DRAFT: not for quotation, etc.
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Chapter Two

Sincerity and Self-Presentation

The difficulties of intimacy or the unobstructed meeting of minds are so various that it has occurred to more than one writer over the centuries that the fundamental problem here arises from our basic metaphysical condition as embodied human beings. In the Enneades, Plotinus describes the happy condition of souls when they have at last reached the heavenly region and are no longer encumbered by the physical bodies that once housed them, and makes a striking comparison between the soul's emancipation from physical embodiment and it's freedom from the need for words or other signs to make itself known to others.

> "We certainly cannot think of them [souls free of the body], it seems to me as employing words when, though they may occupy bodies in the heavenly region, they are essentially in the Intellectual [...] [T]here can be no question of commanding or of taking counsel; they will know, each, what is to be communicated from another, by present consciousness. Even in our own case here, eyes often know what is not spoken; and There all is pure, every being is, as it were, an eye, nothing is concealed or sophisticated, there is no need of speech, everything is seen and known."[1]

[1] Plotinus, Enneades. Trans. Stephen Mackenna (London, 1956), IV. 3, 18.

So we might say: in a better world, there would be no need for speech, for the purpose of speech, and communication generally, can only be to make manifest the contents of one's mind, and there nothing would obstruct the view of one mind to another. A certain familiar picture of the meaning and value of sincerity gains expression in this passage. We value sincerity in speech, and in expression generally, because it is the closest we can come to unmediated access to the genuine state of mind of the person we are communicating with. In the context of putatively informative communication, we value speech because it is a reliable and fine-grained guide to the beliefs of the other person, and we value the person's beliefs themselves because they are often an indispensable and reliable guide to the facts in question. The smile, if sincere, takes us to the pleasure of the other person, and the statements he makes, if sincere, take us to his genuine beliefs about some matter we are interested in. And since the other person's words are only of interest to us insofar as they are a reliable guide to his beliefs, we would do just as well, and perhaps better, if we had more immediate access to those beliefs, dispensing with the need for verbal expression and all of its risks and inadequacies. Then we would be in a position to make up our own minds as to the epistemic value of his beliefs as a guide to the facts themselves, and we would be able to do this without the risks incurred by the additional inference from his possibly insincere speech to his beliefs and other states of mind. From the perspective of this ideal, sincerity belongs with the virtues that seek to make themselves unnecessary, but at the cost of treating speech itself as a lamentable expedient for purposes of ideal communication. The world of unimpeded communion of souls, as

described by Plotinus, is for reason of that very purity an utterly silent world. There is nothing to say, simply because in that state of existence everything goes without saying.

This picture is a natural expression of the thought that sincerity matters to speech because its presence is our guarantee that what the speaker says is an accurate representation of what he actually believes. If what we hear from a speaker is to be believable by us, it is because the speech we hear provides us with access to what the speaker's own beliefs are, and his statements will be believable only to the extent that we are counting on his beliefs on this matter to be reliable. Hence since it is access to the beliefs of the other person that is doing all the real work here, it need not matter just how this access is achieved so long as it is understood that, other things being equal, we should prefer access that was free of the mediations of explicit speech and the risks inherent in the assumption of sincerity.

I will be arguing against this picture, both as an understanding of what sincerity is and as an understanding of the importance of sincerity in speech. The epistemic status of another person's beliefs is importantly different from that of the words he speaks, and the importance of his speech is not simply that of an indicator of what his beliefs are. Further, the role of the assumption of sincerity in speech is not that of a guarantee that the speaker's words reflect his actual beliefs, but is in fact something both weaker than that in one way, and stronger in another way.

We can begin with the following natural assumption about the role of sincerity in speech: since assertion aims at belief on the part of the hearer, this aim cannot be achieved unless the hearer assumes that the speaker believes what he says. This

would provide a straightforward explanation of the norm of sincerity in assertion, and in recent years Timothy Williamson and others have argued that the considerations in favor of this norm in fact support the stronger norm that in assertion the speaker not only believes what he says, but knows it as well. [2] I will not be directly addressing the 'knowledge requirement' here, except to the extent of arguing that even the belief requirement has a more restricted application than is usually assumed. In Truth and Truthfulness,[3] Bernard Williams argues against the assimilation of the sense in which "belief aims at truth" to a norm of truth for assertion, for while falsity is a "fatal objection" to a belief (in that recognition of its falsity on the part of the believer amounts to abandoning it as a belief), there is no comparable fatality with respect to statements that are false. As he says, "We appropriately utter – that is, come out with – false sentences in all sorts of contexts." (70). This is so not only because not all statements present themselves as assertions, but also because not all assertions present themselves as candidates for belief, at least in the sense of being informative to the hearer (71). And yet, when it comes to assertions which do aim to change the beliefs of the audience, Williams suggests that the speaker must at least present himself as believing what he is saying. With respect to the idea that "we cannot typically make sense of someone who seems to be asserting something he does not believe to people who, as he well knows, know that he does not believe it,", he says that "an explanation of it might be this: that an assertion is an utterance intended to bring it about that the hearer believes its content, and this is not an intention which, in these circumstances, the speaker can intelligibly have. This places assertion firmly in the context of one

[2] Williamson, Knowledge and its Limits (Oxford University Press, 2000).

person's telling something to another." (70 - 71) I think it is indeed true that it is only the notion of telling and not the broader notion of assertion that can make sense of the requirement on the speaker's beliefs here, and the general importance of sincerity itself. As mentioned earlier, not all assertion aims at the beliefs of the hearer in the first place, and for these there may be no interest on the part of the hearer in whether what is said reflects the beliefs of the speaker. What Williams suggests above, however, is that when the aim of assertion is belief in the content of what is said, it will be clear to both speaker and audience that this aim cannot be achieved unless the speaker is assumed to believe what he says. This may seem obvious enough, especially if we are thinking of the audience asking itself the question "Why should I believe this if he doesn't?", but in fact this question will often enough have a straightforward answer, with the reasons for believing what is said being quite independent of the speaker's own attitude toward it. For assertions are made, with the aim of being convincing, in the context of such activities as formal debate, ad hominem argument, or the following out of a proof, where the convincingness of what is said in these contexts need not depend at all on the assumption that the speaker himself believes what he is saying. In situations of this sort, assertions can function as reminders, challenges, probings or orientations for the mind, and when successful they can be convincing on their own. Assertions are made and directions are given by the speaker helping someone follow a proof, but the aim here is that the reasons themselves will be found convincing, independent of any assumptions about the actual attitudes of the speaker.

In cases like these, the speaker may be aiming to say true things, but he is not

[3] (Princeton 2001)

himself aiming to be believed. The context is in a natural sense an informative one, but the speaker is playing a different role in the production of belief than he is when he tells someone something. In this way the question of what the speaker himself believes does not have the same relevance for the hearer in the two cases, when he is considering whether to believe what has been said. There will be more to say about the relevance of the speaker's beliefs later, as it pertains to the specific form of informative assertion involved in telling. In particular, I will say more about how the speaker's presentation of his own belief is supposed to play a role in bringing the hearer to believe that very thing. But when the context of assertion is not informative in the first place we might think that conveying beliefs about the speaker's beliefs would only have less of a role to play. Williams, however, disagrees and in so doing he argues for a significant asymmetry between sincerity and insincerity.

> I have made the point that sincere assertion do not necessarily have the aim of informing the hearer; but insincere assertions do have the aim of misinforming the hearer. In the primary case, they aim to misinform the hearer about the state of things, the truth of what the speaker asserts. Derivatively, they may aim to misinform the hearer merely about the speaker's beliefs: the speaker may know that the hearer will not believe what he falsely asserts, but he wants her to believe that he himself believes it. We should say, then, that the standard conditions of A's asserting that P are that:
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> > A utters a sentence "S," where "S" means that P, in doing which either he expresses his belief that P, or he intends the person addressed to take it that he believes that P. (74)

But the very asymmetry claimed here should give us pause. Why should the

general point of an assertion necessarily have anything to do with conveying beliefs (true or false ones) about the speaker's own beliefs? If I open a book and read the sentence "The world is everything that is the case", surely an assertion is being made here, and yet it does not matter to my relation to this statement whether it expresses the actual beliefs of the author, nor does its functioning in my thought depend on my taking it that it does so. Most importantly for our purposes it doesn't matter to the believability of that statement that I take it to reflect the beliefs of the speaker.

And if sincere assertion need not have any sort of informative intent (either about the facts or about the beliefs of the speaker), why cannot insincere assertions also take place in a context where informing or misinforming are simply not the issue? For instance, a teacher is examining a student and asks him to describe the chief causes of the American Civil War, and the student dutifully and intelligently outlines the causes as they were presented in lectures, which, let us assume, downplayed the role of slavery in the origins of the conflict. Perhaps the student himself is unconvinced by the line taken in the lectures, but is nonetheless quite good at outlining the approach presented there. So he speaks insincerely, and does not go into his own thoughts on the matter. The context is one where both teacher and student assume that there is no reporting or exchange of information about the Civil War itself, so that is not the aim of the speaker. And in this situation I don't see why it should be the aim of the student to be misinforming the teacher about his beliefs on the matter either. In situations like these the beliefs of the speaker need not enter in as an object of concern at all. The teacher may simply want to know that the student has understood the lectures and can

discourse on them competently. And if this is right, and situations like this are common enough, I don't see reason to deny that the student is engaged in making assertions when he says things like "The issue of the scope and authority of the federal government divided North and South for reasons quite independent of the extension of slavery to the new territories". Similarly, assertions are made in the context of formal debate and ad hominem argument where there need be no assumption that one is being informed either about the facts or about the beliefs of the speaker.

What I think this shows so far is that not all assertions aim to be informative or mis-informative at all, neither about the facts themselves nor about the beliefs of the speaker. And then within the class of assertions that are informative in the sense of aiming at the beliefs of the audience, some of these achieve their aim through something more like reminding or demonstrating and do not depend for their convincingness on assumptions about the beliefs of the speaker. For these, sincerity need not play any role in achieving the aims of assertion. Finally, within the class of assertions whose aim is informative some of these have the aim that the speaker himself be believed, and these have the force or intent of telling the audience something. For these assertions the success of the aim does involve the hearer's assumption that the speaker believes what he says, for he is being invited or instructed to share that very belief.

But just what is the role of this assumption in the case of telling? In particular, if the hearer will not be convinced unless he assumes that what the speaker says reflects what he believes, does that mean that all the hearer is really concerned with is what the

speaker's beliefs are, such that if he could arrive at this knowledge without being told anything his epistemic position would be just as good or better? That would take us back to the conception of sincerity I derived from the picture of transparent communication in Plotinus, where the value of sincerity would be that of a fallible guarantee that the speaker's words reflect his actual beliefs. If we know his belief independently of intention to make it manifest, it seems we can dispense with any reliance on the external signs of belief. But a person's beliefs, like his other attitudes, may gain expression in his behavior in various ways, and even his explicit statements can be revealing about much more than the particular belief being asserted. Not every belief that the hearer discerns in these ways will provide him with a reason to share that belief, so if sincerity contributes to the believability of what is said it must do more than provide a glimpse into the mind of the speaker. The speaker himself, and not just the fact of his belief, must play a role in constituting a reason for his audience to believe something. We need to look more closely into just how beliefs gain expression in sincere assertion.

When Williams says that insincere assertions must have the aim of misinforming the hearer, an important intuition guiding him here is that of the naturalness of sincerity over insincerity in speech. So, while saying what one genuinely believes about some matter may be the natural, default response to a question about it, and hence need not raise any specific question as to the motives of the speaker for speaking sincerely here, speaking insincerely does seem to require something like an intent on the part of the speaker to deviate from the natural response, and hence does raise the question of the

specific motives of the speaker for doing so. In this sense, then, there is a real difference between sincerity and insincerity. Sincere speech does not immediately raise any question as to why the speaker chose on this occasion to express his actual beliefs. Expressing one's actual beliefs through assertion just is the immediate, natural response in speech situations, and as such it functions independently of the intent either to inform or misinform. It is for reasons of this sort that Williams frequently characterizes sincere assertion as the spontaneous or "direct expression" of one's belief. By contrast, expressing something other than one's actual beliefs is something that calls for some explanation, specifically an explanation in terms of the motives of the speaker regarding his audience, and so it seems that these motives could only be deceitful, either with respect to the facts or his beliefs or both at once. Even so, I think examples such as the ones above show that such motives need not be deceitful at all. The person speaking in an examination or a debate may well have specific motives for departing from the spontaneous expression of his actual beliefs, but these motives need not have anything to with misinforming his audience either about his beliefs themselves or about the facts in question. It is indeed significant that the natural, spontaneous response to any question calling for an assertion is to come out with one's actual beliefs, and Williams places illuminating emphasis on this throughout this chapter. ("Sincerity at the most basic level is simply openness, a lack of inhibition." 75) It is also this emphasis on the naturalness of truthful expression over untruthful expression that accounts for his linking of sincere assertion with a special sense of directness in the expression of belief. This formulation is first introduced and emphasized on p. 74, but is

returned to throughout the chapter. [78, 79, 80, 81]

> "What better expression could there be of that belief than that sentence, and what belief could be better expressed by its utterance? There are, of course, other ways of expressing one's beliefs; we can say that someone who asserts that P and is sincere says something that is a direct expression of his belief that P." (74)

In this passage, there is a question about directness, and a question about what makes an expression of some belief "better" than some other one. If we restrict expressions to verbal expressions, then it may well go without saying that there is no better verbal expression of the belief that P than the utterance of "P" itself. But not all our beliefs, let alone other states of mind we report or give expression to, are so closely tied to words for it to be true that there can be no better expression of them than the utterance of some sentence. If we think of 'expression' as covering a wider field than the verbal, and if a "better" expression is one that is more expressively adequate than some other one, then it won't be hard to imagine situations where there is indeed some more adequate expression (e.g., of my belief about the superiority of one performance to another, or about the quality of irritation in someone's voice) than the utterance of a roughly corresponding sentence. Or, alternatively, if what makes one expression better than another is that it is a more reliable guide to the truth about the state of mind in question, so that what is at issue is basic accuracy or reliability rather than expressive adequacy, then there are different reasons for doubting that the assertion of "P" will always be the better expression. For any assertion is an intentional act, and only counts as any kind of indication of the person's state of mind insofar as it is presented in

a certain spirit, as a sincere assertion and not some other kind of verbal performance, and hence considered as a reliable indication of a person's actual belief, explicit assertion is subject to all the risks involved in relying on a deliberate expression that may be deliberately misleading. And even when the person's sincerity is not in question, his sincere assertion can still only be as accurate or reliable as his own self-knowledge. As compared with other ways of reading off someone's beliefs from what he does (whether deliberately or not), relying on what he says involves the audience in further layers of mediation inseparable from the character of saying something as an intentional act. And this in turn raises questions about the idea of assertion as a "direct expression" of belief.[4]

People's beliefs gain expression continually in what they say and do, and not every mode of expression of belief provides the audience with the type of reason for conviction that ordinary testimony does. Beliefs and other attitudes gain expression in the absence of any intent to communicate, simply through our actions and how we perform them, and for this very reason this might be thought of as a more direct form of expression than one involving the complexities of intention involved in telling someone something, however spontaneous truthful assertion may be. This applies to verbal behavior as much as it does to non-verbal behavior. As Williams points out, "All sorts of inferences may be reasonably made from what people say and the ways in which they

[4] As to "what belief could be better expressed by its utterance", there may be straightforward answers here too, according to which the belief expressed is not that of the truth of the proposition stated. In a given context, the belief being given expression by its utterance need not be belief in that proposition at all, but rather the belief that, for the present purposes of argument or demonstration or instruction, this is what my audience needs to hear.

say it. [...] [H]earers gather more from a speaker's making a particular assertion than the content of that assertion. As I put it earlier, the speaker expresses one belief, but they acquire many. Speakers have countless beliefs and many different ways of expressing them." (99 - 100) Some forms of the expression of belief involve the speaker asserting or explicitly giving his word on something, whereas other forms of expression may manifest beliefs or other attitudes which he may not even be aware of, but which are evident to the right sort of audience. In Erving Goffman's formulation, there is the distinction between "the expression that he gives, and the expression that he gives off."[5] In both cases the hearer may gain access to the beliefs of the speaker, and from this he may indeed learn about the facts themselves that these beliefs represent. But learning by being told something is a different affair from learning by inference from what I pick up about the speaker's beliefs. Corresponding to the difference between what the speaker "gives" and what he "gives off" is the difference between what I learn from him and what I may learn from what he does and how he does it. Only in the case of what I learn from him, the person, does my relation to his beliefs involve the speaker's assuming any responsibility for what I believe, and that makes a difference to the kind of reason for belief that is obtained in the two cases. The role played by the assumption of his sincerity here is thus something more than a

[5] "Many crucial facts lie beyond the time and place of interaction or lie concealed within it. For example, the "true" or "real" attitudes, beliefs, and emotions of the individual can be ascertained only indirectly, through his avowals or through what appears to be involuntary expressive behavior. [...] The expressiveness of the individual (and therefore his capacity to give impressions) appears to involve two radically different kinds of sign activity: the expression that he gives, and the expression that he gives off." Erving Goffman, The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (Doubleday, 1959), p. 2.

guarantee of access to what his beliefs are.

The central difference is between expression in the impersonal sense of the manifestation of some attitude or state of mind, and expression in the personal sense as the intentional act of one person directed to another. To see this, let us leave the case of the expression of belief for a moment and consider the case of an apology or an expression of gratitude. We do want these to be sincere, of course, and to reflect what the person is actually feeling. But it doesn't follow from this that the importance of sincerity in such cases lies entirely in providing a kind of guarantee that the verbal apology or thanks are indications of genuine remorse or gratitude on the part of the speaker. For there are common enough situations where it is as clear as can be that someone is indeed sorry for what happened or grateful for the help, that how they look and act is a more reliable and unequivocal indication of their state of mind than any words could be. Yet finding oneself in such a situation does not do away with the need for words. And this is because the words provide something more than an indication of the speaker's state of mind. For one thing, there is the difference between remorse or gratitude <u>expressing itself</u> in a person's face or action, and <u>the person</u> giving expression to his remorse or gratitude. When we need the person as such to get involved in the explicit expression of remorse or gratitude, this is not out of the assumption that this will always provide a more reliable guide to the state of mind we are interested in, more reliable than what may express itself in his face and gesture. In such a situation I may know everything I need to know about how this person is feeling, since this expresses itself in countless ways, in voluntary and involuntary behavior. When the person

expresses himself, however, he doesn't simply provide a window on to his state of mind, but also "owns up" to the attitude in question, acknowledges it, and assumes a certain kind of responsibility for it, and for my knowledge of it. None of this is part of the story when his remorse or gratitude simply manifest themselves, clear as day, in how he looks or what he does. Hence we need to attend to the difference between what the person does in expressing himself and what the gratitude or remorse within may do in making itself manifest. And the idea of an assumption of responsibility when the person expresses his remorse or gratitude is part of a further difference, which lies in the fact that only when the person as such is involved can we speak of the expression of remorse or gratitude being directed or addressed to some particular other person. When I can read the gratitude in his face this may still leave me not knowing something, though by hypothesis it is not his gratitude itself which I fail to know. What I don't yet know is whether the person is willing to explicitly acknowledge it and address it to me; not only direct my attention to it, though that is of course important to the difference here, and not only make this knowledge 'mutual' between us, but also take up a role in constituting a reason for understanding him as grateful or sorry. Putting all this into words highlights the fact that it is the person as such who is asking to be relied on, his choices rather than the natural generalizations linking states of mind with actions and appearances.

Sincerity is an issue where there is a question of believing the speaker as such, and this requires a notion of expression different from the "direct manifestation" of belief. The case of lying may help to clarify this distinction. In the case of explicit verbal

expression of belief considerably more of the speaker's attitudes may be given expression than the simple belief that P itself (e.g., the fact that he found this worth saying, that he is willing to help out, etc.). When the speaker is lying, of course, he expresses a belief that he does not have. At the same time, his action of telling a lie may express other beliefs and attitudes of his, ones which the action of lying, and the way he carries it out, reveals him actually to have. His choice of words or the creative elaboration of his lie may express his confidence in his powers, his contempt for his audience, or various other attitudes.[6] Hence in his lying assertion that P he both expresses the belief that P, and also while engaged in this lie various of his genuine attitudes also gain expression. And here we can see that the sense of "expression" cannot be the same in the two contexts, the context in which his attitudes are expressed in his behavior and the context in which he makes the explicit, though deceitful, expression of belief that P. One basic difference is simply that in his assertion that P he expresses the belief that P, whether or not he actually has any such belief; whereas when we speak of the beliefs and other attitudes which are given expression in someone's behavior, the very description itself implies that we are normally thinking of expression here in a 'factive' sense, such that speaking of some attitude expressing itself implies the presence of that very attitude. If I begin by characterizing someone's behavior as expressing his confidence in his powers, and then become convinced that he had no such confidence, then I withdraw the original claim that this is what his behavior expressed. His behavior at the time seemed to express his confidence, but I

[6] "Man lügt wohl mit dem Munde, aber mit dem Maule, das man dabei macht, sagt man doch noch die Wahrheit.", Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, § 166.

now see this is wrong. By contrast, were the person himself to have explicitly announced such confidence to someone, the claim that this is what he expressed survives any later revelation that in fact he felt no such thing. The main difference here is between expression as a quite general term for the various ways in which phenomena are made manifest, and “express” as verb of intentional action, something done by a person. Hence we can refer to a ‘personal’ and an ‘impersonal’ sense of expression. A person’s fear or belief may express itself in various ways that the person himself may not control or even be aware of. But the person himself can only express his fear or his belief if he is aware of it and means to make it manifest. Or rather, he can do this on the assumption that he has the fear or the belief in question. A person who makes a lying profession of belief that P is still said to have expressed the belief that P, in that this is what he intended to convey. But here too, the insincere person will only be said to have expressed the belief that P insofar as he was aware that it was this belief (whether in fact his or not) that he was seeking to convey. Thus in the case of either the sincere or insincere expression, the person as such is said to have expressed the belief that P only insofar as he was aware of this belief, either as his actual belief or as the belief he was seeking to convey. 'Expression' in this sense is a conscious act of the person, addressed to another.

The fact that speaking is itself a form of expressive behavior sometimes causes confusion on this point. The distinction I am drawing between the personal and the impersonal senses of ‘expression’ is sometimes assimilated to the distinction between linguistic and non-linguistic expression, with the assumption that linguistic expression is

personal expression, in being the conscious act of a person to make manifest a particular attitude. But since they are actions, speech and assertion will always involve consequences beyond the conscious intent of the person, and hence will always have the potential to be revealing of the person beyond what he intends to convey. Hence the example of lying shows not only the difference between the two dimensions of expression, but shows how both types of expression have application within the domain of speech and assertion itself. The liar expresses one belief with his assertion that P, while another belief (one that he actually has) gains expression through the act of lying itself.[7]

The central question for the role of sincerity in assertion is the one Williams raises in Chapter Five: "What is the relation between the speaker's beliefs and the beliefs with which the hearer ends up?" (96). What the foregoing discussion shows, I believe, is that there are two possible relations here, two ways in which learning of the speaker's beliefs can come to be a reason for my believing the same thing. I may come to know what his beliefs are from all that he says and does, and treat the fact of his belief as on a par with other evidence I may possess. Or I can learn what someone believes from what he tells me, and here the epistemic import of the words he speaks is different from that of his belief itself. From the hearer's perspective, the speaker's words are a reason to believe something only insofar as they are presented by him in a

[7] If someone can express some belief or some fear without having it, then the relation between the expression and the facts about my genuine attitudes cannot be a purely causal one, but opens up the possibility for such failings as error or misrepresentation. In short, there is a normative as well as a causal relation between expression in the personal sense and what is putatively being given expression. The applicability of such terms of criticism as error or misrepresentation for the personal sense of expression is only appropriate given that here the expression in question is the intentional action of a person, and persons and actions provide just the right sort of object for such criticism.

certain spirit, e.g. as an assertion or something else. The very same words may be uttered as merely wondering aloud, or as practicing the rhythm of a certain sentence, or as a claim about how things are, and whether the hearer takes herself to have been presented with a reason to believe something will depend on how the speaker has presented those words. The potential status of the speaker's words as a reason to believe something depends on the speaker's stance toward and presentation of those words. By contrast, what the speaker believes about some matter has whatever epistemic import it may have for another person, quite apart from the speaker's role in making these beliefs known to another person. For the audience or observer, his beliefs about some matter are a phenomenon which may be good evidence for the facts themselves, in a way that has nothing to do with them being presented in a certain spirit, or indeed on them being presented at all. If the importance of sincerity were restricted to guaranteeing access to the speaker's beliefs, then in making the other person aware of his beliefs the speaker would have done his job as far as informing him is concerned. But if this were all that is involved in telling someone something then the liar or the verbal misleader really would be able to say that he cannot be blamed because all he did was provide evidence for what his beliefs are and leave his audience to draw their own conclusions from this. (Williams, pp. 107, 118) But telling someone something is much more directive than this, pointing the audience in a verbally specific direction, attesting to the truth of what is being said, and not just anything and everything that might be garnered from the person's speech and action. (The 'directive' aspect of telling someone something shows up in the fact that the verb 'to tell' has

various imperative forms that are not shared by ‘to say’ or even ‘to assert’. I may not only tell someone the facts, but I may also tell him to back off, or tell him how to get back on the highway.) This directive aspect of telling is only possible insofar as the person as such is involved in the act of expression. For the invitation to trust that it presents to the audience is predicated on the speaker presenting himself as assuming responsibility for his speech being a reason to believe something in the first place (as they would not be, for instance, if those same words are presented as some other speech-act). This is not a relationship he stands in with respect to his beliefs or with respect to any other evidence, and in these ways the speaker is doing something quite other than allowing his beliefs to be known and leaving the audience to draw their own conclusions. A person leaves his audience to draw their own conclusions when the epistemic import of the phenomenon from which they draw their conclusions does not depend on him.

These considerations cast doubt on the idea that the value of words, the value of sincere words, can only be that of a reliable indication of the person’s beliefs. The intentional act of the person in giving explicit expression to his belief and addressing this assertion to someone else provides his hearer with something more than he could have derived from the simple awareness of the speaker’s beliefs themselves. In telling someone something he does not simply lay his belief open to view (which can happen even with respect to an unconscious belief of his), something for the hearer to make of what he will, but rather registers his consciousness not only of the belief itself but of the fact that he is engaged in providing his hearer with a reason to believe that very thing.

The 'directive' aspect of telling, attesting to a specific proposition, is thus related to the speaker's presentation of himself as accountable for the hearer's believing what he says. Simply gaining awareness of what someone believes provides nothing of this relationship between speaker and hearer.

However, the role of the person as such in providing a reason to believe also means that in an important sense the hearer gets something less from sincere assertion than he would from direct access to the speaker's beliefs (and these two facts about the personal level of expression are related to each other, and illuminate the nature of sincerity itself). And this is because although sincere expression involves no intent to deceive, it also need not be terribly discerning about the self to which it gives expression. As Williams says, "It follows from the basis spontaneity of assertion that Sincerity does not typically involve a special exercise of Accuracy, namely, Accuracy in discovering what it is that I believe; rather, in the simplest case I am confronted with my belief as what I would spontaneously assert. There are, of course, other cases in which I do have to discover by inquiry what I believe." (76) Not only does sincerity not require any special exercise of accuracy, but it is a familiar fact about sincerity that it is compatible with error or simple shallowness about one's own attitudes, including one's beliefs. Matthew Arnold speaks of the "surface stream [...] of what we think we feel", and its stark contrast with the noiseless current below of "what we feel indeed", and he is clear that it is from this surface perspective that sincere expression takes place.[8] A

[8] . "Below the surface-stream, shallow and light,
Of what we *say* we feel – below the stream,
As light, of what we *think* we feel – there flows
With noiseless current strong, obscure and deep,
The central stream of what we feel indeed."

person is credited with speaking sincerely when he presents himself as he takes himself to be, which may not involve reporting his own mind either deeply or accurately. In this way the demands of sincerity are weaker than the demands of accurate presentation of one's beliefs or other attitudes. If someone fails to know his actual belief about some matter, whether through self-deception or more innocently, he will still be speaking sincerely when he asserts the belief he takes himself to have. But in another sense, the requirement of sincerity is more demanding than the accurate presentation of one's state of mind. For again, if someone has the repressed belief, for example, that he is a coward, but takes himself to believe no such thing, he will have failed to speak sincerely if, for his own reasons he nonetheless says that he is a coward, even though by hypothesis what he asserts here expresses what he actually thinks about himself. As D. H. Mellor and others have pointed out, a person speaks sincerely when he says what he takes himself to believe, and not simply when he says what he in fact believes.[9] Just as it is possible to lie while inadvertently reporting the actual facts, it is possible to speak insincerely while asserting what is in fact one's actual belief. Saying what I actually believe is not sufficient for sincerity, if my intent was deceptive but my apprehension of my own belief was distorted. And saying what I actually believe is not necessary for sincerity either, since I still speak sincerely if I am somehow wrong about my actual

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Quoted in Lionel Trilling, Sincerity and Authenticity, (Harvard University Press, 1971), p. 6.

[9] Mellor uses the term 'assent' for second-order belief, believing that one believes, and says "Sincere assertion is saying what one assents to, that is what one believes one believes, not just what one believes." p.97, in 'Conscious Belief', Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society (1977-8), pp.87-101. The account Mellor gives of assent in that paper has been superceded by the richer account he gives in 'Consciousness and Degrees of Belief', in Prospects for Pragmatism: Essays in Memory of F. P. Ramsey, edited by D. H. Mellor (Cambridge University Press, 1991).

belief but nonetheless assert what I take myself to believe. Despite Mellor's formulation, the truth in this idea does not require appeal to "second-order states", which would appear to have the consequence that children and others without the concepts of such states cannot be said to be sincere or insincere. The underlying thought is consistent with William's basic idea of sincerity as naturalness or spontaneity, for it would be a bad picture of spontaneity itself that would suggest that a spontaneous declaration cannot be the expression of a person's self-deception, confusion, or simple shallowness with respect to his own mental life. There is indeed such a myth of natural or spontaneous expression as guaranteeing its source in the truth of the person, without any admixture of reflection or interpretation. In the context of verbal expression, however, the basic meaning of spontaneity or naturalness is the absence of either inhibition or the intent to mislead. If we are assuming that the truth about a person's attitudes can indeed be distorted or masked from the person herself in various ways, then there is no reason to think that spontaneous or natural expression is somehow guaranteed to penetrate through such interferences to the undistorted truth itself. For example, a person's sincere declaration of confidence in some outcome may be made in the absence of any acknowledgement of his own doubts and fears about it, and thus fail to accurately display his real state of mind, even to be at variance of his deeper convictions about the outcome. This sort of situation does not require the postulation of second-order attitudes, and may describe the situation of someone without the capacity for such attitudes.

In these ways, sincerity fails to be a guarantee of access to the speaker's actual beliefs, and hence from the point of view of the picture of sincerity that we began with, all this should make it quite mysterious why sincerity should have any central importance at all to the epistemology of testimony. What it suggests is that we cannot make sense of the importance of sincerity for testimony unless we separate this from the assumption that the importance of sincere assertion is that of providing access to the speaker's beliefs. As we saw, the believability of some assertions doesn't rely on assumptions about the speaker's beliefs in the first place, and what the current considerations aim to bring out is that with respect to the class of assertions where the beliefs of the speaker <u>are</u> crucial, whereby the speaker <u>tells</u> his audience something, sincerity does not function as a guarantee of access to the speakers beliefs, but provides something both stronger and weaker than that. Sincere assertion is a weaker guarantee than that, since it only provides us with the speaker's own apprehension of himself, which may be limited in various ways. But this same fact leads to an understanding of how sincere assertion provides the hearer with an kind of epistemic relation to the facts that he could not get merely through knowing what the speaker actually believes.

We gain access to another person's beliefs and other attitudes through what they say and do, and the expression of belief takes various forms, conscious and unconscious, voluntary and involuntary. Only with respect to the sense of "expression" involving the person as such, the intentional action of expressing one's belief, is the person in a position to speak for the meaning or epistemic import of what he is attesting

to. With respect to whatever else may express itself in someone's speech or other expressive behavior, while this may indeed be a source of knowledge for the audience, they are on their own as far as assessing its epistemic significance goes. Since beliefs which are revealed in these ways need not even be known by the speaker himself, the hearer (or observer) cannot assume that the speaker is in a position to offer support or justification for what may be garnered in this way, nor that he speaks with any authority about the meaning or general significance of the belief which manifests itself in his speech or other behavior. Ultimately the speaker's relation to what expresses itself in his behavior is no different from his relation to what his act of lying may reveal about him. And indeed, this is true for beliefs which someone may learn of in ways that have no basis in overt expression at all. In such a situation, the audience cannot look to the person as such to say anything helpful about the belief's meaning, its justification, or how it would alter in response to counter-evidence of various kinds. By contrast, in the ordinary speech exchanges associated with testimony, it is taken for granted that if someone asserts that P, the hearer is not on his own in the task of assessing its meaning or its epistemic significance. In making the assertion, the speaker has taken on the burden of responding to a request for clarification, interpretation or justification.

If something I say or do provides evidence for some fact, it is irrelevant to this evidential force whether or not I know that what I said or did provides such a reason for belief. Nor, in such a case, do I need to know how it constitutes such a reason for belief. But when a person makes a committed assertion, he must recognize the sort of reason he is offering, and his role in constituting it as a reason for belief. Hence

sincerity matters to testimony because it is from this position that the speaker assumes responsibility for the meaning and justification of what he says. This is a genuine epistemological difference for the hearer, providing something different from what he would get simply from access to the other person's beliefs. And in this way the linguistic nature of testimony is related to the role of consciousness in presenting someone with a reason for belief. It is only from a position of consciousness of what he is doing that a speaker can make a promise or give his word on something. The speaker is authoritative with respect to, and hence assumes responsibility for, what illocution his words present, whether as a promise, a prediction, or an hypothesis. To count as a mature speaker of a language is to be credited with investing one's words with the force of, say, an assertion rather than a question or a recitation. And from the hearer's point of view, he will not have any idea of the epistemic import of what he has heard until he knows which illocution the speaker is presenting himself as enacting. Hence for the hearer to know what to make of this utterance, whether as evidence or anything else, he must assume that the speaker is speaking from within the authority to constitute his utterance as, say, an assertion rather than a recitation. If the person is not assumed to speak for himself here, then the hearer cannot take himself to be receiving any kind of testimony from him at all, whatever epistemic stance the hearer may ultimately want to adopt toward the utterance.

We do want and expect what people tell us to be both true and to express their actual beliefs, and often enough we are not disappointed in these expectations. But the importance of sincerity is not simply that of learning the speaker's beliefs, because that

would suggest that any way we might come to know these beliefs would have the same epistemic import as the speaker's assertion. And that would fail to account for the person's own role in constituting his utterance as a reason to believe something, his addressing his assertion to another person, and his attestation to a specific candidate proposition; none of which is part of the person's relation to his expressive behavior or his beliefs themselves. In addition, the understanding of the role of sincerity in terms of access to the speaker's beliefs leaves unexplained the importance of the limited way in which sincerity does relate to such access, since it is neither necessary nor sufficient that sincere speech reflect the actual beliefs of the speaker. One can fail to speak sincerely while nonetheless giving expression to one's actual beliefs, just as one can speak sincerely in a way that reflects a very imperfect grasp of one's actual attitudes. Sincerity matters epistemically to the hearer not because it provides him with a window onto the speaker's beliefs but because it tells him what the person as such is assuming responsibility for, as this relates to the hearer's own belief. The difference doesn't simply lie in the fact that he now has someone to blame should he turn out to be misled, but also in the more epistemically relevant fact that, rather than having simply come upon someone's belief to make of what he will, the hearer can assume that the belief in question has survived the speaker's reflection on it and is being presented to him with the speaker's epistemic backing and answerability for its justification and general (including contextual) significance. As with any assumption of responsibility, this can be something shallow, confused, or deluded, but the speaker's explicit presentation of what he says as belief-worthy, and the joint responsibility for belief expressed by this,

nonetheless provides the hearer with something of an epistemic import different from the private or telepathic discovery of someone's beliefs.

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What we might call the "telepathic ideal" is a fantasy of unmediated contact between two minds, which itself rests on a particular conception of minds themselves and how they relate to one another in the sublunary, non-ideal case. On this picture, a person's words, like their gestures and other reactions, are to be seen as the visible or audible indication of the person's belief, something which is itself neither visible nor audible. The person's state of mind is the direct object of interest, but it needs some intervening medium of expression to become known by another person. The available forms of such manifestation come with their own risks, however, since they can be misleading in various ways. And in the case of communicative speech, that is, a speaker's deliberate manifestation of his state of mind, these risks are amplified by the addition of the possibility of deliberate deception. The ideal, it might seem, would be if we could dispense with such mediation altogether. As opposed to this, we have seen that in at least a broad class of speech acts (thanks, apologies, contracts, retractions) this fantasy does not in fact even represent an unrealized ideal, and the overt act of self-expression is not one that the partners in the exchange would in fact wish to dispense with if that were only possible. The explicit manifestation of one's intent or remorse to someone goes beyond what could be gained by that other person through

an act of mind-reading. And in that case, the value of sincerity in such acts would have to be understood differently than as the next best approximation we could get to unmediated access to the speaker's state of mind.

On one way of seeing Grice's story, it fails to take a decisive step away from the Indicative picture, precisely in virtue of the roles given to the beliefs of the two parties to the communicative exchange, and the type of act that the speaker is described as engaged in. For the speaker is described as doing something (i.e., saying something) with the intent of bringing someone else to believe something. It is thus the state of mind of his audience that is the object of the speaker's action, something he wishes to affect in a particular way. And the description of the effect he wishes to produce in the mind of the audience is itself described in terms of the speaker's own state of mind: that is, (in Grice's post-1957 formulations) the speaker aims to produce the belief in the audience that he himself believes that P. He wishes to produce this effect in a particular way, of course, one that necessarily proceeds through the hearer's recognition of that very intention of his, but nonetheless the description of the speaker's general aim is made in terms of producing a certain result on the mind of another. That result concerns the beliefs of the audience, and the content of the beliefs to be produced in the audience concern the beliefs of the speaker. Of course, Grice presented his account as an account of communicative meaning and not testimony, but we can understand this last condition in terms of a familiar demand of testimony: if the ultimate aim is for the audience to gain the belief that P from the speaker, then this result cannot

be hoped for unless the audience first comes to believe that the speaker himself believes that P. Hence we can see this as a version of the Sincerity condition.

Various philosophers have objected to both the description of the act of the speaker in terms of affecting the beliefs of the audience, and to the description of the desired effect as the audience's coming to believe that the speaker believes something.[10] Even if we accept the importance Grice gives to the explicitness of the speaker's expression of intention, and the role that is to be played by the audience's recognition of this intention in coming to believe that P, it may still seem that this picture places the emphases in the wrong parts of both sides of the exchange. Surely the point of the Speaker's telling his Audience that P is to put that person in touch with the fact of P itself, and not with merely another representation of P. The general description of the Speaker's aim must be that he seeks to do is directly inform his Audience that P, and not provide him with the next best thing to that. The primary object of attention for both parties is some feature of the world, not the psychology of either of them, and that focus is part of what constitutes their understanding of what kind of act they are engaged in. In asserting 'P', the Speaker may not care that the Audience come to any conclusions about his own state of belief, nor is he presuming an interest in his state on the part of the Audience. There is indeed, of course, a role for the Speaker's beliefs in this

[10] In 'Meaning, Communication, and Knowledge', John McDowell criticizes the description of the desired effect in terms of the relation between questions and assertions.

"The primary point of asking questions is not to acquire beliefs about one's interlocutors beliefs, but to find out how things are. Correspondingly, the primary point of making assertions is not to instill into others beliefs about one's own beliefs but to inform others -- to let them know -- about the subject matter of one's assertions." In his collection Meaning, Knowledge, and Reality (Harvard University Press), p. 38. McDowell's primary target here is Strawson's 'Intention and Convention in Speech Acts', but Strawson's own context there is a progressive refinement of the Gricean picture. Ian Rumfitt

exchange, and this role is part of the Speaker's own understanding of what he is doing. But it would be contrary to his understanding of this role to think that his own aim in telling A that P would be satisfied were A to learn of his beliefs in some other way, and then come to his own conclusions about it. "Providing access to his beliefs" is the description of something that might be accomplished in any number of ways, and needn't involve any encounter between the two parties, or the idea of one person addressing another, which is basic to the idea of telling or informing. The proper understanding of the assumption of sincerity in testimony mustn't be at the cost of obscuring or denying the basic conditions of assertion, telling, and testimony themselves, and hence we cannot be satisfied with a description of the Speaker's primary aim as that of bringing his Audience to believe something about his own beliefs. By the same token, it would be a mischaracterization of the kind of act that is an act of telling or informing to define it as that of a Speaker seeking to produce an effect on the beliefs of the Audience, for that suggests a purely instrumental understanding of the act, with the Audience as the purely receptive object of the influences of the Speaker. Just as the psychological description of the vehicle of the Speaker's act (to provide access to his beliefs) loses any sense of one person addressing or encountering another, so the description of the aim of the action in terms of exerting an influence on the beliefs of one's audience suggests that the Speaker's aim would be fulfilled by any indifferent way of exerting that influence.[11] Sometimes, of course, from good or bad motives, one is indeed indifferent to the means employed in attracting someone's attention or altering their state of mind. But again, a characterization at that level of the act of one person

[11] McDowell, Ricketts on 'manipulating' the beliefs of the audience.

telling or informing another, loses or obscures the idea of an encounter or of one person addressing another in words.

There is thus something wrong with the description of the role played by the Speaker's beliefs when he manages to tell A that P, and something wrong with the description of the role played by the beliefs of the Audience in the exchange (taken as a part of a description of the Speaker's aim in speaking). From the side of the Speaker, it is as though he does not see himself as directly addressing or confronting his audience as such, but as (1) seeking to provide access to his own beliefs, and thereby (2) managing indirectly to exert an influence on the beliefs of his audience, should the audience's encounter with these beliefs have the desired effect. And from the side of the Audience, it is as though his primary interest were in the state of mind of the Speaker, of which the Speaker's words could only be more or less reliable indications (and for that matter likely to be less reliable than other ways his beliefs may reveal themselves), and the question of whether to believe what is said were a question of whether and how to submit to the influence of this revelation of the Speaker's beliefs. What remains missing from this perspective is an account of the difference between picking up new beliefs from the beliefs of others as they are revealed in their actions (verbal and otherwise), and being told something, and in response believing that person.[12]

Nonetheless, it might well be thought that in the specific context of the speech

[12] David Owens, p. 165: Amy statements transmit knowledge only of that to which I testify@. AYou might learn that I am rich from my words but you didn=t learn it from me, you didn=t learn it by accepting what I said, and so it does not count as testimonial knowledge.@ (Reason Without Freedom, (Routledge, 2000).

acts of testimony there is a special reason to think that what ultimately matters must be access to the beliefs of the speaker, however that may most reliably be acquired. We have seen that not all assertions convey knowledge in virtue of assumptions about the beliefs of the speaker (e.g., the examples given of the use of assertions in following proofs, or in the context of certain forms of debate), but these contexts are also not ones in which the communication of knowledge involves believing the speaker. In the central class of cases in which one person tells another person something, by contrast, it seems unavoidable that, considered as a reason to believe something, the speaker's statement will count for nothing if it isn't taken to reflect what he himself believes, or if his beliefs themselves are not seen as reliable. What we've seen so far is that the Indicative picture fits uneasily with several of the central features of what makes testimony a distinct source of knowledge, but there is more to be said in explaining how those features not captured by the Indicative picture can themselves be understood as contributing to the hearer's gaining a reason to believe something. In thinking about the role of knowledge of the speaker's beliefs, we have drawn attention to a number of features that distinguish the way they are made known in testimony, the type of act in question, from how the speaker's beliefs may manifest themselves in other situations. The immediate task is to see how these features of verbal expression can be understood as mutually reinforcing in a way that makes sense of testimony as a reason for belief, and explains the normative assumption of sincerity in speech in a way that does not reduce to the question of access to the beliefs of the speaker. The Sincerity condition itself tells us that a Speaker's telling another person that P will count for his

Audience as a reason to believe P, on the assumption that S believes what he is saying. In the remainder of this chapter I want to raise a set of questions about the meaning of this requirement, insofar as it combines with two other commonplaces about verbal communication, as instanced in the central cases of telling, promising, warning, etc. The first of these is the fact that the accomplishment of such acts presumes that the Speaker is not only acting with awareness, but that he knows what he is doing, that he understands the kind of verbal act he is engaged in. We may call this the Knowledge condition on verbal testimony. Words and cries are produced in all sorts of circumstances, consciously and unconsciously, and another person may learn much from them, but a testimonial reason for belief is only on offer if in the speaking itself the person knows what he is doing.

The second feature has been mentioned in connection with the distinction between the 'personal' and 'impersonal' senses of expression, or, as we may say now, between expression in the sense applying to a person's explicit act of self-presentation, and expression as it applies to whatever may reveal itself in a person's speech or other behavior. With respect to the expression of beliefs, it was said that a person's belief may express itself in his behavior with or without his awareness or intent, but that we only speak of the expression of belief in this sense on the assumption that the person actually has that belief, that the belief is there, as it were, to be expressed.[13] By contrast, the idea of 'personal' expression of belief (of which assertion is a primary mode) only applies to a person's self-conscious act of self-presentation, with the

[13] That is, roughly according to Grice's understanding of Natural meaning, for which the truth of "X means that P" entails P itself. The non-obtaining of P requires the withdrawal of the original statement of natural meaning.

difference that this idea of 'expression of belief' applies properly to the person's act whether or not he does indeed have the belief he gives explicit expression to. Lying and other forms of sincerity are familiar facts of life, and are only describable as such because a person counts as having asserted that P, and thus having expressed the belief that P, even when he had no such belief to give expression to in the first place. In the very accusation of insincerity we describe the person as having expressed the belief, the desire, or the hope that P when in fact he had no such belief, desire or hope. In a sense, the 'personal' expression of belief through explicit assertion is all on the surface: the person counts as having asserted that P, expressed the belief that P, simply in virtue of having deliberately and explicitly presented himself to someone as doing so. At the level of description of what was expressed or not, the form of the distinction between appearance and reality that marks the idea of passive or 'impersonal' expression does not apply here, for there is no distance between what is expressed and what the Speaker presents himself as expressing. We may refer to the 'Manifest Condition' to capture the idea that this form of expression is what it is because the Speaker presents himself that way, and this presentation is recognized by his Audience. From the side of the Audience, the primary meaning of the Manifest condition is that the Speaker counts has having asserted or promised, and incurred the responsibilities that go with having done so, even if insincere, simply in virtue of having presented himself to the Audience as having done so. The Speaker cannot say that he never actually promised or told him that P simply because he didn't in fact have the intention or belief that he expressed.[14]

[14] Austin marks this early on in How to Do Things With Words: "Do we not actually, when such intention is

The Knowledge condition as applied to acts like assertion is knowledge of a particular kind, and is as such tied to a notion of agency of a particular kind. Knowledge of what one is doing is important to successful action generally, of course, but not always in a way such that its absence destroys its character as an act of a certain type. Knocking a bottle off a table may be done utterly unconsciously or inadvertently, or it may be done with full deliberate intent. It is the kind of thing that can be 'done' by someone who has no idea what he is doing. Other actions, such as driving a car, require skill, attention, and a knowledge both of the kind of thing one is doing and of what one is doing right now. Such knowledge is employed in the successful execution of the action, and as such, will be something that can come in degrees, the less knowledgeable person performing the action less well. Someone driving to a new address may be a poor driver generally, and may operate under various false assumptions and make particular mistakes along the way, and yet still manage to make it to that address. In a general sense, of course, he "knows what he is doing" (he is not, e.g., operating the car while in a trance), but in other ways, ones which are indeed relevant to the successful completion of the act, his knowledge may be very imperfect. In such a case his action itself will be imperfect, but not so much so that it fails to count as intentionally driving to such and such an address.

On the other hand, the utterance of the sounds associated with the English

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absent, speak of a 'false' promise? Yet so to speak is not to say that the utterance 'I promise that ...' is false, in the sense that though he states that he does, he doesn't [...]. For he does promise: the promise is not even void, even though it is given in bad faith." (p. 11)

sentence "The rain has finally stopped" by someone who has no idea what the words mean, or perhaps even that they are words, has not asserted anything, not even poorly. And the utterance of the words "I promise to meet you tomorrow at 3:00" fails to be a promise at all, if produced under hypnosis, or by someone asleep, or without understanding of what he is saying. The failure of these conditions for the act of asserting or promising do not simply impair it as a good instance of its kind, but destroy its character as an act of that kind altogether.[15] The person must know what he is doing for the resultant act to be the kind of thing that a promise or an assertion is in the first place. The knowledge that is necessary as a condition for performing such acts has several dimensions which will only be sketched in later, but they will include semantic understanding of the language in question, and practical knowledge of what one is doing with these words on this occasion (including illocutionary knowledge and the commisive knowledge that goes with it). What matters for the understanding of speech acts like assertion is the general distinction between knowledge the absence of which impairs the execution of an action, and knowledge the absence of which annuls its character as an action of a certain type at all.

Taken individually, the three conditions under discussion seem like commonplaces of the ordinary practice of speaking and telling, but together they raise a set of questions about how to understand the actual role of the Speaker's beliefs in the

[15] See Anscombe (1963), 'The Two Kinds of Error in Action' for the maxim "error destroys action", and for a discussion of the different sorts of cases where this doctrine applies. For my purposes here, the notion of 'error' is less central than the idea of an absence of knowledge or understanding annulling the action as being of a certain kind, as contrasted with forms of error or ignorance which may impair the execution of an action underway. The reason the person asleep or who does not understand the language of the words he speaks is not engaged in promising or asserting does not concern any error he is making.

exchange. The Sincerity condition tells us that an utterance has to present itself as sincere, as reflecting the beliefs (or intentions, etc.) of the Speaker if it is to fulfill the function of an act of telling, which is to provide a reason to believe what is said. The Knowledge condition tells us that an utterance will not count at all as an act of assertion or promising if the Speaker does not understand what he is doing, either acting without awareness altogether or without the relevant knowledge for the kind of act in question. And the Manifest condition tells us that, when the Speaker is acting with knowledge and understanding of the relevant kinds, the utterance still counts as an act of telling or promising even when insincere, purely in virtue of the Speaker's presenting himself as doing so to an Audience who understands and recognizes his act.

Of course no one wants an insincere promise or assertion, and even an insincere promise or assertion must nonetheless present itself as sincere. The Manifest condition tells us that an utterance may be insincere, and yet still be the performance of the act in question; an act of telling or promising. Insincerity does not annul its character as an act of that type, even though the presentation of sincerity is included in the Manifest condition itself. Further, even if the hearer knows that the speaker is insincere, the hearer will understand the speaker to have told him that P, or promised him to X. Indeed, that is precisely his complaint when he discovers the insincerity: "But you told me ..." And yet, for the Speaker to announce his insincerity in the course of his utterance, would be to annul its character as an act of the type in question. The words "It's raining out, and I don't believe it" fail to constitute an assertion about the rain, or an

assertion of any kind, just as saying "I promise to pay you back, but I have no intention to do so", fails to constitute a promise.

While the absence of the Knowledge condition annuls the character of the utterance as the performance of a speech-act of the relevant kind, the failure of the Sincerity condition is treated differently. A speaker making a statement or a promise, while not having the relevant belief or intention, is nonetheless held to have made a statement or a promise. It's not immediately obvious why this should be so, why the absence or the relevant knowledge or understanding (which annuls the act) is treated differently from the absence of the relevant belief or intention (insincerity), which does not annul the act of telling or promising. A related task will be to account for how the Manifest condition contributes to how an utterance such an act of telling becomes a reason to believe something. In the story developed so far, both Speaker and Hearer understand an act of telling or promising to have been performed even when insincere (the Manifest condition), even though both of them see Insincerity as invalidating the statement as a reason to believe what it says. What, then, is being preserved in the thought "Well, he did tell me so, even though he was lying at the time", once the original statement has been stripped of its character as a reason to believe what it says, and what would be the point, for both Speaker and Hearer, in such an understanding of the conditions for the accomplishment of acts of telling or promising? Why is the presentation of sincerity given this kind of importance, as necessary to the accomplishment of the act of telling, even when actual sincerity itself is not?

We can see another way in which the presentation of sincerity is decisive for the act in a way that knowledge of the speaker's beliefs is not. It is understood by both Speaker and Hearer that an act or promising or telling has been performed even when insincere, and it is even acknowledged to have been performed when the Hearer knows the Speaker is insincere. And since, when this fact is known by the Hearer, it will surely be known by the Speaker himself, and thus this insincerity will be known by both of them. If each of them may know this, without this knowledge destroying the character of the act of telling or promising, why then will it destroy the character of the speech act for the Speaker to announce this insincerity in the course of making his statement? To say "It is raining out, and I don't believe that it is", is familiar as a form of incoherence associated with Moore's Paradox. Coupling "I don't believe it" with the utterance 'P' does destroy its character as an assertion that P. Whatever sense may be made of the utterance, it will not be treated by either party as even a faulty assertion that P. Here, the failure of the presentation of sincerity is being treated similarly to the failure of the Knowledge condition, as cancelling the status of the utterance as an assertion at all, and not like the treatment of the failure of the Sincerity condition.

The Speaker and Hearer may both know that the Speaker does not have the relevant belief P when he makes his assertion 'P', and yet he will count as having made that assertion. But if the Speaker himself announces this, he will not have asserted anything. Clearly, for the conditions on making an assertion or promise, there is a decisive difference between what each person in the encounter may know (about the Speaker's beliefs or intentions), and what is mutually known by them, what they know

together. The difference made by the Speaker's announcement that he does not believe, e.g., that it is raining out, is that now this fact is mutually known by them. Why should that difference matter to the conditions for performing the speech act in question? There is a further difference to be noted. It is not simply that now both parties know, and know that they each know, that the Speaker does not believe what he appears to be saying. For that fact might have been discoverable by the hearer from, say, the Speaker's tone of voice, and that revelation could be noticed by the Speaker himself, and that fact, in turn be noticed by the Hearer, etc., without producing the cancelation of the speech-act of telling. Beyond the fact of mutual knowledge, and the fact that the truth about the Speaker's beliefs has revealed itself, become known mutually, is the fact that in the Moore's Paradox statement the speaker is presenting himself as disbelieving what is said in the first part of the utterance. It is thus not either the fact of Insincerity or the knowledge of the Speaker's insincerity (mutual or not) that is incompatible with the performance of the act of telling someone that P, but rather the overt presentation of oneself as not believing what one says.

So, once again, a decisive importance is given to the presentation of oneself in speech. We are now in a position to see these three conditions (Knowledge, Sincerity, and Manifest) and the relations to each other, as conditions for being a speaker capable of making assertions in the first place. If a person can say anything at all, to affirm some proposition in speech, then he has the capacity to present it as true to another person, and have that presentation be recognized as such. To lack this capacity would be to lack the basic ability to make a declarative utterance. Saying this much, however,

is already to depart from the notion of expression at play in the Indicative picture, according to which "saying that P" is to be regarded as a form of "giving expression to the belief that P", in the same sense that, e.g., looking up at the window gives expression to the belief that the sound came from up there. For when a person does that in response to a sound he has heard, he is not "presenting as true" that the sound came from the window, but simply reflecting that (presumed) fact. To claim that being a speaker at all involves being credited with the capacity to present some proposition as true to someone else does not beg the question of whether, when, and how this self-presentation counts for someone else as a reason to believe it. It does, however, mean that "presenting P as true" counts as presenting oneself as <u>believing</u> that P, and hence that the <u>presentation</u> of oneself as speaking sincerely is included in the conditions for telling or asserting at all, apart from the question of the Speaker's actual sincerity.

We can see this by considering the 'positive' version of Moore's Paradox, that is, an utterance of the form "It's raining out, and indeed I <u>do believe</u> that it is.", which is a fully paradoxical as the more familiar 'negative' forms. The peculiarity of this version consists in the fact that, in the course of an apparent declaration about the rain, the Speaker presents his own belief in that fact as <u>additional information</u> for the Audience. But if the Audience is to take the first part ("it's raining out") as information about the <u>weather</u>, she must take herself to already know, or be entitled to believe, that the second part is true ("and I believe it" - that is, that the Speaker believes it). If it were truly an open question for the Audience whether the Speaker believes what he is

saying, then it would be an open question whether the utterance of the first part ("It's raining out") presents any reason for belief. Further, if it is an open question for the Audience whether the Speaker is presenting himself as believing what he says, then of course it will be an open question whether the first part of the utterance ("It is raining out") counts as a statement or assertion, rather than some other speech act or none at all. So, for the Audience to see the utterance "P" as a reason to believe that P, she must see herself as already entitled to believe that the Speaker believes that P. The assumption of the Speaker's Sincerity must thus be seen as already contained in the Speaker's presentation of the utterance 'P[RM1]' as a statement or assertion. Suspending that assumption would mean suspending the question of what illocution, if any, if being performed by the Speaker. Further, we can see that the assertion that 'P' will be cancelled by the presentation of oneself as not believing it, even if that very statement itself is insincere. That is, the person who says "It's raining out, and I don't believe it" may nonetheless actually believe that it is indeed raining out (he was lying in the second part, about not believing that it's raining). The presence of that belief of his doesn't matter, for it is his explicit presentation of himself as not believing it which cancels the utterance as an assertion about the rain, and not his actual state of belief.

It is natural enough to think of the kind of self-presentation in question as a public performance which leaves open the question of the Speaker's sincerity. In one way this is right, but in an important way it is not right. It is right in that the Audience may hear the Speaker tell him that P, and not yet know whether he is sincere. That question is

open. But the question is not open in the following sense: If the Audience is to understand the speaker as making some kind of statement at all, even responding to it with doubt and suspicion, he must understand him as presenting himself to him as sincere. That question is not an open one for him, for it is a condition of understanding or knowing how to relate to the Speaker's act at all that he understand it in those terms. In that sense, as a condition for the comprehensibility of the act at all, the question of the Speaker's presentation of sincerity is not for him an open question. Not, of course, that he must assume the Speaker really is sincere, but that if he is to make sense of his act as one of telling or asserting at all, and thus know how he to respond to it, he must relate to it as something that gives itself out as sincere. If the Speaker announces that he does not believe what he says this means that the Audience cannot understand what the Speaker is doing in saying these words, and hence cannot understand what he is to do in response. The Audience cannot understand his own role in this exchange ("Is something being presented for belief or not?") By contrast, when the Speaker is insincere but does not announce this to his audience, the meaning of the encounter will yet remain clear to the Audience. If the Audience knows that the Speaker does not believe what he is saying (where the Speaker has not announced this), he does understand what the Speaker is doing. For in that case he understands the Speaker to be engaged in the familiar practice of making a lying assertion (or just kidding, etc.), and the Audience will understand what modes of response and reply will make sense for him here.

Various philosophers have remarked on what John McDowell calls the "special overtness which is characteristic of linguistic communication". [16] Understanding the meaning of this overtness takes us away from the idea of 'showing' or 'revealing' as we find that in the Indicative picture of the expression of the mental state of the Speaker. The importance for his audience of the speaker's words is not that of something making evident his state of belief. Instead, as we'll see further in the next chapter, the very notion of showing or manifestation needs to be understood as the content of a relational act, of one person to another, and not as something that reveals itself in a person's behavior. The importance of 'overtness' in linguistic communication is not a matter of the special clarity of some fact's becoming apparent, but rather that of an action specifically directed to an audience, the assumption of a particular responsibility toward a person being addressed. It is because 'overtness' is a matter of the assumption of relational responsibility that the statement "It is raining out, and I don't believe it" is absurd, even though both people know that people can indeed say what they don't believe, without absurdity. The presentation of 'P' to an audience as true is a form of commitment to that fact, and a person cannot commit himself to another person with respect to the truth of P and at the same time, to the same person, declare that he does not believe that P. (His behavior might show that he doesn't believe it while he is saying it, and that would not annul the character of his statement as commitment to the truth of P.) What is incompatible with the assertion P is not either the fact or the revelation of non-belief in P, but rather the declaration by the Speaker of his non-belief in P to the

[16] McDowell (1980), p. 40. This is emphasized in the Strawson article that McDowell is responding to (Strawson, 1964), p. 32, as well as in the writings of Grice and Austin that Strawson is responding to, and more recently in Robert Brandom's Making It Explicit (1994).

same person to whom he presents that assertion.

What matters to the accomplishment of the act of telling, and what the act of telling itself accomplishes, is not the awareness on the part of the Audience of the beliefs of the Speaker, or the effort on the part of the Speaker to make those beliefs known. The act of telling someone something involves an actual encounter of two people, whereas the awareness of the Speaker's beliefs, even when deliberately produced by the Speaker himself is independent of any encounter. The Audience (A) can know the beliefs of the Speaker (S) without that providing him with what an assertion from S provides him. And conversely, as we just saw, A can know that S is insincere, and (of course) S himself may know this, and yet this knowledge does not cancel the speech-act, the fact that both parties understand S to have told A that P. The fact that S presented P as true to A, that relational act, remains intact, and this fact is known by both S and A. Further, the fact of S's assertion of P to A is not simply something they each know individually, but rather is something they know together. It is not just something that they each know, but rather something they know together in the sense that A's knowledge is a condition for S's knowledge. S cannot know that he has indeed told A anything unless he knows that A has heard and understood him; and likewise, A cannot know that he has been told something by S unless he knows that S himself knows that he has addressed those words to A, which A has heard and understood, etc. Unlike the case where they each have individual knowledge of S's beliefs (either in the case of sincerity or insincerity), the conditions for the speech-act of telling must make appeal to what they know together, such that the content of the

Speaker's knowledge includes what the Audience knows. If A does not know or understand that S has told him that P, then S does not know that he has, in fact, told A that P. We could look at the difference in the following way. For the Audience, knowledge of the Speaker's beliefs simply relates him to a fact, a psychological fact about S, which in fortunate circumstances may lead him to another fact, e.g., about the weather. This does not, however, add up to the knowledge that it expressed in an ordinary successful assertion, where what A knows is something he knows together with S, such that the knowledge had by one is a condition for the knowledge had by the other. This reciprocal knowledge does not just relate the Audience to a fact about the Speaker, but relates him to the Speaker himself, precisely because the knowledge each has is reciprocal and includes the knowledge each has regarding the other. And given that it is reciprocal knowledge that is contained in the act of telling, this puts the relevant notion of overtness in a different light. For the "special overtness" that characterizes linguistic communication is not a matter of the special directness or clarity of the display of the speaker's state of mind, but rather is to be understood in terms of the reciprocal nature of the knowledge had by Speaker and Audience, such that they know together what they are doing, rather than that they each know about the other person's state of mind.

If a someone can speak at all, in the sense of making some claim to someone, he must engage in a practice governed by the interplay of the Knowledge and Manifest conditions. Speakers in general are capable of directly and overtly placing themselves

under obligation to others, just as they are capable of directly and overtly making refusals and granting permissions (i.e., without these acts being hostage to empirical doubt or confutation by appeal to what contrary desire or intent may be in the mind of the speaker.)[17] Without being recognized as exercising this capacity, a speaker could not commit himself about some matter of fact or some preference to another person, but could only gesture to indicate his beliefs and desires. He would not have the power to make it the case that he has committed himself to another person regarding some truth or regarding some course of action. And whatever he did say about such things would always be subject to empirical discounting by reference to something in his psychology. Such a person would lack to power to bring himself into words and have that count for anything, since statements of acceptance or refusal would always be open to invalidation by reference to the persons deeper or merely other desires.

Similar questions are sometimes raised with regard to the role of explicit self-presentation in the giving and receiving of property. Assume that some object is mine to dispose of, and another person is capable of receiving it as a gift from me (thus excluding someone inaccessible to me, or somehow unacquainted with the practice of giving). Someone might ask: "how could it happen that I actually make a gift of this apple to this person, simply in virtue of her recognition that I present myself as meaning to do it? That makes it seem like magic. And it ignores the fact that my actual intent may be something different from what I present to the person." The problem with this thought is that if we are assuming the proper institutional background of a practice of

[17] cf Seanna Shiffrin (2008)

giving, but the mere presentation to the other person is not seen as capable of accomplishing the actual transfer, we would have to be able to specify what more could be required by the person to accomplish the giving of the gift, and yet is anything but clear what such a decisive additional element could be. If a contrary 'private intent' were sufficient to invalidate the presentation of the gift to someone, such that no gift was given if one's actual intent were different from what one overtly presents it as being, then it seems that nothing a person do could actually count as making a gift to someone. There would always be a gap between the overt gestures he may make and what act, if any, he has actually performed with them. The would-be gift-giver could respond to doubts or questions about the seriousness of his presentation as being the real giving of a gift, but these responses themselves would of course be worthless unless at some point he could be taken at his word, such that the presentation itself was sufficient for the deed. And the person receiving the gift needs the practice to be understood in this way (satisfying the Manifest condition), otherwise he could never know whether he has in fact been given something or not. He could never know what his rights and responsibilities with respect to the other person could be. We do however manage to give and receive gifts, and to make a receive statements, claims, and assertions, and we are now in a position to see how these ordinary actions could not be accomplished any other way.

Of course, what we have been talking about are the conditions for an act of assertion, not the conditions under which someone's assertion is a good reason to

believe what it says. And, as we have seen, even to succeed at making an empty assertion, the Speaker must still present himself as sincere. This does not, however, add up to a reason for thinking that for the Hearer, the epistemic interest of the Speaker's words can only be that of a purported indication of the Speaker's beliefs. For it is not as if the conditions for the performance of speech acts such as assertion are somehow incidental to how a Speaker's words come to have the specific epistemic status that goes with having been told something. The phenomenon of acquiring a reason to believe something, in the specific context of being told something by someone, is something that is immediately dependent on the Hearer understanding the Speaker to have made an assertion with these words, and not one of the many other things that might be done with those same words. It is only when that question has been settled, and it is understood that an assertion has indeed been made, that the Hearer takes a reason to believe something to be so much as on offer. Prior to the fulfillment of the conditions for the performance of that speech act, the epistemic reasons relevant to believing what one has been told have not yet come into play.