist position that knowledge is a matter of seeing something for oneself.

In this sense, Augustine’s early epistemology is undoubtably Platonic. Early on Augustine says “reason” is “in the mind what looking is in the eyes”, and “reason promises … to show God to your mind, as the sun is shown to your eyes” (*sol.* 1.6.12). To know (*scire*) God would be to comprehend God with one’s intellect (*intellectu comprehendi*) (*sol.* 1.4.9), that is to have “vision” of God (*sol.* 1.6.13). Augustine also says that dialectic is the “discipline of disciplines” which teaches teaching and learns learning. In dialectic reason itself demonstrates and opens up what it is, what it wishes, what it is capable of. It knows knowing: it alone wants to and is able to make knowers.

At this stage Augustine clearly thinks that knowledge (*scientia*) comes by reasoning alone – sense experience is merely an occasion for the intellect’s attainment of knowledge (*sol.* 1.4.9). Things ‘perceived’ intellectually are “within the mind, where possession and seeing are
identical” (util cred 13.28). But there is no scientia of sense objects; they cannot even be grasped (percepi), because either they are indiscernible from false appearances, or they are always changing, and “what does not remain [the same] cannot be perceived, for that is perceived which is comprehended by scientia” (diu. qu. 9). Testimony is even worse off.

I don’t deny that what escapes the intellect, if at least it falls under the senses, allows some plausible estimate to be made of it. But what can neither be understood nor sensed begets [only] a rash and worthless opinion. (ep. 13.2)

There is no room here for testimonial knowledge.

(ii) Many Platonic passages also suggest that knowledge consists in the possession of a technê. Think of the lowly Athenian cobbler’s technê. He has a systematic and stable grasp of sandal-making. He can give an account (logon didonai) of why he makes sandals the way he does. And his knowledge is fertile: faced with a new problem in sandal-making, he will know what to do, because he understands sandals. He wouldn’t be the master of an art if all he did was follow instructions. A cobbler can adapt when he runs out of his usual materials, or loses a helpful tool, but someone who merely follows instructions cannot. The true knower in the

19 “quod autem intellectu capitur, intus apud animum est nec id habere quicquam est aliud quam uidere.”

20 “Omne quod corporeus sensus adtingit, quod et sensibile dicitur, sine ulla intermissione temporis commutatur .... Quod autem non manet percipi non potest ; illud enim percipitur quod scientia comprehenditur ; comprehendi autem non potest quod sine intermissione mutatur. Non est igitur expectanda sinceritas ueritatis a sensibus corporis.” See also Acad. 3.17.37 where Augustine endorses the Platonic view that “only opinion, and not knowledge, can be engendered about [the sensible world] in the souls of those who are unwise” (“sat est enim ad id, quod uolo, platonem sensisse duos esse mundos, unum intellegibilim, in quo ipsa ueritas habitaret, istum autem sensibilem, quem manifestum est nos uisu tactu que sentire; itaque illum uerum, hunc ueri similem et ad illius imaginem factum, et ideo de illo in ea quae se cognosceret anima uelut exploiri et quasi serenari ueritatem, de hoc autem in stultorum animis non scientiam sed opinionem posse generari.”). See also imm. an. 6.10 (“Sed ea, quae sensu capiuntur, extra nos etiam esse sentiuntur et locis continentur, unde ne percipi quidem posse adfirmantur.”)

21 At quod intellectum fugit, si saltem sensum non fugit, aestimare inde aliiquid uerisimiliter non usquequaque denegatur. quod uero neque intellegi neque sentiri potest, temerarios nimis et nugatorias gignit opinionem.

22 Apology 22d, Laches 185b, Charmides 165c ff, Protagoras 311b ff, Gorgias 464b ff, Republic IV, 438c-e. Republic VII culminates with attributing true knowledge of reality to the technê of dialectic alone (533). And perhaps the technê requirement helps explain why the slave-boy’s insight about squares does not count as knowledge until he has thought it over enough times to be reliably right about squares for the right reasons (Meno 98a).
intellectual realm has, by analogy, a stable, systematic, and fertile understanding of reality.\textsuperscript{23} Her knowledge enables her to give an account of the reality she knows, but she can’t impart her knowledge to someone else merely by giving an account of it.\textsuperscript{24}

The early Augustine likewise characterizes knowledge as the possession of a \textit{disciplina}.\textsuperscript{25} “Neither does knowledge [\textit{scientia}] involve any thing unless it pertains to some \textit{disciplina}. For the \textit{disciplina} of anything whatsoever is knowledge [\textit{scientia}].”\textsuperscript{26} Augustine’s \textit{On Order} follows Plato’s prescription for education in the \textit{disciplinae} (the liberal arts) which are supposed to lead one from the material to the more immaterial, culminating in a vision of the one simple principle of all (\textit{Republic} 518d-534a).\textsuperscript{27} Education aims not just at acquiring bits of knowledge, but at

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\item For discussions of Plato on \textit{techne} and knowledge, see Irwin (1977), Woodruff (1989), Gentzler (1995) and Roochnik (1996).
\item For example, a theme in the \textit{Meno} is that knowledge is not just recognizing the truth on some occasion, and at the prompting of others, but requires a firmly established disposition to recognize the truth in such matters for oneself, not just at the prompting of others (\textit{Meno} 85c-d, 97e-98a). For different views on the role of an account (\textit{logos}) in knowledge, according to Plato, see Fine (1979), Miller (1992), and Shields (1999).
\item Much later, Augustine merely says that ‘some’ translate \textit{epistemai} as \textit{disciplina} (\textit{trin} 14.1.1).
\item \textit{imm. an.} 1.1: \textit{Nec ullam rem scientia complectitur, nisi quae ad aliquam pertineat disciplina. Est enim disciplina quarumcumque rerum scientia.} In \textit{Acad.} 3.5, Augustine also says that \textit{disciplina} yields knowledge: “No one can have \textit{disciplinam} in his mind who has learned nothing; but he who knew \textit{nouit} nothing learned nothing, and no one can know something false” (\textit{nemo autem habere disciplinam potest in ano}, \textit{qui nihil didicit, nihil autem didicit, qui nihil nouit, et nosse falsum nemo potest}). In his very late commentary on these passages, \textit{retr} 1.5.2, Augustine does not deny the claim that all \textit{scientia} is by means of \textit{disciplina}. He only qualifies the claim, pointing out that God’s knowledge does not come from learning a \textit{disciplina}.
\item \textit{ord} 2.16.44: “In these, if anyone will, without ceasing, gather everything, spread widely and variously throughout so many disciplines, into one simple, certain, and true thing, he will be most worthy of being called learned, and now without rashness seeks divine things, not just to believe them but to contemplate, understand, and hold fast to them.” (\textit{Quibus si quise non cesserit et illa omnia, quae per tot disciplinas late uarieque diffusa sunt, ad unum quiddam simplex uerum certumque redegerit, eruditi nomine dignissimus non temere iam quaerit illa diuina non iam credenda solum uerum etiam contemplanda intellegenda atque retinenda}). In his Retractions Augustine says that in his early works he intended to write a book on each of the ‘liberal disciplines’ (1.4.4) to lead the mind from the material to the immaterial (‘\textit{per corporalia cipiens ad incorporalia quibusdam quasi passibus certis vel peruenire vel ducere}’, \textit{retr.} 1.6). The liberal arts Augustine had in mind were grammar, music, dialectic, rhetoric, geometry, arithmetic, and astronomy (\textit{retr.} 1.6; cf. \textit{ord.} 2.12.35–47, 2.4.13–14; \textit{quant.} 23.72; \textit{conf.} 4.16.30). In \textit{retr.} 1.6, but not elsewhere, Augustine lists philosophy as one of the liberal disciplines. In 387, Augustine wrote drafts of \textit{De dialectica}, \textit{De grammatica}, and \textit{De rhetorica}, and after interrupting his project to begin his anti-Manichean works, in 389 he began the \textit{De musica}. But he never completed the project. Hagendahl (1967: 714-715) says that Augustine’s plan was to write a counterpart to Varro’s \textit{Disciplinarum libri}, but that this project was broken off quickly when he was ordained a priest in 391. Augustine’s attachment to the liberal arts was mediated by a long classical tradition (Topping 2012: 22ff; Hagendahl 1967: 713ff). By surveying Augustine’s quotations of classical Latin sources, Hagendahl shows that Augustine from 391 became less and less interested in classical Latin writers, except to criticize them (1967: 715).
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ordering them toward an understanding of the whole. But the systematic understanding involved in disciplina knowledge cannot be acquired merely on another’s say-so. The goal of education is to reason out such an understanding for oneself, something testimony cannot provide: “Then at last he will learn how reasonable were the things he followed before [he could reason about them], and what is that Reason which, after the nursery of authority, he is now strong and fit to follow, and he grasps also what is the Intellect in which all things are – or rather, which Itself is all things – and [grasps] what, besides all of these, is principle of all.”

In his first book, Against the Academicians, Augustine explicitly declared himself a Christian Platonist (Acad. 3.20.43). But in the same book he defends a definition of cataleptic impressions which he takes from Zeno, founder of the Stoic school (Acad. 3.9.18-21 cf. 2.5.11). For Zeno, knowledge (epistêmê) is a systematization of cataleptic impressions (phantasai katalêptikai). An impression (phantasia) is an appearance that something is true. An impression is cataleptic if and only if it is a veridical, detailed, and accurate impression of something that exists, an impression “such that it could not be false”. Cataleptic impressions, like true appearance claims, can be of either sensory or intellectual objects (e.g., “It appears to

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28 sol. 1.13.23: “For it is the duty of good disciplinae to arrive at [wisdom] by means of a definite order [Nam ordine quodam ad eam peruenire bonae disciplinae officium est]; without order it is hardly to be believed that [the result] will be a happy one [sine ordine autem vix credibilis felicitatis].”

29 “Everyone who is deceived, insofar as he is deceived, does not understand” (“Omnis qui fallitur, in eo quod fallitur non intelligit”).

30 ord. 2.9.26: Tum demum discet et quanta ratione praedita sint ea ipsa quae secutus est ante rationem, et quid sit ipsa ratio quam post auctoritatis cunabula firmus et idoneus iam sequitur atque comprehendit et quid intellectus in quo universa sunt, vel ipse potius universa, et quid praeter universa universorum principium.

31 “Furthermore, no one doubts that we’re prompted to learn by the twin forces of authority and reason. Therefore, I’m resolved not to depart from the authority of Christ on any score whatsoever: I find no more powerful [authority]. As for what is to be sought out by the most subtle reasoning – for my character is such that I’m impatient in my desire to apprehend what the truth is not only by belief but also by understanding – I’m still confident that I’m going to find it with the Platonists, and that it won’t be opposed to our Holy Writ.” (King trans.1995: 92)

32 Acad. 3.9.18: “Let’s see what Zeno says: something seen that can be comprehended and perceived is such that it has no signs in common with what is false [Sed uideamus quid ait Zeno: tale scilicet uisum comprehendi et percipi posse, quale cum falso non haberet signa communia].” See King (1995: 68, esp. note 140) on Augustine’s use of this definition. Augustine’s source is Cicero’s Academica 2.11.34.

me that the square root of 4 is 2”). 34 From individual impressions one can build up a system, but according to the Stoics only the perfect system should be called epistêmê; the ‘wise man’ has epistêmê proper, while all others are ‘fools’. 35 ‘Fools’ do not have epistêmê (in Latin, scientia), but they do have cataleptic impressions. Cataleptic impressions must be direct in their ‘grasp’ of an object – they are ‘stamped’ and ‘imprinted’ (enapesphragismenên kai enapomemagmenên). 36 (That is why Cicero translates katalêpsis as perceptio or comprehensio. 37 Augustine certainly had read Cicero’s Academica, as he often quotes it or alludes to it. 38) The Stoics accepted the traditional division between doxa and epistêmê, but they posited katalêpsis as a third, intermediary cognitive state, in order to explain how someone starting as a fool (i.e., lacking epistêmê), might build up towards the achievement of epistêmê by systematizing her individually infallible (i.e., cataleptic) impressions. 39 But – and this is the key point for our purposes – cataleptic impressions cannot be had at second-hand, so they cannot be acquired testimonially. 40 The Stoics did not envision testimonial knowledge even of this intermediate grade. Further, they thought it irrational to assent to any impressions other than cataleptic ones, since such mere opinion would undermine one’s attempt to attain a systematic epistêmê. 41

34 One’s own mental states may also be objects of cataleptic phantasia. Virieux-Reymond (1950: 273) says Augustine owes the idea that one has direct knowledge of one’s mental states in part to Chrysippus, who, like Augustine (lib. arb. 2.3.7) says that if one knows one is understanding, then one knows one lives and exists. Obviously, these claims are precursors to Descartes’ famous cogito.

35 Frede (1999: 299). Augustine mentions this aspect of Stoic epistemology (with apparent approval) in Acad. 1.7.19 and sol. 1.4.9. To be more precise, what one systematizes is not impressions, but assent to those impressions. A belief, according to Zeno, is the assent one gives to an impression (Brittain 2006: xx).


37 Brittain (2006: xli). Brittain also notes that Cicero translates ‘katalêpsis’ as ‘cognitio’ (cf. Frede 1999: 299). Early Augustine (e.g., Acad. 1.7.19, 2.2.4) uses comprehensio similarly, but in his later works, when he explains the difference between having some knowledge of God and the beatific vision of God as a whole, he makes his well-known distinction between knowing something somewhat and having ‘comprehensio’ of it (e.g., ep. 147.9.21).

38 See Hagendahl (1967: 52ff) for quotes from and allusions to Cicero’s Academica.


40 In the process of explaining the Stoic account of cataleptic impressions, Frede (1999: 298) contrasts them with testimonial beliefs. He says that if someone believes that p just because of being told that p, the belief is not guaranteed to be true, and so does not count as cataleptic.

41 See Brittain (2006: xxiii), who cites Cicero’s Academica 2.22 and 2.30-31.
Augustine says that Zeno’s definition of cataleptic impressions is “entirely truthful” (Acad. 3.9.21), and Augustine’s use of the terms perceptio and comprehensio is clearly quite Stoic. Whether accommodating himself to Stoicism, or merely to everyday Latin usage, he eventually came to talk of having perceptio of sensible things. “Everything we perceive (percipimus), we perceive either by one of the bodily senses or by the mind” (mag. 12.39).

When he began to admit sense-perceptio, Augustine broadened his epistemology to include a knowledge of particulars. But clearly perceptio cannot be extended to testimony. For example, if we tell someone about the new moon, but he “doesn’t see the object, he merely believes our words … . He doesn’t learn at all [discit autem nullo modo] unless he himself senses [sentit] what is described” (mag 12.39).

Now the scene is set. As a Platonist, Augustine thought of knowledge both as direct ‘sight’ of an intelligible object, and as a ‘discipline’ (disciplina / techne). Following the Stoics on perceptio, Augustine was also willing to think of knowledge of particulars not as systematic scientia, but as a kind of firm grasp (perceptio) of a truth. But a cataleptic impression or perceptio must come directly from the object it is about, and cannot be had at second-hand. So we might say that Plato had rationalist reasons, while the Stoics had empirical reasons, for dismissing the idea of second-hand knowledge. (It seems that Aristotle likewise has rationalist and Epicurus has empiricist reasons not to countenance second-hand knowledge). Now let’s

42 Virieux-Reymond (1950: 271-3) says that even though Augustine mentions Zeno and not Chrysippus, his epistemology is closer to that of Chrysippus.

43 Aristotelian epistemology is very similar to Platonic epistemology in this regard. Gerson (2009: 67-70) argues that Aristotle thought of epistêmê and doxa as mutually exclusive cognitive states with different subject matters (epistêmê is of eternally immutable truths, doxa is of mutable ones). For Aristotle, epistêmê and nous are direct means of apprehension of truths (Nic. Eth. 6.3 and 6.6). None of the ‘truth-attaining’ faculties or habits he considers in Nic. Eth. 6.2 (nous, aisthesis, orexis, episteme, techne, phronesis, sophia) are social or second-hand. He does give some weight to the ‘unproved assertions and opinions of experienced and elderly people’, because their experience has made them able to ‘see’ things better now (Nic. Eth. 6.11.6). But this only means that we should give their opinions our ‘attention’, not our assent. And it certainly does not mean that we gain knowledge by means of noticing such opinions. Aristotle also considers the possibility of a ‘subordinate science’ (e.g. optics) that accepts conclusions from a ‘superior science’ (e.g., geometry) without demonstrating them or directly grasping them for itself (Post. An. 1.7, 9, 13). But he does not make it clear whether this is a matter of a subordinate scientist accepting something merely on the testimony of the superior scientist. Augustine seems not to have considered the possibility of a subordinate science.

44 Konstan (2009) calls Epicurus’s epistemology “empiricist”. Asmis (1999: 286) says “Epicurus states that one must infer (τεκμαίρεσθαι) the nonevident by calculation (λογισμος) in accordance with perception”. His followers developed the view that “[a]ll calculations about what is unobserved … are inductive judgements” (294). Epicurus used the term ‘testimony’ (martyria) exclusively as a technical term for empirical confirmation of a hypothesis from
see how Augustine took these elements and combined them with considerations from Christianity and observations about ordinary language to leave behind his Platonism and develop an account of testimonial knowledge.

1.2 Stage 1: Platonist

Augustine's most Platonist stage was a period from 386 to 388, when he lived in a philosophical cloister in Italy. He was then committed to learning the disciplinae, or liberal arts, as the road to beatitude. Plato's Republic VII had laid out the first liberal arts curriculum, and many of its elements were reaffirmed in Plotinus. But Augustine recognized more clearly than earlier Platonists that following this road required one to believe an authority. He argues this in 386 in his On Order (De Ordine):

\[\text{\textit{De Ordine}}\]
We necessarily are led to learning by authority and reason: first authority, then reason. The authority of good men seems healthier for the inexperienced many, while reason is more fit for the learned. But since we all begin inexperienced (and not knowing how one ought to be in order to learn, or what kind of life is teachable) only authority can open the door to learning great and hidden things.  

Here Augustine points to both theoretical and practical beliefs that one accepts on authority.

The average layman believes a professional on some theoretical matter (e.g., I believe what my physicist friends say about neutrinos) and gives it no more thought. The student, on the several passages in Plotinus which he considers sources for Augustine’s dictum nisi credideritis non intelligetis, “unless you believe you will not understand” (Enneads 6.4.13, 5.3.17.25, 6.9.4.11-14, 6.9.4.30-35, and V.8.11.13-17). For example, “It is necessary for the learner καταμαθήσασθαι while remaining under the image τύπω of the Divine Being, together with his searching, to come to some discernment γνωματεύσειν of it; on the other hand, he must give himself to a kind of entry ἔσειν as the learner by faith does ὁστὸ μαθόντα κατά πίστιν – so must our learner give himself to this most blessed entry, now, indeed, to the inmost.” (translation of V.8.11.13-17, modified from O’Connell 224). These passages say that pístis is necessary for a learner, but like the Aristotle passage, do not specifi in what way it is necessary. In many other passages, Plotinus uses pístis, as Aristotle does, for ‘argument’ or ‘evidence’ (Enneads 2.3.1.3, 4.7.15.2, 5.5.2.14, 6.9.10.6) or for the credence produced by a proof (2.1.1.18, 2.1.4.26, 3.7.5.5, 5.5.1.12ff, 6.5.2.8; cf. 5.8.11.16). (See chap. 4, page 135 note 63 on Boethius’s and Cicero’s use of the Latin ‘fides’ for such credits, following Aristotle.) One passage where Plotinus seems to say that pístis is necessary for learning, before one has proof and apparently in a way that testimonial, is his treatise on dialectic (Ennead 1.3). There he says that in the early musical stage one “must have the doctrines of philosophy implanted in him; by these he must be brought to firm confidence in what he possesses without knowing it (φίλεται ἑκατέρα ἡ ἀγνοεῖ ἔχων)” (1.3.1). Hagendahl (1967:509), on the other hand, says “there is no doubt” that Augustine gets the antithesis of auctoritas and ratio from Cicero’s Academica II.60, which reads: “Ut qui audient, ratione potius quam auctoritate ducentur.”

I have followed the chronology of Augustine’s works given in the Augustinus Lexikon online. (http://www.augustinus.de/bwo/dcms/sites/bistum/extern/zfa/augustinus/erke/ werkechrono.html). Where the Augustinus Lexikon provides no date, I have followed O’Donnell (1992).

49 “At discendum item necessario dupliciter ducimur, auctoritate atque ratione. Tempore auctoritas, re autem ratio prior est. Itaque, quamquam honorum auctoritas imperitae multitudini videatur esse salubrior, ratio vero aptior eruditis, tamen quia nullus hominum nisi ex imperito peritus fit, nullus autem imperitus novit qualit debeat praebere docentibus et quali vita esse docilis possit, evenit ut omnibus bona magna et occulta discere cupiantur nisi auctoritas ianuam.” ‘Opening the door’ may refer to Metaphysics a.1, where Aristotle says the truth can be ‘hit upon’ like a doorway by everyone. A few passages similar to ord. 2.9.26 are Acad 3.20.43: “no one doubts that we’re prompted to learn by the twin forces of authority and reason” and mor. 1.2.3: ‘The order of nature is such that, when we learn anything, authority precedes reason’ (Naturae quidem ordo ita se habet, ut cum aliquid discimus, rationem praecedat auctoritas). Hagendahl (1967: 726) says that Augustine was basically dogmatic, and not very philosophical, in advocating authority. But Augustine’s line of argument at this point in time is just a Platonist development. Plato’s Socrates often says that a student’s ignorance indicates the need for a teacher (e.g., Apology 21b-23b4; Laches 200e), and Plato’s theory of education in the Republic assumes at many points that students need guidance from teachers in order to attain the depths of knowledge. As mentioned in note 47 above (p. 20), Plotinus also says that students need pístis in order to progress in learning.
other hand, believes her teacher on theoretical matters in a more provisional way, since she aims to understand it for herself. For instance, a mathematics student may believe her teacher’s claim that the Pythagorean theorem has a proof. This enables her to confidently seek the proof for herself so that “later she learns how reasonable were those things she followed before [having] the reason” (ord 2.9.26). But she would be learning only practical applications of mathematics, not the mathematical science itself, if she merely accepted her teacher’s word for it that the Pythagorean theorem has a proof. So her belief that it does, for the sake of finding out what that proof is, is a provisional belief. Augustine does not envision a modern classroom in which students merely accept such a theorem without reasoning toward it for themselves. His is a high standard for learning a discipline. Learning pure mathematics is the paradigm of learning in general for Augustine at this stage, as it had been for Plato.

A student has two reasons to believe her teacher’s theoretical claims only provisionally. First, authorities can be misleading. Nevertheless, a student can weigh the authority’s reliability (and thus the degree to which the student should provisionally commit herself to accepting that teacher’s claims) according to certain indications (indicia) such as the effectiveness and internal consistency of their teaching (ord 2.9.27). Second, the goal of trusting a teacher of a disciplina is to make that teacher obsolete – to learn to reason about the subject matter of that disciplina for oneself. After learning a disciplina, the student should be able to kick away the ladder of trust and “then finally learn how reasonable were the things he followed before [having] the reason” (ord 2.9.26).

In addition to provisional theoretical belief, a student accepts from her teacher some practical claims relevant to acquiring the disciplina. The teacher advises her to read certain

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50 If one assents to p merely for the sake of some purpose, such as that of trying to understand why p is true, then one’s assent is what epistemologists today call ‘acceptance’. See Cohen (1992) and Frankish (2009).

51 He comes closest to this in discussing grammar, which includes the teaching of literature (sol. 2.11.19). Even in teaching fables, Augustine says, grammar teaches truths about the content of those fables: it teaches, for example, that in the story of Icarus’s flight, the Icarus character dies. But it is not because of causing such true beliefs that grammar is called a disciplina. It is a disciplina inasmuch as it contains “definitions and divisions and distinctions of classes and kinds”, defining the nature of linguistic things properly.

52 A physicist friend once told me of a student who after ten years of study had not yet received his BSc in physics, because he didn’t trust his teachers about anything they told him, so he spent all his time in the library double-checking their claims. Augustine seems to expect nothing less from students of any true disciplina.
books rather than others, for instance, or advises her to study in such-and-such a way in order to do well on a test. Students need to be given such practical beliefs because, as Augustine points out, novices don’t even know “how one ought to be in order to learn” (ord. 2.9.26).

In light of these considerations, Augustine does not simply value epistêmê and disvalue doxa. Rather, he distinguishes two kinds of doxa: belief (credere) and opinion (opinio). Believing $p$ is acceptable so long as $p$ is plausible, and one does not claim to know that $p$. But in Augustine’s early epistemology, someone who has the ‘opinion’ that $p$ necessarily falsely takes herself to know that $p$, so opinion is always unacceptable. With this distinction in hand, Augustine can follow both the passages in Plato which disparage doxa when it makes pretensions to being knowledge, and the ones which praise true doxa for its practical value. Pretentious doxa is ‘opinion’; unassuming doxa is ‘belief’. And when such belief is required for learning a disciplina from an authority or for living well, it is valuable (utilis).

During this period Augustine also accepted the Platonic idea that there are ‘mysteries’ that can be understood only once one has been sufficiently ‘purified’ (Acad. 3.17.38). Mysteries are, in this technical usage, truths that are implausible to even the most intelligent of non-philosophers, while purification is basically a matter of living one’s practical life in a way that conduces best to intellectual activity, and this requires one to reject as much as possible the pleasures and curiosities of sensory life.

53 Acad 2.7.19.
54 mend. 3: “The difference between believing and opining is that sometimes one who believes senses that he does not know what he believes (even if he has no doubt about what he knows he is ignorant of), whereas he who opines thinks he knows what he does not know. [Inter credere autem atque opinari hoc distat, quod atiquando ille, qui credit, sentit se ignorare quod credit, quamuis de re, quam se ignorare nouis, omnino non dubitet, si eam firmissime credit; qui autem opinatur, putat se scire quod nescit].” See also util. cred. 11.25 and mag. 12.40. Augustine uses opinio differently in his De rhetorica (17ff) as a technical term in rhetoric for ‘reputation’.
55 Plato disparages doxa in Republic VI 492a-493a and VII 533b-c, Sophist 233c. In Republic VI 506c, Socrates says ‘Does it seem right to you to speak as if one knew on matters one does not know?’ and later answers that ‘all unknowable opinions (tas aneu epistêmês doxas) are shameful’. On the other hand, Plato praises true opinion for its reliability in Meno 97a; in Theaetetus 194c he says that true belief, in contrast with error, is ‘beautiful’.
56 ord. 2.9.26-27
57 mag. 11.37; cf. util. cred. 11.25.
58 “Uncleanness of mind, let me briefly explain, is love of anything besides God and the soul. The more pure a man is from such uncleanness the more easily does he behold the truth” (sunt autem sordës animë, ut breui explicem, amor quarumlibet rerum praetér animimum et deum; a quibus sordibus quanto est quisque purgator; tanto uerum
On the one hand, [the mysteries] are easily perceived only by those who purify themselves of all vices and adopt a different way of life, one that is more than human. On the other hand, someone who knows them and wanted to teach them to men of any kind at all commits a serious sin.  

Like other Church Fathers, Augustine argued that a life guided by Christian faith is the most effective means to such purification. At this time he thought of faith like a student’s provisional belief about how one ought to be in order to learn: Christian faith guides one’s life such that one is able to eventually know the Christian truths for oneself. “My intention now is not to treat of faith”, he says in De moribus ecclesiae catholicae et de mortibus Manichaeorum (388-390), “but of the way of life which makes us worthy to know what we believe” (1.20.37). But this was a first step toward him thinking of the Christian faith itself as a kind of disciplina.

1.3 Stage 2: Particularist

From around 388 on, Augustine’s epistemology gradually became less Platonist and more ‘particularist’, that is, more open to the importance of belief about particulars, and more open to the idea that we can have knowledge of particulars, especially with regard to (a) particulars one senses, and (b) historical facts one believes on testimony. Once Augustine had accepted the idea of knowledge of sensed particulars, and had come to see the importance for the Christian faith of belief about unsensed particulars (in history), he became open to the idea of testimonial knowledge. But how?

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facilius intuetur, util. cred. 16.34; cf. ord 2.12.38, uera rel. 3.3). Elsewhere, Augustine puts this claim that the soul must be ‘pura’ rhetorically: in order to understand the eternal ideas, one must be “sincerum et serenum et similem his rebus quas uidere intendit” (diu. qu. 46.2). Thus, in order to “know God and the soul” Augustine “rejects all testimony of the senses” (sol. 1.3.8).

59 Acad. 3.17.38, cf. util. cred. 10.23.

60 uer rel. 3.3. Origen references this idea, and calls Christianity true ‘philosophy’ in Contra Celsus 1.9-11.

61 Non enim nunc de fide, sed de vita dicere institu, per quam meremur scire quod credimus.
As a Platonist, Augustine thought that particulars \textit{qua} particular cannot be known by means of a \textit{disciplina}.\textsuperscript{62} Only the forms in which they participate, and the overarching subject matter of which they are a part, can be known.\textsuperscript{63} In his Platonist stage, the only exception Augustine allows to this model is the direct grasp of objects ‘seen’ by the mind, which he classifies as seen by ‘reason’. He argues, for instance, that we plausibly have knowledge of disjunctive tautologies (e.g., ‘either Zeno’s definition of knowledge is true or not’) and of appearance claims (e.g., ‘it seems to me that I am warm’), because both tautologies and appearances are grasped directly by the mind.\textsuperscript{64} All other particulars, at that stage, are “believed and never understood” \textit{(diu. qu. 48)}, and Augustine thinks that knowledge of them is unimportant, because they do not contribute to learning a \textit{disciplina}. Beliefs about particulars may even be harmful. Understanding has access to the intelligible forms, and sense perception at least “allows some probable estimate to be made” of things sensed, but “what can neither be understood nor perceived begets too rash and frivolous an opinion”.\textsuperscript{65}

At first, Augustine was reluctant even to say we have sense \textit{perceptio}. In 387, he said

For everything we contemplate or grasp by thought we grasp either by sense or intellect. But the things grasped by sense are sensed as outside us and located in space, and thus we do not even assert that they can be perceived \textit{(percipi)}.\textsuperscript{66}

\textsuperscript{62} See note 51 above (p. 21), on the \textit{disciplina} of grammar.

\textsuperscript{63} \textit{diu qu} 46. This seems to be what he is getting at in \textit{ep.} 13.3-4, when he says that a ‘sensible body’ is ‘judged to be intelligible also, for it could not otherwise be perceived’ \textit{(ergo corpus sensibile, esse autem corpus intelligibile iudicatur; non enim posset aliter percipti)}.

\textsuperscript{64} When Augustine claims we can know exhaustive dichotomies like ‘either it is raining or not’, he seems to think of this as a matter of understanding something about rain, not just about the logical form of the tautology. See what he says about knowing Zeno’s definition of knowledge \textit{(Acad. 3.9.21ff)}, and knowing appearance claims \textit{(Acad. 3.11.24-26)}. In \textit{De libero arbitrio} 2.3 and 2.4 Augustine explains his view in more depth. He claims that we know only what we grasp by reason \textit{('Quicquid enim scimus, id ratione comprehensum tenemus', 2.3.9.29)}, but he includes distinctions about the the senses (e.g., knowing that colours cannot be perceived by hearing, 2.3.9.29-30, because the senses and colour are ‘presented’ to reason for consideration, 2.3.9.35) and about the mind itself \textit{('Do you believe you have reason except by perceiving that by reason [An aliter scires te habere rationem nisi id ratione perciperes?'], 2.3.9.36)}.

\textsuperscript{65} \textit{ep.} 13.2 (Teske (2001: 39) dates this letter between 389 and 392): \textit{‘At quod intellectum fugit, si saltem sensum non fugit, aestimare inde alicuq uid verisimiliter non usquequaque denegatur. Quod uero neque intelleghi neque sentiri potest, temerariam nimis et nugatoriam gignit opinionem.’}

\textsuperscript{66} \textit{imm an} 6.10: \textit{Nam omne, quod contemplamur sive cogitatione capimus, aut sensu aut intellectu capimus. Sed ea, quae sensu capiuntur, extra nos etiam esse sentiuntur et locis continentur, unde ne percipi quidem posse
This sounds paradoxical or even absurd today, but Augustine seems to have thought of *percipio* as the *thorough* cognitive grasp of some object, *per-*ception. And as a Platonist, he denied such thoroughness to bodily sensation. In a letter from 389, for example, he asserts that bodies can be ‘perceived’ only to the degree that they are intelligible.

But in that same year Augustine presents himself endorsing sensory perception without qualification. In the course of arguing that we ‘learn’ (*discere*) things by means of experience in his *De magistro*, he asserts that

> everything we perceive [*percipimus*], we perceive either by one of the bodily senses or by the mind.\(^7\) (mag. 12.39)

Augustine argues in this same passage that one can learn about the moon and other sensible objects if one senses (*sentit*) them, but not from the words of others. I suspect that this change has to do with his respect for Stoic epistemology. Augustine had always thought of knowledge

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\(^67\) Sometimes Augustine seems to use ‘*percipere*’ non-cognitively, for ‘grasping’ or ‘receiving’. For example, in a late letter he encourages a friend to “receive the sacraments of the faithful [*ut iam etiam fidelium sacramenta percipias*]” (ep. 258.5). The most striking case is *trin.* 15.12.22, where Augustine says that even things known testimonially are ‘*percepta*’: “Haec igitur omnia, et quae per se ipsum et quae per sensum sui corporis et quae testimoniiis aliorum percepta scit animus humanus, thesauro memoriae condita tenet”. Here he obviously does not intend to say that testimony is direct, the way the senses or the intellect have direct access to the things known; he just means that knowledge of those things is *received*. Finally, consider a complicated example about ‘receiving’ grace. In *Simpl.* 1.2.2, Augustine says that Paul’s intention in his letter to the Romans was to show that no one should boast in the merit of works. For example, the Israelites wrongly boasted of preserving the law, and thought they deserved to receive (*percepissent*) grace for preserving it (“De quibus [sc. de operum meritis] audebant Israelitae gloriari, quod datae sibi legi seruissent et ex hoc evangelicam gratiam tamquam debitam meritis suis perceperissent, quia legi seruiebant.”) But good works cannot be done unless by faith one receives (*perceperit*) grace. “For a man begins to receive grace by beginning to believe God” (“Incipit autem homo percipere gratiam ex quo incipit deo credere...”).

\(^68\) Of course, this issue is complicated. See Vidart (2010) for a discussion of how Plotinus considers intellection one kind of perception.

\(^69\) *ep* 13.3: *ergo corpus sensibile, esse autem corpus intellegibile iudicatur: non enim posset aliter percepit*. See also his 386 or 387 account of sensation as a mere occasion for intellection in *sol* 1.4.9. Biondi (2010) argues that Aristotle takes a similar view, that perception is always of the universal as found in a particular.

\(^70\) “*Nam omnia, quae percipimus, aut sensu corporis aut mente percipimus.*”
as a kind of *perceptio*, and ‘*perceptio*’, remember, is one of the words (another is ‘*cognitio*’) which Cicero uses to translate Stoic ‘*catalépsis*’. But *catalépsis* applies equally to factive grasp of both intelligible and sensible objects. Early on, Augustine says that his grasp of astronomy, while not sufficient for what the Stoics call *scientia*, does consist in the ‘perception’ they concede even to ‘fools’ (*sol.* 1.4.9). 71 By at least 395, Augustine not only says we sense transient physical things, but also suggests that we can have experiential *cognitio* of them. 72 Now let’s see how Augustine came to admit testimonial *cognitio* as well.

In 383 Augustine arrived in Rome a Manichean; in 388 he returned to Rome a confirmed and baptized Catholic, 73 and at that point he began to envision a new role for testimony. Returning to a city where he had finally lost his confidence in Mani seems to have prompted him to begin a series of anti-Manichean books, and most of his writings for the next decade were anti-Manichean. 74 What bothered Augustine especially was the Manichean claim that religion should never require faith. 75 Catholics required their adherents to believe a creed including mysteries that no one, or perhaps only a few, could fully understand in this life, whereas the Manicheans claimed they would demonstrate everything they believed in a way that was accessible to unaided reason. But they failed to persuade Augustine (see *Confessions*, book 5). Disappointed with their attempted demonstrations, Augustine became an Academic skeptic, then a Platonist, and finally a Catholic. When he returned to Manichean territory in 388 (first in Rome, and then in Africa), he began to look for ways to defend the Catholic requirement that adherents believe something they have not ‘seen’ for themselves by means of reason. The result was an epistemology with a new emphasis on the cognition of particulars.

71 This may just mean that his grasp of astronomy as a *disciplina*, not as including facts about particulars, is a *perceptio* or a set of *perceptiones*.

72 *lib arb* 3.21.60.203: “‘As for things present, in sensing the changes and movements of both body and soul we recognize that all creatures are transient, and whatever we don’t experience we cannot have any kind of knowledge of [*Praesentia uero, quantum ad creaturam pertinet, in corporis et animi mutabilitate et mobilitate quasi transeuntia sentiuntur, in quibus quicquid non experimur cognitione qualicunque tenere non possimus*].’”

73 Clark (1994: 4-9).

74 See Chadwick (2009: 56) and the Augustinus Lexikon chronological list of Augustine’s works (http://www.augustinus.de/bwo/dcms/sites/bistum/extern/zfa/augustinus/swerke/werkechrono.html).

75 As early as 392, just after his ordination to the priesthood in 391, Augustine extends this critique of those who reject the necessity of faith, to philosophers generally (*en.* *Ps.* 8.6).
The first adjustment Augustine made was to extend his notion of a *disciplina* to include the Catholic faith as a kind of *disciplina*, culminating in the sermon he wrote as a bishop called *De Disciplina Christiana* (398). This adjustment was uneven, and took more than a decade. But we can see it beginning from an anti-Manichean argument Augustine outlines in two paragraphs of *De moribus ecclesiae catholicae et Manichaeorum* (1.7.11-12, dated 388) which he later worked out at greater length in various anti-Manichean writings. I’ll call this the wisdom-seeker argument. In outline, the argument is:

1. Being wise is necessary for being happy.
2. We (who seek happiness) are not yet wise, and so need the guidance of a wise teacher in order to achieve wisdom.
3. Therefore, we should look for such a teacher, and believe him.

Wisdom, as Augustine conceives it, has both epistemic and moral status. Backing up premise 1 is the idea that the idealized ‘wise man’ or sage has all the knowledge a human should want, including knowledge about how humans should live, but without this knowledge one is bound to fall into error (*util. cred.* 12.27). The sage knows the art of living, and we who are

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76 This work is not dated by the *Augustinus Lexikon*. The date of 398 is from O’Donnell (1992: lxvii). The sermon begins thus: “The word of God has spoken, and given us an exhortation, saying in Scripture ‘Accept discipline in the house of discipline’ [Ecclesiasticus 51, 31.36]. ‘Discipline’ is so-called from learning [*discendo*]; the house of discipline is the church of Christ. So what is learned there, and why? Who learn, and from whom? One learns to live well [*bene uiuere*]. And one learns to live well for the sake of living always. Christians learn; Christ teaches” (1.1). In this work Augustine describes the church as a philosophical school: “Reject immorality. Say ‘I am Christian; you are Christian. We don’t accept this in the house of discipline; we didn’t learn this in the school [*schola*] we have freely entered. We didn’t learn this under the Teacher whose chair is in heaven.’” (9.9, cf. 14.15).

77 These include *De utilitate credendi* (c. 391), *Contra epistulam Manichaei quam vocant Fundamenti* (396), *Contra Faustum*, especially books 12 and 13 (397-8), and *De fide rerum insignibilium* (the *Augustinus Lexikon* does not give a date for this book, but I take the date of 400 from O’Donnell 1992: lxvii). Chadwick (2009: 57) says that *De utilitate credendi* was a ‘sketch’ for ‘a fuller development’ of the same argument in *Contra epistulam Manichaei quam vocant Fundamenti*.

78 The hypothetical perfectly wise human was the focus of much Stoic and Academic epistemology, as is evident from Augustine’s *Contra Academicos*. See also Frede (1999: 296, 299), and Brittain (xix). Early Augustine does not draw a distinction between practical and theoretical wisdom. In *Contra Academicos* (1.6.16) he defines wisdom as “knowledge [*scientia*] of human and divine matters”, following an abbreviated definition in Cicero (*De officiis* 1.153). Cicero’s lengthier definition adds that wisdom includes “*cognitio causarum*” – knowledge of the causes of human and divine things (*De officiis* 2.5; *Disputationes Tusculaneae* 4.57). Cicero also calls wisdom the “art of life” (*Academia* 2.23, 24, 29). Augustine’s *Contra Academicos* (especially book 1) also strongly associates wisdom and happiness. Note that in his ordinary language phase, Augustine rejects the Stoic doctrine that one either has wisdom as a whole or one does not, like someone who breaks the surface of the sea. In 415, Augustine says that a better image, and one more in tune with Scripture, is the more gradual one of leaving behind darkness and approaching the light (*ep.* 167.12-13).
not yet wise should want this disciplina above all (util. cred. 7.14). Backing up premise 2 is the idea that, while we need wisdom to be happy, we also, unfortunately, need wisdom in order to be certain we have found true wisdom.\(^79\) This is an instance of what Gareth Matthews (2003: 420) and Scott MacDonald (2008: 22) have called ‘the Recognition Problem’ for learning about any object \(O\): if you do not already know \(O\), you will not be able to recognize \(O\) should you come across it in your search. This is one part of the paradox of learning famously discussed in Plato’s *Meno* 80d6-8. The other part is the ‘Targeting Problem’: if you do not already know \(O\), you will not know how to target your search.\(^80\) In *De utilitate credendi* 13.28, Augustine derives an instance of the Targeting Problem from an instance of the Recognition Problem. Assuming that we need an authority to help us acquire wisdom, the relevant Targeting Problem is one of finding a knowledgeable authority, in this case, someone who is wise. But if only the wise can recognize the wise, then we fools can’t recognize the wise one. Our inability to recognize wisdom prevents us from targeting our learning at wisdom.

The best we fools can do is to reason our way to a plausible conclusion about which teacher is wise, and then follow that teacher. If God is provident, then He will lead sincere seekers to the right teacher, and if He isn’t, then there is no point in seeking (util. cred. 13.29, 16.34).\(^81\) Granted these conclusions, and that his reader does think there is some point in seeking...

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\(^79\) “Who with but moderate intelligence can fail to see that for the foolish it is more useful and helpful to obey the precepts of the wise than to live by their own whims? … No one doubts that this would be advantageous in less important matters like trading, agriculture, marrying, begetting and educating children, in short, managing one’s worldly affairs; how much more in religion? … You see, then, that if our heart is set on the good religious life, there is nothing for us so long as we are foolish but to seek out wise men and to obey them …” (util. cred. 12.27, Schopp trans.). “How can fools find a wise man? Nothing can be recognized by signs unless one knows the thing of which these are signs; and the fool does not know wisdom. … So long as he remains a fool, no one can with absolute certainty discover a wise man …” (13.28). The Latin is “quis mediocriter intellegens non plane uiderit stultis utilius aque salubrius esse praeceptis obtemperare sapientium quam suo iudicio uitam degere? … atque hoc si in rebus minoribus, ut in mercando vel colendo agro, in uxore ducenda, in suscipiendo educandisque liberis, in ipsa denique re familiaris administrandis expedire nemo ambigigit, multo magis in religione … nihil igitur nobis restande admodum uides, quamdiu stulti sumus, si nobis uita optima et religiosa cordi est, nisi ut quaequam sapientes, quibus obtemperando dominationem stultitiae neque ita multum sentire, dum inest nobis, et euadere aliquando possumus. (12.27) sed quinam iste sit, cum ab stulto requiritur, quo pacto queat dinoce plane atque percepici, omnino non uideo. neque enim quibuslibet signis cognoscere aliquid potest nisi illud ipsum, cuius ea signa sunt, nouerit. … non ergo potest. quamdiu stultus est, quisquam certissima cognitione inuenire sapientem…” (13.28).

\(^80\) Matthews (2003) and MacDonald (2008) discuss the problem raised in *Confessions* 1.1 and discussed at length in *Confessions* book 10: how can one seek God without already knowing God?

\(^81\) Augustine alludes to Hebrews 11.6: “And without faith it is impossible to please God, for whoever would approach him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him” (NRSV, Coogan 2010). The relevant passages are: “God alone can provide a solution for this great difficulty. We ought not to be seeking true
the true religion, Augustine supports Jesus of Nazareth’s claim to be such a teacher by the “ubiquity” and “antiquity” of belief in him (util. cred. 14.31), and on the evidence of his great and benevolent miracles (util. cred. 14.32).\footnote{Sometimes, Augustine goes farther and argues that not just Jesus but the church Jesus instituted, in conjunction with the holy scriptures it recognizes, is the best teaching authority to follow (mor. 1.7.11, uera rel. 3.5, c. Faust. 11.5 and 12.46). In \textit{De disciplina christiana}, Augustine says that “Christ is the teacher” (14.15, cf. 1.1) but also that “as a Christian, your father is God, and your mother is the Church” and that the apostle Paul, sent by Christ, is the teacher (14.15). Jesus’s claim to authority is through his miracles, his examples, the goodness of his teachings, the effectiveness of those teachings in reforming people, and his ever more widespread following. The Catholic church’s claim to authority is partly through its institution by Jesus, and partly through the scripture prophecies it has fulfilled (mor 1.7.12, util cred 14.31 ff, finuis 3.5 ff).} In \textit{De vera religione} (390), Augustine argues that Jesus of Nazareth fulfills a Platonist’s highest hopes for a public teacher (3.3) and so “fulfills the rule of all rational disciplina” (17.33).

Here Augustine seems to have adopted a broader conception of a disciplina than he had earlier. The disciplina of Catholic faith contrasts with a disciplina of the liberal arts in at least two ways:

\begin{enumerate}
\item[(i)] it is a practical art of living piously, not a purely theoretical art like mathematics, nor a practical art concerned with just one part of life, the way rhetoric is, and
\item[(ii)] it requires full, not merely provisional, assent to claims which the believer cannot come to understand in this life by reasoning.
\end{enumerate}
What concerns the epistemology of testimony most is feature (ii). Remember that the mathematics student must give her teacher *provisional* belief both on theoretical claims (e.g., that the Pythagorean theorem can be proven), and practical claims (that she ought to study in a certain way), in order to eventually reason her way to knowing them for herself. While a Platonist, Augustine seems to have thought that the tutelage of Jesus (and his Church) is much the same. Christian faith is a means of purification, and with sufficient purification some humans come to fully know and understand the divine mysteries in this life, relying on reason and no longer on faith.  

But Augustine gradually adopted the view that Christian faith requires *unconditional* commitment of one’s whole life, and requires the Christian to sincerely and unconditionally believe claims she knows she *cannot* come to understand by reasoning. Christian doctrine (as represented in the Nicene creed) includes two kinds of claims a believer is not expected to be able to know in this life by means of reason: claims about mysteries (e.g., that God is a trinity of persons), and claims about historical events (e.g., that Jesus was crucified under Pontius Pilate).

Let’s consider mysteries first. As early as *De moribus* (388), Augustine said that reason “when it approaches divine things, turns away unable to behold” and that’s why Catholic teaching is necessary.  

But until he became a bishop in 396 he did not clearly say that such belief is necessary for everyone and for one’s whole life – it might be only provisional. Thus, in *De vera religione* (390), he says that when once [the salvation history of Christ] is believed, a way of life agreeable to the divine commandments will purge the mind and make it fit to perceive spiritual things … (*uera rel.* 7.13).

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83 Another reason Platonists like Plotinus said faith (*pistis*) was necessary was to preserve the belief one had acquired by means of intellectual vision, after the vision is over and one is subject to the bias of the senses; or even while the vision is happening, and one is disappointed not to have an accompanying sensory experience. Compare Plotinus *Enneads* 5.8.11.33-40, 6.4.13, and other passages mentioned in O’Connell (1968: 223ff) with *sol.* 1.7.14.

84 *mor.* 1.7.11: “We should consider what people or books should be believed in order to rightly worship God, which is our one hope (sed nostrum est considerare, quibus uel hominibus uel libris credendum sit ad colendum recte deum, quae una salus est).” Compare with *uera rel.* 25.46.

85 See also O’Connell (1968: chapter 9) on this topic.

86 “*Quae cum credita fuerit, mentem purgabit utiae modus diuinis praecipientis conciliatus et ideoneam faciet spiritualibus percipiendis.*” See als *uera rel.* 25.46 and *sol.* 1.23.
The role of ‘mother Church’, on the earlier Platonist view, is to provide ‘milk’ for ‘little ones’. Once fully grown, it is shameful to take a mother’s milk, but wrong to disparage its value for others who still need it \((an.\ quant. 33.76,\ dated\ 388)\). By 391, Augustine says that faith enables one to understand the things one initially believed, but only some of them (such as God’s existence) can be understood as “certain” while the rest are understood “as possible and fitting” \((uela\ rel.\ 8.14)\). Around 395, Augustine says that “the teaching that brings salvation consists partly in things to be believed, partly in things to be understood” \((mend.\ 8.11)\). The church cannot allow lies, or else

the discipline of faith is entirely undermined; and once undermined the understanding for which discipline nurtures little ones is not attained.\(^\text{89}\) \((mend.\ 8.11)\)

As late as 396, Augustine wrote that “a few spiritual men attain the purest wisdom in this life”.\(^\text{90}\)

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\(^\text{87}\) “From this we shall realize how full of truth are the things we are commanded to believe, how excellently and healthfully we were nourished by Mother Church; else, what is the worth of that ‘milk’ which St. Paul declared he gave as drink to little ones. It is very proper to take this nourishment when one is nourished by a mother, but shameful, when one is already grown. To reject it, when needed, is a pity; to find fault with it at any time or to despise it is a sign of impious wickedness, but to explain it and distribute it in a suitable manner is the clearest proof of goodness and of charity” (trans. McMahon 1947). The Latin is: 

\[Tunc\ agnoscemus,\ quam\ vera\ nobis\ credenda\ imperata\ sint\ quamque\ optime\ ac\ saluberrime\ apud\ matrem\ ecclesiam\ nutriti\ fuerimus\ quaeeve\ sit\ utilitas\ lactis\ illius,\ quod\ apostolus\ Paulus\ parvulis\ se\ potum\ dedisse\ praedicavit;\ quod\ alimentum\ accipere,\ cum\ quis\ matre\ nutitur,\ saluberrimum,\ cum\ iam\ grandis\ est,\ pudendum,\ respure,\ cum\ opus\ est,\ miserandum,\ reprehendere\ aliquando\ aut\ odisse\ sceleris\ et\ impietatis,\ tractare\ autem\ ac\ dispensare\ commode\ laudis\ et\ caritatis\ plenissimum\ est.\]

\(^\text{88}\) “Cum enim doctrina salutaris partim credendis, partim intellegendis rebus constet nec ad ea, quae intellegenda sunt, perueniri possit, nisi prius credenda credantur, quomodo credendum est ei, qui putat aliquando esse mentiendum, ne forte et tunc mentiatur, cum praecipit ut credamus?”

\(^\text{89}\) “Quo genere admisso atque adprobato omnis omnino fidei disciplina subuertitur: qua subuersa nec ad intellegentiam peruenitur, cui capiendae ista paraulos nutrit.”

\(^\text{90}\) c. ep. Man. 4: “In catholica enim ecclesia, ut omittam sincerissimam sapientiam, ad cuius cognitionem pauci spiritales in hac vita perveniunt, ut eam ex minima quidem parte, quia homines sunt, sed tamen sine dubitatione cognoscunt – ceterum quippe turbam non intellegendi uiuacitas, sed credendi simplicitas tutissimam facit – ut ergo hanc omittam sapientiam, quam in ecclesia esse catholica non creditis, multa sunt alia, quae in eius gremio me iustissime teneant.” See also c. ep. Man. 14: “by [the Catholic faith] I expect to attain certain knowledge [ego namque catholicam fidem profiteor et per illam me ad certam scientiam peruenturum esse praesumo].” The same idea can be found earlier (391) in utit. cred. 9.21. At the same time (in De Vera Religione, finished 391), he argues that believing the story of the holy scriptures purges one’s mind, making it “fit to perceive immutable spiritual things” and able to recognize the dependence of creatures on God \((uela\ rel.\ 7.13)\). In Contra Faustum (finished around 397 or 399), Augustine suggests that the faith by which one believes the prophets enables one to gain a “purified and strengthened mind” that “can understand” what the prophets are talking about (12.46).
Only after he became a bishop in 396 did he begin clearly to affirm that faith is necessary for this life for everyone, no matter how wise, since the direct knowledge of God necessary for ultimate happiness is attainable only in the afterlife. In the early part of *De doctrina christiana* (c. 397) he says that while a life of faith “purifies that eye by which God can be seen”, such that “the vision of that light” is more tolerable and pleasant, it is still seen “obscurely and through a mirror, because we walk more by faith than by sight as we travel in this life” (2.7.11.22). In *Contra Faustum* (397-399), Augustine contrasts Jacob’s two wives, and takes Leah to represent this life of suffering: “So the action of our mortal human life, in which we live by faith, doing many labors but uncertain of the benefit in what concerns us, is Leah” (c. Faust. 22.52). By 413, Augustine clearly stated that God’s nature cannot be known directly in this life. The implication is that at least some faith claims are, in this life, inaccessible to reason.

Augustine felt a tension in saying that one ought to believe on testimony things one does not know. To make this move more palatable to himself and to those drawn to Manicheanism, he appeals to testimonial beliefs we must hold for the sake of moral social behaviour. It is impossible to know who one’s parents are, he argues, except on the testimony of others, and yet believing that one’s parents really are who they say they are is crucial for a great deal of one’s ethical behaviour (*util. cred.* 12.26, dated 391). In the absence of a DNA test, such a belief is

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91 Green (1995: xxi-xxii) gives good evidence that the first two books of *De doctrina christiana* were written before *Contra Faustum*, and *Contra Faustum* was finished around 397 or 399. The *Augustinus Lexikon* dates the beginning of *De doctrina christiana* at 396, but it was finished only much later.

92 Green, trans. (1995: 67). “… ascendet in sextum gradum, ubi iam ipsum oculum purgat quo videri deus potest, quantum potest ab eis qui huic saeciulo moriuntur quantum possunt. Nam in tantum vident in quantum moriuntur huic saeciulo, in quantum autem hic vivunt, non vident. Et ideo quamvis iam certior et non solum tolerabilior sed etiam incundior species lucis illius incipiat apparere, in aestimare adhuc tamen et per speculum videri dicitur, quia magis per fidem quam per speciem ambulatur cum in hac vita peregrinamur, quamvis conversationem habeamus in caels.” See also *doct. chr.* 1.39.43.94, where Augustine says that “in comparison with the life to come the life of no righteous or holy man in this world is perfect [nam in comparatione futurae vitae nullius iusti et sancti est vita ista perfecta]. This is why scripture says, “there remain faith, hope, and love, these three; the greatest of these is love: when one reaches eternity the other two will pass away and love will remain in an enhanced and a more certain form.” (Green trans., p. 53).

93 “Actio ergo humanae mortalisque vitae, in qua uiuimus ex fide multa laboriosae facientes, incerti quo exitu proveniant ad utilitatem eorum, quibis consulere volumus, ipsa est Lia.”

94 *ep* 147.8.20-21. This is clearly Augustine’s view by the end of his life, of course, as evidenced by *retr.* 1.4.3.

95 See also *conf.* 6.5.7, *f. inuis.* 2.4, *trin.* 15.12.21.
the basis for Mother’s Day cards, hospital visits, and for filial love and affection in general. Later Augustine claims that all the ‘bonds of society’ would break down without testimonial beliefs (f. inuis. 2.4, dated 400). Already in 386 Augustine had noted that language is necessary for “pouring out one’s mind and thoughts to each other” (ord 2.12.35), but he had been inclined to deny any value to testimonial beliefs other than the provisional ones that guide one toward knowledge of God. Now he considers particular cases and their value for human society. He leaves behind the solitary search for wisdom of the Soliloquies, and says, “God is only with those who, seeking him, have also a care for human society” (util cred 10.24). Nevertheless, he continued to deny that knowledge from testimony is possible: “Our knowledge, therefore, we owe to reason; our beliefs to authority” (util cred 11.25).

Now let’s see how Augustine’s commitment to a disciplina of faith changed his epistemology of history. The term historia is ambiguous (as are its Romance language cognates today) between ‘history’ and ‘story’, but to a Platonist, there is not much difference between them. In 386, Augustine wrote that “historia is an unendingly varied thing, more troublesome than fun or true” and said that someone who has never heard the classical myths, like that of Daedalus’s flight, is “not genuinely ignorant”. Around 390, Augustine wrote that poetic

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96 Actually, even acceptance of a DNA test would involve some testimonial belief. If one were not a DNA testing specialist, one would need to believe the DNA tester’s verdict. And even a DNA testing specialist would probably need to believe DNA scientists about the theory behind DNA testing.

97 “…nec homini homo firmissime sociari posset, nisi conloquerentur atque ita sibi mentes suas cogitationesque quasi refunderent…”

98 “cuiusmodi enim liber excellant ingenio, nisi deus adsit, humo repunt. tunc autem adest, si societas humana in deum tendentibus curae sit.”

99 “… quod intellegimus igitur, debemus rationi, quod credimus, auctoritati, quod opinamur, errori.” In this passage, Augustine seems to be using ‘intellegere’ interchangeably with ‘scire’, as he sometimes does. One indication is that immediately after this passage he says that to intellegere something is to believe (credere) it (see also mag. 11.37). Another is that in his Retractiones (I.14.3) he quotes this passage, replacing ‘intellegere’ with ‘scire’: “Quod scimus igitur debemus rationi, quod credimus auctoritati”.

100 ord. 2.12.37. Augustine alludes to the story of Daedalus’s flight several more times. In sol 2.11.19, Augustine claims that it is not part of the content of the disciplina of grammar that Daedalus has flown, but that the fable says he has, and so even teaching such stories involves teaching truths. In mag 12.40, Augustine argues that knowledge comes from one’s own reason at the prompting of another’s words, not merely by acceptance of another’s assertions, by pointing out that if he said he had seen a flying man, Adeodatus would not believe it, or would at least not know it, in the way he knows that wise men are better than fools. Perhaps there is even a reference in util. cred. 16.34, when Augustine contrasts the marvel of a ‘flying man’ with the benevolent miracles of Christ, in a way he would contrast the marvels of pagan lore with the Christian miracles later in De ciuitate dei: “Nam si quis solantem hominem cernat, cum ea res nihil spectatori adferat commodi praeter ipsum spectaculum, miratur tantummodo. Si
metrical conventions are passed down by *historia* rather than art, and “thus believed rather than known”, and around 391 he wrote in *De vera religione* that everyone is within his rights “not to believe” claims about the past (*de praeteritis*).

But later in the same work, Augustine notes that Christian faith requires certain historical beliefs:

In following this religion our chief concern is with the prophetic history of the dispensation of divine providence in time – what God has done for the salvation of the human race, renewing and restoring it unto eternal life. When once this is believed, a way of life agreeable to the divine commandments will purge the mind and make it fit to perceive spiritual things.

One ought to have beliefs about events in prophetic history (e.g., that God was incarnated in Jesus of Nazareth, and that Jesus was crucified and resurrected) even though they cannot be known. Later Augustine said that

A way has been made for us that is suited to our weakness, a way out of temporal things, so that we can contemplate the eternity of Truth and fully enjoy and cleave to it. We must believe what is past, and what is yet to come, as far as is sufficient for our journey towards eternal things. This discipline of faith is governed by divine mercy, so that it has supreme authority. As for things present, in perceiving the changes and movements of both body and soul we recognize that all creatures are

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102 *ver rel* 3.4: ‘… et de praeteritis loquar, quae potest quisque non credere …’. cf. *util cred* 11.25.

103 *ver rel*. 7.13: *Huius religionis sectandae caput est historia et prophetia dispensationis temporalis divinae prudentiae pro salute generis humani in aeternam uitam reformandi atque reparandi. Quae cum credita fuerit, mentem purgabit utiae modus diuinis praeeptis conciliatus et ideoneam faciet spiritualibus percipiendis.*

104 *ver rel* 50.99: ‘verum esse nescientes’.

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ephemeral. We can have no knowledge [cognitione] of these things unless we experience them.\(^{105}\) (lib. arb. 3.21.60.203)

It seems that recognizing the value of this subclass of historical beliefs led Augustine to soften his view on historical belief in general. Whereas earlier (as in the passage from ep. 13 quoted earlier) he had condemned many beliefs as ‘rash’, he now decided on a general rule that makes most historical beliefs permissible: believing something “unworthy of God” or believing “too readily in man” is blameworthy, but otherwise in believing “no fault is committed” (util. cred. 11.25).\(^{106}\) A few years later he explains some of the reasoning behind this rule. It is wrong to have false beliefs about God, because they hinder one in achieving one’s ultimate goal, which is happiness in union with God. But since most beliefs about creatures don’t affect the achievement of one’s ultimate goal, they are allowable, whether true or false (lib. arb. 3.21.59.201).\(^{107}\)

\(^{105}\)“Sed ad contemplandam ueritatis aeternitatem, ut ea perfrui ei que inherere ualeamus, infirmitati nostrae uia de temporalibus procurata est ut, quantum itineri sufficit ad aeterna tendentium, praeeterita et futura credamus - quae fidei disciplina ut auctoritate praepolleat diuina misericordia gubernatur -, praesentia uero, quantum ad creaturam pertinet, in corporis et animi mutabilitate et mobilitate quasi transeuntia sentiuntur, in quibus quicquid non experimur cognitione qualicumque tenere non possimus.” (See also uera rel. 25.46 and trin. 4.18.24). This requirement that one believe particulars is partly explained away in trin. 8.6.9-8.9.13, where Augustine argues that such belief merely prompts us to love the forms of justice, charity, etc., exemplified by the people described in historical scriptures. This seems like a return to giving history spiritual value merely as a source for role models (exempla), as in uera rel. 26.49: “In the first stage [of the spiritual life, before the stage of reasoning] a man is taught by the rich stores of history which nourish by examples [Primam in uberibus utilis historiae, quae nutrit exemplis].”

\(^{106}\)util. cred. 11.25. Elsewhere Augustine even says that false beliefs can sometimes be praiseworthy. For example, he says that falsely ascribing a correct belief (e.g., that virtue is the supreme good) to an author who doesn’t believe it (e.g., ascribing it to Epicurus on the grounds that Epicurus praises the virtue of temperance) is praiseworthy rather than blameworthy, because the belief is, after all, correct (util. cred. 4.10-5.11). The idea seems to be not just that such an ascription is practically to the believer’s benefit, but that believing truths will also be better for such a person epistemically. The idea seems to be that charity is more important than accuracy, provided one’s charity is aimed at the truth. Compare this with Augustine’s rules for interpreting holy Scripture so as to build up charity (doct. chr. 1.36.40.86ff). There Augustine is more careful, noting that one should not get in the habit of misinterpreting, even for what seems like the right end, because habitual misinterpretation can lead one astray, and even lead one to lose faith in the Scriptures (doct. chr. 1.36.41.88-1.37.41.89)

\(^{107}\)If we believe something wrong about God, Augustine says, (Si ergo alius de illo sensorimus quam est), “our faulty aim compels us to journey into futility and not into happiness”, whereas “if we have a false belief about a creature [si quid alter quam sese habet sensorimus], we are in no danger, as long as we do not regard that belief as knowledge [dummodo id non pro cognito perceptoqu teneamus].” But Augustine quickly points out that false beliefs about creatures which hinder the achievement of one’s ultimate goal (e.g. beliefs about the resurrection) are also wrong (3.21.61.212). He gives the following analogy: it is okay to have false beliefs about which port one sets out from, as long as one has the right belief about where one is heading (3.21.61.213).
In the early books of *De doctrina christiana*, Augustine begins to take a positive view of secular history. He encourages Scriptural interpreters to be as rigorous and accurate as possible, and notes that history helps us interpret Scripture better.

Whatever the subject called ‘history’ reveals about the train of past events is of the greatest assistance in interpreting the holy books, even if learned outside the church as part of one’s primary education.  

Augustine no longer despises history; he even says that “history relates past events in a faithful and useful way”; it is certainly much more reliable than astrology. 

For similar reasons, Augustine endorses ‘natural history’, and cites it as a source of cognitio.

There is also a kind of narration akin to demonstration [*demonstrationi similis*], by which things in the present, and not the past, are communicated to people unfamiliar with them [*indicantur ignaris*]. In this category are various studies of topography and zoology, and of trees, plants, stones, and other such things. I have dealt with this category earlier [in 2.24.59] and explained that such knowledge [*cognitio*] is valuable in solving puzzles in Scripture. 

*Cognitio* is a broader term for Augustine than *scientia*, but has epistemic force that our ‘cognition’ does not. As we have seen, it is Cicero’s translation for *katalêpsis*, which cannot be false. This suggests that for Augustine *cognitio* is factive (that is, necessarily, if one has *cognitio* that p, then p is true), like Greek *gnōsis*.  So here Augustine admits, albeit in passing, that

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108 “*Quidquid igitur de ordine temporum transactorum indicat ea quae appellantur historia, plurimum nos adiuvat ad libros sanctos intellegendos, etiam si praeter ecclesiam puellaril eruditione discatur.*”

109 “*Est etiam narratio demonstrationi similis, qua non praeterita, sed praesentia indicantur ignaris. In quo genere sunt quaecumque de locorum situ naturisque animalium, lignorum, herbarum, lapidum allorumue corporum scripta sunt. De quo genere superius egimus eamque cognitionem ualere ad aenigmata scripturarum soluenda docuimus...*”

110 Alexander of Aphrodisias says in the first line of his commentary on Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* (1.1), “*Gnōsis is perfection of the soul: in general of the soul that merely knows, but to a greater degree of the rational [logikos] soul, and still more of the rational soul whose end is theoretical knowledge (théòria)…*” (Commentary on Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* 1.1, Dooley trans. (1989): p. 11). Cicero uses ‘cognitio’ for ‘knowledge’ and ‘cognitum’ for ‘known’ in his *Academica* (1.15, 2.18) and *De officiis* (1.18, 1.152ff, 2.5, 2.23, 2.65, 3.52). I give further evidence for
some testimony can provide a kind of knowledge.\textsuperscript{111} In \textit{De libero arbitrio} (started 388, finished 394-395), Augustine had said that something held even with “unshaken faith” is not known (\textit{cognitum}).\textsuperscript{112} But now he is willing to allow that we can gain \textit{cognitio} from much less authoritative testimonial sources.

\subsection*{1.4 Stage 3: Ordinary Language}

By about 413, Augustine has left behind his youthful enthusiasm for Plato entirely. He no longer takes his terminological bearings from Platonism, and begins to experiment with using terms like \textit{disciplina} and \textit{scientia} differently: he tries to use such words in a way more consistent with both ordinary Latin speech and the usage of sacred Scripture. For example, he now says that \textit{disciplina} is sometimes used as a translation for epistêmê, “since everything is learned for the sake of knowing”, but points out that it is just as common to use ‘\textit{disciplina}’ to refer to “bad things one suffers for the sake of correction”, and that the book of Hebrews uses it this way (\textit{trin} 14.1.1).\textsuperscript{113} I will focus on Augustine’s experiments with different meanings for \textit{scientia}. By the classifying \textit{cognitio} as a kind of knowledge in chapter 3 on Aquinas on \textit{cognitio}. On \textit{gnôsis} in Plato and later Platonists see Lesher (1969), Vidart (2010) and D. Cohen (2010).

\textsuperscript{111} In \textit{doct. chr.} 2.24.59-61 he gives examples of knowledge from natural history, and uses the term ‘\textit{notitia}’: if one knows that a carbuncle glows in the dark, or that hyssop cleanses the lungs, that helps explain passages where these items are mentioned.

\textsuperscript{112} Augustine begins the dialogue by asking Evodius whether he holds that God rightly gave us free will, and whether he “holds it as certain and known” (\textit{certum et cognitum tenses}). Evodius’s reply, which gets the dialogue going, is that while he holds it to be true “with unshaken faith” (\textit{inconcussa fide}) it is not yet “known” to him (\textit{cognitione nondum teneo}), and in order to attain that, they should proceed as if he were uncertain (\textit{quaeramus quasi omnia incerta sunt}) (\textit{lib. arb.} 2.2.4.10-2.2.5.11).

\textsuperscript{113} While mentioning a distinction he draws between \textit{sapientia} and \textit{scientia} (discussed below), he says “\textit{scientia}, or as some have translated the Greek \textit{ἐπιστήμη} as \textit{disciplina}, which gets its name from learning [\textit{discendo}], whence it can also be called \textit{scientia}, for things are learned to be known. But in another sense the bad things one suffers for one’s sins for the sake of correction are usually called ‘\textit{disciplina}.’” (“… \textit{scientia} (siue etiam ut nonnulli de graeco \textit{ἐπιστήμη} interpretati sunt, \textit{disciplina}, quae utique a discendo nomen accepit, unde et \textit{scientia} dici potest; ad hoc enim quaeque res discitut ut sciiatur, quamuis alia notione in his quae pro peccatis suis mala quisque patitur ut corrigatur dici soleat \textit{disciplina}.”). Augustine then refers to Hebrews 12.7 and 11, about the unpleasant but beneficial ‘discipline’ parents impose on their children. \textit{f. et op.} 2.3 (dated 412-413) seems to also use ‘discipline’ this way in the phrase ‘\textit{disciplinae severitatem’}. It is interesting that sense of ‘discipline’ is not found under
end of this period, Augustine has developed a new criterion for testimonial knowledge (scientia): you know on the word of someone else if it would be ‘absurd’ or ‘rash’ for you not to believe her.\textsuperscript{114} Most of the time Augustine’s motivation to accept the notion of testimonial scientia is that this view fits better with Biblical usage, but the arguments he uses are entirely of what I will call the ‘ordinary language’ kind.

It is difficult to date the relevant texts from this period. Augustine began De trinitate in 399, but published it in the 420s without getting a chance to make full revisions (someone had begun circulating a draft without his permission), and the dating of particular books of the De trinitate is very controversial.\textsuperscript{115} Augustine probably began his treatises on the Gospel of John in 406, but may not have finished them until 421, and the relevant sermon may have been written after 414.\textsuperscript{116} The only relevant text of this period that is easy to date is Letter 147 (ep. 147, also known as the treatise De videndo deo), written in 413 or 414. In the absence of clear chronological direction from earlier to later, I will treat these texts in order from least clear to

\textit{disciplina} in Lewis & Short, nor in the Oxford Latin dictionary. Perhaps this is an indication that the Bible informs Augustine’s usage in this period more than ordinary Latin usage.

\textsuperscript{114} The key passages are trin. 15.12.21, ep. 147.5, civ 19.18. I discuss them in order below.

\textsuperscript{115} See Gioia (2008: 2, n. 4) for the literature on this controversy. Gioia (2008: 2-5) emphasizes the unity of the De trinitate, while the scholarship he cites (2008: 2, n. 4) has tended to date most of the work very late, in the 420s. I don’t have a theory about the dating of the different parts of De trinitate, but as La Bonnardière (1965: 139) notes, starting from trin. 12.14 (where Augustine draws a distinction between sapientia and scientia based on Job 28.28 and I Cor. 12.8), the work seems somewhat different in tone from what came before. She dates this last part of De trinitate to around 419-420, and suggests that en. Ps. 135.8 (where Augustine draws the same distinction between sapientia and scientia on the same Scriptural grounds, but not in as much detail) is from around the same time. In earlier works, Augustine uses the Job 28.28 verse, but usually not to distinguish between wisdom and knowledge (e.g., conf. 5.5.8 and 8.1.2, dated 397; spir. et litt. 11, dated 412; ep. 140.18.45, dated 411 or 412). In the Confessions (397), Augustine uses the I Cor 12.8 verse to distinguish between ‘wisdom’ of eternal things and ‘knowledge’ of sensory things, but does not associate this distinction with Job 28.28, and does not develop the idea in any detail (conf. 13.18.22-23). In a letter from 415, ep. 167.11, Augustine draws the wisdom/knowledge distinction on the basis of Job 28.28 (but without reference to I Cor. 12.8), in the course of arguing against the Stoic view that wisdom is all or nothing (ep. 167.12-13) by giving as a counterexample all the Christians who are pious in admitting their sins, and so have some share of wisdom, in accordance with Job 28.28: ‘piety is wisdom’. Based on Augustine’s epistemological positions alone, it is conceivable that the last part of De trinitate should be dated around the same time as ep. 147 (i.e., near 414), and that ep. 167.11 (dated 415) later summarizes and builds on the sapientia/scientia distinction already described in great detail in trin. 12.14ff.

\textsuperscript{116} The date of Io. eu. tr. 90 is unknown. See Rettig (1988: 23-31) for a survey of the literature on the dating of this series of sermons. Io. eu. tr. 54-124 seem to have been written in a similar style and as a single series at a single time. It is likely Io. eu. tr. 90 was written after 414. Le Landais (1953) places this sermon in a group written before 416; Zarb (1933) in a group written in 418; and La Bonnardière (1965) in a group written after 419-420.
most clear in presenting Augustine’s new way of arguing from ordinary language claims to a new view that testimony is a source of scientia. 117

In a sermon on John’s Gospel, Augustine is concerned with a targeting problem relevant to testimony (not to be confused with the general Targeting Problem for learning discussed above). We could call it the affect-targeting problem. Jesus says of his enemies both “they do not know the One who sent me” and “he who hates me hates the Father also”. The problem then is: how can Jesus’s enemies hate someone they don’t know? (Io. eu. tr. 90.1). Augustine’s solution is to say that by means of testimony we can come to know a person’s way of life, and from that we can infer the person’s character, even if we never ‘see’ the person at all:

[I]t is often possible for us to love those we have never seen, so neither is the contrary impossible, for us to hate those we have never seen. For when hearsay [fama] says someone is good or bad, we’re not unjustified in loving or hating the unknown person. But if the hearsay is truthful, in what way should the person about whom we’ve learned truths be called ‘unknown’ [ignotus]? Is it because we have not seen his face? But he himself does not see it, and yet no one can know it better than he. So knowing someone is not communicated to us in his bodily face. Rather the way to knowing him is open when his character and life are not hidden – otherwise no one could know himself who cannot see his own face. But obviously he knows himself more certainly than others do, the more certainly he can see by an internal glance what he is aware of, what he wishes, what life he lives; and when these are opened also to us, he is truly known by us. And because these things often come to

117 Augustine gives some earlier indications that he will head in this direction, when he uses the word ‘scire’ for things known inferentially or testimonially, but he does not use ‘scire’ this way systematically, or focus his discussion on the idea that we get knowledge from testimony. For example, in mend. 4 (394) he says “someone who speaks the truth because he senses he is not believed, certainly says what is true in order to deceive, for he knows [scit] or thinks that what is said can be thought false because it is spoken by him” (qui enim uerum ideo loquitur, quia sentit sibi non credi, ideo utique uerum dicit, ut fallat; scit enim uel existimat propterea falsum putari posse quod dicitur, quoniam ab ipso dicitur). And in conf. 6.5.7 (397) he says he is struck by the importance of testimony, especially “how with unshakeable faith I held fixed to who my parents were, which I could not know [scire], except by believing what I heard” (“postremo quam inconcusse fixum fide retinerem, de quibus parentibus ortus essem, quod scire non possem, nisi audiendo credidisset”). In his sermons, Augustine also uses the phrase ‘fideles scium’ about items revealed in scripture, but as the sermons are difficult to date, these passages do not say much about his development. See Lamirande (2002: 1330), who cites en. Ps. 33.1.5, 48.1.3; s. 5.7, 58.5, 112.1, 159.1, 332.2, 235.3; s. Mai 25.3; s. Dolbeau 18.1, 26.12.
us (whether by hearsay or writing) while he is absent, or even dead, we often either hate or love men whom we’ve never seen by face, but are not entirely unknown to us. 118 (Io. eu. tr. 90.1.2)

Here Augustine says one can know another’s character by means of testimony about that person’s way of life, implying that testimony is a source of knowledge. But testimony is not the theme of the sermon, and Augustine is not careful to give us exact conditions on testimonial knowledge. In fact, in the rest of the sermon Augustine wants to make the point that we should not judge others, since we do not see into their hearts, so he turns to disparaging both external vision and testimony as sources of knowledge about others’ characters, since these sources often mislead us. “[S]ometimes history [historia], and much more often hearsay [fama] lies” (Io. eu. tr. 90.2). 119 The result is that the claims Augustine makes for testimonial knowledge here are not very clear or strong. But what this passage does show is a new way of arguing about testimony. Augustine begins to take ordinary language claims about what things are ‘known’ or ‘unknown’ as indicators for how we should theorize about knowledge.

The De trinitate discussion of testimonial knowledge takes this approach much further. In book 12, Augustine begins to experiment with using the term scientia in a way that Platonists would frown upon. The Biblical book of Job (28:28) says “Behold piety is wisdom [sapientia], but to abstain from evil is knowledge [scientia]”. 120 Augustine takes this to mark an important

118 “Et de hominibus quidem fieri potest ut eos saepe quos numquam uidimus, diligamus; ac per hoc nec illud a contrario impossibile est, ut eos quos numquam uidimus, oderimus. fama quippe de aliquo sermocinante seu bene seu male, fit non immerito ut amemus uel oderimus ignotum. sed si fama sit uerax, quomodo est de quo uera didicimus, dicendus ignotus? an quia eius faciem non uidimus? quam cum et ipse non uideat, nulli tamen potest notior esse quam sibi. non igitur in eius facie corporali nobis intimatur cuiusque notitia. sed tunc nobis ad cognitionem patet, quando eius mores et uita non latet. alioquin nec seipsum nosse quisquam potest, qui uidere faciem suam non potest. sed utique tanto certius quam notus est alius ipse se nouit, quanto certius interiore conspectu potest uiderde quod sapit, uidere quod cupit, uidere quod uisit; quae cum aperiuntur et nobis, tunc uere fit cognitus nobis. haec itaque quoniam plerumque ad nos de absentibus uel etiam mortuis, siue fama, siue litteris perferantur, hinc fit ut saepe quos numquam facie corporis uidimus (non tamen quos omnino nescimus), uel oderimus homines, uel amemus.”

119 “Sed plerumque in eis nostra credulitas fallitur; quia nonnumquam et historia, et multo magis fama mentitur.”

120 “Ecce pietas est sapientia; abstinere autem a malis scientia est” (trin. 12.14.22). Augustine cites this verse in its entirety only in en. Ps. 135.8, ep. 167.11, trin. 12.14.22 and trin. 14.1.1 (La Bonnardière 1965: 138). Augustine cites the first half of this verse a number of times to make the point that piety is wisdom, without drawing any attention to the distinction between sapientia and scientia (conf. 5.5.8, 8.1.2; spir. et litt. 11-12; ep. 140.18.45; ench.
distinction between wisdom and knowledge, confirmed by the apostle Paul in the statement “To some is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom [sapientia], to others by the same Spirit, the word of knowledge [scientia]” (I Cor. 12:8). Augustine admits that it is not obvious how to interpret Paul’s distinction, but offers his own explication:

there is a difference between the contemplation [contemplatio] of eternal things and the action [actio] by which we use temporal things well; the former is marked out as wisdom [sapientia], the latter as knowledge [scientia].

In other words, “to wisdom belongs intellectual cognitio of eternal things; to knowledge belongs rational cognitio of temporal things” (trin. 12.15.25). It is not just that one is “not allowed” to say there is wisdom of temporal things, or knowledge of eternal things, since “in a broader usage of speech [loquendi ... latiore consuetudine] each can be called ‘wisdom’ or ‘knowledge’”. Rather, in I Cor. 12:8, “each is properly called by its own special name [proprie singulis nominibus haec singula uocarentur]” (trin. 13.19.24). So this distinction is important, signalling a new epistemological approach.

1. Augustine’s Latin translation for this verse follows the Septuagint (which he cites in trin. 12.14.22), whereas the Vulgate and other more recent translations (such as the New Revised Standard Version) have “the fear of the Lord is wisdom”, not “piety” (in the Septuagint, θεὸς ὁ φόβος τοῦ θεοῦ).

121 “Alii quidem datur per spiritum sermo sapientiae, alii sermo scientiae secundum eundem spiritum” (trin. 12.14.22).

122 trin 12.14.22. Perhaps Augustine means to say that the knowledge which guides action is scientia, rather than saying that scientia is itself a kind of action.

123 “si ergo haec est sapientiae et scientiae recta distinctio ut ad sapientiam pertineat aeternarum rerum cognitio intellectualis, ad scientiam uero temporalium rerum cognitio rationalis, quid cui praeponendum sit siue postponendum sit non est difficile iudicare.”

124 There are hints of this distinction as early as Confessions 13.18.23-24 (dated 397), where Augustine quotes I Cor. 12.8, and associates wisdom with certain Scriptural images, and associates knowledge with others. Wisdom is associated with the “greater light”, the day, contemplation, intelligibles and souls dedicated to intelligibles; while knowledge is associated with the “lesser light”, the night, action, sensibles and souls dedicated to them, as we walk by faith in this life (drinking milk rather than solid meat). (The context of this chapter is that Book 13 of the Confessions is an exposition of Genesis, chapter 1, the story of creation of light, of day and night, of sun and moon, of heaven and earth, and of various living creatures, and this affects how Augustine reads the verses he In conf. 13.18.24, Augustine associates ‘knowledge’ with the sacraments, and then in 13.20.26-28 he associates the creation of flying things and reptiles with the sacrament of baptism, and in 13.21.29-31 he associates the creation of the soul, birds, and fishes with the sacrament of the eucharist.) In a letter of 415, Augustine cites Job 28:28 (but not I Cor. 12:8) to make the claim that wisdom is piety, and essential to piety is charity, and to draw the conclusion that
Augustine then shows that *scientia* in this new and ‘proper’ sense includes at least some testimonial knowledge:

> Thus, whatever we do prudently, courageously, temperately and justly pertains to that knowledge or discipline [*scientiam siue disciplinam*], by which our action is conversant in avoiding evil and desiring good, as well as whatever we gather by historical cognition [*historica cognitione*], either for examples to be imitated or eschewed, or for necessary evidences of anything useful.¹²⁵

Augustine’s belief about a temporal deed, like the fact that John the Baptist preached by the Jordan river, now “pertains to the knowledge [*scientiam*] which contains historical cognition [*cognitione historica*]” (trin 13.1.2). And in book 14, Augustine identifies three locations for ‘signs’ by which past things are known (*cognoscantur*): archeological artifacts like monuments, authoritative historical writings, and

> in the minds of those who have known them, for once known to [those minds], they are certainly knowable [*noscibili*] to others … who can know [*nosse … possunt*] them from the teaching of those who know them [*illis quibus nota sunt docentibus*].¹²⁶ (trin. 14.8.11)

It is not clear here whether ‘them’ (*ea*) refers to the signs or the things known by means of them. But either way, Augustine’s suggestion seems to be that temporal knowledge of knowables

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¹²⁵ *trin* 12.14.22

¹²⁶ “*Quae signa uel in locis sita sunt sicut monumenta mortuorum et quaecumque similia, uel in litteris fide dignis sicut est omnis grauis et approbandae auctoritatis historia, uel in animis eorum qui ea iam nouerunt (eis quippe iam nota, et aliis utique sunt noscibili quorum scientiam praewenerunt et qui ea nosse illis quibus nota sunt docentibus possunt).*” The reason for the phrase “*quorum scientiam praewenerunt*” is that in this chapter Augustine wants to emphasize that the temporal things which are the object of temporal *scientia* are knowable before they become known, in contrast with some kinds of knowledge of one’s own mind.
(noscibilia) can be transmitted without loss through chains of testifiers. However, Augustine’s focus is not on the details of testimonial knowledge, but on illustrating how all cognitio and notitia of temporal things now falls under the heading of scientia.

If we step back and consider where Augustine started, this looks like an amazing reconfiguration of his epistemology. Platonist Augustine had restricted knowledge to the immediate grasp of forms or the understanding of disciplines; Particularist Augustine had begun to allow for the ‘perception’ of the senses, and the ‘cognition’ of history. But he had always reserved ‘scientia’ for Platonic knowledge of forms or disciplines. Now he throws the gate open to include perceptual and historical knowledge of contingencies in scientia. He says that

the scientia … which was distinguished from wisdom, [is] such that things known are, so to speak, adventitious [adventicia] to the mind, whether [(i)] brought in by historical knowledge [cognitione historica inlata] – for example, deeds and sayings which are performed in time and pass away – or [(ii)] things in nature settled in their own places, or [(iii)] arise in the human where they were not before, either by the teaching of others or by his own thinking – like faith (which we greatly commended in book 13) or like the virtues by which, if they are true, one lives well in this mortality so as to live blessedly in the immortality promised by God. And such things as these have their order in time …

King and Ballantyne (2009: 196) say that Augustine “appears to assume that a testifier doesn’t need the firsthand authority of an eyewitness or source – that is a particular testifier may be many stages removed from the primary testifier” but that “Augustine does not discuss this his assumption explicitly”. This passage (trin. 12.14.22) might give some reason for making this assumption. As mentioned, it is not clear whether every ‘ea’ refers to the signs by which past things are known, or to the noscibilia themselves. If the former, Augustine’s view seems to be that one transmits knowledge by giving others the same signs for past things as the one who first experienced them has. If the latter, Augustine seems to be simply asserting that transmission of noscibilia without loss is possible.

In this chapter Augustine lists several trinities which are not sufficient even to be considered the image of the divine Trinity, introducing each successive one with “nec”, and here he makes the point that the trinity concerned with ‘scientia’ is one of these. “Nec sicut fiebat uel apparebat quando de illa scientia disserebamus iam in hominis interioris opibus constituta, quae distinguisha fuit a sapientia, unde quae sciuntur uel aduentia sunt in animo, siue cognitione historica inlata ut sunt facta et dicta quae tempore peraguntur et transseunt uel in natura rerum suis locis et regionibus constituta sunt, siue in ipso homine quae non erant oriantur aut aliis docentibus aut cognitionibus prorpiis sicut fides quam plurimum in libro tertio decimo commendauimus, sicut uirtutes quibus si uerae sunt in hac mortalitate ideo bene uiiituer ut beate in illa quae diuinitus promititur immortalitate uiuat. haec atque huiusmodi habent in tempore ordinem suum, in quod nobis trinitas memoriae, uisionis et amoris facilius apparebat.”

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It is clear that Augustine no longer thinks of *scientia* as concerned solely with knowledge of forms or intelligibles – in fact, he limits it to knowledge of temporal things, and makes a point of saying it includes knowledge of contingencies.\(^{129}\)

So far it looks like Augustine has based this drastic change merely on a few scripture references. But in book 15 we see that he also bases his view that we have testimonial knowledge on an argument from ordinary language use. Here we find Augustine in the midst of another Scripture-based experiment. Scripture describes Christ, the second person of the Trinity, as the ‘Word of God’ (John 1:1ff, Greek ‘logos’, Latin ‘verbum’). In *De trinitate* 15 Augustine tries to both explain this mystery and show how little we can understand it, by first giving an account of the human ‘word’, as an image of the divine Word, and then showing how different the human word is from God’s.\(^{130}\)

Augustine argues that a word is, properly speaking, a mental word; spoken words are merely signs for mental words, which have their own language which is not a matter of convention (*trin* 15.10.19).

This [mental] word cannot be uttered in sound nor thought in the likeness of sound, such as must be done with the word of any language; it precedes all the signs by which it is

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\(^{129}\) Contrast this with an early passage (*Acad. 1.7.20*), where after saying that wisdom is concerned with ‘human things’ as well as divine, Augustine immediately points out that it is not concerned with extra-mental contingencies (things that “chance can give to us or snatch away from us”) but with the cardinal virtues, which “we dare to call truly our own, without any fear of fortune” (King trans. 20).

\(^{130}\) In *trin* 15.13.22, Augustine says God is “not a rational animal, but as far above every rational soul as can be thought” and asks rhetorically, “Does God the Father, in order to know those things which … by his own self He knows, need someone from whom to learn them, or messengers or witnesses? Of course not. That Perfection is sufficient to himself for knowing all that He knows. … He knew beforehand, without any beginning, all future temporal things … This knowledge, therefore, is far unlike our knowledge. … Thus just as our knowledge is unlike that knowledge of God, so our word, which is born from our knowledge, is also unlike that Word of God which is born from the essence of the Father.” *(Numquid deus pater ea ipsa quae non per corpus quod ei nullum est sed per se ipsum scit aliunde ab aliquo didicit aut nuntiis uel testibus ut ea sciret indiguit? non utique. ad omnia quippe scienda quae scit sufficit sibi illa perfectio … nec ista ex aliquo tempore cognouit ut nosset, sed futura omnia temporalia … sine initio ante praesciuit. … longe est igitur huic scientiae scientia nostra dissimilis. … propter hoc sicut nostra scientia illi scientiae dei, sic et nostrum uerbum quod nascitur de nostra scientia dissimile est illi uerbo dei quod natum est de patris essential.*
signified, and is begotten by the knowledge which remains in the mind when this same
knowledge is spoken inwardly, just as it is.\textsuperscript{131}

He goes on to specify that a ‘true word’ is caused only by one’s knowledge, and only a word
caused by such knowledge is ‘true’.

When, therefore, that is in the word which is in the knowledge [\textit{notitia}], then there is
a true word, and truth, such as is looked for from man; such that what is in the
knowledge is also in the word, and what is not in the knowledge is also not in the
word.\textsuperscript{132}

In this discussion, then, Augustine takes thinking a ‘true word’ to be coextensive with thinking
something one ‘knows’. Thus having in mind a ‘true word’ is more demanding than merely
entertaining or believing a true proposition. We say many things we judge to be true, and have
no doubt of, and which turn out to be true, but which we nevertheless fail to know (\textit{nescimus}),
and so those thoughts fail to be ‘true words’. A true word must be “born from what one knows”
\textit{(trin. 15.15.24)}.

How high is the standard for \textit{scientia} in this new sense? Augustine sets out to answer this
question by listing the kinds of things we know.

[Consider] the knowledge [\textit{scientia}] from which our thought is formed truthfully
when we speak what we know. Of what sort is this knowledge, and how much of it
can someone of the utmost skill and learning acquire?\textsuperscript{133}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{131} \textit{trin} 15.11.20: \textit{Perueniendum est ergo ad illud uerbum hominis, ad uerbum rationalis animantis, ad uerbum non de deo natae sed a deo factae imaginis dei, quod neque prolatium est in sono neque cogitatiuum in similitudine soni quod alicuius linguae esse necesse sit, sed quod omnia quibus significatur signa praecedit et gignitur de scientia quae manet in animo quando eadem scientia intus dicitur siciuti est.\textsuperscript{131}

\textsuperscript{132} \textit{trin} 15.11.20: \textit{Quando ergo quod est in notitia hoc est in uerbo, tunc est uerum uerbum et ueritas qualis exspectatur ab homine ut quod est in ista, hoc sit et in illo; quod non est in ista, non sit et in illo. See also \textit{trin. 15.15.24} on the requirement that a true word be \textit{caused} by truth. In \textit{trin. 15} Augustine switches easily from talking about \textit{scientia} to talking about \textit{notitia}, and back again. In his Compromise stage (as we shall see) he goes back to
reserving \textit{scientia} for knowledge acquired by the mind alone, but sticks to calling testimony a kind of \textit{notitia}.

\textsuperscript{133} \textit{trin} 15.12.21: \textit{Primo ipsa scientia de qua veraciter cogitatio nostra formatur quando quae scimus loquimur, qualis aut qua potest homini provenire quamlibet peritissimo atque doctissimo}?\textsuperscript{133}
\end{flushleft}
Augustine goes on to claim that we can know things in this way by means of (a) the mind alone, (b) the senses, and (c) testimony.

First, he mentions that ‘I live’ is self-evident to intuition, and refers us to *Contra Academicos* for other truths which he thinks he has shown are knowable by the mind alone (*trin* 15.12.21).

Then he discusses knowledge from the senses:

Far be it from us to doubt the truth of what we have learned through the senses of the body. For through them we have learned (*didicimus*) about heaven and earth, and we are acquainted with (*nota sunt nobis*) the things in them to the degree that He who created both them and us wanted them to be known (*innotescere*) to us.\(^\text{134}\)

This passage may be a compressed argument from God’s reliability to the reliability of our senses, of the kind more familiar to us from Descartes: God exists, God is truthful, and God created our senses, so our senses must be truthful.\(^\text{135}\) Augustine does not explicitly say the senses are reliable. He had distinguished “things which come into the mind from the bodily senses” from things known by the mind alone where “we don’t fear being deceived by something truthlike [*aliqua uerisimilitudine*]”. So Augustine has recognized a source of uncertainty about the deliverances of the senses. But in the context of explaining what kind of *scientia* we can express by a ‘true word’, he says we shouldn’t doubt the *notitia* we get through the senses.

Finally Augustine says, indirectly, that we gain knowledge from testimony: “And far be it from us to deny that we know [*scire*] what we have learned by means of the testimony of others” (*trin*. 15.12.21). He supports this claim with an ordinary language argument: such a denial would make our ordinary knowledge attributions absurd.

\(^{134}\) *trin* 15.12.21: *Sed absit a nobis ut ea quae per sensus corporis didicimus uera esse dubitemus. Per eos quippe didicimus caelum et terram et ea quae in eis nota sunt nobis quantum ille qui et nos et ipsa condidit innotescere nobis uoluit.*

\(^{135}\) Of course this is just a rough summary of an argument from Descartes’ *Meditations on First Philosophy*, meditation 6. There Descartes says he has a passive faculty for sense perception, and since God is not a deceiver and has not given him a faculty for recognizing any source of such perceptions other than bodies, the source of such perceptions must be bodies. Similar (but interestingly different) reliability arguments are also found in Henry of Ghent (*Summa Quaestionum Ordinarium* 1.1), Scotus (*Ordinatio* I.3.1.4), Buridan (*In Metaphysicem Aristotelis Quaestiones* lib. 2 q. 1, *Summulae de Dialectica* 8.4.4) and other medieval philosophers.
Otherwise we don’t know \([nescimus]\) that there is an ocean; we don’t know that the lands and cities commended by the most widespread report \([celeberrima fama]\) exist; we don’t know that the people and deeds we read of in history existed; we don’t know the news daily announced and confirmed by consistent and well-founded indications \([indiciis consonis constantibusque]\); finally, we don’t know where or from whom we were born; because all of these we have believed on the testimonies of others. Since this is most absurd to say \([absurdissimum est dicere]\), one must confess that not only our own bodily senses but also those of others have contributed much to our knowledge \([scientiae]\).\(^{136}\)

I call this an ‘ordinary language’ argument, because the idea seems to be that language is a reliable enough guide to reality that if something is \textit{absurd} to say, it must be false; if it is absurd to say \(p\), then not-\(p\). (Augustine need not rely on the stronger claim that ordinary language distinctions are \textit{always} likely to be accurate or sufficiently fine-grained.\(^{137}\) ) Here Augustine says we get testimonial knowledge not just from trusted family members and respected historians but

\(^{136}\) \textit{trin. 15.12.21:} Absit etiam ut scire nos negemus quae testimonio didicimus aliorum aliquoquin esse nescimus oceanum; nescimus esse terras atque urbes quas celeberrima fama commendat, nescimus fuisse homines et opera eorum quae historica lectione didicimus nescimus quae quotidie undecumque nutintur et indiciis conisonis constantibusque firmantur; postremo nescimus in quibus locis vel ex quibus hominibus fuerimus exorti, quia haec omnia testimoniiis credimus aliorum. Quod si absurdissimum est dicere, non solum nostrorum uerum et alienorum corporum sensus plurimum addidisse nostrae scientiae confitendum est.

\(^{137}\) Compare this with J. L. Austin’s view that “our common stock of words embodies all the distinctions men have found worth drawing, and the connexions they have found worth making, in the lifetimes of many generations: these surely are likely to be more sound, since they have stood up to the long test of the survival of the fittest, and more subtle, at least in all ordinary and reasonably practical matters, than any that you or I are likely to think up in our arm-chairs of an afternoon—the most favoured alternative method” (1979b: 182). Austin admits, however, that special cases may require special treatment: “however well-equipped our language, it can never be forearmed against all possible cases that may arise and call for description: fact is richer than diction.” (195). Longworth (2013, n. 1) relates Austin’s view on this point to other ordinary language philosophers of the twentieth century: “Austin’s emphasis on the good standing of distinctions drawn within ordinary language echoes a similar emphasis in Cook Wilson … It is recapitulated and developed in Grice and Strawson (1956) and Putnam (1962).” Dummett (1993: 411) notes the role of ordinary language considerations in philosophical theories of knowledge. He points out that the legal rule that a witness must speak “from one’s own knowledge” suggests that witnesses can’t know things on the testimony of others and comments: “The tide of philosophical opinion is now flowing in the opposite direction: philosophers have become chary of denying the title of knowledge to anything which, in common unreflective discourse, anyone would ordinarily be said to know. Epistemologists of quite a recent period, on the other hand, were wont to follow an ancient tradition in sundering a genuine, strong sense of the verb ‘to know’ from its everyday application. In doing so, they were guided by certain principles governing the concept of knowledge which they found intuitively compelling.” My suggestion in chapter 3 will be that there are (at least) two conceptions of knowledge at play in the epistemological literature, corresponding to \textit{cognitio} on the one hand and \textit{scientia} on the other.
also from everyday hearsay (*fama*) and other news. But he hasn’t developed a new account of how testimonial beliefs are justified, or how they come to be known. The big change is mostly in his use of the term ‘*scientia*’ for ‘knowing’ *p* in the sense that when one says *p* one speaks a ‘true word’. This is a change he has made for ordinary language reasons, taking his cues from trinitarian theology and sacred Scripture.

When we turn to epistle 147 (dated 413 or 414), we find that Augustine is fully committed to the idea that testimony yields *scientia*, and he explains his view much more carefully. Here his argument is not (at first) tied up with any scriptural or theological commitment, which suggests that he is committed to the general view that testimony yields *scientia* proper. He argues first from the intuitions of a competent Latin speaker, and only after giving his account of testimonial *scientia* does he bring in Scripture to confirm his view. First he says that truth-evaluable statements that cannot be demonstrated (to either the mind or the senses) can only be ‘believed’ (*ep* 147.1.4). But then he argues that such ‘belief’ includes many things which we ‘obviously know’ on human testimony:

> If we were to believe nothing at all of the things we don’t see (i.e., [things] we don’t sense as apparent in the present by the mind or the body), and didn’t learn by reading or hearing holy scriptures, how would we know [*unde sciremus*] that cities we’ve never been to exist, whether Rome founded by Romulus, or, to use a more recent example, Constantinople founded by Constantine? How would we know who our parents or ancestors are? Since we obviously know [*sciamus*] many things of this sort, but did not learn them either as present to any of our faculties … or on the authority of the canonical writings … we have learned them on the word of others, and we have concluded that their testimony, at least in this domain, is not to be doubted [*minime dubitandum esse putavimus*].

\[138\]

\[“Si enim ea, quae non uidimus, hoc est in praesenti apparentia non sensimus uel mente uel corpore neque de scripturis sanctis uel legendo uel audiendo didicimus, nulla omnino credidissemus, unde sciremus esse ciuitates, ubi numquam fuimus, uel a Romulo conditam Romam uel, ut de propriis locare, Constantinopolin a Constantino? Unde postremo sciremus, quinam parentes nos procreauissent, quibus patribus, auis, maioribus geniti essemus? Talium quippe cum plurima sciamus, non tamen ea uel ullo sensu praesentia sicut solem, sicut nostri animi voluntatem uel coanonicorum eloquentiam uoctoritate sicut Adam fuisse primum hominem aut Christum in carne natum passumque resurrexisse didicimus sed aliis referentibus, de quorum testimonio in hoc dum taxat rerum genere minime dubitandum esse putavimus.”\]

\[138\]
The Romulus example is unfortunate, but it indicates how completely Augustine has turned his back on his earlier skepticism about testimony. Here Augustine appeals directly to the intuitions of a competent Latin speaker that we do indeed know (scimus) such things. His conclusion is that “our knowledge [nostra scientia] consists of things [i] seen and [ii] believed” (ep 147.3.8).

Here Augustine is simply following common usage in which, according to Lewis and Short, *scire* literally means “to know, in the widest significance of the word”. One need only skim Lewis and Short’s entry on ‘*scio*’ to see that it was fairly common in Latin writings to say one knows what others are thinking, what happened in history, etc. Latin ordinary usage for *scio*, unlike the standard ancient *philosophical* usage, seems to match our English ordinary usage for ‘know’.

In this letter, Augustine’s account of testimonial belief and knowledge is given in the context of explaining the difference between what we know by ‘seeing’ and what we know by ‘believing’, in order to go on to explain what it means to ‘see God’ and to argue that we cannot see God in this life. (This letter is also known as the treatise *De uidendo deo*, “On Seeing God”.) Seeing is direct knowledge had by the bodily senses or the mind. Believing is of things ‘unseen’ or ‘absent’ (ep. 147.2.7); in other words, any knowledge had by believing is indirect. ‘Belief’ in this sense (and also ‘faith’, *fides*) includes both testimonial belief and all kinds of non-demonstrative inference. Because Augustine often takes his opponents to be claiming that one should not have ‘belief’ of any kind, he often defends the reasonableness of ‘belief’ as a broader category, and does not always indicate whether he is discussing testimonial belief or non-testimonial inductive belief, or both. Both, on Augustine’s account at this point, can be sources of knowledge (*scientia* / *notitia*).

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139 Lewis & Short (1966: 1643-1644).
140 The argument of *De fide rerum inuisibilium* is centred on an example of having ‘faith’ in a friends’ love and trustworthiness, not necessarily on the basis of the friend’s testimony, but by means of inference. Besides, Augustine typically says that testimonial faith requires also having ‘faith’ about the the speaker’s intentions, by means of inference (*coniectura*) (trin. 13.1.3, ep. 147.3.10).
141 Augustine argues against the idea that all belief is wrong in *util. cred.* 9.21ff and *De fide rerum inuisibilium*, and in his many other anti-Manichean writings often refers to this Manichean claim as heretical and mistaken. In *De fide rerum inuisibilium*, Augustine defends both inferential belief about a friend’s will or love (1.2, 2.3) and testimonial belief on the basis of history and hearsay (2.4), considering them both cases of ‘faith in things unseen’. In trin. 13.1.3, 13.2.5, 13.3.6, and 13.20.25, Augustine talks about drawing inferences (*coniectura*) about others’ souls on the basis of knowing our own, and points out that we ‘know’ (*nouimus*) by inference that others will to be
But Augustine also discusses testimony in particular. Testimony is offered by a speaker by means of ‘signs’ of whatever kind (spoken, written, or other) (ep. 147.3.8), with the intention of being believed (ep. 147.3.9). The audience then considers what the value of believing is, and has its will ‘moved’ to having faith in the testimony, sometimes under the influence of other testimony (ep. 147.3.9). Augustine contrasts the resultant testimonial belief in something ‘unseen’ with three things that the audience does ‘see’ when introspecting his own act of belief: his will to believe, his reason for believing, and his resultant testimonial ‘faith’. Of course, for Augustine the term ‘fides’ is an everyday Latin term for belief based on trust or confidence, rather than direct awareness, a term that applies widely outside religious contexts, unlike our current English use of the word ‘faith’.

Augustine also says a few things about the conditions for testimonial knowledge:

We rightly say that we know [scire] not only those things that we see or have seen, but also those that we believe when we have been moved on some matter by testimonies or witnesses suitable to that matter. And if we are appropriately said to know even what we believe as most certain, it results that rightly believed things, even if not present to our senses, are said to be seen by the mind. … Faith is, of course, seen by the mind itself, though by faith we believe what we do not see.  

happy. In trin. 15.12.21, Augustine says that we know the will of others with certainty when they say “I will to be happy” or “I will not to err” since it would be ‘impudent’ to question their claims; but here Augustine has mixed testimony with inference about others’ minds, and so complicated the point. In ep. 147.4.10 he says an audience ‘believes’ that a speaker wills that one believe his testimony, even though the audience doesn’t see that speaker’s will (while the speaker does) and in ep. 147.4.11 he says he ‘believes’ that others have the same faith (in the resurrection of Jesus) that he does, even though he doesn’t see their faith (although they do see their own faith).

142 In ep. 147.3.8 he says ‘belief’ is a source of scientia, and in ep. 147.4.11 he says that by believing inferentially that others have faith “we have known many of the faithful, and have been known by many [of them].” (“et multos fideles nouimus et multis noti sumus”).

143 “Non autem inmerito scire nos dicimus non solum ea, quae uidimus aut uidemus, uerum et illa, quae idoneis ad quamque rem commoti testimoniiis uel testibus credimus. Porro si scire non incongruenter dictur etiam illud quod certissimum credimus, hinc factum est ut etiam recte credita, et si non adsint sensibus nostris, uidenre mente dicamur. Scientia quippe menti tribuitur, siue per corporis sensus siue per ipsum animum aliquid perceptum cognitumque retineat, et fides ipsa mente utique uidentur, quamuis hoc fide credataur, quod non uidetur.”
At first glance, it looks like Augustine is saying that we ‘see’ with the mind the things we know by testimonial ‘belief’. But that would be very surprising from the way he so clearly distinguished the two in the previous paragraph (ep. 147.2.7). It’s more likely that Augustine is just playing with the idea he dwells on elsewhere, including in the next paragraph, that someone who believes the unseen also sees with his mind that he so believes. But here Augustine does make two points about testimonial knowledge. First, it requires believing something that is certain (*certissimum*). Whether this certainty is subjective or objective, or both, is not clear, although in the next paragraph his example is of someone who believes “without hesitation” (*sine cunctatione*) (ep. 147.3.9). Second, Augustine says that testimony requires testifiers or testimonies suitable to some matter (*idoneis ad quamque rem*). In ep. 1471.5, he says that we get knowledge when we “learn from those whose testimony we think is not to be doubted, at least in this domain (in hoc dum taxat rerum genere minime dubitandum esse putauimus)”.

So while Augustine leaves it open what considerations should give rise to doubt or remove it, he makes it clear that these considerations will be sensitive to the subject at hand.

Once Augustine has given his account of testimonial *scientia*, he applies it to the case of believing something by faith in God’s Scripture:

> We know [*scimus*] that God can be seen because Scripture says, ‘Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God’. Or ought I not to have said ‘we know’ but

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144 See *ep.* 147.3.9; *f. inuis.* 1.2; *trin.* 13.1.3, *trin.* 14.8.11. Coady (1992: 20-21) mistakenly thinks that in this paragraph Augustine is giving a very bad argument that we have testimonial knowledge, on the grounds that we somehow see what we believe. His view is based on a mistranslation of the following sentence: “*porro si scire non incongruenter dicimur etiam illud quod certissimum credimus, hinc factum est ut etiam recte credita, etsi non adsint sensibus nostris, uidere mente dicamur*” (ep. 147.3.8). Coady thinks Augustine is arguing that testimony gives us knowledge because it is seen, following Bogan’s (1953: 176) translation: “if it is not inappropriate to say that we also know what we firmly believe, this arises from the fact that we are correctly said to see mentally what we believe, even though it is not present to our senses.” But the underlined bit is incorrect and should read “hence it arises that”. Augustine is not saying that testimony is knowledge because it is seen. Rather, he is saying that we can (i) know by means of testimony, and (ii) see that we have such belief. Nevertheless, there is another passage where Augustine hints at something like what Coady attributes to him. In *f. inuis* 2.3 he says that even after having tested a friend, we still only ‘believe’ in his goodwill, “Unless it is that one’s faith is so great that we judge, not incongruously, that with its own eyes we see what we believe, since we should believe because we cannot see.” (“*Nisi quia tanta fides est, ut non incongruenter quibusdam oculis eius nos iudicemus uidere quod credimus, cum proptererea credere debeatamus, quia uidere non possumus.*”)

145 In *trin.* 14.13.17, he says we decide whether the speaker is ‘worthy of belief’ (*fide dignus*)
‘we believe’? For we have never seen God with the body, as we have seen this sunlight, nor with the mind, as we have seen in ourselves the faith by which we believe that, but we have no doubt that it is true only because it is recorded in that Scripture which we believe. But since the apostle John said something of the sort: ‘We know that when he shall appear we will be like him, because we will see him as he is’ – see, he said that he knew [scire] something that had not yet come about and that he had known [cognoverat] not by seeing but by believing – so I rightly said ‘We know that God can be seen’ though we have not seen him, but have believed the authority of God contained in the holy books.146

Even though Augustine here cites in his support a proof text from the Bible, so to speak, the ordinary language arguments at the beginning of the letter are more fundamental to his argument. The Scriptural case is explained in terms of Augustine’s view that we can have scientia from ‘belief’. Augustine does not start from Scripture and develop his account on that basis, although it is handy that Scripture confirms his view, and of course at this stage in his life he was not going to come up with a view that was inconsistent with what he considered the plain meaning of Scripture.

To summarize this Ordinary Language phase, then, Augustine’s dramatic switch to talking about testimonial scientia seems to have been motivated by a desire to accommodate his philosophy to ordinary language (I ‘know’ who my parents are), to ordinary language as used in Scripture (scientia is cognition of temporal things in contrast with sapientia of eternal things) and to a trinitarian theology based on Scripture (a true mental word comes from one’s scientia). But his philosophical arguments that we have testimonial scientia are purely ordinary language arguments.

1.5 Against Alternative Explanations of Augustine’s Shift

Peter King and Nathan Ballantyne (2009: 200) have tentatively proposed three other explanations of Augustine’s switch to talk of testimonial scientia. One is that when Augustine becomes a bishop in 396 he becomes more dependent on letter writing, and so “perhaps not coincidentally, he comes to think testimony can be a source of knowledge” (200). I agree that Augustine’s wider correspondence may have made him recognize that even more of our beliefs come through testimony. But increased frequency of correspondence need not have inspired him to call it ‘knowledge’; it could just as well have reduced his confidence in such testimony. Consider one of his letters from 408 which begins

I have received a letter, and it seemed not incredible to me that it was yours, for the one who brought it to me, as he was evidently a Catholic Christian, could not dare, I think, to lie to me. But if by chance the letter is not yours, I still think the writer ought to be answered ….147 (ep. 93.1.1)

In a world before British standardized post, the identity of letter writers was more doubtful than today.148 Around 416 Augustine and Alypius start a letter (ep. 186) with “At long last God has provided us with a most reliable bearer for our letter!”149 Augustine would be bound to notice the unreliability of letters the more he had to read and write letters on important practical affairs. So it is not likely that having a wider correspondence would encourage Augustine to think of testimony as a source of knowledge; it is at least as likely that increased correspondence would reinforce Augustine’s early categorization of testimony as mere ‘belief’.

A second tentative explanation of the switch is that after Augustine thought he had defeated the skeptics (in his first book, Contra Academicos) he began to turn his attention “from

147 “Accepi epistulam, quam tuam esse non mihi incredibile uisum est; adtulit enim eam, quem catholicum christianum esse constaret, qui, ut opinor, mihi mentiri audere non posset. sed etsi forte non sunt litterae tuae, ego et, qui scripsit, rescribendum putavi …”
148 There was a very efficient postal system called the cursus publicus but it was reserved for use by government officials (Kolb 2001: 97ff). Augustine seems not to have had access to it.
149 See also ep 73.1.2 (c. 404) where Augustine gets upset at Jerome for not recognizing one of Augustine’s letters as Augustine’s.
what could be doubted to what should be doubted, and eventually to conclude that, without apology, we really do know on the basis of sense-perception and testimony”. The idea seems to be that Augustine thought that one could or would be a skeptic about sensory and testimonial knowledge only as an adherent of the Academic school. Once he thought he had refuted their view of knowledge, he turned from thinking about knowledge as what cannot be doubted to thinking of knowledge as everything that should not be doubted. Perhaps, then, any belief one has no reason to doubt is an instance of knowledge; knowledge is a matter of beliefs one is entitled to accept because they have no defeaters. Augustine nowhere explicitly discusses this turn of thought, but one might think that De Trinitate 15.12.21 shows him taking this turn, since he says we should not doubt the deliverances of our senses (see also ciu. 19.18).

But there are problems. Early on in trin. 15.12.21, Augustine draws attention to several skeptical doubts about the reliability of sense-perception (e.g., the idea that we might be dreaming) in order to contrast sense-claims with undoubtable claims arrived at by ‘the mind alone’. So it is not clear that Augustine takes a default view of the senses rather than, like Descartes, thinking that skeptical arguments against relying on the senses would be compelling if not for a certain kind of theism. The reason we should not doubt what we have learned through the senses, Augustine says, is that we are acquainted with ‘heaven and earth’ and the things in them “to the degree that He who created both them and us wanted them to be known to us” (trin. 15.12.21).

Further, Augustine’s discussion of testimony at the end of De Trinitate 15.12.21 says nothing to indicate a default entitlement view of testimony in general. Instead, he points to certain conditions for trusting certain kinds of reports: they should, for example, come from respected sources (historians or parents) or be widespread and confirmed by consistency and other evidence. Augustine does not even say that we shouldn’t doubt testimony; he just points

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150 King and Ballantyne (2009: 200). Coady (1992: 19) says something similar when he notes that in trin 15.12.21 “Augustine takes it that he has destroyed [the sceptics’] basic programme and hastens to assure the reader that he does not share their doubts about perceptual knowledge. His position seems to be that, even on the sceptics’ own premisses, their universal doubt is untenable because of the survival of the key proposition about the existence of the doubting subject … and although this survival may teach us something about the understanding and reason it should not lead us to accept the sceptics’ position about other items of putative knowledge.”

151 “Per eos quippe didicimus caelum et terram et ea quae in eis nota sunt nobis quantum ille qui et nos et ipsa condidit innotescere nobis voluit.”
out that we do get some of our knowledge from testimony. So even if there is some evidence that Augustine takes a default view of sensory knowledge in this passage, there is no such evidence for a default view of testimony.

A third explanation King and Ballantyne offer for Augustine’s switch to talking of testimonial scientia is that he “goes ‘contextual’” (2009: 200). Following Coady, they point to a passage from Augustine’s late catalogue of and commentary on his own works, the Retractationes (completed 427). Augustine comments on his much earlier work, De utilitate credendi (391), thus:

And when I said: “There is a big difference between whether something is grasped by the certain reasoning of the mind, which we call knowing [scire], or is beneficially commended for posterity to believe by reading or hearing” and shortly afterwards: “What we know [quod scimus], then, we owe to reason, what we believe to authority”, this should not be taken to mean that in common speech we should be afraid to say that we know [scire] the things we believe from fitting witnesses. When speaking properly [proprie quippe cum loquimur], we say that we know only what we grasp with the mind’s firm reason. But when we speak with words that are more suitable to common usage [uerbis consuetudini aptioribus], the way divine Scripture also speaks, we shouldn’t hesitate to say that we know both what we perceive with the bodily senses and what we believe by trust in worthy testifiers – so long as we still understand the difference between the latter [i.e., trustworthy testimony and the bodily senses] and the former [i.e., mind’s firm reason].

King and Ballantyne say that what might explain the switch is that Augustine adopted a new semantics for ‘scire’ such that “[w]e can truly say that Jones knows p on the basis of testimony when ordinary usage is in our mouths, but that’s not so for strict usage” (200). I agree that in this

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152 “Et quod dixi: ‘Multum interesse utrum aliquid mentis certa ratione teneatur, quod scire dicimus, an famae vel litteris credendum posteris utiliter commendetur’, et paulo post: ‘Quod scimus igitur debemus rationi, quod credimus auctoritati’, non sic accipienda est, ut in sermone usitatioe uereamur nos dicere scire quod idoneis testibus credimus. Proprie quippe cum loquimur, id solum scire dicimus quod mentis firm ratione comprehendidimus. Cum uero loquimur uerbis consuetudini aptioribus, sicut loquitur etiam Scriptura diuina, non dubitemus dicere scire nos et quod percipimus nostri corporis sensibus et quod fide dignis credimus testibus, dum tamen inter haec et illud quid distet intellegamus.”
late work Augustine recognizes that ‘scire’ has two senses. But in *De trinitate*, Augustine had been writing on the supposition that ‘scientia’ (in opposition to ‘sapientia’) in its *proper* sense is of temporal things, and includes testimonial knowledge (e.g., of history). It is only in its ‘broader usage’ (*loquendi latiore consuetudine*) that *scientia* applies to eternal and necessary truths grasped by reason alone, which there he calls ‘sapientia’.

The apostle would not have written ‘To one is given the word of wisdom, to the other the word of knowledge’ unless properly speaking these were each individually called by their individual names.\(^{153}\) (*trin.* 13.19.24)

In the *Retractationes* passage, however, the proper sense of ‘scientia’ is knowledge had by ‘firm reason’, and excludes testimonial knowledge. So his later semantics in *retr.* 1.14.3 is inconsistent with that of the *De trinitate*. I agree that in this later passage Augustine recognizes two different uses for ‘scientia’, and in the next section I will try to explain those two senses. But this later passage does not explain what was going on in the *De trinitate*, where the ‘proper’ sense for ‘scientia’ is different. So it does not explain why in writing the *De trinitate* Augustine decided to say we have testimonial *scientia*. What explains that shift better, I have argued, is that Augustine decided to follow the ordinary language usage of Latin, especially the Latin of Scripture, and gave ordinary language arguments for doing so.

### 1.6 Stage 4: Compromise

While writing the *Retractationes*, Augustine read over his earlier works. My impression is that he noticed how different his early (Platonist) epistemology of testimony is from that of *De trinitate* 15 and *Epistle* 147. Rather than endorse the Platonist extreme or the Ordinary language extreme, he settles for a compromise. The compromise is that ‘scire’ has two senses: a proper (Platonist) sense, and an Ordinary sense.\(^{154}\)

\(^{153}\) “*Nullo modo tamen scriptum esset apud apostolum, alii datur sermo sapientiae, alii sermo scientiae nisi et proprie singulis nominibus haec singula uocarentur, de quorum distinctione nunc agimus.*”

\(^{154}\) Coady (1992: 18) briefly mentions this possibility.
In an early work, *De dialectica* (387), Augustine pointed out that “every word is ambiguous” (dial. 9) and tried to give a detailed account (probably following Varro) of how different kinds of ambiguity work (dial. 10). For the sake of his commentary in the *Retractationes*, he probably re-read his *De dialectica* before he re-read his *De utilitate credendi*, and perhaps a reconsideration of his early theory of ambiguity helped him come up with the compromise view of *Retractationes* 1.14.3.

What Augustine seems to have in mind in that passage is what Aristotle calls ‘homonymy’, scholastics call ‘analogy’, and linguists today call ‘polysemy’. Here’s an example. The word ‘paper’ has several distinct dictionary-entry meanings derived from a central meaning. I could tell a conference organizer I am sending her a ‘paper’, and send her a piece of cardboard packaging. Strictly speaking I have not misused the word ‘paper’, since in one sense cardboard is paper, but I have misled her by giving her the impression that I was using the word ‘paper’ in a different sense. According to Augustine, *scire* likewise has several meanings, deriving by similarity from a central proper meaning, and it is up to the speaker to choose which one to employ. This is not what epistemologists today call a ‘contextualist’ view of knowledge, since the stringency of ‘scientia’ does not depend on the speaker’s context, but rather on speaker intention. Testimony, Augustine now says, never counts as *scientia* in the most proper sense, but a speaker can intend to use the word ‘scientia’ in an ordinary sense. Neither is

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155 “Itaque rectissime a dialecticis dictum est ambiguum esse omne verbum.”

156 In *dial.* 10, Augustine calls the different ways a word can have more than one meaning *aequivocatio*. As far as I can tell, Augustine never uses the term ‘aequivocum’ except in *De dialectica* and then shortly after writing the *Retractationes* (426–427) in *Contra Iulianum opus imperfectum* (dated between 428 and 430). If we were to follow Augustine’s usage in *De dialectica*, we would call the broad or ordinary use of ‘know’ he advocates in *retr.* 1.14.3 a case of equivocation from a single source, by transference due to similarity. However, Augustine already talked about the difference between ‘properly speaking’ and ordinary use without all these technical terms in *trin.* 13.19.24, *nat.* et *grat.* 67.81 (dated 415) and *adult.* *coniug.* 1.16.17 (419 or later).


158 For the sake of argument, consider the central meaning of ‘paper’ to be ‘thin sheet of material made from wood pulp – or other fiber pulp – typically used for communication, for wrapping, or for decoration’.

159 Some well-known arguments for contextualism are given by DeRose (2009), Lewis (1996), and Cohen (1999).
this a ‘subject-sensitive invariantist’ or ‘interest-relative invariantist’ view\textsuperscript{160}, since the stringency of ‘scientia’ does not vary with the practical interests and circumstances of the knower. In fact, in every circumstance it is a high-stakes matter for a speaker what the truth about one’s ultimate happiness is; but it is okay, on Augustine’s view, to say that by testimonial faith such truths are ‘known’ (\textit{ep} 147.12). Augustine’s view is simpler than all these other views. He just thinks that ‘scientia’ has different senses.

But is this really any different from his earliest view? One might think either that Augustine’s epistemology of testimony never really changed, or that here he returns to an earlier Platonist view. Someone might use this \textit{Retractationes} passage to argue that Augustine’s epistemology of testimony was actually consistent throughout his life, that this late passage (426-427) is consistent with the earlier work it is commenting on (\textit{De utilitate credendi}, 391), and even explains how they are consistent. The simplest explanation, it would seem, is that Augustine’s view of testimony is continuous from early to late.

But this appearance is deceiving. Augustine’s views changed over time in many ways. It is no secret that on other significant topics such as the relation between free will and grace, divine illumination, the relation between Platonism and Christianity, our capacity to achieve the beatific vision in this life, etc., Augustine changed course quite drastically over his career, and that Augustine either smoothed over or emphasized these changes in a revisionary way when he wrote his \textit{Retractationes}.\textsuperscript{161} And while the charitable attempt to read Augustine (or any great philosopher) in a unified way is laudable, in this case the unified reading does not fit very well with what Augustine says about testimony in either his early or later works. In his later works, as we have seen, he uses the term \textit{scientia} freely for testimonial and sensory knowledge, with no indication that he is using the term loosely or improperly. And this is not a careless aside, since epistemology is his primary concern in the relevant passages.

\textsuperscript{160} Some well-known arguments for subject-sensitive invariantism or interest-relative invariantism are given by Hawthorne (2004) and Stanley (2005).

\textsuperscript{161} For example, in the \textit{Retractationes} he represents changes in direction as sudden which were much more gradual: his newfound devotion to philosophy after reading Cicero’s \textit{Hortensius}, his break with the Manicheans, his ‘conversion’ to Christianity, his break with the liberal arts tradition (Hagendahl 1967: 723). Similarly, he gives the impression that Pelagian issues about free will were outside the scope of his \textit{De libero arbitrio}, even though they were not (O’Donnell 2005: 318).
In his early works, on the other hand, Augustine never suggests that it might be okay to call testimonial belief ‘scientia’; on the contrary, he frequently contrasts scientia with testimonial belief. As we have seen, he started out thinking that that “what can neither be understood nor perceived begets only a baseless and valueless opinion” (ep. 13.2, dated between 389 and 392). In sol 1.4.9 (dated 386), Augustine says that he believed Platonic doctrines “as much as I could” (quibus accommodaui quantum potui fidem), but that “to know is something else” (scire autem aliud est). He even denies that he has any ‘faith’ in his senses (sol. 1.15.28). Or consider the surrounding context of the De utilitate passage (11.25) commented on in Retractationes 1.14.3.

There Augustine agrees with the Manicheans that one ought not to think one knows something if one does not have scientia of it in the most proper sense, that is, if one does not know it with “the certain reason of the mind”. He calls such misplaced confidence ‘opinion’. But he then argues against the Manicheans that his Christian faith is not a matter of ‘opinion’, because he knows that the things believed on authority remain unknown to him.

I believe that some most wicked conspirators were put to death by virtue of Cicero. But I not only don’t know it [nescio], but know with certainty [certo scio] that I cannot possibly know it. Now opinion is foul in two ways: one who has persuaded himself he knows cannot learn, even if it can be learned; and such rashness is a sign of a badly formed mind. For even if someone thinks he knows what I said about Cicero (although nothing keeps him from learning that since there cannot be knowledge [scientia] of the thing itself) still, because he does not understand the difference between whether something is seen by the certain reason of the mind, which we call ‘understanding’ [intelligere], or is usefully committed to report or writing for posterity to believe [creendum], he errs, and no error lacks foulness. What we understand, therefore, we owe to reason; what we believe, to authority; what we opine, to error. … For [the Manicheans] who say that nothing is to be believed but what we know [scimus], fear the name of ‘opinion’, which confessedly

162 In this passage of the dialogue, Reason says to him, “Maybe you think that this tree is indeed a tree but not a true one, or else that it cannot perish. Even though you do not believe the senses, and might answer that you do not know whether it is a tree [quamvis enim non credas sensibus, possisque respondere, ignorare te prorsus utrum arbor sit], yet, if it is a tree, I think you will not deny that it is a true tree. For this judgment is made by the intellect, not by sense [non enim hoc sensu, sed intelligentia judicat].”

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is foul and miserable; but if they would attentively consider that there is a great difference between thinking one knows [scire], and believing what one understands one does not know [quod nescire se intelligit], when moved by some authority, they would certainly avoid their errors and the faults of inhumanity and pride.\textsuperscript{163}

There is no hint here, or in any other early passages\textsuperscript{164}, that in some ordinary sense (or some loose sense) one can say one knows anything on testimony. Augustine distinguishes between belief on authority and scientia, and denies that one can know historical facts. Similarly, in book 3 of \textit{De libero arbitrio} (394-395) Augustine says

\begin{quote}
Present things, as far as the creature is concerned, are sensed, in the mutability and mobility of the body and soul, as transient things in which whatever we do not experience we cannot grasp by any knowledge \textit{[cognitione]} whatever.\textsuperscript{165}
\end{quote}

And in book 2 he had denied that unshaken faith with certainty could give one \textit{cognitio}.\textsuperscript{166} So in the early books of \textit{De doctrina christiana} (from around 397) it is an innovation for Augustine even to say we have ‘cognitio’ of historical facts. Before that, any time Augustine referred to testimonial belief he made a point of saying that it is merely belief, and not knowledge. In \textit{De magistro} (389), he made a point of saying that words ‘have force only to the extent that they remind us to look for things; they don’t display them for us to know [ut norimus]’ (mag.

\textsuperscript{163} \textit{Credo enim sceleratissimos coniuratos uirtute Ciceronis quondam interfectos: atque id non solum nescio, sed etiam nullo pacto me scire posse, certo scio. Opinari autem, duas ob res turpissimum est: quod et discere non potest, qui sibi iam se scire persuasit, si modo illud disci potest; et per se ipsa terneritas non bene affecti animi signum est. Nam etiamsi hoc ipsum quod de Cicerone dixi, scire se quisquam arbitratur, quamquam nihil eum impediat a discendo, quia res ipsa nulla scientia teneri potest: tamen quod non intellegit multum interesse, utrum alicquid mentis certa ratione uideatur, quod intellegere dicimus, an fames uel litteris credendum posteris utiliter commendetur; profecto errat, neque quisquam error turpitudine caret. Quod intellegimus igitur, debemus rationi: quod credimus, auctoritati: quod opinamur, errori. … Nam qui dicunt nihil esse credendum nisi quod scimus, hi unum cauent nomen opinationis, quod fatendum est turpe ac miserrimum: sed si diligenter considerent plurimum interesse, utrum se scire quis putet, an quod nescire se intellegit, credat aliqua auctoritate commotus; profecto errores et inhumanitatis atque superbiae crimen euitabant.}

\textsuperscript{164} We have seen many of the relevant passages already, such as \textit{Acad.} 2.7.19, \textit{sol} 1.3.8, ep. 13.2, \textit{mag.} 12.39, \textit{util. cred.} 11.25.

\textsuperscript{165} \textit{lib arb.} 3.21.60.203: “praesentia uero, quantum ad creaturam pertinet, in corporis et animi mutabilitate et mobilitate quasi transseuntia sentiuntur, in quibus quicquid non experimur cognitione qualicunque tenere non possimus.”

\textsuperscript{166} \textit{lib. arb.} 2.2.4.10-2.2.5.11.
10.36); he denies that we get notitia from words. But at the end of his life he says we do get knowledge (notitiam) “through witnesses whom it is absurd not to believe” (ciu. 19.18). So it looks like his Retractationes statement which allows for a sense in which one can say one has testimonial scientia is a revisionary statement. When he wrote the De utilitate credendi, he would have denied that we have testimonial knowledge of any kind.

One might be disappointed by the way Augustine takes a step back from his Ordinary Language claims. But even in his Compromise stage, he does put testimony on equal epistemic footing with sensory knowledge, and this is a major innovation in the history of philosophy. Before Augustine’s time most philosophers held that knowledge in the strictest sense (epistêmê) comes from the intellect alone, although they admitted that sensory knowledge might be a case of some lesser kind of knowledge, gnôsis or katalêpsis. Augustine was familiar with these as cognitio, perceptio, comprehensio, or notitia. Indeed, there was some controversy before Augustine about whether philosophers should recognize two sources of knowledge (the intellect and the senses) or just the one (the intellect). But never before had anyone considered testimony a third source of knowledge. From at least 414 on, Augustine regularly presented his epistemology as one in which there are three sources of knowledge: the mind, the senses, and testimony (ep. 147, trin. 15.12.21, ciu. 19.18).

But is this Retractationes view so earth-shattering after all? Perhaps Augustine is not really distinguishing two senses, but merely pointing to one proper sense and making reasonable allowance for loose use in everyday situations. This is the view that recent skeptic Peter Unger (1975), for example, takes of ordinary English use of the word ‘knowledge’. Coady endorses

167 King, trans., p. 137.
168 “per testes, quibus non credere absurdum est, in nostram notitiam peruenerunt.” De ciuitate 19.18 is quoted in its entirety near the end of this chapter, and this line comes at the end.
169 Other passages show that Augustine similarly did not at first consider the senses a source of knowledge, certainly not a very important one. For example, in Soliloquia 1.3.8 Reason says to him, “Do you wish to know [nosse] your friend, whom you said you don’t know, by sense or by intellect?”, and he replies, “What I know of him by sense, if indeed something is known [noscitur] by sense, is worthless [uile] and is enough. But I want to reach by the intellect that part of him by which he is my friend, that is, his mind.”
170 As noted earlier, Spanneut (1957) discusses a debate between “sensualistes” (including the Stoics and Tertullian) and “intellectualistes” (including Gnostics and Academics) about whether there can be sensory knowledge, and if so, whether intellectual knowledge depends on it.
such a ‘benign misuse’ reading of Retractationes 1.14.3. He says Augustine is “merely admitting that the widespread misuse in the cases of perception and testimony is, for common purposes, harmless and intelligible.”\footnote{Coady (1992: 18). He says that Miles Burnyeat suggested this reading to him. Coady also thinks that while this reading is the most accurate, it makes Augustine’s position ‘dubiously coherent’ (19).} On this reading, Augustine has in effect gone back to square one in denying that we have sensory or testimonial knowledge in any proper sense.

The question is whether at this stage Augustine thinks there is an interesting secondary sense of ‘\textit{scientia}’ at work in the ordinary usage, or Augustine is merely excusing loose use of a word that has only one proper sense. In the remainder of this chapter, I propose to argue for the view that Augustine does have an interesting secondary sense of ‘\textit{scientia}’ in mind, by looking at how Augustine talks about testimony in this last stage. He continues to say that some testimony should not be doubted, and he calls knowledge obtained in this way ‘\textit{notitia}’.\footnote{The main passage I will look at is De \textit{ciuitate dei} 19.18. Earlier on, in book 11 of De \textit{ciuitate dei}, Augustine still talks as if we get \textit{scientia} from the senses and from testimony, but book 11 may be from Augustine’s Ordinary Language period, as it was written around 418, or even earlier, and the last books of the \textit{De trinitate} may have been written around the same time. Augustine says in \textit{ep. 184A.3.5} (c. 418) that he had completed thirteen books of \textit{De ciuitate dei} and was working on book 14. La Bonnardière (1965: 139) claims that the later books of the \textit{De trinitate} were written 419-420. The passage in book 11 I am thinking of is \textit{ciu. 11.3}, where Augustine says Scripture is an authority on matters of which we ought not to be ignorant (\textit{quas ignorare non expedit}) but which we cannot know by ourselves (\textit{nec per nos ipsos nosse idonei sumus}). On the other hand, “things not remote from our senses, whether interior or exterior, can be known \textit{sciri} with ourselves as witnesses” (\textit{ea sciri possunt testibus nobis, quae remota non sunt a sensibus nostris siue interioribus siue etiam exterioribus}). So in this passage, \textit{ciu. 11.3}, Augustine endorses the idea that the senses are a source of \textit{scientia}, and suggests that testimony may be such a source also.} I suggest that the existence of testimonial (and sensory) \textit{notitia} is Augustine’s basis for saying that we should not hesitate to say (\textit{non dubitemus dicere}) that we have some testimonial and sensory ‘\textit{scientia}’. The ordinary language sense of ‘\textit{scientia}’, in other words, is \textit{notitia}. This interpretation better captures the fact that Augustine’s attitude toward testimony in this late stage differs from that of his earliest writings. This interpretation also ascribes to Augustine a more interesting mature approach to testimony, and points toward late scholastic Augustinian views of testimony.

In \textit{De trinitate} 13-15, Augustine said that we have testimonial and sensory \textit{scientia}, but alongside this innovation, he often called sensory knowledge \textit{notitia}, and historical knowledge \textit{cognitio}.\footnote{For example, see \textit{trin. 12.14.22, 13.1.2, 14.8.11, 14.10.13, 14.13.17, 15.10.17, 15.11.20, 15.12.21, 15.12.22.} In Retractationes 1.14.3 Augustine takes back this use of ‘\textit{scientia}’, but he never}
stops using ‘\textit{notitia}’ for sensory and testimonial knowledge. In \textit{De civitate dei} he reaffirms the three sources view and the distinction between ‘\textit{scientia}’ (as the ‘certain’ product of ‘the mind’ alone) and the undoubting ‘\textit{notitia}’ of the senses and of testimony. But before we look at these passages, let’s try to get a bit clearer on the proper and ordinary senses of ‘\textit{scientia}’.

Here is my best guess at how Augustine might define knowledge in the proper sense, if asked:

\textit{Scientia}, properly speaking, is the mind’s cognitive grasp (i) of a truth, (ii) caused by the demonstration of that truth to the mind, either directly by being immediately evident to the mind, or indirectly by being evidently inferred from other truths evident to it, (iii) with objective certainty, (iv) and subjective certainty.

I infer this definition from the way Augustine uses ‘\textit{scientia}’ and what he applies it to in \textit{Contra Academicos} and other early works.\footnote{Augustine applies the term ‘\textit{scientia}’ to knowledge of liberal disciplines like mathematics, but also to introspective knowledge of how things appear to one, and what one’s own attitude is to things. But Augustine already shifts his position in his earliest works. For example, in \textit{Acad.} 1.7.19 he takes the Stoic line when he says that \textit{scientia} “doesn’t consist merely in the matters that are apprehended. Instead, it consists in the fact that they are apprehended in such a way that nobody should be in error about it or vacillate when pressed by any opponents. Accordingly some philosophers have said most truly ($\textit{uerissime}$) that knowledge can be found in no one save the wise man: what the wise man maintains and follows ($\textit{quod tuetur ac sequitur}$) he should hold both completely ($\textit{perfectum}$) and unshaken ($\textit{inconcussum}$).” But in \textit{Soliloquies} 1.4.9 he claims to have \textit{scientia} of mathematical truths, while acknowledging that the Stoics would not allow that he does, since he is not yet wise.} I intend this definition to include the knowledge we acquire by introspection, by mathematical or logical proofs, by grasping the natures of things, and by proofs based on one’s grasp of natures.\footnote{In \textit{Contra Academicos} he says that he has \textit{scientia} of the way things appear to him (\textit{Acad.} 3.11.24ff). In the \textit{Soliloquies}, Augustine says he knows when his mind is thinking certain things, but he is seeking to find out what the \textit{nature} of the mind is (\textit{sol} 1.2.7 et passim). When Augustine considers the possibility that he has some astronomical \textit{scientia} (\textit{sol.} 1.3.8) he probably thinks of it as knowledge of a nature (cf. \textit{sol.} 1.15.28).} All of these Augustine would consider cases of mental ‘seeing’. I mean the definition to exclude inductive inferences of all kinds, as well as any innate or dispositional knowledge that has not yet been consciously demonstrated by grasp of a nature, or evident inference based on the grasp of a nature, or by the keenest of introspection.\footnote{Clearly Augustine doesn’t think that every case of introspection yields knowledge. He thinks many people fail to know what is going on in their minds, and fail to understand the structure of their minds.} It excludes testimony and sense-perception because these are not immediately demonstrated to the mind nor evidently inferred from truths that are. They are not ‘seen’ by the
mind itself. Truths accessed by testimony in particular are not ‘present’ to the mind, but ‘absent’; not only are they ‘unseen’ but often ‘unseeable’.\textsuperscript{177} As Augustine likes to point out, we ‘see’ that we have faith but the truth thereby believed on faith we do not see.\textsuperscript{178}

The Ordinary meaning for ‘scientia’ is harder to guess at, but Augustine gives us some hints when he characterizes it as (a) obligated belief in the truth, and (b) acquaintance with the truth (notitia).

(a) Augustine expresses an absolute obligation to believe $p$ variously by saying that it would be ‘absurd’, ‘impudent’, ‘shameful’ or ‘rash’ not to believe $p$. At first such terms look like they carry only emotive or ethical rather than epistemic weight. For Augustine terms like ‘impudent’ and ‘rash’ do have ethical weight, but from his early writings on Augustine also frequently uses them to express an epistemic obligation. Thus ‘opinion’ (belief that one knows $p$ when one does not) is ‘shameful’ in \textit{Contra Academicos} (386), not in the sense that one ought to hide it, but in the sense that one ought not to have such opinions in the first place.\textsuperscript{179} Still in his Platonist stage, Augustine said that “what cannot be understood or sensed (\textit{intellegi neque sentiri}) gives rise to [nothing more than] an excessively rash (\textit{temerarium}) and worthless opinion”\textsuperscript{180}. In \textit{De quantitate animae} (388), it would be ‘impudent’ not only to reject a conclusion arrived at by reason’s use of the most certain arguments (\textit{argumenta certissima}), but even to doubt it.\textsuperscript{181} In 396, Augustine challenges the Manicheans to present him with “certain knowledge” that contradicts his Catholic faith, in order to convict him of “having believed rashly”.\textsuperscript{182}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{177} \textit{finuis} 1.1, ep. 147.2.7.
\item \textsuperscript{178} ep. 147.3.8, \textit{f. inuis} 1.2, \textit{trin} 14.8.11.
\item \textsuperscript{179} \textit{Acad.} 2.5.11 and 2.6.14.
\item \textsuperscript{180} ep. 13.2: \textit{quod uero neque intellegi neque sentiri potest, temerarium nimis et nugatoriam gignit opinonem}. Teske (2001: 39) dates this letter between 389 and 392.
\item \textsuperscript{181} quant. an. 15.25. Likewise, in \textit{civ} 17.17 Augustine says that a truth can be “so clear that to deny it would imply not merely unbelief and mistake, but downright impudence.” (\textit{Verum quod sequitur ... ita clarum est, ut non solum infideliter et infeliciter, sed etiam impudenter negetur}.)
\item \textsuperscript{182} c. ep. \textit{Man.} 14. see also \textit{conf.} 6.5.7: “rather than from the Manichees to have a rash promise of knowledge with mockery of mere belief, and then afterwards to be ordered to believe many fabulous and absurd myths impossible to prove true.” (\textit{... quam illic temeraria pollicitatione scientiae credulitatem inrideri et postea tam multa fabulosissima et absurdissima, quia demonstrari non poterant, credenda imperari}.) The epistemic sense of \textit{temere} and its
\end{itemize}
Finally, in *Contra Faustum* (397-398), we get a reader’s general rule for identifying obligated beliefs:

My writings are … of the kind that should be read not with an obligation to believe, but with freedom of judgment. In order to leave room for such profitable discussions of difficult questions, there is a distinct boundary separating all writings after the apostolic times from the authoritative canonical books …. In other books the reader may form his own opinion, and perhaps, from not understanding the writer, may differ from him, and may approve of what he likes, or disapprove of what he dislikes. In such cases, a man is at liberty to withhold his belief, *unless there is some clear demonstration or some canonical authority* to show that the doctrine or statement either must or may be true.\(^{183}\)

Think of epistemic justification as falling on a scale from, at the one end, having some justification for believing \(p\) (roughly, what Augustine would call belief in something *probabilis*, i.e., plausible\(^{184}\)) to, at the other end, being beyond reproach in believing \(p\). Augustine’s obligated belief is belief that is beyond reproach.\(^{185}\)

cognates is obscured by other passages where Augustine notes that it is irrational to *act* rashly, by trying to learn something one cannot or ought not *(ord. 2.5.17, 2.16.44; c. Faust. 12.46)*. But it should not be surprising that, corresponding to the norm for rational behavior is a norm for rational belief with the same name. Augustine blurs the line between these two in *f. inuis.* 2.4, where he argues that people wouldn’t love their parents if they ought not to believe anything they can’t “see”, and so would believe that their parents love them “not with praiseworthy trust, but blameworthy rashness” (*non laudabili fide sed culpabili temeritate*).\(^{183}\)

\(^{183}\) *c. Faust.* 11.5: “*Inter hos enim sumus, quibus idem dicit apostolus: et si quid aliter sapitis, id quoque uobis deus reuelabit. quod genus litterarum non cum credendi necessitate, sed cum iudicandi libertate legendum est. cui tamen ne intercluderetur locus et adimeretur posteris ad quaestiones difficiles tractandas atque uersandas linguae ac stili saluberrimus labor, distincta est a posteriorum libris excellencia canonicae auctoritatis ueteris et noui testamenti, quae apostolorum confirmata temporibus per successiones episcoporum et propagationes ecclesiarum tamquam in sede quadrum sublimiter constituta est, cui serviat omnis fidelis et pius intellectus. itaque in eis [sc. opusculis posteriorum], si qua forte propterea dissonare putantur a uero, quia non, ut dicta sunt, intelleguntur, tamen liberum ibi habet lector auditor ut judicium, quo uel adprobet, quod placuerit, uel inprobet, quod offendert. et ideo cuncta eiusmodi, nisi uel certa ratione uel ex illa canonica auctoritate defendantur, ut demonstretur sive omnino ita esse, sive fieri potuisse, quod uel disputatum ibi est uel narratum, si cui disquisirer aut credere noluerit, non reprehenditur.*”

\(^{184}\) See Augustine’s discussion of the *probabilis* in *Acad.* 2.11.26, 2.13.30, 3.15.33ff. Ian Hacking (1975: 34) has argued that before the rise of mathematical probability theory in the 17th century, there was no conception of probability, and that the notion of the *probabilis* was limited to that of a generally approved proposition (like Aristotle’s *endoxa*). However, Augustine already had a notion of subjective probability (*Acad.* 3.16.35), which he
Augustine holds to this rule from now on, until he modifies it to include testimony which is also ‘absurd to disbelieve’ (ciu. 19.18). For example, his response to rationalists or skeptics who won’t accept Scriptural ‘marvels’ (miracula) they can’t explain is to give them a long list of the ‘marvels’ recorded by naturalists: ‘salt’ that becomes fluid in fire but crackles in water, peacock’s meat that never rots, etc. (ciu. 21.5). If you accept the existence of such natural marvels without having an explanation for them, argues Augustine, then you shouldn’t require an explanation to believe Scriptural miracles. And Augustine argues that you should accept such natural marvels, because they are well-known (notissima) whether by observation or from recent witnesses (ciu. 21.7). But to avoid the charge of credulity, he is careful to note his reasons for accepting some reports with more certainty than others:

For my own part, I do not wish all the marvels I have cited to be rashly accepted, for I do not myself believe them such that I have no doubt about them, except those I have experienced, or which anyone can easily experience, such as the salt that crackles in water, … [etc.]. Some of these I am acquainted with (novi) in common with all people, some with many … But for those I have only read about, I have been unable to find suitable witnesses from whom I could hear whether they are true, except for the case of the fountain in which burning torches are extinguished and extinguished torches are lit, and the apples of Sodom which look ripe but are full of smoke. And I haven’t found any who said they had seen the fountain in Epirus, but some said they had seen a similar fountain in Gaul not far from Grenoble. On the other hand, books worth trusting mention the fruit of Sodom’s trees, and so many people say they have seen it that I cannot doubt it.  

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186 No further content provided.
This passage shows how the rule for obligated belief stated in *Contra Faustum* has been expanded, by the end of Augustine’s life, to include cases of testimonial belief which ‘cannot’ be doubted.

Finally, Augustine frequently bases his argument on the appearance that some belief is obligated. Where *scientia* proper is not possible, Augustine sometimes uses *reductio* arguments (believing not-p would be absurd, therefore p), or argues that believing not-p (or denying p) would be impudent or rash. (We could call such arguments *reductio ad impudentem* and *reductio ad temerarium*. It would be ‘impudent’, for example, to deny someone’s claim to will her own happiness; and this is enough to show that people do know that they will their own happiness (*trin.* 15.12.21; *cf. ciu.* 17.17).187

(b) Augustine typically labels ordinary ‘knowledge’ *notitia*. For example, he substitutes *notitia* for *scientia* when using *scientia* in an ordinary language sense in *De trinitate* books 13, 14 and 15,188 and in his later works he returns to contrasting the *notitia* we get through sense-perception and testimony with the *scientia* we get through the mind alone (*ciu.* 19.18). *Notitia* seems to have two meanings in Augustine: (i) acquaintance or familiarity with a person, and (ii) acquaintance in a more general or transferred sense: awareness or notice of some truth.189

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187 In *f ini nes* 2.4 he says that one has a ‘praiseworthy faith’ that one’s parents are who they say they are, not a ‘culpable rashness’. One might think that the reason not to doubt the senses in *trin.* 15.12.21 is that it would be an impudent rejection of God’s gift. *ciu* 11.3 says we ‘ought to believe’ what the Scriptures say. Other examples are a bit messier. For example, in a sort of *tu quoque* argument in *De libero arbitrio* and *De utile creden* Augustine says only that one would be *more* culpable if one refused to believe a true teacher of religion than if that teacher were to give holy secrets to someone unworthy, although the suggestion is that the student who has put himself in a position to be taught ought to believe what his teacher says.


189 Lewis & Short (1966: 1218) list the original literal but very rare use for *notitia* as (1) “a being known, celebrity, note, fame” and from this they say two other, much more common, meanings were derived: (2.A) “acquaintance with a person” and (2.B) “a knowing, knowledge, an idea, conception, notion of a thing”. As far as I can tell, Augustine does not use *notitia* to mean ‘fame’. In his early works he contrasts *nouisse* and *notitia* with testimonial belief (e.g., *Acad.* 2.9.17, and *trin.* 8.5.7, following *mag.* 11.37), but perhaps some familiarity with archaic Latin
When you’ve met someone (say, Lucy), you can say you are acquainted with her. And as
a result of your meeting, you should be able, under ordinary circumstances, to recognize her
again. By contrast, someone who had merely heard that there is a person named Lucy, but
had never met her (nor seen pictures of her), would not be able to recognize her, or recognize
that someone else looks like her. By analogy, one can speak of gaining an acquaintance with
some thing, some nature, or some truth, when one comes to ‘notice’ or ‘be aware of’ it. Noticing
is factive: necessarily, if you notice that \( p \), then \( p \) is true. But you don’t need to have scientia
of \( p \), in Augustine’s proper sense, in order to count as noticing, being aware of, or being
acquainted with \( p \). Suppose you hear the door open and close, and thereby rightly think that your
daughter has come home even though you don’t see her walk in. Even though you don’t see her
come home, and don’t have a demonstration of the fact that she is home, you count as noticing
that she came home. In short, it seems to be enough for noticing that (1) you have a true belief
that your daughter came home, and (2) that belief was caused by her coming home.

But one might want to add a further condition: that you get that belief from a reliable
faculty. For example, we have seen that Augustine considers sense-perception a reliable faculty,
that is, a faculty one ‘ought to believe’ even though it sometimes makes mistakes. Augustine
typically says we get notitia, not scientia, from sense-perception. Memory of past events is

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190 Acad. 2.7.19 and trin. 14.13.17 use nouisse in this way.

191 In Acad. 2.7.19, Augustine points out that it would be ridiculous for someone to say of some boy “How like his
father he is! How accurately rumor has reported this to me!” (quam patris similis est! quam non temere hoc ad me
fama detulerat!), but when asked whether he knows the father replies “I don’t know him, but he seems similar” (non
noui, inquit; tamen similis eius mihi uidetur)

192 Augustine recognizes this condition in trin. 15.10.17: ‘uera sunt alioquin nota non essent’.

193 In trin. 15.12.21, Augustine highlights the fact that the bodily senses can lead us astray (in order to contrast
sense-perception with the perception of reason), before he says that we should nevertheless not doubt them. See ciu.
19.18 (quoted below) for a summary of Augustine’s Contra Academicos argument to this effect.

194 See f. inuis. 1.2 (we nosse things by means of our bodily eyes), trin. 13.1.4 (‘inasmuch as the world is noticed
(notas est), it is noticed by those who see (videntibus notas est’), and of course trin. 15.12.21 (it is through the
another faculty that one ought to believe, even though it occasionally goes wrong. And memory is another faculty that, according to Augustine, provides us not with *scientia*, but *notitia*. For example, if Jim claims to be your acquaintance, but no matter what you do you cannot recognize him, “then you have already forgotten him such that all notice (*notitia*) of him has been completely erased from your mind”. Augustine recognizes that the acquaintance that memory provides us with is indirect, by means of images and the ‘testimony’ of one’s own faculties. Perhaps it is not surprising, then, that a few years before he began writing the *De trinitate*, Augustine began occasionally to say that we gain acquaintance (*notitia*) with past events or the facts of nature through the testimony of others.

In summary, we have many hints in Augustine’s other works as to what he meant in *Retractationes* 1.14.3 by the ordinary sense of ‘*scientia*’. In its ordinary sense it refers to obligated belief (when it would be absurd, or epistemically ‘rash’ or ‘impudent’ not to believe), and all the obligated beliefs Augustine considers are cases of ‘*notitia*’ (‘acquaintance’: true belief about some object caused by grasping that object with a reliable faculty). By admitting

senses that we ‘learn’ about the things that are noticed (*nota sunt*) in heaven and earth, inasmuch as God wished them to be noticed (*innotescere*).

195 *mag.* 12.39.

196 Note that by ‘memory’ here I refer only to memory of past events, which Augustine says we have by means of images or similitudes (e.g., *mag.* 12.39, *conf.* 10.8.14, *Gn. litt.* 12.6.15, *trin.* 13.1.2-3). Augustine also talks about memory as the storehouse for the liberal disciplines, but he says it does not work by means of images, as memory of past events does (*conf.* 10.9.16). Later Augustine occasionally uses ‘memory’ to refer to dispositional knowledge, even if it does not arise from past experience, ‘attributing to the memory everything that we know (*scimus*)’, even if we do not think (cogitemus) of it. … that is a more profound depth of our memory, where we also find those contents which we think of for the first time’ (*trin.* 15.21.40).

197 *trin.* 14.13.17: … *ita iam oblivus es ut omnis illa notitia penitus delete sit animo*…

198 *mag.* 12.39. However, ‘testimony’ was commonly used in this evidential sense before Augustine (e.g., in Aristotle and Epicurus and Plotinus – see note 44, pp. 18-19).

199 In his discussion of Scripture interpretation he points out that having *notitia* about certain natural facts one has learned from others (e.g., that carbuncles glow in the dark, or that hyssop cleanses the lungs) helps one better interpret passages that mention those natural objects. (*doct. chr.* 2.24.59-61). He also notes in his argument against Faustus the Manichean that the *notitia* we have about Christ’s life comes to us “through a human witness” (*homine teste*) (*c. Faust.* 12.45).
testimonial *notitia*, Augustine recognizes that we can be acquainted with something not only directly but also indirectly, by means of ‘the senses of others’ (*trin.* 15.12.21).

Augustine neatly summarizes these two features (obligated belief and *notitia*) in *De civitate dei* 19, chapter 18. This chapter, like *trin.* 15.12.21 (a key passage from the Ordinary Language stage), is written in response to Academic skepticism. In *trin.* 15.12.21, Augustine had tried to show that a ‘true word’ can come from three different sources of *scientia*: reason, sense-perception, and testimony. As if to correct that earlier work, Augustine now makes a clear distinction between *scientia* proper on the one hand, and sense-perception and testimony on the other, in *De ciuitate dei* 19.18:

As for the distinctive feature of the New Academy (according to Varro), that to them all things are uncertain, the city of God detests such doubt as madness. It has the most certain knowledge [*certissimam scientiam*] about things grasped by the mind and by reason – even if it has very little, due to the corruptible body that weighs down the soul (since, as the apostle says, ‘we know in part’).

Augustine’s claim that we have some knowledge with certainty, either ‘by the mind’ (perhaps referring to introspection) or ‘by reason’ (perhaps referring to intuition of natures and demonstration) is no different here from anything he has ever said before. He just says it a bit more vehemently. Augustine then moves on to sense-perception:

It [the city of God] also believes the bodily senses (*creditque sensibus*) in evident matters, since the one who thinks they are never to be believed errs more miserably [than the one who believes them].

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200 “… *non solum nostrorum uerum etiam et alienorum corporum sensus plurimum addidisse nostrae scientiae confitendum est.*”

201 I have provided the whole chapter, but split up by my own commentary. Here is this first part: “*Quod autem adinet ad illam differentiam, quam de Academicis nouis Varro adhibuit, quibus incerta sunt omnia, omnino ciuitas dei talem dubitationem tamquam dementiam detestatur, habens de rebus, quas mente atque ratione comprehendit, etiam si parum propter corpus corruptibile, quod adgrauat animam - quoniam, sicut dicit apostolus, ex parte scimus -, tamen certissimam scientiam,…*”

202 “… *creditque sensibus in rei cuiusque evidentia, quibus per corpus animus utitur, quoniam miserabilius fallitur, qui numquam putat eis esse credendum;…*”
In *Contra Academicos*, Augustine had argued against the idea that it is ‘shameful’ to assent to anything other than what one knows. He imagined two travelers: one credulously gets the right directions to a city, but the skeptic, who “follows the plausible” but without assent, gets tricked by a respectable-looking guide (*Acad.* 3.15.34). The credulous one went wrong by believing too easily, but the skeptic went wrong, too, by taking the wrong road. Augustine concludes that skepticism is not the cure-all for error that its advocates claim. The *ciu.* 19.18 argument for believing the senses makes a similar comparison, between the person who believes the senses and the person who thinks the senses should never be trusted, but the conclusion now is a positive one: one ought to believe the senses. Perhaps the idea is that the senses are so overwhelmingly reliable that to doubt every one of their results (or even any significant proportion of them) on the basis of a few errors is absurd. And perhaps belief in the senses’ reliability is based on the idea (expressed in *trin.* 15.12.21) that God created our senses as a guide to the physical world. Augustine then moves on to faith, a special case of testimony:

> It [the city of God] also believes the canonical holy Scriptures, both old and new, from which it gets the faith by which the just lives, the faith by which we walk without doubt while we travel apart from the Lord.\(^{203}\)

And he ends the chapter with a summary of his epistemology cast in the negative, as the set of things one is allowed to doubt.

> As long as this faith is kept with certainty on some matters, we doubt, without being justly blamed, things [i] we don’t perceive by reason, [ii] nor perceive by sense, [iii] or which are not clear from canonical scripture, [iv] nor came into our knowledge [notitiam] through witnesses whom it is absurd not to believe.\(^{204}\)

Augustine’s concern throughout this chapter is to distinguish the matters one is permitted to doubt from those one is obligated to believe. He points out that ‘reason’ and ‘mind’ give us

\(^{203}\) “... credit etiam scripturis sanctis et ueteribus et nouis, quas canonicas appellantur, unde fides ipsa concepta est, ex qua iustus uiuit; per quam sine dubitatione ambulamus, quamdiu peregrinamur a domino; ...”

\(^{204}\) “... qua salua atque certa de quibusdam rebus, quas neque sensu neque ratione percepimus neque nobis per scripturam canonicam claruerunt nec per testes, quibus non credere absurdum est, in nostram notitiam peruenerunt, sine iusta reprehensione dubitamus.”
certain scientia. Then he discusses the things we ought to believe, even though they do not give us certain scientia. We get perceptio from the senses, and notitia from “witnesses whom it is absurd not to believe”. If we include believing Scripture as a special case of such testimony, then these three levels match up with the three sources of knowledge in Retractationes 1.14.3, one case of scientia proper, and the two cases of ordinary ‘knowledge’ (notitia). So in civ. 19.18 we have a concise but comprehensive statement of Augustine’s mature epistemology of testimony.

1.7 Conclusion

Augustine was an important pioneer in the epistemology of testimony. He broke with the whole philosophical tradition before him by valuing testimonial belief so highly, and by endorsing testimonial knowledge. Medieval philosophers after him continued to elaborate on the value of testimony, and some followed him in calling it notitia, or scientia in a broad sense.205

I have argued that Augustine’s break with the established philosophical tradition of his day took place in four stages. The motives for this break match those stages, although all of these motives were present to some degree throughout his life. As a Platonist, Augustine recognized the epistemic and practical value of trusting the authoritative claims of one’s teacher, for the sake of learning a discipline. As a Particularist, he recognized the epistemic and practical value of believing particular truths (e.g., historical truths), even when they do not fit into the systematic body of beliefs that make up a discipline. In his Ordinary Language stage, Augustine felt free to abandon traditional philosophical usage for the sake of fitting his epistemology to Scriptural and everyday Latin. When at last Augustine surveyed his own development, he

205 Henry of Ghent says testimony is a case of scire large accepto and notitiam certam qua cognoscitur res sicut est absque omni fallacia et deceptione, and cites Augustine’s trin. 15.12.21 in his support (SQO 1.1). Ockham says that one loose sense of scientia is notitia certa alicuius veri, and gives testimonial belief about foreign cities as an example (Expositio in Libros Physicorum, prol. part 2). Augustine uses belief about foreign cities as examples of testimony so frequently (conf. 6.5.7, Gn. litt. 12.6.15, ep. 147.5, trin. 8.6.9, trin. 15.12.21) that Ockham is probably following Augustine even in choosing what kind of example to give. In contrast, prominent earlier medievals like Baldwin of Ford and Abelard either are not interested in whether testimony yields knowledge (there is no discussion of this issue in Baldwin’s Commendatio Fidei) or deny that it does (Abelard says that if something he believed on faith were present, only then would he have cognitio of it, Sententiae Parisienses 3.6-8).
recognized that obligated testimonial *notitia* is a kind of knowledge, and found a way to make this view consistent with his initial conviction that *scientia* proper is the domain of the mind alone.
Chapter 2
Augustine on Testimonial Knowledge

2.0 Introduction

I have argued that in his later years Augustine’s view was that testimony provides second-class knowledge, notitia. And I have suggested that notitia is obligated belief. But the question then arises, what obligates that belief? Is it that we cannot but infer that $p$? Or is it that our automatic, default setting is to believe that $p$, and we would need positive reasons to depart from that? Or is it that the speaker’s authority gives us a special interpersonal reason to believe? Unfortunately, no single passage in Augustine addresses these questions in detail, and we shall have to reconstruct his view from various statements on the matter (including statements from his early works, so long as they are consistent with his mature view). To organize the discussion, I will first review the three current approaches to testimonial knowledge I outlined in the Introduction, and then consider what Augustine has to say about knowledge had by default entitlement, by acceptance of authoritative testimony, and by inductive inference.

Suppose that a speaker knows $p$ and asserts $p$ to you, and you previously did not not know $p$. Under what conditions does such an assertion give you testimonial knowledge? On a Default view, you come to know $p$ when you understand the assertion and have no defeaters for believing it. This is analogous to the way you know $p$ whenever you remember that $p$, and have no reason to distrust your memory. On an Inferential view, there is no such entitlement; to know $p$ you need sufficient justification for inferring that $p$ from such testimony. (Inferential views

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1 By “Augustine’s mature view” I mean the Compromise view I explained in the previous chapter. Passages from earlier works are useful for explaining Augustine’s mature view only if they are consistent with his mature view in a stronger sense than logical consistency. That is, not only should they not explicitly contradict what he says in his Compromise stage; they should also be claims that even the mature Augustine would have made.

2 For example, E. Fricker (2006) says that you need to know that S is ‘trustworthy’, in the sense that not easily would S assert $p$ unless S knew $p$. Testimony is ‘reduced’ to an inference from ‘S is trustworthy’ to ‘S knows $p$’;
are typically called ‘Reductionist’ views, because they ‘reduce’ testimony as a source of knowledge to a kind of inference.) On an Assurance view, the speaker must intend you to accept \( p \) on her authority, and this gives you a non-inferential reason to believe that \( p \). There are different ways to construe this non-inferential reason. For example, it might be that the authority implicitly or explicitly commands you to believe that \( p \), and this gives you a reason to believe when you have placed yourself under her authority.\(^3\) Or it might be that the authority implicitly or explicitly offers to take responsibility for the truth of your belief that \( p \), and this gives you a reason to believe once you have accepted the offer.\(^4\)

I will begin by explaining where I think a Default interpretation of Augustine goes wrong. Then I will entertain an Assurance interpretation of Augustine while explaining some conditions he places on believing authoritative testimony. I conclude, however, that the textual evidence favours an Inferentialist reading.

3 McMyler (2011:146-166) considers this kind of view, as does Zagzebski (2012: 101-102, 139).

4 On Richard Moran’s ‘Assurance’ view, testimonial knowledge requires not only that S know \( p \), but also that S voluntarily offer you an assurance that \( p \) (thereby taking responsibility for the justification of your belief that \( p \)) and that you voluntarily accept that offer. Moran (2005b: 18) says about the speaker: “On a genuinely non-Humean account, when someone tells me it’s cold out, I don’t simply gain an awareness of his beliefs; I am also given his assurance that it’s cold out. This is something I could not have gained by the private observation of his behavior. When someone gives me his assurance that it’s cold out he explicitly assumes a certain responsibility for what I believe” (6). And about the audience Moran says: “The account of this role [of the mutual recognition of the speaker’s intention in telling the audience that \( p \)] suggested by the Assurance View is that the mutual recognition of intention can play the role for the audience of providing him with a reason for belief, because he sees the speaker as presenting himself as accountable for the truth of \( p \), and asking, through the recognition of his intention, that this offer of his assurance be accepted. And it is understood by both parties that this acceptance is something which the audience is free to give or refuse.”
2.1 Problems for the Default Interpretation

The tendency in the scholarly literature so far has been to read Augustine as a Defaultist. Rist (1994: 43, 91) and King & Ballantyne (2009: 200) suggest that Augustine’s overall epistemology may have taken a turn toward default entitlement, once he thought he had shown that the Academics were wrong to say knowledge is impossible. The idea is that Augustine may have thought that he had shifted the burden of proof to the Academics (and any others who wanted to deny ordinary cases of knowledge); he may have taken his refutation of the Academics to have opened the floodgates to all kinds of mental states that should be considered knowledge by default, including testimonial knowledge.

In chapter 1, I argued against reading *trin.* 15.12.21 this way. Here I will argue against reading Augustine this way in general. There are two general problems for this view. First, Augustine says that a little bit of reasoning to the effect that one ought to believe always precedes the acceptance of testimony (*uera rel.* 24.45, *ep.* 120.3, *praed. sanct.* 2.5). But such reasoning should not be necessary on a Default interpretation. For example, in the course of arguing for a Default view, Michael Dummett says

> If someone tells me the way to the railway station, or asks me whether I had heard that the Foreign Secretary has just resigned, or informs me that the Museum is closed today, *I go through no process of reasoning, however swift,* to arrive at the conclusion that he has spoken aright: my understanding of his utterance and my acceptance of his assertion are one; I simply add what he has told me to my stock of information. (1993: 491, emphasis added)

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5 Others who discuss Augustine only briefly (Coady 1992 and McMyler 2011) take him to deny that testimony really is a source of knowledge. Coady (1992: 18) notes that some things Augustine says can be read in a Defaultist way (and cites *trin.* 15.12.21), but does not commit to reading Augustine this way. He seems more inclined to think that *retr.* 1.14.3 shows that for Augustine only *scientia* proper, had by the mind’s firm reason, is knowledge, and that talk of testimonial *scientia* is “benign misuse” (Coady 1992: 19) as I mentioned on page 62 above. McMyler (2011:18-21) briefly considers the *Confessions* and similarly says that Augustine denies that testimony provides “genuine knowledge” (19).

6 See pages 54-55 above.
This claim is central to Dummett’s argument, and directly contradicts what Augustine says in *praed. sanct.* 2.5:

> Indeed no one believes anything unless he has first thought that it is to be believed. For however suddenly, however quickly, some thoughts fly before the will to believe, and this presently follows them in closest conjunction, it is still necessary that everything which is believed should be believed after thought has preceded.⁷

Commenting on a favourite Scripture passage (“unless you believed you would not understand [*nisi credideritis non intelletetis*]”),⁸ Augustine also says:

> So if it is reasonable that faith precedes reason on some great question which cannot yet be grasped, undoubtedly the reason, however tiny, which convinces one of this, itself precedes that faith.⁹ (*ep.* 120.1.3)

These passages seem incompatible with a Default position.

Second, while it is true that the later Augustine does say, in reply to the Academics, that we should not doubt our senses (*trin.* 15.12.21, *ciu.* 19.18), he never gives the same blanket endorsement to testimony. In fact, it is a commonplace in Augustine’s writings that to disbelieve a testifier, unless the testifier should not be doubted (e.g., authoritative Scripture), is perfectly acceptable.¹⁰ Some kinds of testimony (e.g., news and rumors) require corroboration in order to provide us with knowledge (*trin.* 15.12.21). Augustine also says we should evaluate which testimony to believe, in a discussion on the nature of faith.

We must inquire next, or rather remember, what faith the apostle so earnestly recommends, for it is not good to believe just anything. Otherwise why does he say

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⁷ “Nullus quippe credit aliquid, nisi prius cogitauerit esse credendum, quamuis enim raptim, quamuis celerrime credendi voluntatem quaedam cogitationes anteuolent, mox que illa ita sequatur, ut quasi coniunctissima comitetur; necesse est tamen ut omnia quae creduntur, praeueniente cogitatione credantur.”

⁸ See TeSelle (2002) on Augustine’s use of this phrase from Isaiah 7:9 (in the Old Latin translation).

⁹ “Si igitur rationabile est, ut magnum quandum, quae capi nondum potest, fides antecedat rationem, procul dubio quantulacumque ratio, qua hoc persuadet, etiam ipsa antecedit fidem.”

¹⁰ Some representative passages are *c.* Faust. 11.5, *ep.* 147.1.4, *civ.* 19.18, *ciu.* 21.7-8. The idea is suggested in *util cred.* 11.25. See also chap. 1, p. 65 above.
“Brothers, don’t believe every spirit, but test which spirit is from God”\textsuperscript{11} (spir. et litt. 32.55)

Finally, he says that we can doubt testimony “without blame” (\textit{sine iusta reprehensione}), except when something “came to our knowledge through witnesses whom it is absurd to believe” (ciu. 19.18).\textsuperscript{12} So there are a number of times when Augustine’s claims are incompatible with a Default reading.

King & Ballantyne (2009) don’t just suggest that Augustine’s epistemology as a whole took a Defaultist turn. They also give an argument for reading Augustine as a Defaultist about testimony in particular, and it goes like this:

1. According to Augustine, friendship requires testimonial belief.\textsuperscript{13}

2. “Furthermore, [according to Augustine] friendship doesn’t require gathering reasons and evidence for a friend’s trustworthiness” in each case where the friend testifies to some proposition.\textsuperscript{14}

3. “But friendship is central to [C]hristian charity, and, along with a general commendation of ‘good will’, Augustine recommends we have it toward all” (210).

Therefore, “we should extend the privileges of friendship even to strangers, giving their testimony the same default epistemic status” (210-11).

\textsuperscript{11} “Deinde quaerendum est, immo recolendum, quam fidem tanta conflictatione commendet apostolus, non enim quodlibet credere bonum est; nam unde est illud: fratres, nolite spiritui credere, sed probate spiritum qui ex deo est?”

\textsuperscript{12} “… per testes, quibus non credere absurdum est, in nostram notitiam peruenerunt …”

\textsuperscript{13} In support of this premise King & Ballantyne (2009: 209-210) cite \textit{f. inuis}. 1.2. There Augustine argues that friendship between A and B requires that A have a belief about B’s attitudes toward A, and vice versa. But since A cannot perceive B’s attitudes by means of sensation, Augustine argues, she must acquire beliefs about them by means of testimony. We’ve already seen that Augustine goes on to accept that A might infer what B’s attitude is from ‘indications’ of it (\textit{f. inuis}. 3.5).

\textsuperscript{14} In support of this premise King & Ballantyne (2009: 210) cite \textit{f. inuis}. 2.3 thus: a person ought to “believe in the hearts of friends though these hearts be not yet truly tried”. But as we have seen, Augustine goes on to accept the idea that we have ‘indications’ of a friend’s attitude (\textit{f. inuis}. 3.5).
The main problem with this argument is premise 3, for which there is no textual evidence. It is certainly true that Christians are supposed to be friendly towards their neighbors and even their enemies; but they are not supposed to presume that their neighbors or enemies will be friendly back.\textsuperscript{15} Besides, given Augustine’s conception of friendship it is implausible to say he thought we should trust everyone as friends. In the text King & Ballantyne cite to support premises 1 and 2 (\textit{f. inuis.} 2.4), Augustine distinguishes between friendship, kinship, and affinity; and he says friendship involves reciprocal trust and an expectation that one’s friend will be helpful in hard times.\textsuperscript{16} Augustine uses this reciprocal conception of friendship to support premise 1 above. Friendship for Augustine is typically a very special, reciprocally affectionate and altruistic relationship that goes far beyond casual acquaintance.\textsuperscript{17} So he does not think we should treat everyone we meet as if they were friends deserving of default trust.\textsuperscript{18}

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{15} Augustine notes one case in which charity enjoin us \textit{not} to have default belief: when believing person X would detract from our love for some other person Y. “What about the fact that the same charity advises that one not easily believe something bad of a brother and that, when some such thing is said, [charity] judges it more in its character not to believe? [\textit{quid quod eadem caritas admonet non facile de fratre mali aliquid esse credendum et, cum tale aliquid dicitur, hoc ad se magis iudicat pertinere ne credat?}]” (\textit{spir. et litt.} 32.55). And later Augustine considers friendship a way to escape the untrustworthiness of general society: “If we don’t fall into the nearly insane ignorance that is so prevalent in this miserable life, that we mistake a friend for an enemy, or an enemy for a friend; what consoles us in this human society full of errors and disasters but the unfeigned faith and mutual love of good and true friends?” (\textit{Si autem non contingat quaedam ignorantia similis dementiae, quae tamen in huius utiae misera condiceone saepre contingat, ut credatur uel amicus esse, qui inimicus est, uel inimicus, qui amicus est: quid nos consolatur in hac humana societate erroribus aerumnisque plenissima nisi fides non ficta et mutua dilectio uerorum et bonorum amicorum?}) (\textit{ciu.} 19.8).

\textsuperscript{16} \textit{f. inuis.} 1.2: “You discern your friend’s countenance by means of your body; you discern your trust by means of your mind; but your friend’s trust is not appreciated by you, unless there is in you a reciprocating trust, by which you may believe what you do not see in him”. (“\textit{Amici faciem cernis corpore tuo, fidem tuam cernis animo tuo; amici uero non abs te amatur fides, si in te mutuo nulla sit fides, qua credas quod in illo non uides.”)

\textsuperscript{17} Elsewhere, Augustine says that you trust a friend, confiding your intimate thought with him, knowing that he will keep them sacred (\textit{diu. qu.} 71.6, cf. McNamara 1964: 224). He favorably cites Cicero’s definition of friendship (from \textit{De Amicitia} 6.20) as “agreement on human and divine matters combined with charity and good will [\textit{rerum humanarum et diuininarum cum beniuolentia et caritate consensio}].” (\textit{Acad.} 3.6.13). Much of epistle 258 is a commentary on Cicero’s account of friendship in his \textit{De Amicitia}. See McNamara (1964) for an extended account of Augustine’s statements on friendship and their relation to Cicero’s classical ideal of friendship. See especially Cicero \textit{Laelius (De Amicitia)} 65, where Cicero says that ‘faith’ (\textit{fides}) is the ‘foundation’ (\textit{fundamentum}) of a friendship, and thus only good people can be friends. After all, only a good person does not misrepresent himself or suspect a friend of wrongdoing. Aristotle says something similar in \textit{Nicomachean Ethics} VIII, 1592-1593.

\textsuperscript{18} King & Ballantyne could make their view easier to swallow by modifying premise 3 to say that, \textit{barring defeaters for trust}, one ought to have friendship toward all. They suggest (2009: 211) that \textit{ep.} 147.2.7 supports adding such a clause, but I do not think it does, and even if it does, it does not support the rest of premise 3. They say “Discussing a particular testifier’s report, Augustine says (\textit{ep.} 147.2.7): ‘If I hold him to be lying, I don’t believe him, even though perhaps it is as he says. Therefore, we believe things that are not present to our senses as long as what the testimony says seems appropriate.’ Here ‘seems appropriate’ suggests reasoning that goes beyond default
In light of the serious problems facing a Default interpretation,¹⁹ let’s consider the Assurance and Inferentialist interpretations.

### 2.2 Conditions on Testimonial Knowledge

From early on, Augustine was primarily motivated to show how belief based on *authority* is reasonable. He mostly mentions cases of non-authoritative testimony only to support this point. However, as his vision of testimonial knowledge expanded to include a variety of other kinds of testimony (believing friends, historians, daily news, common knowledge, etc.)²⁰ he seems to have adopted not an Assurance view of testimony, but an Inferential view in which belief on authority plays a very important role. Nevertheless, to show the difference between an Assurance interpretation and the Inferential interpretation, I will examine the evidence for the Assurance view first, and then explain how that evidence can be accommodated by an Inferential interpretation.

As I characterized it before, Assurance-based testimonial knowledge involves a speaker intending the audience to believe on her authority, and giving the audience a non-inferential entitlement to believe. Another way King & Ballantyne might try to save their interpretation is to say that Augustine advocates default trust in proportion to the friendliness of the relationship. But *f. inuis.* 1.1-2.4 is not an argument in favour of trusting in a default way; it’s an argument in favour of trusting at all, arguing against a verificationist rejection of the category of testimonial beliefs altogether. Besides, the text goes on (*in f. inuis* 3.5ff) to state that one has *indicia* for trusting one’s friends. So again it looks like Augustine thinks one needs ‘positive reasons’ of some kind for trusting even one’s friends, beyond a mere default entitlement.

¹⁹ King & Ballantyne give another brief argument for the Defaulist reading. They say that Augustine allows for cases of testimony in which “the hearer cannot, even in principle, check it using non-testimonial evidence”, and they give knowing the identity of one’s parents as an example (2009: 197, 213). But it is not at all clear that Augustine thought such testimony cannot be ‘checked’. Later in *f. inuis.* 3.5 he gives various indications (*indicia*) of the trustworthiness of a speaker, and nothing he says would indicate that such indications could not or should not be applied to the case of believing the identity of one’s parents. But even if Augustine did admit some cases of testimonial belief that cannot in principle be justified inferentially, this need not make him a Defaulist about all testimony. He could have adopted a view like Fricker’s (1995), on which a ‘global’ reduction is not possible, and children have to accept some things by default, but for adults ‘local’ reductions to inference are normally possible and required. (See the Introduction, p. 4.)

²⁰ See *trin.* 15.12.21, as well as *f. inuis.* 2.4 and *ep.* 147.1.5.
reason to believe her, which the audience then chooses to accept. Augustine, I will argue, is committed to saying that an audience gets authority-based testimonial knowledge only if the following conditions are met:

(1) **Speaker Intention:** The speaker conveys her intent that the audience believe $p$ on her authority, and the audience recognizes that intent.

(2) **Credibility Reasoning:** The audience reasons (rightly) that the speaker is a trustworthy epistemic authority on the topic of $p$, and

(3) **Choice:** The audience chooses to accept $p$.

These conditions can be read in an Assurance way, or in an Inferentialist way, depending on how exactly the speaker intends her audience to believe her, either by accepting some non-inferential reason, or by inferring that what she says is true. But before we look at these three conditions in detail, and consider the evidence for the Assurance reading, let’s see what else we might need to add to get jointly sufficient conditions on testimonial knowledge.

At the very least, one would have to also require that

(4) $p$ is true.

Condition (4) is perhaps too obvious to discuss, but Augustine does indicate that he accepts it by saying that “However I define it … all agree on this point: there can’t be knowledge of falsehoods”\(^{21}\) (Acad. 3.3.5). He also says in trin. 15.12.21, where he considers testimony a source of knowledge, that whatever one speaks from knowledge is true (see also trin. 15.11.20 and 15.12.22).

We could add another condition based on Augustine’s way of distinguishing testimony from other knowledge sources. Augustine’s official list of knowledge sources includes just three: the mind (or reason), the senses, and testimony.\(^ {22}\) He frequently distinguishes testimony

\(^{21}\) (King trans. 1995: 55) “Quoquo modo, inquam, eam determinem, illud omnibus placuit scientiam falsarum rerum esse non posse.”

\(^{22}\) See trin. 15.12.21, ep. 147.1.5, ciu. 19.18. For earlier versions of the trichotomy, in texts where Augustine denies that testimony is a knowledge source (and sometimes denies that the senses are), see mag. 12.39 and sol. 1.38.
from the previous two by saying that while they provide ‘vision’ of the ‘seen’, testimony is of only the unseen. So we could add the following condition:

(5) Unseen: $p$ is unseen, i.e., $p$ is not known by means of the bodily senses, nor known by introspection, nor known by direct grasp of an intelligible truth, nor remembered as seen in any of these ways.

We will see a passage that supports this condition (ep. 147.1.4-5) in section 2.4 below.

Do we now have a set of jointly sufficient conditions for testimonial knowledge, or do we need to add the following conditions?

(6) Transmission: The speaker knows that $p$, and

(7) Good Faith: The speaker is speaking in good faith.

If testimonial knowledge is gained only from authoritative testimony that would be ‘absurd to doubt’, one might expect Augustine to affirm these two conditions.

Condition (6) has been controversial recently, as Jennifer Lackey and others have argued that a speaker’s testimony need not ‘transmit’ the speaker’s knowledge; a speaker who doesn’t know that $p$ can give testimony which ‘generates’ knowledge that $p$ in the audience. King and Ballantyne (2009: 204-207) argue that Augustine likewise dispenses with condition (6), that for Augustine, “a hearer can gain knowledge by testimony even when the testifier doesn’t know the truth of what he said” (207).

I don’t find Augustine explicitly affirming condition (6), but neither does he ever reject it. To support their reading, King and Ballantyne appeal to a passage from Augustine’s early De magistro (dated 389) in which an Epicurean presents an argument to a true conclusion which he himself does not believe. At first glance, it is not clear that this is even a case of testimony, since one does not testify to $p$ by reciting an opponent’s argument that $p$. I would argue that Augustine

23 See, for example, f. inuis. 1.1-1.2, ep. 147.1.4 and ep. 147.2.7.

mentions the recited argument as a case of words that prompt someone to come to her own conclusion, not as a case of testimonially based belief.\footnote{See the Introduction, pp. 2-3 above, for a distinction between \textit{testimonia\textit{lially based} knowledge and knowledge \textit{prompted by testimony}.} And the context suggests that the passage will not be relevant to Augustine’s later view of testimonial knowledge. After all, the overall point of the dialogue is that words themselves are not a source of knowledge; at best they prompt you to acquire knowledge for yourself by ‘looking’ at the things themselves with either your senses or your mind.

To give them as much credit as possible, words have force only to the extent that they remind us to look for things; they don’t display them for us to know. Yet someone who presents what I want to know to my eyes, or to any of my bodily senses, or even to my mind itself, does teach me something.\footnote{\cite{King trans. 1995: 137} “\textit{Hactenus uerba ualuerunt, quibus ut plurimum tribuam, admonent tantum, ut quaeramus res, non exhibent, ut norimus. is me autem aliquid docet, qui uel oculis uel ulli corporis sensui uel ipsi etiam menti praebet ea, quae cognoscere uolo.”} Augustine gives as many examples as he can think of where words don’t produce knowledge, some interesting and others not so interesting. That mumbling doesn’t reliably produce knowledge is no big news. But that no one is “taught” in a math class is surprising. Augustine’s view is that when students learn the conclusions of mathematical proofs, it’s not that they find out what the teacher’s beliefs were and accept those; rather, they quickly figure out the conclusion for themselves, at the prompting of the teacher’s words. Augustine concludes that the students are mistaken to think of the teacher as the source of their knowledge \textit{(mag. 14.45)}.\footnote{Augustine does not give a specifically mathematical example, but he does give the example of a teacher instructing students in the \textit{disciplines}, and some disciplines are mathematical. He says that students “consider within themselves whether truths have been stated. They do so by looking upon the inner Truth, according to their abilities. That is therefore the point at which they learn” \textit{(King trans. 1995: 145)}. \textit{(Falluntur autem homines, ut eos qui non sunt magistros uocent, quia plerumque inter tempus locutionis et tempus cognitionis nulla mora interponitur, et quioniam post admonitionem sermo\textit{cian}tis cito intus discunt, foris se ab eo, qui admonuit, didicisse arbitrantur.)} Another example Augustine gives is that of someone who overhears and accepts an argument to a true conclusion (that the soul is immortal), pronounced aloud by someone who doesn’t believe it (an Epicurean). Augustine asks
Should it then be thought that he [the Epicurean] teaches what he doesn’t know? [No.] Yet he uses the very same words that someone who does know also could use.\(^{28}\) (mag. 13.41)

King & Ballantyne consider three possible interpretations of this example, and take the view that “The hearer’s knowledge is derived from reports, and thus counts as testimonial knowledge, perhaps in an extended sense” on the grounds that the hearer “doesn’t contribute anything of substance to the conclusion merely by deducing it from the premisses” since “[f]or Augustine, as for modern meaning-holists, inference is a kind of interpretation” (2009: 205-6). But is the Epicurean’s recitation of the argument a testimonial report? Most likely it is just a series of putatively necessary statements from which one could infer that necessarily the soul is immortal, none of which is meant to be taken on the testimony of the speaker. (Presumably none of the premises would be a testimonial report about some contingent state of affairs, such as “Dionysius said he died and came back to life”.) Or if the Epicurean signals that what he is doing is reporting someone else’s argument (e.g., if he says “Plato argues that…”) then his statements can be seen as testimonial reports, although not about the immortality of the soul, but rather about what Plato said about the immortality of the soul. In neither case is the Epicurean giving testimony that the soul is immortal.

At any rate, the point Augustine is making with this example seems to be not that the Epicurean has given the listener testimonially-based knowledge but that the listener learned the truth for herself. The point is that, in this case as in the mathematical case, words (and so testimony) can do nothing more than prompt. In this dialogue, Augustine says that seeing something with the senses of the body or the mind can produce knowledge (mag. 10.36, 12.39), but words which don’t prompt seeing can at best produce useful belief (mag. 11.37). So the point of the Epicurean example is not that such an argument produces valuable testimonial belief in the hearer, but that it prompts the hearer to see the truth for herself.\(^{29}\)

\(^{28}\) (King trans. 1995: 142. I have added the ‘No’ response implied by ‘num’) “At ille, qui dicit, utrum uera dicat ignorat, immo etiam falsissima existimat; num igitur putandus est ea docere, quae nescit? atqui isdem uerbis uittur, quibus uti etiam sciens posset.”

\(^{29}\) However, a similar passage in an early work where useful belief is at issue is De utilitate credendi 4.10-5.11, where Augustine argues that overly charitable interpretation – e.g., ascribing the belief that the soul is immortal to an Epicurean who states an argument for that conclusion – is not blameworthy when that interpretation leads one to
In the other passage King and Ballantyne appeal to, Augustine tells the story of a speaker who wants to get a listener to believe that \( p \) (e.g., that there are robbers on such-and-such a road), but knows that whatever he says will be disbelieved; so by saying the contrary (robbers are on the only other road), he gets the listener to act on \( p \) (\textit{mend.} 4.4). The purpose of this passage is to highlight how difficult it is to accuse such a speaker of lying, since he intended to get the listener to believe the truth. But Augustine says nothing about whether this transaction gives the listener knowledge. And again it is doubtful whether this is even a case of specifically \textit{testimonial} belief, since the speaker does not testify that \( p \), but that not-\( p \), and what the hearer infers is that \( p \).

While there are no passages where Augustine clearly rejects or affirms condition (6), he does come close to affirming it when describing the communicative purpose of language. He says that “one human could not closely associate with another unless they spoke together and thus in some way poured out their minds and thoughts to each other” (\textit{ord.} 2.12.35).\(^{30}\) And he says

There is no reason for us to signify something (that is, to give a sign) except to express and transmit to another’s mind what is in the mind of the person who gives the sign.\(^{31}\) \textit{(doct. chr.} 2.2.3)\)

These passages don’t explicitly say that every case of testimonial knowledge is a case in which a speaker transmits her knowledge (or even her beliefs), so they don’t quite confirm condition (6). But if Augustine’s view is that testimonial knowledge can be had only from legitimate authorities, and a speaker is not a legitimate authority on \( p \) unless she knows that \( p \), then to be consistent when asked about condition (6) – that the speaker must know \( p \) – Augustine would have to accept it.

\( \ldots \text{... nec homini homo fìrmìssime sociari posset, nisi conloquerentur atque ita sìbi mentes suas cogitationesque quasi refunderent...} \)

\( \text{“Nec ulla causa est nobis significandi, id est signi dandi, nisi ad depromendum et traiciendum in alterius animum id quod animo gerit qui signum dat.”} \)

\(^{30}\) \(^{31}\)
Condition (7) – that the speaker must speak in good faith – looks like Augustine’s counterpart to a sincerity condition. Augustine’s conception of speaking in good faith is much richer than mere sincerity, if mere sincerity is just a matter of saying what one believes.\(^\text{32}\) We can identify five aspects of speaking in good faith, of which sincerity is only one. To speak in good faith is, at the very least, a matter of \((i)\) being just toward one’s audience, in contrast with the injustice of lying, by speaking the truth just as one indicated that one would.

Faith \([fides]\) is so named in Latin from the fact that one does what one says \(\text{[fit quod dicitur]},\) which clearly is not the case in lying.\(^\text{33}\) (mend. 20.41)

In De mendacio 20.41 Augustine further indicates that ‘perfect faith’ in a speaker is also a matter of \((ii)\) loving the truth for its own sake (or at least valuing the truth, and valuing that one speak only the truth, above any temporal goods whatsoever), \((iii)\) speaking only what one thinks, i.e. speaking sincerely, \((iv)\) speaking out of goodwill, and \((v)\) speaking as one judges one ought to speak, i.e. speaking conscientiously.\(^\text{34}\) Presumably not every case of speaking in good faith


\(^{33}\) “Fides enim appellata est in latina lingua ex eo, quia fit quod dicitur: quam manifestum est non exhibere mentientem.” Augustine explains this further in doct. chr. 1.36.40.87, where he says “For no liar, inasmuch as he lies, keeps faith. For he wishes that one have faith in him, which faith, by lying, he does not keep. And every violator of faith is unjust.” (Nemo enim mentiens in eo quod mentitur servat fidem. Nam hoc utique vult, ut cui mentitur fidem sibi habeat, quam tamen ei mentiendo non servat. Omnis autem fidei violator iniquus est.) See also spir. et litt. 31.54.

\(^{34}\) “And yet, if anyone would propose to himself \((ii)\) to love the truth not only in thinking but also in speaking what is true in each kind of thing and \((iii)\) not presenting his thought with his mouth otherwise than it is grasped and seen in his mind, so that \((ii)\) he would prefer the true beauty of faith not only to gold and silver and gems and pleasant estates, but to every good of temporal life and of the body, I don’t know that it would be wise to say he erred. And if he valued this more than all his temporal goods, he also would rightly prefer it to the temporal goods of other humans, \((i)\), \((iv)\) whom he should keep and help with innocence and goodwill. For he would love perfect faith not only of believing well the things said to him by an excellent and faith-worthy authority, but also faithfully speaking the things \((v)\) he himself would judge and would say should be said.” (“Et tamen, si quisquam proponeret sibi sic \((ii)\) amandam ueritatem, non tantum quae in contemplando est, sed etiam in uero enuntiando, quod in suo quoque rerum genere rerum est, \((iii)\) et non aliter preferendam ore corporis sententiam, quam in animo concepta atque conspecta est, ut \((iii)\) fidei ueridicam pulchritudinem non solum auro et argento et gemmis et amoenis praediis, sed et ipsi uniuerseae temporali utiae omni que corporis bono praeponeret, nescio utrum sapienter a quoquam errare diceretur et, si hoc suis omnibus talibus rebus recte anteferret pluris que penderet, recte etiam temporalibus rebus aliorum hominum, \((i)\), \((iv)\) quos innocentia beniuolentiaque sua servare atque adiviare debet. amaret enim perfectam fidem non solum bene credendi ea, quae sibi excellenti et fide digna auctoritate diceretur, sed etiam fideliter enuntiandi, \((v)\) quae ipse dicenda iudicaret ac diceret.”
perfectly meets all these conditions; conditions (i)-(v) represent an ideal. But any case of speaking in good faith, as an approximation to this ideal, goes beyond mere sincerity.

Does Augustine think that testimonial knowledge is available from only speakers who speak in good faith? Again, there are no passages where Augustine clearly affirms (or denies) this condition. What he does say is that we get knowledge from a speaker whom it would be “absurd to doubt” (ciu. 19.18), a speaker whom one “should not doubt” (ep. 147.1.5). If there is a reasonable chance that the speaker could either be deceiving or be deceived, then there seems to be room for doubt. At the very least, if there is a reasonable chance the speaker is deceiving or deceived, this should put believing on her authority in doubt. So to be consistent, Augustine should say that authoritative testimonial knowledge is had only from those who speak in good faith. If, then, Augustine’s view is that testimonial knowledge is had only from authoritative testimony that it would be absurd to doubt, he will hold that conditions (1)-(7) are necessary and jointly sufficient for knowledge.

2.3 Belief on Authority

To see what Augustine says about authority-based testimonial knowledge, let’s now consider, in order, the first three conditions: (1) Speaker Intention, (2) Credibility Reasoning, and (3) Choice.

Starting from his earliest writings, Augustine is focused on belief based on authority. He is particularly interested in the belief a student has while learning a discipline (disciplina) from a teacher. When something is too ‘obscure’ for us to understand immediately, there are “two paths” one can take: we can either reason things out for ourselves, or we can follow an

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35 In light of what I say later, that Augustine’s ‘absurd to doubt’ condition is probably a moral certainty condition, a ‘reasonable’ chance that the speaker could be deceiving or deceived is a chance that makes it reasonable not to be certain enough to act or think as if what she says is true without qualification. Augustine highlights such worries in Io. eu. tr. 90.2.1, Cresc. 3.69.80 and c. ep. Pel. 1.13.27. Augustine frequently points out that some people want to lie but no one wants to be lied to (s. 306; conf. 10.23; c. Faust. 16.33; ench. 5.17), and sometimes contrasts bad people who want to lie with good people who don’t (s. 19D, s. 182). In his sermons he frequently contrasts the case of God, who cannot deceive nor be deceived (symb. cat. 1; en. Ps. 88 sermo 2, par. 6; en. Ps. 93 par. 7; en. Ps. 123 par. 2; s. 180; s. 330), or the holy scriptures which cannot deceive or be deceived (Cresc. 1.33.39; pecc. mer. 1.22.33) with the case of humans who can deceive or be deceived (en. Ps. 39 par. 2).
“authority” (*auctoritatem*) (*ord.* 2.5.16). But in every discipline beginners don’t know where to start. So “for all those wishing to learn great, good and hidden things, the door is not opened except by authority” (*ord.* 2.9.26). The authority offers to enter into an implicit but intentional contract: she agrees to give her knowledge to the audience, and the audience, if it accepts the offer, agrees to believe her. Then the teacher has a right to expect her students to believe her on the topic on which they have submitted themselves to her as an authority.

Authority demands trust [*fidem flagitat*] and prepares someone for reason. Reason leads to understanding and knowing; and yet reason doesn’t altogether abandon authority, when it considers whom one ought to believe.

When students so submit, the teacher offers her knowledge to them, authorizing them to believe, and they, recognizing her intent, trust her and accept that authorization. In his earlier works, Augustine thought of a student’s belief on authority as preparation and purification that will guide her towards knowing for herself what the authority knows. But as we saw in the previous

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36 “*Duplex enim est via quam sequimur, cum rerum nos obscuritas movet, aut rationem, aut certe auctoritatem.*” See also *uera rel.* 24.45. Unless otherwise noted, ‘authority’ (*auctoritas*) refers not just to putative authority, but legitimate authority.

37 “… *euenit ut omnibus bona magna et occulta discere cupientibus non aperiat nisi auctoritas ianuam.*”

38 Goodwin (2001: 50ff) argues that there is a very similar implicit contract between speaker and audience in Cicero’s arguments from authority. She says that in Cicero’s speeches the speaker uses his reputation as a reason the audience ought to believe him (the audience would be ‘impudent’ and shameful not to believe someone of such dignity), while at the same time, the audience holds his reputation hostage, should he turn out to be wrong (that is, the speaker wagers his dignity on being right). She calls this the ‘bond and blackmail’ view of authority, since the speaker offers his reputation as bond, and simultaneously blackmails the audience into believing, to avoid the charge of impudence.

39 See *uera rel.* 24.45. In *util. cred.* 10.23 and in *lib. arb.* 2.2.5.14-15, Augustine argues for the reasonableness of religious faith in the following way. Augustine assumes that it is more blameworthy to pass on religious doctrines to a deceitful listener than it is to believe the one passing them on. But then the listener has at least as much of an obligation to believe a religious teacher as the teacher has to believe that the listener is not deceitful. This argument works so long as the listener has already subjected herself to the teacher as an authority, or already feels that she should. The argument has no force for someone who is wondering whether to subject herself to the authority or not, e.g., for someone who questions whether the teacher is a legitimate authority on the topic of *p*. Even if not persuasive for everyone, this argument serves to illustrate Augustine’s belief that a teacher has a right to expect belief from a student.

40 “*Auctoritas fidem flagitat et rationi praeparat hominem. Ratio ad intellectum cognitionemque perducit, quamquam neque auctoritatem ratio penitus deserit, cum consideratur cui credendum sit …*”
chapter, he came to extend this model, applying it to belief on authority even when the believer has no chance of becoming an expert herself.  

Other cases of testimonial knowledge, especially in Augustine’s early stages, tend to follow this teacher-student paradigm. Augustine draws a broad distinction between using one’s reason and believing an authority, and in his early works he takes these two to exhaust all the options for pursuing the truth, at least in matters where genuine *scientia* is possible. “To believe an authority is a great timesaver, and is no work”, he says; believing an authority is generally safer for those who don’t have the time or ability to learn something for themselves (an. quant. 7.12). We have the writings of “excellent men” (*diuini uiri*), and for those who can’t reason out matters for themselves it is most beneficial to believe an excellent authority and live accordingly. If you think this safer, I not only relent, but heartily approve. (an. quant. 7.12) Augustine never doubts the value of believing on authority. “Perfect faith” on the audience’s part is a matter of “rightly believing things spoken by an excellent and trustworthy authority” (mend. 20.41). Later on, Augustine marvels at just how much he has come to believe on authority. Much of what we believe about our own infancy, we have “on the authority of little old women [*auctoritatibus etiam muliercularum*]” (conf. 1.6.10). He says “we would do nothing

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41 See p. 27ff above.

42 There are kinds of ignorance to which this dichotomy between reason and authority doesn’t apply. On the question of whether it is raining or not (and other empirical questions), Augustine would presumably admit that our ignorance should move us to perform an empirical test if we can. In his later works Augustine’s dichotomy is not that between reason and authority, but that between seeing (of the body and the mind) and believing (inferential and testimonial).

43 “Aliud est enim cum auctoritati credimus, aliud cum rationi. Auctoritati credere magnum compendium est et nullus labor.”

44 “His ergo utilissimum est excellentissimae auctoritati credere et secundum hoc agere vitam. Quod si titius putas, non solum nihil resisto, sed etiam multum adprobo.”

45 In this paragraph Augustine cares about affirming the ‘faith’ of speaking truly rather than lying, and says that someone who loves such faith above all temporal goods does best. “For he would love perfect faith, not only of rightly [*bene*] believing what were said to him by an excellent and trustworthy authority, but also faithfully speaking what he himself would judge should be spoken.” (Amaret enim perfectam fidem non solum bene credendi ea, quae sibi excellenti et fide digna auctoritate dicentur, sed etiam fideliter enuntiandi, quae ipse dicenda iudicaret ac dicaret.) We will see later that an account of truthfulness is important for Aquinas’s account of testimonial *fides* as well.
at all in this life” if we did not believe others (historians, doctors, friends, etc.) about things outside our own experience, and he marvels again that he knows who his parents are “with unshaken faith” only by believing what he hears (conf. 6.5.7). 46

In early works, Augustine frequently gives short arguments for believing authorities (like the Wisdom-Seeker argument discussed above, page 27). In later works, Augustine goes further and starts examining in more detail just how such belief works. One case he focuses on is an audience’s response to “testimony” in the form of a command: “Believe that Christ rose from the dead”. 47 When the audience accepts this “testimony”, it both believes the testifier’s claim (that Christ rose from the dead), and believes that the testifier intended it to so believe: “He does not see, but rather believes, both the resurrection of Christ and the intention [voluntatem] of the speaker that he believe” (ep. 147.10). The resurrection is believed on testimony, while that testimony is made available to the audience only after it has drawn the inference that the speaker intends it to believe the proposition stated (cf. f. inuis. 1.2, trin. 13.2.5). Augustine calls both inductive inference and testimony sources of ‘belief’, to distinguish them from ‘sight’, i.e., knowledge that is direct (either knowledge of sensibles present to the bodily senses, or knowledge of intelligibles present to a mind’s ‘reason’). 48

Some current epistemologists say that to accept a speaker’s assurance is to accept something on the speaker’s authority, even in a way analogous to accepting a command. 49 A command from a practical authority (e.g., a sergeant) gives a subordinate (e.g., a soldier) a preemptive reason to do something, a reason that bypasses the subordinate’s own reasoning on the matter. Similarly, when an epistemic authority tells you to believe something, that can give you a preemptive reason to believe it, a reason that bypasses your own reasoning on the matter.

46 “… consideranti, quam innumerabilia crederem, quae non uiderem neque cum gererentur affuissem, sicut tam multa in historia gentium, tam multa de locis atque urbis, quae non uideram, tam multa aniciis, tam multa medicis, tam multa hominibus aliis atque aliis, quae nisi crederentur, omnino in hac uita nihil ageremus, postremo quam inconcussa fixum fide retinere, de quibus parentibus ortus essem, quod non possem, nisi audiendo credidisset ...”. Augustine uses the example of believing who one’s parents are quite often (util. cred. 12.26; f. inuis. 2.4; trin. 15.12.21; ep. 147.5; ciu. 19.18). For further examples of things we know only by testimony, see f. inuis. 2.4, trin. 15.12.21, and ep. 147.5.

47 ep. 147.3.9. See King and Ballantyne (2009: 202-203) for another discussion of this passage.

48 See ep. 147.1.4, ep. 147.2.7, f. inuis. 1.2. See also mag. 12.39, ciu. 19.18.

Linda Zagzebski (2012: 101-2) points out that believing on command is only a problem when “one has no reason to think that what is commanded is true”; but if the authority is an *epistemic* authority, one does have a reason to believe the proposition is true, and believing on command is no harder than believing ordinary testimony. The fact that Augustine similarly associates testimony with authority, and even with commands,\(^{50}\) suggests that he has a similar Assurance view of authoritative testimony.

Nevertheless, Augustine does not require that an authority always give an *explicit* command to believe. Augustine recognizes other ways an authority can indicate her intention that you take something on her authority. This comes up in his discussion of the apostle Paul’s claim to have had a vision. Augustine notes that Paul is uncertain whether the vision was bodily or not.

But that it was the third heaven to which he was caught up he did not doubt, nor did he wish us to doubt. He prefaces his account with the statement, ‘I know’, and continues in such a manner that only the man who does not believe the apostle himself can refuse to accept as true what the apostle says he knows.\(^{51}\) (*Gn. litt.* 12.3.8)

According to Augustine, Paul can use locutions such as ‘I know *p*’ in such a way that to disbelieve *p* would be to disbelieve Paul. But Augustine also seems to think that *in general* we recognize that a speaker intends the audience to believe her, as part of recognizing the meaning of a speaker’s utterance. Augustine says that “Anyone who speaks gives an external sign of his will by means of an articulated sound”\(^{52}\) (*mag.* 1.2) and that “anyone who utters any thing bears witness to his own mind”\(^{53}\) (*mend.* 5.6). And in general words are not ‘natural’ signs, but ‘given’ or intentional ones.

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\(^{50}\) See *c. Faust.* 11.5; *ep.* 147.9; *f. inuis.* 1.1; *trin.* 13.1.3.

\(^{51}\) “*Sed illud, quod tertium caelum esset, quo raptus est, neque dubitauit neque dubitare nos uoluit. ad hoc enim praemisit scio et inde coepit, ut quod se scire apostolus dicit, solus ille non credat uerum esse, qui non credit apostolo.*”

\(^{52}\) “*Qui enim loquitur, suae voluntatis signum foras dat per articulatum sonum . . .*”

\(^{53}\) “*Quisquis enim aliquid enuntiat, testimonium perhibet animo suo.*”
Given signs are those which living things give to each other in order to show, as much as they can, the emotions of their minds, or anything they have sensed or understood. There is no reason for us to signify something (that is, to give a sign) except to express and transmit to another’s mind what is in the mind of the one who gives the sign.\(^54\) (\textit{doct. chr. 2.2.3})

 Granted, there are various cases where a speaker’s intention is not clear (e.g., in cases of mishearing what a speaker said) (\textit{mag. 13.42-13.45}). But we do have a natural ability to know the intentions of others by means of inference (\textit{coniectura}) from our own minds and from experience.\(^55\) So when language does its job, a speaker is able to convey her intention that the audience believe a claim on her authority, and the audience is able to recognize that intent. Then the first of the three conditions for gaining knowledge on authoritative testimony is met.

The other two conditions concern the audience’s response to the speaker’s assurance. Remember the second condition:

\[ (2) \textit{Credibility Reasoning:} \text{ The audience reasons (rightly) that the testifier is a trustworthy epistemic authority on the topic of } p. \]

As we have seen, even when Augustine contrasts reason and authority as sources of belief, he recognizes that the acceptance of an authoritative claim involves reasoning “when one considers whom to believe” (\textit{uera rel. 24.45}).\(^56\) We have also already seen him say that “no one believes

\(^{54}\)“\textit{Data vero signa sunt quae sibi quaeque viventia invicem dant ad demonstrandos quantum possunt motus animi sui vel sensa aut intellecta quaelibet. Nec ulla causa est nobis significandi, id est signi dandi, nisi ad depromendum et traiciendum in alterius animum id quod animo gerit qui signum dat.}”

\(^{55}\)See \textit{mag. 8.24, trin. 13.3.6, ep. 147.4.10-11}. In \textit{De magistro}, Augustine considers the worry that words’ meanings are underdetermined by merely pointing to the objects or actions they represent. How, for example, could one teach someone what ‘walking’ refers to by using the word ‘walking’ and demonstrating a bit of walking? After all, the learner might think the word refers to as essential something that is incidental, like the amount of walking the teacher did while demonstrating what walking is (\textit{mag. 10.29}). This is similar to the problem of ‘radical interpretation’ (famously raised in Davidson 1973). Augustine’s solution is just to say that people are generally ‘intelligent’ enough to understand what one is referring to (\textit{mag. 10.32}). In \textit{trin. 13.3.6}, he claims that we can infer (\textit{coniicere}) the intentions of others from analogy with our own case, and from experience. In \textit{ep. 147.4.10-11}, he says that we do just that when we believe someone’s testimony.

\(^{56}\)“… \textit{quamquam neque auctoritatem ratio penitus deserit, cum consideratur cui credendum sit …}”
anything unless he has first thought that it is to be believed” (*praed. sanct.* 2.5). I suggest that in cases of authoritative testimony, the tiny bit of reasoning (*quantulumcumque ratio*) that precedes belief (*ep.* 120.1.3) is concerned with (a) whether the speaker is a legitimate epistemic authority on the topic of \( p \), and (b) whether the speaker is a trustworthy speaker. Reasoning about whether to accept a teacher for a certain *disciplina*, for example, involves looking at ‘indications’ (*indicia*) of the teacher’s competence in that *disciplina*.

Human authority frequently deceives, but [authority] rightly is seen to excel in those who give many indications [*indicia*] of their teachings – as much as beginners can grasp – and do not live otherwise than how they teach one ought to live. (*ord.* 2.9.27)

One distinctive aspect of an Assurance approach to testimony is its emphasis on believing a *person*, in a way that is not reducible to merely inferential belief on the basis of impersonal evidence. Nevertheless, the process of deciding which speakers are legitimate rather than spurious authorities typically involves inference from impersonal evidence that the speaker is a legitimate authority. So even though on the Assurance view there is a special interpersonal transfer of knowledge that is not itself reducible to inference, certain background conditions have to be met to make transfer possible, and one of these is that the audience has to infer that the speaker is a legitimate authority on the topic at hand. According to Augustine, indications of legitimate authority from which the audience may infer that a speaker has legitimate authority include such things as the teacher’s effectiveness, the internal consistency of one’s claims, consistency with what an audience already knows, and past reliability.

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57 “Nullus quippe credit aliquid, nisi prius cogitauerit esse credendum.”

58 It is tempting to try to trace this use of ‘indications’ back to the Stoic claim that a catalepsis includes an ‘indication’ of its truth (Lamont 2004: 42 suggests this), but this could just as well be the common Latin way to talk about authorities.


60 See *f. inuis*. 3.5ff. Augustine mentions these and other such ‘indications’ in many other works, especially his anti-Manichean ones: *ord.* 2.9.27, 2.11.32; *mor.* 1.7.12; *util. cred.* 15-17; *uera rel.* 3.5, 25.46; *c. ep. fund.* 4, 15; *c. Faust.* 12.1, 12.45, 13.5, 13.13, 13.17; *cons. eu.* 1.18.13; *ep.* 137.13; *ciu.* 10.16, 21.7. Augustine also talks about harmony as an indicator of rationality: harmony between deeds and words, but also harmony among words (*ord.* 2.11.32). See Lütcke (1968: chap. 4) for further discussion of such indications of legitimate authority.
Augustine also astutely notices that human authority is relative to a topic. We learn testimonially “on the reports of others whose testimony, at least on this kind of thing [in hoc dum taxat rerum genere] we think is not to be doubted” (ep. 147.1.5). For example, one might have believed that Constantine founded Constantinople either by believing Constantine himself, as an authority on his own experience, or by believing an historian on the topic of, say, ancient Roman history. But it would be foolish to treat either Constantine or the historian as authorities on every topic. Authority-based knowledge does not require such a high standard. It is enough if the speaker is an authority on the topic at hand.

Accepting something on authority can be an interpersonal transaction. If the speaker voluntarily offers her assurance, or even commands belief, the audience, it seems, has a choice whether to accept that assurance, or obey that command. And Augustine does recognize that an audience has a choice in the third condition on authority-based testimonial knowledge:

(3) Choice: The audience chooses to accept p.

Augustine describes this choice in De praedestinatione sanctorum, while discussing the act of faith:

For who cannot see that thinking is prior to believing? Indeed no one believes anything unless he has first thought that it is to be believed. For however suddenly, however quickly, some thoughts fly before the will to believe [credendi voluntatem], and this presently follows them in closest conjunction, it is still necessary that everything which is believed should be believed after thought has preceded, although belief itself is nothing but to think with assent [cum assensione cogitare]. (praed. sanct. 2.5)

61 “… aliis referentibus, de quorum testimonio in hoc dum taxat rerum genere minime dubitandum esse putauimus.”
An interesting example of this idea is Augustine’s claim that the gospels need not be believed on everything. For example, they must have made mistakes about the order of events (cons. eu. 2.21.51).

62 “Quis enim non uideat, prius esse cogitare quam credere? nullus quippe credit aliquid, nisi prius cogitauerit esse credendum. quamuis enim raptim, quamuis celerrime credendi voluntatem quaedam cogitationes anteuolent, mox que illa ita sequatur, ut quasi conjunctissima comitetur; necesse est tamen ut omnia quae creduntur, praeventient cogitatione credantur. quanquam et ipsum credere, nihil aliud est, quam cum assensione cogitare.”
Here we see Augustine hint at condition (2) about credibility reasoning, and endorse condition (3) about choice. Belief requires a brief act of ‘thinking’ that something is to be believed; but the next step is to ‘will to believe’. Does that mean believing someone is just a matter of choice? Does Augustine mean that every belief is voluntary?  

We should be cautious here, since Augustine thinks the will is involved in many activities, including some one would think are not a matter of choice. In his De trinitate, Augustine wants to show, in various ways, that the human mind is an image of the Trinity by having three distinct but inseparable parts, and the result is that he posits that the will is involved in every mental act. For example, Augustine argues that memory, intellect and will are three essential aspects of the mind, and are each present in every act of the mind (trin. 10.11.17-10.12.19). He also points to a trinity in the act of vision: every act of vision, he says, requires (i) the form (species) of the body seen, (ii) the image it impresses on the bodily senses, (iii) and “the will of the soul which applies the sense to the sensible thing, and holds that vision on it” (trin. 11.2.5). In fact, this holds for sensation in general: all bodily sensing requires such willing (trin. 11.1.1). If voluntas can be so broad for Augustine that it applies even to bodily and mental activities one would normally think are automatic, then is willing to believe really a matter of choice?  

In his De spiritu et littera, he indicates that believing authoritative testimony is a matter of choice. First, Augustine distinguishes “the faith we apply when we believe something” from that “which we give when we promise something”.

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63 Note that passages about “believing in”, according to Augustine, describe loving belief, so they do not provide evidence that unloving belief is voluntary. For example, in Io. eu. tr. 26.2, Augustine says “No one believes except voluntarily [Nullus credit nisi ulolens]”, but his concern in that sermon is with believing “in Christ”. In another sermon of the same series Augustine says that “to believe in him [credere in eum]”, i.e., to believe in Christ, is to believe lovingly (creendo amare, credendo diligere) (Io. eu. tr. 29.6).

64 Another case is our will for happiness (beatitudo). As humans we all necessarily will our own happiness, even if we don’t realize it – we have no choice: “For whatever else it is that anyone secretly wills, he does not withdraw from this will which is sufficiently known to all and is in all men [omnibus et in omnibus satis nota est]” (trin. 13.3.6, cf. 15.12.21).

65 “Quae cum ita sint, tria haec quamuis diversa natura quemadmodum in quandam unitatem contemperentur meminerimus, id est species corporis quae uidetur et imago eius impressa sensui quod est uisio sensusue formatus et voluntas animi quae rei sensibili sensum admouet, in eoque ipsae uisionem tenet.” cf. trin. 11.9.16.

66 On the will’s involvement in perception see also MacDonald (2012).
For that is also called ‘faith’, but saying ‘he did not have faith in me’ is different from saying ‘he did not keep faith with me’. For the one means ‘he did not believe what I said’ and the other ‘he did not do what he said’.  

Then Augustine says that it is “absurd” to hold that anyone believes unwillingly:

Consider now whether anyone who is unwilling to believe believes, or who is willing to doesn’t believe. And if that is absurd – for what is believing if not consenting [consentire] that what is said is true, and consent is certainly voluntary? – then faith is certainly in our power. … Given that faith, then, is in our power, since each one, when he wills to, believes, and, when he believes, believes willingly, we must inquire, or rather remember, which faith it is that the apostle commends so earnestly. For not just any believing is good.  

Here Augustine need not be taking a hard doxastic voluntarist line. He might not be talking about choosing one’s belief out of thin air but about choosing to believe a person when that person presents you with a proposition. As he says, even though it is up to someone to choose whether to believe a speaker, “he cannot believe anything by free choice, unless there is some suasion or summons toward the person he believes” (spir. et litt. 34.60). God does this, Augustine says, both externally (e.g., in Scripture) and internally “where no one has in his control what shall enter his mind”. But the will to believe is not therefore to be thought of as something God does, “since it is from free choice [ex libero arbitrio] …. it is up to one’s own will to either consent or dissent” (spir. et litt. 34.60). That such a belief is a voluntary choice

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67 “Nam et ipsa dicitur fides, sed aliter dicimus: ‘non mihi habuit fidem’, aliter autem: ‘non mihi seruauit fidem’. nam illud est ‘non credidit quod dixi’, illud ‘non fecit quod dixit’.”

68 “Vide nunc utrum quisque credat, si noluerit, aut non credat, si voluerit. quod si absurdum est – quid est enim credere nisi consentire utrum esse quod dicitur? consensio autem utique uolentis est –, profecto fides in potestate est. … Cum ergo fides in potestate sit, quoniam cum uult quisque credit et, cum credit, uolens credit, deinde quaerendum est, immo recelendum, quam fidel tanta conflictatione commendet apostolus, non enim quadrilibet credere bonum est.” This is another passage which shows that Augustine does not have a Defaultist view of testimony.

69 “Neque enim credere potest quadrilibet libero arbitrio, si nulla sit suasio uel vocatio cui credat.”

70 “Non ideo tantum istam voluntatem diuino munerii tribuendam, quia ex libero arbitrio est …. consentire uel dissentire propriae voluntatis est.” See also c. Iul. imp. 2.157, Simpl. 1.2.10.
makes more sense if it is a response to a person than if it is just an inference about a person. Perhaps what the audience consents to (or dissents from), is a policy of accepting the deliverances of some authority (on some topic). But Augustine seems to think that an audience also subjects individual authoritative statements to a choice between consent and dissent. And that choice is there even when the authority is canonical, or otherwise such that it is ‘absurd’ to doubt.\textsuperscript{71} One could choose not to believe, opting to suspend judgment or draw one’s own conclusion instead.\textsuperscript{72}

If the ‘will to believe’ someone’s testimony is a matter of choice, then it should be subject to moral evaluation, and this opens up the possibility of an ethics of belief. It is interesting that Augustine does not say that the only grounds for willing to believe \( p \) on authoritative testimony have to do with reasons for thinking the testifier is a trustworthy authority. Instead, Augustine develops an ethics of belief through various arguments that belief is instrumentally ‘valuable’ (\textit{utilis}).\textsuperscript{73} His ethics of belief takes into account three kinds of goods that can be achieved by means of believing testimony: (\textit{a}) pragmatic, (\textit{b}) moral, and (\textit{c}) epistemic goods.

(\textit{a}) The “natural bond of society”, Augustine says, requires language. Without it we could not recognize what others are thinking or feeling (\textit{ord}. 2.12.35).\textsuperscript{74} So testimony has


\textsuperscript{72} For further passages on ‘consenting’ and ‘willing’ to believe a speaker, see \textit{f. inuis}. 2.4; \textit{ep}. 141 end; \textit{diu}. \textit{qu}. 1.2.10; \textit{ep}. 147.9, 10.

\textsuperscript{73} I am thinking of his primarily anti-Manichean arguments in works like \textit{De moribus}, \textit{De uera religione}, \textit{De utilitate credendi}, \textit{Contra Faustum}, \textit{Conf}. 6.5.7, \textit{De fide rerum inuisibilium} and so on. Again, in these arguments Augustine takes himself to be refuting the view that one ought not to have beliefs about things one cannot ‘see’ for oneself, either by (i) the bodily senses or (ii) the mind’s direct grasp of intelligibles. So when he argues for the value of ‘belief’, he argues for the value of believing without seeing, specifically, the value of both (a) belief based on non-demonstrative inference and (b) testimonial belief. But he does distinguish these two, especially in his later works (like \textit{ep}. 147.2.7 and \textit{trin}. 13.1.3). I will focus only on what Augustine says about testimonial belief. The fact that when he developed most of these arguments Augustine denied that we can testimonial knowledge does not affect his reasons for thinking that testimonial belief is valuable, and in his later works he simply thinks of testimonial knowledge as valuable for the same reasons. King and Ballantyne (2009: 210) also briefly discuss Augustine’s “ethic of belief” in \textit{f. inuis}. 2.4. What they say mostly applies to Augustine’s argument in the first part of \textit{f. inuis}. 2.4 that non-demonstrative inferential belief is valuable, rather than to the value of testimonial belief, which Augustine discusses at the end of \textit{f. inuis}. 2.4.

\textsuperscript{74} “Thus our rational part (i.e., the part that uses reason and either produces or follows reasonable things) since it was bound by a natural bond of association with others who share in reason, but one man could not firmly associate with another unless they spoke together and somehow poured out their minds to each other, it [reason] saw that
pragmatic value: without it we could not achieve cooperative goals. A specific example
Augustine is fond of is the value of reputation. When someone hears that oratory is powerful
\((\text{trin.} \ 10.1.1)\), this is a case of reputation; and when one hears that Cicero was an excellent orator
\((\text{util. cred.} \ 7.16)\), this too is a case of reputation. So when one is then moved to study (or to have
one’s children study) Cicero, for the sake of making them more powerful orators, one is acting
on the basis of reputation. Diffuse and traditional reputation of this kind Augustine calls “the
authority of the elders” \((\text{auctoritas maiorum})\), and it plays a role in many practical social matters,
such as setting the conventions for proper pronunciation \((\text{mus.} \ 2.1.1)\), and helping people decide
which literature is worth reading \((\text{util. cred.} \ 6.13)\). Augustine recognizes that traditional
reputation can also be arbitrary, mistaken, or superstitious \((\text{mus.} \ 2.1.1; \text{ciu.} \ 7.17, 7.24, 22.6)\). But
when it works well, such testimony enables individuals to cooperate and to benefit in a practical
way from the experience and wisdom of others \((\text{an. quant.} \ 7.12)\). Augustine considers all the
things he has believed about things ‘unseen’ from history and geography, “from friends, doctors,
and so many others” and says that if such things were not believed, “we would do nothing in this
life” \((\text{conf.} \ 6.5.7)\). Clearly belief on testimony serves some important pragmatic goods.

\(\text{b) Augustine also points out that in order to fulfill our social obligations, we depend on}
\) testimony. Even though Augustine thinks the happy life is ultimately one of contemplating God,
he also thinks that we have moral duties to help others. “God is only with those who, seeking

\(\hfill\)

\(\text{75 I quoted this passage above, p. 89, n. 43. In his early works, Augustine regards the testimony of history as}
\) ‘useful’ but not a source of knowledge \((\text{e.g., util. cred.} \ 11.25)\). Perhaps the pragmatic value of historical beliefs is
that they guide our thoughts and actions accurately with regard to our society. For example, political decisions are
often motivated by appeal to historical examples.

\(\text{76 Obviously it is an exaggeration that we would do nothing if not for testimony. Matthew of Aquasparta argues in}
\) more detail and more subtly, in \textit{De Fide}, q. 2, that there are no ‘human acts’ which do not depend on testimony.
Baldwin of Ford’s \textit{Commendatio Fidei} also has a more elaborate argument that, without faith, all social ties and all
levels of government would dissolve, so peace and happiness would be impossible \((1.1-2)\). Unfortunately, he does
not distinguish in these passages between (a) faith as trustworthiness or loyalty, and (b) faith as a kind of belief.
Him, have also a care for human society” (util. cred. 10.24). In order to live a pious and just life, one must love and care for one’s parents with filial piety, which is “the most sacred bond of the human race” (pietatem ... sanctissimum generis humani uinculum) (util. cred. 12.26). And yet we come to know who our own parents are only by means of their testimony, and usually they come to know that we are their children only by means of the testimony of doctors and nurses – after all, one could have been switched at birth (util. cred. 12.26; cf. conf. 6.5.7, f. inuis. 2.4, trin. 15.12.21, ep. 147.1.5). The fragility of this testimonial link makes for the drama in the lives of legendary kings like Oedipus and Arthur, and lesser legends like Eric Clapton and Jack Nicholson. Less dramatically, there are other social obligations established on testimony, from ordinary partnerships and business contracts to marriages arranged entirely by mail. Clearly we must depend on testimonial belief to fulfil some of our most important moral obligations.

(c) From looking at these early arguments one might think that for Augustine testimonial belief has only practical, not epistemic value. Nevertheless, my suggestion is that even before Augustine thought of testimony as a source of knowledge, he thought it had epistemic value, but only indirectly, that is instrumentally. Once we have seen how it is instrumentally epistemically valuable, we can see how at least some kinds of pragmatic and moral reasons for believing are also indirectly epistemic reasons to believe.

From his earliest works on, Augustine thought of testimony as instrumentally epistemically valuable both as (i) understanding-conducive and (ii) wisdom-conducive.

(i) As we have seen, Augustine thinks of the case of a student learning a disciplina from a teacher as a paradigmatic case of testimony. A chemistry student who trusts her teacher does so with an epistemic goal in mind: she aims to know and understand chemistry. So when she accepts claims about chemistry on the testimony of her teacher, or claims about how she ought to study chemistry, that acceptance is not only truth-conducive, but also knowledge- and understanding-conducive. In the terms of Augustine’s mature epistemology, she has notitia, but

77 “Cuiusmodi enim libet excellant ingenio, nisi deus adsit, humo repunt. Tunc autem adest, si societas humana in deum tendentibus curae sit.” (Schopp trans.)

78 I’m not thinking here of mail-order brides. I know an old Mennonite couple who became engaged by mail without ever having met before, when the woman’s family had not yet emigrated from Europe to Paraguay, but the man’s family had.
aims at scientia (strictly speaking), which involves understanding (intellegere).\textsuperscript{79} Her testimonial belief thus has instrumental epistemic value. The general conclusion Augustine draws is that first we believe an authority, and only later do we understand “how reasonable were the things we followed before we could reason about them” (ord. 2.9.26).\textsuperscript{80}

(ii) Augustine also thinks that our ultimate practical goal is identical with our ultimate epistemic goal: ultimate happiness is a matter of achieving wisdom, which involves having the best knowledge of the best things.\textsuperscript{81} Alternatively, Augustine characterizes our ultimate practical goal as the enjoyment (frui) of God, which consists in knowing God.\textsuperscript{82} All other goods are merely instrumental toward this goal, and so should only be ‘used’ (uti) toward this end.\textsuperscript{83} So sometimes when Augustine says that testimonial belief is ‘valuable’ (utilis) he means that it helps one attain the ultimate practical aim of enjoying (frui) God (an. quant. 33.76, mag. 11.37, lib. arb. 3.21.60.204, c. Faust. 22.52). But since the ultimate practical goal is also an epistemic goal (viz., knowing God), that testimonial belief’s value is also epistemic. Again, it is a case of notitia one uses toward achieving the deeper knowledge of scientia.

A good example of this connection between practical and epistemic value in Augustine is his account of curiosity (curiositas). Suppose Bert, who should be seeking wisdom, spends all his time collecting and cataloging bottle-caps instead. Augustine would say he has the vice of ‘curiosity’ (curiositas). Cataloging bottle-caps is bad for Bert, not because bottle-caps are bad,

\textsuperscript{79} Both Aquinas (In BDT 3.1c) and Henry of Ghent (Summa Quaestionum Ordinarium 1.10) incorporate the idea that notitia of principles, received from a teacher, is necessary for learning a science (scientia).

\textsuperscript{80} “… tum demum discet et quanta ratione praedita sint ea ipsa quae secutus est ante rationem, et quid sit ipsa ratio quam post auctoritatis cunabula firmus et idoneus iam sequitur atque comprehedit et quid intellectus…” See also an. quant. 33.76.

\textsuperscript{81} See Acad. 1.8.23; beat. u. 29, 30, 34-5; sol. 1.12.21; lib. arb. 2.9.102-103. In later works Augustine says that a degree of wisdom can be had in this life (ep. 167.11) and that while wisdom is knowledge of eternal things (trin. 12.14.22ff), our happiness is completed not just by achieving such knowledge in general but by seeing God as God is, in particular (ep. 147).

\textsuperscript{82} beat. u. 34; ep. 147.9.21.

\textsuperscript{83} See also ord. 2.2.6; lib. arb. 1.16.34 and 3.21.59.201ff; doctr. chr. 1.3 and 1.22.20; trin. 9.8.13; diu. qu.30; uera rel. 37.68; mus. 6.14.46.
or knowledge about them is bad, but because devoting one’s time to them prevents him from achieving the understanding he could have otherwise had on more important matters.  

We can now see how some pragmatic and moral reasons to believe can also be indirectly epistemic reasons to believe. If pragmatic and moral goods get their value by contributing towards an ultimate epistemic good, then they are also instrumentally epistemically valuable. For example, if going to a good school would make one better off by Augustine’s lights, because it better enabled one to become wise or beatified, then believing the testimony of college guidebooks about which schools are better is not only pragmatically valuable, but also morally and epistemically valuable.

2.4 The Inferential Interpretation

We have seen good evidence that Augustine accepts conditions (1) to (4) – and to be consistent should probably also accept conditions (6) and (7) – as necessary and jointly sufficient conditions on gaining knowledge from authoritative testimony. The question we have been dodging up to now is this: Does Augustine think all testimonial knowledge is based on authoritative testimony?

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84 On *curiositas*, see *ord.* 2.5.17; *mor.* 1.21.38; *ue ra l.* 52.101; *util. cred.* 9.21-22; *doctr. chr.* 2.38.57.138-9; *conf.* 1.10.16, 10.35.55; *trin.* 14.1.3. For an example, see *mag.* 14.45.

85 The kind of pragmatic and moral reasons for belief mentioned in (a) and (b) above have been used by others to argue for a Default view of testimony, so one might think that they support a Default interpretation of Augustine. Michael Dummett (1993), for instance, argues that we typically cannot back up our testimonial beliefs by conscious inference when challenged, and if we were to rely only on that part of our testimonial knowledge supported by conscious inferential grounds, the social institution of language would fall apart. The implication is that, since our social institutions have not fallen apart, our testimonial beliefs are justified by default. Augustine similarly argues that without testimonial belief social institutions would fall apart. But unlike Dummett, he does think that conscious thought precedes all belief, as I pointed out on page 77 above. So Augustine does not say that the the pragmatic and social benefits of testimonial belief depend on a default entitlement. Instead, he says we have strong *indicium* supporting our beliefs, and that all belief is preceded by a bit of reasoning. This sounds more like the view of Reductionists who claim that, even if our inferences are not conscious, they are necessary for the justification of our testimonial beliefs. See Fricker (1994) and (1995), Lyons (1997), Thagard (2005), Fumerton (2006).
The place to find out is the preface to his Epistle 147. In the course of cautioning his reader not to believe anything rashly, he elaborates a taxonomy of knowledge sources.

Hold onto this distinction: if I suggest something in my discussion which (i) you see with your bodily eyes or sense with any other sense, or remember having sensed … or (ii) see with the vision of your mind … , and do not doubt it to be so … you will judge me to have shown this. But if I should say anything that I don’t show … which is such that it necessarily is either true or false … but is not seen by either way, it remains only to be believed or not. And if (iii) it is confirmed by the clear authority of divine scriptures, called ‘canonical’ by the church, then without doubt it is to be believed. (ep. 147.1.4)

Here Augustine wants his reader to distinguish two demonstrative sources of belief from one testimonial source, divine scripture. He immediately moves on to affirm other sources for testimonial knowledge.

But as for other testifiers or testimonies of something, it is licit [liceat] to believe to the degree that you think they do or do not have weight for producing conviction [ad faciendam fidem]. For if we weren’t to believe anything at all of the things we neither see (i.e., we don’t presently sense either by the mind or the body) nor learn from reading or hearing the holy scriptures; then how would we know there are cities we’ve never been to, such as Rome founded by Romulus or, to give a more recent example, Constantinople founded by Constantine? Lastly, how would we know who are our parents, grandparents and ancestors? Since we obviously know many such things, we learned them, not as present to any sense (as we know the sun or the

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86 This letter is a fairly lengthy treatise on the beatific vision, and is known to later medievals as ‘On Seeing God’ (De uidendo deo).

87 “Hanc itaque distinctionem tene, ut, si quid te admonuero disserendo, quod ita uideas oculis carnis uel ullo alio sensu eius sentias seu te sensisse recolas, sicut sentiuntur colores, fragores, odores, sapores, ferox eue si quid aliiu per corpus cernendo, audiendo, olfactando, gustando, tangendo, sentimus aut ita uideas mentis intuitu, ut uides utam, uoluntatem, cogitationem, memoriu, intelleguientiam, scientiam, fidem tuam, et quicquid aliud mente conspicis atque ita esse non tantum credendo sed plane uidendo non dubitas, hoc me iudices ostendisse. quod autem non sic ostendero, ut aut corporis aut animi sensu uisum perceptumque teneatur, et tamen dixero aliud, quod aut uerum quidem aut falsum esse necesse sit, sed nullo illorum duorum genere uideatur, restat, ut tantum modo credatur uel non credatur. sed si diuinum scripturarum eurm scilicet, quae canonicae in ecclesia nominantur, perspicua firmatur auctoritate, sine uilla dubitatione credendum est.”
mind’s will) nor by the authority of canonical words (as we know that Adam was the first man, or that Christ has suffered and been resurrected in the flesh), but from the report of others whose testimony, at least on such things, we thought was not to be doubted.\textsuperscript{88} (\textit{ep. 147.1.4-5})

Coming right after the claim that authoritative Scriptural testimony should not be doubted, Augustine’s claim that we get knowledge from other testimony when we think it is “not to be doubted (\textit{minime dubitandum putauimus})” sounds like a claim that testimonial knowledge comes only on the assurance of authorities. And Augustine says something very similar in \textit{De ciuitate dei}, when he rejects the Academic position by saying it is not reprehensible to believe things we see with the mind or the body, believe from canonical scripture, and “things that have come to our knowledge by testifiers whom it is absurd not to believe” (\textit{ciu. 19.18}).\textsuperscript{89} (In a few pages I will suggest that Augustine’s threshold for what’s ‘absurd’ not to believe is pretty low.)

But not every case in which one ought to believe some testimony, because it would be ‘absurd’ not to, is one in which the testifier intends her testimony to be taken on authority. Let’s consider the possibilities for a bit, before looking at the relevant examples in Augustine. Consider that one’s beliefs about one’s parents, or about distant cities, might be grounded not in any one assurance or command to believe, but rather in an inference from the fact that so many people agree on it, or from the idea that if the testimony were false, you would have had good reason to think so. Then no one person’s testimony decisively confirms something such that it should not be doubted. Granted, a \textit{group} of testifiers could count as one authoritative testifier; this is most obvious when a group is so organized (e.g., a church or a government or a union) that it can be said to have a group intention to make certain statements.\textsuperscript{90} Maybe even a very

\textsuperscript{88}“\textit{Aliis uero testibus uel testimoniiis, quibus alicuius credendum esse suadetur, tibi credere uel non credere liceat, quantum ea momenti ad faciendam fidem uel habere uel non habere perpenderis. Si enim ea, quae non uidimus, hoc est in praesenti apparentia non sensimus uel mente uel corpore neque de scripturis sanctis uel legendo uel audiendo didicimus, nulla omnino credidissetemus, unde sciremus esse ciuitates, ubi numquam fuimus, uel a Romulo conditam Romam uel, ut de propriis uel loquar, Constantinopolim a Constantino? unde postremo sciremus, quinam parentes nos procreauissent, quibus patribus, auis, maioribus geniti essemus? talium quippe cum plurima sciamus, non tamen ea uel ullo sensu praesenti sicut solem, sicut nostris animi uoluntatem uel canonicitum eloqium auctoritate sicut Adam fuisse primum hominem aut Christum in carne natum passumque resurrexisse didicimus sed aliiis referentibus, de quorum testimonio in hoc dum taxat rerum genere minime dubitandum esse putauimus.”

\textsuperscript{89}“…\textit{testes, quibus non credere absurdum est…”}

\textsuperscript{90} For an Assurance view of group testimony, see M. Fricker (2012).
loosely associated group could testify authoritatively. Suppose all the people who live within a mile of my house testify that my house burned down. Then I should no longer doubt that it did. But it would be very unusual for such a group to assure me of such an event in a way that meets condition (1) under an Assurance interpretation, that is, by voluntarily intending me to take what they say on their authority (as the group of people who live within a mile of my house). It seems more likely that after just one of my neighbors tells me that it burned down, I suspect and worry that it has, but hope that it hasn’t; and then, as more and more reports come in from all my neighbors, the cumulative effect is that at some point I should not doubt it, even though I have not yet seen it for myself.

Augustine gives a similar example in *De ciuitate dei* 21.7, when evaluating testimony he has received about natural marvels. In response to critics of Christianity who think the future bodily resurrection incredible, he points to all the natural marvels that those same critics would otherwise consider impossible, but are willing to accept because reported by “recent and credible” writers (*credendis hodieque dicerentur testibus*). Not wanting to appear credulous himself, Augustine carefully indicates exactly which of the reports he believes.

For my part, I don’t want all [the marvels] I have cited rashly to be believed, since neither do I believe them such that I have no doubt about them, except the ones I have experienced and it is easy to experience, like the limestone that is heated by water but cooled by oil … [etc.] But for the other marvels I have not experienced, but have [only] read about – except the fountain where burning torches are extinguished and extinguished torches lit, and the apples of Sodom which are ripe on the outside but dust on the inside – I have been unable find fitting testifiers from whom to hear whether they are true. … But *so many* trustworthy writers mention the fruit of the trees of Sodom, and *so many* say they have experienced them, that I could not doubt. ⁹¹ (*ciu.* 21.7)

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⁹¹ *Nam nec ego uolo temere credi cuncta quae posui, quia nec a me ipso ita creduntur, tamquam nulla de illis sit in mea cogitatione dubitatio, exceptis his, quae vel ipse sum expertus et cuiuis facile est experiri; sicut de calce, quod feruet in aqua, in oleo frigida est … de his autem, quae posui non experta, sed lecta, praeter de fonte illo, ubi faces exstinguuntur ardentes et accenduntur extinctae, et de pomis terrae Sodomorum forinsecus quasi maturis, intrinsecus fumeis, nec testes aliquos idoneos, a quibus utrum uera essent audirem, potui reperire. … de fructibus autem arborum Sodomitarum non tantum litterae fide dignae indicant, uerum etiam tam multi se loquuntur expertos, ut hinc dubitare non possim.*
The case of the apples of Sodom seems to me analogous to the case of my neighbors. Augustine believes that such fruit exist, not on the assurance of any one testifier, or any one intentionally organized group of testifiers, but because of the number of credible witnesses. But then it looks like the justification for such belief is not the interpersonal assurance or command of an authority, but inference about the credibility of the testimony.

One’s testimonial knowledge that Rome or Constantinople exists, without having been there (mentioned in ep. 147.1.5 above), seems similarly grounded. And in fact, in De trinitate Augustine uses this case as an example of inferential knowledge. There he is arguing that we can have inferential knowledge about the minds of others, and he gives the example of a comedian who teasingly promised to reveal the secret of what it is that everyone wishes, and then said it was “to buy low and sell high” (ubi emere et caro uendere) (trin. 13.3.6). How could he know?, Augustine asks. And how could everyone in the audience recognize that he was right?

How but because each one infers in others, not inappropriately, what he, by vice or nature, feels with them or agrees in with them. But it is one thing to see one’s own will, and another to infer someone else’s with even the most certain inference [quamuis certissima coniectura conicere]. For I am as certain of Rome, in human matters, as of Constantinople; while Rome I have seen with my own eyes, but about Constantinople I know nothing but what I have believed on the testimony of others. (trin. 13.3.6)

Here Augustine very clearly implies that one of his paradigm cases of testimonial knowledge – belief about cities one has never been to (cf. ep. 147.1.5) – is had by means of inference, since he

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92 This kind of evidence might also be supported by what Goldberg (2011) calls ‘coverage’ – the reasoning that if \( p \) were not true, you would have heard about it by now.

93 “Qua tandem causa nisi quia sunt quaedam quae non inconuenienter in aliis de se quisque coniciat compatiente uel conspirante uitio seu natura? sed aliud est uidere voluntatem suam, aliud quamuis certissima coniectura conicere alienam. Nam conditam Romam tam certum habeo in rebus humanis quam Constantinopolim, cum Romam uiderim oculis meis, de illa uero nihil nouerim nisi quod aliis testibus credidi.”
gives it as an example of a very certain inference. So this is another case that confirms the Inferential reading of Augustine.  

It is unfortunate Augustine does not give us more details about how such inferences work. All I can do is speculate. Perhaps the qualifier “in human matters” indicates that the certainty of notitia (in contrast with the certainty had by “the firm reason of the mind”, retr. 1.14.3) is moral certainty. In other words, notitia is sufficiently certain for one to act on, so one ought not to doubt it, at least for the sake of living one’s life. This would apply equally to notitia from the bodily senses. And it would help explain why, when Augustine in De trinitate 12.14.22 says scientia pertains to “the action by which we use temporal things well”, he then feels free to use this term for what he would otherwise normally call notitia. Perhaps the reasons such testimony should be believed have to do with Augustine’s ethics of belief: they are pragmatic, moral, and instrumentally epistemic reasons to believe.

This would help explain what Augustine means by saying that some testimony is “absurd not to believe”. He might just mean that when the testifier or testimony is such that, for the sake of practical thinking and action, it would be unreasonable not to believe her, it would be ‘absurd’ not to. It might seem that he has a stronger condition in mind, such as that the audience can rule out all not-p possibilities. But the examples he gives of things “absurd” or impossible to doubt (knowing about cities, knowing the news, knowing who one’s parents are, knowing a surprising fact about nature, ciu. 19.18, trin. 15.12.21, ciu. 21.7) are ones in which it is obvious to Augustine that there is room for some theoretical doubt, as he indicates when highlighting the

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94 In ep. 147.1.4, before he gives his examples of testimonial knowledge (including knowledge about faraway cities) he says that in believing “testifiers or testimonies” other than divine Scripture, “it is licit to believe to the degree that you think they do or do not have weight for producing conviction [ad faciendam fide].” The phrase “faciendam fide” might be a reference to Cicero’s De Topica which Hagendahl (1967) has missed. Cicero defines an argumentum as something that “produces belief about something doubted [quae rei dubiae faciat fide]” (De Topica 2.8). If so, this is further evidence that Augustine thinks of testimonial belief as inferential. I discuss this sense of ‘fides’ further in chap. 3, pp. 135, 138.

95 On the topic of inferring about other minds from our own, see trin. 8.6.9, 13.2.5, 13.3.6. See also Matthews (2001).

96 “Distat tamen ab aeternorum contemplatione actio qua bene utimur temporalibus rebus, et illa sapientiae, haec scientiae deputatur.” The Scripture passage he appeals to in support of this distinction, Job 28:28, says “Behold piety is wisdom, but to abstain from evil is knowledge” (ecce pietas est sapientia; abstinere autem a malis scientia est) (trin. 12.14.22).
possibility of sensory error in *De trinitate* 15.12.21. Augustine obviously doesn’t mean that it is logically impossible for the testimony to be false.

If testimonial knowledge is linked to a criterion of moral certainty, then the bar is quite low. For example, in an ordinary situation when a cashier tells me the price of a pair of socks, it would be *absurd* for me to doubt her, to dispute the price and ask to speak to the manager. Her telling me the price allows me to know the price, because it makes me certain enough to act on. Note that linking the criterion for testimonial *notitia* to moral certainty makes it subject to what epistemologists today call ‘pragmatic encroachment’. 97 That is, whether I count as knowing *p* depends on my practical circumstances and interests. So if the circumstances and practical interests are not ordinary – suppose I don’t have quite enough money to pay the price the cashier has quoted me, and I know the socks were priced cheaper yesterday, and I desperately need that exact pair of socks – then it becomes reasonable not to act as if I am certain the cashier’s testimony is right.

It’s true that testimonial knowledge from holy scripture is concerned with the highest possible stakes – your eternal salvation is on the line! But Augustine thinks that the costs of not acting on that testimony are also very high, and that we cannot get knowledge on this topic in any other way, so we have very good reasons for believing the authority most likely to be right on such matters; and he thinks that the indications (*indicia*) supporting the Christian church’s authority in this matter provide sufficient certainty to act on. 98 Theoretical reasons to doubt could, of course, be considered, but in the end following the authority of the Christian church is, for Augustine, the most reasonable of the live options in this forced choice about such a momentous issue. 99

97 Some important representatives of the view that pragmatic interests rightly make a difference to what knowledge is are Hawthorne (2004), Stanley (2005), and Fantl and McGrath (2009). Stanley calls his view “interest relative invariantism”. Above (p. 58) I said that Augustine does not have an interest relative invariantist view of *scientia* proper. Here I claim, in effect, that he is an interest relative invariantist about *notitia*, that is, ordinary *scientia*.

98 Augustine’s most detailed argument to this effect is in *De utilitate credendi*, but see also *conf*. 6.5.7, and *f. inuis*. 2.4. Augustine usually supports his argument by pointing out how we already take huge risks by believing the testimony of others, but we have to in order to live moral lives, e.g., in order to love our parents and friends appropriately. See also my discussion of the ‘wisdom-seeker argument’ above (chapter 1, p. 27ff).

99 See William James (1896) for the view that when an option is ‘live’, ‘forced’, and ‘momentous’, it is legitimate to choose what to believe without sufficient evidence.
Now if we consider some of the other cases Augustine mentions in *De trinitate*, it is most plausible to think that these cases are inferential as well:

Far be it also from us to deny that we know what we have learned from the testimony of others. Otherwise we don’t know there is an ocean; we don’t know that the lands and cities of most celebrated fame exist; we don’t know there to have been people and the works we learned by historical reading; we don’t know the news announced daily from everywhere and confirmed by consistent and firm indications; finally, we don’t know in what places or from which humans we came about, because all of these we believed on the testimony of others. 100 (*trin*. 15.12.21)

Constantinople is one of the cities that can be known about through ‘most celebrated fame’, so it seems that at least one of these cases is inferential. And other reports confirmed by indications are similar to the travellers’ reports about the apples of Sodom. Admittedly, some of these cases might fit an authority view. Earlier in *De trinitate*, Augustine said that we can get *notitia* from signs about the past, including “in trustworthy letters, such as all serious history of credible authority” (*in litteris fide dignis sicut est omnis gravis et approbandaes auctoritatis historia*) (*trin*. 14.8.11). But other signs of the past include “monuments to the dead, and similar things” (*trin*. 14.8.11), and it is more difficult to see how a monument could be, or could mediate, an authoritative assurance.

I suggest, then, that Augustine does not think of conditions (1) and (2) as requirements for all testimonial knowledge, even if they are necessary conditions for knowledge had by authoritative testimony. From all the evidence we have seen, I suggest that Augustine has a simpler view in which testimonial knowledge is inferential, and belief on authoritative testimony is just a special case of inferential knowledge. Then the necessary and jointly sufficient conditions for testimonial knowledge of *p* could be expressed by the following five conditions, where (A) and (B) are revised versions of conditions (1) and (2):

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100 “Absit etiam ut scire nos negemus quae testimonio didicimus aliorum alioquin esse nescimus oceanum; nescimus esse terras atque urbes quas celeberrima fama commendat, nescimus fuisse homines et opera eorum quae historica lectione didicimus nescimus quae quotidie undecumque munitur et indicis consonis constantibusque firmantur; postremo nescimus in quibus locis uel ex quibus hominibus fuerimus exorti, quia haec omnia testimoniiis credidimus aliorum.”
(A) *Appropriate Testimony:* The audience receives linguistic signs that \( p \) from a testifier or testimony that is appropriate (idoneus), i.e., such that it should not be doubted.

(B) *Credibility Reasoning:* The audience reasons (rightly) that the testifier or testimony is appropriate, i.e., such that it should not be doubted.

(3) *Choice:* The audience chooses to accept \( p \).

(4) \( p \) is true.

(5) *Unseen:* \( p \) is unseen, i.e., \( p \) is not known by means of the bodily senses, nor known by introspection, nor known by direct grasp of an intelligible truth, nor remembered as seen in any of these ways.

(7*) *Sincerity:* The speaker sincerely reports that \( p \).

Allow me a few comments of clarification and support.

I find condition (5) about the unseen, and most of condition (A) about appropriate testimony given in *ep.* 147.3.8, where Augustine says

> So our knowledge is based on things seen and things believed. But for things which we see or saw, we ourselves are testifiers, while for those which we believe, we are moved to faith by other testifiers *when signs are given* (whether by words or letters or whatever other indications) *of the things we neither see nor remember having seen*; and these signs being seen, the unseen are believed. We duly say we know not only those which we see, but also those which we believe, when moved by *appropriate testimonies or testifiers.*

I have included in Condition (A), and in condition (B) about credibility reasoning, a clause explaining what makes testimony *‘appropriate’* (idoneus). I get this clause from the passage we

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101 “Constat igitur nostra scientia ex uisis rebus et creditis. sed in his, quae uidimus uel uidemus, nos ipsi testes sumus, in his autem, quae credimus, alios testibus movemur ad fidem, cum earum rerum, quas nec uidisse nos recolimus nec uidemus, dantur signa uel in uocibus uel in litteris uel in quibusque documentis, quibus uissis non uisa credantur. non autem inmerito scire nos dicimus non solum ea, quae uidimus aut uidemus, uerum et illa, quae idoneis ad quamque rem commoti testimoniis uel testibus credimus.”
saw just before this one (ep. 147.1.5) and from De ciuitate dei 19.18. These are the passages I have now quoted several times, in which Augustine says that we know on the basis of testimony which ‘should not be doubted’ or would be ‘absurd’ to doubt.

Note that by replacing (1) with (A), I have removed the idea that the audience recognizes in the speaker an intention directed at that particular audience. Two things in the passage just quoted are relevant here. First, testimonial belief is based on ‘signs’. Testimony is limited to linguistic or ‘given’ signs,\(^{102}\) and while such signs must be intentional, they need not include an intention directed at any specific audience. Thus, an audience can get testimonial knowledge from monuments and history books, even if those were not intended to provide an interpersonal assurance to that specific audience.\(^{103}\) Second, Augustine says testimonial belief can be based on either ‘testimonies or testifiers’. Talk of ‘testimonies’ on their own seems to leave the door open to believing something to which one is not the intended audience (e.g., by eavesdropping, or reading other people’s mail). Speaker intentions directed at specific audiences might be important for certain kinds of authority-based belief, like accepting a Creed on the Church’s authority. But there is not sufficient evidence that this is a condition on testimony generally. So I reject the idea that Augustine has an Assurance view of testimony in general.

Notice also that I have not included condition (6), that the speaker must speak from knowledge. I argued before that while Augustine did not come out clearly for or against this

\(^{102}\) ‘Given signs’ are those by which people “show as much as they can the emotions of their minds, or anything they have sensed or understood” (doctr. chr. 2.2.3: “Data vero signa sunt quae sibi quaeque viventia invicem dant ad demonstrandos quantum possunt motus animi sui vel sensa aut intellecta quaelibet. Nec ulla causa est nobis significandi, id est signi dandi, nisi ad depremendum et traiciendum in alterius animum id quod animo gerit qui signum dat.”) Given signs include gestures and other signals, but they should be distinguished from ‘natural signs’ which might also convey what one is thinking, such as grimaces of pain or sighs of boredom. King and Ballantyne (2009: 196) note that Augustine means to include “gestures, such as hand signals, nods, and the like.” They cite mag. 3.5, trin. 15.10.19 and note that in doctr. chr. 2.3.4 Augustine says the gestures of pantomimists “are, in a manner of speaking, visible words” (quasi verba visibilia).

\(^{103}\) There are things “which have passed and themselves do not exist, but are known to have been from signs. These signs are at certain places, such as monuments to the dead and the like, or are in trustworthy writings, such as serious and authoritative history, or are in the minds of those who knew the things” (trin. 14.8.11: “sunt autem uel in locis suis uel quae tempore praeterierunt, quamuis quae praeterierunt non ipsa sint sed eorum quaedam signa praeteritorum quibus uisis uel auditis cognoscanturuisse atque transisse. quae signa uel in locis sita sunt sicut monumenta mortuorum et quaequecumque similia, uel in litteris fide dignis sicut est omnis gravis et approbandae auctoritatis historia, uel in animis eorum qui ea iam nouerunt …”
condition, it is a plausible condition on belief on authority. While this is a plausible condition on belief on authority, it need not hold for all obligated belief based on testimony. For example, one might infer that it would be absurd not to believe something, on the grounds that so many people say it (ciu. 21.7) without inferring that they know it. In De utilitate credendi Augustine says that often the masses who don’t know follow the few experts who do, so uniformity of belief that \( p \) is a sign that \( p \) is known, but not that it is known by the masses (util. cred. 7.16). One might infer that \( p \) on the grounds that it is believed with such uniformity that it would be absurd to disbelieve, even if one does not directly believe the experts who know that \( p \). So it seems safer not to take condition (6) to be a general condition on testimonial knowledge.

What about condition (7)? This is the condition that a speaker must speak in good faith. It seems that here, too, the masses need not meet all of Augustine’s conditions for good faith (speaking out of justice toward one’s audience, loving the truth for its own sake, etc.). But it is hard to see how one could get testimonially based knowledge from a speaker who speaks insincerely. Augustine does consider the case of an audience who expects a speaker to lie, so that when the speaker says \( p \), the audience infers that not-\( p \). If the speaker is a reliable enough liar, such a procedure could yield knowledge that \( p \). But this knowledge is just prompted by the liar’s testimony; it is not appropriately testimonially based. After all, the liar has testified that \( p \), rather than not-\( p \). So while condition (7) is too strong, condition (7*), that the speaker must be sincere, is a plausible condition on testimonial knowledge.

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104 We might think that what happens in Lackey’s cases of ‘selfless assertion’, when a doctor or a teacher, while doubting what she asserts, nonetheless provides the audience with knowledge, is that the audience believes the speaker only insofar as she has taken on an institutional role (Sosa 2011: 47). Newscasters are the paradigm case. It is irrelevant what the newscaster knows or even believes to whether the audience gains knowledge from the newscaster’s speech, because the newscaster is speaking not for herself personally, but for an institution which the audience trusts to provide them with knowledge. The audience trusts that the institution or group is knowledgeable, not that the specific spokesperson is.

105 The same goes for the case of double-bluffing. Suppose a politician expects her opponent to infer the opposite of whatever she says, and so says \( p \), intending the opponent to believe not-\( p \). It does not seem that the politician has testified that not-\( p \). Rather, she has tried to maneuver her opponent into believing not-\( p \) by testifying that \( p \). See Augustine’s discussion of such cases in mend. 3-4.
2.5 Two Objections and a Puzzle

But what about all the evidence we saw for the Assurance reading of authority-based testimony? I suggest that that evidence is to some degree an artifact of Augustine’s development, and to some degree the result of focusing on the cases of authority-based testimony central for Augustine (the teacher-student and Church-religious seeker cases) without seeing whether all the features of those central cases apply to what Augustine considers genuine but peripheral cases of testimonial knowledge.

In Augustine’s early works, he focuses on the distinction between reason and authority, and he gives arguments for the value of testimonial belief only in order to affirm the legitimacy of believing on authority. He denies the possibility of testimonial knowledge, and says “what we believe we owe to authority” (util. cred. 11.25). But as he comes to say in the Particularist stage that we have knowledge not just from reason, but also from the senses and from testimony, he broadens and modifies the dichotomy he is concerned with. He eventually shifts his attention from the dichotomy between reason and authority (in the Platonist stage) to a dichotomy between seeing (uidere) and believing (credere) (in the Ordinary language stage), where ‘seeing’ provides direct knowledge of things ‘present’ (praesto) to the senses (sensus) of either the body or the mind, including what he previously called ‘reason’; whereas ‘believing’ provides indirect knowledge of things ‘absent’ from one’s senses, whether by means of authoritative testimony, other kinds of testimony, or any other inductive inference. Before Augustine thought to recognize fallible means of acquiring knowledge, like testimony and inference, he was focused on the value of testimonial belief as a means of attaining expertise under the guidance of an expert. He initially thought of the liberal arts (disciplinæ) as a path to wisdom. But as he came to argue that testimony in general is a source of knowledge (and gave up on the possibility of

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106 This is true of Contra Academicos, De ordine, and Augustine’s anti-Manichean writings generally.

107 “Quod intelligimus igitur, debemus rationi, quod credimus, auctoritati, quod opinamur, errori.”

108 On this distinction see especially ep. 147.1.4 and 147.2.7. This shift begins in earnest, perhaps, with De fide rerum inuisibilium (dated 400 by O’Donnell 1992: lxvii), which is not explicitly anti-Manichean. What is new in Augustine is not the distinction between seeing and believing, but his claim that both provide knowledge. In De fide rerum he does not claim that believing provides one with knowledge, but he elaborates in great detail a short argument from Confessions 6.5.7 affirming non-authoritative testimony, and uses a new case in which inference about the mental states of others is very important.
achieving wisdom in this life by means of the liberal arts), he embraced all kinds of testimony, not just the central cases of authoritative testimony in the teacher-student and Church-believer relations. Thus, he came to accept, as sources of testimonial knowledge, cases in which the reciprocal addressive relations between speaker and audience that are so important to the Assurance view need not be very important: common opinion, daily news, history, reports of far-off cities.

If we revisit the authority-based conditions (1) and (2), then, we will see that they need not be read as Assurance conditions, but can be read as conditions of an Inferential view specific to some important cases of belief on authority. Here are the conditions again:

(1) **Speaker Intention:** The speaker conveys her intent that the audience believe \( p \) on her authority, and the audience recognizes that intent.

(2) **Credibility Reasoning:** The audience reasons (rightly) that the testifier is a trustworthy epistemic authority on the topic of \( p \).

What is essential here is not that there be a special interpersonal addressive relation between the speaker and audience. What is essential is that the audience take the speaker to be an authority, and believe her for that reason. So these conditions can apply to a subset of inferential testimonial knowledge.

But why, if testimonial knowledge is a branch of inferential knowledge, and Augustine recognizes inference as a source of knowledge in trin 13.3.6, does his official trichotomy of knowledge sources (mind, senses, testimony) in trin. 15.12.21 and ciu. 19.18 not include inference, but only testimony? Shouldn’t the trichotomy be: mind, bodily senses, inductive inference (*coniectura*)?

Well, Augustine was clearly very keen on pointing to the value of testimony, as it supported his adoption of Christianity and rejection of Academic skepticism and Manicheanism, so it is not surprising that he would highlight this by saying that testimony gives us knowledge. It’s true that inductive belief was also an important part of his polemic against those who say you should never believe anything you don’t see (e.g., in *De fide rerum inuisibilium*), but the ultimate conclusion he aims to support is about testimony: that one should accept the testimony of the
Christian church. To this end, it is not very important to carefully distinguish testimonial ‘belief’ from other kinds of ‘belief’, but it is important to highlight that testimony is valuable, and even a source of knowledge. Augustine has a lot to say about why it is reasonable to believe testimony, but little to say about why we should believe inductive inferences. I suggest that Augustine just never got around to recognizing the role of inductive inference in his epistemology, because doing so was not central to any of the arguments he wanted to make.  

Finally, perhaps the biggest puzzle facing the Inferential reading is the role of the will in testimonial knowledge. Augustine defines belief as “thinking with assent” (cogitatio cum assensu) (praed. sanct. 2.5); he says that even if God motivates one to have belief, that belief is still from free choice (liberum arbitrium) (spir. et litt. 34.60); and he has an elaborate ethics of belief. If testimonial knowledge were had only from authorities, it would make sense for it to involve an acquiescence to authorities which is somehow voluntary. But it is not a normal part of an Inferential or Reductionist view that testimonial belief or knowledge essentially involve voluntary assent.

Some have suggested that Augustine’s definition of belief as thinking with assent is Stoic, and I think this is basically right. The debate between Academics and Stoics about whether one ought to assent to some things (as the Stoics claim) or withhold assent on all matters (as the Academics claim) is pointless unless we have it within our voluntary control to give or withdraw such assent. So it is a presupposition of this debate that assent is voluntary. If the

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109 In De trinitate, Augustine does care to show that we can get inductive knowledge about other minds (e.g., trin. 8.6.9, 13.2.5, 13.3.6) because his project is to explain how the mind is an image of the Trinity. But he doesn't think of inductive inference (coniectura) as an important element in any one of those mental trinities that is an image of the divine Trinity. So his project does not require him to draw any important conclusions about how inductive inference works.

110 Kahn (1988: 259) says that Augustine draws “not only on the theological tradition but also on the Stoic theory of assent, the Latin vocabulary that links voluntas to voluntarium and free choice, and the late pagan preoccupation with our inner life of self-examination and the effort toward self-perfection that we have illustrated from Seneca to Epictetus.” See also Holte (1962: 81), Markus (1967: 348-349) and Rist (1994: 61). Spanneut (1957: 222) finds that Clement of Alexandria similarly thinks of belief and knowledge as assent (συγκεκτέθεις) and says that for the ancient Greeks knowledge was a voluntary activity: “La connaissance est donc à leurs yeux l’activité essentielle” (204). Nevertheless, scholars typically find a new emphasis in Augustine on the independence of the will from the cognitive powers. Dihle (1982: chap. 6) explains this new emphasis by appeal to various factors, including Augustine’s introspectiveness, his familiarity with a ‘voluntarist’ Biblical tradition, and his familiarity with the importance of a testator’s voluntas in Roman jurisprudence.

111 One passage that indicates this is sol. 2.3.3, where Augustine says that one to whom things appear falsely is not deceived, but only one who assents to the appearance.
Academics are right, then you have foolishly developed entrenched habits of assenting to many things you don’t know, and no matter how automatic such habits feel, they were voluntarily developed. I suggest that Augustine accepts this view of assent, while rejecting the claim that you should never give assent. We have seen that Augustine thinks you should give your assent not only to what you see with your mind’s eye, but also to the deliverances of your senses generally, and in special cases of testimony or inductive inference when it would be absurd not to assent (while in all other inductive cases one is permitted to either believe or disbelieve) (ep. 147.1.4-5). So while Augustine’s view is an Inferential one, it is not like any contemporary Reductionist account of testimony, since for him choice is a necessary part of testimonial belief. And what Augustine counts as good reasons to believe are not always evidential, even when they are instrumentally epistemic.

2.6 Conclusion

Augustine’s initial view on testimony was that only authorities should be believed. But as he came to accept the idea of knowledge on testimony, he came to recognize a broader range of cases of testimonial knowledge. He also came to accept inductive knowledge, and implied that central cases of testimonial knowledge are cases of inductive inference. The most plausible interpretation of Augustine’s epistemology of testimony is therefore that he thinks of testimonial knowledge as a branch of inferential knowledge, in accordance with conditions (A), (B), (3), (4), (5) and (7*), and thinks of authority-based testimonial knowledge as an important subset that meets further conditions (1), (2), (6) and (7).
Chapter 3
Aquinas on Testimonial Opinion and Testimonial Faith

3.0 Introduction

A 12th century poem in praise of faith ends with a stanza about the importance of ‘human faith’ (humana fides).

The credence of men, by which they believe each other so much,

Is human faith, a trace of faith divine.

For without faith perish good society, manners,

Fealty of friendship, sweet union of love;

Without faith no child knows his parents;

Lost without faith is all filial reverence,

Affection of spouses, love of companions,

The full sweet solaces of natural relations;

Without faith perish evidence for others, and virtue;

All that is fitting, and all order, is at once confounded.1

This stanza is clearly inspired by Augustine,2 but this move – to argue for the reasonableness of ‘divine faith’ (which involves believing God and his church) by drawing analogies with human

1 “Credulitas hominum, per quam sibi plurima credunt, / est humana fides, fidei s<e>iullula diue. / Nam perit absque fide bona conversatio, mores, / fedus amiciciie, dulcis connexus amoris; / absque fide genitus cognoscit nemo parentes; / deperit absque fide reverencia tota parentum, / coniugis affectus, dilectio consociorum, / dulcia nature solacia sanguinis ampla; / absque fide pereunt alii uirtus et documentum / cuncta decora simul omnis confunditur ordo.” This is the end of a poem beginning “O miranda fides”, attributed to Peter of Blois (section IV, song 1 in Wollin 1998). All translations are my own, unless otherwise noted.

2 Many of the points made in this poem can be traced to De fide rerum inuisibilium 2.4.
‘faith’ – was a standard move in Christian apologetics even before Augustine. Theophilus of Antioch (d. c. 184) said

Do you not know that faith [pistis] leads the way in all actions? … What sick man can be cured unless he first entrusts himself to the physician? What art or science can anyone learn unless he first delivers and entrusts himself to the teacher?\(^3\)

In the same vein, Aquinas, in the course of arguing that divine faith is necessary, also claims that society needs human faith. The question of this chapter is, How does human faith work? The plan is to first clear away some of Aquinas’s confusing terminology, and then argue that Aquinas recognizes two distinct kinds of human faith, while explaining how they work. But first let’s take a bit of a detailed look at the three ways Aquinas thinks society needs faith, so we already have some specific cases in mind when we get to the intricacies of his view.

First, following Maimonides, he argues that even if some important truths (e.g., that God exists) can be demonstrated, and so believed without faith, faith is necessary for individuals and for society as a whole because without it only very few individuals would have the time, talent, training, and leisure necessary to demonstrate these truths. And even those who achieved such demonstrations would likely mix the results together with mistakes, and find it hard to agree with each other. The result would be that very few people would know these important truths, and then only with doubt, and after a long time. The non-philosophers especially would find it hard to know what to believe on the basis of the philosophers’ demonstrations.\(^4\) Nowadays we could say that testimony is necessary for similar reasons on important but difficult subjects such as human evolution, forensic science, or constitutional law. Even in temporal matters it is

\(^3\) Ad Autolycum I.8 (Grant trans. 1970:11-13) (ἡ σκέφτεσθαι ὅτι ἡ ἁπάντησιν προφήτης ή πίστις προηγεῖτί; … τίς δὲ καίμων δύναται θεραπεύων, ἐὰν μὴ πρῶτον ἑαυτὸν πιστεύων τῷ ἱερῷ ποιῶν δὲ τέχνην ἢ ἐπιστήμην δύναται τις μαθῶν, ἐὰν μὴ πρῶτον ἐπίδοξο ἑαυτὸν καὶ πιστεύων τῷ διδασκάλῳ). We have seen that Augustine gives similar (but more careful and more developed) arguments in conf. 6.5.7, util. cred. 12, f inuis 2.4, ep. 147.1.5, trin. 15.12.21. Baldwin of Ford’s twelfth century Commendatio Fidei is a medieval book-length work in this vein, arguing from the necessity and nature of faith in daily life to the need for religious faith. Grant notes that “faith leads the way in all actions” may be a version of a well-known Christian aphorism, no. 166 in The Sentences of Sextus: πίστις καὶ ἀπασχόλει καλῶν πράξεων ἡμεῖς ἐστιν (Chadwick 1959: 32). Rufinus’s Latin translation of The Sentences of Sextus was well known in the West (Chadwick 1959: ix). His translation for aphorism 166 is “Fides omnes actus tuos praecedat” (Chadwick 1959: 33).

\(^4\) QDV 14.10c; In BDT 3.1c; SCG I.4; ST I.1.1c; ST II-II.2.4c; In Sym Ap proem.; cf. In Joh 2.3. My abbreviations for Aquinas’s titles follow those of Kretzmann and Stump, eds. (1993) The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas.
important for non-experts to have the right beliefs about such things without having to become experts themselves. We could say that such an epistemic division of labour is a vertical one, with the experts on top.\(^5\)

Following Aristotle, Aquinas also found a vertical division of labour among the experts themselves, when one science depends on another. Aquinas says that some sciences (the ‘subalternated’ ones) are based on others such that demonstrations in that science (e.g., optics) start from the theorems of another science (e.g., geometry) taken on faith:

The ultimate first principle of any science is always understanding (*intellectus*), but this is not always the proximate principle; rather, sometimes faith is the proximate principle of a science, as in the subalternated sciences, in which conclusions come proximately from faith in the things supposed from a superior science, but come ultimately from the understanding of the superior knower, who has certainty, through understanding, about the things [merely] believed [in the subalternated science]. And similarly the proximate principle of [theology] is faith, but the first principle is the divine intellect, which we believe. And yet the goal of our faith is that we come to understand what we believe, just as if a subordinate scientist [*inferior scien*] were to learn the science of a superior scientist, such that things previously only believed would become understood and known.\(^6\) (In BDT 2.2 ad 7)

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\(^5\) On Aquinas’s divisions of epistemic labour, see also Pasnau (2013) and Hawthorne’s (2013) reply. Pasnau (2013: 85-89) says that Aquinas is an ‘elitist’ when he calls for an epistemic division of labour, and an ‘elitist fideist’ because on Aquinas’s view most people cannot have “knowledge” on some matter, but have to believe the few who do. Hawthorne replies that, according to Aquinas, divine faith is hyperreliable and is in the same logical space as what we would today call knowledge, so Aquinas does not deny that those with faith have knowledge, and so is not what Pasnau calls a ‘fideist’. I agree with Hawthorne but I would go further and argue that Aquinas also thought of human faith as a source of knowledge (*cognitio* or *notitia*), although not a source of the most perfect kind of knowledge, *scientia*. (See chapter 4.)

\(^6\) “… *dicendum quod cuiuslibet scientiae principium est intellectus semper quidem primum, sed non semper proximum, immo aliquando est fides proximum principium scientiae. Sicut patet in scientis subalternatis, quia earum conclusiones sicut ex proximo principio procedunt ex fide eorum quae supponuntur a superiori scientia, sed sicut a principio primo ab intellectu superioris scientis, qui de his creditis certitudinem per intellectum habet. Et similiter huius scientiae principium proximum est fides, sed primum est intellectus divinus, cui nos credimus, sed finis fidei est nobis, ut perveniamus ad intelligendum quae credimus, sicut si inferior scien* addiscat superioris scientiam, et tunc fient et intellecta vel scita, quae prius erant tantummodo credita.” On subalternation of sciences, see especially In PA I.15 and I.25, cf. In Sent I prol. 3.2 ad 2, In Sent III.24.1.2.2 ad 3, QDV 14.9 ad 3, In BDT 2.2, In BDT 3.1c, In PA I.17.3, In PA I.41.2, In SS 1.1.16, ST I.1.2c, ST I.79.9c, ST II-I.9.2 ad 3
Someone with only the subalternated science (e.g., an optician) ‘supposes’ some principles on the testimony of someone with a ‘superior’ science (e.g., a geometer), and draws out from those suppositions (together with the appropriate self-evident principles\(^7\)) a systematic demonstrative knowledge of her subject matter, which Aquinas is willing to call a ‘science’ (\textit{scientia}).\(^8\) We see something similar today – setting aside all the Aristotelian details about a science being based on demonstrations from self-evident principles – in the way biology depends on chemistry, and chemistry on physics.

Second, like Augustine, Aquinas argues that human society could not function without a \textit{horizontal} epistemic division of labour. He says that faith is of what is ‘not apparent’, and then explains:

\begin{quote}
Something can be not apparent to human cognition in two ways … from a defect in 
(ii) the object or (ii) our intellect.
\end{quote}

\footnote{In Aquinas’s Aristotelian account of science there are two kinds of self-evident principles: principle proper to a science (in this case, principles about the nature of light) and principles common to every science (such as the principle of non-contradiction). The propositions accepted from a superior science (e.g., geometrical conclusions about lines accepted by the optician) are not common principles, but are, from the geometry’s point of view, conclusions, and from the optician’s point of view, are principles proper to rays of light, since they necessarily travel in straight lines. Aquinas talks about such issues in In PA I.15.5 and 17.3. See Jenkins (1997: chap. 1) and Laird (1983: 96ff) for more details.}

\footnote{In ST I.1.2ff (cf. QDV 14.9 ad 3), Aquinas argues that theology is a subalternate science which supposes its first principles, the articles of faith, on divine faith (I explain what I mean by ‘divine faith’ below, pp. 116, 136). Aquinas’s critics deny that such faith can produce an Aristotelian science, strictly speaking. John Duns Scotus says that someone with a subalternated science has to at least \textit{be capable} of having the superior science, but notes that this condition is not met in the case of theologians (\textit{Ordinatio} III.24.4). Peter Auriol says no one can have the subalternated science, strictly speaking, unless she simultaneously has the superior science (Livesey 1994: xv). John of Reading says that since distinct sciences cannot have the identical subject matter (according to the \textit{Posterior Analytics}), theology cannot be a distinct science with the same subject matter as God’s knowledge of Himself (Livesey 1989: 37). Gregory of Rimini says that one could perhaps have the subalternated science without simultaneously having the superior science, but only if one had had the superior science while one learned the subalternated science (Livesey 1994: xvii). Other critics include Durand of St. Pourçain and Landolfus Caracciolo (Livesey 1994: xiv). Scholastic defenders of Aquinas like Aegidius Romanus, Antonius de Carlenis (Livesey1994: xiv), Hervaeus Natalis, Jacques de Metz, John Capreolus (Chenu 1969: 85) and Thomas Claxton (Livesey 1990: 283) accept some of these criticisms, and tend to admit that theology and other subalternated sciences (when had without having the superior science) are not properly speaking sciences, but do nevertheless have a scientific character, and so deserve to be called sciences in a looser sense. They support their interpretation with passages like In Sent III.33.1.2.4c and QDV 14.9 ad 3. For a helpful overview of this issue see Livesey (1994) and Chenu (1969). For an insightful discussion of subalternation in Aristotle’s \textit{Posterior Analytics}, see McKirahan (1978). See Jenkins (1997) for a novel argument that in Aquinas’s view theology is “fully a PA \textit{scientia}” (p. 51), i.e., an Aristotelian science that meets all the conditions laid down for a \textit{scientia} in the \textit{Posterior Analytics}.}
For example, singulars and contingents which are removed from our senses, such as the acts, sayings and thoughts of people, are such that they can be known to one human and unknown to another. And since in human community [convictu] it ought to be that one person use another as himself when he is not self-sufficient, so it ought to be that he stand toward those things which another knows, and are unknown to him, the way he stands to those he cognizes himself. Thus faith, by which one man believes the sayings of another, is necessary in human interaction. It also is the “foundation of justice” as Cicero says in De Officiis [1.23], which is why no lie is without sin, since every lie detracts from this faith which is so necessary. (In BDT 3.1c)

Here Aquinas notices that some humans have what Bernard Williams (2002: 42) calls “merely positional advantage” over each other in knowing things that happen to be present to their senses but are absent from the senses of others. (Aquinas here focuses on merely positional advantage with regard to contingent truths about singulars, but he has not ruled out that some people are in a better position to learn some necessary truths than others are, for example, by getting an opportunity to learn about the natures of certain rocks or animals when others don’t.) What seems most significant about this passage is that Aquinas does not just point to specific kinds of social relations that would be undermined by the loss of testimony, as Augustine does, but makes a very general point about the social need for the communicability of knowledge.  

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9 Quod autem aliquid non sit patens humanae cognitioni, potest ex duobus contingere, ut dicitur in II metaphysicae, scilicet ex defectu ipsarum rerum cognoscentium et ex defectu intellectus nostri. Ex defectu quidem rerum, sicut in rebus singularibus et contingentibus quae a nostris sensibus sunt remotae, sicut sunt facta hominum et dicta et cogitata, quae quidem talia sunt, ut uni homini possint esse nota et alii incognita. Et quia in convictu hominum oportet quod unus utatur altero sicut se ipso in his, in quibus sibi non sufficit, ideo oportet ut stet illis quae alius scit et sunt sibi ignota, sicut his quae ipse cognoscit. Et exinde est quod in conversatione hominum est fides necessaria, qua unus homo dictis aliterius credat, et hoc est iustitiae fundamentum, ut Tullius dicit in libro de officiis. Et inde est quod mendacium nullum sine peccato est, cum per omne mendacium huic fidei tam necessaria derogetur.

10 Augustine makes similar claims about the social need for language (ord. 2.12.35, doct. chr. 2.2.3ff), but not for testimonial faith. Most of the cases mentioned in f. inuis. 2.4 are cases of non-testimonial inductive inference. Like Augustine, Baldwin of Ford argues in an extended treatise on faith from the 12th century (Commendatio Fidei) that faith is necessary for maintaining various social relations: “A friend requires faith of a friend, a companion of a companion, a master of a servant, a commander of a soldier, a husband of a wife; everyone who lives requires faith of him with whom he lives.” (1.1: “Fidem exquirit amicus ab amico, socius a socio, dominus a seruo, imperator a milite, maritus ab uxore: omnis qui uiuit ab eo cum quo uiuit.”). But only after his argument does he distinguish faith as belief-worthiness from faith as a disposition to believe someone (chaps. 2-3), so it’s not clear how significant an epistemological point is being made. A little later than Aquinas, Matthew of Aquasparta argues for a more extreme view that faith is necessary for “every human act, every contract, and every bond of society” (QD de
Third, in the same passage, Aquinas argues that faith is necessary for learning the sciences.  

(ii) Divine and necessary things, which in the order of nature are best known [maxime notae], are not apparent [to us]. Hence we are not fit from the first moment to see into them, since we must arrive at things prior and better known from things posterior and less known in the order of nature. But since by the power of those which we know last are known those which we know first, we must from the beginning have some knowledge [notitiam] of those things which are better known in themselves [per se magis nota], which cannot happen except by believing another [credendo]. And we see this in the order of the sciences, since the science of the highest causes, namely metaphysics, comes last in a man’s knowing, and yet in the preamble sciences one must suppose certain things which in [metaphysics] are known more fully. Hence every science has suppositions which the learner must believe.  

(Aristotle, at the beginning of the Posterior Analytics (71a1-2), says all theoretical teaching and learning begins from pre-existing knowledge (gnôsis). Here Aquinas says that some of the pre-

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Fide 2). But this is not quite as extreme a claim as it sounds: ‘human act’ is a scholastic term for ‘act performed qua human’ as opposed to acts of the kind a brute animal could perform, such as eating. Nevertheless, Matthew of Aquasparta seems to be picking up on Augustine’s claim in the Confessions that without testimonial belief “in this life we would do nothing at all” (conf. 6.5.7: “consideranti quam innumerabilia crederem quae non uiderem neque cum gererentur affuisset … tam multa hominibus aliis atque aliis, quae nisi crederentur, omnino in hac vita nihil ageremus”). Aquinas’s claim in In BDT 3.1c is similar, but it is about cognitio, not just about useful belief. I will argue in chapter 4 that cognitio here is a kind of knowledge. Some well-known contemporary accounts of human society’s need for the communicability of knowledge are Craig (1990) and Williams (2002).

11 See also QDV 14.10c; In BDT 3.1c; In Joh 8.4; SCG III.152.4; ST II-II.2.3c.

12 “Ex defectu vero nostro sunt non apparentia res divinae et necessariae, quae sunt secundum naturam maxime notae. Unde ad harum inspectionem non sumus statim a principio idonei, cum oporteat nos ex minus notis et posterioribus secundum naturam in magis nota et priora naturaliter pervenire. Sed quia ex vi illorum, quae ultimo cognoscimus, sunt nota illa quae primo cognoscimus, oportet etiam a principio aliquam nos habere notitiam de illis quae sunt per se magis nota; quod fieri non potest nisi credendo. Et etiam hoc patet in ordine scientiarum, quia scientia quae est de causis allissimis, scilicet metaphysica, ultimo occurrerit homini ad cognoscendum, et tamen in scientiis praebendis oportet quod supponantur quaedam quae in illa plenius innotescunt; unde quaelibet scientia habet suppositiones, quibus oportet addiscendum credere.”

13 “Πάσα διδασκαλία καὶ πάσα μάθησις διανοητικὴ ἐκ προπορχούσης γίνεται γνώσεως.”
existing knowledge for learning a science must be testimonial. And he echoes what Augustine had said about the need for authoritative guidance in learning a *disciplina*.\(^{14}\)

Suppose that modern theoretical physics were an Aristotelian science, and young Jane wants to learn it. She can’t start by reading one of Einstein’s journal articles because, among other things, she doesn’t understand the principles of physics, and doesn’t even understand how to choose which first principles to start from. So she starts from what she is familiar with – mundane cases of force, motion, and matter – and works toward a more and more universal understanding of these, until she can judge for herself whether Einstein has laid out the right principles and demonstrated his conclusions. But her reasoning about these cases will be much more fruitful and accurate if it is guided by someone who already knows physics, and so can explain the principles involved, and give her further examples she would not have noticed for herself, pointing out the relevant similarities and differences between different cases. The teacher

sees that the student cannot grasp the things he knows, in the way he [the teacher] knows them, so he works to distinguish and multiply by examples, so they can be comprehended by the student.\(^{15}\) (QDV 9.5c)

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\(^{14}\) The similarity with Augustine’s *De ordine* 2.9.26 is even more obvious in QDV 14.10c, where Aquinas says the student doesn’t start out knowing the ‘reasons’ for things she believes. Aquinas applies a general principle that “it is not possible [non ... contingit] that something is brought from imperfect to perfect except by the action of something perfect” to the case of teaching: “For at first a human is imperfect in knowledge. To acquire the perfection of science he needs some instructor to lead him to the perfection of science, which the instructor cannot do unless he has the science perfectly himself, comprehending the reasons of the things that fall under that science. But he does not at once pass on to the instructee the reasons of the knowables in which he intends to instruct him. Instead, he passes on some things of which the student is ignorant at first, but will come to know [sciet] after progressing in the science. And thus it is said [by Aristotle, *On Sophistical Refutations* 165b3] that the learner must believe. And the student could not otherwise arrive at perfect science unless he were to suppose things passed on to him at first, the reasons for which he could not grasp at the time.” (In principio enim homo imperfectus est in cognitione. Ad hoc autem quod perfectionem scientiae consequatur, indiget aliquo instruente, qui eum ad perfectionem scientiae ducat; quod facere non posset, nisi ipse perfecte scientiam haberet, utpote comprehendens rationes eorum quae sub scientia cadunt. Non autem in principio suae doctrinae statim ei qui instruitur, tradit rationes scibilium de quibus instruere intendit: quia tunc statim in principio perfecte scientiam haberet qui instruitur; sed tradit ei quaedam, quorum rationes tunc, cum primo instruitur discipulus, nescit; sciet autem post profectum in scientia. Et ideo dicitur, quod oportet addiscerum credere: et aliter ad perfectam scientiam pervenire non posset, nisi scilicet supponeret ea quae sibi in principio traduntur, quorum rationes tunc capere non potest.)

\(^{15}\) “...et est simile de magistro, qui videt discipulum non posse capere ea quae ipse cognoscit, per illum modum quo ipse cognoscit; et ideo studet distinguere et multiplicare per exempla, ut sic possit a discipulo comprehendi.” See also QDV 14.10c; ST I.117.1, I-II.111.4c.
Indeed, young Jane could hardly have started her studies without a physicist giving her some direction in understanding the basic principles governing force, motion, and matter, as physicists today understand them.\textsuperscript{16} It would be best to have such principles introduced bit by bit, as she becomes able to understand them (ST II-II.1.7 ad 2).\textsuperscript{17} Without such basic instruction she would have to go through all the experimenting and theorizing of generations of physicists in her one lifetime, which is impossible. It is impossible because some observations (e.g., certain astronomical observations, such as the frequency with which Hailey’s comet orbits the sun) take longer than individual lifetimes.\textsuperscript{18} It also seems impossible for her to have all the insights past physicists (and present physicists in other parts of the world) have had. So she will need to read what others have written. In short Aquinas recognizes that a student of a science needs various kinds of testimony, for various reasons.\textsuperscript{19}

So here we have three areas in which Aquinas recognizes the importance of testimony, in the form of human ‘faith’\textsuperscript{20}: when it enables guidance (1) from experts, (2) from peers who happen to know something you didn’t know for yourself, and (3) from teachers. Now let’s see how faith works. First, I will distinguish assent to the unseen (faith in a broad sense) from assent to the seen. Then I will distinguish two more specific kinds of human faith, which I call

\textsuperscript{16} In Heb 11.1 (\textit{reportatio}): “We see this in the liberal sciences, that if someone wishes to learn one of them, he must first accept its principles, which he must believe when they are handed on [\textit{traduntur}] to him by a teacher. For one must believe he who teaches, as says Posterior Analytics I [actually Sophistical Refutations 165b3].” (“\textit{Hoc autem videmus in scientiis liberalibus, quod si quis aliquam velit addiscere, oportet eum primo accipere principia ipsius, quae oportet credere cum sibi traduntur a magistro. Oportet enim credere eum qui discit, ut habetur I Poster.}”)

\textsuperscript{17} Aquinas also suggests that a teacher may use non-demonstrative arguments to convince a student of a principle, when he says that ‘\textit{opinio}, caused by dialectical syllogism, is the way to \textit{scientiam}’ (ST III.9.3 ad 2).

\textsuperscript{18} See In DC I.7.6, where Aquinas discusses the empirical evidence for the view that some heavenly bodies are made of a ‘fifth element’ (\textit{corpus quintum}) which is not subject to generation or corruption (In DC I.7.1). He notes that the empirical evidence depends on the testimony of past astronomers, but even so such evidence merely makes the hypothesis \textit{probabile}, not necessary, since someone could claim that we just have not observed the heavens long enough to notice a case of generation or corruption. In PH 1.2.2 (quoted below) also suggests that some observations may not only require too much time, but be spread across too far a distance for one person to make them.


\textsuperscript{20} Note that, while Aquinas uses the phrase ‘\textit{fides humana}’ in several passages (In BDT 3.1c; In De Caelo 1.7.6; In Sent 3.25.2.1.4 ad 2), for him it is not a technical term that contrasts with ‘divine faith’, since he sometimes calls divine faith ‘\textit{fides humana}’, to indicate that it is faith had by humans (SCG 2.2.1; ST III.46.2 ad 4).
‘testimonial opinion’ and ‘testimonial faith’.\(^{21}\) Along the way, I will answer three questions we can put to Aquinas which help us see the outlines of his epistemology of testimony. First, is all testimonial belief justified merely by inductive inference? Second, what does it mean for a speaker to be the formal object of one’s faith? And third, is testimony acceptable by default? I will conclude that Aquinas is a pluralist: he thinks some testimonial belief (testimonial opinion) is straightforwardly inductive, while some is had by believing the person of the speaker in a special way (testimonial faith). (We will have to wait until the next chapter to make the connection to knowledge. In chapter four I explain in what sense Aquinas’s account of *cognitio* is an account of knowledge, and how testimony can be a source of such knowledge.)

3.1 Faith as Assent about the Unseen

Aquinas’s first systematic discussion of faith comes in his commentary on the *Sentences*, Peter Lombard’s compilation of varied and opposed theological opinions of the church fathers. (Such a commentary was the standard exercise for masters in theology, so it is in effect Aquinas’s dissertation.) Aquinas regularly stops to distinguish various senses of important terms, and his exposition on the term ‘*fides*’ helps us distinguish different kinds of testimonial belief, and to distinguish testimonial belief from other kinds of faith.

‘Faith’ properly speaking is (*i*) when someone assents to those things which he does not see. But this happens in two ways: in one way according as someone is led by *human reason*, and thus (*ii*) strong opinion is called ‘faith’. Hence more broadly (*iii*) all certitude through human reason, even if it leads to vision, is called ‘faith’, according as argument is called “a reason that makes for faith in something [previously] doubted”. (*iv*) Human veracity is also called ‘faith’, inasmuch as it is a reason [*causa*] for someone to believe even about things which he does not see, and

\(^{21}\) Why ‘testimonial faith’ when we already have a confusing variety of meanings in Aquinas for the term ‘faith’? Because unlike opinion, the human cases of testimonial faith are analogous to what Aquinas most often means by ‘faith’, namely, divine faith. And testimonial faith as a general category includes divine faith as one instance.
thus Cicero says that “faith is the foundation of justice” [De officiis 1.23], using ‘faith’ for ‘faithfulness’ [fidelitate]. And further (v) the conscience according to which someone keeps this veracity is called ‘faith’. (Romans 14:23: “everything which is not from faith”, Gloss: “that is, conscience”).

In a second way [one assents to things unseen] according as someone is led by divine reason, and thus we call ‘faith’ (vi) the habit by which one believes, whether formed or unformed; and (vii) the act, and (viii) the object, and (ix) the sacrament [of baptism], inasmuch as it is a cause and sign of this faith, and (x) whatever certitude which is had about divine things, which is broadly speaking called ‘faith’, even if they are seen.  

This passage should be a warning to anyone who expects to find a single straightforward account of faith in Aquinas. My goal is to explain human faith, so the last five senses, because they relate only to divine faith, do not directly concern us.

As per (i), the common features of all propositional attitudes that qualify as ‘faith’ are (a) assent, and (b) that the attitude is had toward a proposition whose truth or falsity is

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22 In Sent III.23.3.4.3expos: “Fides proprie dicitur ex hoc quod aliquis assentit eis quae non videt. Hoc autem contingit dupliciter. Uno modo secundum quod homo inducit per rationem humanam: et sic dicitur fides opinio vehemens. Et adhuc magis ex tenet extenso nomine omnis certitudo quae fit per rationem humanam, etiamsi ad visionem inducat, dicitur fides, secundum quod argumentum dicitur ratio rei dubiae faciens fidelem. Dicitur autem et veracitas hominis fides, inquantum est causa quod credat quis etiam de his quae non videt; et sic dicit Tullius, quod fides est fundamentum justitiae, fidelem pro fidelitate accipiens. Et uterius ipsa conscientia secundum quam aliquid hanc veracitatem tenet, dicitur fides. Rom. 14. 23: omne quod non est ex fide, Glossa: idest ex conscientia. Alio modo secundum quod homo inducit per rationem divinam: et sic dicitur fides ipse habitus quo creditur, sive sit formatus sive informis, et actus, et objectum, et sacramentum, inquantum est causa et signum hujus fidei, et quaelibet certitudo quae habetur de divinis, extenso nomine dicitur fides etiamsi videantur.”

23 I use the term ‘propositional attitude’ to describe mental habits which take propositions as their objects, as well as those habits’ acts. Pickavé (2012: 311) notes that Aquinas recognizes a number of mental states that we can think of as kinds of knowledge: prudence, art, science, intellection, and wisdom (In PA I.44, ST I-II.57, QDV 7, In NE 6.1ff; Aquinas gets this list from Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics, book 6). Aquinas also recognizes a number of propositional attitudes that we would think fall short of knowledge: opinion, doubt, suspicion (In PA 1.1), and some that are common to knowledge and opinion: assent, consideration (cogitatio, consideratio), thinking (aestimatio) (In PA I.1.1, QDV 14.1c, ST II-II.2.1c). Aquinas also recognizes a number of supernatural ways of gaining knowledge, such as prophecy (QDV 12, ST II-II.171-174), and the gifts of the Spirit, including the gifts of understanding and knowledge, which enable and strengthen infused faith (ST II-II.8-9).
‘unseen’. Faith’ in this broad sense nicely matches Augustine’s use of ‘belief’ (credere), and includes all kinds of testimonially and inductively based belief. In this passage, the only kind of human faith Aquinas references is ‘strong opinion’, but we will see that Aquinas recognizes other kinds of human faith as well. Before we get to that, let’s contrast assent about things ‘unseen’ with assent about things ‘seen’.

When one sees that p, one’s assent is automatic and involuntary. “Things are said to be seen which by themselves move our intellect or sense to cognitio of them”. The idea seems to be that an object ‘seen’ is as directly accessible to the knower as possible, in as determinate a way as possible, so that none of the features relevant to knowing p remains unrepresented to the knower. These features of seeing make one’s grasp of the object ‘fixed’ and ‘determined to one’, and so ‘certain’. For example, as I write this I know, by seeing, that a brown cup is on

24 Here are a few other ways Aquinas draws the distinction between the seen and unseen. Following Augustine, he sometimes says the distinction is between things ‘present’ and ‘absent’ (QDV 14.9c). In keeping with the definition of faith as “evidence of the non-apparent” (argumentum non apparentium) in the Latin Vulgate translation of Hebrews 11:1, he sometimes says the distinction is between the apparent and non-apparent (SCG III.40.6, In Heb 11.1, ST II-II.4.1c). Following Gregory the Great, he also says faith is of what human reason does not “offer experience of” (experimentum praebere, SCG I.6.1) or “offer experience of sufficiently [sufficienter]” (In Sent III.24.1.3.3 ad 1). In early works Aquinas occasionally talks about ‘seeing’ p mediately and non-evidently (In Sent III.24.1.2.1; QQ 7.1.1c; QDV 14.2 ad 15), but I take it that in these passages he is speaking loosely, and so they do nothing to undermine his official view about the distinction between seen and unseen.

25 Augustine himself uses the term ‘faith’ this way quite often, as in De fide rerum inuisibilium. Aquinas says that belief (credere) is the act of faith (fides), but only what I call ‘testimonial faith’, that is, divine faith and analogous cases of trusting a human speaker (ST II-II.2.1c).

26 See In Sent III.17.1.2.1c, ST I-II.17.6c.

27 “Illa autem videri dicuntur quae per seipsa movent intellectum nostrum vel sensum ad sui cognitionem.” (ST II-II.4.1c)

28 See ST I.85.3c. Even when something is ‘seen’ in the sense mentioned, it must be represented to the intellect by means of both phantasms and intelligible species (ST I.12.13c, 70.3c, 84.6c, 84.7c).

29 “Whoever knows things by an intellectual light, which is in a way a connatural effect as the form remains in him, must have fixed knowledge of them. But this cannot happen unless he inspects them in the first thing [principio] in which they can be known, for as long as there is no resolution of knowns into their principles, knowledge is not determined to one…” (QDV 12.1c: “Quicumque enim alia cognoscit intellectuali lumine, quod est ei effectum quasi connaturale ut forma in eo consistens, oportet quod de eis fixam cognitionem habeat. Quod esse non potest, nisi ea inspiciat in principio in quo possunt cognosci: quamdui enim non fit resolutio cognitorum in sua principia, cognitio non firmatur in uno…””) Other passages on being determined to one include QDV 14.1c, ST I.12.13 ad 3, ST II-II.2.1 ad 3, ST II-II.4.1c.

30 “Certitude is nothing other than determination of the intellect to one: the stronger the determination, the greater the certitude.” (In Sent III.23.2.2.3c: “Ad tertiam quaestionem dicendum, quod certitudo nihil aliud est quam determinatio intellectus ad unum. Tanto autem major est certitudo, quam est fortius quod determinationem causat.”).
the table next to me. The features of the cup and of the table which are relevant to me knowing that a brown cup is on the table (the cup’s and table’s shape, size, colour, etc.) are ‘evident’ to me, making my belief determinate in a way it would not be if I had formed that belief merely on the basis of a drawing; or on the basis of some natural sign of the cup’s presence (e.g., its shadow); or on the basis of an argument that a brown cup must be on the table; or on the basis of someone else’s assertion that a brown cup is on the table. Paradigm cases of intellectual seeing, for Aquinas, are the two overall stages of an Aristotelian science as described in the *Posterior Analytics*: first, immediate grasp of self-evident (*per se nota*) first principles; and second, syllogistic demonstration of further conclusions based solely on those first principles. Aquinas seems to take the distinction between seen and unseen to be sharp. Anything short of seeing makes room for the voluntary assent of faith, but “as soon as something begins to be present or apparent, the object cannot fall under the act of faith.”

In cases of seeing, assent is ‘natural’ rather than voluntary, so the only voluntary choice an agent can make is whether or not to attend to *p* sufficiently to see it. But as soon as *p* is unseen,

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31 Perhaps seeing the cup’s approximate size, colour, etc., is enough for those features to count as evident to me. And I need not be able to articulate or explain what those features are in order for them to be evident to me.

32 See MacDonald (1993) and Jenkins (1997: chap. 1) for an overview of Aquinas’s account of *scientia*.

33 Perhaps this is so in cases of intellectual seeing, but in sensory cases the difference between seeing that *p* and not seeing that *p* is probably vague: I may not see that a cup is on the table when I see only a bit of the cup (because I don’t recognize it as a cup), but come to see that a cup is on the table when I see a bit more of it (because from its colour and shape I recognize it as one of the cups in my house), and there may not be a precise way to determine how big a bit makes this difference.

34 In Sent III.24.1.3.3 ad 3, In BDT 2.1 ad 5, ST II-II.2.9 ad 3. In these passages Aquinas says that having a reason to believe does not detract from the merit of faith, because as long as that reason is not ‘sufficient’ for assent, as in the case of *scientia*, it leaves room for voluntary assent.

35 QDV 14.9c: “*quam cito incipit aliquid esse praesens vel apparens, non potest ut obiectum subsesse actui fidei.*”

36 In Sent I.17.1.4c, ST II-II.2.9 ad 2. By saying that assent is ‘natural’, Aquinas does not mean it is “natural and easy” (Stump 2003: 362), but just that it is not subject to voluntary choice. Stump’s example of a mother who “finds herself assenting, whether she wants to do so or not, to the proposition that the judge dislikes her son’s performance” is not an example of seeing, but of strong opinion, akin to demon faith (see ST II-II.5.2c, In Sent III.23.3.3.1c). I discuss demon faith below, pp. 133-134.
the intellect assents not because it is sufficiently moved by its proper object, but by a voluntary choice \([\text{electionem}]\) inclining toward one part [of a contradiction] more than the other [i.e., to assent to \(p\) rather than to not-\(p\)].\(^{37}\) (ST II-II.1.4c)

Something ‘unseen’ or ‘not apparent’ can determine one’s intellect (and so be \(\text{cognitum}\)) only as mediated by signs, arguments, or the assertions of others, together with a decision to assent.\(^{38}\)

But how is it possible for one to choose what to assent to? Aquinas explains:

[\(R\)]eason reflects on itself, so it can also order its own act just as it orders the acts of other powers. Hence its act can also be commanded. But we can consider the act of reason in two ways. (1) First, with regard to its \(\text{exercise}\), an act of reason can always be commanded, as when someone is told to pay attention, and use his reason. (2) Second, with regard to the \(\text{object}\), notice two acts of reason. (2a) First, the act of \(\text{apprehending}\) the truth about something, which is not in our power, for it comes about through the virtue of some light, either natural or supernatural. So in this respect the act of reason is not in our power, and cannot be commanded. (2b) But the other act of reason is that it \(\text{assent}\) to what it apprehends. If things are apprehended to which the intellect \(\text{naturally}\) assents, like first principles, assent or dissent to such is not in our power, but in the order of nature, and so, properly speaking, is not under our command. But some things are apprehended which do not convince the intellect so much that one can’t for some reason assent or dissent, or at least suspend assent or dissent, and in such cases the assent or dissent is in our power, and falls under one’s command.\(^{39}\) (ST I-II.17.6c)

\(^{37}\) “\(\text{Alio modo intellectus assentit alicui non quia sufficienter moveatur ab objecto proprio, sed per quandam electionem voluntarie declinans in unam partem magis quam in aliam.}\)”

\(^{38}\) See In Sent II.7.2.2 ad 5, In BDT 3.1c; SCG III.154.1; ST I.12.13 ad 3; QDV 12.1c.

\(^{39}\) “… quia ratio supra seipsam reflectitur, sicut ordinat de actibus aliarum potentiarum, ita etiam potest ordinare de actu suo. Unde etiam actus suus potest esse imperatus. Sed attendendum est quod actu rationis potest considerari dupliciter. Uno modo, quantum ad exercitium actu. Et sic actu rationis semper imperari potest, sicut cum indicitur alicui quod attendat, et ratione utatur. Alio modo, quantum ad objectum, respectu cuius, duo actu rationis attenduntur. Primo quidem, ut veritatem circa aliquid apprehendat. Et hoc non est in potestate nostra, hoc enim contingit per virtutem alicuius luminis, vel naturalis vel supernaturalis. Et ideo quantum ad hoc, actu rationis non est in potestate nostra, nec imperari potest. Alius autem actu rationis est, dum his quae apprehendit assentit. Si igitur fuerint tala apprehensia, quibus naturaliter intellectus assentiat, sicut prima principia, assensus taliue vel dissensus non est in potestate nostra, sed in ordine naturae, et ideo, proprie loquendo, nec imperio subiacet. Sunt
This explanation depends on a distinction between apprehending the truth, and assenting to that apprehension, which I cannot explain here. But this passage shows that Aquinas is not just a crude doxastic voluntarist about the unseen. The decision to assent, while voluntary, is not just a command of the will, but of one’s reason. So it is not just belief on a whim; it is a matter of managing one’s assent for the best of the human as a whole. Nevertheless, when something is unseen, pragmatic and ethical considerations can enter into reason’s decision to assent. We shall see that Aquinas thinks different kinds of practical considerations enter into the different propositional attitudes one can take toward the unseen.

In this early passage, the only human faith that Aquinas recognizes as a propositional attitude is (ii), strong opinion. Let’s consider first opinion in general, and then look at what’s special about ‘strong’ opinion. Opinion, we will see, is based on inductive inference; then the question to consider will be whether, for Aquinas, all testimonial belief is opinion, and so based on inductive inference.

3.2 Testimonial Opinion

Following Aristotle, Aquinas distinguishes opinion from several nearby attitudes with different degrees of assent. To ‘doubt’ is not to assent, because one is inclined equally to both $p$ and not-$p$. To ‘suspect’ is to incline more to $p$ than to not-$p$, on the ground of some weak (levis)

\[ \text{autem quaedam apprehensa, quae non adeo convincunt intellectum, quin possit assentire vel dissentire, vel saltem assensum vel dissensum suspendere, propter aliquam causam, et in talibus assensus ipse vel dissensus in potestate nostra est, et sub imperio cadit."}

40 Tyrell (1948) says that whether there is a real distinction between these two is a matter of controversy among Thomists. His monograph argues that there is.

41 In BDT 3.1c, QDV 14.1c, In PA I.1.6, ST II-II.2.1c.

42 Aquinas says doubt can result either from having insufficient reason to believe, or from having equal reason to believe both $p$ and not-$p$ (QDV 14.1c).
signs, but not yet to assent (ST II-II.2.1c). To ‘opine’ by contrast, is assent to one part of a contradiction, i.e., assent to $p$ rather than not-$p$. Aquinas sometimes says no more than that opinion is based on ‘signs’ or ‘verisimilitudes’ (In Sent III.17.1.2.1c, In BDT 3.1 ad 4). But elsewhere he describes it as the product of inductive inference:

Just as there are degrees in natural things that act for the most part [ut in pluribus agunt] – as the stronger a natural power, the less it fails in its effect – so also in the process of reasoning which is not absolutely certain there are degrees, insofar as it attains more or less perfect certainty. Sometimes such a process, even if it doesn’t produce science, nevertheless produces faith or opinion on account of the probability of the propositions from which it proceeds, when reason is totally inclined to one part of a contradiction, although with fear of the other. ‘Topical’ or dialectical reasoning is ordered to this, for the dialectical syllogism, the subject of Aristotle’s Topics, is from probable [propositions]. (In PA I.1.6)

The opiner assents to $p$, while yet having ‘fear’ that not-$p$. This fear is not emotional but epistemic. Science is about universal and necessary truths, while opinion is about contingencies

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43 In his early works Aquinas says that opinion lacks assent (In Sent III.23.2.2.1c; QDV 14.1c). But his mature view seems to be that one who opines that $p$ assents to $p$ (In BDT 3.1 ad 4; In Heb. 11.1; In PA I.44; ST II-II.1.4c; cf. In NE 6.8.10), just not as fully as faith does. In ST II-II.2.1c, he says the belief of faith can be distinguished from seeing by being cogitatio, and from suspicion, doubt and opinion by being cum assensu. I suggest that here he just means that faith is distinguished from opinion by having ‘firm’ or full assent, without any fear that what is assented to is false.

44 “Sicut autem in rebus naturalibus, in his quae ut in pluribus agunt, gradus quidam attenditur (quia quanto virtus naturae est fortior, tanto rarius deficit a suo effectu), ita et in processu rationis, qui non est cum omnimoda certitudine, gradus aliquid inventur, secundum quod magis et minus ad perfectam certitudinem accedetur. Per huiusmodi enim processum, quandoque quidem, etsi non fiat scientia, fit tamen fides vel opinio propter probabilitatem propositionum, ex quibus proceditur: quia ratio totaliter declinat in unam partem contradicitionis, licet cum formidine alterius, et ad hoc ordinatur topica sive dialectica. Nam syllogismus dialecticus ex probabilibus est, de quo agit Aristoteles in libro topicorum.” The phrase “fides vel opinio” might refer to strong opinion (fides) and weak opinion (opinio). In this passage Aquinas gives an Aristotelian epistemological taxonomy which ignores all the divinely infused epistemic habits he discusses elsewhere (prophecy, the gifts of knowledge and understanding, the beatific vision). I suggest that here he also ignores divinely infused faith, and the testimonial faith that is analogous to it, which I discuss below. In ST I-II.51.3c Aquinas says “the opinative habit must be caused by many acts of reason” (ex multis actibus rationis oportet causari habitum opinativum), in contrast with intellection of first principles, which can come about from assenting to a per se nota proposition just once. In this passage, but probably not in every passage, Aquinas is thinking of opinion as induction from cases.
(In PA I.44.2-3); the ‘fear’ of not-\(p\) arises from the fact that \(p\), even if true, is true only contingently.\(^{45}\)

For one cannot have opinion and \textit{scientia} of the same thing simpliciter, since it is of the nature of \textit{scientia} that what is known is thought to be impossible to be otherwise, but it is of the nature of opinion that what one thinks, one thinks possible to be otherwise.\(^{46}\) (ST II-II.1.5 ad 4)

Granted, one’s assent could be overdetermined; one could have \textit{cognitio} that \(p\) both for probable reasons and demonstrative ones (ST I-II.67.3c), but then one would simply have \textit{scientia} and not \textit{opinio}, because one would have no fear that not-\(p\).\(^{47}\) In spite of the passage just quoted, it is not clear whether Aquinas thinks opinion always involves conscious ‘fear’ that not-\(p\).\(^{48}\) But in general the idea seems to be that to have an opinion that \(p\) is to inductively infer that \(p\), when \(p\) is ‘probable’ to some degree sufficient for assent, but not for the automatic assent of ‘seeing’ that

\(^{45}\) Pickavé (2012: 325, n. 30) notes that Aquinas takes this term from Avicenna, but that where the Latin translation has ‘\textit{cum formidine}’ the Arabic for \textit{Liber de anima} tract. V cap. 1 suggests rather ‘\textit{cum possibilitate}’ (see Van Riet 1968: 79, including the editor’s note).

\(^{46}\) “\textit{Scientia enim cum opinione simul esse non potest simpliciter de eodem, quia de ratione scientiae est quod id quod scitur existimetur esse impossibile aliter se habere; de ratione autem opinionis est quod id quod quis existimat, existimet possibile aliter se habere.”

\(^{47}\) See ST I-II.67.3c. We usually describe our propositional attitudes under the strongest, and so most informative, description. For example, if I know Jill’s house is on fire, and she asks me whether it is, it would be misleading to say only “I believe it is”, leaving her to draw the implicature that I don’t know. Similarly, if I believe that her house is on fire, it would be misleading to say only “I suspect it is”, leaving her to draw the implicature that my credence is not sufficient for belief. The question whether one can have both \textit{scientia} and \textit{fides} of the same proposition at the same time was of great interest to scholastic philosophers, who often addressed it in the prologues to their commentaries on Lombard’s \textit{Sentences}. Usually they said that these propositional attitudes are incompatible. An interesting exception is Matthew of Aquasparta’s \textit{De Fide} q. 5. He argues, among other things, that one can retain faith with regard to a proposition for which one has proof because (a) the kind of obscurity necessary for faith that \(p\) remains when one has only \textit{quia} demonstration that \(p\), and (b) the adherence of faith on authority is stronger than that of science, as shown by the fact that some will risk their lives for faith, but not for science. Aquinas says that gaining \textit{scientia} of \(p\) removes faith that \(p\), but does not remove the readiness to believe, and so does not remove the merit of faith (ST II-II.2.10 ad 2).

\(^{48}\) Thomists distinguish between ‘actual’ fear, by which one consciously judges that not-\(p\) is possible; ‘implicit’ fear, by which one acts and thinks as if not-\(p\) is possible, but without conscious judgment; and ‘radical’ fear, by which one feels uncertain, even if one doesn’t judge or think as if not-\(p\) is possible (Tyrrell 1948: 87). Note that Aquinas often uses the word ‘\textit{opinio}’ in a non-technical way, as when he surveys the contrary views (\textit{opiniones}) of past philosophers or theologians on some controversial topic; and then he need not imply anything about how certain or uncertain those philosophers were.

Whereas Augustine’s term for inductive inference was *coniectura*, Aquinas typically uses the term *opinio*.

‘Strong opinion’ (*opinio vehemens*), then, seems to be opinion with very high subjective probability or credence, enough that ‘fear’ of not-*p* is minimized, and the opiner can be said to have ‘faith’ that *p*, in the sense that she is convinced of *p*.

Whenever things accepted are in some way assented to, there must be something that inclines one to assent: in assent to *per se* known first principles, it is a naturally endowed light; in assent to known conclusions, it is the truth of those first principles; and in assent to what we opine, some verisimilitudes, which, if they were a little stronger, would incline one to believe, as opinion helped by reasons is called ‘faith’.51 (In BDT 3.1 ad 4)

Sadly, in passages where Aquinas refers to ‘strong opinion’ we do not get an explanation of how opinion gets bumped up to *strong* opinion. But in various passages he does say that evidence, or

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49 The degrees involved may be very coarse-grained – obviously Aquinas is not a Bayesian. I don’t know of any degrees he explicitly mentions other than ‘suspicion’, ‘opinion’ and ‘strong opinion’ (See In PA I.1.6; In Rom 4.1; ST I.12.7c; ST III.9.3 ad 2). Sometimes Latin ’*probabilis*’ means ‘plausible’ or ‘approved by authorities’ (hence the name of the ‘Probabilist’ dispute in later scholasticism), but not always (see chapter 1, p. 66, n. 184). Aquinas’s claim that opinion is ’*probabilis*’ means something more than that it is ‘plausible’ or ‘not obviously wrong’ or ‘supportable by some evidence’; these descriptions would apply better to what Aquinas calls ’*suspicio*’ or ’*dubitatio*’. See Garber and Zabell (1979) for further discussion of the different senses of ’*probabilis*’ in the history of philosophy. It is worth investigating whether opinion, since it is “totally inclined” but also based on probabilities, is flat-out belief based on high degree of credence.

50 Aquinas usually does not use the term *opinio* in the derogatory sense, common in Augustine, of thinking one knows what one doesn’t (e.g., *util. cred.* 11.25). Aquinas usually says that *coniectura* is the process that produces suspicion (*suspicio*), without assent (In PA I.1, ST II-II.48.1c, In NE 6.3.2). But he also uses the phrase *cognitio coniecturalis* apparently to refer to inductive knowledge. For example, only by divine revelation could one know that one has the virtue of charity; but “one knows something inerentially (coniecturaliter) by signs. And in this way someone can know he has grace, inasmuch as he perceives that he delights in God, and despises worldly things, and inasmuch as he is not conscious of a mortal sin.” (ST I-II.112.5c: “Tertio modo cognoscitur aliud coniecturaliter per aliqua signa. Et hoc modo aliquis cognoscere potest se habere gratiam, inquantum scilicet percipit se delectari in Deo, et contemnere res mundanas; et inquantum homo non est conscius sibi alicuius peccati mortalis.”)

51 “… quandocumque acceptis aliquo modo assentitur, oportet esse aliquid quod inclinet ad assensum, sicut lumen naturaliter inditum in hoc quod assentitur primit per se notis et ipsorum principiorum veritas in hoc quod assentitur conclusionibus scitis, et aliquae verisimilitudines in hoc quod assentimus his quae opinamur; quae si fuerint aliquantulum fortiores, inclinant ad credendum, prout fides dicitur opinio iuvata rationibus.”
arguments, or authorities strengthen (firmant / confirmant) an opinion one already has. So perhaps the idea is that an argument, or some other evidence, can provide one with grounds for believing that are sufficient for passing a credence threshold, such that one becomes ‘convinced’, and the resulting propositional attitude can be called ‘faith’.

An interesting case of strong opinion is the ‘faith’ of demons. The apostle James wrote in response to those who think they don’t need to do good deeds because they can be good Christians just by having faith: “You have faith that God is one? Good for you! The demons also have faith – and tremble.” It became a standard scholastic puzzle to explain how evil demons could have a kind of ‘faith’ that is relevant to James’s argument, but is not virtuous. Aquinas’s solution was to say that the demons’ belief is coerced (cogitur), but not by seeing that what they believe is true. If a demon sees a prophet make a prediction and perform a miracle as a sign that God confirms his prediction (e.g., the prophet causes a corpse to come to life again) and the demon realizes that such a miracle could only have been performed with God’s power and permission, then the demon could infer with near certainty that the prophet’s prediction will

52 For example: “But later philosophers, seeing the truth more diligently and clearly, showed by evident signs and reasons that natural things are governed by providence. … So when the opinion of the majority that natural things are governed not by chance but providence was confirmed by the order which is manifest in them, there emerged a doubt about most human acts, whether human things proceed by chance or are governed by some providence or superior order.” (In Job prol.: “Sed posteriorum philosophorum diligentia perspicacius intuens veritatem, evidentibus indicis et rationibus ostenderunt res naturales providentia agi. … Opinione igitur plurimarum firmata in hoc quod res naturales non casu sed providentia agerentur propter ordinem qui manifeste apparerit in eis, emersit dubitatio apud plurimos de actibus hominum, utrum res humanae casu procederent an aliqua providentia vel ordinatione superiori gubernarent.”) See also In Sent II.19.1 prol., IV.12.1 prol., IV.18.1 prol., IV.19.1 prol., IV.22.1 prol.; SCG II.85.12, III.120.4.

53 Aquinas seems to use ‘be convinced’ to mean ‘give full assent to’, as when he says that “there can be something active that totally overcomes the corresponding passive power, as when one per se nota proposition convinces the intellect to assent firmly to a conclusion” (ST I-II.51.3c: “… potest esse aliquod activum quod uno actu totaliter vincit potentiam sui passivi, sicut una proposittio per se nota convincit intellectum ad assentiendum firmiter conclusioni …”). Aquinas says that things unseen are “not apprehended so as to convince the intellect” (ST I-II.17.6c “Sunt autem quaedam apprehensa, quae non adeo convincunt intellectum …”), but in the case of divine faith, “the intellect is convinced by divine authority to assent to what it doesn’t see” (ST II-II.4.1c: “… per auctoritatem divinam intellectus credentis convincitur ad assentiendum his quae non videt.” cf. QDV 14.2c, In Heb 11.1)

54 James 2:19: συ πιστεύεις ὅτι ἔις ἐστίν ὁ θεός. καλὸς ποίεις. καὶ τὰ δαιμόνια πιστεύουσιν καὶ φρίσουσιν.

55 The faith of demons is given as a case of ‘unformed faith’ in Lombard’s Sentences, book III, distinction 23. Aquinas usually uses ‘demon’ to refer to fallen angels, as a synonym for ‘devil’, and that is how he (and James) seem to use it here, although occasionally Aquinas recognizes the pre-Christian sense in which ‘daemon’ just means some kind of spirit (Deferrari and Barry 1949: 263).
come true. However, the demon doesn’t **see** that the prophet’s prediction will come true, since only God knows the future, so technically its belief is still a case of ‘faith’. But demons are smarter and more knowledgeable than we are (In Sent II.7.2.2c), so alternative explanations of the miracle that a human might consider – other epistemic possibilities – are not open to the demon: demon faith is super-strong testimonial opinion which ‘compels’ assent.

How can it compel assent if what is believed remains unseen? The only hint of a solution to this puzzle I have found in Aquinas is his claim that “[this] kind of faith compels the intellect to believe by the fact that nothing to the contrary is apparent” (In Sent III.23.3.3.1c). The idea seems to be that the intellect is not determined to one by the object itself, in the most direct and determinate way possible, but rather is determined to one because no other reasonable options are open for the intellect to assent to, the way you are constrained to give your wallet to a

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56 This is Aquinas’s example in ST II-II.5.2c, although he doesn’t specify until the end that he is talking about a demon.

57 ST I.86.4c. See also In Sent II.7.2.2c; QDV 8.12c; ST I.57.3c; QDM 16.7c.

58 In Sent III.23.3.3.1c: “The first kind of faith compels the intellect to believe by the fact that nothing to the contrary is apparent; and the second kind is not compelled, but is inclined by the will. And the first kind is in demons, inasmuch as from [their] natural knowledge, together with the miracles, which they see much more subtly than us to be above nature, they are compelled to believe things which exceed their natural knowledge, but not with the second kind [of faith].” (“Et primo modo dicta fides cogit intellectum ad credendum per hoc quod non apparet aliquid contrarium; sed secundo modo intellectus non cogitur, sed ex voluntate inclinatur. Et primo modo est fides in Daemonibus, inquantum ex ipsa naturali cognitione simul, et ex miraculis quae vident supra naturam esse multo subtilius quam nos, coguntur ad credendum ea quae naturalem ipsorum cognitionem excedunt, non autem secundo modo.”) ST II-II.5.2 ad 1: “… the aforementioned future event would not be evident in itself, so the faith would not be removed.” (“… licet illud futurum quod praedicitur in se evidens non esset, unde ratio fidei non tolleretur.”)

59 QDV 14.9 ad 4: “The demons do not assent voluntarily [non voluntate assentiant] to the things they are said to believe, but are coerced by the evidentness of signs [sed coacti evidentia signorum], from which they are convinced that what the faithful believe is true, although those signs do not make visible what is believed so that through them they could be said to have vision of the things they believe. Thus ‘credere’ is said almost equivocally [quasi aequivoce] of faithful humans and of demons.” (“Daemones non voluntate assentiant his quae credere dicuntur, sed coacti evidentia signorum, ex quibus convincitur verum esse quod fideles credunt; quamvis illa signa non faciant apparere id quod creditur, ut per hoc possint dici visionem eorum quae creduntur, habere. Unde et credere quasi aequivoce dicitur de hominibus fidelibus et daemonibus, nec est in eis fides ex aliquo lumine gratiae infuso sicut est in fidelibus.”)

60 In the case of demon faith “the intellect is convinced that what is said should be believed, although it is not convinced by the evidentness of the thing” (ST II-II.5.2c: “… intellectus convincitur ad hoc quod iudicet esse credendum his quae dicuntur, licet non convincatur per evidentiam rei.”)

61 “Et primo modo dicta fides cogit intellectum ad credendum per hoc quod non apparet aliquid contrarium; sed secundo modo intellectus non cogitur, sed ex voluntate inclinatur.”
thug when he makes it clear that he will injure you if you do not. It is not reasonable in such a situation to choose to believe that some incredible chance event might prevent the thug from injuring you (e.g., a meteor might land on him), even though it is a possibility. It is not clear whether Aquinas thinks all strong opinion works this way, or he just takes demon faith to be one especially strong case of strong opinion.

By synecdoche, ‘fides’ can refer to (iii) the ‘certitude’ or ‘conviction’ of strong opinion’s full assent. And by transference, ‘fides’ can be used for any certitude that results from an argument, whether merely probable, or demonstrative, and so of things seen. “Certitude”, Aquinas says, “is nothing other than determination of the intellect to one: the stronger the determination, the greater the certitude” (In Sent III.23.2.3c). Aquinas implies, here and elsewhere, that certitude comes in degrees. Aquinas also makes use of at least three different kinds of certitude, or determination of the intellect: certitude of evidentness, when the object is seen; certitude of adhesion, when the will is fully determined to assent; and certitude of cause, when the cause of one’s assent is perfectly reliable and/or efficacious (e.g., when God influences

62 A. J. Ayer (1954) has a similar notion of ‘constraint’. He claims that compulsion includes not just being forced to do X, but being constrained to do X when there is no other reasonable course of action available to the agent.

63 On determination as being ‘convinced’, and so having ‘conviction’, see note 53, p. 133 above. Aquinas refers to conviction produced by either demonstrative or probable arguments with the term ‘fides’ in his commentaries on Aristotle. In PA I.4.14: “Thus in Topics I a demonstration is said to be from things primary and true, or from those which get their fidel from these” (cf. I.27.11, I.40.7); In DC I.8.2: “And [Aristotle] says that through many arguments [rationes] one can take fidel that there is no local motion contrary to the circular motion” (cf. I.18.4, II.6.5). To illustrate the use of ‘fides’ as certitude, Aquinas says “an argumentum is called a reason that makes for faith on something [previously] doubted”. Aquinas says (In Heb 11.1) he gets this idea from Boethius’s De Topica. In book 1, Boethius frequently quotes Cicero’s De Topica 2.8: “Itaque licet definire locum esse argumenti sedem, argumentum autem rationem, quae rei dubiae faciat fidel.” In his discussions of faith Aquinas sometimes cites this definition (In Sent III.23.2.1 ad 4, In Heb 11.1), or uses a phrase derived from it: “argumentum facit fidel” (e.g., In Heb 11.1). This Ciceronian usage for fides was well known, and is referred to by Martianus Capella, Berengar of Tours, Abelard, and Bonaventure. Cicero’s idea has its roots in Aristotle’s Topics 4.5 (126b15-19), where Aristotle says that pistis (the Greek for fides) should not be defined as strength of assumption (σφοδρότητα ύπολήψεως) which would be to treat the differentia (strength) as the genus, but as assumption that is strong (ὑπόληψις, σφοδρό). “Ad tertiam quaestionem dicendum, quod certiduo nihil aliud est quam determinatio intellectus ad unum. Tanto autem major est certiduo, quanto est fortius quod determinationem causat.”

64 Here are some instances where he makes use of degrees of certainty: some sciences are more certain than others (In PA I.1.1, In PA I.41.2ff); and the court judge must make a decision based on ‘probable certitude’ (ST II-II.70.2c). Even though Aquinas says divine faith is certain, he recognizes that some have it with more certainty than others (ST II-II.5.4c and ad 2).
one to have divine faith). Science has the certitude of evidentness, which divine faith lacks, but they both have the certitude of adhesion, and divine faith’s adhesion is stronger thanks to its cause.

Presumably at least some of what we assent to on the basis of others’ testimony is just opinion with assent too weak to count as ‘strong opinion’. But both weak and strong opinion are the results of inductive inference. And Aquinas points to one possible ground for such inferences. If the speaker is (iv) veracious, then she is keeping faith with her audience by speaking what she takes to be true. She is speaking ‘in good faith’, that is, with (v) conscientiousness that aims at veracity. An audience who judges a speaker veracious has good grounds for inferring that probably what the speaker says is true. The case of demon faith is also a case of testimonial belief, but in this case (and perhaps in other cases of strong opinion), the grounds for inferring that what the speaker says is true go far beyond the evidence we ordinarily have for the veracity of the speaker.

Aquinas also considers some more mundane cases of testimonial opinion, usually as a contrast with some kind of ‘seeing’, to show that while there are other ways to cognoscere a proposition, seeing is required to do so most completely or perfectly (perfecte).

What is comprehended is perfectly cognized, and what is perfectly cognized is cognized as much as it is cognizable. Thus if something cognizable by demonstrative science is opined by the grasp of some probable reason, it is not comprehended. For example, if someone knows by demonstration that a triangle has three angles equal to two right angles, he comprehends it, but if someone else accepts his opinion in a probable way, because it is said by the wise or the many, he does not

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66 There is a subtle shift in Aquinas’s discussions of certitude. Early Aquinas contrasts the certitude of evidentness with the certitude of adherence (In Sent III.23.2.2.3 ad 1). He says that faith is between opinion and scientia not “intensively”, as if it had less of the same kind of certainty, but “extensively”. That is, scientia has two kinds of certitude (of evidentness and of adhesion) whereas faith has only one (firm adhesion), but its adhesion is stronger (vehementior) than that of science. Later he ascribes the certitude of adherence to the reliability of the divine cause (QDV 14.1 ad 7). And later yet he contrasts the certitude of evidentness with the certitude of cause (ST II-II.4.8c and ad 3). It seems that certitude of adhesion is compatible with doubt, since someone with divine faith has the strongest degree of certitude of adhesion, but since her intellect is not ‘fixed’ by vision, it can have some ‘motions of doubt’ about the articles of faith (In Sent III.23.2.2.3 ad 2; cf. QDV 14.1c, ST II-II.4.8 ad 1).
comprehend it, because he does not attain the perfect way of cognizing it as far as it is cognizable.\(^67\) (ST I.12.7c)

In this case the opiner believes something she doesn’t see, based on considerations we could express with the following inductive argument:

1. If most (wise) people say \(p\), then probably \(p\).
2. Most (wise) people say \(p\).

Therefore \(p\).

This is the kind of reasoning Aquinas recommends in a discussion of court testimony. Other things being equal, we should give more weight to \(p\) when more witnesses say \(p\) than not-\(p\), because “it is probable that the saying of many contains the truth more than the saying of one” (ST II-II.70.2c).\(^68\)

### 3.3 Testimonial Faith

Now we have come to the first of our three questions. In Aquinas’s view, is all testimonial belief (apart from divine faith, of course) just opinion? At first it seems that it is, from what Aquinas says about ‘acquired faith’ (\(fides acquisita\)), which scholastics typically contrast with ‘infused faith’ (\(fides infusa\)).

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\(^67\) “Ad cuius evidentiam, sciendum est quod illud comprehenditur, quod perfecte cognoscitur. Perfecte autem cognoscitur, quod tantum cognoscitur, quantum est cognoscibile. Unde si id quod est cognoscibile per scientiam demonstrativam, opinione teneatur ex aliqua ratione probabili concepta, non comprehenditur. Pute, si hoc quod est triangulum habere tres angulos aequales duobus rectis, aliquid sciat per demonstrationem, comprehendit illud, si vero aliquis eius opinionem accipiit probabiliter, per hoc quod a sapientibus vel pluribus ita dicitur, non comprehendet ipsum, quia non pertingit ad illum perfectum modum cognitionis, quo cognoscibilis est.”

\(^68\) “Est autem probabile quod magis veritatem contineat dictum multorum quam dictum unius.”
And when it is said that faith is below science [in certitude], this is said not about infused faith, but acquired faith, which is opinion strengthened by reasons.  

(Ain Sent I prol.1.3.3 ad 1; cf. In Sent III.23.2.3 ad 1)

Aquinas mentions acquired faith only in two early passages, and there he treats acquired faith and divinely infused faith (i.e., faith made supernaturally certain in adhesion and reliability) as two incommensurable habits. The impression one gets is that all non-divine faith (and so all human faith) is acquired faith, and acquired faith is just strong opinion.

But when we move past these early passages, Aquinas drops this approach to acquired faith, and we see Aquinas distinguish some cases of human faith from opinion, in order to clarify the contrast between divine faith and opinion. In his Disputed Questions on Truth, he says that in the case of opinion “what inclines [one toward assent to one part of a contradiction] does not sufficiently move the intellect to determine it to one of the parts entirely, so it accepts one part, but hesitates about the other” (QDV 14.1c). In contrast with opinion, the intellect can

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69 “Et quod dicitur, quod fides est infra scientiam, non loquitur de fide infusa, sed de fide acquisita, quae est opinio fortificata rationibus.”

70 The other passage in which Aquinas explicitly mentions acquired faith is In Sent III.23.3.2, where Aquinas argues that ‘unformed faith’ is not acquired faith, because it is still infused. (‘Unformed faith’ is divine faith that lacks the theological virtue of charity. For example, someone who has faith in all the right doctrines may commit a mortal sin, that is, a sin that kills one’s love for God (i.e., charity), making her faith still accurate and divinely infused, but ‘unformed.’) Different scholastics understand the acquired/infused distinction differently. For example, William of Ockham thinks of acquired faith as a habit that forms a necessary part of divinely infused faith: the acquired habit is what we do naturally, while the infused part is God’s assistance, which makes assent firm and fully reliable. Ockham argues that every theological virtue requires an accompanying acquired virtue (Quaestiones Variae: Notabilia q. 6 art. 8), and he discusses fides acquisita in a number of passages (Sentences commentary prol. q. 8, q. 12; Quaestiones Variae: Tres Quaestiones q. 5; Quodlibeta septem quod. 3, q. 7 and q. 8; Quodlibeta septem quod. 4 q. 6). Aquinas, by contrast, says that divine faith is only an infused habit, with natural aspects: “Even though it is an infused habit, faith is said to be from four things which are in us, with regard to the determination and act of faith: the [proposition] to be believed, reason determining the will to believe, will commanding the intellect, and intellect executing that command.” (In Sent 23.3.2 ad 2: “Ad secundum dicendum, quod in fide quatuor considerantur; scilicet ipsum quod credendum est, ratio voluntatem determinans ad credendum, voluntas intellectui imperans, intellectus exequens: et secundum hoc fides quantum ad ejus determinationem, et quantum ad ejus actum qui in nobis est, quamvis habitus sit infusus, dicitur esse ex quatuor quae in nobis sunt. …”)

71 Hugh of St. Victor’s 12th century claim that faith is more certain than opinion but less certain than scientia (De sacramentis 1.10) had become traditional by Aquinas’ time. He rejects this view in the Sentences commentary prologue, as we have just seen, but accepts it thereafter (from In Sent III.23.2.2.3 on). See note 66, p. 136, on the certitude of divine faith in contrast with the certitude of science. After In Sent III.23.2.2.3 ad 1, where he mentions acquired faith very tentatively, he never mentions it again.

72 “Quandoque vero intellectus inclinatur magis ad unum quam ad alterum; sed tamen illud inclinans non sufficienter movet intellectum ad hoc quod determinet ipsum in unam partium totaliter; unde accipit quidem unam
be sufficiently moved by the object itself, in cases of intellectual seeing (e.g., science). Or, it can be
determined by the will, which chooses to assent to one part determinately and distinctly because of something sufficient to move the will, but not to move the intellect; for example, because it seems good or fitting [bonum vel conveniens] to assent to it. And this is the disposition of belief, as when someone believes the sayings of some human, because it seems to [the audience] appropriate or beneficial [decens vel utile]. Similarly we are moved to believe the sayings of God, because the prize of eternal life is promised to us if we believe, and this prize moves the will to assent to the things said, although the intellect is not moved by an object it grasps.73
(QDV 14.1c)

Here Aquinas identifies a kind of testimonial belief that is not just opinion, but instead is analogous to divine faith in some important aspects. To distinguish it from testimonial opinion, I will call it testimonial faith. The assent of testimonial faith may not be any stronger than that of strong opinion, but it is based on different grounds. The assent of testimonial faith is not automatic, as in the case of science, nor is it coerced, as in the case of demon faith, nor is it motivated solely by the probable evidence (verisimilitudes, signs, probable propositions), as in the case of ordinary opinion.74 Rather, it is motivated by practical considerations of two different kinds.

73 “Quandoque vero intellectus non potest determinari ad alteram partem contradictionis neque statim per ipsas definitiones terminorum, sicut in principiis, nec etiam virtute principiorum, sicut est in conclusionibus demonstrationis; determinatur autem per voluntatem, quae eligat assentire uni parti determinate et praecise propter aliquid, quod est sufficiens ad movendum voluntatem, non autem ad movendum intellectum, utpote quia videtur bonum vel conveniens huic parti assentiere. Et ista est dispositio credentis, ut cum aliquis credit dictis alicuius hominis, quia videtur ei decens vel utile. Et sic etiam movemur ad credendum dictis Dei, inquantum nobis reprimittitur, si crediderimus, praemium aeternae vitae: et hoc praemio movetur voluntas ad assentiendum his quae dicuntur, quamvis intellectus non moveatur per aliqoid intellectum.”

74 Aquinas contrasts faith with the attitude of one who “is not willing to believe except by induction [ nisi propter rationem inductam]” (ST II-II.2.10 ad 1: “Gregorius loquitur in casu illo quando homo non habet voluntatem credendi nisi propter rationem inductam.”) and says that faith “has no inquiry of natural reason for demonstrating
First, for Aquinas as for Augustine, one’s ultimate practical end is at the same time an ultimate epistemic end. The direct beatific vision of God, Aquinas argues, is what human happiness consists in, and so it is what all humans desire, whether they realize it or not. Thus, when your attitude toward a proposition is neither automatic nor coerced, it is open to you to choose to assent (or dissent, or suspend judgment) (ST I-II.17.6c), for the sake of attaining “the prize of eternal happiness”, which is not just a practical but also an epistemic end. But if this were the only motive for faith, that might not be enough for the epistemic rationality of such a belief.

Second, Aquinas says that the person of the speaker can be a reason to believe her. This comes up in his discussions of how divine faith is an act of believing God (credere deo). Augustine likes to make catchy distinctions in passing, and Lombard offers up many of these distinctions for interpretation in his Sentences. One of them is a distinction between three different objects of the act of belief (credere) involved in divine faith: credere deum (‘believing that God [exists]’), credere in deum (‘believing in God’), and credere deo (‘believing God’). Aquinas cleverly assigns each of these acts to a different part of the soul. Credere deum is the intellect’s act of being determined to one, where the intellect’s object is the proposition believed.

what it believes. But it has a certain inquiry about the things that induce someone to believe, such as that [the propositions] are said by God and confirmed by miracles” (ST II-II.2.1 ad 1: “[F]ides non habet inquisitionem rationis naturalis demonstrantis id quod creditur. Habet tamen inquisitionem quandam eorum per quae inductur homo ad credendum, puta quia sunt dicta a Deo et miraculis confirmata.”)

75 See ST I-II.2-3, especially ST I-II.3.8.

76 QDV 14.3 ad 8: “[A] habit is virtuous …. because it makes the desiring part of the soul perfectly subject to reason. Similarly, the good of the intellect is to submit to the will adhering to God, so faith is said to enable the intellect, inasmuch as it enslaves it to such a will.” (“[H]abitus virtutis non dicitur expedire concupiscibilem ad actum ut faciat eam libere effluere in concupiscibilia; sed quia facit eam perfecte subiectam rationi. Similiter etiam bonum ipsius intellectus est ut subdatur voluntati adhaerenti Deo: unde fides dicitur intellectum expedire, in quantum sub tali voluntate ipsum captivat.”)

77 Stump (2003) takes the view that such a motive is sufficient for the epistemic rationality of faith. See below, p. 149.

78 ‘Credere deum’ expresses what Aquinas calls the ‘material object’ of divine faith. ‘Credere deum’ is short for ‘credere deum esse’ or ‘credere deum [other infinitives]’. It is supposed to capture the idea that divine faith is concerned with propositions about God or at least about things in their relation to God, if nothing else, because revealed by God. For Aquinas’s account of this threefold distinction, see In Sent III.23.2.2.2c and ST II-II.2.2c. See Camelot (1941) on the history of this distinction.
Credere in deum is the will’s act of believing out of love of God, where the will’s object is God himself. Credere deo (“to believe God”) is reason’s act of inclining the will to assent, where the object is the proposition believed, but only as spoken by that speaker:

Inasmuch as reason inclines the will to the act of faith, it is credere deo. For the reason the will is inclined to assent to things unseen is because God said them; just as a man, in matters he doesn’t see, believes the testimony of some good man who sees the things he doesn’t. 79 (In Sent III.23.2.2c)

Here again Aquinas gives a human faith analogue for divine faith. But here the reason that makes assent choiceworthy is that (a) the proposition’s source is a certain person, and (b) one wants to believe that person because he is good. Let’s look at these in turn.

(a) We’ve just noted that in one sense the object of credere deo is the proposition. Aquinas calls this the ‘material object’ of faith. But since this proposition is believed only as spoken by that speaker, Aquinas calls the speaker the ‘formal object’ of faith.

On the part of the intellect, there are two ways to take the object of faith. One is the material object of faith. In this way the act of faith is called credere deum, because, as said above, nothing is proposed for us to believe except as it pertains to God. Another is the formal object, which is like a means [medium] on account of which one assents to such a believable [proposition]. In this way the act of faith is called credere deo, because, as said above, the formal object is the First Truth [i.e., God], to which a man adheres so as, on account of it, to assent to what he believes. 80 (ST II-II.2.2c)

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79 “Secundum autem quod ratio voluntatem inclinat ad actus fidei, est credere Deo. Ratio enim qua voluntas [a ratione?] inclinatur ad assentiendum his quae non videt, est quia Deus ea dicit: sicut homo in his quae non videt, credit testimonio alius boni viri qui videt ea quae ipse non videt.” (cf. In BDT 3.1 ad 5.) Does ‘ratio’ here refer to the faculty of reason, or simply to an individual reason to assent? Aquinas’s statement is ambiguous. He says elsewhere that the faculty of reason can command assent (ST I-II.17.6c), so I read this passage as saying that, when the intellect would otherwise be left undetermined, the faculty of reason commands assent on the basis of a practical consideration or reason to assent, but still one aimed at the epistemic good of believing the truth.

80 “Si quidem ex parte intellectus, sic in obiecto fidei duo possunt considerari, sicut supra dictum est. Quorum unum est materiale obiectum fidei. Et sic ponitur actus fidei credere Deum, quia, sicut supra dictum est, nihil proponitur nobis ad credendum nisi secundum quod ad Deum pertinent. Aliud autem est formalis ratio obiecti, quod est sicut
The material object of divine faith is the creed, a set of propositions which all have something to do with God. But the formal object is the speaker, God. Someone with divine faith believes those propositions, not because of arguments or probable considerations, but because she ‘adheres to’ the speaker. The key to understanding testimonial faith is to understand what it means for the speaker to be the formal object of one’s belief.

The notion of a formal object does a lot of work in Aquinas’s psychology, action theory, and ethics. This is because powers and habits and their characteristic acts, according to Aquinas, should be distinguished by their formal objects. For example, an apple can be the object of different powers by being visible, or liftable, or desirable, and each of these makes for a different formal object, even though the material object, the apple, is the same in each case. Divine faith

medium propter quod tali credibili assentitur. Et sic ponitur actus fidei credere Deo, quia, sicut supra dictum est, formale objectum fidei est veritas prima, cui inhaeret homo ut propter eam creditis assentiat.”

81 Some other passages where Aquinas highlights the difference between the material and formal objects of faith are In Sent III.24.1.1.1c, QDV 14.8 obj 9 and ad 9, QDVC 4.1c, QDVC 4.1 ad 4, In 2 Tim 1.4, and ST II-II.129.6c, where Aquinas says “it pertains to faith to believe something and someone” (“Ad fidem autem pertinet aliquid et alicui credere.”) In this passage Aquinas says ‘fiducia’ gets its name not only from the faith of promise-keeping, but also from the faith of strong opinion. See also ST II-II.17.6c

82 In Sent III.27.2.4.1 ad 3: “Material diversity of objects suffices for distinguishing acts numerically, but they are not distinguished according to species except by diversity of formal objects. But the diversity of formal objects is according to the notion which a habit or power principally attends to ..” (Materialis diversitas objectorum sufficit ad diversificandum actum secundum numerum; sed secundum speciem actus non diversificantur nisi ex diversitate formali objecti. Formalis autem objecti diversitas est secundum illam rationem quam principaliter attendit vel habitus vel potentia.) ST I.59.2 ad 2: “Powers are not distinguished by a distinction of material objects, but by a formal distinction, following the notion of the object. And thus a notional diversity of good and true suffices for distinguishing intellect from will” (Potentiae non diversificantur secundum materialem distinctionem objectorum, sed secundum formalem distinctionem, quae attenditur secundum rationem objecti. Et ideo diversitas secundum rationem boni et veri, sufficit ad diversitatem intellectus et voluntatis.). A vice like incest, even if materially the same as other sexual acts, has a different formal object (In Sent IV.41.1.4.1 ad 1). Similarly, the vice of lying is defined by ‘formal falsity’, that the speaker intends to speak falsely (voluntatem falsum enuntiandi) (ST II-II.110.1c). See also In Sent III.23.1.4.1c, SCG I.76.2, ST I.59.4c, ST I-II.1.3, ST I-II.62.2c. See also Boyle (1980: 530) on Aquinas on the formal objects of virtuous and vicious acts.

83 Here is a more exotic case. Suppose Al lovingly fears breaking Belle’s vase because that would sadden Belle and Al loves Belle, whereas Cam servilely fears breaking Belle’s vase just because that would mean dire consequences for him. Al and Cam’s fears are qualitatively different in kind, and so are different habits, even though they are both fear concerned with the same material object (the breaking of the vase). They are qualitatively different, and so different in species, because they have different formal objects: Al and Cam fear the same thing, but their fears are differently motivated. This does not just mean that their fears have different causes, but that they are qualitatively different kinds of habit, taking their material object in a different way – the fear itself is not fully described without describing the aspect of love or servility that makes it the kind of fear it is. Servile fear is analogous in some ways to testimonial opinion, and loving fear is analogous in some ways to testimonial faith. The case that interests
faith believes propositions, the material object of faith, as revealed (to the audience) by God, making God as speaker the formal object.84 If the same propositions are instead believed by demonstration or induction, then the attitude one takes toward them is not divine faith. “[F]aith does not assent to or dissent from something because of arguments, but because of the First Truth [i.e. God]” (In Sent III.21.2.3 ad 1).85 Someone who believes the same propositions, not by adhering to the speaker, but purely on inductive inferential grounds (verisimilitudes, signs, probable propositions), does not have faith, but only opinion. Demons, for instance, do not adhere to God, but nevertheless believe the same propositions as the faithful, by inference from

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Aquinas is the difference between fear of breaking God’s laws out of love for God (timor castus) and fear of breaking them merely out of fear of punishment (timor servilis) (In Sent III.34.2.3.1c). He comments: “That which is the ratio of something else, as formally completing the object, does not pertain to a distinct habit or power, as [is clear in the case of] light and colour, and in this way God is the ratio of loving one’s neighbour out of charity. But that which is the ratio of something else as a cause need not pertain to the same habit, nor even to the same power. For example, the heat that is the ratio of an odor is known by touch, but the odor by smell. And similarly separation from God is said to be the ratio of eternal punishment as cause, which need not pertain to the same habit [as fear motivated by charity].” (In Sent III.34.2.3.1 ad 3: “[I]l lud quod est ratio alterius sicut formaliter complens objectum, non pertinet ad alium habitum vel potentiam, sicut lux et color: et hoc modo Deus est ratio diligendi proximum per caritatem. Sed illud quod est ratio alterius sicut causa, non oportet quod ad eumdem habitum pertineat, nec etiam ad eamdem potentiam; sicut calor qui est ratio odoris, cognoscitur tactu, odor autem olfactu. Et similiter separatio a Deo dicitur esse ratio poenae aeternae sicut causa; unde non oportet quod ad eumdem habitum pertineat.”

84 “Every cognoscitive habit has two objects, namely, what it cognizes materially, its material object, and that by which it is cognized, which is the formal notion of the object. For example, in the science of geometry the conclusions are known materially, but means [media] of demonstration, by which the conclusions are cognized, are the formal notion of knowing. So in faith, if we consider the formal notion fo the object, it is nothing but the First Truth [i.e., God], for the faith of which we are speaking does not assent to anything except because revealed by God, so it is tied to the divine truth as to a medium.” (ST II-II.1.1c: “[C]uiuslibet cognoscitivi habitus objectum duo habet, scilicet id quod materialiter cognoscit; quod est sicut materiale objectum; et id per quod cognoscitur; quod est formalis ratio objecti. Sicut in scientia geometrica materialiter scita sunt conclusiones; formalis vero ratio sciendi sunt media demonstrationis, per quae conclusiones cognoscuntur. Sic igitur in fide, si consideremus formalem rationem objecti, nihil est aliquid quam veritas prima, non enim fides de qua loquimur assentit alicui nisi quia est a Deo revelatum; unde ipsi veritati divinae inimitur tanquam medio.”) cf. ST I.1.3c.

85 “… fides non assentit alicui vel dissentit propter argumenta, sed propter veritatem primam.” Elsewhere, Aquinas says, “Faith is said [by John of Damascus] not to be ‘consent from inquiry’ inasmuch as the consent or assent of faith is not caused by the inquiry of reason, but this doesn’t exclude some remaining thought or consideration in the intellect of the believer about what he believes.” (QDV 14.1 ad 2: “[F]ides dicitur non inquisitus consensus, in quantum consensus fidei vel assensus non causatur ex inquisitione rationis; tamen non exclusituer per hoc quin in intellectu credentis remaneat aliqua cogitatio vel collatio de his quae credit.”) See also In Sent III.24.1.2.2 ad 4, In BDT 2.1c, ST I.1.8c, ST II-II.2.10 ad 1.
Aquinas says the same of cases in which humans believe the propositions of faith, but only on probable grounds:

[I]f someone believes that God exists by some human reasons and natural signs, he is not yet said to have faith of the kind under discussion, but only when he believes for this reason, that it is said by God, which is designated by calling it ‘believing God’ [credere deo].\(^{87}\) (In Rom 4.1)

Here again Aquinas distinguishes faith from opinion by appealing to faith’s formal object.

Aquinas helps us understand the idea of a formal object by giving the following analogy: the speaker as formal object is like the end, while the propositions believed to that end are like means:

Now, since anyone who believes assents to someone’s statement, the person to whose statement one assents seems to be principal, and [is treated] as an end, while the [propositions] by which believing one wants to assent to him are secondary. So therefore, one who has Christian faith correctly assents by his will to Christ in those things which truly pertain to his teaching.\(^{88}\) (ST II-II.11.1c)

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86 In Sent III.23.3.1c, QDV 14.9 ad 4. I discuss demon faith above, pp. 133-134.

87 “... si aliquis credat Deum esse per aliquas rationes humanas et naturalia signa, nondum dicitur fidem habere, de qua loquimur, sed solum quando ex hac ratione credit quod est a Deo dictum, quod designatur per hoc quod dicitur credere Deo.” An atheist historian who believed that Jesus was crucified under Pontius Pilate, not because of faith in God or the Church, but just on the basis of historical research and an assessment of the relevant evidence, would not have testimonial faith, but opinion. (But since she assents to something unseen, she does have ‘faith’ in Aquinas’s broad sense.) It is a puzzle how one can believe God that God exists, but this is not a puzzle that Aquinas addresses. Jenkins (1997:199-201) and Stump (2003: 368-370) offer solutions based on their interpretations of Aquinas’s faith, but their interpretations (as I note below, p. 149) do not take into account the formal object of faith.

88 ST II-II.11.1c: “In credendis autem voluntas assentit aliqui vero tanquam proprio bono, ut ex suprædictis patet. Unde quod est principale verum habet rationem finis ultimi, quae autem secundaria sunt habent rationem eorum quae sunt ad finem. Quia vero quicumque credit aliquius dicto assentit, principale videtur esse, et quasi finis, in unaquaque credulitate ille cuius dicto assentitur, quasi autem secundaria sunt ea quae quis tenendo vult aliquui assentire. Sic igitur qui recte fidem Christianam habet sua voluntate assentit Christo in his quae vere ad eius doctrinam pertinent.”
To put it another way, in faith, adhering to the speaker is the end, and believing the proposition spoken is the means to that end. In the case of faith, the audience believes $p$ ultimately because the speaker said so; whereas in the case of opinion, the audience believes $p$ ultimately because it takes $p$ to be most probable. Thus the audience’s belief in a proposition is dependent on the speaker in a way that it wouldn’t be if the audience were to have inferred that proposition for itself.

That’s why opinion is more sensitive to evidence: if the audience’s evidence for $p$ had been slightly different, she might not have thought $p$ probable on just her own evidence, but might still remain committed to adhering to the speaker. For example, suppose Godfrey goes to stay a few days with his aunt Eliza, and she tells him that she owns no cat. He believes her, but he also notices cat hair on the sofa, a picture of a cat on the fridge, a cat’s food dish, cat toys, and other signs that his aunt owns a cat, and he hears a cat mewing in a room upstairs. One of his friends comes to visit, and asks whether Eliza owns a cat. Godfrey says she doesn’t. The friend challenges him, saying “How do you know?” and Godfrey replies “Aunt Eliza told me”. It’s not unreasonable for Godfrey to remain confident that Eliza is right, while still wanting an explanation of the counterevidence. (It turns out that Eliza has been cat-sitting for a friend of hers.) Godfrey not only adds her statements to the store of evidence from which to make a probable judgment, in which case he would have opined that she did own a cat. Rather, he chooses to believe her, and so to assent to what she says.

Could the role of the speaker as formal object be reduced to that of inductive evidence? For example, could the idea that the speaker is the formal object be expressed merely by the

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89 See also In Sent I.45.1.2 ad 1, QDV 22.14c. Aquinas sometimes describes the means-end relation itself in terms of formal objects: “For every virtue is drawn by one operation or one act to an object and in the formal notion of an object, just as by the same vision we see light and the colour that is made visible by light. When we will something on account of the end alone, what is desired for the sake of the end has the notion of being willed from the end, and so the end is related to it as the formal notion to its object, like light and colour.” (SCG I.76.2: “Omnis enim virtus una operatione, vel uno actu, fertur in obiectum et in rationem formalem obiecti: sicut eadem visione videmus lumen et colorem, qui fit visibilis actu per lumen. Cum autem aliquid volumus propter finem tantum, illud quod propter finem desideratur accipit rationem volit ex fine: et sic finis comparatur ad ipsum sicut ratio formalis ad obiectum, ut lumen ad colorem.”)

90 I recognize that there is a broad sense of ‘evidence’ in which one’s relationship with the speaker might count as evidence, and so a reason to adhere to the speaker. But it would not count as publicly accessible or ‘third-person’ evidence that a third party could use to infer the same conclusion, and my impression is that Aquinas restricts opinion to inference based on such third-person evidence. For discussions of ‘first-person’ and ‘second-person’ evidence, see Zagzebski (2012: 64ff, 130f) and McMyler (2011: 92ff, 145ff, esp. 154).
proposition “S said that p”, from which (together with background knowledge about S) the audience then inductively infers that p?\textsuperscript{91} Not entirely. For one can assent to this proposition, and use it in an inductive argument (as the demons do) without adhering to the speaker, and so without believing p for the sake of believing the speaker.

One last point from Aquinas that helps flesh out his notion of adhering to a speaker is that assent on this basis is creditable to the speaker in a way that science and opinion are not. The assent of science is compelled, while opinion “does not have firm assent” and so is not creditable to the believer the way faith is.\textsuperscript{92} Faith is a “choice” (electio). Faith involves more commitment, and so more risk than opinion. But the reward for taking this risk is that one can take part in an epistemic division of labour (e.g., when one develops a science on the basis of principles had on faith from another science) that would otherwise be merely a matter of one’s own opinion.

\textbf{(b)} What makes the speaker such that one would want to adhere to her by believing what she says? As we saw earlier, Aquinas has said that believing God is like believing “the testimony of some good man” (In Sent III.23.2.2.2c). But what kind of goodness does he have in mind? Obviously not just any desirable traits will do. Neither physical strength nor virtuous patience make a speaker more faith-worthy. The speaker needs a kind of goodness that grounds adherence in the person of the speaker as a speaker. Earlier we saw (in the passage where Aquinas identifies ten different senses of ‘faith’) that according to Aquinas a reason for believing

\textsuperscript{91} This interpretation is particularly attractive in light of the analogy Aquinas draws between God as formal object and the ‘means of demonstration’ as formal object, in ST II-II.1.1c (see also p. 141 above).

\textsuperscript{92} Aquinas’s point is about the merit of divine faith, but his argument has implications for the credit of testimonial faith in general. ST II-II.2.9 ad 2: “In science two things should be considered: assent of the knower to the thing known, and consideration of the thing known. The assent of science is not subject to free choice, since the knower is forced to assent through the efficacy of the demonstration, and so the assent of science is not meritorious. But actual consideration of something known is subject to free choice … [I]n faith both [assent and consideration] are subject to free choice, and so faith can be meritorious with respect to both. But opinion does not have firm assent, for it is something weak and unstable, according to Posterior Analytics I. Thus it does not seem to come from a complete willing. And thus with regard to assent it doesn’t much seem to have merit. But with regard to actual consideration it can be meritorious.” (“[I]n scientia duo possunt considerari, scilicet ipse assensus scientis ad rem scitam, et consideratio rei scitae. Assensus autem scientiae non subicitur libero arbitrio, quia sciens cogitatur ad assentiendum per efficaciam demonstrationis. Et ideo assensus scientiae non est meritorius. Sed consideratio actualis rei scitae subiacet libero arbitrio, est enim in potestate hominis considerare vel non considerare. Et ideo consideratio scientiae potest esse meritoria, si referatur ad finem caritatis, idest ad honorem Dei vel utilitatem proximi. Sed in fide utrumque subiacet libero arbitrio. Et ideo quantum ad utrumque actus fidei potest esse meritorius. Sed opinio non habet firmum assensum, est enim quoddam debile et infirmum, secundum philosophum, in I Poster. Unde non videtur procedere ex perfecta voluntate. Et sic ex parte assensus non multum videtur habere rationem meriti. Sed ex parte considerationis actualis potest meritoria esse.”)
the speaker is the speaker’s veracity (veracitas) (In Sent III.23.3.4.3 expos.). He says very little about it there, but does note that veracity is a kind of faithfulness on the part of the speaker, and that conscientious veracity is also called ‘faith’ (In Sent III.23.3.4.3 expos.). This may be an early reference to a virtue he discusses more fully in his *Summa Theologiae*, the virtue of truthfulness.

Truthfulness (veritas) is an Aristotelian moral virtue.\(^93\) Truthfulness is the virtue of representing oneself to others accurately, including representing one’s knowledge accurately by means of words and other signs.

But since knowable truths, inasmuch as they are known by us, are about us and pertain to us, in this way the truthfulness [veritas] of teaching can pertain to this virtue, and whatever other truthfulness by which one manifests by word or deed what one knows.\(^94\) (ST II-II.109.3 ad 3)

Truthfulness is a part of justice, because it is directed “to the other” (est ad alterum), and as a social animal, one owes it to others that one be truthful; otherwise the horizontal epistemic division of labour built on testimony (as described in In BDT 3.1c above) would collapse.\(^95\)

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93 Aristotle discusses the virtue of truthfulness in *Nicomachean Ethics* 4.7. The ordinary sense of ‘veritas’ in Aquinas is that of conformity between mind and reality, but he also uses ‘veritas’ to mean the reality to which mind conforms (so that ‘veraciter’ sometimes just means ‘really’) or the cause of that conformity (e.g., God as First Truth is cause of all things) (QDV 1.1, ST I.16.1). Aquinas distinguishes these more common senses from three ways of using ‘veritas’ to refer to a virtue: the Aristotelian virtue of truthfulness of concern to us, the ‘truth of life’ and the ‘truth of justice’: “The virtue called ‘truth’ is not ordinary truth, but a virtue by which someone shows himself in word and deed as he is. But ‘truth of life’ refers particularly to the way someone fulfills in his life what he was ordained to by the divine intellect, the way truth is also said to be in other things. And ‘truth of justice’ is that by which someone keeps to what he ought, toward others, according to the order of law.” (ST I.16.4 ad 3: “[V]irtus quae dicitur veritas, non est veritas communis, sed quaedam veritas secundum quam homo in dictis et factis ostendit se ut est. Veritas autem vitae dicitur particulariter, secundum quod homo in vita sua implet illud ad quod ordinatur per intellectum divinum, sicut etiam dictum est veritatem esse in ceteris rebus. Veritas autem iustitiae est secundum quod homo servat id quod debet alteri secundum ordinem legum.”)

94 “Veruntamen quia vera scabilia, inquantum sunt a nobis cognita, circa nos sunt et ad nos pertinent; secundum hoc veritas doctrinae potest ad hanc virtutem pertinere, et quaecumque alia veritas qua quis manifestat verbo vel facto quod cognoscit.”

95 ST II-II.109.3 ad 1: “Because man is a social animal, one man naturally owes to another that without which human society cannot be preserved. But humans could not live together unless they believed each other, manifesting the truth to each other as to themselves. And thus the virtue of truthfulness [veritatis] has in some way the character of a debt.” (“[Q]uium homo est animal sociale, naturaliter unus homo debet alteri id sine quo societas humana conservari non possit. Non autem possent homines ad invicem convivere nisi sibi invicem crederent, tanquam sibi invicem veritatem manifestantibus. Et ideo virtus veritatis aliquo modo attendit rationem debiti.”)
Aquinas makes a connection between truthfulness and faith. If one believed a proposition simply on one’s own evidence for it, one would have science or opinion. But faith is still supported by evidence and arguments (he calls them ‘supports’ of faith, adminicula); it’s just that this support is indirect: it is not support for the proposition spoken, but for the speaker’s truthfulness (veritas):

Evidence that compels faith, such as miracles, does not prove the [propositions of] faith directly [per se], but proves the truthfulness of the speaker, and so does not make for science of those propositions.⁹⁶ (In Sent III.24.1.2.2 ad 4)

In the case of divine faith, one believes God, the paragon of truthfulness, since He cannot deceive nor be deceived.⁹⁷ But in testimonial faith more generally, human testifiers too can approximate such truthfulness to varying degrees, and so be faith-worthy.⁹⁸ One can communicate oneself to another “such that one is known to be such as he is in word and deed, by means of a certain virtue which [Aristotle] calls veritas” (In Sent III.34.1.2c).⁹⁹

This concludes my explanation of testimonial faith. So far the secondary literature has focused not on human faith but on divine faith, and I will comment on it briefly insofar as it is relevant to human faith. Recent literature on Aquinas on divine faith can be divided into three camps. Some interpreters, like Terence Penelhum and Alvin Plantinga, have taken Aquinas to be an evidentialist; the faithful, on this reading, are simply believing no more and no less than what they have evidence for (e.g., the evidence of confirmatory miracles).¹⁰⁰ Others, like James Ross

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⁹⁶ “[A]rgumenta quae cogunt ad fides, sicut miracula, non probant fides per se, sed probant veritatem annuntiantis fident: et ideo de his quae fidei sunt, scientiam non faciunt.” See also In Sent III.21.2.3 ad 1, ST II-II.2.1 ad 1 and ST II-II.2.10 ad 1.

⁹⁷ In BDT 3.1 ad 4, QDV 14.8 obj 9 and ad 9, In Gal 6.2, ST II-II.2.4c, ST II-II.89.1c.

⁹⁸ We saw this in the passage where Aquinas distinguishes various senses of ‘fides’ quoted above (In Sent III.23.3.4.3 expos.).

⁹⁹ Aquinas is listing various ways in which there is communicatio in the active life, and one is that “in eo quod seipsum alteri exhibet sive per cognitionem, ut scilicet cognoscatur talis qualis est per dicta et facta, quod facit virtus quaedam quae a philosopho dicitur veritas”.

¹⁰⁰ See Penelhum (1977) and Plantinga (1983). Penelhum poses a dilemma for Aquinas: either credibility arguments (the adminicula of faith) give the intellect conclusive reason for belief, and so yield rational certainty, or do not, and then the certainty of faith is irrational (1977: 146, 152). Penelhum seems unaware of Aquinas’s distinction between the certitude of evidentness and the certitude of adhesion. And he misses the role of the formal object of faith, which is not just to give the audience evidence to reason with, but to make the audience sensitive to
and Eleonore Stump, have taken Aquinas to be what I call a ‘voluntarist reliabilist’; the faithful, on this reading, assent to a proposition like “God exists” for purely pragmatic reasons (e.g., to gain eternal happiness), and it happens in this case to be an epistemically reliable method of gaining belief (because God is, in a sense, one’s happiness). And yet others, like John Jenkins and Bruno Niederbacher, take the ‘basic belief’ approach; on this view faith is warranted even if you don’t know how you acquired it.

Each of these interpretations has an element of truth to it. One can gain indirect evidence for faith, by having evidence that adhering to a speaker would be a good thing to do, because the speaker is truthful. And one’s faith can be rationally motivated by the desire for happiness, since, in Aquinas’s view, happiness is an epistemic good. And in the case of divine faith, there is a divine infusion of grace that makes one certain of the articles of faith, even if one doesn’t know about it. But the major problem, shared by all three approaches, is that they do not recognize the importance of the speaker (in this case, God) as the formal object of one’s belief, and the special role of the will in believing someone this way. For Aquinas it is essential to divine faith that one chooses to believe God (credere deo); a proposition is not believed on divine faith except as revealed by God. This means that, for Aquinas, divine faith is not rationally grounded merely the speaker’s evidence, even though the audience doesn’t know what that evidence is. See chapter 5 for more details.

101 See Ross (1985) and Stump (2003). Stump gives an argument why at least one of the articles of faith (that God exists) when might be justifiably believed for purely pragmatic reasons. Here’s a summary: Aquinas says God is perfect goodness, and perfect being. God also ‘is’ our happiness in the sense that human happiness consists in the beatific vision of God’s essence. Thus, willing to believe that a perfect being (God) exists, on the basis of willing to believe that one’s perfect happiness (God) exists, happens to be a reliable method of acquiring true beliefs, and so is justified (2003: 367-369). The main problem with this approach is that it becomes irrelevant to the justification of the believer’s faith whether she believes what she does on divine authority, as spoken by God, or from some other source. And there are three other problems with taking Stump’s approach to divine faith. Divinely infused grace seems to play no role. And it is hard to see how this approach could be extended to other articles of faith (that Jesus Christ was resurrected, that God is a trinity, etc.). Also, this view does not explain how faith can be an intellectual virtue aimed only at the truth (ST II-II.1.3 ad 1).

102 See Jenkins (1997: chap. 6) and Niederbacher (2004) and (2012). One problem for this as a view on divine faith in Aquinas is that Aquinas sometimes says that when you have faith, you do know that you have it (QDV 10.9 ad 8, ST I-II.112.5 ad 2, ST III.30.1 ad 3).

103 ST II-II.1.1c: “… for the faith of which we are speaking does not assent to anything except because revealed by God.” (“…non enim fides de qua loquimur assentit alicui nisi quia est a Deo revelatum.”). cf. In Sent III.24.1.1.1c, QDV 12.1 ad s.c. 4.
evidentially, or pragmatically, or as a basic belief. These missteps in interpretation of Aquinas on divine faith are worth pointing out here, because they could easily lead to misinterpretations of Aquinas on testimony generally.

3.4 Presumption

We have seen that Aquinas recognizes at least two rational sources of testimony-based belief. Testimonial opinion is straightforwardly inferential, while testimonial faith gives a special role to adhering to the person of the speaker. Now we have come to our third question. Does Aquinas ever think that testimonial belief is rationally acceptable by default?

One could argue that he does, starting from his idea that humans are by nature social animals, and his idea that society requires reliable testimonial belief. If we are naturally social animals, then, one might think, we must be naturally reliable testifiers. But then we must be warranted by default in accepting the testimony of others.

This kind of speculation will not amount to much unless there are passages where Aquinas says we should believe others by default. And he seems to say we should when he says we should presume the best of others.

An ignorant man should presume good of everyone, but after the truth about people is known, he should relate to them according to their condition. (In Joh 2.3)

From the fact that someone has a bad opinion of someone [else] without sufficient cause, he does him an injustice and despises him. But no one ought to despise or bring about any harm without being forced to. So where no manifest signs of malice

104 See above, p. 147.
105 See Dummett (1993) for a similar argument. In chapter 2, pp. 76-77, I contrasted Dummett’s view with Augustine’s.
106 “Licet autem homo ignorans debeat de quolibet praesumere bonum; tamen postquam veritas innotescit de aliquibus, debet se homo habere ad eos secundum eorum conditionem.”
in someone appear, we should take him to be good, interpreting for the better what is doubtful.\textsuperscript{107} (ST II-II.60.4c)

To presume the best of others is not to take them to be perfect, but rather to refrain from judging them sinful: “It is not necessary to presume of everyone any good whatever, but [only] that to which they are bound, which by omitting they sin” (In Sent IV.15.2.5.3 ad 1).\textsuperscript{108} However, according to Aquinas all lying is sinful,\textsuperscript{109} and intentionally misrepresenting your knowledge to others is wrong.\textsuperscript{110} So when someone asserts something, you should presume she’s not lying, and not misrepresenting her knowledge. It is a short step from this to the conclusion that we should presume that others are speaking what they sincerely take to be the truth, and another short step to accepting what others assert by default.

The problem with this argument is that the duty to presume the good of others is a duty to \textit{presume}, not to believe or assent. It is a moral duty to premise one’s thinking and actions on charitable interpretations of others, not an epistemic duty to confidently believe such interpretations. (A jury is not required to \textit{believe} that the defendant is innocent, but just to presume that she is.) And Aquinas recognizes that the moral duty to presume that $p$ can come

\textsuperscript{107} “\textit{Ex hoc ipso quod aliquis habet malam opinionem de alio absque sufficienti causa, iniuriatur et et contemnit ipsum. Nullus autem debet alium contemnere, vel nocumentum quodcumque inferre, absque causa cogente. Et ideo ubi non apparent manifesta indica de malitia alciuis, debemus eum ut bonum habere, in meliorem partem interpretando quod dubium est.”

\textsuperscript{108} “… non oportet quod praesumamus de quolibet quodlibet bonum, sed illud ad quod tenetur, quo praetermissis peccat; quia nullum debemus credere malum, nisi constet nobis de malitia ejus; et ideo non oportet quod famulus credit quod domino placeat, nisi in illa necessitate pauperis in qua dominus de necessitate tenetur.” Here Aquinas explains why a servant should not give his master’s goods away as alms, on the presumption that his master would want to give those particular alms.

\textsuperscript{109} Lying is always bad because “unnatural” and “undue”: words (and other signs) are naturally signs of thoughts (ST II-II.110.3c). It is bad not just from the harm it brings, but from its inherent disorder, so lying is not allowed even to save someone’s life (ST II-II.110.3 ad 4). What counts as a lie? “[T]he definition of lying is taken from its formal falsity, viz. that someone has the will to utter falsehood” (ST II-II.110.1c: “\textit{Sed tamen ratio mendacii sumitur a formali falsitate, ex hoc scilicet quod aliquis habet voluntatem falsum enuntiandi.”). Such utterance may be by signs other than words (ST II-II.110.1 ad 2; 111.1c).

\textsuperscript{110} ST II-II.70.4 ad 1: “[T]n giving testimony, a man should not assert for certain, as if knowing [quasi sciens] that of which he is not certain, but should present doubtful matters with doubt, and that of which he is certain, assert for certain.” (“\textit{In testimonio ferendo non debet homo pro certo asserere, quasi sciens, id de quo certus non est, sed dubium debet sub dubio proferre, et id de quo certus est pro certo asserere.”). This passage is about court testimony in particular, but if truthfulness is in some sense owed to every other human, then it seems Aquinas should say the same about testimony generally.
apart from one’s epistemic warrant for \( p \). Sometimes one ought to presume the good, even when it would be epistemically unreliable so to believe:

It can happen that he who interprets for the better is deceived quite often. But it is better that someone be deceived frequently, having a good opinion of some bad man, than that he be deceived less frequently, having a bad opinion of some good man, because in this [second] case he does an injustice to someone, but not in the first.\(^{111}\)

(ST II-II.60.4 ad 1)

On the other hand, if presuming the best of one person would endanger another, one ought not so to presume, regardless of how epistemically accurate the presumption is.

One should presume good of everyone unless the contrary is apparent, so long as it does not tend toward anyone’s danger, for then one should apply caution that one not believe anyone easily.\(^{112}\) (ST II-II.70.3 ad 2)

It should be clear, then, that the duty to presume is moral, and not epistemic. So Aquinas’s account of presumption does not support the idea that it is rational to accept the assertions of others by default (although in order to give them a fair hearing, we should act as if we do, until we have evidence otherwise). But more importantly, Aquinas explicitly rejects the idea that we should believe others by default: “to believe a human without probable reason is to believe too quickly” (In Sent III.24.1.3.2 ad 1).\(^{113}\)

\(^{111}\) “\([P]\)otest contingere quod ille qui in meliorem partem interpretatur, frequentius fallitur. Sed melius est quod alicuius frequenter fallatur habens bonam opinionem de aliquo malo homine, quam quod rarius fallatur habens malam opinionem de aliquo bono, quia ex hoc fit iniuria alicui, non autem ex primo.”

\(^{112}\) “\(D\)e quolibet praesumendum est bonum nisi appareat contrarium, dummodo non vergat in periculum alterius. Quia tunc est adhibenda cautela, ut non de facili unicuique credatur, secundum illud I Joan. IV, ‘Nolite credere omni spiritui!’” This may be an allusion to Augustine’s spir. et litt. 32.55, where Augustine makes almost the same point, and appeals to the same Scripture passage.

\(^{113}\) “\([C]\)edere homini absque ratione probabili est nimis cito credere”. See also SCG III.154.8.
3.5 Conclusion

The results of this chapter can be summarized in the following chart of propositional attitudes we have seen in Aquinas.

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<tr>
<th>Non-assent</th>
<th>Assent</th>
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<td>to the ‘seen’</td>
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<td></td>
<td>to the ‘unseen’</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(‘faith’ broadly)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• suspicion (slight inclination)</td>
<td>• science</td>
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<tr>
<td>• doubt (equal inclination)</td>
<td>• intellection of first principles</td>
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<tr>
<td>• presumption (independent of assent)</td>
<td>• senses</td>
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<td>• prophecy</td>
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<td>• divine faith</td>
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<td>• weak or strong opinion (inductive)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• testimonial faith (by adherence to the speaker, creditable)</td>
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Aquinas’s epistemology can be confusing, since he uses the term ‘faith’ in so many different ways. In the broadest sense, faith is any assent to the unseen. He also calls the conviction of strong opinion ‘faith’. But he contrasts divine faith with opinion, and as he does so, he appeals to a human analogue to divine faith, which I have called testimonial faith. I have argued, in effect, that Aquinas is a pluralist who recognizes two distinct rational sources of testimonial belief. He recognizes that some testimonial belief is opinion, and so is justified by inductive inference; but he also recognizes that in some testimonial belief the audience adheres to the person of the speaker, believing the proposition spoken in order to believe the speaker, rather than the other way around.
To illustrate the contrast between testimonial opinion and testimonial faith, I will close with a tale of two cities. Morris arrives in Chicago and asks a woman for directions to the Willis Tower. Reasoning inductively that a woman in Chicago is likely to know the directions to the Willis Tower, Morris gives his assent, but he doesn’t go beyond his own evidence in any way, so he still ‘fears’ that the directions might be wrong. Morris has testimonial opinion.

Meanwhile, Maurice arrives in Toronto and follows the directions he got from a friend who used to live in Toronto. She tells him to take a short-cut to the CN tower. But at first the short-cut appears to lead away from the CN Tower. If she had merely mentioned the directions, he would have doubted them and turned back, but she had assured him that those directions were the quickest way to the CN Tower, implicitly asking him to trust her. Maurice chooses to trust her, and believes what she says in order to adhere to her, so his assent is creditable in a way that it wouldn’t have been had he simply inferred that those were the right directions on his own evidence, and happily he arrives at the tower all the sooner. At the same time, his choice is reasonable, because he takes her to be truthful. Had the directions been wrong, he would not have blamed himself for inferring falsely, but would have blamed the friend he trusted for not keeping faith with him. Maurice has testimonial faith.

Aquinas’s pluralism means he does not reduce testimonially based belief to inference-based belief, nor to assurance-based belief; neither does he think testimonial belief is acceptable by default. We will now turn to considering in what way testimonial opinion and testimonial faith can provide knowledge.

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114 This example is based on Lackey (2007: 352), where a similar example is supposed to show that someone in Morris’s position doesn’t deserve any credit for his testimonial knowledge. The example is supposed to cut against a virtue epistemology approach to knowledge. For responses, see Riggs (2009), Greco (2010:81ff), Ernest Sosa (2011: 90). (Since Lackey’s article came out, the Sears Tower has been renamed the Willis Tower.)

115 Moran (2005b) argues that the reductionist cannot adequately explain why an audience has the right to complain about being misled. McMyler (2011) explains this right to complain in terms of an epistemic right of deferral.
Chapter 4
Aquinas on Knowledge and Testimony

4.0 Introduction

You know that you are reading this chapter. And you could let others know it, too, just by telling them. But would Aquinas, when speaking as a philosopher, and in keeping with his theory of knowledge, agree?

The answer is a bit complicated, and it might help to consider first what it is that we are affirming when we say we know such things. One thing we want to say thereby is that the proposition expressed by “you are reading this chapter” is true; more generally, when you know something, we want to say that the state of your mind somehow matches reality. But if it just happened to match reality by accident or by chance, we wouldn’t say you knew. We’re inclined to say that if you know, the match between your mind and reality is in some way guaranteed or reliable; either guaranteed against all contrary possibilities, or perhaps only guaranteed sufficiently for the purposes at hand, such as for relying on it in one’s thinking and acting, and asserting it to others such that their minds can match reality in a similarly guaranteed way. Finally, such a guarantee would make it valuable, insofar as we value our minds matching reality (i.e., we value the truth), and would rather not depend on chance for getting it. All of these features of knowing (truth, guarantee, communicability, and value) are features that contemporary epistemologists typically try to preserve in their theories of knowledge.¹

¹ In this paragraph I particularly have in mind popular safety accounts, virtue epistemology accounts, and pragmatic encroachment accounts of knowledge, as well as Plantinga’s proper function account, and Edward Craig’s popular account of knowledge as the property of an agent that makes one a good informant. For an interesting attempt to combine safety accounts, virtue epistemology accounts, and Edward Craig’s account, see Pritchard (2012). When I say ‘guaranteed’ I am thinking of what Aquinas calls ‘certitude’. He sometimes says that one’s assent can be “certified” (In Rom 2.4, In Ps 24.8). But by ‘certitude’ Aquinas does not always mean absolute certainty, as epistemologists have tended to do since Descartes. Aquinas is willing to talk about degrees of certitude, and even “probable” certitude (see above, p. 135, note 65). A nice overview of some contemporary attempts to define knowledge is Zagzebski (1999).
But it is difficult, at first, to see where Aquinas has a theory of knowledge that would accommodate such mundane cases as you or the people you told knowing that you are reading this chapter. We could look at Aquinas’s theory of cognitio, since cognitio has been identified as Aquinas’s “fundamental epistemic category”. Aquinas has a detailed commentary on Aristotle’s De Anima, and often references this account in treatises on the cognitio of God, angels, and humans, where he asks questions such as “Does God cognoscere particulars?” But sometimes Aquinas seems to be talking merely about the psychology of cognition, not knowledge. He uses cognitio to talk about raw sense data, and sometimes even talks about “false cognitio”. So cognitio seems to lack the truth, guarantee and value of knowledge. Should we then look at Aquinas’s theory of scientia? He has a detailed commentary on Aristotle’s Posterior Analytics, and quite often he summarizes this account when he explains what he means by scientia (for example, when distinguishing scientia from faith and opinion). On this official account, scientia is a kind of cognitio, but it is had only of truths, is fully certain, and so fully guaranteed. However, the account is also very restrictive. One restriction on scientia meant to support its certainty is that it is of only necessary truths, not contingent truths (like the truth that you are reading this chapter). Another is that the truths of scientia must be ‘seen’. The truths of scientia must either be directly seen to be necessarily true just from their terms (truths like “The whole is greater than the part”) or must be seen to be necessarily derivable from something directly seen. Thus even divine faith, which for Aquinas is necessarily directed at truths in a

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3 The treatises I have in mind are SCG I.48-71, ST I.14, ST I.54-58, ST I.84-49
4 I discuss these issues in detail below.
5 On the difference between scientia and faith see note 8 below. Among the many passages where Aquinas explicitly appeals to the In PA I.4.5 definition of scientia are: In BDT 2.2c; QDV 2.1 ad 5, 2.12 s.c. 6, 10.10 ad 5, 11.1c; SCG I.49.2, II.73.23, II.75.14, III.59.5; ST I.14.1 ad 2; In Joh. 4.4; ST II-II.1.4-5; ST III.9.3 ad 2, In NE 6.3.4, 8; In M 1.1.29, 7.15.5, 8.4.11.
6 Another worry is that, if cognitio is not factive, but scientia is defined as cognitio that meets some further non-factive conditions (as it is in the central text, In PA I.4.5), then the official definition of scientia does not make it factive either. In other words, then as per In PA I.4.5 scientia would be defined as (non-factive) cognition of something necessary, its cause, and the application of that cause to its effect.
7 See Appendix A for an argument that various kinds of scientia Aquinas recognizes in his commentary on the Posterior Analytics are only of necessary and universal truths.
hyper-reliable way, does not count as *scientia*, because those truths are not ‘seen’. A fortiori there is no chance of ordinary testimonial faith or testimonial opinion of the ‘unseen’ providing *scientia*. So *scientia* is not easily communicable.

Faced with these apparent dead-ends, some have attempted to discern Aquinas’s theory of knowledge obliquely. Eleonore Stump, for example, notes that Aquinas is committed to the idea that humans have been designed to acquire true beliefs about the world, and on that basis speculates that Aquinas has an externalist reliabilist view of knowledge. Scott MacDonald, on the other hand, points to ways that Aquinas’s official account of *scientia* allows for cases that fall short of the ideal. Aquinas says that *scientia* is ‘perfect cognitio’, and MacDonald speculates that on Aquinas’s view *scientia* is “the paradigm for knowledge”, and argues that Aquinas is an internalist. Neither of these speculative approaches gives us a clear indication of what Aquinas thinks about ordinary knowledge of the unseen, such as knowledge from inductive inference or testimony. If *scientia* is the upper limit on knowledge, what is the lower limit? If propositional

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8 ST II-II.1.5c: “All *scientia* is had by some principle known directly [*per se*], and consequently seen. So all things *scita* are in some way seen. But it is not possible that the same thing by the same subject be both *creditum* and seen, as stated above [ST II-II.1.4c]. So it is also impossible that the same thing by the same subject be both *scitum* and *creditum.*” ([O]mnis scientia habetur per aliqua principia per se nota, et per consequens visa. Et ideo oportet quaeque sunt scita aliquo modo esse visa. Non autem est possibile quod idem ab eodem sit creditum et visum, sicut supra dictum est. Unde etiam impossibile est quod ab eodem idem sit scitum et creditum.) In this passage *credere* is used as a technical term for assent to propositions unseen, and *scire* is used as a technical term for assent had on either intuition or demonstration based on such intuition (or demonstration *quia*), in the ways described in Aristotle’s *Posterior Analytics*. (See also QDV 14.9c). Hawthorne (2013:124) describes divine faith as ‘hyper-reliable’ and goes on to argue that there is a strong case for thinking that Aquinas’s divine faith is knowledge.

9 As was mentioned in the previous chapter, the puzzling case of the subalternate sciences seems to be one in which faith in the conclusions of a superior science enables the inferior scientist to demonstrate a body of conclusions that can be called a ‘science’ in a secondary sense, but not to have science in the primary and strict sense, so long as the conclusions of the superior science are not ‘seen’ by the inferior scientist. See above, pp. 118-119.

10 A teacher can, of course, tell a student what propositions she will be able to demonstrate once she has *scientia*, but the teacher cannot thereby give a student *scientia*. To have *scientia*, the student must see that the truths are necessarily true for herself. *Scientia*, on the official account, is communicable only in the sense that the teacher can prompt a student to come to see things for herself (In Sent II.9.1.2 ad 4, QDV 11.1c, SCG II.75.7).

11 See Stump (2003: 231-237). In order to support the externalist reading she also argues that *scientia* is not justified with certainty based on self-evident principles. Note that even though this chapter was printed ten years after MacDonald (1993), it is basically the same as Stump (1991), and MacDonald (1993) can be read as an internalist’s response to Stump (1991).

12 The quote is from MacDonald (1993: 163). MacDonald’s argument that Aquinas is an internalist (186-187) depends heavily on an assumption in endnote 78. MacDonald gives three examples of knowledge for which he claims *scientia simpliciter* is the paradigm: sensory knowledge, *scientia quia* and for-the-most-part *scientia* (175). I discuss these in Appendix A.
attitudes that fall short of *scientia* in reliability count as knowledge because they are reliable enough, or because they are similar enough to the paradigm, how much reliability, or similarity to the paradigm, is enough?

Martin Pickavé looks at the official cases of *scientia* that Aquinas recognizes which fall short of *scientia simpliciter*, to revisit the idea that *scientia* just is knowledge. What is in common among the official cases of *scientia* which Aquinas admits fall short of the ideal, he finds, is certitude. He also notes that Aquinas contrasts *scientia* with opinion by saying that opinion has “fear of the opposite” which *scientia* lacks. From these two observations, Pickavé implies that “nonparadigmatic knowledge” bottoms out at “true cognition … without fear of the opposite”. If so, then Aquinas should be open to calling testimonial or inferential grasp of truths *scientia*, when sufficiently certain. This is an elegant solution, but it faces a serious problem. Aquinas explicitly denies that divine faith gives us *scientia*, even though he explicitly says that divine faith is true *cognitio* without fear of the opposite. The sticking point, for Aquinas, is that *scientia* is of the ‘seen’, while faith is of the unseen.

In light of these complications, I would like to revisit the possibility that Aquinas’s theory of *cognitio* simply is his theory of knowledge. Recent commentators have dismissed the idea rather quickly, on the basis of objections that I think can be defused. And I think more can

13 On ‘fear of the opposite’ see above, chapter 3, pp. 130-131.

14 The quote is from Pickavé (2012: 321). He considers cases of non-ideal *scientia* and notes the way Aquinas contrasts *scientia* with opinion on page 319. On page 317, Pickavé says that “for Aquinas *scientia* is inseparably linked with certainty (*certitudo*). According to Aquinas, I cannot be said to have *scientia* of something if I am in doubt about it.”

15 Aquinas denies that divine faith is *scientia* in In Sent III.24.2.2c, QDV 14.1c, QDV 14.2c, QDV 14.9c, ST II-II.1.5c, ST II-II.2.9 ad 3, In Heb 11.1 and elsewhere. He says that divine faith is only of truths (ST II-II.1.3c), is only of truths (ST II-II.4.5c), has no fear of the opposite (ST II-II.2.1c), and is *cognitio* (In Sent I.3.1.3 ad 8, In Sent III.31.2.1.1, QDV 14.2 ad 10, SCG III.40, Compend. I.1, In Joh 1.4, ST I.12.13 ad 1 and ad 3, ST I.94.3c, ST I-II.113.4, ST II-II.2.12 ad 2, ST III.61.3 ad 2). See also In Sent I.2.1.5expos, In Sent III.25.2.2.4expos, QDV 10.12 ad s.c. 6, QDV 14.2 ad 9, QDV 14.10 ad 3, In Joh 2.3, SCG IV.1.12, ST I-II.67.3 ad 2, ST I-II.113.4 ad 2, ST II-II.1.7 ad 2, ST II-II.2.4c, ST II-II.4.8 ad 3, ST II-II.5.1c, ST II-II.17.6c, ST II-II.24.7 ad 3, ST III.36.2 ad 1.

16 Another problem is that all the official cases of *scientia* which Aquinas admits in his commentary on the *Posterior Analytics*, but which do not meet all the conditions of the official definition of *scientia* from In PA I.4.5, not only have certitude in common, but are also of universal, necessary truths. So even nonparadigmatic *scientia*, as explained in Aquinas’s commentary on the *Posterior Analytics*, is too restrictive to be knowledge. See Appendix A.
be said for this reading than has been said before.\textsuperscript{17} I will argue for the thesis that to \textit{cognoscere} a proposition is to know it. That is, in keeping with the rough outline of what we care about when we say we know things, to \textit{cognoscere} a proposition is to be in a mental state had only toward truths, and one that is somehow guaranteed to be toward the truth. Aquinas’s official theory of \textit{cognitio} certainly looks like a theory of knowledge, and ‘\textit{cognitio}’ usually plays the same role in Aquinas as ‘knowledge’ does for us. One benefit of this reading is that it becomes fairly straightforward that we can have knowledge of the unseen, so both divine and human faith can be sources of knowledge. This approach also sticks to Aquinas’s own technical terms and gives a unified account of what it is that underlies the various kinds of knowledge he recognizes.

Here’s the plan. In section 1, I briefly explain Aquinas’s theory of \textit{cognitio}, and give evidence that Aquinas uses the term ‘\textit{cognitio}’ and ‘\textit{cognoscere}’ the way we use ‘knowledge’ and ‘know’. In section 2, I reply to the key objections to this view. Then in section 3, I show that testimonial opinion and testimonial faith are sources of \textit{cognitio}, and explain how Aquinas thinks of such knowledge.

\textbf{4.1 Cognitio}

\textbf{4.1.1 Cognitio defined}

\textit{Cognitio}, like knowledge, can be considered very broadly. \textit{Cognitio} is a state of soul in which the soul is made similar to (as Aquinas says, ‘assimilated’ to) an object by receiving the form of that object, as that form is in the object – but without also receiving the matter of that object – by means of a natural power to be so informed. Aquinas summarizes his view of \textit{cognitio} thus:

\begin{quote}
[T]he cognizant [\textit{cognoscentia}] are distinguished from the non-cognizant [\textit{non cognoscentia}] in that the non-cognizant have nothing but their own form, but a
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{17} Some interpretations of Aquinas along somewhat similar lines but very different in details are Rüppel (1971) and González (2006).
cognizer by nature has \textit{[natus est habere]} the form also of another thing, for the species of the cognized is in the cognizer.\(^{18}\) (ST I.14.1c)

(I will translate \textit{`cognoscere’} as \textit{‘cognize’}, until I have given some reasons for thinking of it as \textit{‘know’}.) Here Aquinas notes that a cognizer not only grasps the forms of other things, but does so by means of a natural capacity to do so. It is, as Aristotle says, like wax that receives the form of a signet ring, but without the gold.\(^{19}\) Following Aristotle, Aquinas says that the soul is potentially all things, and \textit{cognitio} is the soul’s being made similar to a thing by taking on its form.\(^{20}\)

Aquinas also says that human natural capacities to be so informed have been designed for that purpose.

A soul is united to a body in order to understand, which is [its] proper and principal activity. And consequently it is necessary that the body united to a rational soul be best suited to serve the soul in those things which are needed for understanding.\(^{21}\)

And Aquinas very often says that the goal of the understanding is truth, \textit{bonum intellectus est verum}, or more precisely, to cognize the truth, \textit{cognoscere verum}.\(^{22}\)

“The senses were given to humans not only to procure the necessities of life, as with other animals, but also for cognizing \textit{[ad cognoscendum]}” (ST I.91.3 ad 3).\(^ {23}\) In short, \textit{cognitio} is a state of soul in which the soul matches reality, and humans were made to attain it.

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\(^{18}\) “\textit{... cognoscentia a non cognoscentibus in hoc distinguuntur, quia non cognoscentia nihil habent nisi formam suam tantum; sed cognoscens natur est habere formam etiam rei alterius, nam species cogniti est in cognoscente.”

\(^{19}\) \textit{De anima} 2.12.424a17-20. On the assimilation of the soul to the thing, see also In Sent I.34.3.1 ad 4, In Sent I.35.1.1 ad 4, QDV 22.1 ad 2, ST I.78.3c.

\(^{20}\) ST I.17.3c. See also ST I.12.4c, I.76.2 ad 4, I.84.2 ad 2. See also MacDonald (1993: 160-162).

\(^{21}\) QDA 8.15c, Stump’s translation (2003: 232).

\(^{22}\) “The true is the good of the intellect, whence an understanding is called good because it cognizes the true.” (SCG I.71.4: “\textit{Verum est bonum intellectus: ex hoc enim aliquid intellectus dicitur bonus quod verum cognoscit.”} ”) “For the good of the intellect, and its natural end, is \textit{cognitio} of the truth” (SCG III.107.8: “\textit{Nam bonum intellectus, et eius finis naturalis est cognitio veritatis}”). In this Aquinas follows Aristotle’s \textit{Nicomachean Ethics}, book 6. See also In Sent III.23.2.3.3c, In Sent III.26.2.1c, QDV 18.6c, SCG I.1.4, SCG II.84.4, SCG III.25.10, ST I.94.4c, ST II-II.1.3 ad 1.
Aquinas thinks of the soul as being able to match reality in basically two ways: by grasping sensible forms, and by grasping intelligible ones. The goal of the intellect is true understanding, but humans are such that they cannot attain understanding except on the basis of what they come to know through the senses. Thus, on Aquinas’s account human cognitio has two natural stages. Roughly, the senses receive the sensible forms of material things, and then from these the intellect recognizes the essences or ‘quiddities’ of material substances and of their accidents. But in the material world these forms are found together in complexes – a human is not just a human, but also white, sunburnt, etc. – so to match complex realities the intellect must also be able to form its own complexes, in the form of propositions. And by the process of reasoning from these propositions, the intellect can then derive further true propositions.

At the level of the senses, cognitio is not conceptual or propositional, but purely objectual. Aquinas talks about cognoscendo tastes and colours, discerning them from other tastes and colours, the same way we talk about ‘knowing’ a shade of red or ‘knowing’ the taste of a mango. This is the kind of ‘knowledge’ Frank Jackson had in mind in his famous ‘knowledge argument’ for the existence of qualia (based on the idea that someone ‘learns’ something when she senses colours she had never sensed before). Thus cognitio, like knowledge, can be very broad. At the level of the senses, Aquinas implies that cognitio is veridical, that it is had only of forms as they actually are in reality. For

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23 “… sensus sunt dati homini non solum ad vitae necessaria procuranda, sicut aliis animalibus; sed etiam ad cognoscendum.”

24 The soul grasps sensible forms by means of bodily organs, but intellectual grasp of intelligible forms is not the function of any bodily organ (In DA 3.7). Aquinas says the similarity between sense and intellect is that each is a kind of cognoscere and is something like a passion (In DA 3.7.5). Elsewhere Aquinas distinguishes three grades of cognitio: at the bottom is sensory cognitio, whose object is the form of a material object, at the top is purely intellectual cognitio, like that of the angels, whose object is a purely intelligible form. The human intellect, Aquinas says, falls in between. Humans are made to know the forms of material things, but as abstracted from the individual (ST I.85.1c).

25 ST I.84.6c and 7c and 8c; ST I.85.3c.

26 QDV 1.3c, ST I.16.2c, ST I.85.5c.

27 ST I.79.8c, In PA I prol., QDV 15.1c.

28 ST I.78.4 ad 2, ST II-II.144.3c, In PA I.1.9.
example, he says that *cognitio* is grasping the form of something as it presently is (or remembering it as it was), on the basis of the following principle:

> Each thing is cognizable inasmuch as it is in act, for something is not cognized according as it is in potency, but according as it is in act, as is said in *Metaphysics* IX.\(^{29}\) (ST I.14.3c)

Aquinas also suggests the veridicality of *cognitio* when he says that the report of a character witness gains weight “because of *cognitio* of those about whom one’s testimony is, since each one judges well of what he cognizes” (ST II-II.144.3c).\(^{30}\) (I will give further passages in support of the veridicality of *cognitio* in section 4.1.2.)

What about propositional knowledge, which is after all the kind of knowledge epistemologists most care about? Aquinas discusses the difference between sensory *cognitio* and propositional *cognitio* while discussing the nature of truth:

> Since every thing is ‘true’ when it has its proper nature, it is necessary that the intellect, to the degree that it is cognizant [*cognoscens*], is true to the degree that it has a similitude of the thing cognized, which is [the intellect’s] form inasmuch as it is a cognizer [*cognoscens*]. And that is why truth is defined by conformity of intellect and thing. So to cognize that conformity is to cognize the truth. But sense in no way cognizes this, for although vision has a similitude of the visible [object], it does not cognize the relation between the thing seen and what it apprehends of it. But the intellect can cognize its conformity to the intelligible …\(^{31}\) (ST I.16.2c)

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\(^{29}\)“*Est enim unumquodque cognoscibile secundum modum sui actus, non enim cognoscitur aliquid secundum quod in potentia est, sed secundum quod est in actu, ut dicitur in IX Metaphys.*” See also ST I.87.1c, QDM 16.7c, In PH 1.14.19. This explains why the future can only be cognized to the degree that it is already present in its cause: “An effect, before it exists, cannot be cognized except in its cause, for only thus can it exist before it comes to exist in itself” (SCG I.63.5: “*Effectus autem, antequam sit, non potest nisi in sua causa cognosci: sic enim solum esse potest antequam in se esse incipiat.*”).

\(^{30}\)“… propter cognitionem eorum de quibus est testimonium, quia unusquisque bene iudicat quae cognoscit.”

\(^{31}\)“*Cum autem omnis res sit vera secundum quod habet propriam formam naturae suae, necesse est quod intellectus, inquantum est cognoscens, sit verus inquantum habet similitudinem rei cognitae, quae est forma eius inquantum est cognoscens. Et propter hoc per conformitatem intellectus et rei veritas definitur. Unde conformitatem istam cognoscere, est cognoscere veritatem. Hanc autem nullo modo sensus cognoscit, licet enim visus habeat*
Here Aquinas distinguishes between the objectual \textit{cognitio} of colours, tastes, etc., had by the senses, and the propositional \textit{cognitio} had by the intellect, of a thing and its form. Aquinas goes on to distinguish this also from the intellect’s objectual \textit{cognitio} of forms or quiddities. When the intellect cognizes its conformity to the intelligible it does not apprehend it the way it cognizes the quiddity of something, but judges the thing to have the form it apprehends, and then in the primary sense it cognizes and ‘speaks truth’ [\textit{dicit verum}]. And this it does compounding and dividing, for in every proposition it either applies or removes some form (signified by the predicate), to or from some thing (signified by the subject). So while the senses are ‘true’ of some thing, as is the intellect in cognizing the quiddity, they do not cognize or say the truth. … For the ‘truth’ can be in the senses, or in the intellect cognizing the quiddity, the way a thing is ‘true’, but not as cognized in someone cognizant [\textit{cognitum in cognoscente}], which is what ‘truth’ implies. For the perfection of the intellect is the truth as cognized.\footnote{32 See Williamson (2000: 34ff). Williamson’s view is based to some degree on the linguistics literature about factive words. But Williamson and other epistemologists are concerned with factive \textit{mental states}, whereas linguists talk about the factive use of \textit{words}. The factivity of the word ‘know’ depends to some degree on context and} (ST I.16.2c)

Here \textit{cognitio} in the primary sense is grasp of the truth, that is, the match between thing and mind. This suggests that propositional \textit{cognitio} is veridical. Since it is aimed at truths, being veridical would make \textit{cognitio} factive. (In contemporary epistemology, a factive mental state is one necessarily had only to truths.\footnote{33 See Williamson (2000: 34ff). Williamson’s view is based to some degree on the linguistics literature about factive words. But Williamson and other epistemologists are concerned with factive \textit{mental states}, whereas linguists talk about the factive use of \textit{words}. The factivity of the word ‘know’ depends to some degree on context and}) But is propositional \textit{cognitio} factive?

\textit{similitudinem visibilis, non tamen cognoscit comparationem quae est inter rem visam et id quod ipse apprehendit de ea. Intellectus autem conformitatem sui ad rem intelligibilem cognoscere potest...”}\footnote{32 “… sed tamen non apprehendit eam secundum quod cognoscit de aliquo quod quid est; sed quando indicat rem ita se habere sicut est forma quam de re apprehendit, tunc primo cognoscit et dicit verum. Et hoc facit componendo et dividendo, nam in omni propositione aliquam formam significatam per praedicatum, vel applicat alicui rei significatae per subiectum, vel removet ab ea. Et ideo bene inventur quod sensus est verus de aliquo re, vel intellectus cognoscendo quod quid est, sed non quod cognoscat aut dicat verum. Et similiter est de vocibus complexis aut incomplexis. Veritas quidem igitur potest esse in sensu, vel in intellectu cognoscente quod quid est, ut in quadam re vera, non autem ut cognitum in cognoscente, quod importat nomen veri; perfectio enim intellectus est verum ut cognitum. Et ideo, proprie loquendo, veritas est in intellectu componente et dividente, non autem in sensu, neque in intellectu cognoscente quod quid est.”}
Aquinas is explicit that it is in at least two places. First, one of his arguments about future contingencies turns on the claim that “all cognitio is of some truth”\textsuperscript{34}. Second, he argues against a Manichean interpretation of one of Paul’s letters by appealing to the fact that ‘cognovimus’ is factive:

No one says that we ‘know’ (novimus) falsehoods, but that we ‘opine’ them. So when the apostle here uses this word ‘cognovimus’, it seems that he never thought [his claim] was false.\textsuperscript{35}

Aquinas gives further evidence that cognitio is veridical in a surprisingly skeptical passage, meant to support the idea that knowledge is not innate:

Deception seems more proper to animals than cognitio, in accordance with their natural condition. For we see that humans can deceive themselves and err, but that to cognize the truth they must be taught by others. Again, the soul is in deception more than in cognitio of the truth, for it barely arrives at cognitio of the truth after lengthy study. And this is an efficacious argument against the old philosophers who posited that cognitio is in the soul by nature, as if from its very constitution it had not only a potential for cognizables, but that it were actually cognizing.\textsuperscript{36} (In DA 3.4.10)

\textsuperscript{34} QDM 16.7c: “[S]ince all knowledge is of some truth [omnis cognitio sit alicuius veri], it is impossible that some knowledge [cognitio] with respect to future things as future would know [cognoscat] them in themselves.” (“… cum omnis cognitio sit alicuius veri, impossibile est quod aliqua cognitio respiciens futura in ratione futuri, cognoscat ea in seipsis.”)

\textsuperscript{35} In II Cor, 5.4 (reportatio): “Primo quia de eo, quod falso putamus, nullus dicit novimus, sed opinamur. Cum ergo apostolus utatur hic hoc verbo cognovimus, videtur quod non aliquando falso putaverit.” The passage from St. Paul is “… and if we knew Christ according to the flesh, but now we don’t…”. The Manichean paraphrase of this passage is “we were once of the opinion that Christ had flesh, but we no longer believe so.” Aquinas’s reply is that ‘cognovimus’ is factive, so cannot mean merely “we were of the opinion that…”.

\textsuperscript{36} “deceptio videtur esse magis propria animalibus quam cognitio secundum conditionem suae naturae. Videmus enim quod homines ex seipsis decipi possunt et errare. Ad hoc autem quod veritatem cognoscant, oportet quod ab aliis doceantur. Et iterum pluri tempore anima est in deceptione quam in cognitione veritatis; quia ad cognitionem veritatis vix pervenitur post studium longi temporis. Et haec quidem ratio efficax est contra antiquos philosophos, qui ponebant cognitionem inesse animae ex sui natura, quasi anima ex hoc quod constituta est ex principiis, habeat quod non solum sit in potentia ad cognoscibilia, sed quod sit actu cognoscens.”
Two elements in this passage suggest that *cognitio* is veridical: the difficulty of acquiring it, and the contrast with deception. Elsewhere Aquinas contrasts *cognitio* with error. And the difficulty of acquiring *cognitio* is a common theme for Aquinas when he talks about the need for divine faith. If human reason were left to discover the truth about God on its own, “few humans would have *cognitio* of God” (SCG I.4.3) due to various practical impediments, and even those few would have it imperfectly. Divine faith enables humans to share in God’s *cognitio* on this topic so important for their salvation (SCG I.4.6). In short, there are a number of indications that propositional *cognitio* is factive.

Taking all these points together, we can define Aquinas’s notion of *cognitio* thus: *cognitio* is grasping, by one’s natural ability, the form of something else as it is. Put a bit more carefully, we can say that *cognitio* is being caused by X to take on the form of X, due to the use of one’s own faculty naturally aimed at correspondence of that kind. This definition gives us good *prima facie* reason to think that propositional *cognitio* is propositional knowledge. After all, if one has *cognitio* by assenting to some proposition, then that proposition is true, and one’s grasp of it is had by means of a natural power aimed at grasping its truth, which was designed to aim at that truth. When Aquinas says that someone *cognoscit* some proposition, it looks like that the person can rely on that proposition being true. Before considering some objections, let’s consider in some more detail the evidence that *cognitio* is knowledge.

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37 In Job 12: “There are two kinds of error in action. One is from ignorance, to which he [Job] refers by saying ‘they feel their way in darkness, not in light’, designating ignorance by ‘darkness’ and *cognitio* by ‘light’. … The other error is on account of passions by which reason is joined to particulars such that it doesn’t apply its universal *cognitio* to acting ….” (“Contingit autem aliquem errare in agendis dupliciter: uno modo per ignorantiam, et quantum ad hoc dicit palpabunt in tenebris et non in luce, ut per tenebras ignorantia, per lucem cognitio designetur. … Alio modo errant aliqui in agendis propter passiones, quibus eorum ratio ligatur circa particularia ut ne universalem cognitionem applicet ad agenda….”). See also In Sent IV.30.1.1c and SCG III.118.4.

38 See also In Sent prol. 1.1c, In BDT 3.1c, QDV 14.10c, ST I.1.1c, ST II-II.2.3 ad 1, ST II-II.2.4c.

39 I add “aimed at” to rule out accidental but natural correspondences, for example, if as the result of a brain lesion someone thought a true proposition. The idea seems to be present in the passages under discussion. This makes Aquinas’s account of *cognitio* similar to John Greco’s definition of knowledge as “a kind of success from ability” (2010: 3). For other accounts of Aquinas on cognition, see MacDonald (1993: 160ff), Stump (2002: chapter 8), Pasnau (1997: 14ff), Pasnau (2002), O’Callaghan (2002) and Moser (2011).
4.1.2 Cognitio’s factivity

A mental state is factive if and only if, necessarily, one has it only to truths. Knowledge is factive, for one cannot know falsehoods. Timothy Williamson has proposed that knowledge is the most general factive mental state, since being in any other factive state (e.g. seeing that \( p \)) entails being in a state of knowing that \( p \).\(^{40}\)

For decades philosophers have thought that some mental state might be knowledge if it ‘passes the Gettier test’ in the sense that by being in that state one has a justified true belief, but it is not just an accident that one’s belief is both true and justified.\(^{41}\) Factive mental states do pass the Gettier test. For example, in a standard Gettier case in which Smith looks at a sheep-shaped rock on a hill and thereby thinks that there is a sheep on the hill even though he doesn’t see the only sheep on the hill (hiding just behind the rock), Smith’s mental state is not factive; but when from another angle Jones sees the sheep hiding behind the rock, and thereby recognizes (or senses or sees or understands or apprehends or discerns or grasps or perceives or realizes or comprehends) that there is a sheep on the hill, his mental state is factive.\(^{42}\) We would ordinarily say that if Jones is in one of these factive states, then Jones knows that there is a sheep behind the rock.

Since propositional cognitio is factive, this is strong *prima facie* evidence that cognitio is knowledge, or at least plays the role assigned to knowledge in most contemporary epistemology. Some would prefer to think of knowledge much more narrowly as “the supreme cognitive achievement”.\(^{43}\) Some philosophers in the English tradition have been on this ‘rigorist’ side: for example, John Locke in his *Essay* says that “knowledge” is “had only of visible certain truth” (IV.xx.1) and says that the only sources of knowledge are intuition, demonstration and sensation.

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\(^{40}\) This is just a very quick summary of his view. See Williamson (2000: 34ff)

\(^{41}\) Gettier (1963) famously argued that knowledge cannot be analyzed as justified true belief.

\(^{42}\) This Gettier case is adapted from Cohen (1999: 297, 300).

\(^{43}\) “The basis for the comparability of ancient and contemporary views,” says Lloyd Gerson, “is that all parties take knowledge to be the supreme cognitive achievement” (2009: 12). He adds that another point of comparison is the way ancient and contemporary views respond to skepticism.
Others have been more ‘lenient’: Hobbes’s English-language Leviathan uses ‘knowledge’ where the Latin-language Leviathan says ‘cognitio’, and his English uses ‘science’ for Latin ‘scientia’. Timothy Williamson and many other contemporary philosophers are on the ‘lenient’ side. Williamson would of course file the supreme cognitive achievement, whatever that is (provided it is factive), under the category of knowledge, but he presents his theory as a broad account of all kinds of knowledge, including testimonial knowledge (2000: 257, 264). Aquinas’s account of cognitio is similarly broad. As we will see, it includes the very demanding case of demonstrative scientia, but also includes knowledge of particular contingencies. So Aquinas’s theory of cognitio is the appropriate point of comparison with contemporary theories of knowledge.

4.1.3 Cognitio’s epistemic force

Further evidence that cognitio is knowledge comes from the way Aquinas uses it with epistemic force. We can consider in a descriptive or merely psychological way what someone thinks, or we can consider in an epistemically normative way what she ought to think. If her thoughts about $p$ do not meet the standard for knowledge of $p$, she cannot know that $p$. Aquinas mentions various cases in which one cannot cognoscere some $p$ in spite of the fact that one could easily think about it, or even have a justified belief about it.

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44 I get the terms ‘rigorist’ and ‘lenient’ from Zagzebski (1999: 97). She says that leniency is fairly recent, and there is “a long line of rigorist accounts starting with that of Plato in the Phaedo and the Republic.” But how rigorist we think a speaker is on knowledge depends in part on which terms we translate as ‘knowledge’. See Burnyeat (1980) and Burnyeat (1981) for the view that what is of most concern to Plato and Aristotle in their discussions of epistêmê is not knowledge, but something akin to understanding.

45 See, for example, Leviathan part I, chap. 7, which starts, in English: “Of all Discourse, governed by desire of Knowledge, there is at last an End, either by attaining, or by giving over” and in Latin “Omnis discursus, si a cupiditate cognitionis gubernetur, vel in aedepionte terminatur vel in rejectione.” Later in the chapter he says “For, as for the knowledge of Fact, it is originally, Sense; and ever after, Memory. And for the knowledge of Consequence, which I have said before is called Science, it is not Absolute, but Conditionall” where in Latin he says “Nam cognitio facti originaliter sensio est, et deinde memoria. Et cognitio consequentiarum, quae, ut ante dixi, scientia appellatur, scientia absoluta non est, sed tantum conditionalis.” See also part I, chap. 9.
Two of these cases are based on the principle that something is not *cognoscible* except insofar as it is in act. 46 First, a future particular contingency, E, does not presently exist “in itself”, but only potentially, “in its cause”, so only God can directly *cognoscere* whether E will obtain just by considering E “in itself”, which He does by considering Himself as the cause of all things. Humans cannot *cognoscere* E “in itself” but only “in its cause”:

[I]nasmuch as future things exist in their causes, they can be known [*cognosci possunt*] even by us. And if they are in their causes such that they come about necessarily, they are known [*cognoscuntur*] with the certainty of science [*scientiae*], as an astronomer foreknows [*praeagnoscit*] a future eclipse. But if they exist in their causes such that they come about most of the time [*ut in pluribus*], they can thereby be known [*cognosci*] by an inference more or less certain, depending on whether the causes are more or less inclined to the effect.47 (ST I.86.4c)

Clearly someone who doesn’t know the cause of E could think about whether it will obtain, but, according to Aquinas, she cannot *cognoscere* whether or not E will obtain. In Aquinas’s terms, the person who doesn’t know the cause of E can cogitate (*cogitare*) or consider (*considerare*) whether E will obtain in the future, but cannot *cognoscere* that it will. Here is his explanation of what it means to ‘cogitate’:

‘Cogitate’ has three senses. (i) The common sense is, any actual consideration of the intellect, as when Augustine says in *De trinitate* 14 “I mean the understanding by which we understand while cogitating”. More properly, cogitation is the

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46 “Each thing is cognoscible inasmuch as it is in act [*secundum quod est in actu*] and not inasmuch as it is in potency, as is said in *Metaphysics* book 9, for as something is being and true [*sic enim aliquid est ens et verum*] it falls under knowledge, inasmuch as it is in act. And this is clear in sensible things, for vision does not perceive something potentially coloured, but only coloured in act. And similarly … that is why [the intellect] does not know prime matter except in proportion to form, as is said in *Physics* book 1” (ST I.87.1c; cf. QDM 16.7c). In memory, the intellect knows that a particular *was* in act in the past, by referring either to species of the thing in sensitive memory (when something is known as past) or intellectual species in the intellect (e.g., when some universally true proposition is remembered) (ST I.79.6).

47 “*Sed prout sunt in suis causis, cognosco possunt etiam a nobis. Et si quidem in suis causis sint ut ex quibus ex necessitate proveniant, cognoscuntur per certitudinem scientiae; sicut astrologus praeagnoscit eclipsim futuram. Si autem sic sint in suis causis ut ab eis proveniant ut in pluribus, sic cognosco possunt per quandum coniecturam vel magis vel minus certam, secundum quod causae sunt vel magis vel minus inclinatae ad effectus.*” See also In Sent II.7.2.2c; QDV 8.12c and ad 3; QDV 12.10c; SCG I.63.5; ST I.57.3c; QDM 16.7c. See Appendix A on *scientia* of *ut in pluribus* universal claims.
consideration of the intellect with some inquiry, before arriving at the perfection of understanding through the certitude of vision, as when Augustine says in De trinitate 15 that “God’s Son is not called the cogitation of God, but the word of God. When our cogitation finally arrives at knowledge, and so fully formed, it is our ‘true word’. Thus ‘Word of God’ should be understood without cogitation, having nothing formable that could be unformed.” So more properly cogitation is the movement of a deliberating mind [animi] not yet perfected by full vision of the truth. But since such movement can be in a mind deliberating about universal intentions, which pertains to the intellective part, or particular intentions, which pertain to the sensitive part, (ii) ‘cogitate’ in the second sense is the act of a deliberating intellect, and (iii) in the third sense is the act of the cogitative power. 48 (ST II-II.2.1c)

The immediate relevance of this passage is that it gives us a term in Aquinas (‘cogitatio’) for the mere psychological consideration of some object or proposition which need not have any epistemic force. At the end, Aquinas also mentions the cogitative power, which later I will argue is the part of the soul Aquinas takes to be crucial for enabling a human to know propositions about particulars and contingencies.

Second, a human cannot cognoscere the existence of her own mental habits (e.g., knowledge, love, etc.) except indirectly, by noticing that one has performed an act proper to such a habit.

48 “[C]ogitare tripliciter sumi potest. Uno modo, communiter pro qualibet actuali consideratione intellectus, sicut Augustinus dicit, in XIV de Trin., hanc nunc dico intelligi tiam qua intelligimus cogitantes. Alio modo dicitur cogitare magis proprie consideratio intellectus quae est cum quadam inquisitione, antequam perveniatur ad perfectionem intellectus per certitudinem visionis. Et secundum hoc Augustinus, XV de Trin., dicit quod Dei filius non cogitatio dicatur, sed verbum Dei dicitur. Cogitatio quippe nostra proveniens ad id quod scimus atque inde formata verbum nostrum verum est. Et ideo verbum Dei sine cogitazione debet intelligi, non aliquid habens formabile, quod possit esse informe. Et secundum hoc cogitatio proprie dicitur motus animi deliberantis nondum perfecti per plenam visionem veritatis. Sed quia talis motus potest esse vel animi deliberantis circa intentiones universales, quod pertinet ad intellectivam partem; vel circa intentiones particulares, quod pertinet ad partem sensitivam, ideo cogitare secundo modo sumitur pro actu intellectus deliberantis; tertio modo, pro actu virtutis cogitativae.”
For inasmuch as a habit falls short of perfect act, it falls short of being knowable through itself (per seipsum cognoscibilis), but it is necessary that it be known (cognoscatur) through its act …

(ST I.87.2c)

To cognoscere the essence of either one’s mind or one’s mental habits is even more difficult, and cannot be done except by careful study of their proper acts.

Aquinas also says it is impossible to have explanatory knowledge (cognoscere propter quid) of some p without knowing ‘that’ p is the case (cognoscere quia).

Sometimes we have ‘that’ [quia] in our cognitione, and we seek the ‘why’ [propter quid]; but sometimes both are clear to us at the same time. The third [possibility], that someone know [cognoscat] the ‘why’ about some thing before [knowing] ‘that’, is impossible.

Clearly one can think about the possible explanations for some p without considering whether it is the case. But one cannot cognoscere the explanation for p being the case, before having cognitio that it is the case.

In all these three cases (future particular contingencies, the nature of one’s habits and mind, and explanations) we can think p (or have a justified belief that p) even when, according to Aquinas, it is impossible to have cognitio of p. So it looks like cognitio in these passages is not merely psychological, but has some epistemic force. Many other passages give a similar appearance.

49 “Sic ergo inquantum habitus deficit ab actu perfecto, deficit ab hoc, ut non sit per seipsum cognoscibilis, sed necesse est quod per actum suum cognoscatur …”

50 ST I.87.1 ad 1, I.87.2c.

51 In PA II 7.5.

Aquinas mentions other cases which have nothing to do with the principle that cognitio is of the actual, where (justified) belief is possible but not cognitio. In this life we cannot “cognoscere what God is, except insofar as we know [cognoscimus] what He is not” (QDV 10.12 ad s.c. 7). One cannot affirm a proposition contrary to principles “naturaliter cognitis” (QQ 8.2.2c, cf. SCG I.7.2 and I.61.3). Angels and antelapsarian man “knew by a manifest knowledge [manifesta cognitione cognoverunt]” things that we “cannot know [cognoscere] except by believing [nisi credendo].” (ST II-II.5.1c; cf. 17.6c; In Joh 6.8) Aquinas affirms Augustine’s claim that “one cannot judge [what is] truthlike unless the truth is known [cognitum]” (In Sent II.3.2.1c). Some passages indicate high epistemic status.
This appearance is confirmed in a comment on Aristotle’s claim that all learning comes from prior knowledge:

The name[s] of ‘teaching’ and ‘learning’ pertain to the acquisition of knowledge \textit{[cognitionis]}. For teaching is the act of one who makes someone know \textit{[cognoscere]} something, while learning is the reception of knowledge \textit{[cognitionis]} from another. For ‘teaching’ and ‘learning’ are not taken here for the acquisition of \textit{scientia} alone, but for the acquisition of any knowledge \textit{[cognitionis cuiumcumque]}. This is clear because [Aristotle] shows his claim [is true] even in disputative and rhetorical disputation, through which one does not gain \textit{scientia}. Thus he doesn’t say ‘from pre-existing \textit{scientia}’ or ‘understanding’, but [from] ‘\textit{cognitio}’ in general. But he adds ‘intellective’ to exclude sensitive or imaginative reception of knowledge \textit{[cognitionis]}. For it belongs to reason alone to proceed from one thing to another [in learning].\textsuperscript{53} (In PA I.1.9)

Here teaching is defined as the act of bringing someone to \textit{cognoscere} something, and learning is the acquisition of \textit{cognitio}. Some learning is a matter of acquiring \textit{scientia}, but some is a matter of acquiring other kinds of \textit{cognitio}. And Aquinas’s final comment seems to identify

\textsuperscript{53} “\textit{Nomen autem doctrinae et disciplinae ad cognitionis acquisitionem pertinet. Nam doctrina est actio eius, qui aliquid cognoscere facit; disciplina autem est receptio cognitionis ab alio. Non autem accipitur hic doctrina et disciplina secundum quod se habent ad acquisitionem scientiae tantum, sed ad acquisitionem cognitionis cuiumcumque. Quod patet, quia manifestat hanc propositionem etiam in disputativis et rhetoricis disputationibus, per quas non acquiritur scientia. Propter quod etiam non dicit ex praeexistenti scientia vel intellectu, sed universaliter cognitione. Addit autem intellectiva ad excludendum acceptionem cognitionis sensitivae vel imaginativa. Nam procedere ex uno in aliud rationis est solum.” Aquinas makes a very similar statement in ST I.117.1c: “Anyone engaged in teaching leads the student from what he knows to knowledge of things he had not known, in accordance with \textit{Posterior Analytics} I, which says that all teaching and all learning comes about from preexistent knowledge. Now the teacher leads the student from prior knowledge to knowledge of things he didn’t know in two ways….” (“\textit{Unde et quilibet docens, ex his quae disciplus novit, ducit eum in cognitionem eorum quae ignorabat; secundum quod dicitur in I Poster., quod omnis doctrina et omnis disciplina ex praeexistenti fit cognitione. Ducit autem magister discipulum ex prae cognitis in cognitionem ignotorum, dupliciter. …”) See also In Sent II.9.1.2 ad 4 and ST II-II.171.6c.
“intellective cognitio” with propositional knowledge in general, since the point of identifying it as ‘intellective’ is just to exclude sensory and imagination cognitio.⁵⁴

What about propositions about contingencies and singulars? Are these known by “intellective cognitio”? Aquinas’s distinction between sense and intellect, with particulars and contingencies known by sense, and universal and necessary things known by the intellect, seems to leave no place for propositional knowledge of particulars or contingencies. But on closer inspection, we find that Aquinas recognizes an intermediate power in the soul, the ‘cogitative’ power, which in some ways straddles the two.⁵⁵

In brute animals, the analogous ‘estimative’ power recognizes ‘intentions’ that are not just sensible forms or collections of them. A mouse ‘estimates’ that a cat is dangerous, not by reacting directly to sensible forms, as it would if it were reacting out of pain, nor by considering cat natures in the abstract, which mice cannot do, but by responding to the cat under the ‘intention’ of it being dangerous. Similarly, a swallow ‘estimates’ that a bit of mud is good nest material, not because the mud has some attractive sensible form, but because it senses its usefulness.⁵⁶

In brutes such responses are by ‘natural instinct’, but humans are able to collect such intentions rationally, by a kind of ‘reasoning’.

The cogitative power is the highest in the sensitive part [of the soul], so in a way it reaches the intellective part, sharing that which is lowest in the intellect, namely discursive reason … . Thus the cogitative power is also called ‘particular reason’ … and it is only in humans, where it takes the place of the natural estimation of brutes.⁵⁷

(QDV 14.1 ad 9)

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⁵⁴ See also In DA III.4.15.
⁵⁵ See Barker (2012) and Black (2000) for helpful overviews of Aquinas’s account of the cogitative power, for the provenance of this idea, and for references to further literature on the topic. See Bérubé (1964: 45-63) for a critical discussion of Aquinas on cognitio of individuals, which puts his account in historical context and references more of the literature on the topic.
⁵⁶ These examples are from Barker (2012: 203-204).
⁵⁷ “[P]otentia cogitativa est id quod est altissimum in parte sensitiva, unde attingit quodammodo ad partem intellectivam ut aliquid participet eius quod est in intellectiva parte infimum, scilicet rationis discursum, secundum
So while it is the intellect’s job to cognize things as universals (under ‘universal intentions’) it is the job of the cogitative power to cognize them as particulars (under ‘particular intentions’):

Since, at the moment I see someone speaking or moving, I apprehend his life by my intellect, I can be said to see that he lives. But if he is apprehended in his singularity – as when I see something coloured – such apprehension comes about in the cogitative power, which is also called ‘particular reason’ because it coordinates individual intentions, just as universal reason coordinates universal reasons. But … [unlike the estimative], the cogitative power apprehends individuals as existing under a common nature, inasmuch as it is united to the person’s intellective power, whence it knows [cognoscit] this man as this man, and this wood as this wood. 58 (In DA 2.13.14,16; cf. ST I.78.4c.)

The cogitative power is able to reason about things, not just as particulars, but as tokens of a more general kind. The phrase ‘this wood’, gets reference to a particular with ‘this’ and reference to a common nature with ‘wood’.

Like the intellect, the cogitative power can form propositions and reason about them. For example, in practical reasoning the intellect provides universal premises (say, “Evil should not be done”) while the cogitative power provides premises about particulars (say, “Stealing this child’s lollipop would be evil”). 59 When Aquinas contrasts the cognitio that can be involved in reasoning with the cognitio of the senses and the imagination, he puts propositional cognitio of particulars on the side of reasoning, assigning it to ‘particular reason’, the cogitative power. So

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58 “Sicut statim cum video aliquem loquentem, vel movere seipsum, apprehendo per intellectum vitam eius, unde possim dicere quod video eum vivere. Si vero apprehendatur in singulari, utputa cum video coloratum, percipio hunc hominem vel hoc animal, huissusmodi quidem apprehensio in homine fit per vim cogitativam, quae dicitur etiam ratio particularis, eo quod est collativa intentionum individualium, sicut ratio universalis est collativa rationum universalium. … Differenter tamen circa hoc se habet cognitiva, et aestimativa. Nam cognitiva apprehendit individuum, ut existens sub natura communi; quod contingit ei, inquantum unitur intellectivae in eodem subiecto; unde cognoscit hunc hominem prout est hic homo, et hoc lignum prout est hoc lignum.”

59 ST II-II.49.2 ad 3, In NE 6.1.15. See also In NE 6.7 and In NE 6.9.
starting from our definition for *cognitio*, we can narrow it down to a definition for intellective or propositional *cognitio* thus: someone has intellective *cognitio* if and only if she grasps true propositions by means of a natural power aimed at such a grasp.

In passages where *cognitio* clearly has epistemic force, it would be misleading today to translate it as ‘cognition’. Granted, the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines ‘cognition’ as a philosophical term for “the action or faculty of knowing taken in its widest sense, including sensation, perception, conception, etc., as distinguished from feeling and volition.” But more recently psychologists and philosophers have tended to use the term without any epistemic force. For example, Jaegwon Kim (1988: 392-4) says a “cognizer” is someone who “forms representations and constructs theories”. And Alvin Goldman (1992: 97) goes so far as to say that by “cognitive events” he means “events within the organism’s nervous system.” The term ‘cognition’ has been broadened to include all kinds of thinking, whether veridical or not. Hallucinating that X exists is a case of having a ‘cognition’ of X, we might say, but it would not be a case of having *cognitio* of X, on Aquinas’s official view of what *cognitio* is, but rather *cogitatio* or *consideratio* of X. To have *cognitio* of X one must be, literally, *informed* by X. So it can be misleading to translate ‘*cognitio*’ as mere ‘cognition’.

### 4.1.4 Ordinary knowledge is *cognitio*

We typically think we know contingent facts. I know by my *senses* that it is raining, know by *memory* that it wasn’t raining yesterday, and come to know by inductive *inference* that it has rained one out of the last two days. Further, when I call my mother by phone I can know by *testimony* whether it is raining at my mother’s house. Aquinas says that we have *cognitio* of

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61 There are some exceptions among historical scholars. There are Thomists who take ‘cognition’ to mean a broad kind of knowledge (e.g., see Joseph Owens’s 1992 book *Cognition: an Epistemological Inquiry*, p. 4), just as there are Thomists who mean by ‘charity’ not just help for the poor, but a love of God. There are also scholars of ancient philosophy who use the term ‘cognition’ for the factive state of *katalēpsis*. Frede (1999: 298) says “A belief which is such that one holds the belief that something is the case precisely because it is the case, is guaranteed to be true. Hence we can call it a ‘cognition’.” He reserves the name ‘knowledge’ for *epistêmê*.

62 A hallucination would have to be mediated, however, by objectual *cognitio* of sensible and maybe intelligible quiddities.
such contingent facts. I’ll deal with testimony at the end of this chapter, and just briefly look at the first three now.

The intellect is properly concerned with universals, but “by a certain reflection [reflexionem], it can know [cognoscere] the singular” (ST I.86.1c). One way it reflects is by using the cogitative power to reason about particulars (QDV 10.5c, QDV 10.5 ad 2), although this is technically a part of the senses, not the intellect. Thus

contingencies qua contingent are known [cognoscuntur] directly by the senses, but indirectly by the intellect, while the universal and necessary natures of contingents are known [cognoscuntur] by the intellect.63 (ST I.86.3c)

Sensible particulars, such as human deeds and sayings “are such that they can be known to one human and unknown to others”, although the one who knows (cognoscit) one of these can tell others so they can treat them as known as well (In BDT 3.1c).64

Aquinas also thinks we have memory knowledge, both of universal truths not indexed to any time, and of something as past, when we cognoscere it “as here and now” (sub hic et nunc).65 But he assigns memory of particulars and past events to the ‘sensory’ rather than the ‘intellective’ power, except when the intellect remembers the past-ness (praeteritio) of its own past intellectual acts.66

Aquinas further thinks (as mentioned above) that we have inductive knowledge of future particular contingencies. Craftsmen get this kind of knowledge from experience, and can then pass on “the things they know by experience [ea quae experimento cognoscunt]” to others.67 For

63 “Sic igitur contingentia, prout sunt contingentia, cognoscuntur directe quidem sensu, indirecte autem ab intellectu, rationes autem universales et necessariae contingentium cognoscuntur per intellectum.”
64 In BDT 3.1c, quoted in chapter 3, pp. 120-121, and also below, p. 196.
65 ST I.79.6 obj 2 and ad 2. Cf. ST I.79.6c.
66 ST I.79.6 ad 2
67 In MP I.1.29.
example, a physician has a kind of *cognitio* by which he can accurately predict health or death from specific signs “through temporal experience, according to which such signs have most often correlated with such effects” (In Sent II.7.2.1c). It seems then, from the way he talks about knowing things as present, past or future, that Aquinas’s theory of how we know contingencies and particulars is a theory of *cognitio*.

In section 4.1, I have outlined Aquinas’s account of *cognitio* and pointed to various aspects of it (factivity, epistemic force, and various cases of *cognitio* that look like knowledge) which make a strong *prima facie* case that Aquinas’s theory of *cognitio* is a theory of knowledge. But does this case hold up under fire? Let’s consider a few objections.

### 4.2 Objections

Scott MacDonald gives an admirably clear account of *cognitio* to which I am indebted. And he says that “the general view of cognition sketched here identifies a space in [Aquinas’s] framework corresponding to our notion of knowledge” (1993: 162). But he goes on to state two reasons for denying that *cognitio* is knowledge:

Cognition, Aquinas’s basic epistemic concept, is clearly not itself knowledge, for he allows that we can have false cognition. Moreover, he seems to allow not only that our relatively sophisticated conceptual and propositional assimilation of reality can constitute cognition but that our more primitive sorts of assimilation – our possession of raw sensory data, for example – can constitute cognition as well. On Aquinas’s account, then, cognition is broader than knowledge. (1993: 162)

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68 *Quaedam vero sunt quorum cognitio per naturam haberi potest; et hoc dupliciter: vel per causas determinatas ad effectus naturales ... vel per aliqua signa, ex quibus ut in pluribus potest alicujus cognitio haberi, sicut medici prognosticantur de sanitate vel de morte; et talia cognoscunt per experientiam temporum, secundum quod talibus signis pluries tales effectus concurrerunt.” See also ST I.57.3c
These are the two basic objections to the interpretation I have developed. I think there is less to them than at first appears.

4.2.1 False Cognitio

Aquinas uses the phrase ‘falsa cognitio’ or something analogous in at least nine passages, so at first glance it looks like he thinks there is cognitio of falsehoods, which would make cognitio non-factive and so not knowledge. However, Aquinas also talks about ‘falsa scientia’, and no one would deny that scientia is for Aquinas some kind of knowledge. What I will do is suggest two plausible ways to interpret the ‘falsa scientia’ passages, such that scientia is still a kind of knowledge, and then apply the same two ways to explain the ‘falsa cognitio’ passages, such that cognitio is still knowledge.

First, ‘false scientia’ may refer to fake scientia, something that looks like scientia but isn’t. Having false scientia is like having a false identity, false humility, or false teeth. Aquinas comments on a passage where St. Paul warns against anti-faith arguments thus:

[St. Paul] says “and the oppositions of scientia falsely so-called” because it is not true scientia, but apparent. For scientia in the proper sense is of nothing but truths. (In 1 Tim 6.4)

Likewise, most cases of ‘false cognitio’ in Aquinas can be read as ‘fake cognitio’. For example, in a discussion of the value of a good reputation, Aquinas says

69 QDV. 2.2 ad 9, 2.12c; ST I.17.2c and 3c; In DA III.12.15 and 13.7; ST I-II.2.3 ad 2; In Joh. 4.2 and ST II-II.10.3c. Aquinas also seems to use ‘cognoscere’ to mean ‘recognise’ or ‘admit’ in a non-factive sense in one passage (In Sent IV.21.2.3 ad 1) where he describes someone who “recognises (cognoscat) that she has committed some act which she did not commit”.

70 MacDonald (1993: 160), Pasnau (1997: 12), Jenkins (1997: 16), Stump (2003: 521 n. 38), Pickavé (2012: 311). One sed contra style reply to this objection is that Aquinas says we should only attribute perfections to God (ST I.13.3c) and yet Aquinas frequently talks about the ‘cognitio’ of God (SCG I.50; ST I.14.1; etc.), so cognitio must be a perfection, and so must not be something one can have toward falsehoods.

71 “Et dicit ’et oppositiones scientiae falsi nominis’, quia non est vera scientia, sed apparent. Scientia enim secundum propriam rationem non est nisi verorum.”
The good of a person which by fame or glory is in the knowledge \([\textit{cognitione}]\) of the many, if the knowledge is true, must derive from the good existing in that person ….

But if it is false knowledge \((\textit{cognitio falsa sit})\), it does not agree with reality, and so the good is not found in him whose fame is widespread.\(^73\) (ST I-II.2.3 ad 2)

It is plausible to read this passage as saying that when many people have an unfounded good opinion of someone, they do not have knowledge \((\textit{cognitio})\) at all: they merely appear to.

The second way to explain ‘false \textit{scientia}’ passages is more complicated. Some processes are named by a success term, even when not successful. For instance, ‘evacuation’ means ‘removal from danger’, but one can still say “the evacuation failed”, meaning that the attempt to remove people from danger failed. Similarly, ‘proof’ is a success term; if one has a proof of \(p\), then \(p\) is true. Nevertheless, it is felicitous to say “There was an error in Frege’s proof”, meaning that Frege attempted to produce a proof but failed. ‘\textit{Scientia}’ is also a success term, but occasionally Aquinas seems to use ‘false \textit{scientia}’ to refer to the result of a process that would have been \textit{scientia} if it had not failed by resulting in adherence to a false proposition.

One uses one’s intellect rightly according to \textit{scientia}, which is of speculative and necessary truths, or according to prudence … or according to true opinion … . One uses one’s intellect not rightly according to their contraries, i.e., according to false \textit{scientia}, imprudence, and false opinion.\(^74\) (In DA III.4.16)

Imprudence is not necessarily a case of fake prudence, since it need not be presented as prudence; and false opinion is not necessarily \textit{apparently} true, even if the process which produced it was aiming at truth. So these cases of ‘false’ propositional attitudes are not fakes.

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\(^72\) I would apply this reading to: QDV 2.2 ad 9; ST I.17.2 and 17.3; In DA III.12.15; In Joh 4.2; ST I-II.2.3 ad 2; ST II-II.10.3c. But some of these are ambiguous and may be better explained in the second way.

\(^73\) "…\textit{bonum aliquius hominis quod per famam vel gloriam est in cognitione multorum, si cognitio quidem vera sit, oportet quod derivetur a bono existente in ipso homine, et sic praesupponit beatitudinem perfectam vel inchoatam. Si autem cognitio falsa sit, non concordat rei, et sic bonum non inventur in eo cuius fama celebris habetur.}"\(^74\) "Recte quidem contingit intelligere secundum \textit{scientiam}, quae est speculabilium et necessariorum, vel secundum prudentiam, … vel secundum opinionem veram, …. Non recte autem contingit intelligere, secundum eorum contraria, idest secundum falsam \textit{scientiam}, et secundum imprudentiam et secundum opinionem falsam."
but misfires. Presumably false *scientia* is similar. No one need have intended it to appear to be *scientia*, it simply failed to be *scientia*. In general one might say that such ‘false *scientia*’ refers to something that is not the success of *scientia*, but saliently resembles it. Hence Aquinas also uses ‘false *scientia*’ to describe mistakes he denies God would make: if, *per impossibile*, God were to foreknow something false, he would have “*falsa scientia*”.75

The import of all this for us is that if there are passages where ‘false cognitio’ does not just mean ‘fake cognitio’, perhaps those passages use the success term ‘cognitio’ to refer to the failure of a process aimed at *cognitio*.76 Commenting on Aristotle’s obscure claim that “true and false knowledge [*cognitio*]” whether practical or speculative, “is in the same genus, whether good or bad”, Aquinas says that either this means that the objects known are sometimes good and sometimes bad, or else “that true knowledge [*cognitio vera*] is a certain good of the intellect … and false knowledge [*cognitio falsa*] is a certain bad of the intellect” (In DA III.12.15).77 The idea seems to be that the processes which normally result in *cognitio* were engaged, but for whatever reason no *cognitio* happened. Aquinas says that “false opinion is a kind of defective operation of the intellect, just as monstrous births are defective operations of nature, which is why Aristotle says in *Ethics* book 6 that the false is the bad of the intellect’ (QDM 16.6c)78

Perhaps the most difficult passage to explain on my interpretation is from *De Veritate* 2.12c:

75 “… for God does not know that the contingent effect is determined in its cause; it would be false *scientia*, since it is not determined in its cause.” (In Sent I.38.1.5 ad 5) “It cannot be that God foreknow that someone dies at a certain time, and that he die at another time. Otherwise God’s *scientia* would be deceived.” (*Ad Bernardum*)

76 Something similar can be said about In PA I.27.2, where Aquinas distinguishes between ignorance as the absence of knowledge, and ignorance as “a disposition to know, but a corrupt one (*dispositionem in cognoscendo, sed corruptam*); namely, when one believes something false about some thing … And this [type of] ignorance is the same as error.” Aquinas does not quite say that any *cognitio* is false, here, but he does point to the possibility of a cognoscentive process resulting in error.

77 “Alio modo potest intelligi, quod ipsa cognitio vera est quoddam bonum intellectus sive speculativi sive practici. Et ipsa cognitio falsa est quoddam malum intellectus, sive speculativi sive practici.”

78 “Dicendum quod falsa opinio est quaedam defectiva operatio intellectus, sicut partus monstruosus est quaedam defectiva operatio naturae: unde philosophus dicit in VI Ethic., quod malum intellectus est falsum. Defectiva autem operatio semper procedit ex defectu alicuius principii, sicut ex alicuio defectu seminis procedit monstruositas partus, ut dicitur in II Physic. Unde necesse est quod omnis falsa aestimatio procedat ex defectu alicuius principii cognoscendi; sicut in nobis falsa opinio accidit plerumque ex indebita ratiocinatione. Nihil autem potest deficere quantum ad id ad quod semper est in actu secundum suam naturam; sed in eo alicuius deficere potest respectu cuius est in potentia: nam id quod est in potentia, potest subiici et perfectioni et privationi.”
[T]here are some cognoscitive powers and habits in us in which falsity cannot be
(such as the senses, and scientia, and intellection of principles) and some in which
something false can be (such as imagination, opinion, and estimation). Falsity occurs
in some cognitione, when something is not in reality as it is apprehended. Thus if
some cognoscitive power is such that falsity is never in it, its object [cognoscibile]
must never fall short of that which the cognizer apprehends of it.79

(Ignore for the moment the oddity of Aquinas saying that the senses and intellection of principles
cannot go wrong; he means that they cannot go wrong with regard to their proper objects, and
that’s not as odd as it sounds.80) Here Aquinas points out that among the dispositions and
faculties that contribute to our grasp of the truth (our ‘cognoscitive’ powers) some are fallible.
On my interpretation, that means that sometimes they produce knowledge (cognitio) and
sometimes they do not. So when Aquinas says “Falsity occurs in some cognitione when
something is not in reality as it is apprehended”, he uses the success term ‘cognitio’ to refer to
failed attempts at cognitio. Consider an analogous sentence with the success term ‘see that’:
“Falsity occurs in seeing that p when something is not in reality as it is seen.” Or consider an
analogous evacuation case: “People are left in danger, in some evacuation, when the people are
not removed.” These sound felicitous to me, in spite of ‘evacuation’ and ‘see that’ being success
terms. Even if some processes which typically produce knowledge go wrong, knowledge itself is
still factive.81

To sum up, my interpretations of these ‘false cognitio’ passages are not indisputable. But
it does seem that any plausible way to interpret the ‘false scientia’ passages will work just as

79 “…in nobis sunt quaedam potentiae et habitus cognoscitivi in quibus nunquam falsitas esse potest, sicut sensus, et
scientia, et intellectus principiorum; quidam vero in quibus potest esse falsum, sicut imaginatio, et opinio, et
extimatio. Ex hoc autem falsitas accidit in aliqua cognitione, quod non est ita in re sicut apprehenditur; unde si
aliaqua vis cognoscitiva est talis quod nunquam in ea est falsitas, oportet quod suum cognoscibile nunquam deficiat
ab eo quod de ipso cognoscens apprehendit.”

80 See ST I.17.2c and ST I.17.3c. Jenkins (1997: chap. 4) discusses this issue.

81 A less simple solution would be to say that cognitio has two meanings, one factive and one not. ‘Intellectus’ is
like this. Obviously the intellect can go wrong, but Aquinas also uses ‘intellectus’ as the cognate noun for
‘intelligere’, a factive mental state.
well for the ‘false cognitio’ passages, and this is enough to undermine the first objection. If we take cognitio to be knowledge, the benefit is that we can finde in Aquinas a single unified view, with a technical term for knowledge. But if someone is inclined to say that cognitio, like many of Aquinas’s other important technical terms, has many senses, and that in some of the ‘false cognitio’ passages cognitio is merely psychological and not epistemological my main point still stands, since in many passages it is clear that he does intend cognitio factively – for instance, when he uses it interchangeably with scientia.

4.2.2 Cognitio seems too low-level

Aquinas includes even such low-level processes as imagination and the possession of “raw sensory data” under cognitio, which means that even brute animals have cognitio, and this suggests that cognitio is broader than knowledge.

This objection, it seems to me, is not to the point. My main concern has been to show that propositional cognitio is propositional knowledge. We do talk about ‘knowing’ our colours, ‘knowing’ our friends, etc., and Aquinas similarly talks about non-propositional cognitio of

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82 One might think that Aquinas recognizes such a broad use of ‘cognitio’ in In Sent I.17.1.4 ad 4: “[T]he soul itself, and its powers and habits, we do not know [non cognoscimus] except by their acts, which are known by their objects – unless we wish to speak broadly of cognitio, as Augustine does, as when he says that to understand is nothing other than [for something] to be presently before the intellect in any way.” (“Et ideo ipsam animam et potentias ejus et habitus ejus non cognoscimus nisi per actus, qui cognoscantur per objecta. Nisi largo modo velimus loqui de cognitione, ut Augustinus loquitur, secundum quod intelligere nihil aliud est quam praesentialiter intellectui quocumque modo adesse.”)

83 For example, Aquinas’s Summa Theologiae treatise on the scientia of God (ST I.14) is a version of his treatise on the cognitio of God (SCG I.48-71; see esp. SCG I.64.1), and frequently answers questions of the form “Does God have scientia of X?” with replies of the form “Yes, He does cognoscere X” (e.g., ST I.14.10c). Aquinas even says that ‘scientia’ can be broadly used to mean human intellective cognitio: “Some created scientia belongs to the nature of the human soul, namely, that by which we naturally know the first principles, for here we take ‘scientia’ broadly for any cognitione of the human intellect.” (ST III.9.1c: “… aliqua scientia creat a pertinet ad animae humanae naturam, scilicet illa per quam naturaliter cognoscamus prima principia, scientiam enim hic large accipimus pro qualibet cognitione intellectus humani.”) Aquinas also says “All cognitio is by assimilation of the knower (cognoscens) to the known (scitum)” (QDV 8.5c cf. In BDT 3.1c, In Phys. I.1.5, In DC I prol. 1, In NE 7.3, QDV 18.6c, ST I.84.5c). Such passages support a reading on which Aquinas’s account of knowledge is one of paradigmatic and nonparadigmatic scientia, but only if nonparadigmatic scientia bottoms out at cognitio.

84 MacDonald (1993: 162) is the only one I know to explicitly make this objection, but Jenkins (1997: 16) implies it when he claims that ‘cognitio’ and ‘cognoscere’ are “generic terms for intentional, mental activity”.
qualities, of particulars, etc. It may be that in some sense brute animals have know-how or objectual knowledge – when they develop habits, or when they become familiar with qualities like red and particulars like bananas – but epistemologists have mainly not been concerned with know-how or objectual knowledge. They focus on propositional knowledge, and I have focused on propositional cognitio. And Aquinas himself distinguishes between the cognitio of the senses and ‘intellecutive cognitio’ which “belongs to reason alone” (In PA I.1.9). Some intellecutive cognitio is of universal truths (propositions entertained and reasoned about by the intellect proper), while some is cognitio of particulars, and so falls under the domain of ‘particular reason’ (propositions entertained and reasoned about by the cogitative power, under the influence of the intellect). So it is not a problem if some cognitio is not what epistemologists are concerned with when they talk about knowledge. What matters is that propositional cognitio is propositional knowledge.

Now someone might worry that even some kinds of propositional cognitio (e.g., sensory or memory knowledge of particulars) are too low level to count as knowledge proper. The idea might be that real knowledge should be reflective knowledge, in which the knower is aware, or at least could be aware, of her knowing. Such reflection seems necessary in order to ensure that one’s belief really is sufficiently guaranteed to be true to count as knowledge. Otherwise, no matter how reliable the process by which one arrived at that belief, it seems just a matter of chance that one trusted one’s belief-formation to that process. This is a typically internalist worry, and I cannot here dive into the deep waters of the internalist-externalist debate. But I can say that Aquinas is clearly very sensitive to such concerns with regard to scientia, and that is why he says that scientia requires not just certainty, but also seeing that something is true. That is also why he says that someone with scientia knows that she has scientia. But scientia, as

85 Strictly speaking, Aquinas would not say that the sensory powers make propositional judgments on their own; rather, the human agent makes propositional judgments about particulars based on information provided by those faculties (ST I.75.2 ad 2).

86 “Aristotle speaks of the habits of the intellecutive part, which if they are perfect, cannot be hidden from those having them, since certitude is [constitutive] of their perfection. Thus any knower knows he knows [quilibet sciens scit se scire], since scire is to know [cognoscere] the cause of a thing, and that it is the cause of that thing, and that it is impossible for it to be otherwise. And similarly someone having the habit of intellection of principles (intellectus principiorum) knows [scit] he has that habit.” (QDV 10.10 ad 5; cf. ST II-II.1.5 ad 4). See Martin (2007: esp. 104) for the view that Aquinas here affirms a KK-thesis, i.e., a thesis that knowing p necessarily involves knowing that one knows p. Notice also that in some manuscripts copied either directly or almost directly from the exemplar, In PA I.4.5 includes knowing that one knows as a condition on scientia simpliciter (‘oportet igitur scintem, si est
important as it is for Aquinas, is a very special case of *cognitio*; knowledge of particulars need not be so direct or evident.

Nothing in the definition we have given for *cognitio* requires that it be reflective. Nevertheless, Aquinas does talk about *cognitio* of one’s *cognitio*.

It is necessary that the intellect, inasmuch as it is knowing [*est cognoscens*] is true inasmuch as it has a likeness of the thing known, which is its form inasmuch as it is knowing [*est cognoscens*]. And for this reason truth is defined by the conformity of the intellect and reality. So to know [*cognoscere*] that conformity is to know the truth. But the senses don’t in any way know this …

The senses don’t know that they are in conformity with reality; they’re not reflective. But here Aquinas gives ‘knowing the truth (*veritatem*)’ a technical sense in which it is necessarily reflective, as it requires second-order knowing that one knows. Aquinas also says that “the mind knows the singular by a kind of reflection” (QDV 10.5c). This means, at the least, that sensory awareness of singulars, had by the cogitative power, is accessible to be reflected upon by the intellect.

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*perfecte cognoscens, quod cognoscat causam rei (se) scire*, Leonine edition, vol. 1.2, p. 19, line 87). It seems to me that the two ‘know’s in such KK-statements cannot be univocal. Obviously someone with demonstrative scientia doesn’t have demonstrative scientia that she has such, and someone with intellection of a principle self-evident from its terms does not take it to be self-evident from its terms that she has such intellection. Perhaps the idea is that one ‘sees’ in some other way that one has scientia or intellection.

87 “*Cum autem omnis res sit vera secundum quod habet propriam formam naturae suae, necesse est quod intellectus, inquantum est cognoscens, sit verus inquantum habet similitudinem rei cognitae, quae est forma eius inquantum est cognoscens. Et propter hoc per conformitatem intellectus et rei veritas definitur. Unde conformitatem istam cognoscere, est cognoscere veritatem. Hanc autem nullo modo sensus cognoscit…”*

88 “*Et sic mens singulare cognoscit per quamdam reflexionem…*”.

89 In QDV 10.5c Aquinas says the mind can know singulars indirectly in two ways. First, by retracing its steps to the phantasms from which it abstracted intelligible species, “*Et sic mens singulare cognoscit per quamdam reflexionem, prout scilicet mens cognoscendo objectum suum, quod est aliqua natura universalis, redit in cognitionem sui actus, et ulterior in speciem quae est sui actus principio, et ulterior in phantasma a quo species est abstracta: et sic aliquam cognitionem de singulari accipit.*” The other way is by directing the cogitative power, which compounds and divides particular intentions.
However, the cogitative power’s job of gathering propositional *cognitio* about particulars does not require such reflection. So it is not obvious that reflection is required for all kinds of *cognitio*. In fact, the intellect’s abstraction of intelligible species depends on the cogitative power first doing its work of coordinating particular intentions (SCG II.73.16, II.76.8). So there seems to be a level of *cognitio* about particulars which is not yet reflective, but rather is presupposed for reflective *cognitio*. This fits well with the fact that we do typically take ourselves to have sensory and memory knowledge of particulars, even in cases where we do not or cannot reflectively evaluate the reliability of the sensory or memory processes on the basis of which those judgments are made. Sometimes we cannot even tell with utmost precision which processes we have used.  

It seems to me that Aquinas’s theory of knowledge allows for at least two kinds of knowledge. *Cognitio* is one’s natural grasp of truth, and one kind is our natural grasp of truth by means of propositions. It need not be reflective or accompanied by a special feeling of certainty. *Scientia*, on the other hand, is a very specialized and reflective kind of propositional *cognitio*, ‘perfect *cognitio*’, which is absolutely certain in every way.  

If someone starts out by looking for the one concept in Aquinas that matches her intuitions about knowledge – and her intuitions are either more on the reflective side, or more on the non-reflective side – she will deprive herself of the chance to be informed by Aquinas about both kinds of knowledge; she will miss the complexity and interest of Aquinas’s theory of knowledge.

But this need not mean that Aquinas’s theory of knowledge is completely foreign to modern readers. Laurence BonJour, famous for his arguments against the idea of non-reflective knowledge, has become more conciliatory of late, and argued that

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90 For some contemporary accounts of our inability to always tell which process we use, see Sosa (1991: 229-231), Williamson (2002: chapter 8) and Schwitzgebel (2008).

91 That is, *scientia* has not only certitude of evidentness but also certitude of adherence, and certitude of cause, and the intellect is fully determined to assent to one proposition. See chapter 3 above, pp. 135-136, for a discussion of the kinds of certitude in Aquinas.

92 See Hibbs (1999) and Pickavé (2012) for different arguments that Aquinas’s theory of knowledge includes both internalist and externalist elements. Pickavé (2012: 319) says that even Aquinas’s theory of *scientia* “combines elements of externalist and internalist epistemologies.” But it seems to me that if Aquinas accepts a KK-thesis for *scientia*, then whatever other conditions it includes, *scientia* is straightforwardly internalist.
both the internalist and the externalist approaches are legitimate in relation to
genuine epistemological issues and … there is no compelling reason why one has to
be chosen in preference to the other. (BonJour 2002: 259)

He suggests there might be more than one legitimate concept of knowledge, perhaps one
predominantly externalist and another predominantly internalist, and he points us in the direction
of Ernest Sosa’s distinction between ‘animal knowledge’ and ‘reflective knowledge’.93 Sosa
himself develops this distinction partly on the basis of a distinction he finds in Descartes between
cognitio and scientia.94 Sosa argues that distinguishing these two grades of knowledge gives
Descartes an escape from the infamous ‘Cartesian circle’.95

I don’t mean to say that the extensions of Aquinas’s cognitio and scientia and Descartes’
are the same. For example, Aquinas would grant that someone can have scientia in some field,
by intuiting the relevant first principles and demonstrating conclusions based thereon,
indepedent of whether that person has proven that a veracious God exists. The similarity with
Descartes is just this: Aquinas’s theory of cognitio, like Descartes’, is a broad theory of
knowing, and makes no explicit requirement that cognitio be reflective, while Aquinas’s theory

93 Sosa (1991: 240) and (1997: 231-2). In ‘animal knowledge’ one’s mental state directly responds to experience
with little guidance from reflection, while ‘reflective knowledge’ involves an understanding of one’s knowledge that
p in a wider whole, and understanding of how that knowledge came about. Most recently Sosa (2011: chap. 1) has
characterized animal knowledge as apt belief (belief that is accurate from ability), and reflective knowledge as apt
belief aptly endorsed by the subject (2011: 1, 11).

94 Sosa (1997: 236-238, 240). In the Second Replies (to the objections to his Meditations), Descartes defends his
view that one must know that God exists in order to have scientia against the objection that an atheist mathematician
seems to have scientia (e.g., scientia that the angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles). Descartes claims
that the mathematician’s cognitio does not amount to scientia since it can be doubted; the mathematician cannot be
certain that he is not deceived in even what seems most evident to him (AT VII, 141).

95 Sosa’s solution (1997: 239, 240) is to interpret the two steps of the supposed circle thus: (1) I can have certain
scientia that whatever I perceive clearly and distinctly is true only if I first have certain cognitio that there is a
veracious God, and (2) I can have certain scientia that there is a veracious God only if I first have certain cognitio
that whatever I perceive clearly and distinctly is true. The idea is that with enough certain cognitio, one can attain a
coherent and comprehensive world view that enables reflective scientia. Reed (2012) disagrees. I can’t comment
on the Cartesian circle, but it is interesting that in the passage about the atheist mathematician which Sosa appeals
to, Descartes says that the cogito is a non-inferential intellection of a first principle (“principiorum ... notitia”) which
one “recognizes as per se notam to the simple intuition of the mind” and from which one can then infer
“general propositions” such as that “it is not possible to think unless one exists” (AT VII, 140-141). His solution, in
that letter at least, seems to appeal to Aristotelian intellection of principles. If so, his view differs from Aquinas’s in,
among other things, requiring that sciences be based on grasping as a first principle that one exists and that one is a
thinking thing.
of *scientia* is stringent, like Descartes’, requiring not just reflection but also vision of a particular kind.

The extensions of Aquinas’s *cognitio* and *scientia* also differ from those of Sosa’s animal and reflective knowledge. Aquinas’s general notion of *cognitio* is much broader than Sosa’s notion of animal knowledge, since it need not be propositional. However, intellective *cognitio* – grasping true propositions by one’s natural ability aimed at such grasp – when it does not require the reflection of the intellect, is very similar to Sosa’s animal knowledge as apt belief: belief that is accurate from ability. And Aquinas’s special notion of *scientia* is much narrower than Sosa’s notion of reflective knowledge, which need not depend on demonstrative syllogisms, and need not be absolutely certain. The point of these comparisons was just to show that we can compare Aquinas’s theory of knowledge to other accounts of knowledge in interesting ways.

To summarize my reply to the two key objections, Aquinas’s account of propositional *cognitio* is not too broad to be an account of propositional knowledge. Passages referring to “false *cognitio*” need not undermine the factivity of *cognitio*. And Aquinas distinguishes propositional *cognitio* from non-propositional collection of raw sensory data. Often propositional *cognitio* is under the control of the intellect’s reflection, but sometimes it is non-reflective, and that’s okay. It just means that, if we think of Aquinas’s theory of *cognitio* as a theory of knowledge, it is a very broad theory that accommodates various kinds of knowledge. I conclude, then, that the two main objections against treating *cognitio* as knowledge have been defused.

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96 There are a number of issues to sort out in order to compare Sosa’s animal knowledge with Aquinas’s intellective *cognitio*, and I’ll just mention a few. Is it important that the ability be a natural one, and what does that mean? Is it important that the ability be ‘aimed’ at grasping, and what does that mean? Sosa says belief is an endeavor (2011: chap. 2); is this compatible with Aquinas’s account of *cognitio* as a mental state?
4.3 Testimonial Cognitio

4.3.1 General Considerations

Supposing, then, that propositional *cognitio* is knowledge, does Aquinas recognize any cases of testimonial knowledge? One clear cut case is that of divine faith, which Aquinas says is a kind of *cognitio*, and a ‘light’ by which humans ‘cognoscere’ the articles of faith. Before the fall, humans knew things “with manifest knowledge” which today “we cannot know except by believing” on divine faith (ST II-II.5.1c). So even though divine faith is of the unseen, it is still a kind of knowledge. This is not a terribly surprising result, given that divine faith, according to Aquinas, is made infallibly accurate by divine grace. But Aquinas still says that *scientia* has pride of place as ‘perfect *cognitio*’ and faith is necessarily ‘imperfect *cognitio*’ (ST I-II.67.3c), because it is of the unseen. Before we move on to consider knowledge from human faith, it will be helpful to see how all kinds of assent to the unseen differ from *scientia*.

There are two related ways that assent to the unseen is imperfect in comparison with *scientia*. One is that the intellect is not ‘fixed’ or ‘determined to one’ from its own operation alone, but must be guided in part by something external. The other is that the knowledge we have by believing others cannot be as systematic and explanatory as the knowledge we have when we understand something for ourselves. Aquinas expresses both of these imperfections in the following passage:

> Whoever knows [*cognoscit*] things by an intellectual light … must have fixed knowledge [*cognitionem*] of them. But this cannot happen unless he sees them in the principle in which they can be known, for as long as there is no resolution of known things to their principles, knowledge is not determined to one, but he apprehends the

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97 QDV 14.2 ad 9, SCG I.4, ST II-II.2.4c.
98 “Sed quantum ad ea quae materialiter credenda proponuntur, quaedam sunt credita ab uno quae sunt manifeste scita ab aliis, etiam in statu praesenti, ut supra dictum est. Et secundum hoc etiam potest dici quod Angelus ante confirmationem et homo ante peccatum quaedam de divinis mysteriis manifesta cognitione cognoverunt quae nunc non possimus cognoscere nisi credendo.” See further references to faith as *cognitio* in note 15 above.
things he knows by some kind of approvability [probabilitatem], for example, as spoken by others. Then he necessarily receives things singly. For instance, if someone didn’t know how to deduce geometrical conclusions from principles, he would not have the habit of geometry. Whatever he knew about the conclusions of geometry he would apprehend as believing a teacher, and so he would need to be taught about single cases. For he would not be able to infer from one thing to another firmly, not having made the resolution into first principles.  

As we saw in chapter 3, when one sees that \( p \), one is moved by an object that is present to one’s mind as determinately as possible, and one automatically assents in a fully determinate way. Assent to the unseen, however, can only be fixed by the will, or by inferential elimination of alternatives – it is not automatic, and the object is not presented to one’s mind as determinately as it could be. Call this feature of assent to the unseen ‘indeterminacy’. As indeterminately known, the unseen is not “known as much as it is knowable” and so not “perfectly known” (ST I.12.7c).

Another feature present in ‘seeing’ but missing in assent to the unseen is systematic explanatory connection to the rest of one’s knowledge. The unseen is not “comprehended” (ST I.12.7c). Call this feature of assent to the unseen ‘isolation’. Isolation is related to indeterminacy. Consider the difference between me knowing that a brown cup is on the table by seeing that it is, and me knowing it on the word of another. When I see it, I am aware of

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99 “Quicumque enim aliqua cognoscit intellectuali lumine, quod est ei effectum quasi connaturale ut forma in eo consistens, oportet quod de eis fixam cognitionem habeat. Quod esse non potest, nisi ea inspiciat in principio in quo possunt cognosci: quamdui enim non fit resoluto cognitorum in sua principia, cognitio non firmatur in uno, sed apprehendit ea quae cognoscit secundum probabilitatem quamdam utpote ab aliis dicta: unde nescesse habet de singulis acceptionem ab aliis habere. Sicut si aliquid nesciret geometriae conclusiones ex principiis deducere, habitum geometriae non haberet: sed quaecumque de conclusionibus geometriae sciaret, apprehenderet quasi credens docenti, et sic indigiter ut de singulis instrueretur: non enim possit ex quibusdam in alia pervenire firmiter, non facta resolutione in prima principia.” The point of this passage is to support Aquinas’s argument that prophecy requires a supernatural vision of God, which is the only “principle in which future contingents, and other things which exceed natural knowledge, can be known” (“Principium autem in quo possunt cognosci futura contingentia, et alia quae cognitionem naturalem excedunt, de quibus est prophetia, est ipse Deus.”) See above, p. 134f.

100 I quoted ST I.12.7c more fully above (p. 136-137), while explaining the nature of opinion.

101 The favourite example among scholastics was that of the difference between seeing an eclipse for oneself, or hearing about it from someone who saw it. Aquinas mentions this example in In Heb 11.1. Henry of Ghent adds a third character, to illustrate a threefold difference he argues for between (i) divine faith, (ii) the knowledge of
many features of the situation (the lighting, the location of the cup on the table, etc.) that contribute to fully determining my intellect. My awareness of these other features contributes to me understanding that fact in relation to other facts (e.g., about the location of the table in the room). But when I do not see that the cup is on the table, not only is my assent not automatically fixed, but I also lack that additional awareness which would help me understand how that fact relates to other facts. I can recognize what is logically entailed by $p$, and adjust my beliefs accordingly, but I don’t see the big picture, so I won’t be able to make all the adjustments I could, and not as accurately, as I could if I had seen that $p$.

*Scientia* is also a matter of seeing facts on a background of other related facts. *Scientia* is a systematic grasp of conclusions in orderly explanatory derivation from first principles. It is a matter of explicitly working out the implications of the first principles that one intuits about some subject matter. So someone who has *scientia* of some one proposition $p$ in a subject matter necessarily has an understanding of that subject matter that someone who does not see that $p$, but merely knows it on the testimony of another, lacks.

Because knowledge of the unseen is indeterminate and isolated in these ways, it must be had ‘singly’ (*de singulis*). This probably means, not that knowledge of the unseen can only be about singulars (as opposed to universals) – nothing prevents one from believing the truths of geometry on a geometer’s testimony – but rather that testimony cannot give one understanding of how individual propositions relate to others and so can only give one knowledge of those propositions as isolated from others. A result of isolation is that assent to the unseen lacks theologians, and (iii) the beatific vision. Besides the one seeing the eclipse, and the one who merely believes him, there is an astronomer (*astrologus*) who does not see the eclipse, and so does not ‘comprehend’ it, but knows there is an eclipse by means of his science (*Quodlibet* 12.2). The theologian is supposed to be in a position similar to the astronomer, and he can be an additional authoritative source of knowledge for the mere believer. After Henry scholastics sometimes discussed astronomer examples in their *Sentences* commentaries. The astronomer as example of an authority may originally come from William of Sherwood’s discussion of arguments from authority (Niederbacher 2004: 69ff). But Augustine uses a similarly astronomical example in *mag.* 12.39, which might have prompted some scholastics to think of astronomers independently.

103 Lackey (2011) calls such knowledge “isolated secondhand knowledge” and argues that it often does not licence one in asserting that $p$. One might be in a situation where asserting that $p$ will make one responsible for understanding and be able to answer questions about $p$. For example, one might know that a doctor was going to tell a patient that she has been diagnosed with cancer, but not be in a position to answer the patient’s questions, or take responsibility for the diagnosis being a reliable one. I’m grateful to Kenneth Boyd for directing me to this essay.
intellectual ‘rest’ (*quietatio*).

No matter how firmly one believes the testimony of another, one’s intellect is still ready for further ‘inquiry’ (*inquisitio*) into the matter for the sake of understanding and vision. This is what it means, Aquinas says, for assent to the unseen to remain assent with ‘cogitation’.

We can now see a bit more clearly why Aquinas says one cannot have both faith and *scientia* of the same proposition at the same time – to do so one would have to know it as determinately and systematically as possible, while at the same time knowing it only indeterminately and unsystematically.

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### 4.3.2 Knowledge from testimonial opinion

I have followed Aquinas’s commentary on the *Posterior Analytics* by thinking of opinion as inductively inferential belief with stronger assent than suspicion, but with ‘fear of the opposite’.

If that is what we mean by opinion, and *cognitio* is knowledge, then Aquinas clearly thinks that one can have knowledge from opinion, as counterintuitive as that sounds, because he thinks we can have inferential knowledge (*cognitio coniecturalis*). For example, I know that snow will fall in Toronto next winter, not because I have the direct awareness of future contingencies as God does, but because I know about Toronto’s weather patterns. I “know a contingent effect only in its cause” and so only by inductive knowledge (*coniecturalem cognitionem*).

Aquinas even argues that the *cognitio* of a proposition which one gains by

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104 QDV 10.12 ad s.c. 6, SCG III.40.5.
105 ST II-II.2.1c, QDV 10.12 ad s.c. 6.
106 See Aquinas’s explanations of faith’s act of believing, in accordance with the Augustinian dictum that *credere* is *cum assensu cogitare* (ST II-II.2.1c, QDV 14.1c, In Sent III.23.2.2.1c, In Heb 11.1, SCG III.40).
107 See ST I-II.67.3c and ST II-II.1.5c for a discussion of the issues.
108 Aquinas also refers to the idea that opinion is the result of ‘dialectical’ or ‘probable’ syllogisms in ST I-II.67.3c and In Rom 4.1.
109 Aquinas explains inductive knowledge of the future most fully in QDM 16.7c when talking about how different ways angels and humans can know future contingencies inferentially, and how that knowledge differs from God’s. See also In Sent II.4.1.2c, and In Sent II.7.2.2c. Knowledge we have of our own habits seems also to be inductive, especially when that habit is infused by God. Aquinas discusses whether we know that we have charity in In Sent IV.9.1.3.2c, ST I-II.112.5c, QQ 8.2.2c, QDV 10.10c.
‘probable’ or ‘dialectical’ means remains even after one has the perfect *cognitio* of vision with regard to that same proposition.\textsuperscript{110}

Now, we saw in chapter 3 that Aquinas distinguishes between run of the mill opinion and ‘strong opinion’. Ordinarily opinion is had with ‘fear of the opposite’, and the result is that one doesn’t assent, or one’s assent is not firm.\textsuperscript{111} But when someone lacks assent, it is not clear that she has *cognitio*, since her mind is not even determined to one proposition on the matter, but is open to the contrary being true, and so her mental state is not one of matching reality. Her mind is not informed that $p$. On the other hand, someone with strong opinion is ‘convinced’ that $p$ and does assent to $p$. The testimonial case of strong opinion we looked at was demon faith based on prophecy, when the demon is so convinced that it is ‘compelled’ to believe that $p$, even though it doesn’t see that $p$.\textsuperscript{112} When the demon’s mental state matches reality in this way, it has *cognitio* that $p$. After all, its mental state matches reality by means of a natural faculty of inductive inference aimed at such a match.

There is some debate today about whether testimonial knowledge is purely by transmission (when the speaker must know that $p$ in order to give a hearer knowledge that $p$ by means of testimony) or is sometimes ‘generative’ (when the speaker doesn’t know $p$, but her testimony still generates knowledge that $p$ in the hearer).\textsuperscript{113} In principle, knowledge from testimonial opinion can be generative. For example, a prophet could doubt his own prophecy

\textsuperscript{110} ST I-II.67.3c: “[O]ne human can know the same conclusion by both probable and demonstrative means” (“... *potest enim unus homo cognoscere eandem conclusionem per medium probabile, et demonstrativum*”). ST III.9.3 ad 2: “Similarly opinion, caused by dialectical syllogism, is a path to science, which is acquired by demonstration. And yet, once [demonstration] has been acquired the knowledge had by dialectical syllogism can remain, following the demonstrative science which is through the cause. For he who knows the cause thereby all the more can know probable signs from which proceeds a dialectical syllogism.” (“*Et similiter opinio, ex syllogismo dialectico causata, est via ad scientiam, quae per demonstrationem acquiritur, qua tamen acquisita, potest remanere cognitio quae est per syllogismum dialecticum, quasi consequens scientiam demonstrativam quae est per causam; quia ille qui cognoscit causam, ex hoc etiam magis potest cognoscere signa probabilia, ex quibus procedit dialecticus syllogismus.*”)

\textsuperscript{111} As mentioned in chapter 3, Aquinas sometimes says that opinion lacks assent, while other times he says it includes assent but that assent is not firm. See above, p. 130, note 43.

\textsuperscript{112} See chapter 3, pp. 133-134. The most relevant passage is In Sent III.23.3.3.1c.

\textsuperscript{113} See Lackey (2008: chap. 2) on this controversy. Keren (2007) argues that while other kinds of testimony may be generative, knowledge on authoritative testimony can only be by transmission.
will come true, while a demon is rightly convinced that it will. And in general a hearer could have good reason to be convinced that what someone has said is true, even when the speaker does not.

4.3.3 Knowledge from testimonial faith

Testimonial faith is different. In testimonial faith, remember, the audience believes a proposition in order to adhere to a speaker (as the ‘formal object’ of her belief), and she does so because it seems good to do so, and it seems good to do so at least in part because she takes the speaker to be truthful. The audience adheres to the speaker as someone speaking from knowledge. But then it seems that the audience will count as knowing only if the speaker knows (and so has knowledge to transmit). In fact, Aquinas says that when one has knowledge of some proposition $p$ as unseen, such knowledge must ultimately be traced back to a speaker who sees that $p$.

[F]aith is a kind of knowledge [cognitio], inasmuch as the intellect is determined by faith to something knowable. But this determination to one does not come from the vision of the believer but from the vision of the one he believes. (ST I.12.13 ad 3, cf. SCG III.154.1, In Sent IV.49.2.7 ad 3)

By testimonial faith the audience comes to ‘share’ in the knowledge of the speaker.

But Aquinas thinks that one need not directly believe the person who sees that $p$. Testimonial faith enables chains of belief, by which one believes intermediary speakers whose faith is grounded in the seeing of an original speaker. We see this idea at work in an ad

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114 Aquinas considers the related case in which one person (Pharaoh) has a prophetic vision but doesn’t gain knowledge from it, while another person (Joseph) without having that vision makes the correct prophetic judgment (QDV 12.7c).

115 “[F]ides cognitio quaedam est, inquantum intellectus determinatur per fidem ad aliquod cognoscibile. Sed haec determinatio ad unum non procedit ex visione credentis, sed a visione eius cui creditur.”

116 SCG I.4.6 says this of divine faith. This should apply, a fortiori, to human cases, where the speaker and hearer’s cognitive abilities are much more similar. See also In Sent III.21.2.3c and In Sent IV.49.2.7 ad 3.
absurdum infinite regress argument about knowledge from divine faith which uses some premises that apply to testimonial faith in general:

Someone would not believe the unseen when proposed by another unless he estimated that [the speaker] had more perfect knowledge about those things than he himself, who doesn’t see them. Now either the believer’s estimation is false, or the speaker has more perfect knowledge of what was proposed. And if he knows those things only as hearing them from another, this cannot go on to infinity, for the assent of faith would be empty and without certitude since there would be no first [speaker] certain by himself, who would bring certitude to the faith of the believers [in the chain].  

(SCG III.40.4)

In other words, in testimonial faith the audience is moved to believe another speaker that \( p \), and this can go on in a chain of speakers likewise moved to believe by previous speakers, but there has to be a first mover who sees that \( p \), otherwise the whole chain was never properly moved in the first place.

There are at least two ways such a chain could work. When I believe Antony that \( p \) on faith, it could be that, without my knowing it, Antony himself took \( p \) on faith from someone else. If such a chain doesn’t end in a seer (or at least someone with “more perfect knowledge”), then

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117 “Non autem crederet aliquis non visis ab alio propositis nisi aestimaret eum perfectiorem cognitionem habere de propositis quam ipse habeat qui non videt. Aut igitur aestimatio credentis est falsa: aut oportet quod proponens habeat perfectionem cognitionem propositorum. Quod et si ipse solum cognoscit ea quasi ab alio audientis, non potest hoc in infinitum procedere: esset enim vanus et absque certitudine fidei assensus; non enim inveniretur aliquid primum ex se certum, quod certitudinem fidei credentium affret.” Aquinas continues by applying the argument to divine faith: “But it is not possible that the knowledge of faith be false or empty, as is clear from what was said in the first book…. Therefore there is some human knowledge of God higher than the knowledge from faith, whether it is that the man proposing faith sees the truth immediately for himself – and thus we believe Christ – or immediately receives it from the seer – and thus we believe the apostles and the prophets.” (“Non est autem possibile fidei cognitionem esse falsam neque vanam, ut ex dictis patet in principio libri…. Est igitur aliqua hominis cognitio de Deo altior cognitione fidei: sive ipse homo proponens fidem immediate videat veritatem, sicut Christo credimus; sive a vidente immediate accipiat, sicut credimus apostolis et prophetis.”)

118 Aquinas uses this ‘first mover’ image in In Sent III.25.1.4 ad 2, where he also says that the first speaker ‘regulates’ what others believe, and intermediate speakers are regulated regulators of what others believe. Aquinas also often says that expositors or teachers of the Christian faith are rightly believed by the faithful with an ‘implicit faith’, but only “insofar as the leaders adhere to divine teaching”, that is, only insofar as what the teachers of the faith say is what God says (ST II-II.2.6 ad 3, cf. In Sent III.25.2.1.4c). Similarly, the apostles and prophets are believed on matters of faith only insofar as they say what God says (In Sent IV.49.2.7 ad 3, SCG III.154.1, ST II-II.6.1c).
Antony and I have been had—we don’t have knowledge. This is so even if \( p \) happens to be true, because faith is designed to provide access to what others see or know, and is not otherwise reliable.

On the other hand, it could be that I believe Antony that \( p \), because Antony says that Beatrice has seen that \( p \), and we both have faith in Beatrice. As long as every audience in the chain of speakers believes the original speaker (Beatrice) as the formal object of his belief (and so long as the chain reliably reports what the original speaker said), we all get to know what the original speaker saw. Believing a speaker as formal object involves believing propositions in order to adhere to the speaker as an end. But a speaker could be the ultimate end, while there are intermediary speakers, to whom one adheres as intermediate ends, in order to adhere to the ultimate speaker as the ultimate end. Aquinas is especially interested in these kinds of chains, because he thinks that the Christian faithful believe God in this way, by means of different kinds of intermediaries (prophets, apostles, and church authorities).

Now we can see the difference between the knowledge of testimonial opinion and the knowledge of testimonial faith. Inductive testimonial knowledge, testimonial opinion, is more sensitive to the evidence, so much so that an audience might know something on the basis of

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On prophets and apostles, see In Sent III.21.2.4.2 s.c. 2, In Sent IV.49.2.7 ad 3, QDV 12.2 ad 3, SCG III.154.1, ST II-II.6.1c, ST III.55.1 ad 2. On church authorities (*maiores*) who have the office of instructing the ‘*simplices*’ or ‘*minores*’, see In Sent III.25.2.1.3, In Sent III.25.2.1.4, QQ 3.4.2, ST II-II.2.6 ad 3. Most striking is Aquinas’s argument in QDV 14.10 ad 11 against the objection that Christian faith is suspect because the intermediary speakers are suspect, and “when something is confirmed by many intermediaries, if one of them lacks firmness, the whole confirmation lacks efficacy. This is clear in syllogistic deductions…. But matters of faith came to us by means of many intermediaries. For they were spoken by God to apostles and prophets, by them to their successors, and then to others, and so finally arrived at us by means of various intermediaries. But the infallible truth is not certain in all those intermediaries, since humans have been deceived and can deceive. So we have no certitude about matters of faith and it is stupid to assent to them.” (“\([Q]\)uando aliquid confirmatur per plura media, si unum illorum non habet firmitatem, tota confirmatio efficacia caret; ut patet in deductionibus syllogismorum, in quibus una de multis propositionibus falsa vel dubia existente, probatio inefficax est. Sed ea quae sunt fidei, in nos per multa media devenerunt. A Deo enim dicta sunt apostolis vel prophetis, a quibus in successores eorum, et deinceps in alios et sic usque ad nos pervenerunt per media diversa. Non autem in omnibus istis mediis certum est esse infallibilem veritatem: quia cum homines fuerint et decipi et decipere potuerunt. Ergo nullam certitudinem habere possamus de his quae sunt fidei; et ita stultum videtur his assentire” QDV 14.10 obj 11). Aquinas replies “All the intermediaries by which the faith came to us are beyond suspicion. For we believe the prophets and apostles because God gave testimony to [their truthfulness] by doing miracles…. And we do not believe the successors of the apostles and prophets except inasmuch as they announce to us what the apostles and prophets left in the Scriptures.” (“\([Q]\)omnia media per quae ad nos fides venit, suspicione carent. Prophetis enim et apostolis credimus ex hoc quod Deus eis testimonium perhibuit miracula faciendo…. Successoris autem apostolorum et prophetarum non credimus nisi in quantum nobis ea annuntiant quae illi in scriptis reliquerunt.” QDV 14.10 ad 11)

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testimony that the speaker doesn’t know. Knowledge from testimonial faith, on the other hand, is more sensitive to the epistemic status of the speaker or chain of speakers.

I would like to close this section with some of Aquinas’s illustrations of cognitio from human testimonial faith. The most straightforward case is that of the subalternate scientist. On Aquinas’s official account, one can have scientia in some subject matter only if one has seen that certain universal principles relevant to that subject matter are necessarily true, and then demonstrated conclusions that follow from those principles. Both stages (intellection and demonstration) are necessary. But someone can still develop a systematic understanding of a subject matter by demonstrating conclusions that follow from some principles even when one does not see all of those principles for oneself, so long as the person she is getting them from has demonstrated them from principles seen to be necessarily true. Then she has “faith in the things supposed from a superior science”, but she would not count as having a science at all if the things she supposed did not “come ultimately from the understanding of the superior knower” (In BDT 2.2 ad7).

Here we see at work the idea that knowledge of the unseen must be traced back ultimately to seeing, at least in the case of scientia. The subordinate scientist’s mental state is aimed at matching reality by means of assenting to true propositions, and this she does by trusting someone who sees the truth.

He who speaks the truth brings forth signs conforming to things … (ST II-II.109.1 ad 3)

The act of the one believing does not terminate at the proposition, but at the reality, for we form propositions only to have knowledge of things by them; as in science, so in faith. (ST II-II.1.2 ad 2)

120 There are a number of other conditions that have to be met. See Aquinas’s commentary on Posterior Analytics book I, and Jenkins’s exposition of this material in Jenkins (1997: chap. 1).

121 “[C]uiuslibet scientiae principium est intellectus semper quidem primum, sed non semper proximum, immo aliquando est fides proximum principium scientiae. Sicut patet in scientiis subalternatis, quia earum conclusiones sicut ex proximo principio procedunt ex fide eorum quae supponuntur a superiori scientia, sed sicut a principio primo ab intellectu superioris scientis, qui de his creditis certitudinem per intellectum habet.”

122 “[I]lle qui dicit verum profert aliqua signa conformia rebus …”
This last claim looks like an exaggeration, since we obviously form propositions not only for conveying the truths we know but also to make jokes, deceive people, play pretend, and so on. But perhaps Aquinas here is considering the broader social origins of the practice of communication. In his discussion of the virtue of truthfulness, he says

Since man is a social animal, one human naturally owes to the other that without which human society cannot be preserved. But humans could not live together unless they believed each other, as manifesting the truth to each other.\textsuperscript{124} (ST II-II.109.3 ad 1)

Humans have the practice of communicating by means of propositions for the sake of sharing their knowledge with each other, and other propositional practices (like joking) are parasitic on this fundamental reason for presenting each other with propositions.\textsuperscript{125} Faith is naturally aimed at matching our mental states to reality, and is thus a source of \textit{cognitio}.

The idea that human society depends on communication is expressed in the passages where I have already identified a ‘horizontal epistemic division of labour’. Aquinas says that some

singular and contingent things which are remote from our senses, such as the deeds and sayings and thoughts of [other] humans, are such that they can be known to one

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{123} “\textit{Actus autem credentis non terminatur ad enuntiabile, sed ad rem, non enim formamus enuntiabilia nisi ut per ea de rebus cognitionem habeamus, sicut in scientia, ita et in fide.”}
\item \textsuperscript{124} “[Q]uia homo est animal sociale, naturaliter unus homo debet alteri id sine quo societas humana conservari non posset. Non autem possent homines ad invicem convivere nisi sibi invicem crederent, tanquam sibi invicem veritatem manifestantibus.”
\item \textsuperscript{125} One might worry that what one acquires through language is not \textit{cognitio}, because it’s not had by a natural power aimed at grasping the truth. It’s true that language is not purely natural and involuntary – using language is an acquired art, as Aquinas would say, and language has different manifestations in different communities. But language is necessary for society and humans naturally and involuntarily seek society. In this sense it is natural that humans develop and use language to grasp truths. See Craig (1990) and Williams (2002) for ‘genealogical’ explanations of how and why practices of communication would have arisen from an original state of nature. Aquinas would be sympathetic, not to the idea that there ever was such a state of nature, or that communication practices developed out of it, but to the idea that without communication we would quickly fall into such a state of nature.
\end{itemize}
human and unknown to another. And since in human community [convictu] it ought to be that one person use another as himself when he is not self-sufficient, so it ought to be that he stand toward those things which another knows, and are unknown to him, the way he stands to those he knows himself. Thus faith, by which one man believes the sayings of another, is necessary in human interaction.\(^{126}\) (In BDT 3.1c)

Here again, accepting propositions by faith is something we naturally do for the sake of matching our mental state to reality, and here again it looks like faith must get its epistemic status from an original seeing by someone to whose senses the events or thoughts related were present.

In the same passage, Aquinas describes the vertical division of labour between a teacher and a student. In order to acquire the sciences,

we must from the beginning have some knowledge of those things which are better known in themselves, which cannot happen except by believing another.\(^{127}\) (In BDT 3.1c)

So in both the horizontal and the vertical cases, we again see Aquinas tracing the knowledge one gains from faith back to an original speaker who sees the truth of the matter.

The last case I will discuss, knowledge from reputation, is a bit tricky. Aquinas says it pertains to the perfection of a human that he know himself, but it does not pertain to his perfection to be known by others, and so that is not to be desired in itself. But it can be desired as useful to some end … [such as that] he is eager to persevere in and improve the good things which he knows in himself through the testimony of others’ praise, and goes on to better things.\(^{128}\) (ST II-II.132.1 ad 3)

\(^{126}\) “… sicut in rebus singularibus et contingentibus quae a nostris sensibus sunt remotae, sicut sunt facta hominum et dicta et cogitata, quae quidem talia sunt, ut uni homini possint esse nota et alii incognita. Et quia in convictu hominum oportet quod unus utatur altero sicut se ipso in his, in quibus sibi non sufficit, ideo oportet ut stet illis quae alius scit et sunt sibi ignota, sicut his quae ipse cognoscit. Et exinde est quod in conversatione hominum est fides necessaria, qua unus homo ille alius credat…”

\(^{127}\) “… oportet etiam a principio aliquam nos habere notitiam de illis quae sunt per se magis nota; quod fieri non potest nisi credendo.”

\(^{128}\) “[A]d perfectionem hominis pertinet quod ipse cognoscat, sed quod ipse ab aliis cognoscatur non pertinet ad eius perfectionem, et ideo non est per se appetendum. Potest tamen appeti inquantum est utile ad aliquum, vel ad hoc …”
What’s tricky about this case is that it is not obvious whether it is a matter of testimonial opinion or testimonial faith. Because there are so many other reasons why people praise us other than just to be truthful, some of what we know about ourselves from the praise of others we do not just accept by faith, but inductively infer is true. On the other hand, we do sometimes trust the speaker, that is, we accept her praise in order to adhere to her because she is truthful. This seems to be more what Aquinas had in mind here, from the way he describes the case of vainglory. One way for someone to glory in reputation vainly is “with regard to him from whom one seeks glory, such as someone whose judgment is not certain” (ST II-II.132.1c).\textsuperscript{129} This suggests that in the good case one trusts a speaker whose judgment is certain, and so is worthy of one’s trust.

4.4 Conclusions

Aquinas’s account of \textit{cognitio} is an account of how we grasp, by our natural ability aimed at such a grasp, the forms of things as they are. Propositional or ‘intellective’ \textit{cognitio}, I have argued, is propositional knowledge. And I have argued that the two key objections to thinking of \textit{cognitio} in this way can be defused. In keeping with this account of \textit{cognitio}, Aquinas has an account of testimonial knowledge on which grasping the forms of things by means of propositions about the unseen yields \textit{cognitio} in cases where that grasp can be traced back either to an appropriate use of inductive inference, or to faith that is ultimately grounded in the original speaker’s vision.

\textit{quod Deus ab hominibus glorificetur; vel ad hoc quod homines proficient ex hono quod in alio cognoscunt; vel ex hoc quod ipse homo ex bonis quae in se cognoscit per testimonium laudis alienae studeat in eis perseverare et ad meliora proficere.”}

\textsuperscript{129} “\textit{Potest autem gloria dici vana, uno modo, ex parte rei…, alio modo ex parte eius a quo quis gloriabit, puta hominis, cuius iudicium non est certum.”}
Appendix A

Official Cases of Nonparadigmatic Scientia

Those who argue that scientia is paradigmatic for all knowledge, and that the resulting theory is not too restrictive to be a theory of knowledge, have supported their view by appealing to cases of scientia which Aquinas officially recognizes, but which do not meet all the requirements for scientia simpliciter. Here is the central text where Aquinas gives the definition for scientia simpliciter:

Therefore someone with scientia, if he knows perfectly [si est perfecte cognoscens], must (i) know the cause of the object of scientia. But if he were to know the cause alone, he would not yet know the effect in act … and thus someone with scientia simpliciter must (ii) know also the application of the cause to the effect. But scientia is also (iii) certain knowledge of the thing, and what can be otherwise one cannot know with certitude, so the object of scientia must not possibly be otherwise.130 (In PA I.4.5)

The cases of scientia which Aquinas explicitly recognizes in his commentary on the Posterior Analytics, but which do not meet all of these requirements are: (1) intellection of first principles, and (2) factual scientia (i.e., scientia quia).

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130 “scire aliquid est perfecte cognoscere ipsum, hoc autem est perfecte apprehendere veritatem ipsius: eadem enim sunt principia esse rei et veritatis ipsius, ut patet ex II Metaphysicæ. Oportet igitur scientem, si est perfecte cognoscens, quod cognoscat causam rei scitae. Si autem cognosceret causam tantum, nondum cognosceret effectum in actu, quod est scire simpliciter, sed virtute tantum, quod est scire secundum quid et quasi per accidens. Et ideo oportet scientem simpliciter cognoscere etiam applicationem causae ad effectum. Quia vero scientia est etiam certa cognitio rei; quod autem contingit aliter se habere, non potest aliquis per certitudinem cognoscere; ideo ulterius oportet quod id quod scitur non possit aliter se habere. Quia ergo scientia est perfecta cognitio, ideo dicit: ‘cum causam arbitramur cognoscere’; quia vero est actualis cognitio per quam scimus simpliciter, addit: ‘et quoniam illius est causa’; quia vero est certa cognitio, subdit: ‘et non est contingere aliter se habere’.”
[Aristotle] responds to the question whether there is some way of having *scientia* other than the aforementioned, and he promises to address this later. For there is also [(2)] *scire* through the effect, as will become clear. And in another way we say that [(1)] one has *scientia* of the indemonstrable principles, for which one gives no cause. But the more proper and perfect way of having *scientia* was mentioned before.¹³¹ (In PA I.4.8)

Scott MacDonald (1993: 175) says Aquinas also relaxes the strict conditions in the cases of (3) knowledge of propositions “about particular sensible objects” when those objects are “better known to us” and (4) for-the-most-part *scientia*. In this appendix I will argue that all these cases are concerned solely with necessary truths about universals. Thus I find no evidence in Aquinas’s official account of *scientia*, as presented in his commentary on the *Posterior Analytics* (which he references elsewhere), for any nonparadigmatic *scientia* of contingent truths, or truths about particulars.

Before considering these cases, notice that Aquinas explicitly says a number of times in this commentary that there is no *scientia* of contingent truths or of particulars, because *scientia* is only of absolutely certain, universal, and necessary truths. For example, Aquinas closes his commentary on book 1 with a lecture on what makes *scientia* different from other propositional attitudes, in which he states:

> Then [Aristotle] … shows what pertains to *scientia*, and he says two things pertain to it: one is that it is universal; for *scientia* is not of sensible singulars, and this was clear above. The other is that *scientia* is through necessaries. And he explains what

¹³¹ “Quinto, ibi: si quidem etc., respondet tacitae quaestioni, utrum scilicet sit aliquis alius modus sciendi a praedicto. Quod promittit se in sequentibus dicturum: est enim scire etiam per effectum, ut infra patebit. Dicimur etiam aliquo modo scire ipsa principia indemonstrabilia, quorum non est accipere causam. Sed proprius et perfectus sciendi modus est qui praedictus est.”
is necessary, namely, that which cannot be otherwise. And it was shown above that demonstration proceeds from necessaries.\textsuperscript{132} (In PA I.44.2)

At this point, Aquinas had already devoted one lecture to explaining why scientific demonstration had to proceed from necessaries (In PA I.13), one lecture to explaining why it had to be of eternal, not corruptible things (In PA I.16), and one lecture to explaining why it could not be of sensible singulars (In PA I.42).

Now let’s consider the four cases in order.

1. Intellection of first principles is the starting point for scientia. It is absolutely certain and is a case of seeing that a necessary truth is necessarily true. But it is knowledge that is not yet systematic and explanatory, so it does not fully meet conditions (i) and (ii) on scientia. Nevertheless, the first principles of every scientia are truths seen to be self-evidently and necessarily true. And since a science is already contained virtually in its principles, and just needs to be drawn out from them by the method of demonstration, it makes sense to allow that intellection of first principles is in a less proper sense a kind of scientia.

2. Scientia quia, or factual scientia, is another case in which conditions (i) and (ii) are relaxed. Rather than demonstrating the effects from their causes (demonstration propter quid, explanatory demonstration), demonstration quia shows only that the cause of some effect must exist or must have some property (ST I.2.2c, In PA I.23). Aristotle’s example is of the planets which, because they are near to the earth, do not twinkle when they shine. Explanatory demonstration goes from the cause (being near) to the effect (not twinkling). But quia demonstration starts from some fact established as universally true by induction from experience, about an effect (things that don’t twinkle are near) to

\textsuperscript{132} “Deinde cum dicit: quoniam scientia universalis etc., ostendit quid pertineat ad scientiam et ponit duo ad eam pertinere: quorum unum est quod sit universalis. Non enim scientia est de singularibus sub sensu cadentibus: et hoc supra manifestatum est. Aliud est quod scientia est per necessaria. Et exponit quid sit necessarium, scilicet illud quod non contingit altero se habere. Et hoc etiam est supra manifestatum, quod demonstratio procedat ex necessariis.”
concluding a universal fact about the cause of that effect (planets don’t twinkle, so they are near). The premises and conclusion of such demonstrations are all universal claims (“All planets …” and “All things that don’t twinkle …”) (In PA I.23.6 and 9). Aquinas says that if the premises of an explanatory demonstration were concerned with some particular sensible experience, they would not produce scientia (In PA I.42.6 and 7). For example, if an observer were on the moon, and so in a position to see that an eclipse of the sun was caused by the moon, this would not yet give her scientia of that fact. She would have to observe many cases and from those come to know the universal truth of the matter, before she could use that universal truth in a demonstration that produces scientia (In PA I.42.6-7). 133

3. Thus, even if a proposition of which one has scientia concerns a particular sensible object (e.g., a proposition about the behaviour of the moon), and the truth that causally explains the moon’s behaviour is not as well known to us as some other universal truth which we have intuited on the basis of repeated sensory experiences, it is still true for Aquinas that for our knowledge to be considered scientia, it must be knowledge of necessary, universal truths demonstrated from other necessary, universal truths. Hence in his discussion of what it means for premises to be ‘better known to us’ (notiora quoad nos), Aquinas says:

From sensible singulars there are no demonstrations, but only from intelligible universals. Or one should say that in every demonstration one should proceed from what is better known to us – not from singulars, but from universals. 134 (In PA I.4.16)

133 MacDonald (1993:183, 194) gives a nice explanation of how induction from cases may result in the intuition of a universal truth.

134 “Ex singularibus autem quae sunt in sensu, non sunt demonstrationes, sed ex universalibus tantum, quae sunt in intellectu. Vel dicendum quod in omni demonstratione, oportet quod procedatur ex his, quae sunt notiora quoad nos, non tamen singularibus, sed universalibus.”
One should also note that Aquinas’s astronomical examples can be misleading for modern readers. Facts about the general behaviour of the moon or the planets are, in Aristotle’s view, eternal truths about incorruptible objects. And Aquinas’s exposition of the Posterior Analytics is in line with that view. (But strictly speaking, Aquinas would say that the ‘necessary’ truths about nature are conditioned on God’s will, and that ‘eternal’, i.e. ‘sempiternal’, objects are incorruptible only for so long as God sustains them in existence.)

4. In the lecture where Aquinas discusses scientia of truths that are so only for-the-most part (ut in pluribus), but not all the time, he reminds us that demonstration is “only of universals” and so of what is true “always” (In PA I.16.8). Aquinas’s explanation of how there can be scientia of for-the-most-part truths seems to be that the demonstration starts from conditional universal truths as premises, something like “Necessarily, if cause C is present, and impediments D1, D2, … are absent, then E occurs.” He says that such demonstrations should be organised “so that from universal propositions is inferred a universal conclusion, removing those things in which there can be a lack [of universality], whether of time or of the cause.” (In PA I.16.8).\textsuperscript{135} So while such a scientia is based on the natural tendencies of things, and concerns causes which do not infallibly bring about their effects, but can be impeded, it is not in any way probabilistic. And none of the conditions in the definition of scientia simpliciter has been relaxed. It is just that the necessary truths of which one gains scientia include conditions that allow for a cause being impeded.

It seems, then, that every kind of scientia in Aquinas’s commentary on the Posterior Analytics is scientia of universal and necessary truths. And this is the account of scientia he references elsewhere when epistemology is his main concern.

\textsuperscript{135} See also In PA II.7.2, II.9.11, and II.15.2. See Wallace (1974) for his explanation of Aquinas’s solution to the problem of having scientia of ut in pluribus truths in the natural sciences.
Chapter 5
Testimonial Trust and Trustworthiness

5.0 Introduction

Arguably we get a lot of our knowledge from testimony, and arguably much testimonial knowledge is had on the basis of trust.\(^1\) It is common to think that such trust is based in some way on judging the speaker trustworthy.\(^2\) Epistemologists who deploy the notions of trust and trustworthiness seldom explain them in detail.\(^3\) But ethicists do, and they typically focus on trust and trustworthiness as subjects of normative evaluation in a way that distinguishes them from ‘mere reliance’ and ‘mere reliability’.\(^4\) Annette Baier’s famous example is that of Kant’s neighbours, who could rely on his regular walks as an indication of the time. If he slept in one day they might feel disappointed with him “but not let down by him, let alone had their trust betrayed” (1986: 235). Much more could be

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\(^2\) See McMyler (2011: chap. 4) and Keren (2014) for arguments that trust is ‘doxastic’ or ‘cognitive’ in the sense that it is essential to trusting A to φ that one believes A trustworthy.

\(^3\) Two notable exceptions are McMyler (2011) and Faulkner (2011). McMyler says that in testimony the goodwill a speaker has toward the hearer is the willingness to respond to challenges to the hearer’s testimony-based belief deferred to her by the hearer (2011: 91ff, 103, 128f). But if that willingness is not based on the speaker’s conscientiousness or competence, it is not a very good epistemic reason. Truthfulness provides a better epistemic reason to trust a speaker. Faulkner’s notion’s of ‘predictive trust’ and ‘affective trust’ are very different from the kind of trust I am concerned with. ‘Predictive trust’ is a case of mere reliance. ‘Affective trust’ is an audience’s attempt to elicit speaker reliability, by appeal to social norms that call for trustworthiness. (Others call this ‘therapeutic trust’.) My account spells out in more detail what it is that our social norms call for in such cases, and covers other cases of trusting (e.g., when the speaker doesn’t even know that the hearer exists). My account also excludes cases when the speaker is merely reliable out of fear of the consequences of flouting the social norms. See Pettit (1995) on such ‘trust-reliability’.

said for this distinction, but for the purposes of this chapter I will just point to two normative aspects of trust and trustworthiness that intuitively do distinguish them from mere reliance and reliability: (1) Failure to be trustworthy leaves one open to the charge of betrayal, whereas failure to be merely reliable does not. I am right to feel betrayed by my friend when I trust her with a precious crystal vase and she breaks it; but it makes no sense for me to feel betrayed by a shelf I had merely relied on to hold another precious crystal vase, but which fell and broke it. (2) Trustworthiness is something admirable to which one can aspire, whereas mere reliability or predictability is not. You do not get to be trustworthy by being reliably stupid or rude.  

It is possible to gain testimonial knowledge by merely relying on a speaker, taking her to be a reliable source of truth, the way one relies on a thermometer. Such is the reliance of inductive inference in testimonial opinion. But here I will focus on developing an account of the trustworthiness that is part of a hearer’s good grounds for trusting (rather than merely relying on) a speaker for the truth, as in testimonial faith. Taking these two normative aspects to be constraints on a theory of testimonial trustworthiness, I examine three recent treatments of testimonial trustworthiness as foils, showing how they fail to meet these two constraints, and so are too broad. I then argue that an Aristotelian alternative based on Aquinas’s account of truthfulness not only does better, but also explains the appeal of the other three views. I then defend this account from the charge that it is too narrow, and explain its role in giving trust (or faith) an epistemic advantage over mere reliance (or opinion).

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5 See Baier (1986: 2). The vase example is from Hawley (2014: 2). Here are two further reasons for distinguishing trustworthiness from mere reliability: (i) Trust’s opposite, distrust, is not just the lack of trust or reliance but involves an expectation that someone will be untrustworthy (Hawley 2014: 10); one might rely on an inveterate liar, when there is no better alternative, while nevertheless distrusting her. (ii) Trust itself can be praiseworthy, and a failure to trust can be blameworthy. If you find out later (from her secret diary) that your friend did not trust you even while she had to rely on you, you have grounds for being offended.
5.1 Three Recent Accounts

Elizabeth Fricker has been known for defending the reductivist view that the justification of testimonial belief can be reduced to inferential justification. But sometimes she talks as if she gives a greater role to trust, distinguishing testimonial trust from mere inferential reliance on the testimony of another:

When I take another’s word for it that P, I trust her in a way that makes my relation to her different from when I treat the fact of her apparent confident belief that P as one piece of evidence to be weighed with the rest. I take her utterance at face value, as nothing less than what it purports to be, an assurance that P, and an expression of knowledge. I treat my teller with respect, in a way that I do not when I treat her expressed belief merely as defeasible evidence. One might say that I treat her as an end, not merely as a means. (2006: 607, emphasis added)

When a hearer trusts a speaker, she not only takes the speaker’s utterance at face value, as an expression of knowledge, but does so out of ‘respect’. Trusting is not just a matter of believing that the speaker has expressed her knowledge on the evidence; by “belief in the trustworthiness of the teller” a hearer commits herself to believing the speaker. However, the testimonial trustworthiness of the speaker, on Fricker’s account, does not involve any kind of commitment to the speaker, but seems to be a kind of mere reliability.

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6 Fricker (2006: 601): “The key positive point is that belief in the trustworthiness of the teller is a normative commitment incurred, in believing what one is told on the basis of trust in the teller – that is, believing what she says because one takes her act at face value, and forms belief on her say-so, taking her to speak from knowledge.”
[An audience’s] belief about T [the teller] which constitutes her trust, antecedent to her utterance, is something like this: T is such that not easily would she assert that P, vouch for the truth of P, unless she knew that P. Call this dispositional property of T her trustworthiness with regard to P. (600, emphasis added)

The trustworthiness of a speaker is crucial to Fricker’s account of how testimonial knowledge (from tellings) is grounded: if a hearer knows that the speaker is trustworthy (in the sense that not easily would she assert that P unless she knew that P), and that the speaker has asserted P to the hearer, then the hearer is in “an epistemic position to know that S knows that P” and “thereby has a basis for knowledgeable belief that P herself” (595). Let’s suppose for now that justification along these lines does enable a hearer to gain testimonial knowledge. Does Fricker’s account of trustworthiness meet our two constraints?

It does not, since in many cases one might judge that such a counterfactual is true about a speaker, without judging the speaker trustworthy in a way that is admirable, and without leaving oneself open to betrayal. Suppose that Harry, the torture expert, judges that Sam has passed the breaking point past which not easily would he tell Harry that P unless he knew that P. (In all my examples, speakers’ names will start with ‘S’, and hearers’ names with ‘H’.) This seems to me not a judgment about Sam’s trustworthiness, but rather a judgment that, given the state he is in, Sam is merely reliable. The same problem will arise any time the speaker’s reliability results primarily from compulsion (e.g., hypnotism) or from non-virtuous motivation (e.g., fear of a fact-checker). So Harry does not trust Sam, and does not leave himself open to betrayal, because Harry’s believing Sam is

\[\text{\footnotesize See Faulkner (2011: 61) for a description of a hypnotism case.}\]
not based on taking Sam to be trustworthy, as Sam is not admirably motivated to say what he does.

Katherine Hawley gives a narrower account of trustworthiness, focused not just on reliability in speaking from knowledge, but reliability in meeting a normative commitment to speak from knowledge. On her general view of trust, “To trust someone to do something is to believe that she has a commitment to doing it, and to rely upon her to meet that commitment” (2012: 10). Trustworthiness in any particular case, then, is reliability in fulfilling a particular commitment; while trustworthiness in general is a general reliability to fulfill the commitments one takes on (15-16). This gives Hawley a plausible way to explain why we hold asserters to a knowledge norm. It is natural, she says, to think that by making an assertion one acquires a commitment (by mutual expectation and convention) to speak truly and sincerely. “People can betray our trust through either error or deceit, and part of trustworthiness is the attempt to avoid making assertions where you lack knowledge” (17). The torture case I mentioned earlier is not a problem for Hawley’s account, because no one acquires a commitment to speak sincerely and truly by being tortured; hence Hawley does not have to say that Harry the torture expert takes Sam to be trustworthy.

Hawley’s account uses a particular conception of commitment which makes her account of trustworthiness problematic. Commitments are normative, but not psychological: you can remain ‘committed’ to doing something while having decided not to do it (10). And one doesn’t have to commit any particular act in order to acquire a commitment: commitments can be “implicit or explicit, weighty or trivial, conferred by roles and external circumstances, default or acquired, welcome or unwelcome” (11). According to Hawley, mutual expectation and convention give rise to commitment unless one takes steps to disown it (11). Further, when you trust someone, you need not rely on a commitment made to you, but just “to someone or other” (11). Since commitments are not psychological,
someone can be reliable in meeting a commitment either without knowing about it, or without caring about it. Either way, that person is still not trustworthy, because not admirably motivated to meet her commitment.

Consider Sid the criminal. Sid phones Holly, a fellow criminal, and says that he will meet her at noon the next day. By making such an assertion, Sid has taken on a normative commitment to speak from his knowledge about his plans for the next day. Sid is reliable in speaking the truth about such things, not because he has any loyalty to Holly or camaraderie with the gang of which Holly is a member, or for any other admirable motive. Sid simply thinks that telling Holly the truth in this case will make him the most money. If Sid had thought that lying would make him the most money, he would have lied. So while Sid is (merely) reliable in meeting such a normative commitment to speak the truth, his assertions do not flow from the right disposition, so he has failed the admirability constraint on trustworthiness. Now suppose Holly comes to know this about Sid. In fact, Sid outright tells Holly what his motives are. Then Holly is no longer in a position to trust Sid, even though she is still in a position to rely on Sid to meet his normative commitment in this case. In such a case Sid’s reliability has failed the betrayal constraint as well. That is, while Holly can rely on Sid to tell her the truth, she no longer can complain that he has betrayed her trust, should he fail to do so. (This case can be generalized to show that general trustworthiness should not be construed as general reliability to meet commitments. For instance, suppose that all of Sid’s normative commitments to speak from his knowledge have excellent pragmatic payoffs, and he meets those commitments only to get those payoffs. He is motivated only by the thought that “honesty is the best policy”, but otherwise doesn’t care whether his hearers get the truth from him. Then he is not trustworthy, even though he is very reliable. And someone who knew this about him could rely on him, but not trust him.) The moral of the story is that trustworthiness requires more than mere reliability, even mere reliability in meeting normative commitments.
Linda Zagzebski gives an even narrower account of testimonial trustworthiness, focused on the motives of the speaker. She claims that what makes one trustworthy is conscientiousness, where ‘conscientiousness’ covers various virtuous dispositions: it can be either an epistemic virtue, aimed at the truth, or a moral virtue, aimed at some moral good. In testimonial trust, Zagzebski argues, trusting a speaker involves believing that the speaker has both an epistemic and a moral virtue. Testimonial trust requires not just “trust in accuracy”, i.e., trust that the speaker’s belief is accurate but also “trust in sincerity” (2012: 126). Neither one is sufficient on its own. For example, you might not trust the assertions of a confidence trickster, because you do not trust his sincerity, even if you trust his accuracy (you think he is very conscientious about what he believes). On the other hand, you might not trust your doting grandmother, because you do not trust her accuracy, even if you trust her sincerity (you think she is very conscientious about expressing what she believes). According to Zagzebski, “trust in testimony involves trust in sincerity as well as trust in accuracy” because a testifier “assumes responsibility … for both her accuracy and her sincerity” (126).

Zagzebski seems to think of accuracy and sincerity as independent conditions on trustworthiness, and seems to think of a speaker’s sincerity as her being conscientious to assert only what she believes. But if accuracy and sincerity are disconnected, then her account is liable to the same objections as Hawley’s account is. Sid the criminal is both accurate in his belief and sincere in expressing it. But Sid does not care about his hearer; he is not conscientious in the sense that he cares about whether he accurately represents his own knowledge to her. His ‘sincerity’, in this case, is purely self-interested and not virtuous. So the fact that Sid happens to have both accuracy and sincerity of the kind Zagzebski requires does not suffice to make him trustworthy.
5.2 An Aristotelian Alternative

Now, I have not explored all the possible responses that could be made to these counterexamples, nor represented the full complexity of Fricker’s, Hawley’s and Zagzebski’s views. But I have shown that their accounts face difficulties in meeting the admirability and betrayal constraints on testimonial trustworthiness. I propose an alternative account which better meets these two constraints. The alternative is simply that a speaker is trustworthy when she has an Aristotelian virtue of *truthfulness*.

Aristotle famously argues that a virtue is always a mean between two extremes. In support of this view he gives us a tour of various pairs of vices, for which he finds the virtue in the middle. When he considers the vicious pair of boastfulness on the one hand and self-deprecation on the other, he says that the boastful man claims to have what he doesn’t, and the self-deprecator claims not to have what he does, “while the man who observes the mean is one who calls a thing by its own name, being *truthful* both in life and word, owning to what he has, and neither more nor less.”8 Such a man is not just truthful in order to keep an agreement, or as a matter of justice, but “is true both in word and in life because his character is such.” He “loves truth, and is truthful where nothing is at stake” and so “will still more be truthful where something is at stake”.9 The main point I take from all of this is that truthfulness is, for Aristotle, a virtue of accurate self-representation. As Aquinas says, truthfulness is the virtue by which “a human shows himself as he is, by word and deed” (ST I.16.4 ad 3).10

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8 *Nicomachean Ethics* 4.7.2-4 (W. D. Ross trans.)
9 *Nicomachean Ethics* 4.7.7-8 (W. D. Ross trans.) Aquinas says truthfulness is motivated by love of truth at In Sent III.38.1.1 ad 3.
10 “[V]irtus quae dicitur veritas, non est veritas communis, sed quaedam veritas secundum quam homo in dictis et factis ostendit se ut est.” See also In Sent I.19.5.1c, In Sent II.42.2.4 ad 3, ST I.22.2 ad 2, In NE 4.15.5.
Aquinas extends this account to cover accurate representation of one’s own knowledge.

[S]ince knowable truths, inasmuch as they are known by us, are about us and pertain to us, the truthfulness of teaching can pertain to this virtue, and whatever other truthfulness by which one manifests by word or deed what one knows.\footnote{“Veruntamen quia vera scibilia, inquantum sunt a nobis cognita, circa nos sunt et ad nos pertinent; secundum hoc veritas doctrinae potest ad hanc virtutem pertinere, et quaecumque alia veritas qua quis manifestat verbo vel facto quod cognoscit.” Aquinas’s Latin translation for Aristotle’s διηθετικός is veritas. I translate both διηθετικός and veritas as ‘truthfulness’. Aquinas also says “veritas, sive veracitas” when describing this virtue (ST II-II.109.1c).} (ST II-II.109.3 ad 3)

The main point I take from this is that truthfulness is, for Aquinas, a virtue of accurately representing one’s knowledge. Truthfulness is more demanding than sincerity, but less demanding than competence on a subject.

I can rely on my doting grandmother to say only what she sincerely believes, but the reason I don’t trust her in everything she says is that I cannot rely on her to assert only what she knows. Truthfulness requires not only that one aim at the truth, but also that one refrain from speaking what one is uncertain of, in order not to misrepresent one’s knowledge. Aquinas’s example is the man Jesus cured of congenital blindness. That man “showed himself truthful, not asserting uncertainties” by saying “he made mud and put it on my eyes” since Jesus had made mud from spit, which [the blind man] wasn’t aware of. But that [Jesus] had made mud and put it on his eyes he learned by the sense of touch,
and thus he did not say ‘he made mud from spit’ but simply ‘he made mud
and put it on my eyes’.\(^{12}\) (In Joh 9.2)

In order to be truthful, a speaker should aim to meet a moral requirement that, for legal
witnesses, has been made into a formal requirement: that the speaker represent as certain
only that of which she is certain, and represent as doubtful what she takes to be
doubtful.\(^{13}\) Human society depends on testimony, and so truthfulness is not just a virtue
to which we aspire, but something which in some way we owe to others.\(^{14}\) Hence some
form of the legal requirement on witnesses is a moral requirement on us all.

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\(^{12}\) “Secundo recitat factum, dicens ‘lutum fecit, et unxit oculos meos’; ubi se veracem ostendit, non asserens
incerta. Dominus enim lutum fecerat ex sputo, quod quidem iste nescivit; sed lutum factum, et oculis
superpositum, per sensum tactus didicit; et ideo non dixit ‘lutum fecit ex sputo’ sed simpliciter ‘lutum fecit,
et unxit oculos meos’.”

\(^{13}\) Aquinas describes the legal requirement in ST II-II.70.4 ad 1: “In giving testimony one ought not to
assert as certain, as knowing (sciens), that of which one is not certain. One should present the doubtful
under doubt and assert as certain that of which one is certain. But since one sometimes takes oneself to be
certain of what is false, through the fallibility of human memory, if someone, considering with due care,
thinks he is certain of what is false, he does not commit a mortal sin in asserting this, because he did not
give false testimony per se and from his intention, but by accident, against what he intended.” (“\[I\]n
testimonio ferendo non debet homo pro certo asserere, quasi sciens, id de quo certus non est, sed dubium
debet sub dubio proferre, et id de quo certus est pro certo asserere. Sed quia contingit ex labilitate
humanae memoriae quod reputat se homo quandoque certum esse de eo quod falsum est, si aliquis, cum
debita sollicitudine recogitans, existimet se certum esse de eo quod falsum est, non peccat mortaliter hoc
asserens, quia non dicit falsum testimonium per se et ex intentione, sed per accidens, contra id quod
intendit.”)

\(^{14}\) II-II.109.3 ad 1: “Because man is a social animal, one man naturally owes to another that without which
human society cannot be preserved. But humans could not live together unless they believed each other,
manifesting the truth to each other as to themselves. And thus the virtue of truthfulness has in some way
the character of a debt.” (“\[Q\]uia homo est animal sociale, naturaliter unus homo debet alteri id sine quo
societas humana conservari non posse. Non autem possent homines ad invicem convivere nisi sibi invicem
crederent, tanquam sibi invicem veritatem manifestantibus. Et ideo virtus veritatis aliquo modo attendit
rationem debiti.”) Does this mean that all of our actions must perfectly represent what we are thinking in
order to be virtuous and right? Aquinas answers in the negative, when he allows for ambushes and other
kinds of non-linguistic deception. “An ambush is designed to deceive the enemy. But someone can be
deceived in two ways by the act or speech of another. First, by being told something false, or by having a
promise broken. And that is always unlawful. … Second, someone can be deceived by our word or deed
because we do not lay open our intent or understanding to him. We are not always required to do so, since
even in sacred doctrine many things are to be hidden, especially from infidels, so that they are not laughed
at …. Hence much more are our preparations for fighting our enemies to be hidden. … Nor is such an
ambush called ‘fraud’, nor is it contrary to justice or to a well-ordered will, since it would be an inordinate
will were someone to wish to hide nothing of his own from others.” (ST II-II.40.3c: “[I]nsidiae ordinantur
ad fallendum hostes. Dupliciter autem aliquis potest falli ex facto vel dicto alterius uno modo, ex eo quod ei
While truthfulness is more demanding than sincerity, it is less demanding than a
competence requirement, in that it does not require competence on the subject at hand. I
can trust truthful Tamara when she talks about bicycles, even though she is not an expert
on bicycles, because I can rely on her not to assert things of which she is uncertain, and to
admit it when she doesn’t know something. What truthfulness does require is
competence, under ordinary circumstances, to reliably sense whether one knows
something.

The clause ‘under ordinary circumstances’ is important. We are only human, and
cannot be expected to guarantee our assertions against all hazards. If last night
Tamara’s bicycle was the first stolen in her neighborhood in fifty years, and this morning
she says – intending to represent herself as knowing only what she does know – that her
bicycle is in the garage, then she has not failed to be truthful; she has simply fallen prey
to extraordinary circumstances. What will count as ordinary circumstances will differ
from one speaker to the next, and from one domain to the next. Physicist Jan might be
ordinarily competent to sense whether she knows something about bosons, while it would
be exceptional for her to competently remember what clothes she wore yesterday. So
judging a speaker for truthfulness is complicated, except when common sense
psychological knowledge licences us to expect a speaker to be competent in sensing
whether she knows, e.g., her name, the current year, where she lives, what is in clear
view in front of her, etc.

Does trust on the assertion of a truthful speaker suffice for knowledge, or must we
add that the speaker is also knowledgeable, as a background condition? Under ordinary
dicitur falsum, vel non servatur promissum. Et istud semper est illicitum. ... Alio modo potest aliquis falli
ex dicto vel facto nostro, quia ei propositionem aut intellectum non aperimus. Hoc autem semper facere non
tenemur, quia etiam in doctrina sacra multa sunt occultanda, maxime infidelibus, ne irrideant .... Unde
multo magis ea quae ad impugnandum inimicos paramus sunt eis occultanda. ... Nec propriis huiusmodi
insidiae vocantur fraudes; nec iustitiae repugnant; nec ordinatae voluntati, esset enim inordinata voluntas
si aliquis vellet nihil sibi ab aliis occultari.”

15 This clause does not apply to the case of most concern to Aquinas, that of God. God cannot deceive nor
be deceived (see chapter 3, p. 148).
circumstances, a truthful speaker’s assertions will be knowledgeable, because she will refrain from representing herself as knowing something she does not, and she will be competent to judge whether she knows something. But in exceptional cases, the truthful speaker will not realize that she lacks the appropriate competence, and so may fail to be reliable. So if the audience has reason to suspect that the circumstances are extraordinary (relative to the speaker’s competence to know whether she knows something), the audience has reasons not to trust a speaker who is generally truthful, and these reasons may be sufficiently strong to prevent the audience from gaining knowledge even from a truthful speaker who speaks knowledgeable.

Does someone who modestly refrain from saying what she knows fail to be truthful? Not necessarily. Aiming at the mean sometimes requires aiming more toward one extreme than the other, in order to correct for natural human tendencies. Humans are naturally more inclined to represent themselves as knowing more than they do, so truthfulness tends more toward self-deprecation. Suppose a brilliant physicist is asked whether \( p \), where \( p \) is a truth of physics which he alone knows, and he replies, “Oh, I don’t know” or “I’m guessing that \( p \)”. If his intent is modesty, his statement can be virtuous. But the usual Aristotelian caveats apply – his action has to be appropriate for the circumstances. For example, if harm could result from the physicist hiding his knowledge (e.g., communicating his knowledge to his audience could save an astronaut from dying), then the physicist should stick to representing exactly what he knows on the subject.

In summary, the following analysis of testimonial truthfulness seems to capture the most important aspects of this virtue, as they apply to testimonial cases:

A speaker has testimonial truthfulness in some domain if and only if she

\[\text{(16) See In NE 2.10, where Aquinas comments on Nicomachean Ethics II.8.1109a1-19.}\]
\[\text{(17) In NE 4.15.10, where Aquinas comments on Nicomachean Ethics IV.7.1127b7-9.}\]
\[\text{(18) I am not aware of a passage where Aristotle or Aquinas says this, but it is in keeping with what Aquinas says about presuming the innocence of others. See above, chapter 3, p. 150f.}\]
(a) aims (with at least due care and at least ordinary competence) at knowing
the truth in that domain out of a love of the truth for its own sake, and
(b) aims (with at least due care and at least ordinary competence) to present
herself as knowing only what she does know in that domain, for her
hearers’ sake.

Both (a) and (b) are admirable aims. And should a speaker invite others’ trust, or leave
herself open to being trusted, those who trust her will have a right to complain of
betrayal, if she turns out not to have spoken from those motives. So our two constraints
on trustworthiness are met.

Some epistemologists have argued that assertions are held to a knowledge norm,
that is, there is a norm that one must assert $p$ only if one knows that $p$.\(^{19}\) If this is because
in making an assertion one represents oneself as knowing that $p$, then a moral obligation
to be truthful explains why asserters are held to this norm. Epistemologists who focus on
testimony often identify the speech act of telling as the act by which a speaker presents
herself as knowing something to her hearers, and to distinguish tellings from mere
assertions.\(^{20}\) If this is right, then truthfulness is in part a virtue of producing tellings for
the right reasons.

Now we are in a position to see how this Aristotelian alternative meets the
requirements laid down by Fricker, Hawley, and Zagzebski, but without being subject to
the same counterexamples. A truthful speaker, $S$, will satisfy Fricker’s counterfactual
‘not easily would $S$ assert that $P$ unless $S$ knew that $P$’, because $S$’s truthfulness is a

\(^{19}\) See Williamson (2000: 243ff) for a well-known argument for this view. See Weiner (2007) for an
overview of the debate about norms of assertion.

\(^{20}\) Some epistemologists who agree on this general approach, but disagree greatly on the details of how
belief on tellings is justified, are Hinchman (2005), Moran (2005b), E. Fricker (2006), McMyler (2011),
Zagzebski (2012), E. Fricker (2012), M. Fricker (2012). It seems plausible to me that speakers sometimes
make assertions that are not held to a knowledge norm or truthfulness norm, because they are not made in
such a way that the speaker presents herself as knowing. For example, suppose I’m watching the opening
of a football match with my dad and I assert “Brazil is going to win.” My dad has no grounds for faulting
me in making that assertion, even though I don’t know whether it is true, because it is obvious to both of us
that I don’t know whether it’s true, and that I am just using the assertion to express a strong belief.
disposition that prevents her from misrepresenting her knowledge. A truthful speaker will also reliably fulfill the normative commitments she acquires in asserting P, commitments (if Hawley is right) to refrain from asserting things she doesn’t know, because her truthfulness disposes her to have accurate beliefs and to accurately represent them to others. Finally, a truthful speaker will be conscientious about both her accuracy and her sincerity, because she will care about knowing the truth for its own sake, and care about giving that truth to others for their sake. Thus, the Aristotelian account of truthfulness not only meets the admirability and betrayal constraints, but also explains the appeal of these other accounts.

One might wonder how this Aristotelian account deals with trusting eavesdroppers. If an eavesdropper trusts a speaker who turns out not to have been truthful, has the speaker betrayed the eavesdropper she didn’t even know about? Suppose Ann overhears Bob present himself as knowing p to Claire. Bob invites Claire to trust him on p, and she does, but unfortunately he lied and p is false. Clearly Claire has a right to complain of betrayal, thanks to his invitation. But does Ann have a right to complain of betrayal, if she has also trusted Bob for the truth, even though he hasn’t explicitly invited her to? Ann’s situation is somewhere between that of Claire (directly betrayed by Bob) and someone else who doesn’t trust Bob, but nevertheless relies on him for the truth, and so has only the right to be disappointed at having depended on an unreliable source, the way Kant’s neighbors would be disappointed but not let down or betrayed if he were to sleep in one morning. Miranda Fricker analyzes such cases thus. Someone in Claire’s position has ‘second-personal trust’ and so opens herself up to full-fledged betrayal, while someone in Ann’s position has ‘third-personal trust’, and she has the right to complain, not of full-fledged betrayal, but of “ethical let-down” (2012: 257). Aristotle and Aquinas would explain the ethical let-down an eavesdropper experiences at finding a speaker untruthful by saying that humans have a natural need for society, and society depends on truthfulness. When Bob presents himself as knowing p to one member of

21 More recent authors have argued, with less metaphysical baggage, that our social practices depend on the reliability of testimony as a social institution. See Craig (1990), Dummett (1993), Williams (2002), Greco (2012).
his society, Claire, and invites her to trust him, then by means of conventions society has in place for the communication of knowledge, he has not just authorized Claire to depend on him, but has also authorized her to present \( p \) to others as something known.\(^{22}\) By representing himself as knowing that \( p \) to Claire, he has also authorized potential audiences of Claire to take \( p \) as known, and so has taken responsibility for the beliefs those potential audiences derive ultimately from his telling. Someone who publishes something as known in this way but fails to be truthful undermines the testimonial practices that make society possible, and to that degree does betray other members of society.\(^{23}\) And ordinarily, an eavesdropper is someone whom the speaker would consider a member of his audience’s potential audience. Thus there is a sense in which the speaker who fails to be trustworthy ordinarily betrays an eavesdropper (in this case Ann) who trusts him.\(^{24}\)

One might also wonder how this approach applies to speakers who fail to have knowledge, but still reasonably believe that they know, and invite others to believe them. Do such speakers betray their listeners? Suppose Sue is generally very reliable in knowing whether she knows something, and is generally very truthful. But unbeknownst

\(^{22}\) Brandom says “In asserting a claim, one not only authorizes further assertions (for oneself and for others) but undertakes a responsibility, for one commits oneself to being able to vindicate the original claim by showing that one is entitled to make it” (1994: 171). Greco (2012) gives an explanation (based on Craig 1990) of how audiences are authorized to pass on testimonial knowledge to others. On his account, society requires more rigorous justification for believing an ‘original source’, such as an eyewitness, but there are social institutions in place for giving such knowledge a “stamp of approval” and making the easy flow of such knowledge to others reliable.

\(^{23}\) We can see something like this at work in Aquinas’s claim that “in human community it ought to be that one person use another as himself when he is not self-sufficient, so it ought to be that he stand toward those things which another knows, and are unknown to him, the way he stands to those he knows for himself. Thus faith, by which one man believes the sayings of another, is necessary in human interaction. It is also the ‘foundation of justice’ as Cicero says in De officiis [1.23], which is why no lie is without sin, since every lie detracts from this faith which is so necessary” (In BDT 3.1c. See chapter 3, p. 120, note 9 for the Latin). Note that a neo-Aristotelian account of truthfulness can keep the idea that a speaker who fails to be truthful undermines society but explain this ‘genealogically’ rather than deriving it from claims about human nature. Some well-known attempts to take this route are Craig (1990) and Williams (2002). Faulkner (2011: chap. 6) modifies Williams’s account. See also Faulkner (2014).

\(^{24}\) Hawley and Zagzebski might be able to appeal to similar considerations to say that their views meet the betrayal constraint. But mere reliability in meeting one’s normative commitments, or in speaking sincerely or competently, is not admirable in the way that truthfulness is admirably aimed at speaking the truth out of love of truth and care for one’s audience.
to her, she is not very reliable about events in her life from before ten years ago, and she has not had much chance to find out how unreliable she is on such matters. One day she tells Hal that she learned to ski at age five; it seems to her that she knows this, but in fact she learned to ski at age seven. (Hal is writing a biography of Sue, and it is important to him to get such facts right.) Sue has met our conditions for testimonial truthfulness, by aiming to know the truth and aiming to present herself as knowing only what she does know, for the sake of her audience. But while she thought she was operating under ordinary circumstances, she was not. When Hal finds out about her mistake he might at first feel betrayed, but if he learns that Sue was doing her best to represent her knowledge to him, and that Sue is not as competent as she thought in sensing whether she knows about events in her life from more than a decade ago, he should respond to it as an ‘honest’ mistake, and not complain of betrayal. It is not as if Sue had switched teams; she was on the same team as Hal, in pursuit of the truth, but due to a fallibility she was unaware of, the team failed to reach its goal on this occasion. So Sue’s ignorance is not culpable ignorance. Does this mean that Hal has no right of complaint against Sue? Not quite. Sue not only was truthful in her aims, but also performed the act of inviting Hal to trust her, thus taking responsibility for his belief being true. She failed in that responsibility, and Hal can complain of this. However, Sue has a very good excuse, which mitigates the degree to which Hal can complain of her failure. In law, a defendant not deemed negligent can nonetheless be held strictly liable for damages for which she was unknowingly responsible. We might say similarly that in this case, while Sue was not negligent, she was strictly liable for Hal’s false belief. Sue can try to make up for having failed in her responsibility by taking extra pains to find out exactly when she did learn to ski, and by being more careful to give Hal the truth in the future.

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25 See Zagzebski (2012: 123) for a similar account. In Strawson’s famous essay “Freedom and Resentment” (1962), he notes that participant reactive attitudes, like the attitude of resenting a betrayal, can be suspended or modified when the putative betrayer acted from goodwill, but went wrong accidentally, and so can be excused. For a fuller discussions of excuses, see Baron (2006), Botterell (2009) and Peels (forthcoming).

5.3 Two Worries about the Aristotelian Account

While the other accounts were too broad, one might think this Aristotelian account is too narrow, either (1) by excluding genuine cases of testimonial trustworthiness, or (2) by having too inflexible a notion of a virtue. 27

1. A speaker need not be truthful in order to have goodwill toward the hearer, perhaps by encapsulating the hearer’s interests in her own, 28 or by responding to a hearer’s ‘epistemic needs’, 29 and so meet our two constraints. 30 For example, suppose that atheist Sandy, in conversation with her religious friend Hamish, helps him sort out a question of Biblical exegesis, even though Sandy doesn’t think that uncovering the meaning of the Biblical text is truth-revealing the way Hamish does. Sandy tells Hamish, “But that passage is meant figuratively, not literally.” Suppose her saying so is an expression of an admirable goodwill for Hamish (e.g. amiability), and it would be appropriate for Hamish to react with a feeling of betrayal, should it turn out that Sandy had not had such goodwill, for

27 There are a number of other aspects which require clarification, which I cannot address here. I’ll just mention two of them. [1] It is not obvious how we can come to justifiably believe or know that speakers have truthfulness. Some argue that we judge such character traits by means of an inference to the best explanation (Lyons 1997 and Thagard 2005). But perhaps we can read such character traits in others more directly. Consider the psychological and epistemological literature on ‘mind-reading’ which has arisen out of studies of autistic children. An autistic child might infer that his mother is sad because it is probable that someone who cries is sad, and his mother is crying; a non-autistic child knows his mother is sad more directly, by ‘mind-reading’ (see Gallagher 2001, 2005; Gallese 2005; Goldman 2009, 2011; Moore et al. 1997; Sperber and Mercier 2012). It might be that virtues can be sensed in a similar way. [2] It is not obvious how to extend this account, which is about the virtue of an individual speaker, to describe trust in a group or institution, since it is not obvious that groups or institutions can have virtues. Miranda Fricker has developed an account of group testimony on which “a group testifier is constituted, at least in part, by way of a joint commitment to trustworthiness as to whether p (or whatever range of p-like questions might delineate the body’s expertise, formal remit, or informal range of responsibility)” (2012: 271-272). And she thinks of trustworthiness with regard to doing A as being competent to do A for the right sorts of reason (2012: 257). Such an account could easily be developed to allow for the Aristotelian truthfulness of group testifiers. Other approaches to group testimony that might be adapted to an Aristotelian virtue account are those which explain stable group dispositions in terms of a shared point of view (Zagzebski 2012: chapter 7) or shared intentions (Searle 1990; Bratman 1992).


29 See Hinchman (2012b).

30 Other well-known accounts which differentiate trust from mere reliance by some kind of goodwill are Baier (1986) and Jones (1996). For an overview of the literature on trust, see McLeod (2011).
instance, had she just been stringing him along to make fun of him. In this instance Sandy meets our two constraints for trustworthiness, in spite of not speaking from knowledge, so her statement does not manifest truthfulness. But is this a case of testimonial trustworthiness? Even though Sandy is trustworthy in responding to some of Hamish’s needs, she has not here shown herself trustworthy in responding to his need for the truth. So her trustworthiness is not a case of the testimonial trustworthiness audiences count on when trusting speakers for the truth.

2. Two common charges against Aristotelian virtue ethics are that (a) it implausibly posits broad-based, stable dispositions in a way discredited by situational social psychology, \(^{31}\) and (b) it focuses only on ideal cases, and so is not applicable to ordinary cases. \(^{32}\) In response, I should point out that in giving my Aristotelian account of truthfulness, I have focused on features specific to truthfulness, and have not appealed to general features Aristotle ascribes to all the virtues in common, except when I appealed to the idea that a virtue aims for the mean between two extremes. My account is not committed to endorsing all the other general features of Aristotelian virtues.

At the same time, it seems to me that the conditions on truthfulness I have articulated are nuanced enough to resist these accusations. I have not focused only on the ideal case, but on truthfulness under ordinary circumstances, and what happens under extraordinary circumstances. I have also recognized that truthfulness can be domain-specific. These nuances flow naturally from the constraints Aquinas recognizes on requiring truthfulness of fallible human beings when he describes the virtue of truthfulness (ST II-II.109) and requirements on witnesses at court (ST II-II.70). So the situationist challenge to Aristotelian virtues,


\(^{32}\) Russell (2014) mentions this as a common but mistaken way of reading Aristotle.
at least in the case of truthfulness, is overblown. What I will do now is indicate a few more of the subtleties of Aquinas’s account of the virtues, and how those subtleties play out in the case of truthfulness. Aquinas recognizes that (i) virtues come in degrees of stability, (ii) stable virtues can be impeded by circumstances or choices, and (iii) virtues come in degrees of strength.

(i) Aquinas, like Aristotle, thinks that the way to grow a habit is by doing the acts proper to that habit (In NE 2.4.6). A child plays a scale on the piano, not at first just as a pianist does (from awareness of what she is doing, and in order to play beautifully, and from a stable disposition), but gradually more and more so. Just as we are naturally capable of learning crafts and sciences, Aquinas says, we are naturally capable of learning to be virtuous (In NE 2.4.7). So virtues grow through various degrees of stability. Also, virtues can be praised more or less, in accordance with how stable they are (CR 12). So virtues, for Aquinas, come in degrees of stability. Truthfulness in particular is a learned habit, and can be had more or less stably, as it disposes one to aim for the truth and for representing one’s knowledge to others over more or fewer possible situations, and in more or fewer domains.

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33 Daniel Russell (2009: chaps. 8 to 10) and (2014) has argued that it is a mistake to read Aristotle as the kind of dispositionist discredited by recent social psychology. Situationalist social psychology, Russell says, actually supports an Aristotelian approach to virtue, because both focus on the relation between an agent’s inner state and a situation as construed by that agent. For Aristotle virtuous action aims at certain goals, and the way in which one ought to meet those goals will change depending on circumstances, which is why all virtues require intelligent guidance (phronesis) about the specifics of virtuous action. (Consider, for example, Aristotle’s claim that the mean between any two extremes that is relevant to virtue is the mean relative to us, and so relative to circumstances (Nicomachean Ethics II.6.1106a26-b24) and Aristotle’s claim that all virtues have goals and are guided in meeting those goals by practical intelligence (phronesis) (Nicomachean Ethics VI.13.1144b10-17, VI.1.1138b18-34, VI.5.1140a24-31, VI.12.1144a6-9). Aristotle thinks of the virtues not just as ideals to aim at, but as dispositions we work on, and improve at (Russell 2014, cites Nicomachean Ethics II.1-2). For another defense of Aristotelian virtue ethics in general, see Annas (2011).

34 “[S]ince the praise of a deed is rooted in the will, an external deed is rendered more praiseworthy to the degree it proceeds from a better will. And among the conditions of a good will is that the will be firm and stable, which is why Proverbs 13:4 blames the lazy saying ‘the lazy man wills and doesn’t will’. Thus the more an external deed is made stable in the good, the more it is rendered praiseworthy.” ("Cum laus operis ex radice voluntatis dependeat, tanto exterius opus laudabilius redditur, quanto ex meliori voluntate procedit. Inter aliam autem conditiones bonae voluntatis una est ut sit voluntas firma et stabile; unde et in vituperium pigrorum inducitur quod habetur Prov. XIII, 4: ‘vult et non vult piger’. Tanto igitur opus exterius laudabilius redditur et magis meritum, quanto voluntas eius magis stabilitur in bono.")
Aquinas also thinks the acts of a stable habit are caused by the habit in a quasi-natural way. You could say that a well-established habit is ‘second nature’ to you. Nevertheless, just as natural causes necessitate their effects only on the condition that they are not impeded, so stable habits cause their acts reliably, but only on the condition that they are not impeded (In Sent IV.33.3.1 ad 3). An example of such an impediment is venial sin. A mortal sin is an act that ‘kills’ (and so removes) the supernatural virtue of charity (roughly, love of God), whereas a venial sin is one that only impedes it. Once one’s virtue theory allows for internal impediments of these kinds, it can explain why a stable virtue does not manifest itself more often. Thus, while a speaker may be generally truthful, and so generally aim at the truth and at representing her knowledge to others, she might nevertheless have her virtue impeded in some instance, either (a) blamelessly, or (b) in a blameworthy way, but not in a way that removes her general disposition of truthfulness. For example, she might be impeded in her ordinary competence at aiming for and representing the truth, even under what I have called ordinary circumstances, but fail to be truthful due to, say, a brain malfunction. On the other hand, she might be blinded in some particular instance by bias or self-interest or laziness, even though she is, as we say, not that kind of a person, and would not likely repeat her mistake.

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35 “The act of a virtue requires not only discretion on the part of reason, but also a certain firmness from a habit inclining to its act in the way of nature [per modum naturae]. And just as natural causes, for their part, are ordered immovably to their proper effects (which is why we can say that stone falls downward perpetually, although it can sometimes be impeded), so also the habit of a virtue, for its part, is unchangeably ordered to its proper act, although sometimes the agent acts contrary to the habit.” (In actu virtutis non solum requiritur discretio ex parte rationis, sed etiam firmitas quaedam ex habitu inclinante ad actum per modum naturae. Et sicut causae naturales, quantum est de se, ordinatae sunt immobile ad effectus proprios; ratione cujus dicere possimus, lapis perpetuo descendit deorsum, quamvis hoc quandoque impediri possit: ita et habitus virtutis, quantum est de se, immobile ordinatur ad actum proprium, quamvis quandoque habens actum virtutis contrarium agat.)

36 “A mortal sin binds the soul absolutely, inasmuch as it prevents it from returning to the order of charity, but a venial sin binds the soul in a certain regard [only], inasmuch as it impedes the virtue from acting.” (QDM 14.2 ad 7: “Pecatum mortale simpliciter ligat animam, in quantum impedit eam ne per seipsam possit redire in ordinem caritatis; sed peccatum veniale ligat animam secundum quid, in quantum impedit virtutem in actu.”)

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(iii) Finally, Aquinas recognizes that a virtue can come in different degrees of strength, varying in ‘intensity’. That is, one person can be “better disposed” to act virtuously than another, whether naturally, or by habituation, or because of having better judgment (ST I-II.66.1c). Thus, a speaker can either be minimally truthful by aiming at the truth and representing what she knows to others with no more than due care and ordinary competence, or she could be more truthful by being painstakingly careful, or introspectively acute.

5.4 Testimonial Trust and Judging Truthfulness

The focus of this chapter has been on what it means for a speaker to be testimonially trustworthy. Now let’s see what truthfulness has to do with testimonial trust. Just as we have followed ethicists by focusing on a semi-technical conception of trustworthiness, as something morally admirable, the failure of which can leave one open to a charge of betrayal, so we will focus on a semi-technical conception of trust as relying on the speaker in a way that leaves the audience open to the possibility of betrayal. I will follow the common view that trust is a three-place relation: A trusts person B to φ. In the testimonial case, A trusts person B to speak the truth about whether p.

37 “And on this point the Stoics were wrong to think that no one is virtuous unless he is fully disposed to virtue. To be virtuous one need not reach the exact mean of right reason, as the Stoics thought. It is enough to be near the mean, as is said in Nicomachean Ethics II.” (ST I-II.66.1c: “Et in hoc deficiebant Stoici, aestimantes nullum esse virtuosum dicendum, nisi qui summe fuerit dispositus ad virtutem. Non enim exigitur ad rationem virtutis, quod attingat rectae rationis medium in indivisibili, sicut Stoici putabant, sed sufficit prope medium esse, ut in II Ethic. dicitur.”) It is interesting that when we turn to the passage Aquinas has in mind (Nicomachean Ethics II.9.1109b18-24), we see that Aquinas has bent the passage to his own use. There Aristotle says we do not blame those who miss the mean by a little, for the epistemic reason that it is difficult to determine whether on any one occasion someone has hit the exact mean. But Aquinas gives a metaphysical reason why we do not blame those who miss the mean by a little: because they are still virtuous enough to be blameless, even though they have missed the mean to some degree. A passage that more clearly supports Aquinas’s reading is Metaphysics 5.22.1023a6-7, where Aristotle says “not every person is good or bad, just or unjust, but there is also something intermediate.” Aquinas comments on this passage (In M 5.20.21-22), but there too cites Nic. Eth. II.9.1109b18-24 in support of the metaphysical reason for thinking of virtues as coming in degrees. However, when Aquinas comments on the Nicomachean Ethics itself (In NE 2.11.11-13), he does not give this metaphysical argument.

One might think that all there is to trusting a speaker is believing what the speaker says, on the grounds that she is truthful. But this need not leave the audience open to the possibility of betrayal. For example, if A inductively infers for herself that what B says is true, taking ‘B is truthful’ as one of the premises, she merely relies on B, exploiting the fact that a truthful speaker is thereby reliable. Should B turn out not to be truthful, A has no right to complain of betrayal, but can blame only herself for her mistaken inference.

This is so even if B explicitly or implicitly issues an invitation to trust her. How a speaker issues such invitations is a difficult question, but I will assume that ordinarily a speaker invites her hearers to trust her for the truth of \( p \) by presenting herself as knowing that \( p \) (either in the second-personal way appropriate to her direct audience, or implicitly in a third-personal way appropriate to others who might hear of what she has to say).\(^{39}\) The hearer, Hank, may take the speaker, Sal, to be truthful, and recognize that Sal has invited him to trust her, and believe what she says because she is truthful, yet not trust her. Suppose, for example, that Sal has calculated the answer to a question, and gives Hank the answer ‘42’. Hank might infer that what Sal says is true, on the grounds that she is truthful, but decide not to take her word for it. For example, he might want to figure out for himself whether it is true, so that he need not depend on her, so rather than trusting, he continues to make his own calculations. (We could tinker with the case to come up with other reasons Hank might believe Sal on the grounds that she is truthful yet fail to trust her. Maybe he feels the stakes are too high to trust her; or he’s so emotionally

\(^{39}\) Others have given speech-act explanations of how speakers invite trust by means of tellings. See Hinchman (2005), E. Fricker (2006), Keren (2007), McMyler (2011), Faulkner (2011), E. Fricker (2012), M. Fricker (2012). Moran (2005b) is on the same topic, although rather than use the word ‘trust’ he prefers to say that his concern is with the way an audience ‘believes the speaker’ as a ‘direct object’ of belief, rather than merely believing that what the speaker says is true. I have said that ‘ordinarily’ one invites trust by presenting oneself as knowing. In some extraordinary circumstances this is not true. For example, answers to test questions are not invitations for the examiner to trust the examinee. And a speaker might use an assertoric sentence and tone of voice she would otherwise use to invite truth, even when she has no expectation that the audience will trust her, and so cannot reasonably see herself as inviting their trust. In the course of arguing that assertions need not involve the audience-directed intentions Grice supposes, Ian Rumfitt offers the case of the Birmingham Six, who were falsely accused and convicted of a bombing. While interrogated, “it must have become clear very quickly … that nothing they could do or say would persuade their interlocutors either that they (the suspects) had not planted the bombs or that they (the suspects again) believed that they had not planted the bombs” (1995: 834).
scarred that he can’t bring himself to trust; or he has adopted a policy of not trusting people like Sal, no matter how truthful.)

Further, a speaker can invite an audience to (merely) rely on her without inviting the audience to trust her. A speaker can do this by inviting her audience to believe her on the grounds that she is truthful, while either blocking or cancelling any invitation to trust. Inviting an audience to rely on you, while blocking any invitation to trust, is analogous to inviting someone to rely on you, but without promising anything, as in this example from Joseph Raz:

Imagine that John wants to know whether he can rely on Harry giving him a lift to town tomorrow. Harry tells him: ‘I am almost certain to offer you a lift to town tomorrow. In the circumstances it would be far wiser for you to rely on me rather than make alternative arrangements, but remember, I do not promise anything, I am merely advising you.’ Harry is intentionally inducing John to rely on him but he does not promise anything. Promising is surely more than inducing reliance. By promising I bind myself and confer a right on the promisee. (1972: 99)

We can construct an analogous example for testimonial trust. Imagine that Hans wants to know what the capital city of Mali is. The speaker, Stacy, could say something like the following:

I take myself to know that Bamako, not Timbuktu, is the capital of Mali, and you yourself know that I am truthful and competent on matters geographical, so it would be best for you to believe that Bamako is the capital of Mali; but I don’t want you to trust me this point. I’m just laying out some evidence from which you could draw the right conclusion, and pointing out that it would be better for you to believe what I’ve said, that Bamako is the capital of Mali, not Timbuktu.

What the speaker is blocking here is any offer of responsibility for the audience’s belief. Even though Stacy presents herself as knowing, and offers her own truthfulness as
evidence, she does not offer to be responsible for meeting challenges to the claim that Bamako is the capital of Mali; nor does she offer to be responsible for Hans communicating this knowledge to anyone else. And Stacy certainly does not invite the Hans to ‘adhere’ to her; that is, she does not invite him to believe the claim for the sake of believing her.

Thus, when a speaker does invite the audience to trust her, she does more than just invite the audience to rely on her, more even than rely on her on the grounds that she is truthful. She does, of course, invite the audience to rely on her; that is, she gives the audience good evidence for believing what she says. But the speaker who invites trust goes further by offering to take responsibility for the audience’s belief, and for the audience’s right to communicate that belief to others.

On Aquinas’s account, an invitation to trust is an invitation to ‘faith’, to ‘adhere’ to the speaker, and so believe what she says for the sake of believing her. It is an invitation for the audience to be faithful and loyal to the speaker, to be on the same team; that is, to be aiming at the same goal cooperatively. Specifically, she invites the audience to adhere to her judgment on the matter at hand. The audience who accepts this offer leaves herself open to the possibility of betrayal. She does this primarily by not taking precautions against the possibility that the speaker is wrong. The audience could have instead taken such precautions by continuing to consider her own evidence on the matter, and drawing her own conclusions. An invitation to trust is an invitation not to take such precautions.\(^{40}\) Aquinas says that those with faith do not base their belief on evidence or arguments (argumenta), but rather on choosing to believe the speaker.\(^{41}\)

\(^{40}\) See McMyler (2011: esp. 91-94 and 146ff), Zagzebski (2012: chap. 6) and Keren (2014) for similar accounts to which I am indebted. The primary difference between these other accounts and my Aquinas-based account, is that by incorporating truthfulness and adherence, the Aquinas-based account explains in more detail the conditions under which an invitation to trust gives the hearer a reason to ‘preempt’ her own evidence-gathering.

\(^{41}\) See above, chapter 3, p. 143.
5.5 The Epistemic Advantage of Trust

It is sometimes said that trust is in tension with evidentialism.\(^{42}\) It is tricky to say what evidence and evidentialism are. But from our description of testimonial trust and trustworthiness, we can see that testimonial trust does not conflict with a rigorous evidentialism in one respect, but does in another.

The paradigmatic cases in which testimony is valuable are those in which the speaker is both truthful and better positioned at the moment to know or have justified beliefs about something than the hearer does. (This may be a ‘merely positional advantage’. For instance, if you have a watch you can check for the time, whereas I would have to walk around a corner to check the clock. Or it may be that the speaker, whether by nature or habituation, is more apt to know something than the hearer, as when a mathematician tells me that he knows Fermat’s last theorem is true, because he has worked through the proof himself.) When a truthful speaker is better epistemically positioned with respect to \(p\), her invitation to trust her that \(p\) is very good evidence for \(p\). This aspect of trust is not in tension with evidentialism, and in such cases inferring for oneself what is true and trusting the speaker for the truth will be on par, epistemically.

But now imagine that such a speaker has represented herself as knowing that \(p\) to two hearers, Hesitant and Hopeful, who each have the same inconclusive evidence against \(p\). Now the hearer who doesn’t trust the speaker (Hesitant), will have to find some means of weighing the evidence for and against \(p\), and coming up with a verdict of her own, even though she is not in as good a position to weigh the evidence as the speaker is. \textit{Ex hypothesi}, the speaker’s judgment on the evidence is better than Hesitant’s – the speaker either has knowledge that \(p\) or is at least better justified in her belief than Hesitant is. Hesitant’s judgment is more sensitive to her own evidence for \(p\), but not as sensitive to the speaker’s evidence, and so not as sensitive to the overall evidence for \(p\).

\(^{42}\) See Wanderer and Townsend (2013) for a nice overview of this topic.
Meanwhile, the hearer who does trust (Hopeful), adheres to the speaker, and places the responsibility for her belief being accurate on the speaker. She ignores the counterevidence and thereby makes her judgment less sensitive to her own evidence with regard to \( p \), but the payoff is that her judgment is more sensitive to the speaker’s evidence, and so more sensitive to the overall evidence for \( p \).\(^{43}\) An evidentialist who is committed to the idea that a hearer should proportion her belief to only her own evidence will be committed to the idea that wholeheartedly trusting the speaker for the truth of \( p \) when one has counterevidence to \( p \) is irrational. But to others, this is a case in which (if the hearer knows that the speaker is truthful and better placed to judge the evidence for \( p \) than she is) trusting is more rational than not.\(^{44}\)

Call this the synchronic advantage of trust, the advantage trust has at the moment of one’s trust being invited. Trust also has an advantage that is diachronic. In the case we are considering, the hearer’s evidence for \( p \) is imperfect; ideally she would like to see that \( p \) for herself. Some evidentialists say that everyone in a less than ideal evidential position has a duty to pursue that ideal by seeking further evidence.\(^{45}\) But seeking further evidence for \( p \) may be costly. Pragmatically, it may be costly because it will make one’s life more difficult or take time away from other valuable pursuits. Epistemically, it may be costly because it will take time and effort away from learning other valuable truths. And the hearer may just not be as talented or as well positioned as the speaker to see the truth for herself. A way to avoid these costs is to continue in adherence to whatever the speaker says on the matter (provided that one has reason to think the speaker continues to be truthful and continues to be better positioned to judge whether \( p \) than the hearer).\(^{46}\) The speaker has laid Hopeful open to the possibility of betrayal by giving her a reason not to take precautions against being misled about \( p \). But

\(^{43}\) Keren (2014: 20-21) makes this point.


\(^{45}\) For example, Hall and Johnson (1998) argue for the following principle of synchronic evidentialism: “For any proposition that is less than certain on one’s present evidence, one has an epistemic duty to seek more evidence about that proposition.”

\(^{46}\) For a related view about faith in general, rather than testimonial faith in particular, see Buchak (2012).
by putting the responsibility for her belief on the speaker’s shoulders, Hopeful is not only relieved of responsibility for weighing all the evidence with regard to \( p \), but also relieved of responsibility for seeking further evidence about \( p \).

We are now in a position to see how trust provides the audience with an epistemic reason to believe, which mere reliance does not. Jennifer Lackey has argued that views of testimony on which trust plays an important epistemic role face a dilemma: “either the view of testimony in question is genuinely interpersonal but epistemologically impotent, or it is not epistemologically impotent but neither is it genuinely interpersonal” (2008: 222). On the view of trust I have argued for, trust is ‘genuinely interpersonal’ in the sense that it goes beyond mere reliance and lays the audience open to the possibility of betrayal. An invitation to trust on its own gives the audience no epistemic reason to believe what the speaker says, since the speaker could be lying. The speaker must also be trustworthy, and believed because she is trustworthy. But then the worry is that believing on the grounds that the speaker is trustworthy and so reliable is all that explains the epistemic status of the audience’s belief (as justified belief or as knowledge). From Lackey’s perspective, it doesn’t seem to matter whether the hearer trusts or merely relies. But we have seen that it does matter. If the audience doesn’t trust, she may of course gain knowledge or a very well justified belief, grounded in the judgment that the speaker is trustworthy and so reliable. But if the audience does trust, she gets the added advantage that her belief is more sensitive to the evidence available to the speaker. Whenever the speaker is better positioned toward the evidence than the audience, this will be an epistemic advantage that the hearer who doesn’t trust will lack.

5.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I have offered an account of testimonial trustworthiness that draws on recent accounts of trust and trustworthiness, as well as on Aquinas’s accounts of truthfulness and faith. If trustworthiness is something morally admirable, the failure of which leaves the trustee open to the charge of betrayal, then a good
candidate for testimonial trustworthiness is Aristotelian truthfulness, which combines a concern for knowing the truth with a concern for representing oneself to others as knowing only what one does know. If trust is something more than mere reliance, a good candidate for testimonial trust is Aquinas’s testimonial faith, by which one believes for the sake of adhering to the speaker, opening oneself to the possibility of betrayal by not taking the precaution of trying to draw one’s own conclusion on the matter. And if a truthful speaker is in a better epistemic position than her audience, then it is epistemically advantageous for her audience to trust her.
CONCLUSION

6.0 Introduction

This dissertation has been an introductory exploration of two influential medieval thinkers, Augustine and Aquinas, on the topic of testimony. The reader who has understood their terms, their interests, and the positions they take on issues concerning testimony will be well placed to understand what other medieval thinkers in the Latin tradition, and later philosophers influenced by that tradition, had to say on issues of social epistemology. And the reader who has understood how Augustine and Aquinas’s terms and positions relate to those of philosophers today will be well placed to draw new insights on the topics of social epistemology under discussion today from a reading of Augustine, Aquinas, and other medievals. Along the way, I argued that Augustine’s epistemology of testimony developed through four distinct stages (chapter 1), and that he thought of testimony as an inferential source of knowledge (chapter 2); that Aquinas distinguished two testimonial sources, opinion and faith (chapter 3), which provide knowledge by providing cognitio (chapter 4); and finally, that testimonial trust and trustworthiness are plausibly understood as testimonial faith and truthfulness (chapter 5).

This dissertation has also been a discussion of four related questions in social epistemology. Let’s review where we have come on each one of these questions, with an eye to locating Augustine and Aquinas in the history of social epistemology, noting along the way some interesting trails for further research to pursue.

6.1 Is Testimony a Source of Knowledge?

In chapter 1, we saw how Augustine developed the idea that testimony is an important source of knowledge. This development was motivated by a new respect for the importance of particular historical truths, and for the usage of Scriptural and everyday Latin. Against the Academic and Manichean schools of thought which had tempted him,
Augustine defends faith as a broad category including all kinds of belief in the ‘unseen’, and defends testimony as a source of knowledge. In some contexts he goes so far as to say that we have *scientia* from testimony, but his mature view is that *scientia* proper is from ‘firm reason’ alone, while testimony and the senses are sources of *scientia* in an ordinary or broad sense, that is, they give us *notitia*.

In the years between Augustine and Aquinas, many in the Latin tradition followed Augustine on this point,\(^1\) but some were not clear about whether *human* testimony is a source of knowledge;\(^2\) while others denied that faith (even divine faith) is a source of knowledge (*cognitio* or *agnitio*).\(^3\) One important development was Hugh of St. Victor’s claim that faith is between opinion and *scientia*,\(^4\) a claim which scholastics later elaborated on in their commentaries on Lombard’s *Sentences*.\(^5\) Aquinas accepts Hugh’s framework, and does not make the same accommodation to ordinary usage that Augustine did; Aquinas denies that faith of any kind is a source of *scientia*, primarily

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\(^1\) For example, Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) talks about “*quae fide iam scimus*” but like Augustine distinguishes it from *intellegere* (*De consideratione* 5.3.6). Bartholomew of Exeter (d. 1184) quotes Augustine’s *retr.* 1.14.3 in support of his claim that by faith we can be certain of not just necessary truths but also contingent truths (*Contra Fatalitatis Errorem* chap. 59). Albert the Great (c. 1200-1280) also distinguishes between the *scientia* of vision, and *scientia* that is ‘veiled’, which is had by faith (*In Sent* III.23.2).

\(^2\) For example, Baldwin of Ford’s *Commendatio Fidei* has a very interesting discussion of human faith, but it is not clear whether he thinks only divine faith is a source of *scientia* or not (see chap. 13, sections 1-4).

\(^3\) A well-known tag from Gregory the Great (c. 540-604) was “*apparentia non habent fidem, sed agnitionem*” (*Homily 26 in Evang.*, n. 8, L 76). Haimo of Auxerre (d. c. 855), part of a revival movement in Biblical studies, said in his commentary on Paul’s letter to the Romans “*Si autem quod credimus iam uidemus, fides non est habenda, sed cognitio.*” Peter Abelard (1079-1142) quotes this text, and he became infamous for, among other things, saying no more than that divine faith is “*existimatio*” of the unseen (*Theologia Scholastica* 12, 981c). He is also reported to have said to his students “*quod estimo regem esse Parisium, hoc est fides, quia de re est invisibilis, alicui visui sensuum non subiacens. Si enim eum viderem, iam non esset fides, sed cognitio.*” (*Sententiae Parisienses* 3:6-8). Abelard was also known for saying that faith was incompatible with absolute certitude (LePage 1989: 241). He was falsely accused of many things by later medievals, such as that he said no one should have faith, because it’s not reasonable (e.g., see Matthew of Aquasparta *Quaestiones Disputatae de Fide*, q. 2c).

\(^4\) Aquinas’s *In BDT* 3.1c refers to Hugh of St. Victor’s (1096-1141) *De sacramentis* 1.10. See above, chapter 3, p. 138, note 71, on Aquinas’s reception of this claim.

\(^5\) For example, see Albert the Great (*In Sent* III.23.2c).
because *scientia* is for him only of what is ‘seen’.⁶ But he does nevertheless say that testimony (e.g., the testimony of one’s teacher) does provide knowledge (*notitia* or *cognitio*).

After Aquinas, scholastics generally thought of faith as a source of *cognitio* or *notitia*, but in different ways. Some held on to Augustine’s idea that testimony provides *scientia* in a broad sense.⁷ Others drew their own distinctions between broad and proper senses of *scientia*. Some early thirteenth century commentators on Aristotle had given a range of senses for *scientia*, from broad to proper, but even their broadest sense was still that of *comprehensio* of the truth, and ‘*comprehensio*’ in scholastic authors tends to imply *seeing* that something is true, and so cannot be testimonially based.⁸ But later scholastics began to define *scientia* in a broad sense in a way that admits testimonial knowledge.⁹

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⁶ See above, chapter 4, pp. 156-157 and 158. One passage where Aquinas makes some allowance for ordinary usage is in an early and more Augustinian work than usual, the *Quaestiones Disputatae de Veritate*, where Aquinas says “But as for the certitude of assent, faith is *cognitio*, by reason of which it can even be called *scientia* and vision, as in I Cor. 13:12, ‘We see now in a glass darkly’” and goes on to quote Augustine’s ep. 147.3.8 (QDV 14.2 ad 15: “*Sed quantum ad certitudinem assensus, fides est cognitio ratione cuius potest dici etiam scientia et visio, secundum illud I Cor. XIII, 12: ‘videmus nunc per speculum in aenigmate’. Et hoc est quod Augustinus dicit in Lib. de videndo Deum: ‘si scire non incongruenter dicimur etiam illud quod certissimum credimus, hinc factum est ut etiam credita recte, etsi non adsint sensibus nostris, videre mente dicamus.’”) Subalternated sciences are not based entirely on ‘seeing’ all of the first principles of the science, so medieval defenders of Aquinas took him to mean that someone with only the subalternated science has *cognitio* with a scientific structure (of demonstration from first principles), but not *scientia* properly speaking. See above, p. 119, note 8.

⁷ See, for example, Henry of Ghent (*Summa Quaestionum Ordinarium* 1.1c), and Matthew of Aquasparta (*Quaestiones Disputatae de Fide* 2 ad 4). John Duns Scotus (*Ordinatio* III.24 sec. 13, *Reportatio Parisiensis* III.24 sec. 15) gives the Augustinian broad sense, but then explains the contrasting proper sense by stating four conditions on *scientia* drawn from Aristotle’s *Posterior Analytics*.

⁸ Robert Grosseteste (c. 1168-1253) identified four senses of ‘*scientia*’, starting with ‘*veritatem comprehensio*’ as the most broad (*Commentary on Posterior Analytics* I.2, p. 99 in Rossi 1981). Roger Bacon (1214/1220-1292) similarly identified four senses of ‘*scientia*’, starting with ‘*comprehensio veritatis complete et rei sive contingentis sive necessariae, et per quacunque causam*’ as the most broad (*Questions on the Metaphysics*, book 6, p. 182). Augustine’s distinguished the testimonial *scientia* had on divine faith from the *comprehensio* of those who have the beatific vision of God (ep. 147.9.21), and this distinction was given in Lombard’s *Sentences*, so it was well-known to medieval theologians and philosophers. Earlier, Abelard defined *scientia* as ‘*comprehensio veritatis rerum quae sunt*’ (*Theologia Summi Boni* 78, p. 117 and *Theologia Christiana* 70, p. 196). Much later, John Buridan (before 1300 to before 1361) makes it a requirement on the broadest sense of *scientia* that it include both certainty and evidentness (*Summulae de Dialectica* 8.4.3, and *In Metaphysicem Aristotelis Quaestiones* lib. 2 q. 1).

⁹ William of Ockham (c. 1287–1347) identified four senses of ‘*scientia*’, starting with ‘*certa notitia aliquius veri*’. His illustration is one of testimonial knowledge: “et sic sciantur aliqua per fidem tantum. *Sicut dicimus nos scire quod Roma est magna civitas, quam tamen non vidimus; et similiter dico quod scio*
When scholars in the early modern period moved away from Latin to the vernacular, whether they preserved the idea that testimony could provide *cognitio* but not *scientia* seems to have depended on which vernacular they wrote in. For example, Antoine Arnauld and Pierre Nicole’s *Port Royal Logic* distinguishes between *connaissance* and *science*, references Augustine, and says that while testimony does not provide ‘*science*’, it can provide *connaissance* which is just as certain as that of the mathematical sciences. By contrast, Thomas Hobbes and John Locke, even though they distinguish between science and other kinds of knowledge, say that neither human testimony nor divine faith is a source of knowledge.

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10 Arnauld and Nicole (1763), part 4, chap. 12. Without an awareness of the *cognitio/scientia* distinction, one can easily be misled by reading French or Latin works in translation. For instance, Benjamin McMyler quotes the first paragraphs of part 4, chapter 12, where Arnauld and Nicole say “Everything we have said until now concerns the purely human sciences [*sciences*], and knowledges [*connoissances*] based on the evidence of reason. But before we end it is good to talk of another kind of knowledge [*connaissance*] that often is no less certain nor less evident in its own way: that which we take from authority [*l’autorité*]. For there are two general ways we believe something is true. The first is the knowledge [*connaissance*] we have through ourselves … . The other way is the authority of persons worthy of belief, who assure us that something is so, although by ourselves we make nothing of it. This is called faith, or belief, following the speech of St. Augustine *Quod scimus, debemus rationi; quod credimus, autoritati.*” (This is my translation. I quote this passage at greater length in French in note 24 below, p. 239). McMyler (2011: 20-21) comments “It is noteworthy that the beginning of this passage appears to allow that belief based on authority can actually amount to knowledge. This is then taken back in the quote from Augustine.” But what is allowed in this chapter is that belief on authority can yield *connaissance* (i.e. *connaissance*). What is denied, both by Arnauld and Nicole at the beginning, and by the quote from Augustine at the end, is that belief on authority can yield *science/scientia*.

11 Hobbes says that knowledge of ‘fact’ is had only by sense or memory, and that testimony and faith yield opinion (*Leviathan* part 1, chapters 7 and 9). Locke says that knowledge is “to be had only of visible certain truth” (*Essay* IV.xx.1) and that there are only three kinds of knowledge: intuitive, demonstrative and sensitive (IV.ii.14). “And herein lies the difference between probability and certainty, faith and knowledge, that in all the parts of knowledge, there is intuition; each immediate idea, each step has its visible and certain connexion; in belief not so” (IV.xv.3). Locke is careful not to say that faith gives us knowledge, even though it is certain (IV.xvi.14). Much earlier on, Locke had already said that “we may as rationally hope to see with other men’s eyes, as to know by other men’s understandings. So much as we ourselves consider and comprehend of truth and reason, so much we possess of real and true knowledge. The floating of other men’s opinions in our brains, makes us not one jot the more knowing, though they happen to be true” (I.iv.23). But Locke’s usage doesn’t always match his official position, and he sometimes talks about things ‘known’ by faith in a divine revelation (IV.xviii.4).
6.2. What Kind of Knowledge Can One Get from Testimony?

In chapter 1, we saw that Augustine develops a kind of knowledge, notitia, in which the truth of what is known need not be directly evident to the mind, and yet one is still obligated to believe it. I have suggested that notitia is knowledge with ‘moral certainty’, that is, sufficient certainty to act on. In chapter 3, we saw that Aquinas has a similar notion of a kind of knowledge, cognitio, in which the truth of what is known need not be directly evident. And like Augustine, he distinguishes this kind of knowledge from a kind of scientia with reflective certainty. But cognitio is not so much obligated belief as it is naturally apt belief. It is (factive) information one acquires by means of one’s natural and reliable (but fallible) ability to be so informed. It is fairly clear that Aquinas’s cognitio is externalist: you don’t have to be aware, or even possibly aware, that you cognoscere p in order to cognoscere p. It is less clear what the status of Augustine’s notitia is. But it seems that, like sensory notitia, it need not be reflective.

Between Augustine and Aquinas there seems not to have been much discussion about the nature of notitia or cognitio. The debate seems to have been between those who, like Baldwin of Ford, said that divine faith is a source of scientia, due to its certainty and the reliability of its source, and those who, like Peter Abelard, said it is not, since scientia can be had only by means of seeing and understanding. After Aquinas’s time, the most striking innovation in the theory of cognitio/notitia was Scotus’s

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12 Of course, in Aquinas’s case the reflectively certain scientia he has in mind is Aristotelian epistêmê. Whereas Augustine has in mind a more Platonist version of epistêmê.

13 Baldwin says “Quapropter cum rerum comprehensibilium vera cognitio scientia dicatur et sit, multo magis incomprehensibilium verissima cognitio, Deo revelante nobis indulta, pro sui certitudine et infallibilitate, scientia dici debet: non solum supra incertum opinionis, sed supra omnem humanam scientiam et supra iudicium rationis collocanda, quasi scientia scientie preferenda, sed non ei que futuri temporis aliquomodo conferenda.” (Commendatio Fidei 13.3). Abelard defines faith as “existimatio rerum non apparentium, hoc est sensibus corporis non subjacentium” (Theologia scholastica 981c), and denies that faith is cognitio (see above, p. 233, note 3).
distinction between intuitive and abstractive *cognitio*.\(^{14}\) Intuitive *cognitio* is, in Scotus and others, direct *cognitio* of something as existing or as present, while abstractive *cognitio* is not direct, and need not be of the object as present. For example, the astronomer who calculates that an eclipse is happening but doesn’t *see* that it is happening has abstractive, but not intuitive *cognitio* of that eclipse. The focus of this debate was not on explaining testimonial knowledge, but on how angels, or humans in extraordinary circumstances, could have *scientia* of God apart from the beatific vision. But it also contributed indirectly to social epistemology by motivating a more sophisticated discussion of the difference between the seen and the unseen.\(^ {15}\)

### 6.3 How is Testimonial Knowledge (or Belief) Acquired?

Augustine does not offer an account of the epistemic justification of testimonial knowledge (or belief) that differentiates it in any way from knowledge (or belief) based on inference (*coniectura*). However, he does discuss various indications (*indicia*) of reliability in a speaker, and discusses motives for believing on testimony. Again, one of the most significant developments in the intervening centuries was Hugh of St. Victor’s claim that faith is neither opinion nor *scientia*, but something in between. Aquinas thinks of opinion as the result of inductive inference, and *scientia* as the result of demonstrative inference. And he thinks of opinion, faith and *scientia* as ways to assent to propositions, in an attempt to conform one’s mind to reality. Inductive inference, faith in a speaker, and demonstrative inference, are three ways (*modi*) or means (*media*) of attaining propositional *cognitio*.\(^ {16}\) The same person could know the same proposition by all three of these means at once, basing her belief on probable grounds, on the assertion of

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\(^{14}\) On Scotus’s reasons for developing this distinction, and a list of scholastic discussions of this distinction, see Dumont (1989).

\(^{15}\) For example, Ockham draws on this distinction when he says that in this life we can see our intellectual acts intuitively, but not our habits (*Quaestiones Disputatae* 5.3).

\(^{16}\) See ST I-II.67.3c. Other passages where Aquinas highlights the *media* by which one attains *cognitio* are QDV 9.1c, QDV 14.2 ad 9, QDV 14.8 obj 9 and ad 9, ST I.79.9c, and ST II-II.5.3c.
someone she trusts, and on demonstrative grounds. But she could not count as having all three propositional attitudes (opinion, faith, and scientia) at once, because opinion entails a ‘fear’ that the other two lack, while scientia entails seeing the truth, which the other two lack. Other scholastics from Aquinas’s time on were similarly interested in different methods (modi or media) of knowing the truth, and discussed whether these methods overdetermined one’s knowledge, or were incompatible with each other.  

Although a major focus of scholastic discussions was divine faith, they were interested in discussing related methods of knowing which were mentioned in Lombard’s Sentences, or became well-known topics in Sentences commentaries: demon ‘faith’, unformed faith, and ‘acquired’ faith. In the few passages where Aquinas considers acquired faith, he thinks of it as the ‘strong opinion’ one gets from convincing but non-demonstrative arguments. But others thought of acquired faith as the naturally acquired part of divine faith (as opposed to the divine infusion of grace), had in common with everyday testimonial faith. John Duns Scotus, for instance, argues that all the features of divine faith other than its supernatural reliability can be explained by acquired faith.

These topics remained important for Renaissance scholastics, who also thought carefully about belief based on authorities, during the controversies about ‘probabilism’ (the view that it is acceptable to follow a plausible authority even while that authority is in conflict with an even more plausible authority). And there was some development of

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17 For example, see Bonaventure In Sent III.24.2.1 and 3, and Matthew of Aquasparta Quaestiones Disputatae de Fide 2. Giles of Rome (d. 1316) Commentary on the Sentences III q. 38. See also Ockham (Quodlibet 5.2).

18 Unformed faith is divine faith that fails to be motivated by charity, that is, love of God. Some say that demon faith is unformed faith, while others, like Aquinas, explain demon faith differently, and think of unformed faith as still supported by divine grace.

19 See, for example, Bonaventure In Sent III.23.2.2, Ockham Quaestiones Variae q. 6 art. 8.


21 See Scotus Ordinatio III.23.

22 This controversy, concerned with authorities one can approve (probabiles) has little to do with the rise of mathematical probability theory. For some recent literature on probabilism, see Fleming (2006), Maryks (2008), and Ghidoni (2011).
the concept of ‘extrinsic evidence’, i.e., the evidence provided by authority or testimony. Arnauld and Nicole were familiar with some of these scholastic debates, and at the end of their Port Royal Logic (1662) they included a discussion of the ‘external circumstances’ that make testimonial knowledge with moral certainty possible by means of ‘human faith’.

6.4 How does Testimonial Trust Work?

In chapter 2, I argued that Augustine’s account of testimonial knowledge is an inferential one, but one in which authority-based testimonial knowledge probably meets two further conditions: that the speaker knows that $p$, and speaks in good faith. In chapter 3, I argued that Aquinas’s account was not just an inferential one: he distinguished two ways of acquiring testimonial knowledge or belief. Testimonial opinion is inductive belief based on testimony, while testimonial faith is belief chosen for the sake of adhering to the speaker as the ‘formal object’ of one’s belief. And one reason an audience adheres to a speaker, is because she takes the speaker to be ‘truthful’. Both the idea that the speaker is the formal object, and the idea that faith is based on taking the speaker to be truthful are

23 For instance, Sebastian Izquierdo (1601-1681) argues that testimony provides evidentia, strictly speaking (Pharus scientiarum tract. 2, disp. 4, q. 2, div. 4).

24 “Tout ce que nous avons dit jusqu’ici regarde les sciences humaines purement humaines, & les connoissances qui sont fondées sur l’évidence de la raison : mais, avant que de finir, il est bon de parler d’une autre sorte de connaissance, qui souvent n’est pas moins certaine, ni moins évidente en sa maniere, qui est celle que nous tiron de l’autorité. … L’autre voie est l’autorité des personnes dignes de croyance, qui nous assurent qu’une telle chose est, quoique par nous-mêmes nous n’en fachions rien ; ce qui s’appelle foi, ou croyance, selon cette parole de saint Augustin : ‘Quod scimus, debemus racioni ; quod credimus, autoritati’ [util. cred. 11.25; retr. 1.14.3] … La foi humaine est de soi-même sujette à erreur, … et néanmoins, ainsi que nous avons déjà marqué ci-dessus, il y a des choses que nous ne connaissons que par une foi humaine, que nous devons tenire pour aussi certaines et aussi indubitables que si nous en avions des démonstrations mathématiques ; comme ce que l’on sait par une relation constante de tant de personnes, qu’il est moralement impossible qu’elles eussent pu conspirer ensemble pour assurer le même chose, si elle n’était vraie.” (Part 4, chap 12, pp. 369-370) “Pour juger de la vérité d’un événement, et me déterminer à le croire ou ne pas le croire, il ne faut pas le considérer nûment et on lui-même, comme on ferait une proposition de géométrie; mais il faut prendre garde à toutes les circonstances qui l’accompagnent, tant intérieures qu’extérieures. J’appelle circonstances intérieures celles qui appartiennent au fait même et extérieures celles qui regardent les personnes par le témoignage desquelles nous sommes portés à le croire.” (Part 4, chap. 13, pp. 374-375).
already present in rougher form in the works of Aquinas’s teacher, Albert the Great.\(^{25}\)

When audiences judge whom to trust, they look for testimonial trustworthiness, and I have argued that testimonial trustworthiness is something like what Aquinas meant by the virtue of truthfulness (\textit{veritas, veracitas}). I have also argued that taking a speaker to be truthful in this way gives one a reason to adhere to the speaker, rather than to rely on only one’s own weighing of the overall evidence. Believing the speaker is a different way of believing than believing what the speaker says, which can be done on the basis simply of one’s own inferences, and is then a matter of (mere) reliance, rather than trust.

After Aquinas, scholastics discussed the role of the will in faith,\(^{26}\) and talked about what it means to believe propositions by means of believing a person, when they discuss Augustine’s \textit{credere deum, credere deo} and \textit{credere in deum} distinction cited in Peter Lombard’s \textit{Sentences}. Giles of Rome, for instance, says that while you can believe the same proposition on the testimony of a friend or an enemy, one’s belief in a friend is at the ‘command of the will’ (\textit{imperium voluntatis}), while one’s belief in an enemy can be only that of ‘probable reason’ (\textit{rationem probabilem}).\(^{27}\) Giles of Rome’s discussions are particularly original, because he had a strong interest in rhetoric,\(^{28}\) and so was interested in persuasion and the connection between divine faith and the ‘faith’ produced by oratory.\(^{29}\) Later scholastics, especially the scholastics of the Renaissance and after who

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\(^{25}\) See for example Albert’s In Sent III.23.2, III.23.3, and IV.26.9. Albert says the audience ‘rests on’ (\textit{innititur}) the speaker (III.23.7). Alexander of Hales (c. 1185-1245) uses the terminology of ‘\textit{adhaerentia}’ (\textit{Summa theologica} lib. 3, pars 3, inquisitio 2, tract. 1, memb. 6, cap. 1, sec. 3). Bonaventure, like Aquinas, talks about readiness to assent (“\textit{promptus erit et facilis ad assentiendum}” In Sent III.23.2.2).

\(^{26}\) For example, Ockham gives an extended \textit{reductio ad absurdum} argument that the will must play a role in faith (\textit{Quaestiones Disputatae} 5.3).


\(^{28}\) Giles of Rome’s commentary on Aristotle’s \textit{Rhetoric} was perhaps the most influential one in the Latin tradition (Lambertini 2009).

\(^{29}\) For example, Giles considers whether \textit{credere deum, deo, and in deum} correspond to three acts of faith in forensic persuasion (ibid.). He gives a very different explanation in his \textit{Commentary on the Sentences} III d. 23 part 2 q. 1.
commented regularly on Aquinas’s *Summa theologiae*, continued to discuss the role of the speaker in faith as the formal object of belief.\(^{30}\)

The English tradition seems to have dropped the idea that there was anything special about faith in a speaker fairly quickly. For example, Thomas Hobbes says that all testimony is a matter of opinion, although he does at least think that taking the speaker to be virtuously truthful makes a difference to how this opinion is grounded.

When a mans Discourse beginneth not at Definitions, it beginneth either at some other contemplation of his own, and then it is still called Opinion; Or it beginneth at some saying of another, of whose ability to know the truth, and of whose honesty in not deceiving, he doubteth not; and then the Discourse is not so much concerning the Thing, as the Person; and the Resolution is called Beleefe, and Faith: *Faith, in* the man; *Beleefe, both of* the man, and *of* the truth of what he sayes. So that in Beleefe are two opinions; one of the saying of the man; the other of his vertue. To *have faith in*, or *trust to*, or *beleeve a man*, signifie the same thing; namely, an opinion of the veracity of the man: But to *beleeve what is said*, signifieth onely an opinion of the truth of the saying. … From whence we may inferre, that when wee believe any saying whatsoever it be, to be true, from arguments taken, not from the thing it selfe, or from the principles of naturall Reason, but from the Authority, and good opinion wee have, of him that hath sayd it; then is the speaker, or person we believe in, or trust in, and whose word we take, the object of our Faith …\(^{31}\)

*Leviathan*, part 1, chap. 7, p. 48

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\(^{30}\) For instance, Francisco Suárez (1548-1619) has a 100 page discussion of the formal object of faith (*Disputatio* 3, titled “De objecto formali fidei, et quomodo ad illud fiat ultima resolutio”) in his almost 600 page treatise *De Fide Theologica* (*Opera Omnia*, vol. 12).

\(^{31}\) Hobbes goes on in chapter 7 to argue against the idea that believing a prophet is a way of mediately believing God. In effect, Hobbes denies the possibility of testimonial chains united by one formal object.
Here Hobbes considers faith a kind of opinion, which includes an opinion about the ‘honesty’ or ‘vertue’ of the speaker. Locke’s view is similar. Locke says that when someone believes on the testimony of

a man of credit, … the foundation of his assent is the probability of the thing, the proof being such, as for the most part carries truth with it: the man, on whose testimony he receives it, not being wont to affirm anything contrary to, or besides his knowledge, especially in matters of this kind. So that that which causes his assent to this proposition … is the wonted veracity of the speaker in other cases, or his supposed veracity in this. 32 (IV.xv.1)

Does this leave any room for trust? As Locke further explains what he means, it seems not. For ‘faith’ is a matter of ‘probability’ (IV.xv.3), “whereof we have no certainty, but only some inducements to receive [propositions] for true” (IV.xv.4). In matters of probability “the mind if it will proceed rationally, ought to examine all the grounds of probability, and see how they make more or less, for or against any probable proposition, before it assents to or dissents from it” (IV.xv.5). What is going on here, it seems, is not that the audience adheres to the speaker as the formal object of her belief, but that the audience is inferring for herself, based only on her own evidence, what to believe.

This shift away from the idea of believing the speaker toward the idea that faith is just probabilistic inference, is an important turning point in the history of the

32 Note how similar this is to Fricker’s view, discussed in chapter 5 above (p. 207) that a speaker is trustworthy if and only if not easily would she assert that \( p \) unless she knew that \( p \). But Fricker thinks one can have knowledge that a speaker is so trustworthy, and can thereby be in a position to have knowledge from testimony, whereas Locke denies that such considerations ever give an audience anything more than ‘probability’. The example Locke uses is almost the same as Aquinas’s example of testimonial opinion in ST I.12.7c. They both use the example of believing that the sum of the angles of a triangle is the sum of two right angles, but Locke’s example is of believing one mathematician about this, while Aquinas’s is about believing it because so say the wise or the many (\( \textit{per hoc quod a sapientibus vel pluribus ita dicitur} \)).
epistemology of testimony. Less than forty years ago Elizabeth Anscombe wrote “Believing someone is not merely a neglected topic in philosophical discussion; it seems to be unknown” (1979: 141). But a revival of this topic is underway in discussions of epistemic authority, illocutionary authority, second-personal reasons to believe, and preemptive reasons to believe. I hope I have shown that there are further resources for understanding such belief, and other aspects of social epistemology, in medieval philosophy. And I hope that this dissertation has provided a helpful introductory guide to those resources.

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33 See McMyler (2011: chapter 1) for similar observations on the history of the epistemology of testimony.


36 See McMyler (2011) and Zagzebski (2012).

37 See Keren (2007) and (2014), and Zagzebski (2012).

38 I have focused only on the Latin tradition, and so have not even mentioned discussions of ‘word’ as a source of knowledge in Indian philosophy (see Chakrabarti and Matilal 1994 and Phillips 2012) and ‘tradition’ (hadith) as a source of knowledge in medieval Arabic philosophy (see Black 2013). The Indian and Arabic traditions are worth investigating, but historically seem to have had little impact on Western Latin and vernacular discussions of testimony.
# Works Cited

## 7.1 Primary Texts by Augustine

### Abbreviations


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<td>On the Magnitude of the Soul</td>
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<td>c. ep. Man.</td>
<td>Against the Manichaean</td>
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<tr>
<td>c. Faust.</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Gn. litt.</td>
<td>Literal Commentary on Genesis</td>
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<tr>
<td>imm. an.</td>
<td>On the Immortality of the Soul</td>
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### Abbreviation | Title | Title Translated
--- | --- | ---
Io. eu. tr. | In Iohannis euangelium tractatus | Sermons on the Gospel of John
lib. arb. | De libero arbitrio | On Free Choice
mag. | De magistro | On the Teacher
mend. | De mendacio | On Lying
mor. | De moribus ecclesiae catholicae et de moribus Manichaeorum | On the Morals of the Catholic Manicheans
mus. | De musica | On Music
nat. et gr. | De natura et gratia | On Nature and Grace
ord. | De ordine | On Order
pecc. mer. | De peccatorum meritis et remissione et de baptismo parvulorum | On the Punishment and Remission of Sins, and on the Baptism of Infants
praed. sanct. | De praedestinatione sanctorum | On the Predestination of the Saints
retr. | Retractationes | Reconsiderations
rhet. | De rhetorica | On Rhetoric
s. | Sermones | Sermons
Simpl. | Ad Simplicianum | Letters to Simplicianus
sol. | Soliloquia. | Soliloquies
spir. et litt. | De spiritu et littera | On the Spirit and the Letter
symb. cat. | De symbolo ad catechumenos | On the Creed: to Catechumens
trin. | De trinitate | On the Trinity
uera rel. | De uera religione | On True Religion
util. cred. | De utitate credendi | On the Value of Believing

### Dates and Editions

My dates mostly follow the [Augustinus Lexikon](http://www.augustinus.de/bwo/dcms/sites/bistum/extern/zfa/augustinus/werke/werkechrono.html). Below I indicate which dates are not from the *Augustinus Lexikon* with an asterisk: ‘*’.


CSEL = *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* (1866-) Vienna: Austrian Academy of Sciences.


[This is not really a set of critical editions, but sometimes provides the best text available.]

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### 7.2 Primary Texts by Aquinas

#### Abbreviations


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<td>Against Those Who Deter Others From Religious Orders</td>
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<td>Compendium of Theology</td>
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<td>Commentary on Aristotle’s <em>De sensu et sensato</em></td>
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<td>In Sym Ap</td>
<td>Sermons on the Creed</td>
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</table>
QDA  Quaestio disputata de anima  Disputed Question on the Soul
QDM  Quaestiones disputatae de malo  Disputed Questions on Evil
QDV  Quaestiones disputatae de veritate  Disputed Questions on Truth
QDVC  Quaestiones disputatae de virtutibus in communi  Disputed Questions on the Virtues
QQ  Quaestiones de quodlibet  Quodlibetal Questions
SCG  Summa contra gentiles  Summary Work against the ‘Gentiles’ [i.e., non-Christians]
ST I  Summa theologiae (prima pars)  Summary of Theology, part 1
ST I-II  Summa theologiae (prima secundae)  Summary of Theology, part 2, sec. 1
ST II-II  Summa theologiae (secunda secundae)  Summary of Theology, part 2, sec. 2
ST III  Summa theologiae (tertia pars)  Summary of Theology, part 3

Dates and Editions


I have followed E. Stump (2003) on dates, but many of these dates are tentative, and the reader interested in more precisely dating the texts, or particular parts of the texts, should consult Torrell (2005).

LEONINE = Sancti Thomae Aquinatis doctoris angelici Opera omnia iussu Leonis XIII. O. M. edita. cura et studio fratrum praedicatorum, Rome, 1882-


<table>
<thead>
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<th>Critical Edition (and volume or tome number)</th>
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7.3 Other Medieval or Scholastic Primary Texts

ABELARD, Peter


ALBERT the Great

In *Sent* = *Commentarii in tertium librum Sententiarum* distinction 23 in A. Borgnet, ed. (1894) *Opera Omnia Alberti Magni*. Paris: L. Vivès.

ALEXANDER of Hales


BACON, Roger

*Questions on the Metaphysics*

R. Steele and F. M. Delorme, eds. (1930) *Quaestiones supra libros primae philosophiae Aristotelis. Opera hactenus inedita Rogeri Baconi*, Fasc. X.

BALDWIN of Ford


BARTHOLOMEW of Exeter


BERNARD of Clairvaux


BONAVENTURE

In *Sent* = *Commentaria in quattuor libros Sententiarum Magistri Petri Lombardi* in St. Bonaventure College, ed. (1887) *Opera omnia*, vol. 3, ed., Ad Claras Aquas Quaracchi.
BURIDAN, John  


GILES of Rome  

GREGORY the Great  
*Homily 26 in Evang.* in  

GROSSETESTE, Robert  

HENRY of Ghent  

HUGH of St. Victor  

IZQUIERDO, Sebastian  
*Pharus scientiarum.* Lugduni: C. Borgeat and M. Lietard, 1659.

MATTHEW of Aquasparta  
*Quaestiones disputatae de fide*  

OCKHAM, William of  
*Expositio in Libros Physicorum* in *Opera Philosophica* vol. IV. Franciscan University of St. Bonaventure (1967)

*Quaestiones disputatae* = *Quaestiones uariae: Tres Quaestiones disputatae* in G. I. Etzkorn, F. E. Kelley, J. C. Wey, eds. (1984) *Opera Theologica,* vol. VIII.


SCOTUS, John Duns
Ordinatio prologue

Ordinatio III.23, 24

Quodlibet 14

SUAÑEZ, Francisco

7.4 Early Modern Primary Texts Cited


7.5 Secondary Works Cited


CAMELOT, P. (1941/2) “Credere Deo, credere Deum, credere in Deum. Pour l'histoire d'une formule traditionnelle” Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques 30, pp. 149-155.


WOODRUFF, P. (1989) “Plato’s Early Theory of Knowledge” in *Epistemology (Companions to Ancient Thought: 1)*

