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EPISTEMIC AUTHORITY, TESTIMONY AND THE TRANSMISSION OF KNOWLEDGE†

ABSTRACT

I present an account of what it is to trust a speaker, and argue that the account can explain the common intuitions which structure the debate about the transmission view of testimony. According to the suggested account, to trust a speaker is to grant her epistemic authority on the asserted proposition, and hence to see her opinion as issuing a second order, preemptive reason for believing the proposition. The account explains the intuitive appeal of the basic principle associated with the transmission view of testimony: the principle according to which, a listener can normally obtain testimonial knowledge that *p* by believing a speaker who testifies that *p* only if the speaker knows that *p*. It also explains a common response to counterexamples to this principle: that these counterexamples do not involve normal cases of testimonial knowledge.

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Since knowledge is distributed unevenly among us, the most effective way to seek knowledge is often to ask someone who knows. But under what conditions can one obtain knowledge by believing a speaker? Can a listener obtain knowledge on the basis of a speaker's testimony if the speaker does not know? These questions have generated much controversy in recent epistemological literature. At the heart of the discussion is an attractive principle about the necessary conditions for obtaining testimonial knowledge. According to this principle, *knowledge* (on the part of speaker) is *necessary* for *testimonial knowledge*. More precisely, the principle (KNTK) states that:

(KNTK) Hearer H can obtain testimonial knowledge that *p* by believing speaker S who testifies that *p* only if S knows that *p*.

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(KNTK) has been endorsed by several philosophers,[1] and has much intuitive appeal. But in recent years, a number of philosophers, such as Jennifer Lackey and Peter Graham, have presented counterexamples to (KNTK), describing situations in which a hearer seems to acquire knowledge by believing a speaker who asserts that *p* but does not know that *p*.[2]

An examination of the suggested counterexamples is necessary if we are to determine whether (KNTK) is valid. But the significance of these counterexamples goes further than that. A common response to the suggested counterexamples involves the claim that even if listeners in these suggested cases obtain knowledge on the basis of the testimony of speakers, these cases are somehow exceptional, are not normal instances of testimonial knowledge (Williamson 2000, 257; Audi 2006, 43). If there is something correct about this common response, then an explanation of our intuitions about these cases would require an account of the normal way in which testimony works to spread knowledge. Such an explanation would not only serve our understanding of the conditions under which one can obtain knowledge, but also of what is involved in a normal testimonial exchange.

A successful account of how testimony normally works to spread knowledge should illuminate several common intuitions that structure the current debate about (KNTK). First, it should allow us to explain the prevalent intuition captured by (KNTK): that normally, a successful testimonial encounter requires a speaker who knows that her testimony is true. Second, it should allow us to appreciate what is normal and what is not normal about suggested counterexamples. That is, the account should allow us to explain why suggested counterexamples to (KNTK) do not involve normal cases of acquisition of testimonial knowledge. And it should allow us to do so while acknowledging the fact that in the cases described by Lackey and Graham, the belief of the listener, which seems to constitute knowledge, is formed in the normal way in which testimonial beliefs are formed: by believing the speaker, or trusting her. Such an account should therefore allow us to meet the challenge of explaining how it could be the case that the testimonial beliefs obtained in these cases are not normal instances of testimonial knowledge, in spite of the fact that they are formed in the normal way in which testimonial beliefs are formed, and in spite of the fact that they constitute knowledge.

Meeting this challenge will require a change in the terms in which the debate is usually cast. As I will suggest, the lesson we should draw from the suggested counterexamples is not that there is something improper about talk of testimony transmitting or transferring knowledge and entitlement; nor that the transfer of knowledge does not crucially depend on the speaker's judgment having some privileged epistemic status. Instead, the proper lesson for us is that the privileged epistemic property to which principles for the transmission of knowledge and entitlement should appeal is epistemic authority, not knowledge.

To argue for these conclusions, I will start by presenting one suggested counterexample to (KNTK). I will then discuss two ways of defending (KNTK), which do not meet the challenge spelt out above. Finally, I will turn to an account

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of what it is to accept a speaker's testimony upon trust, and will suggest a way of meeting the challenge based on this account.

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According to (KNTK) one can obtain knowledge that *p* by believing a speaker who testifies that *p* only if the speaker knows that *p*. As Audi puts it: "If I do not know that the speaker lost his temper, you cannot come to know it on the basis of my attesting to it…What I do not have, I cannot give" (1997, 409). This claim enjoys high intuitive appeal. But why is that so? The factivity of knowledge guarantees the validity of a modest principle stating that one cannot obtain knowledge that *p* by believing a speaker's testimony that *p*, if the speaker's testimonially-expressed belief is not true. (KNTK) however is stronger than this modest principle, and unlike the modest principle, does not seem to follow from the semantics of 'know.' Indeed, given suggested counterexamples to (KNTK), it would seem that any attempt to argue for (KNTK) on such a basis is bound to fail.

There are different kinds of counterexamples to (KNTK): some involve a speaker who does not know that *p* because she has inadequate grounds for her asserted belief that *p*; others involve a speaker who asserts, but does not believe, and thus does not know, that *p*. My focus here will be on cases of the former kind: cases in which the speaker lacks adequate grounds for her asserted belief.[3] An example is the Judy-and-Trudy case, first described by Graham (2000). One day, while Susan is looking at her, Judy breaks a statue. When asked by Bill about the noise, Susan tells him that Judy broke the statue, and he believes her. Susan does not know, however, that Judy has an identical twin, Trudy, who was with Bill in an adjacent room when the statue was broken. Susan, Graham argues, does not know that Judy broke the statue, for she is unable to rule out a relevant alternative: that it was Trudy who broke the statue. But Bill, who distinguishes between Judy and Trudy, and was with Trudy when the statue was broken, can rule out this possibility, and thus, Graham argues, comes to know that Judy broke the statue. He comes to know that by believing Susan, in spite of the fact that Susan does not know that the attested proposition is true.

In spite of such apparent counterexamples to (KNTK), many refuse to give up on the principle, insisting that (KNTK) must hold for normal testimonial exchanges. (KNTK) seems to express something quite fundamental about the normal functioning of testimony: the testimony of a speaker can allow a listener to share a speaker's entitlement to believe a proposition, but it cannot generate entitlement to believe a proposition, where the speaker had none in the first place. Many thus maintain that somehow there must be something irregular about cases such as that described by Graham: even if the audience obtains knowledge that *p* on the basis of the testimony of a speaker who lacks knowledge, the normal way of obtaining knowledge on the basis of testimony does not allow for that.

This common response might indeed be true. What it requires, however, is a rationale. To avoid the charge of arbitrariness, a defender of (KNTK) must explain

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in what way apparent counterexamples to (KNTK) do not constitute normal cases of testimonial knowledge. This may indeed be the real significance of the current debate: if there is something irregular about these cases, then addressing the challenge presented by Lackey and Graham would require an account of the normal way in which testimony works to spread knowledge.

Now, as Graham notes, Bill's knowledge rests partially on background knowledge, not obtained through Susan's testimony (2000, 374). A defender of (KNTK) might suggest that it is because of this fact that Bill's knowledge is not testimonial; this indeed is how Audi seems to respond to this example (2006, 46–7).[4] But this response is inadequate: for while it allows us to save (KNTK) by claiming that what Bill obtains is not testimonial knowledge, the response casts doubt on the very possibility that we can ever obtain testimonial knowledge. As Audi himself admits, "We all have background beliefs that constrain what we accept" (2006, 27–8). Quite plausibly, it is because we have background knowledge that constrains our acceptance of testimony, that we are entitled as adults to accept the testimony of others, and that our testimonially based beliefs can constitute knowledge.[5] If we want to claim that Bill's knowledge is not testimonial because it partially rests on background information, we need to explain why background information constraining what we accept can sometimes be compatible with the claim that the knowledge acquired can properly be called testimonial, but why background information constraining what we accept excludes saying so in other cases, such as Bill's.

Perhaps Audi's claim that Bill's knowledge does not constitute testimonial knowledge is based on his claim that testimonial knowledge is never inferential (Audi 2006, 27). Now it is true that Bill can come to know that Judy broke the statue through an inference from his knowledge that Susan testified to this effect, conjoined with his background knowledge that Judy's only twin was elsewhere when the statue was broken; and if this is the way in which Bill would come to believe this fact, then given Audi's claim that testimonial knowledge is never inferential, Bill's knowledge would not constitute testimonial knowledge. But to argue in this way is to miss the force of Graham's example. For what makes this example interesting is precisely the fact that, as Graham tells the story, Bill does not arrive at his belief on the basis of an inference: he just believes Susan, he trusts her. In this respect, there is nothing extraordinary about Bill's knowledge, nothing that can explain the intuition that Bill's is not a normal instance of testimonial knowledge. For the normal way of relying on a speaker's testimony, as several philosophers have noted, is by believing the speaker, by taking her word for it; and this is precisely what Bill does.

One might attempt to defend (KNTK) on the basis of a plausible claim about the nature of assertions, or of a subclass of assertions, namely tellings, together with the claim that (KNTK) applies only to normal testimonial exchanges, that is, to exchanges involving a listener who forms a belief upon trust of the speaker. According to the suggested defense, to trust a speaker is to take her assertion at

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face value, and, therefore, to trust a speaker asserting that *p* is to base one's belief upon the premise that the speaker knows that *p*. For, as several philosophers have suggested, in flat-out asserting that *p*, a speaker represents herself as knowing that *p*.[6] It follows that if one trusts a speaker who testifies that *p* but does not know that *p*, then one's testimonially-based belief that *p* is based on a false premise. And such a belief, it may be argued, does not constitute knowledge. Such a defense of (KNTK) seems to be suggested by Fricker (2006, 249).

If the premises underlying this piece of argumentation are true, then there can be no belief based on trusting a speaker which constitutes a counterexample to (KNTK).[7] Thus we have a ready explanation both of the validity of (KNTK) in as much as it applies to trust-based beliefs, and of what goes wrong with Graham's suggested counterexample: if indeed Bill's belief is based upon trust, then his belief does not constitute knowledge.

Fricker's suggestion that (KNTK) applies to trust-based beliefs, is, I believe, an important one;[8] there are, however, a number of problems with her attempted defense of this claim. First, while it is certainly true that most beliefs based upon false premises do not constitute knowledge, it is not obvious that no such belief can constitute knowledge. Usually a justified belief based on a false premise will either be false or accidentally true. But there are cases in which a belief can be based on a false premise and yet be safe, reliable or truth-tracking, and it is controversial whether such a belief cannot constitute knowledge. Indeed, Bill's belief that Judy broke the statue, even if based on a false premise, is reliably formed; or as Graham might claim, even if the belief is based on a false premise, Bill can rule out all the relevant alternatives, and his belief thus constitutes knowledge.

In any case, the claim that anyone who believes a speaker, who fails to know, thereby forms a belief on the basis of a false premise, is itself suspect; for the claim that trust-based beliefs are essentially based on the assumption that the speaker knows that her assertion is true is inconsistent with how we often think about trustworthy thinkers. The claim assumes a factive account of epistemic trustworthiness, according to which having a true belief that *p* is necessary for being trustworthy on *p*.[9] But consider the implications of such an account for situations in which laymen confront two honest experts expressing conflicting opinions about a certain proposition. When two experts are thus in conflict, we often think of ourselves as being faced with a dilemma: whom should we trust, the first expert, or the second? But if trustworthiness is factive, then we can never find ourselves in this familiar dilemma: we can never find ourselves in a situation where we have good grounds for believing that two persons with conflicting opinions about a proposition *p* are both trustworthy about *p*. For we would not have grounds for thinking that the first is trustworthy on *p* if we didn't have grounds for thinking that her belief is true, and thus that the conflicting belief of the second is false, and vice versa. A factive account of trustworthiness thus implies that if the grounds for thinking that the first is trustworthy are as good as the grounds for thinking that the second is trustworthy, then we cannot have good reasons

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for thinking that either of the two is trustworthy; and thus we should never find ourselves in a dilemma concerning whom to trust. Obviously, lacking good reasons for believing that either is trustworthy, we should trust neither. Thus, if the way we usually think about conflicts between experts is not utterly confused, then a factive account of epistemic trustworthiness cannot be correct.

It is doubtful therefore whether the suggested account of trustworthiness underlying this argument is correct.[10] But even if it were correct, it would not explain the common response to Graham's suggested counterexamples. An account along the lines suggested by Fricker entails that Bill does not know that Judy broke the statue; but the common response to suggested counterexamples to (KNTK) is different: the common intuition seems to be that whether or not the listener obtains knowledge, her knowledge is not a normal instance of testimonially-based knowledge. It is this response that we have set to explain, and the account of trust discussed here does not help us with that. Let us turn to a different account of trust that will allow us to explain why, even if Bill's belief is based on trust and constitutes knowledge, it is not, properly speaking, a case of testimonial knowledge.

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As several philosophers have pointed out, the normal way of relying on a speaker's testimony involves believing the speaker, a relation which is not to be confused with that of believing that what the speaker said is true (Anscombe 1979; Welbourne 1986; Moran 2005). As Anscombe suggests, "believing someone… is trusting her for the truth…." (151). The key observation, which would allow us to explain our intuitions about (KNTK) and suggested counterexamples, is the following one: To trust a speaker, to take her word for it, is to grant her epistemic authority on the matter. As Welbourne writes, "Anyone who ventures to tell another that *p* to that extent assumes the mantle of authority and anyone who believes another to that extent defers to authority" (1986, 67).

Now the idea that the normal way of relying on a speaker's testimony involves trusting the speaker and relying on her authority has become familiar to readers of contemporary epistemological literature on testimony; but all too often the meaning and significance of this idea has gone unnoticed. To have the kind of epistemic authority that allows others to trust one on *p*, that allows others to take one's word for it, is to have a special kind of normative power, the power to issue a special kind of reason for belief: by expressing her belief that *p*, a person who has authority on *p* does not merely give us a reason to likewise believe that *p*. More than that, she gives us a second-order, preemptive reason for disregarding other relevant evidence which we may have concerning *p*. That is, the reason which the opinion of a trustworthy speaker gives us for forming a similar opinion has the distinguishing mark of authoritative reasons, as noted by political philosophers such as Joseph Raz and H. L. A. Hart (Hart 1990, 100–7; Raz 1990, 124–6, 133–7): the testimony of a trustworthy speaker gives one a preemptive reason to believe

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what the speaker says. To trust a speaker is to grant her such authority, hence to recognize her as issuing such a preemptive reason to believe.[11]

Let me explain. Only persons, who respond to reasons, are able to issue preemptive reasons to believe a proposition, and they are able to issue such reasons because they respond to reasons. The fact that a reliable clock shows three may give us sufficient reason for believing that it is three. But this fact does not give us a preemptive reason to form the belief, merely a reason that can and should be added to other relevant evidence, and be weighed alongside with them. Unlike the clock, however, a trustworthy thinker's judgment is trustworthy because her judgment is itself sensitive to reasons. Therefore, if I have reason to believe that she is trustworthy on the asserted proposition, knowledge of her opinion may replace consideration of relevant reasons available to me, instead of being added to the balance of reasons. For just to add her judgment to those reasons which are accessible to me would amount to double-counting of those reasons that are accessible to both of us. There are two distinct ways in which one can rely on a thinker's opinion, if one is to avoid such double-counting: One is by relying on background information to infer what the facts are from knowledge of the thinker's opinion about the facts. One can do so either by inferring what the thinker's reasons for her opinion are and weighing these alongside other reasons available to one; or by relying on some known lawlike correlation between the thinker's opinion and the facts, which again allows one to infer the facts from the thinker's opinion. But there is also a second, and different way of relying on a thinker's opinion, without recourse to such inference: one can accept her judgment *instead of* considering relevant evidence available to one, thus putting one's trust in her judgment. But if one uses the first alternative, if one infers the facts from knowledge of the speaker's opinion, then one does not base one's belief upon trust: one is not taking the speaker's word for it. To take her word for it requires opting for the second route, accepting her judgment *instead of* relying on reasons available to one to infer the facts from her testimony; to take her word for it thus requires treating her opinion as giving one a preemptive reason to believe.

Audi, we now see, is to some extent correct in pointing out that normal testimonial knowledge is not inference-based. While mistaken in arguing that testimonial knowledge can never be based upon any kind of inference, he is right to say that certain kinds of inference are not compatible with a belief constituting testimonial knowledge. A normal testimonially-based belief can be based upon an inference, in that one can come to believe that a speaker is trustworthy on the basis of an inference. It is possible, in other words, to trust a speaker on the basis of an inference. But if one trusts a speaker, then one does not accept her judgment on the basis of an inference from what she has said to the fact that what she has said is true.[12]

What Audi has failed to note, however, is that the non-inferential nature of testimonial knowledge is a consequence of the fact that normal testimonial knowledge is based on an acknowledgement of a speaker's ability to issue

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preemptive reasons for belief. It is this fact, together with the fact that the opinion of a trustworthy thinker can give us such a reason because her belief itself responds to reasons, which lends such plausibility to (KNTK), and which is therefore of such significance for our discussion.

One way of arriving at (KNTK) on the basis of these observations follows a somewhat familiar route. To base a belief upon trust of a speaker, I have argued, is to form a belief on the basis of the premise that the speaker has authority on the matter. But one has epistemic authority on *p*, it is often assumed, if and only if one knows that *p*;[13] hence, if one trusts a speaker who asserts that *p* but doesn't know that *p*, then one's trust-based belief is based on a false premise; and therefore, one might argue, such a belief does not constitute knowledge.

Now this line of thought seems to suffer from some of the same problems we encountered when discussing Fricker's argument. First, there may be exceptions to the principle that beliefs based on false premises cannot constitute knowledge. And the assumption that one can have epistemic authority on *p* only if one knows that *p* is just as suspect as the assumption that trustworthiness on *p* requires that one knows that *p*: a factive account of epistemic authority, just like a factive account of epistemic trustworthiness, is incompatible with several intuitions that we have about epistemic trust and authority.[14] Finally, this line of thought, even if sound, does not explain the common response to Graham's and Lackey's suggested counterexamples.

If however we focus on what it is that one has when one has epistemic authority, and not just on the conditions for having epistemic authority, then we can both explain why (KNTK) has seemed so plausible to so many, and why many have responded to suggested counterexamples to (KNTK) in the way that they have. To have epistemic authority on *p* is to have the ability to entitle others to form an opinion by giving others a preemptive reason for believing that *p*. Whatever the conditions for having epistemic authority may be, epistemic authority is a normative power that one has in virtue of the fact that one's judgment responds to reasons. In virtue of my trust of the authoritative judgment of a trustworthy thinker, my opinion becomes sensitive to evidence that the trusted person has, and insensitive to evidence that I may have. And therefore, if the epistemic status of one's belief is owed to the trust of a trustworthy thinker, the reasons supporting one's belief are ultimately just those reasons supporting the trusted speaker's judgment, and thus can only be as strong as the reasons supporting her judgment.[15] It is in this observation that (KNTK) seems to have its source: for if the reasons supporting the trusted speaker's belief do not suffice to render her belief knowledge, how could those very same reasons render the trusting thinker's belief knowledge?

(KNTK) owes its attractiveness to the idea that if the epistemic status of one's belief is based upon trust, then the reasons supporting one's opinion can only be as strong as the reasons that support the trusted thinker's judgment. But does this idea not neglect the possibility exemplified in Graham's Judy-and-Trudy case? After all, a thinker who trusts a speaker's assertion that *p* may have information that the

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speaker lacks, and which may either constitute evidence for *p*, or a defeater of a defeater of the speaker's justification for believing that *p*. Indeed, Bill has such information, and this might suggest, as Graham seems to do, that because Bill has information not available to the trusted speaker, his belief owes *part* of its epistemic status to his trust of the speaker and *part* of its epistemic status to information he has independently of the speaker (Graham 2000, 374). And if this suggestion is correct, then it would seem that while Bill's belief that *p* owes part of its epistemic status to trust, his belief is better grounded than the trusted belief of the speaker.

This suggestion neglects, however, a significant difference between beliefs based upon trust, and beliefs based upon other sources of information, such as perception. That a belief is partially based on a perceptual state and partially on non-perceptual knowledge does not mean that the epistemic status of the belief is not partially owed to perception. Things are different when it comes to trust-based beliefs. To trust a speaker who tells one that *p* is to acknowledge her judgment as issuing a preemptive reason to believe that *p*, and thus to see oneself as having a reason to disregard other evidence that one may have which may be relevant to *p*. Therefore, if the epistemic status of one's belief that *p* is owed to such evidence, as in Bill's case, the epistemic status of one's belief is not owed to trust, not even partially so. In as much as the epistemic status of one's trust-based belief is owed to the distinctive normative structure associated with trust, it cannot be owed to other evidence one has for believing that *p*. Bill may have obtained knowledge through his trust of Susan, but if he did, this is because the epistemic status of his trust-based belief is not owed to the distinctive normative structure associated with trust. Bill's belief was formed through trust, and in trusting Susan, Bill saw himself as having the right to disregard that independent evidence which he has; but this does not mean, of course, that he has actually disregarded such evidence. Had Bill disregarded the independent evidence which he had about Trudy's whereabouts, then arguably the status of his belief would be no better than Susan's belief; he would not come to know that Judy broke the statue by believing Susan's testimony.[16] If his trust of Susan is not damaging, if his belief nonetheless constitutes knowledge, this is because he does not disregard this piece of information, in spite of the fact that he takes himself as having a right to do so. So if Graham is correct in insisting that Bill has obtained knowledge by trusting Susan, that is not in virtue of his trust in her. Bill's belief, while trust based, does not owe its epistemic status to his trust of Susan, and in this respect, does not constitute a normal instance of testimonial knowledge.

The claim that one cannot obtain testimonial knowledge that *p* from a speaker who does not know that *p* does not rest only on the idea that if one's belief owes its epistemic status to trust, then the reasons supporting one's opinion can only be as strong as the reasons supporting the trusted thinker's judgment; it is also based on the intuition, that it is only the strength of the reasons that supports a true belief that determines whether that belief constitutes knowledge. This intuitive idea has recently met with criticism from those who claim that

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the epistemic standards that a belief needs to meet to constitute knowledge are partially determined by relevant practical interests of the believer (Hawthorne 2004; Stanley 2005). While this admittedly counterintuitive claim does not undermine our explanation of the intuitive appeal of (KNTK) and of the common response to suggested counterexamples, the claim, if correct, may indeed undermine (KNTK). And if defenders of subject-sensitive invariantism are correct, then perhaps one can obtain knowledge that *p* in virtue of one's trust of a speaker who does not know that *p*, as long as the speaker has epistemic authority on *p*.

If we agree to call a belief 'entitled' if it fits the evidence – true evidence, that is – then we can say that one can obtain an entitled belief that *p* in virtue of one's trust of a speaker only if the speaker has epistemic authority on *p*; and that one's trust-based belief can be entitled only to the extent that the authoritative judgment of the speaker is. We can thus summarize our discussion by saying that to have epistemic authority is to have the ability to transfer entitlement to believe a proposition to trusting thinkers by issuing preemptive reasons to believe the proposition. And accordingly, we can formulate a principle governing the transfer of testimonial entitlement, according to which epistemic authority (on the part of the speaker) is necessary if the audience is to obtain testimonial entitlement in virtue of her trust of the speaker.

(ANTE): Hearer H can obtain testimonial entitlement for the belief that *p* in virtue of her trust of a speaker S who asserts that *p* only if S has epistemic authority on *p*, and only to the extent that S has reasons supporting the belief that *p*.

The validity of ANTE does not depend on any controversial assumptions about the conditions for having epistemic authority, or about the determinants of the epistemic standards for knowledge. If what I have said above is correct, then ANTE should not admit of any exceptions. If a speaker does not have epistemic authority on *p*, then one cannot obtain entitled belief that *p* just in virtue of one's trust of the speaker: such a trust-based belief would be based on a false premise, and hence would not be entitled; if a belief obtained through such trust is entitled, it is entitled by information available to the trusting thinker independently of her trust of the speaker, and then the belief does not owe its epistemic status to trust. As long as a belief that *p* owes its epistemic status to trust, the belief is ultimately supported by reasons available to the trusted thinker, and it can be entitled only to the extent that the speaker has reasons supporting the belief that *p*.

I have suggested (ANTE) as an alternative to (KNTK); but I do not argue here for the rejection of (KNTK). Whether (KNTK) is valid depends on a number of questions, including that concerning the conditions for having epistemic authority, and that is a question that our discussion has left open. Let me end, however, by noting that our discussion does suggest how we can approach this question. If what we have said is correct then a necessary condition for obtaining entitled belief that *p* in virtue of one's trust of a speaker is that the speaker have epistemic authority on *p*. Thus we can test whether a certain property F is necessary for having such

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authority, by asking whether one can obtain an entitled belief that *p* in virtue of one's trust of a thinker who does not have F. If the answer is positive, then F is not a necessary condition for epistemic authority on *p*. Thus, some suggested counterexamples to (KNTK) may help us determine the conditions for having epistemic authority. Lackey, for example, has described suggested counterexamples to (KNTK), where the speaker has very good evidence for believing that *p*, but still does not know that *p* because she does not believe that *p*. If, as Lackey suggests, one can obtain knowledge that *p* by trusting such a speaker's assertion that *p*, and if such knowledge is indeed owed to one's trust of the speaker, then such examples teach us something quite important about the condition for having epistemic authority: that to have epistemic authority on *p*, it is not necessary that one has the belief that *p*. But I will leave the question whether that is the correct conclusion to draw from such examples for another time.

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NOTES

1 (KNTK) or some close variation of it, was endorsed, e.g., by Audi (1997, 410), Angus Ross (1986, 82), James Ross (1975, 53), Williamson (1996, 520), and Fricker (2006, 240). For a more comprehensive list of philosophers who endorse some version of the principle, see Lackey (2006a, 21). Some philosophers have endorsed a weaker principle that requires merely that a testimonial chain starts with a speaker who knows that *p*, if a hearer is to obtain knowledge that *p* through the chain; see e.g., Dummett (1994, 264). While I will focus here on the stronger principle, most of what I will say applies also to the weaker principle.

2 Such examples were suggested, e.g., by Goldberg (2005), Graham (2000) and Lackey (1999; 2006b).

3 As I will suggest later on, these different kinds of cases may admit of different kinds of analyses, and may teach us quite different kinds of lessons.

4 Like Audi, I will reserve the term 'testimonial knowledge' to normal instances of knowledge acquired on the basis of testimony. Thus to say of a certain knower who has obtained knowledge on the basis of testimony that her knowledge is not testimonial is to say that her knowledge, in spite of the fact that it was based on testimony, does not constitute a normal instance of testimony-based knowledge. As should be clear by now, a main task of our discussion is to explain what it is that makes knowledge acquired on the basis of testimony into testimonial knowledge.

5 For such an explanation of our entitlement to believe what we are told, see Adler (2002).

6 For a defense of this claim, see e.g., Unger (1975) and Williamson (2000). The claim that in asserting that *p*, one represents oneself as knowing that *p* may not be true of all assertions, but only of some paradigmatic forms of assertions, such as the speech act of telling, or what Williamson calls 'flat-out assertions.' For the sake of simplicity, I will assume here that the claim is nonetheless true of all assertions.

7 For any counterexample to (KNTK) would involve a speaker that does not know that her assertion is true, and any listener who trusts such a speaker does not obtain knowledge on the basis of her trust.

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8 Graham (2000, 372) discusses a similar suggestion, but does so without discussing the reasons for thinking that such a suggestion may be true.

9 Unless we assume a factive account of trustworthiness it is not clear why trust of a speaker must necessarily be based on the premise that the speaker's expressed belief is true. It is a mistake to think that this follows just from the fact that when we trust a speaker who asserts that *p*, we form the belief that what she asserts is true. While that is part of what trusting a speaker consists in, that need not be the *basis* of our belief.

10 In Keren (2005) I discuss in greater detail some of the problems raised by a factive account of epistemic trustworthiness and epistemic authority.

11 To say that the opinion of a speaker who has epistemic authority on *p* gives me a second-order preemptive reasons to believe that *p* is not to say that once I am told that *p* by a person with authority, I am entitled from that point onwards to disregard all apparent counterevidence to *p*. For such counterevidence may either undermine my entitlement to believe that the speaker has authority on *p*, or make it the case that the speaker no longer has authority for me (even if she previously did have authority for me). The basic relation of having epistemic authority on *p* is a relation between persons at times, and so person A may have authority over B but not over C, and may have authority over B at one time, but not at another. Elsewhere I discuss the conditions for having epistemic authority, and present an account of these conditions with its relational nature explicit (Keren 2005).

12 It is possible, in other words, to trust a speaker on the basis of evidence and background information. The distinction drawn in the previous paragraph between accepting a speaker's testimony upon trust, and other ways of using a speaker's testimony that *p* to form the belief that *p*, is not based on the idea that trust of a speaker is never based on evidence, background information, or inference from these. The judgment that a speaker is trustworthy often rests on evidence, and rightly so. What is unique about epistemic trust is that when one trusts a speaker, one does not accept her testimony on the basis of an inference from the fact that she said that *p*, to the fact that *p*; and that, moreover, one avoids basing one's belief on such an inference, because one takes oneself as having a right to disregard the kind of information that would have been the basis of such an inference.

13 I discuss and reject this assumption in (Keren 2005).

14 There might be, however, a way of escaping this problem, provided that the controversial claim that warrant entails truth (Merricks, 1995) is false: In that case, we can improve on the suggested argument by replacing the assumption that epistemic authority on *p* requires knowledge that *p* with one based on an account of epistemic authority that requires warranted belief that *p* but not knowledge that *p* for having epistemic authority on *p*. If a speaker asserts that *p* but does not know that *p*, then she either does not have a warranted belief that *p*, or she has a warranted belief that *p*, but the belief is false. Obviously, if the latter is true, and one believes her, then one's false belief does not constitute knowledge. If the former is true, that is, if one trusts a speaker who does not have a warranted belief that *p*, then, according to the suggested account, one's trust-based belief is based on a false premise that the speaker has epistemic authority on *p*, and so one's belief again does not constitute knowledge.

15 The idea that reasons supporting an audience's trust-based belief are ultimately those reasons supporting the trusted speaker's judgment is not new, and has recently been

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expressed by Schmitt (2006). The claim defended by Schmitt, however, seems to be the more modest one, that a testimonially-justified belief *can* be justified on the basis of the testifier's reasons for her belief; my claim is stronger: in as much as a trust-based belief owes its epistemic status to trust, the reasons supporting the testimonially-justified belief *cannot* be stronger than the testifier's reasons for his belief. It is the latter claim that is crucial for the explanation presented below of the intuitions that structure the debate about (KNTK). This claim is not supported by Schmitt's defense of his modest claim, because Schmitt defends his claim on the basis of the idea that reasons that could justify a testimonially-justified belief are often unavailable to the audience; he says nothing that supports the idea, which is crucial to our explanation, that the opinion of the speaker can sometimes give the audience a reason to disregard evidence which is available to her.

16 Compare Bill's case with the following one: Phil, a security officer who works with Susan and Bill, is sitting in front of a monitor that tracks the movement of employees by listing the ID numbers of employees located in odd-numbered rooms. Like Bill, he hears the noise from an adjacent room (room #2), and asks Susan about it. Susan tells him that Judy broke the statue, and, like Bill, he believes her. Like Bill, Phil can distinguish between Judy and Trudy; moreover, he is staring at the monitor that indicates that Trudy is in room number 3. But because he trusts Susan, he does not process the information provided by the ID numbers listed on the monitor. While he could infer from the monitor that Trudy was not in the adjacent room, he disregards the information and does not make the inference. If Susan does not distinguish between Judy and Trudy, does Phil come to know that Judy broke the statue by believing Susan? Arguably he does not. Since he disregards the background information available to him, the status of his trust-based belief is no better than Susan's.

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