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Believing what the Man Says about His Own Feelings

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1. Introduction

J. L. Austin begins the conclusion of his paper 'Other Minds' by linking the 'Predicament' that is the philosophical problem of other minds to an issue concerning human speech.

> I should like to make in conclusion some further remarks about this crucial matter of our believing what the man says about his own feelings. Although I know very well that I do not see my way clearly in this, I cannot help feeling sure that it is fundamental to the whole Predicament, and that it has not been given the attention it deserves, possibly just because it is so obvious. (1979: 114)

He then goes on to quickly discuss and reject a particular view of the epistemology of testimony, after which he concludes,

> It seems, rather, that believing in other persons, in authority and testimony, is an essential part of the act of communicating, an act which we all constantly perform. It is as much an irreducible part of our experience as, say, giving promises, or playing competitive games, or even sensing coloured patches. We can state certain advantages of such performances, and we can elaborate rules of a kind for their 'rational' conduct (as the Law Courts and historians and psychologists work out the rules for accepting testimony). But there is no 'justification' for our doing them as such. (1979: 115)

While 'Other Minds' has long been considered an important if controversial work on the problem of other minds, only recently have philosophers begun to appreciate its importance as a work on the epistemology of testimony.[1] What still hasn't been sufficiently appreciated, however, is the intimate connection that Austin sees between issues concerning the epistemology of testimony and the philosophical problem of

[1] Authors who have recognized that 'Other Minds' is concerned with issues regarding the epistemology of testimony include Coady 1992, Welbourne 1993, and most recently Hinchman 2005.

other minds. Austin doesn't do much more than suggest such a connection, but he clearly thinks that 'this crucial matter of our believing what the man says about his own feelings' is 'fundamental to the whole Predicament'. In this paper I want to explore and press further the connection that Austin sees between these issues. I hope to show that one cannot understand Austin's account of our cognitive relation to other minds without appreciating the centrality to this account of issues concerning the epistemology of testimony.

Section 2 examines the place of considerations of the epistemology of testimony in the overall structure of 'Other Minds' leading up to Austin's famous analogy between saying 'I know' and saying 'I promise'. Section 3 offers a rather revisionist reading of this analogy by taking it to be an analogy between the speech act of promising and what epistemologists typically treat as the speech act of testifying. Section 4 argues that the point of the analogy is to begin to give an answer to the question of what constitutes the justification of knowledge based on testimony. The answer Austin gives here is one that draws on the essentially interpersonal character of testimonial knowledge. Knowing that *p* based on a speaker's testimony that *p* involves *believing the speaker that p*, where believing the speaker that *p* cannot be construed as a matter of coming to one's own conclusion about *p*.[2] Section 5 then turns to Austin's treatment of the problem of other minds. Austin argues that our ordinary cognitive relation to the minds of others doesn't involve inferring conclusions about their psychological states from behavioural evidence (from symptoms). Instead, we can bear a direct, non-inferential cognitive relation to the psychological states of others by simply observing their states in their expressions of those states. Unlike other philosophers who hold that we can bear a kind of 'perceptual' relation to the psychological states of others, however, Austin is explicitly concerned to distinguish our ordinary cognitive relation to other minds from the kind of non-inferential cognitive relation to material objects characteristic of ordinary perception. Section 6 begins to examine the character of this non-inferential and yet non-perceptual cognitive relation we often bear to other minds. Austin first discusses several special worries that he takes to arise with regard to our knowledge of other minds. These special worries all have to do with the way in which many overt expressions of psychological states, unlike the behaviour of ordinary material objects, are intentional acts. Austin then points out that among the intentions with which a psychological state can be expressed are the kind of communicative intentions paradigmatically involved in the case of testimony. Some intentional expressions of psychological states amount to what I call testimonial avowals, and like cases of testimony generally, testimonial avowals call for an audience to believe the

[2] More precisely, *testimonially* knowing that *p* based on a speaker's testimony that *p* involves believing the speaker rather than coming to one's own conclusion about *p*. One can certainly treat a speaker's testimony as a consideration on the basis of which one draws one's own conclusion that *p*. The point is just that this is not a case of acquiring *testimonial* knowledge. Ordinary cases of testimonial knowledge involve believing the speaker that *p*, and according to Austin, believing the speaker that *p* is inconsistent with treating what the speaker says as a consideration from which one draws one's own conclusions.

speaker that she is in the particular psychological state that she avows. Finally, section 7 argues that Austin returns at the end of 'Other Minds' to issues concerning the epistemology of testimony, specifically to issues concerning a person's testimony about her own psychological states, in order to draw out what he sees as the second-personal nature of the problem of other minds. As Austin sees it, the problem of other minds is to a large extent an expression of very ordinary worries about the interpersonal relations of authority and responsibility involved in believing others.

My concern in this paper with 'the problem of other minds' will be, like Austin's, a concern with the nature of our cognitive relation to the psychological states of others. My interest in outright *scepticism* about other minds will be only to the extent that it raises the question of what this cognitive relation consists in. In asking whether we can ever have knowledge of the existence and contents of other minds, the sceptic is asking what kind of cognitive relation we do in fact bear towards the minds of others and whether this cognitive relation can ever amount to knowledge. Austin argues that the sceptic offers a picture of our relation to other minds that is inconsistent with our ordinary talk about knowledge and about the psychological states of others, and he suggests an alternative picture that is more consistent with the kinds of things we ordinarily do and say. Obviously this can't amount to a knockdown argument against the sceptic—the sceptic can always insist that our ordinary talk about knowledge and about the psychological states of others is precisely what is in need of justification—but instead of concentrating on the best way of responding to the sceptic, I want to examine in some detail Austin's alternative conception of our cognitive relation to the psychological states of others and what he takes this alternative conception to reveal about some of the motivations behind the philosophical problem of other minds.

Austin is a very suggestive writer, and much of what he says in 'Other Minds' is particularly so. He is often content to point out features of our ordinary epistemic practice without going into any detail with regard to the philosophical conclusions that should be drawn from them. Distinctions are seemingly drawn for their own sake, and arguments often consist of illustrative analogies and examples. In his own contribution to the symposium at which Austin's paper was first delivered, A. J. Ayer says of Austin that while 'he likes his philosophical garden to be neat and tidy', in this case 'he has found so much pruning to do by the way that he has hardly applied his knife to . . . [the] problem' (1946: 188).[3] Though what Ayer says here is clearly meant as a complaint, this is precisely the aspect of Austin's writing that makes it such a fertile source for further inquiry. The reader is left in the position of filling in details and providing further argumentation, and this is what I'll attempt to do here. I'll be offering something like a rational reconstruction of certain regions of Austin's thought in 'Other Minds'. This will involve passing over many of the issues that Austin addresses in the paper, but it will also allow me to piece together and hopefully render coherent a

[3] The text of all three contributions to the symposium entitled 'Other Minds' by Wisdom, Austin, and Ayer were originally published in 1946, the *Aristotelian Society Supplement* 20: 122–97.

central thread of the paper that has gone surprisingly unappreciated. At many points this will require going well beyond anything that Austin says explicitly in the text, but I hope that this will help further an appreciation for their own sake of the issues that interested Austin.

2. The place of testimony in 'Other Minds'

The bulk of 'Other Minds' is taken up by a discussion of knowledge concerning material objects, this pursued by examining the various ways in which we ordinarily respond to the question 'How do you know?' when asked with regard to such statements as 'There is a goldfinch in the garden.' Austin's real target in 'Other Minds' is, nevertheless, knowledge of other minds. The reason Austin spends so much time considering our knowledge of material objects is that he wants to apply the conclusions he gleans from this discussion to what he sees as the more difficult problem of our knowledge of other minds.[4] More specifically, he wants to have a basis upon which to begin to draw out the way in which the problem of other minds is an expression of difficulties importantly *different* in kind from those relevant to our knowledge of material objects.

It is on this further issue of the peculiarity of the problem of other minds that I'd like to focus in this paper, so I will leave to one side most of Austin's more famous discussion of the distinction between knowing and believing and of the philosopher's use and misuse of the notions of reality, sureness, and certainty. Still, it is important to see that Austin's concern with testimony as a mode of access to the minds of others surfaces over and again throughout these discussions. For example, one of the reasons he gives for thinking that knowledge should not be construed as a species of belief is that in saying 'I know' a subject is not self-ascribing a subjective mental state in the same way as she is in saying 'I believe'.

> If we like to say that 'I believe', and likewise 'I am sure' and 'I am certain', are descriptions of subjective mental cognitive states or attitudes, or what not, then 'I know' is not that, or at least not merely that: it functions differently in talking. (1979: 78–9)

Of course, as Austin immediately notes, this leaves completely open what exactly the relevant distinction here amounts to. One obvious difference between knowing and believing is that, as Austin puts it, *if I know I can't be wrong*; to show that I am wrong is to show that I did not know, while to show that I am wrong *is not* to show that I did not believe. In contemporary terminology, this is to say that knowledge is factive while belief is not. Nevertheless, Austin thinks there is much more to the way in which

[4] It is a point of concern for Austin in *Sense and Sensibilia* that there is no one thing called our 'ordinary knowledge of material objects'. Our cognitive relation to the material world thus is not exhausted by our cognitive relation to middle-sized dry goods. Nevertheless, for my purposes here it is useful to draw a general distinction between knowledge of other minds and knowledge of material objects.

saying 'I know' and saying 'I believe' function differently in talking than this difference with respect to factivity. At this point in 'Other Minds' Austin says that this issue 'must be considered in due course', and he then puts it off until after a long discussion of the various ways in which we ordinarily respond to the question 'How do you know?' Austin's famous discussion of the parallels between saying 'I know' and saying 'I promise', taken up under the heading 'If I know I can't be wrong', is then intended to further cash out the ways in which saying 'I know' differs from saying 'I believe', and, to anticipate, the fundamental issue here concerns the peculiar way in which saying 'I know' functions to communicate information to others. As we will see, the issue Austin is ultimately driving at is one concerning the epistemology of testimony.

Before we turn to Austin's discussion of saying 'I know' and saying 'I promise', however, there is an important section within his discussion of the ways in which we ordinarily respond to the question 'How do you know?' in which Austin foreshadows much of what he goes on to argue in 'Other Minds'. Austin claims that the reasons or justifications we ordinarily give in response to the question 'How do you know?' are different in kind from the reasons or justifications we ordinarily give in response to the question 'Why do you believe?' Giving my reasons for knowing typically involves stating how I come to be in a position to know, while giving my reasons for believing typically involves a recital of symptoms, arguments in support, etc. Austin then claims that one of the most important justifications for knowing typically offered involves the citing of an authority:

> Among the cases where we give our reasons for knowing, a special and important class is formed by those where we cite authorities. If asked 'How do you know that the election is today?', I am apt to reply 'I read it in *The Times*', and if asked 'How do you know the Persians were defeated at Marathon?' I am apt to reply 'Herodotus expressly states that they were'. In these cases 'know' is correctly used: we know 'at second hand' when we can cite an authority who was in a position to know (possibly himself also only at second hand). The statement of an authority makes me aware of something, enables me to know something, which I shouldn't otherwise have known. It is a source of knowledge. In many cases, we contrast such reasons for knowing with other reasons for believing the very same thing: 'Even if we didn't know it, even if he hadn't confessed, the evidence against him would be enough to hang him'.
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> It is evident, of course, that this sort of 'knowledge' is 'liable to be wrong', owing to the unreliability of human testimony (bias, mistake, lying, exaggeration, &c.). Nevertheless, the occurrence of a piece of human testimony radically alters the situation. We say 'We shall never know what Caesar's feelings were on the field of the battle of Philippi', because he did not pen an account of them, *if* he *had*, then to say 'We shall never know' won't do in the same way, even though we may still perhaps find reason to say 'It doesn't read very plausibly: we shall never *really* know the *truth*' and so on. Naturally, we are judicious: we don't say we know (at second hand) if there is any special reason to doubt the testimony: but there has to be *some* reason. It is fundamental in talking (as in other matters) that we are entitled to trust others, except insofar as there is some concrete reason to distrust them. Believing persons, accepting testimony, is the, or one main, point of talking. We don't play (competitive) games except in the faith that our opponent is trying to win: if he isn't, it isn't a game, but something different. So we don't talk

with people (descriptively) except in the faith that they are trying to convey information. (1979: 81–3)

There are several things to note here. First, Austin holds that one of the most common reasons for knowing ordinarily given in response to the question 'How do you know?' involves the citing of an authority. Second, the topic of the statements of authorities, the topic of testimony, here includes such mundane cases as newspaper reports concerning the dates of elections. Importantly, it also includes such things as what people say about their own psychological states, here, what Caesar may have said about his own feelings at the battle of Philippi. Austin is thus working with a very broad conception of testimony, one that encompasses much more than the formal or ritualized instances of what we would term testimony in a court of law or governmental hearing. The topic of testimony is here the topic of ordinary everyday *tellings*. Knowledge based on testimony (or ordinary tellings), encompasses for Austin all those cases of knowledge that are justified by citing an authority.[5] Third, Austin claims that knowing based on testimony is knowing by *believing or trusting others*. And fourth, Austin claims that we often distinguish this particular way of knowing from the process of inferring a conclusion from evidence. The testimony offered in the form of a confession doesn't typically amount to just some more evidence from which we must infer whether the person did what she said (though we can certainly decide to treat it as such).

Of course, this is all very sketchy, but it points to the issues that Austin is ultimately driving towards in 'Other Minds'. Austin goes on to reject a certain conception of the epistemology of testimony according to which testimonial knowledge is just a species of knowledge based on inference from evidence. This mistaken conception of the epistemology of testimony arises from a failure to appreciate the fundamental role that believing or trusting others plays in our cognitive lives. As Austin sees it, this is a failure that is particularly characteristic of the problem of other minds. He thus traces a significant part of the motivation for the problem of other minds to worries about believing and trusting others, worries that are particularly prescient when it comes to the epistemology of testimony.

3. Saying 'I Know' and Saying 'I Promise'

The heart of Austin's treatment of testimony occurs in the section of 'Other Minds' that comes under the heading 'If I know I can't be wrong'. The parallel that Austin draws in this section between saying 'I know' and saying 'I promise' has garnered a great deal of critical attention, and yet I think one would be hard-pressed to find another stretch of Austin's text that has been more wildly misunderstood. In this

[5] The distinction between 'formal' and 'informal' testimony is by now a commonplace in the testimony literature. See, for example, Coady 1992.

section and the next I'll be offering what might appear to be a radically revisionist reading of this material, though I'll be doing so by simply attempting to remain faithful to the general point of the text.

As we've already seen, Austin uses the dictum 'If I know I can't be wrong' to attempt to spell out the difference between knowing and believing, and one way of doing this involves taking the dictum to point to the way in which saying 'I know', unlike saying 'I believe', involves self-ascribing a factive state. Still, Austin thinks that the dictum points to much more than this. In particular, it points to the variety of ways in which saying 'I know' is analogous to saying 'I promise'.

> 'When you know you can't be wrong' is perfectly good sense. You are prohibited from saying 'I know it is so, but I may be wrong', just as you are prohibited from saying 'I promise I will, but I may fail'. If you are aware you may be mistaken, you ought not to say you know, just as, if you are aware you may break your word, you have no business to promise. (1979: 98)

Austin is here making a pragmatic point about the speech acts involved in saying 'I know' and 'I promise'. Unlike his earlier reading of 'If I know I can't be wrong' as pointing to the factivity of *the epistemic state* of knowing as opposed to believing, Austin is here pointing to a feature of *the speech acts performed in saying* 'I know' and 'I promise'. The parallel Austin is drawing is a parallel between two particular speech acts, a speech act involved in saying 'I know' and a speech act involved in saying 'I promise'. Clearly, the speech act paradigmatically involved in saying 'I promise' is the speech act of promising, but what, we must ask, is the parallel speech act that Austin takes to be involved in saying 'I know'?

It is tempting to think that, since the speech act paradigmatically involved in saying 'I promise' is the speech act of promising, Austin must take the parallel speech act involved in saying 'I know' to be the speech act of *knowing*. Some readers have thus attributed to Austin the view that saying 'I know' involves performing some kind of act of knowing.[6] There are two problems with this, however. First, the idea that the parallel speech act involved in saying 'I know' is an act of knowing is just obviously mistaken. Knowing is a state and not an act, and hence there are no conventions according to which saying 'I know', in the appropriate circumstances, is to perform an act of knowing. However, second, there is little textual evidence to support the idea that Austin actually holds such a view. Austin never explicitly speaks of an act of knowing that is analogous to the act of promising. Instead, he continually speaks of the parallel between *saying* 'I know' and *saying* 'I promise', leaving to one side the question of what in the end we should label the particular speech act that he takes to be involved in saying 'I know'.[7] There is thus little reason to think that Austin takes the parallel

[6] See, for example, Warnock 1989 and Graham 1977. Danto 1962 also comes close to attributing such a view to Austin.

[7] One possible exception is the first footnote on p. 102 of 'Other Minds'. There Austin says, ' "Swear", "guarantee", "give my word", "promise", all these and similar words cover cases both of "knowing" and "promising", thus suggesting that the two are analogous.' Even here, however, the odd quotes around the

speech act involved in saying 'I know' to be an act of knowing. We should therefore look for a more charitable reading of Austin's actual position.

I would like to suggest that we take the parallel speech act involved in saying 'I know', the speech act that Austin claims is in many ways analogous to the speech act of promising, to be the speech act of *testifying*, where testifying is construed broadly so as to encompass ordinary everyday tellings (as we saw Austin construe it earlier). Just as it is clearly true that saying 'I promise' is one way (though only one way) of performing the speech act of promising, it is clearly true that saying 'I know' is one way (though only one way) of performing the speech act of testifying (of telling). If this way of construing the parallel between saying 'I know' and saying 'I promise' is correct, then Austin's interest in the parallel is an interest in the way in which the act of testifying, one of the primary ways in which we communicate information to others, is in many ways analogous to the act of promising.

Note that construing Austin's parallel in this way provides a very straightforward answer to the famous and on many accounts decisive objection that Austin himself raises.

> We feel, however, an objection to saying that 'I know' performs the same sort of function as 'I promise'. It is this. Supposing that things turn out badly, then we say, on the one hand 'You're proved wrong, so you *didn't* know', but on the other hand 'You've failed to perform, although you *did* promise.' (1979: 101)

But if the speech act involved in saying 'I know' that Austin is concerned with is the speech act of testifying, then just as you did promise even if you failed to perform, you did testify even if you were proven wrong. Austin's own response to the objection isn't nearly so straightforward.

> I believe that this contrast is more apparent than real. The sense in which you 'did promise' is that you did *say* you promised (did say 'I promise'): and you did *say* you knew. That is the gravamen of the charge against you when you let us down, after we have taken your word. But it may well transpire that you never fully intended to do it, or that you had concrete reason to suppose that you wouldn't be able to do it (it might even be manifestly impossible), and in another 'sense' of promise you *can't* then have promised to do it, so that you *didn't* promise. (1979: 101)

terms 'knowing' and 'promising' suggest that Austin means to refer to the expressions 'know' and 'promise' rather than to acts of knowing and promising. Elsewhere in the text when Austin refers to the expressions 'know' and 'promise' he always speaks of an analogy between *the use* of the expressions rather than between the expressions themselves. See, for example, p. 101: 'We feel, however, an objection to saying that "I know" performs the same sort of function as "I promise" '; 'Consider the use of other phrases analogous to "I know" and "I promise".' Here Austin is clearly concerned with the function of these expressions within speech, with how they are used to do things, and so the parallel is one between the acts involved in actually saying 'I know' and 'I promise' rather than between the linguistic expressions themselves. Of course, one can perform many different speech acts in uttering the words 'I know' and 'I promise'. As I have put it, Austin is concerned with the speech act paradigmatically performed in saying 'I promise', namely promising, and a particular parallel speech act often performed in saying 'I know'.

Instead of getting clearer about the specific act involved in saying 'I know', he tries to preserve the parallel by claiming that there is a sense in which, if I say 'I know' or 'I promise' and turn out to be mistaken or not to follow through, then I did know or promise (in the sense that I did *say* 'I know' or 'I promise') and another sense in which, if I say 'I know' or 'I promise' even though I don't believe it or don't intend to follow through, then I didn't really know or promise. Both of these suggestions seem wrong. While it's true that the gravamen of the charge against the person who said 'I know' and was mistaken is not that she knew but that she *said* she knew, the gravamen of the charge against the person who said 'I promise' and failed to perform is not simply that she said she promised but that *she promised*. And while it's true that saying 'I know' without believing is not to know, there is no 'sense' of promising in which saying 'I promise', in the appropriate circumstances, without intending to follow through isn't really to promise. Austin himself takes this back in *How to Do Things with Words* where he develops more sophisticated terms in which to say that a promise can fully 'come off' even if the speaker doesn't intend to follow through. This is a case of what Austin calls an 'abuse' rather than a 'misfire' (1975: 16). I take the fumbling here to be an indication that at the time of writing 'Other Minds' Austin just isn't very clear about the exact terms in which to state the parallel that he is interested in. He is confident that the parallel he has in mind holds up in the face of this challenge—he states flatly, 'I believe that this contrast is more apparent than real'—but he doesn't know exactly how to express the point. I think putting things in terms of a parallel between testifying and promising captures what Austin is trying to say much more perspicuously. Moreover, it renders the parallel completely consistent with Austin's later distinction between abuses and misfires. Just as a promise can 'come off' even though the speaker doesn't intend to follow through, testimony can 'come off' even though the speaker doesn't believe what she testifies. This is just to say that both promises and testimony can be insincere.

One might still wonder, however, whether the act of saying 'I know' can be so neatly identified with the act of testifying construed in this broad sense. Austin is acutely sensitive to the nuances of ordinary language and so would surely hesitate to identify the speech act of saying 'I know' with the act of testifying. In the final class of illocutionary forces Austin offers at the end of *How to Do Things with Words*, the class of expositives, he lists separately the forces of informing, apprising, telling, testifying, reporting, and swearing, even placing the first and second three forces into different groupings (the first three appear in group 3 and the second three appear in group 4).[8] Clearly, this means that Austin thinks there are differences between these various illocutionary forces. But while there certainly *are* differences in the ways in which

[8] Notoriously, Austin also includes in group 4 the forces of doubting, knowing, and believing, each preceded by a question mark. This can provide further encouragement for confusing the state of knowing with an illocutionary force or act and can further obscure the way in which Austin's concern with what is involved in saying 'I know' is really a concern with the epistemology of testimony.

we ordinarily use these words (for example, 'testify', 'report', and 'swear' are typically more formal and ceremonial in function than 'inform', 'apprise', and especially 'tell'), Austin gives no principled criterion in terms of which to distinguish them. In fact, Austin is quite vague concerning the issue of individuating speech acts and often simply relies on the existence of different grammatical locutions.[9] As we'll see, this actually introduces a good deal of confusion into his discussion of the analogy between saying 'I know' and saying 'I promise'. As I hope to show, the various parallels that Austin wishes to draw between saying 'I know' and saying 'I promise' can be maintained only by taking the act of saying 'I know' to be one way of performing the speech act of testifying and by construing the speech act of testifying as epistemologists typically construe it, as the general act of giving information from one person to another that is apt to be classed alongside perception, memory, and inference as one of the typical ways in which we acquire knowledge about the world around us.

As we saw in section 2, in the course of 'Other Minds' Austin does use the term 'testimony' in something like this fashion. So why doesn't he use it here? Why doesn't he just say that the relevant analogy he wishes to draw is between the speech act of promising and the speech act of testifying (or telling)? In effect, what Austin does is focus on highly ritualized cases of testimony. Ordinary tellings often serve to communicate information to others through the use of indicative utterances without any explicit force-indicating grammatical markers. I can communicate to an audience the fact that *p* by very unceremoniously saying that *p*. Here there is little to grammatically mark out the utterance as an obvious instance of what Austin calls a 'ritual' case, and so it might seem that such a case could have little in common with the much more obviously performative act of saying 'I promise'. Cases of testimony in which we actually come out and say 'I know', on the other hand, can appear more ritualized and thus more likely to involve a performative dimension.

Still, saying 'I know' isn't the only way in which the act of testifying can be explicitly ritualized. Saying 'I hereby testify that *p*' or 'I must tell you that *p*' are also ways of highlighting the performative dimension of testifying or telling. Moreover, as Austin later realizes explicitly, there is a performative dimension to all human speech whether it bears an explicitly ritualizing marker or not.[10] In the appropriate circumstances, simply saying '*p*' can be one way of performing a speech act with the illocutionary force of testifying, and simply saying 'I'll do *A*' can be one way of performing the obviously performative act of promising. So while there may be a reason to focus on the more obviously ritualized cases of testimony in order to motivate the analogy between testifying and promising, the analogy should nevertheless obtain between cases of

[9] This is no doubt partially the result of Austin's fascination with the explicit performative verb, with the cases in which saying 'I hereby ϕ' is precisely to perform the act of ϕ-ing. Austin is quite clear, however, that not all speech acts are performed by use of an explicit performative verb.

[10] The fact that at the time of writing 'Other Minds' Austin was not as clear as he later became about the way in which the performative/constative distinction breaks down might thus explain some of the confusion here.

telling and promising that do not make use of any obviously ritualizing grammatical markers.

Of course, taking Austin's concern with the speech act involved in saying 'I know' to be a concern with the speech act of testifying broadly construed still leaves open how in fact it is that testimony can serve to transmit knowledge from one person to another; it doesn't yet give any particular answer to the question of how we acquire knowledge and justified belief from the testimony of others. This is just the problem of the epistemology of testimony, but I think that this is precisely the problem that Austin's analogy between saying 'I know' and saying 'I promise' is supposed to go some distance towards solving.

In the above passage, Austin simply notes that there is a normative constraint on saying 'I know' such that I shouldn't say 'I know' if I have some concrete reason to believe that I may be mistaken. Analogously, there is a normative constraint on promising such that I shouldn't say 'I promise' if I have some concrete reason to believe that I may break my word. Of course, I *can* certainly testify or promise even when I know that I am mistaken or that I will break my word. The point is just that there are similar normative constraints present to be violated with regard to both the speech acts of testifying and of promising.

Importantly, Austin's concerns here are very different from those of contemporary epistemologists interested in the normative constraints on assertion. As Austin conceives it, saying 'I know that *p*' amounts to performing a speech act far more elaborate than the mere act of assertion, and he quickly goes on to contrast saying 'I know that *p*' with simply asserting '*p*' (or 'S is P').[11]

> When I say 'S is P', I imply at least that I believe it, and, if I have been strictly brought up, that I am (quite) sure of it: when I say 'I shall do A', I imply at least that I hope to do it, and, if I have been strictly brought up that I (fully) intend to. If I only believe that S is P, I can add 'But of course I may (very well) be wrong:' if I only hope to do A, I can add 'But of course I may (very well) not'. When I only believe or only hope, it is recognized that further evidence or further circumstances are liable to make me change my mind. If I say 'S is P' when I don't even believe it, I am lying: if I say it when I believe it but am not sure of it, I may be misleading but I am not exactly lying. If I say 'I shall do A' when I have not even any hope, not the slightest intention, of doing it, then I am deliberately deceiving: if I say it when I do not fully intend to, I am misleading but I am not deliberately deceiving in the same way.
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> But now, when I say 'I promise', a new plunge is taken: I have not merely announced my intention, but, by using this formula (performing this ritual), I have bound myself to others, and

[11] There is a larger problem with connecting Austin's concerns here with those of philosophers interested in the analysis of assertion, and this has to do with the way in which philosophers often conceive of assertion as the external analogue of judgement. Judgement is not an intrinsically other-directed activity, and conceiving assertion as the external analogue of judgement thus leads philosophers to discuss assertion without much concern for the interpersonal issues that interest Austin. Austin is primarily concerned with how asserting, testifying, promising, expressing beliefs, expressing intentions, etc., serve *to do things with others*. He is interested in the kind of significance that testifying has for others and with how this differs from the kind of significance involved in mere assertion.

staked my reputation, in a new way. Similarly, saying 'I know' is taking a new plunge. But it is *not* saying 'I have performed a specially striking feat of cognition, superior, in the same scale as believing and being sure, even to being quite sure': for there *is* nothing in that scale superior to being quite sure. Just as promising is not something superior, in the same scale as hoping and intending, even to merely fully intending: for there *is* nothing in that scale superior to fully intending. When I say 'I know', I *give others my word*: I *give others my authority for saying* that 'S is P'. (1979: 99)

Austin here contrasts what is involved in saying '*p*' or 'I shall do *A*' with what is involved in saying 'I know that *p*' or 'I promise to do *A*'. In saying 'I know' and 'I promise', Austin claims that 'a new plunge' is taken beyond what is involved in saying '*p*' or 'I shall do *A*'. Taking this new plunge involves doing such things as *binding myself to others*, *staking my reputation*, and *giving others my word*, and Austin thinks that these features of what is involved in saying 'I know that *p*' and 'I promise to do *A*' make these speech acts different in kind and not merely in degree from the speech acts involved in saying '*p*' and 'I shall do *A*'.

In the above passage, Austin claims that the speech act involved in saying 'I know that *p*' is to the speech act involved in saying '*p*' as the speech act involved in saying 'I promise to do *A*' is to the speech act involved in saying 'I shall do *A*'. As we have seen, however, in different contexts I can perform the act of testifying by saying either 'I know that *p*' or '*p*', and in different contexts I can perform the act of promising by saying either 'I promise to do *A*' or 'I shall do *A*'. We should thus give up on these particular grammatical locutions and instead take Austin's basic claim to be that the speech act of testifying is to the speech act of something less than testifying (let's call this the speech act of *merely declaring one's belief*) as the speech act of promising is to the speech act of something less than promising (let's call this the speech act of *merely declaring one's intention*). Even here there will surely be intermediate cases between testifying and merely declaring a belief and between promising and merely declaring an intention—it is a common point of contention for us whether and to what extent someone is, for example, promising us to do something or doing something less than this—but focusing on the difference between the clear cases is the only way to understand what is intermediary about the intermediate ones.

4. Testimony and believing a speaker

Austin takes the acts of testifying and promising to involve taking a new plunge beyond the acts of merely declaring a belief or intention, and he takes this new plunge to involve giving my word, binding myself to others, and staking my reputation. The question, then, is how exactly testifying or promising involves giving my word and thereby binding myself to others in a way that merely declaring a belief or intention does not. What exactly is it that I do in testifying or promising that I do not do in merely declaring a belief or intention? Austin attempts to cash this out as follows.

When I have said only that I am sure, and prove to have been mistaken, I am not liable to be rounded on by others in the same way as when I have said 'I know'. I am sure *for my part*, you can take it or leave it: accept it if you think I am an acute and careful person, that's your responsibility. But I don't know 'for my part', and when I say 'I know' I don't mean you can take it or leave it (though of course you *can* take it or leave it). In the same way, when I say I fully intend to, I do so for my part, and, according as you think highly or poorly of my resolution and chances, you will elect to act on it or not to act on it: but if I say I promise, you are *entitled* to act on it, whether or not you choose to do so. If I have said I know or I promise, you insult me in a special way by refusing to accept it. We all *feel* the very great difference between saying even 'I am *absolutely* sure' and saying 'I know': it is like the difference between saying even 'I firmly and irrevocably intend' and 'I promise'. If someone has promised me to do A, then I am entitled to rely on it, and can myself make promises on the strength of it: and so, where someone has said to me 'I know', I am entitled to say *I* know too, at second hand. The right to say 'I know' is transmissible, in the sort of way that other authority is transmissible. Hence, if I say it lightly, I may be *responsible* for getting *you* into trouble. (1979: 100)

It isn't abundantly clear what Austin is saying here, but I would like to offer a general account of the parallel between testifying and promising that I think captures the spirit of what Austin is driving at.

There is a pretty clear intuitive distinction between promising another to do *A* and merely declaring to another one's intention to do *A*. When I promise someone to do *A*, I am doing something different from when I merely declare to her my intention to do *A*, and this different thing that I am doing when I promise someone to do *A* involves my assuming a different kind of responsibility with regard to her ability to rely on me to do *A*. When I promise someone to do *A*, I am (at least purportedly) trying to make it the case that she can rely on me to do *A*. I am committing myself to doing *A*. When I merely declare the intention to do *A*, on the other hand, I may be trying to make it the case that she knows *that I intend to do A*, but I am not typically trying to make it the case that she can rely on me to do *A*. And even if I am trying to make it the case that she can rely on me to do *A*, I seem to be doing so by some kind of indirection—by a detour through my intentions—and thus not in the same way as when I come out and promise her to do *A*. If this is right, then the relevant difference between promising and merely declaring an intention seems to be a difference with regard to the relationship that I take up towards others in speaking. In promising to do *A*, I am entering into a different kind of relationship with my audience than when I merely declare the intention to do *A*, and this different kind of relationship is characterized by my bearing a different kind of responsibility for my audience's ability to rely on me to do *A*.

There seems to be an analogous difference between testifying that *p* and merely declaring the belief that *p*. When I come out and testify to someone that *p*, I am doing something different from when I merely declare to her my belief that *p*, and this different thing that I am doing when I testify that *p* involves my assuming a different kind of responsibility with regard to her epistemic standing with respect to *p*. When

I testify to someone that *p*, I am (at least purportedly) trying to make it the case that she knows that *p*. I am trying to put her epistemically in touch with the fact that *p*.[12] When I merely declare to her my belief that *p*, on the other hand, I may be trying to make it the case that she knows *that I believe that p*, but I am not typically trying to make it the case that she knows that *p*. And even if I am trying to make it the case that she knows that *p*, I seem to be doing so by some kind of indirection—by a detour through my own beliefs—and thus not in the same way as when I come out and tell her that *p*. So again, the relevant difference between testifying and merely declaring a belief seems be a difference with regard to the kind of relationship I take up towards others in speaking. In telling or testifying that *p*, I am entering into a different kind of relationship with my audience than when I merely declare my belief that *p*, and this different kind of relationship is characterized by my bearing a different kind of responsibility for my audience's epistemic standing with respect to *p*.

I think Austin's interest in the parallel between saying 'I know' and saying 'I promise' is an interest in how testifying and promising differ from merely declaring a belief and merely declaring an intention in precisely this respect. According to Austin, just as promising involves entering into a relationship with the audience of one's promise that is different in kind from the relationship one bears to the audience of one's mere declaration of intention, testifying involves entering into a relationship with the audience of one's testimony that is different in kind from the relationship one bears to the audience of one's mere declaration of belief. Austin isn't all that clear about what exactly this difference with respect to the relationship between speaker and audience amounts to, but I think that what he does say is enough to point the way to a sketchy yet nevertheless substantive conception of the epistemology of testimony. In the case of testimony, the difference in the relationship between speaker and audience involved in testifying rather than merely declaring a belief makes it the case that, from an epistemological perspective, an audience's knowing that *p* based on a speaker's testimony that *p* is different in kind from its knowing that *p* based on a speaker's mere declaration of belief that *p*. *The interpersonal difference* in the kind of relationship I take up towards an audience in testifying that *p* rather than merely declaring my belief that *p* makes for *an epistemological difference* in what constitutes the epistemic credentials of the audience's knowledge that *p* based on my testimony rather than on my mere declaration of belief.

We can begin to spell this out by noting that, when addressed to an audience, the acts of testifying and of merely declaring a belief both call for a particular kind of response from the audience. In general terms, both testifying that *p* and merely declaring the belief that *p* call for the audience *to believe the speaker*. Not all assertoric speech acts addressed to an audience call for the audience to believe the speaker. If a

[12] One definition of the verb 'tell' is, appropriately, *to make known*, suggesting that in telling another that *p* I am making it the case that she knows that *p*, in a sense whether she likes it or not. Consider one common response to unpleasant or disconcerting news: 'Don't tell me that; I don't want to know!'

speaker asserts that *p* as the conclusion of a serious (non-hypothetical) argument, for example, this calls for the audience to believe that *p* but it does not call for the audience to believe the speaker.[13] In arguing that *p,* the speaker intends for the audience to believe that *p* on the basis of the audience's own understanding and assessment of the argument and not on the basis of believing the speaker. The acts of testifying that *p* and declaring the belief that *p*, however, are very different. When a speaker testifies that *p* or declares the belief that *p* to an audience, she intends to communicate information to her audience by way of the audience's believing *her*.[14] Still, only in the case of testifying that *p* does the speaker intend to communicate to the audience the information *that p* by way of its believing her. When a speaker merely declares the belief that *p*, the audience's believing her requires only that the audience believe *that the speaker believes that p*. It is then a further question whether the audience should go on and itself believe that *p*. The audience may go on to believe that *p* on the basis of the speaker's declaration of belief if it thinks that the speaker's belief that *p* is good evidence for the truth of *p*, but here the audience is in the position of coming to its own conclusion about *p*; it is not in the position of believing the speaker that *p*. When an audience believes a speaker's testimony that *p*, however, there is no further question as to whether the audience should itself believe that *p*. In the case of a speaker's testimony that *p*, to believe the speaker is already to believe that *p*, meaning that the audience isn't in the position of coming to its own conclusion about *p* in the same way as when the speaker merely declares the belief that *p*. When an audience believes a speaker's testimony that *p*, the audience *believes the speaker that p*, it *trusts the speaker for the truth*.[15]

This suggests that the epistemic credentials of an audience's knowledge based on a speaker's testimony are different in kind from the epistemic credentials of an audience's knowledge based on a speaker's mere declaration of belief. When an audience comes to know that *p* based on a speaker's mere declaration of belief that *p*, the epistemic credentials of the audience's knowledge are constituted by the audience's coming to its own conclusion about *p*, and as a result, the audience is solely epistemically responsible for the conclusions that it draws. The speaker may be responsible for putting the audience in the position to draw for itself certain conclusions with regard to *p*, but she is not responsible for the epistemic credentials of these conclusions themselves. When an audience comes to know that *p* based on a speaker's testimony that *p*, on the other hand, the epistemic credentials of the audience's knowledge are constituted not by the audience's coming to its own conclusion about *p* but rather by its believing the speaker. The audience must still come to its own conclusion about whether to believe the

[13] If the argument isn't serious or genuine, if the speaker asserts that *p* as the conclusion of a hypothetical argument, then the speaker's assertion does not even call for the audience to believe that *p*.

[14] This isn't to deny that a speaker can declare a belief without a communicative intention. A speaker can declare the belief that *p* to herself where she does not intend to communicate anything to anyone. The relevant contrast I will be concerned with is between testimony and cases of mere declaration of belief addressed to an audience with a communicative intention.

[15] See Anscombe 1979.

speaker—whether to take the speaker's word—but when it does decide to believe the speaker, it is not in the position of coming to its own conclusion about the content of the speaker's testimony. As a result, the audience is not solely epistemically responsible for the credentials of its belief that *p*. The speaker is not simply responsible for putting the audience in the position to draw for itself certain conclusions based on what she has said. Rather, the speaker is actually partially responsible for the epistemic credentials of the audience's belief.[16]

The general point of Austin's analogy between testifying and promising is that both testifying and promising are ways in which a speaker gives her word, and a speaker's giving her word involves her entering into a relationship with her audience characterized by the speaker's assuming a particular responsibility towards the audience. There is a sense in which Austin actually understates this point, however. The speech acts of testifying and of promising not only have parallels, they sometimes coincide. There are various uses of the locution 'I promise' that actually do the work of testifying. In speaking to children we often promise them that certain things are the case—'I promise you that there isn't a monster under your bed'—and when the adult practice of giving our word breaks down we often revert to such locutions: 'Did you remember to shut the garage door? 'Yes.' 'Are you sure?' 'Yes.' 'Really?' 'Look, I promise you that I shut the garage door!' This particular use of 'I promise' certainly expresses exasperation, yet we can see in it an attempt to highlight and insist on features central to the practice of giving and taking testimony, features of interpersonal commitment and responsibility.

5. Symptoms and expressions

It is only after going to such great lengths to elaborate on the parallel between saying 'I know' and saying 'I promise' that Austin finally feels that he is in a position to begin to address the problem of other minds. Austin first notes that we certainly *do* sometimes say that we know of the existence and contents of other minds; we certainly do

[16] The epistemologist will likely feel that this position concerning the epistemology of testimony has not been sufficiently established. Even if knowledge based on a speaker's mere declaration of belief that *p* is different from knowledge based on a speaker's testimony that *p*, this does not necessarily mean that the epistemic credentials of testimonial knowledge must be constituted by the kind of interpersonal relations alluded to in the text. Perhaps believing a speaker that *p* *does* involve the speaker's coming to her own conclusion about *p*, only in a way that is different from knowledge based on a speaker's mere declaration of belief. I haven't here argued against such a view. However, I do think that my construal tracks most straightforwardly what Austin says about this issue. Moreover, I have argued elsewhere that though an audience can treat a speaker's testimony that *p* as evidence from which it can infer the conclusion that *p*, there are good reasons to distinguish such knowledge from knowledge that involves believing the speaker. In particular, it is only when an audience comes to know that *p* by believing the speaker that it is entitled to defer epistemic challenges to its knowledge that *p* back to the original speaker. See McMyler 2007 and forthcoming. For similar interpersonal conceptions of the epistemology of testimony, see Ross 1986, Moran 2005, and Hinchman 2005.

sometimes say, for example, that we know that another person is angry.[17] Still, we can't always know another's feelings or emotions, especially when it comes to people we have little acquaintance with or little in common with. In order to know what another person is feeling, we generally need to have some experience with the person involved. We also generally need to have some experience with the kind of feeling or emotion in question. We might need to have experienced the feeling or emotion ourselves, and we might need to have experienced the feeling or emotion as manifested by others. One might very well think, then, that our knowledge that some particular person is angry on some particular occasion can only be justified via an inference from the person's behaviour, through independently available considerations concerning our experience with the particular person and with the particular psychological state, to the conclusion that the person is actually experiencing the psychological state.

Austin thinks that such a thought is common to many sceptics and non-sceptics about other minds alike. Taking our cognitive relation to the minds of others to be one that can only consist in an inference from evidence is, as Austin sees it, a fundamental feature of scepticism about other minds. Arguing that the kind of inference thereby available (by analogy or otherwise) is sometimes actually sufficient to yield knowledge, as many non-sceptics attempt to do, is thus only to concede the heart of the sceptic's position. For instance, Austin takes John Wisdom (1952) to make a distinction between the behavioural or physical signs or symptoms of a psychological state and the psychological state itself and to hold that we can only know the psychological state of another on the basis of an inference from the physical symptoms to the conclusion that the person is actually experiencing the psychological state. The person experiencing the psychological state, in contrast, knows it on the basis of the experience of the state itself. Austin thinks that this account of our cognitive relation to the minds of others is mistaken, and he tries to argue that it is mistaken by pointing to the ways in which it is at odds with our ordinary talk about the psychological states of others.

Austin begins by claiming that such a use of the term 'symptom' is confused:

> What is important is that we never talk of 'symptoms' or 'signs' except *by way of implied contrast with inspection of the item itself*. No doubt it would often be awkward to have to say exactly where the signs or symptoms end and the item itself begins to appear: but such a division is always implied to exist. And hence the words 'symptom' and 'sign' have no use except in cases where the item, as in the case of disease, is liable to be *hidden*, whether it be in the future, in the past, under the skin, or in some other more or less notorious casket: and when the item is itself before us, we know longer talk of signs and symptoms. When we talk of 'signs of a storm', we mean signs of an impending storm, or of a past storm, or of a storm beyond the horizon: we do *not* mean a storm on top of us. (1979: 105–6)

[17] I will follow Austin in limiting my discussion to the cases of feelings and emotions. Nevertheless, I think Austin's conception of our cognitive relation to the psychological states of others can be extended to encompass occurrent thoughts and sensations as well as standing attitudes.

We ordinarily only speak of symptoms or signs of a thing in the absence of the thing itself. To talk about signs or symptoms of another's psychological states is thus already to talk as if the psychological states of another are somehow *hidden* or *suppressed*, and while there certainly are occasions on which we speak of the signs or symptoms of hidden or suppressed psychological states, we typically contrast such cases with cases in which the psychological states *are not* hidden or suppressed.[18]

When the psychological states are no longer suppressed, when they are fully exhibited in another's behaviour, we then talk about *expressions*, *manifestations*, or *displays* of the psychological states rather than about signs or symptoms.

> 'Symptoms' or 'signs' of anger tend to mean signs of *rising* or *suppressed* anger. Once the man has exploded, we talk of something different—of an expression or manifestation or display of anger, of an exhibition of temper, and so forth. A twitch of the eyebrow, pallor, a tremor in the voice, all these may be symptoms of anger: but a violent tirade or a blow in the face are not, they are the acts in which the anger is vented. 'Symptoms' of anger are not, at least normally, contrasted with the man's own inner personal feeling of anger, but with the actual display of anger. (1979: 107)

Austin thinks that expressions of psychological states are related in a peculiar way to the psychological states themselves. Rather than being opposed to the actual presence of the state in the manner of signs or symptoms, expressions of psychological states are the natural routes through which, on their natural occasions, the psychological states themselves are exhibited.

> It seems fair to say that 'being angry' is in many respects like 'having mumps'. It is a description of a whole pattern of events, including occasion, symptoms, feeling and manifestation, and possibly other factors besides. It is as silly to ask 'What, really, *is* the anger *itself*? as to attempt to fine down 'the disease' to some one chosen item ('the functional disorder'). That the man himself feels something that we don't (in the sense that he feels angry and we don't) is, in the absence of Mr. Wisdom's variety of telepathy, evident enough, and incidentally nothing to complain about as a 'predicament': but there is no call to say that 'that' ('the feeling') *is* the *anger*. The pattern of events whatever its precise form, is, fairly clearly, peculiar to the case of 'feelings' (emotions)—it is not by any means exactly like the case of diseases: and it seems to be this peculiarity which makes us prone to say that, unless we have had experience of a feeling ourselves, we cannot know when someone else is experiencing it. Moreover, it is our confidence in the general pattern that makes us apt to say we 'know' another man is angry when we have only observed parts of the pattern: for the parts of the pattern are related to each other very much more intimately than, for example, newspapermen scurrying in Brighton are related to a fire in Fleet Street. (1979: 109–10)

[18] We also talk about signs or symptoms of psychological states when we are not privy to the entirety of the circumstances in which the psychological state is being expressed. If I happen to see a stranger slam a door, I may take this as a sign of anger from which I can infer that the person is angry. Someone present at the meeting from which the stranger just left in a huff, however, may be able to see the person's behaviour as an overt expression of anger rather than as a mere sign or symptom.

According to Austin, expressions of a psychological state are the outwardly observable aspects of the psychological state of a person. To describe a person as angry is to ascribe to the person a property that consists of a whole pattern of things including the person's possible overt manifestation or expression of the state through certain natural routes in certain natural situations. Moreover, the parts of the pattern that makes up the state are so intimately connected that we can know that a person is in the psychological state simply by observing a part of the pattern. We can thus have direct, non-inferential access to the psychological states of others based simply on observing their overt expressions of those states.

In this respect, Austin's conception of our cognitive relation to other minds is similar to Wittgenstein's.[19] In *Zettel* Wittgenstein writes,

> 'We *see* emotion.'—As opposed to what?—We do not see facial contortions and make inferences from them (like a doctor framing a diagnosis) to joy, grief, boredom. We describe a face immediately as sad, radiant, bored, even when we are unable to give any other description of the features.—Grief, one would like to say, is personified in the face. (1967, §225)

Wittgenstein suggests that it belongs to the concept of emotion that we can perceive another's emotional states directly in her behaviour. To see someone smile just is to see that she's happy (when she is). This is not to say that we can't be mistaken as to whether someone is happy. Smiles can be feigned just as can all behaviour. In the case of a smile that is not genuine, the smiling behaviour has come apart from the emotion that we typically take it to express. But this is not to say that smiling behaviour and happiness *always* stand apart, that there is always a gulf between the behaviour and the psychological state that must be bridged by an act of interpretation.

> We say 'The expression in his voice was *genuine*'. If it was spurious we think as it were of another one behind it.—*This* is the face he shews the world, inwardly he has another one.—But this does not mean that when the expression is *genuine* he has two the same. (1997, §606)

In the case of a genuine smile we don't have a dead piece of behaviour that we now have to interpret so as to get at the emotion behind it. A genuine smile is alive with happiness—the behaviour is an expression of the psychological state—which is to say that the emotion can be directly perceived in the behaviour itself.[20]

Austin doesn't explicitly use this kind of perceptual terminology. Unlike Wittgenstein, he doesn't explicitly say that we can *see* the anger in an angry face, that we can *perceive* the psychological states of others in their expressions of those states. He clearly thinks that we can have non-inferential access to the contents of other minds based on observing overt expressions or displays of psychological states, but beyond the use of the notion of observation he doesn't explicitly characterize this access in perceptual terms. In fact,

[19] For a detailed account of Wittgenstein's conception of expression and its relation to self-knowledge, see Finkelstein 2003.

[20] As Bar-On 2004 puts it, expressive behaviour is 'transparent-to-the-subject's-mental-condition' which in turn allows the consumers of expressive behaviour to perceive the subject's present mental condition.

Austin quickly goes on to try to distinguish the way in which we know the psychological states of others from the way in which we know ordinary material objects. For Austin, the kind of non-inferential cognitive relation we bear to the contents of other minds is not exhausted by the kind of non-inferential cognitive relation characteristic of ordinary perception.

6. The peculiarity of other minds

The remainder of 'Other Minds' is an attempt to spell out just how our cognitive relation to other minds differs from that characteristic of ordinary perception. Despite the fact that this is clearly the most important part of Austin's treatment of the problem of other minds, what Austin offers in this regard is far sketchier and far more incomplete than anything else in 'Other Minds'. The rest of this paper is an attempt to reconstruct and extend what Austin says in the final five pages of 'Other Minds' in a way that hopefully follows logically from the general trajectory of the paper.

Austin's treatment of the peculiarity of our cognitive relation to other minds consists of two parts. He first discusses several worries that are typically associated with the problem of other minds and which might be taken to distinguish the problem of other minds from the problem of how we know ordinary material objects. While there *is* something important and distinctive about these worries, Austin doesn't do much to make clear what this is. It is only in the second part of Austin's discussion, the part that deals with the issue of 'believing what the man says about his own feelings', that a substantive epistemological distinction between our knowledge of other minds and our knowledge of ordinary material objects emerges. The issue of the epistemology of testimony, in particular, the issue of our knowledge of the psychological states of others based on their testimony about their own psychological states, is thus, for Austin, at the heart of the problem of other minds.

The first part of Austin's discussion focuses on several special ways in which we can be mistaken about the contents of other minds. While there are a whole variety of ways in which we can be mistaken about material objects, when it comes to other minds we are liable to special kinds of mistakes that lead to special kinds of worries. Austin lists three such worries, all of which he thinks commonly arise within our ordinary dealings with others.

> We may worry (1) as to whether someone is *deceiving* us, by suppressing his emotions, or by feigning emotions which he does not feel: we may worry (2) as to whether we are *misunderstanding* someone (or he us), in wrongly supposing that he does 'feel like us', that he does share emotions like ours: or we may worry (3) as to whether some action of another person is really deliberate, or perhaps only involuntary or inadvertent in some manner or other. (1979: 112)

Austin thinks none of these kinds of worry are relevant to ordinary material objects.

> The goldfinch cannot be assumed, nor the bread suppressed: we may be deceived by the appearance of an oasis, or misinterpret the signs of weather, but the oasis cannot lie to us and we cannot misunderstand the storm in the way we misunderstand the man. (1979: 112)

So what exactly is it that distinguishes these worries from the kinds of worry that can arise with regard to ordinary material objects?

The three worries that Austin lists are all worries concerning the way in which many (though by no means all) expressions of psychological states are *intentional* in nature. By 'intentional' I mean here that many expressions of psychological states are phenomena performed with certain intentions, or for certain reasons, or in the pursuit of certain goals or ends. Many expressions of psychological states are *actions*—they are *things we do* rather than things that simply happen to us—and they are thus subject to our wills. Now, a person's expressions of her psychological states certainly are not *always* subject to her will. People often unintentionally express their psychological states in their behaviour, and here we sometimes speak of the person's expression of an emotion as being the result of the emotion overcoming or getting the better of her. There may also be more 'primitive' expressions of psychological states that aren't so easily treated as actions, for example, a person crying out in pain after being pricked with a pin. The point is just that there are a great many expressions of psychological states that are actions in that they are pieces of behaviour that are apt to be described as intentional.[21] This is not to say that we always have a specific intention or purpose 'in mind' when we intentionally express a psychological state. Even in a situation in which we would not describe an expression of a psychological state as unintentional, the person expressing the state need not have any particular purpose for expressing her state beyond, say, venting it. Nevertheless, many expressions of psychological states are far more like overt actions than like mere twitches or reflexes.

We can now return to Austin's three special worries. Given that many expressions of psychological states are intentional, this means that (1) they can be feigned, (2) understanding them requires understanding the intentions with which they are performed, and (3) there is room for mistaking inadvertent or involuntary behaviour for intentional expressions. None of this is true of ordinary material objects. A goldfinch cannot be feigned; understanding an oasis does not require understanding the intentions behind it; and there is no danger of a pot boiling involuntarily. Our cognitive relation to other minds is thus distinguishable from our cognitive relation to ordinary

[21] What about expressions of unconscious psychological states? Finkelstein 2003 argues that unconscious psychological states are characterized by the fact that, though they can be expressed in a person's behaviour, they cannot be expressed by avowing them. If what I say in the text is correct, then perhaps unconscious psychological states are characterized more broadly by the fact that they cannot be expressed intentionally. The fact that one cannot avow an unconscious psychological state would then simply be the result of the fact that avowals are intentional expressions.

material objects by the relevance of the particular kinds of worry associated with the way in which many expressions of psychological states are intentional.

But how exactly does the fact that many expressions are like actions, that they are often intentional, make our knowledge of other minds different from our knowledge of ordinary material objects? It might be the case that there are simply additional possibilities that a subject must be responsive to in order to be credited with knowledge that a person is experiencing a certain psychological state. Knowing that someone is angry might be unlike knowing that there is a goldfinch in the garden simply in the sense that I cannot come to know that someone is angry on the basis of observing her expressive behaviour without being rationally responsive to considerations concerning the person's intentions. Austin sometimes suggests such a view. After laying out the above three worries, he writes,

> Though the difficulties are special, the ways of dealing with them are, initially, similar to those employed in the case of the goldfinch. There are (more or less roughly) established procedures for dealing with suspected cases of deception or of misunderstanding or of inadvertence. (1979: 112)

Nevertheless, I think that Austin's considered view is that knowing someone is angry is not simply distinguishable from knowing that there is a goldfinch in the garden by the fact that there are additional special possibilities that must be taken into account. Rather, our non-inferential knowledge of the psychological states of others is often *different in kind* from our non-inferential knowledge of ordinary material objects based on perception, and this is intimately connected to the way in which many expressions of psychological states are intentional. This only becomes clearer, however, when Austin turns to the second part of his discussion of the peculiarity of our knowledge of other minds.

After discussing the above three worries, Austin claims that there is a further feature of other minds that radically distinguishes how we know other minds from how we know ordinary material objects.

> The goldfinch, the material object, is, as we insisted above, uninscribed and *mute*: but the man *speaks*. In the complex of occurrences which induces us to say we know another man is angry, the complex of symptoms, occasion, display, and the rest, a peculiar place is occupied by the man's own statement as to what his feelings are. In the usual case we accept this statement without question, and we then say that we know (as it were 'at second-hand') what his feelings are: though of course 'at second-hand' here could not be used to imply that anyone but he could know 'at first-hand', and hence perhaps it is not in fact used. In unusual cases, where his statement conflicts with the description we should otherwise have been inclined to give of the case, we do not feel bound to accept it, though we always feel some uneasiness in rejecting it. (1979: 113–14)

Austin is not claiming, like Descartes, that other minds are to be distinguished from ordinary material objects due to their capacity to employ language. Rather, he is

claiming that our knowledge of other minds is peculiarly dependent on what the other tells us about her own psychological states and that this (often) makes our cognitive relation to other minds significantly different from our cognitive relation to ordinary material objects. Austin's concern with a person's own statements about her psychological states is a concern with what nowadays are typically termed *avowals*, psychological state self-ascriptions that exhibit first-person authority. Like Wittgenstein, Austin seems to hold that avowals are to be classed among the natural expressions of a person's psychological states. Austin never explicitly says this, but he does say that a person's own statement about her psychological state 'is not (is not treated primarily as) a sign or symptom, although it can secondarily and artificially be treated as such' (1979: 114). At the very least, Austin holds that avowals are *like* natural expressions of a psychological state in that they are not something from which an audience is in the position of having to make an inference to the conclusion that the speaker is experiencing the psychological state she avows. Unlike Wittgenstein, however, Austin is particularly impressed by the fact that some avowals amount to tellings, to testimony.[22] Among the intentions with which a particular psychological state can be expressed are the kinds of *communicative intentions* paradigmatically involved when a speaker tells an audience that *p*. In this sense, when a person comes out and tells me that she is afraid, not only does her assertion amount to an expression of her fear, it also amounts to testimony. Certainly not all avowals amount to testimony. If a person avows her fear in private simply as a way of venting it, then her expression is not addressed to anyone and does not amount to an instance of testimony. Nevertheless, many avowals are so addressed and do amount to genuine tellings. Let's call such avowals *testimonial avowals*.

An audience's cognitive relation to the psychological states expressed in testimonial avowals appears to be different in kind from an audience's cognitive relation to the psychological states expressed in non-testimonial expressions. When a speaker comes out and tells an audience that she is afraid, it is plausible to think that she is doing something more than simply behaving expressively in front of the audience. There must be some reason why she chooses to express her fear in this particular testimonial way, especially given the fact that the audience could easily come to know that she is afraid simply by observing her non-testimonial expressions of fear. We can imagine a case in which it is clear to everyone concerned that the speaker is visibly afraid. She may be shaking, trembling, etc., and yet we can still imagine her choosing, on top of all this, to tell her audience that she is afraid. It thus seems that the point of a speaker's coming out and telling an audience her mind isn't exhausted by making her psychological states observable to the audience. In telling an audience that she is afraid, as in cases of testimony generally, the speaker is calling for the audience to believe her, to believe her that she is afraid. The point of a speaker's telling an audience her mind is that it draws

[22] There are points at which Wittgenstein recognizes that avowals can amount to testimony. See, for example, Wittgenstein 1997: §174.

into play the interpersonal relations of epistemic authority and responsibility involved in the practice of giving and taking testimony.

If this is right, then there are actually three different cognitive relations that we can bear to the psychological states of others.

(1) We can infer the psychological states of others based on (what we treat as) signs or symptoms of those states.[23]
(2) When the psychological states of others are fully exhibited in their behaviour, we can observe their states in their overt expressions of those states.
(3) When the person comes out and tells us her psychological state, we can believe her, accept her testimony.

We commonly adopt all three of these cognitive relations at different points in our ordinary commerce with others; all three are elements of our ordinary epistemic practice with respect to other minds. Nevertheless, Austin is particularly interested in (3). (3) is distinguished from (1) and (2) due to the fact that the nature of the cognitive relation involved in (3) is essentially interpersonal. While the cognitive relations characteristic of (1) and (2) are both genuine ways in which we sometimes come to know the minds of others, the cognitive relation characteristic of (3) is one that puts us essentially in commune with others. (3) draws into play interpersonal relations of authority and responsibility that are absent in the case of (1) and (2), and thus it essentially depends on a particular kind of minded interaction between persons. We might say that (3) involves taking up a *second-personal* cognitive relation to others, one predicated on the other's being in the authoritative position to address claims to us, while (1) and (2) involve taking up a *third-personal* cognitive relation to others.[24] I think it is the second-personal nature of (3) that Austin finds so significant. Austin thinks that there is an important sense in which the problem of other minds is a problem of the second rather than the third-person.

7. Believing a person and the problem of other minds

What impresses Austin about the case of a person's testimony about her own psychological states is that this is a case in which knowing the person's psychological state involves believing her. As I noted at the beginning of this paper, Austin begins the conclusion of 'Other Minds' by saying that he thinks this issue of 'believing what the man says about his own feelings' is 'fundamental to the whole Predicament'

[23] Austin sometimes talks as if we can only bear this cognitive relation to signs or symptoms of hidden or suppressed psychological states, but I think his more considered view is that we can often adopt this kind of attitude towards the psychological states of others, though this may be to treat expressions as we would normally treat mere signs or symptoms.

[24] For a recent articulation of the difference between second-personal and third-personal relations to others, though one largely confined to practical relations, see Darwall 2006.

(1979: 114). So how does this issue of believing a person connect to the problem of other minds more generally?

Since believing a person involves entering into a relationship with the person in which we put ourselves in her hands and give up partial responsibility for our knowledge, this clearly makes us dependent on the will of the other in a way that necessarily courts certain kinds of particularly bruising dangers not typically associated with our knowledge of ordinary material objects. Not only does it introduce additional ways in which what we take ourselves to learn may be mistaken, but it also makes room for that particular kind of deliberate abuse that we can only suffer at the hands of another person. Other minds are in a position to call for us to believe them, to draw into play the interpersonal relations of authority and responsibility in virtue of which testimonial knowledge is justified, and then to abuse these relations by failing to live up to them. This kind of second-personal abuse is very different from our making a mistake about the behaviour or characteristics of an ordinary material object, and it is a kind of abuse that has a peculiar kind of significance for us. Other minds are particularly worrying not only because knowing the minds of others often requires understanding their intentions but also because the intentional nature of the actions and expressions of others puts them in a position to be second-personally abusive.

This might very well lead one to question whether believing others can amount to a genuine way of knowing. How can subjecting oneself to the will of another and thereby giving over to the other partial responsibility for one's own belief ever amount to a way of knowing about the world around us? As Austin puts it, the question here is 'Why believe someone?' (1979: 114). What justification is there for taking up the particular cognitive relation to the minds of others characteristic of our ordinary practice of believing others? He writes,

> There are answers that we can give to this question, which is here to be taken in the general sense of 'Why believe him ever?' not simply as 'Why believe him this time?' We may say that the man's statements on matters other than his own feelings have constantly been before us in the past, and have been regularly verified by our observations of the facts he reported: so that we have in fact some basis for an induction about his general reliability. Or we may say that his behaviour is most simply 'explained' on the view that he does feel emotions like ours, just as psycho-analysts 'explain' erratic behaviour by analogy with normal behaviour when they use the terminology of 'unconscious desires'.
>
> These answers are, however, dangerous and unhelpful. They are so obvious that they please nobody: while on the other hand they encourage the questioner to push his question to 'profounder' depths, encouraging us, in turn, to exaggerate these answers until they become distortions.
>
> The question, pushed further, becomes a challenge to the very possibility of 'believing another man', in its ordinarily accepted sense, at all. What 'justification' is there for supposing that there is another mind communicating with you at all? How can you know what it would be like for another man to feel anything, and so how can you understand it? It is then that we are tempted to say that we only mean by 'believing him' that we take certain vocal noises as signs for certain

impending behaviour, and that 'other minds' are no more really real than unconscious desires. (1979: 114–15)

Austin here considers two possible reasons for believing a person in general, first, that we have good inductive evidence of her general reliability, and second, that her behaviour is best explained by supposing that the person is experiencing the state she avows. Austin claims that these answers are, in a sense, obvious but at the same time dangerous and unhelpful. They are obvious in that we *can* appeal to such things as reasons for believing people. If we are asked why we believe a particular person's avowals, we might state that we know the person to be generally reliable or that it simply wouldn't make sense for her to be dissembling. However, these answers can be dangerous as well. If we are worried about the particular dangers associated with believing others generally, then these answers would alleviate this worry only if they were appealed to as inferential reasons for believing that a person is in the particular state that she avows. This, however, actually eliminates the phenomenon we were seeking to justify.

It will pay to go slowly here. If a person tells me that she is afraid, then I may very well appeal to considerations concerning such things as her general reliability in deciding whether to believe her. Believing a person is a cognitive attitude we adopt on the basis of reasons. However, this kind of rational appeal to considerations of reliability will not yet alleviate any worries about the peculiar dangers associated with believing others generally. These worries are associated with the cognitive attitude itself, with the way in which the cognitive attitude of believing a person involves putting ourselves in her hands and giving up partial responsibility for what we believe. Basing the cognitive attitude on reasons concerning reliability is not yet to eliminate these features of the attitude. This, I think, is why Austin states that the question is 'Why believe him ever?' not simply 'Why believe him this time?' If general considerations about reliability are appealed to as considerations on the basis of which we decide to believe a person on a particular occasion, then they will not alleviate the worries about believing others generally that were the original motivation for the question. In this sense, these answers must be pushed further. These considerations about reliability, or about what best explains a person's action, must be appealed to as considerations on the basis of which we decide whether to believe others generally.

For Austin, to take considerations of a person's reliability to be considerations on the basis of which we decide whether to believe others generally is, I think, to take such considerations to be an inferential basis upon which we believe what the person says on any occasion on which we do believe what the person says. If the person tells me that she is afraid, on any particular occasion, then my believing that she is afraid is justified by an inferential appeal to general considerations about her reliability. This is to construe belief based on testimonial avowals as belief justified by the strength of an inference from considerations about the person's reliability, or from what best explains the person's action, to the conclusion that what the person avows is true.

This amounts to an application of one of the dominant contemporary views about the epistemology of testimony to the particular case of testimonial avowals. Reductionism about testimony is the view that the epistemic credentials of knowledge and belief based on testimony can be reduced to the epistemic credentials of other sources of knowledge and belief, typically to those of perception, memory, and inference.[25] Reductionists about testimony are also committed to the more specific claim that the justification of testimonial knowledge consists in the strength of an inference from the speaker's saying that *p*, through independently available considerations of such things as the speaker's reliability, competence, and sincerity, to the conclusion that *p*. Details aside, the upshot of such an account is that testimonial knowledge is simply a species of inferential knowledge. Austin can be read as here envisioning a kind of reductionism about testimony applied to the specific case of testimonial avowals. On such an account, an audience's knowledge that a speaker is experiencing the particular psychological state she avows is simply a species of knowledge based on either inductive or abductive inference.

Pushed to this point, the two answers that Austin considers *do* begin to answer to the worries about believing others that motivated the initial question. If our knowledge of the psychological states of another based on her testimonial avowals is simply a species of knowledge based on inference, then such knowledge doesn't necessarily incur any particularly noteworthy kinds of risk. Of course, any knowledge based on broadly inductive inference is liable to be mistaken, and due to the frequency of experienced instances of incompetence and insincerity, it may be the case that what others say is a particularly flimsy inferential basis upon which to draw conclusions. But none of this supports the idea that there is anything particularly problematic about our knowledge of other minds as such. If our knowledge of other minds based on their testimonial avowals is simply a species of non-deductive inferential knowledge, then it should be just as problematic (or unproblematic) as non-deductive inferential knowledge generally.

In meeting our initial worry about the dangers associated with believing others, however, reductionism about testimonial avowals actually eliminates the phenomenon it was seeking to justify. Austin claims that construing the epistemic credentials of an audience's knowledge based on testimonial avowals in terms of the strength of an inference is a distortion of our ordinary epistemic practice. This particular distortion is, as he puts it, a challenge to the very possibility of 'believing another man' in its ordinarily accepted sense.[26] Reductionism about testimonial avowals distorts our

[25] Reductionists about testimony include Fricker 1987, 1994, and 1995, and Lyons 1997. Anti-reductionists about testimony hold that the epistemic credentials of knowledge and belief based on testimony *cannot* be reduced to the credentials of other sources of knowledge and hence that testimony is a 'basic', 'autonomous', or *sui generis* source of knowledge. Anti-reductionists include Coady 1992, Burge 1993, and McDowell 1998.

[26] I am here taking Austin's concern with 'believing what the man says about his own feelings' to be a concern with *believing someone that p*. Given what I have said about believing a person that *p*, the way in which Austin frames this issue in the conclusion of 'Other Minds' is somewhat sloppy. Though he sometimes simply speaks of what is involved in 'believing what the man says', I think that, given what he goes on to say about

ordinary epistemic practice by taking our believing a speaker's avowal to be justified by the strength an inference from the avowal, through independently available considerations concerning such things as our past experience with her general reliability, to the conclusion that the speaker is actually in the state she avows. But if the justification of the audience's knowledge of the speaker's psychological state is constituted by the strength of an inference, then the audience must be in the position of coming to its own conclusion about what the speaker avows. Inferring that *p* from a body of inductive evidence involves a subject's coming to her own conclusion about *p*, and hence the subject is completely epistemically responsible for the credentials of the conclusions that she draws from within her own epistemic position.[27] In this sense, reductionism about testimonial avowals eliminates the interpersonal relations of authority and responsibility that Austin has claimed characterize our ordinary practice of believing others. Reductionism about testimonial avowals renders our knowledge of other minds less worrisome only at the price of eliminating our ordinary practice of believing others.

Austin is quite clear that we often do not treat the testimonial avowals of others as signs or symptoms from which we can only draw inferences. Crucially, however, merely treating testimonial avowals as genuine expressions of a person's psychological states that allow an audience to directly observe the states expressed in the avowal is not any help here. If testimonial avowals allow us to simply observe the psychological states of others, then our knowledge of other minds based on such observation should be just as problematic (or unproblematic) as any other knowledge based on observation. It may be the case that the observation of the psychological states of others is often more difficult than the observation of the behaviour and characteristics of ordinary material objects, particularly due to the way in which many expressions of psychological states are intentional, but it shouldn't be the case that there are any worries about our knowledge of other minds that are different in kind from those associated with observational knowledge generally. Again, just as perceiving that there is a goldfinch in the garden involves coming to one's own conclusion about the presence of the bird,

this, his real concern is best understood as a concern with believing a person that *p*. Austin often does speak in this way. He says the question is 'Why believe him?', in the sense of 'Why believe him ever?', where this can lead us to question the very possibility of 'believing another man' in its ordinarily accepted sense. He goes on to say, 'It seems, rather, that believing in other persons, in authority and testimony, is an essential part of the act of communicating, an act which we all perform.' This is also unfortunate. Speaking of 'believing in other persons' can lead one to think that Austin is making a claim about believing *in the existence* of other persons. Austin is sometimes read in this way. But again, I think his real concern is with believing a person that *p*. Note that he also speaks of believing 'in authority and testimony'. It seems quite implausible that this could be a claim about believing *in the existence* of authority and testimony. It is much more plausible to think that his concern with 'believing in other persons, in authority and testimony' is a concern with believing others, believing authorities, and believing their testimony.

[27] A speaker may very well be responsible for putting an audience in a position to draw for itself certain conclusions, but I don't take this to be a genuinely epistemic responsibility. The speaker may be held to account for this morally or socially, but she cannot be held epistemically responsible for the credentials of the conclusions that the audience draws for itself.

observing the psychological states of others in their expressions of those states involves coming to one's own conclusion about the nature of their states. In this sense, I think that Austin would take such a construal of our knowledge of other minds to be just as eliminative of our ordinary practice of believing others as the reductionist account discussed above. If we are always only in the position of simply observing the psychological states expressed in another's avowals, then this too leaves no room for the interpersonal relations of authority and responsibility characteristic of our ordinary practice of believing others.

By now one might be thinking that this is just so much the worse for our ordinary practice of believing others. If construing our knowledge of other minds as either inferential or perceptual avoids the peculiar worries we have about the ordinary practice of believing others, then perhaps this is good reason to think that this practice, or at least our essentially interpersonal account of it, is mistaken. Perhaps we should simply rest content with the possibility of inferential and/or observational knowledge of other minds. Austin seems to think that resting content here is not a viable option. To do so would leave us in a position where, granted, we are perfectly able to acquire knowledge of the psychological states of others but where, nevertheless, we are not cognitively in commune with them. It would leave us in a position where we are able to cognitively relate to others third-personally but not second-personally. In this sense, we would still be left with something that Austin thinks deserves to be called a problem of other minds.

Austin is unwilling to rest content with the possibility of inferential and/or observational knowledge of other minds. This doesn't mean that he offers another way to avoid the kinds of worries about believing others that can drive one to those accounts. Rather, he seems to think that we must simply learn to get over these worries, to give up looking for a justification for believing people in general. Since believing a person involves entering into a relationship with the person in which we put ourselves in her hands and give up partial responsibility for our knowledge, this makes us dependent on the will of the other in a way that necessarily courts certain kinds of particularly bruising dangers not typically associated with our knowledge of ordinary material objects. We can try to eliminate these risks from our cognitive lives by construing our cognitive relation to the psychological states of others in such a way as to make ourselves completely responsible for the epistemic credentials of any knowledge gained thereby. In this sense, we might construe our cognitive relation to other minds as inferential or simply perceptual. However, this would be to distort our ordinary epistemic practice. Our knowledge of the psychological states of others is often based on believing the person, and it is often important to us that this is so. The kind of second-personal cognitive relation to other minds involved in believing a person is in this sense non-optional. We couldn't simply give this up and still be the kind of minded creatures that we are. Knowledge based on believing others is a fundamental and irreducible feature of our lives as social beings.

8. Conclusion

Austin's 'Other Minds' was originally delivered to a symposium of the same title at a joint session of The Aristotelian Society and The Mind Association. John Wisdom's contribution to the symposium concludes with a long quotation from Virginia Woolf describing the loneliness characteristic of a life lived through letters, telephones, and conversations.

> Let us consider letters—how they come at breakfast, and at night, with their yellow stamps and their green stamps, immortalized by the postmark—for to see one's own letter on another's table is to realize how soon deeds sever and become alien. Then at last the power of the mind to quit the body is manifest, and perhaps we fear or hate or wish annihilated this phantom of ourselves, lying on the table. Still, there are letters that merely say how dinner's at seven; others ordering coal; making appointments. The hand in them is scarcely perceptible, let alone the voice or the scowl. Ah, but when the post knocks and the letter comes always the miracle seems repeated—speech attempted. Venerable are letters, infinitely brave, forlorn, and lost.
>
> Life would split asunder without them. 'Come to tea, come to dinner, what's the truth of the story? have you heard the news? life in the capital is gay; the Russian dancers . . . .' These are our stays and props. These lace our days together and make of life a perfect globe. And yet, and yet . . . when we go to dinner, when pressing finger-tips we hope to meet somewhere soon, a doubt insinuates itself; is this the way to spend our days? the rare, the limited, so soon dealt out to us—drinking tea? dining out? And the notes accumulate. And the telephones ring. And everywhere we go wires and tubes surround us to carry the voices that try to penetrate before the last card is dealt and the days are over. 'Try to penetrate,' for as we lift the cup, shake the hand, express the hope, something whispers, Is this all? Can I never know, share, be certain? Am I doomed all my days to write letters, send voices, which fall upon the tea-table, fade upon the passage, make appointments, while life dwindles, to come and dine? Yet letters are venerable; and the telephone valiant, for the journey is a lonely one, and if bound together by notes and telephones we went in company, perhaps—who knows?—we might talk by the way. (1922: 92–3)[28]

Wisdom ends his paper by asking,

> This isolation which we may defeat but cannot vanquish, does it find voice in the old puzzle as to whether we really know what is in the minds of others? Does the contradiction in the philosopher's request for perfect knowledge of others reflect a conflict in the human heart which dreads and yet demands the otherness of others? (1952: 229)

I think Austin's answer to these questions is clearly 'Yes', and as un-Austinian as it may sound, these questions about loneliness and isolation are precisely what drives Austin's discussion in 'Other Minds'. Austin thinks that the way in which we know the minds of others is often a way of knowing that is necessarily dependent on the otherness of the other. Insofar as knowing the psychological states of others often involves believing the person, such knowledge is necessarily dependent on the will of the other. And yet

[28] I have here cited a bit more of the passage than does Wisdom 1952.

the philosophical problem of other minds can be motivated by an unwillingness to countenance such dependence on others as a genuine way of knowing. About the three worries that arise from the way in which many expressions of psychological states are intentional, Austin states, 'Any or all of them may be at the bottom of the passage from Mrs. Woolf: all work together in the feeling of loneliness which affects everybody at times' (1979: 112). As I have tried to show here, Austin's ultimate concern is with how the problem of other minds is a kind of expression of such loneliness. The problem of other minds is to a significant extent motivated by ordinary human worries about believing others, worries concerning the ways in which the interpersonal relations involved in believing others can break down and concerning the peculiar kind of significance that such breakdown has for us.[29]

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