

Testimonial Desire

Allan Hazlett

Can desires be transmitted through testimony, in the way that beliefs can be transmitted through testimony? Can there be testimonial desire, in the way that there can be testimonial belief? And, if not, why not? These questions are suggested by two observations. First, belief and desire are our most familiar examples of both propositional attitudes and intentional states.¹ They together play essential and complementary roles in the belief-desire model of intentional action, the Humean theory of motivation, and interpretationist theories of intentionality. In philosophical psychology, belief and desire seem to come together as a package deal. Second, human belief (like many human things) is highly social. We form our beliefs in both a physical and a social environment, what we believe is affected in various ways by what other people believe, and we depend on others in various ways when we form and sustain our beliefs. Given these two observations, a natural general question is whether human desire is also highly social, and, if it is, how, and why, and in what ways is it? My question in this paper – can desires be transmitted through testimony, in the way that beliefs can be transmitted through testimony? – is a specific instance of this general question.

Some philosophers assume that non-cognitive attitudes – those sometimes described as “desire-like” – cannot be transmitted through testimony.² Indeed, you might think that testimony is essentially a means of transmitting belief (or propositional knowledge), as some philosophers suggest.³ This would preclude the possibility of testimonial desire.⁴ However, nothing has been said in defense of these claims. Here, we will investigate whether they are true.

Moreover, supposing that testimony is essentially a means of transmitting belief, is this a conceptual truth or a substantive fact? On the one hand, if it is a conceptual truth, then it seems like we have ruled out testimonial desire by stipulation, and there remains a substantive question: can desires be transmitted through some practice similar to testimony in every respect apart from that it is a means of transmitting desire? The answer to this question is hardly obvious. On the other hand, if it is a substantive claim, then we both need to determine whether it really is true – its answer is hardly obvious – and would like to know, if it is true, what explains its truth. Why is testimony essentially a means of transmitting belief?

I will argue that desires cannot be transmitted through testimony, in the way that beliefs can be transmitted through testimony. More precisely, I will argue that there is a way in which beliefs can be transmitted that has no analogue when it comes to desire: it is possible to believe something on trust, but there is no such thing as desire on trust. And I will propose an explanation of why this is so. If this

¹ I assume that desire is a propositional attitude. However, if some desires are not propositional attitudes, consider the present discussion as a discussion of propositional desire only. There is clearly such a thing as propositional desire, e.g. desiring that the Celtics win the NBA Championship.

² McGrath 2009, pp. 321-2, 2011, pp. 116-7, 2019, p. 79, Enoch 2014, pp. 253-8, Fletcher 2016, Callahan 2017.

³ Hills 2006, p. 670-1, Zagzebski 2008, p. 145, 2012, p. 174, Wiland 2021, p. 116.

⁴ I assume that there can be testimonial *F* only if *F*s can be transmitted through testimony. However, note that a belief might be testimonial even if it was not transmitted through testimony, e.g. if the speaker was lying. What I assume is that the possibility of testimonial *F* depends on the possibility of transmitting *F*s through testimony.

explanation is right, what I say here about desire can be said, *mutatis mutandis*, about non-doxastic attitudes in general, such as fear, admiration, and anger.

Here is the plan. I'll begin by narrowing our focus: our concern will not be with testimonial desire, *per se*, but with desire on trust (§1), which is at least a species of testimonial desire. Then, I'll articulate two necessary conditions on having an attitude on trust: having an attitude on trust requires that said attitude be constituted by your trusting someone (§2) and that they be accountable to you for the fittingness of said attitude (§3). After that, I'll consider some species of desire transmission that do not involve desire on trust (§4) and a species of desire transmission that involves desires that meet the accountability condition but not the trust-constitution condition (§5). Then, I'll show that it is difficult to find a speech act that invites desire on trust, which suggests that there is no such speech act (§6) and propose an explanation of why there is no such thing as desire on trust: in the case of desire, meeting the accountability condition on having an attitude on trust requires not meeting the trust-constitution condition on having an attitude on trust (§7). Finally, I'll conclude the discussion and suggest that only beliefs can be had on trust (§8).

1 From testimonial belief to belief on trust

We began with the question of whether desires can be transmitted through testimony, in the way that beliefs can be transmitted through testimony. What do we mean when we say that something is “transmitted through testimony”? In the epistemology of testimony, philosophers have defended wildly dissimilar accounts of testimony, ranging from the view that testimony is merely a special case of inference to the best explanation to the view that testimony involves a *sui generis* acceptance of a speaker's assurance.⁵ Rather than enter into those debates, we can specify a species of belief transmission and ask whether it has any analogue when it comes to desire.

We are roommates, I am at home, and you text me to ask whether there is any horseradish in the fridge. I check, see that there is, tell you that there is horseradish in the fridge, and you believe me. Your belief, in this case, is an instance of *belief on trust*. I transmitted my belief that there is horseradish in the fridge to you, in such a way that you came to have a belief on trust that there is horseradish in the fridge.

What do I mean when I say that your belief, in this case, is a “belief on trust”? The aim of this and the following two sections is to explain the concept of belief on trust and motivate the assumption that there is such a thing as belief on trust – that beliefs can be transmitted from one person to another in such a way that the latter's belief is a belief on trust. On this basis, we will be able to generalize and characterize having an attitude on trust.

The concept of belief on trust is posterior to the concepts of *telling* and *believing someone*. In a case of belief on trust, in the present sense, one person tells another that *p*, the hearer believes the speaker, and thereby believes that *p*. Alternatively, we could say that the hearer takes the speaker's word that *p* or

⁵ See, respectively, Lipton 1998 and Ross 1986. Consider also the fact that “testimony” is plausibly polysemous (Graham 2021, 2022).

believes that *p* on their say-so or on their authority.⁶ Note that, in the present sense of “belief on trust,” belief on trust entails a corresponding telling: you cannot believe that *p* on trust unless someone tells you that *p*. I leave open whether trust, in general, entails a corresponding speech act, and, indeed, whether in a broader sense a belief might be had “on trust” without a corresponding telling.

Note well that, when someone tells you something and you have a belief on trust, you believe *them*.⁷ It will not do to merely say that you believe that *p* because they told you that *p*. Consider a savvy detective who infers that a hoodlum is telling the truth in an attempted double-bluff. The notoriously dishonest hoodlum tells the detective the loot is stashed at the boathouse, hoping to avoid a search of the boathouse, where the loot is stashed. The detective sees through the hoodlum’s ruse, and concludes that the loot is stashed at the boathouse. That’s not a belief on trust. The hoodlum tells the detective that the loot is stashed at the boathouse, and the detective believes that the loot is stashed at the boathouse because the hoodlum told them that, but the detective does not believe the hoodlum. They merely believe what the hoodlum told them.

I do not assume that a belief is testimonial only if it is a belief on trust. It would be a mistake, in the present context, to make any stipulation or assumption about the nature of testimony. There may be things sensibly called “testimony” that do not involve belief on trust. And belief on trust may be a relatively rare thing, by contrast with other species of belief based on or caused by what other people say. What I am going to assume is that there is such a thing as belief on trust – that people do sometimes believe things on trust.

2 Trust-constitution

Recall that, in a case of belief on trust, one person tells another that *p*, the hearer believes the speaker, *and thereby believes that p* (§1). You believe that *p* on trust only if there is someone such that your believing them constitutes your believing that *p*. I want to generalize from this condition on belief on trust and articulate a corresponding condition on having an attitude on trust.

Recall your belief that there is horseradish in the fridge (§1). Your believing me – your taking my word – constitutes your believing that there is horseradish in the fridge. You did not, as it were, first believe me, and only later, separately, come to believe that there is horseradish in the fridge. You believed me, and thereby believed that there is horseradish in the fridge. By contrast, if I tell you that Jones owns a Ford, and you infer from this that Jones is a farmer, on the premise that anyone who owns a Ford is a farmer, your believing me does not constitute your believing that Jones is a farmer. You believed me that Jones owns a Ford – so, there is a belief on trust in this case – but not that Jones is a farmer. You inferred that Jones is a farmer from the premise that Jones owns a Ford. Only your belief that Jones owns a Ford is constituted by your believing me. For this reason, your belief that Jones is a farmer is not a belief on trust.

⁶ Must speaker and hearer be distinct? We need not assume so, although in this paper I will often describe belief on trust as something that involves one person and “another” person.

⁷ Cf. Anscombe 1979.

Note that, even if I also believe that Jones is a farmer, your belief that Jones is a farmer is not a belief on trust. In that case, I transmitted my belief that Jones is a farmer to you, but not in such a way that your belief that Jones is a farmer is a belief on trust. Moreover, whether or not I believe that Jones is a farmer, if I tell you that Jones owns a Ford with the intention of causing you to infer that Jones is a farmer, your belief that Jones is a farmer is not a belief on trust. A belief on trust must be constituted by the believer believing someone; what is believed cannot merely be inferred from something believed on trust.⁸

None of this implies that a belief on trust must be non-inferential. If you think that believing someone amounts to inferring that what they've told you is true, that is fine. If you think that beliefs on trust epistemically and causally depend on other beliefs we have – beliefs about the speaker's reliability, beliefs about the speaker's sincerity, general beliefs about human behavior, beliefs relevant to the plausibility of what the speaker said – that is also fine. The present claim is compatible with a “reductionist” conception of belief on trust.⁹

You believe that p on trust only if there is someone such that your believing them constitutes your believing that p . I think we can generalize from the case of belief to a condition on having an attitude on trust. My leading idea is that believing someone is a species of trust: to believe someone is to trust them in a certain way. This is why the name “belief on trust” is apt for the species of belief we have been discussing. With this in mind, I propose the following condition on having an attitude on trust:

Trust-constitution: You ϕ on trust only if there is someone such that your trusting them constitutes your ϕ ing.

Thus, you desire that p on trust only if there is someone such that your trusting them constitutes your desiring that p . If desire on trust is possible, it will have to involve this kind of constitution of desire by trust.

3 Accountability

When one person tells another that p and the latter believes the former, the speaker is accountable to the hearer for the truth of the proposition that p . This is a familiar theme in the philosophy of assertion and the epistemology of testimony.¹⁰ You believe that p on trust only if there is someone who is accountable to you for the truth of the proposition that p . As with the fact that beliefs on trust are constituted by believing someone (§2), I want to generalize from this condition on belief on trust and articulate a corresponding condition on having an attitude on trust.

What does it mean for one person to be accountable to another for the truth of a proposition? Accountability, in the present sense, is characterized by two entitlements on the part of the hearer. First,

⁸ I assume nothing here about whether implicatures can be believed on trust. If I say, in response to the question of whether Smith has been dating anyone, that he has been visiting New York every weekend, might you believe on trust that Smith is dating someone who lives in New York? On my account, this depends crucially on whether I told you that Smith is dating someone who lives in New York. I want to leave open that possibility (cf. Saul 2012).

⁹ Cf. Fricker 2006.

¹⁰ Cf. Ross 1986, Brandom 1983, 1994, Chapter 3, Moran 2005, Moran 2018, Goldberg 2006, 2011a, 2011b, 2015, McMyler 2011, Faulkner 2011, Chapter 6, Zagzebski 2012, Chapter 6; cf. Fricker 2006, p. 594.

if you believe something on trust, you are entitled to blame or otherwise hold the speaker accountable if it turns out that your belief is false, i.e. if it turns out that what the speaker told you is false. Second, if you believe something on trust, you are entitled to refer challenges to your belief – in the form of questions like “how do you know?” or “what’s the evidence for that?” – back to the speaker, who has a prima facie obligation to respond.

Recall your belief that there is horseradish in the fridge (§1). In this case, I am accountable to you for the truth of the proposition that there is horseradish in the fridge. First, if it turned out that there is no horseradish in the fridge, you would be entitled to blame or criticize me for misleading you. Second, if someone asked you how you knew that there was horseradish in the fridge, you would be entitled to tell them that I was your source and “pass the buck” to me.¹¹

Why does belief on trust involve accountability in this way? On the account I favor, telling is an offer of accountability: when you tell someone that *p*, you offer to be accountable to them for the truth of the proposition that *p*.^{12,13} Telling and promising, on this view, are species of a genus: when you tell someone that *p*, you offer to be accountable to them for the truth of the proposition that *p*, just as, when you promise someone to ϕ , you offer to be accountable to them for your ϕ ing.¹⁴ Indeed, we might say that promising is a genus that admits of two species: practical promising (promising to ϕ) and theoretical promising (promising that *p*).¹⁵

It is clear that, when you tell someone something, you at least represent yourself as believing it. (Plausibly, you also represent yourself as knowing or being justified in believing it.) However, you can represent yourself as believing that *p* without telling anyone that *p*, because you can represent yourself as believing that *p* without offering to be accountable for the truth of the proposition that *p*. First, consider hedged assertions.¹⁶ If an annoying-looking traveler asks you whether the approaching train goes to Chicago, you might say, not wanting to be accountable to the traveler, “I believe it is.” You represent yourself as believing that the train goes to Chicago, but do not invite the traveler to trust you that the train goes to Chicago.¹⁷ Your expectation is not that they will take your word and believe you, but rather that

¹¹ Cf. Goldberg, *op. cit.*

¹² Cf. Ross 1986, Harman 1986, pp. 50-1, Williamson 2001, p. 268, Watson 2004, Hinchman 2005, Moran 2005, Fricker 2005, 2006, Zagzebski 2012, Chapter 6, Hawley 2014; see also Austin 1946/1979, pp. 97-103 (on claiming knowledge), Owens 2006, p. 61n (on guaranteeing), Lawlor 2013, Chapter 1 (on assuring).

¹³ It seems clear, although we need not assume this, that telling is a two-place relation: in every instance of telling, there is a speaker who tells and a hearer who is told. You cannot tell that *p* without telling someone that *p*. By contrast, assertion is not a two-place relation. You can assert that *p* without asserting to anyone that *p*, as in soliloquy or a diary entry.

¹⁴ Cf. Austin 1946/1979, p. 99, Harman 1986, pp. 50-1, Watson 2004.

¹⁵ Alternatively, we might say that when you tell someone that *p*, you implicitly promise to be truthful about whether *p*, such that their positive response can be broken down into two parts: (i) their acceptance of your promise, which amounts to trusting you to be truthful about whether *p*, and (ii) their consequently believing that *p* (Holton 1994, pp. 73-6).

¹⁶ Cf. Benton and van Elswick 2018, van Elswick 2022; see also Austin 1946/1979, pp. 77-8, Zagzebski 2012, p. 121.

¹⁷ Notice that this is not a case of “weak belief.” (Hawthorne et al. 2016) You might believe full well and even know that the train goes to Chicago, but nevertheless not want to be accountable to the traveler.

they will check on the train's destination for themselves. You might even explicitly disavow any offer of accountability by saying, "but don't take my word for it" or "but you'd better check with the conductor."¹⁸ Second, consider expressive assertions.¹⁹ Hiking with a friend, you might see a magnificent tree, which your friend can see perfectly well, and exclaim, "That is a magnificent tree!" You represent yourself as believing that the tree is magnificent, but do not invite your friend to trust you that the tree is magnificent. Your expectation is not that they will take your word and believe you, but rather that they will appreciate the tree's magnificence for themselves. Third, consider asserted conclusions of arguments. In an op-ed, having enumerated the pros and cons of establishing a no-fly zone in Syria and having argued that the cons outweigh the pros, you might conclude, "Therefore, a no-fly zone ought not be established." You represent yourself as believing that a no-fly zone ought not be established, but do not invite your reader to trust you that a no-fly zone ought not be established. Your expectation is not that they will be take your word and believe you, but rather that they will consider your argument and (perhaps) believe its conclusion on the basis of the reasons you adduced.

You believe that p on trust only if there is someone who is accountable to you for the truth of the proposition that p. Again, I think we can generalize from the case of belief to a condition on having an attitude on trust. Note the following conceptual truth: a belief that p is fitting if and only if it is true that p.²⁰ For this reason, to say that someone is accountable to you for the truth of a proposition you believe seems no different from saying that they are accountable to you for the fittingness of believing it. With this in mind, I propose the following condition on having an attitude on trust:

Accountability: You ϕ on trust only if there is someone who is accountable to you for the fittingness of ϕ ing.

I am going to assume that a desire that p is fitting if and only if it is desirable that p.²¹ Thus, the accountability condition tells us that you desire that p on trust only if there is someone who is accountable to you for the fittingness of desiring that p, i.e. someone who is accountable to you for the desirability of the proposition that p. In other words, you desire something on trust only if there is someone who is accountable to you for its desirability. If desire on trust is possible, it will have to involve this kind of accountability for the fittingness of a desire.

We are not accustomed to speaking of *propositions* as desirable. We are misled here by the fact that a desirable thing is something desirable to have or hold or eat or otherwise "get."²² You cannot get a proposition. All I mean, when I speak of a desirable proposition, is a proposition such that it is desirable that it be true. The proposition that p is desirable, in the present sense, if and only if it is desirable that p. Keep this in mind, in what follows, when I speak of the desirability of propositions.

¹⁸ Cf. Harman 1986, p. 50, Watson 2004, p. 65; see also Wiland 2021, p. 155.

¹⁹ Cf. Audi 1997, p. 405.

²⁰ All I mean is that there is a concept of fittingness on which this is a conceptual truth. There are, I concede, other useful ways of using the word "fitting."

²¹ We'll revisit this assumption, below (§8). Representative defenses include Oddie 2005, Tenenbaum 2007, and Hazlett 2022.

²² Cf. Anscombe 1963, §36.

4 Desire transmission without trust

The trust-constitution (§2) and accountability (§3) conditions on having an attitude on trust now set our agenda going forward. We are in search of a case in which one person transmits their desire for something to another such that (i) the latter's trusting the former constitutes their desiring it and (ii) the former is accountable to the latter for its desirability. There are several species of desire transmission where the resulting desires satisfy neither the trust-constitution nor the accountability condition. Since beliefs can also be transmitted in these ways, we should concede that belief and desire are, in these respects, on a par when it comes to transmission.

First, we sometimes come to believe something that someone else believes, on the basis of the fact that they believe it, on the premise that what they believe is true, without their saying anything. Arriving at an unfamiliar airport with no knowledge of the local language, you might come to believe that the exit is down the stairs, given that the locals arriving home all evidently believe that the exit is down the stairs, because they are going down the stairs. In the same way, we sometimes come to desire something that someone else desires, on the basis of the fact that they desire it, on the premise that what they desire is desirable, without their saying anything. At an unfamiliar restaurant with no knowledge of the cuisine, you might come to desire to eat the goulash, given that the other customers all evidently desire to eat the goulash, because they are all ordering bowls of it and consuming them with relish. This is one way in which desires can be transmitted, in the same way that beliefs can be transmitted.

However, the present case is not a case of desire on trust. First, your wanting to eat the goulash is not constituted by your trusting the other diners. Instead, your desire is based on an inference, to the effect that the goulash is worth eating because the other diners evidently like it. Second, the other diners are not accountable to you for the desirability of eating the goulash. If the goulash turned out to be nasty, you would not be entitled to blame or otherwise hold them accountable. You might reasonably be annoyed that they seem to enjoy eating nasty goulash, but you could not reasonably resent them for misleading you. For the same reasons, your belief that the exit is down the stairs is not a belief on trust.²³

Second, we sometimes come to believe what someone else believes, on the basis of the fact that they believe it, on the premise that what they believe is true, because they have expressed their belief (but without offering to be accountable for the truth of what they believe). Consider a case of overheard soliloquy: walking past my office, you hear me mutter to myself, "Ugh, here's another stupid email from the Dean." On the basis of this, you might come to believe that I have just opened an email from the Dean, given that I would not have said what I said unless I believed that I just opened an email from the Dean and would not believe that I had just opened an email from the Dean unless I had done so.²⁴ In the same way, we sometimes come to desire what someone else desires, on the basis of the fact they desire it, on the premise that what they desire is desirable, because they have expressed their desire (but without offering to be accountable for the desirability of what they desire). Imagine that the other customers at the unfamiliar restaurant not only evidently want to eat the goulash, but say as much: as they wait in line,

²³ Which is not to say that you might not appropriately blame the locals for deceiving you, e.g. if they were playing a prank on you.

²⁴ Consider also cases in which a hedged assertion, expressive assertion, or asserted conclusion of an argument (cf. §3) gives you sufficient reason to believe the relevant proposition.

they say things like, “Oh, I am so looking forward to eating this goulash; I want it so much!” and, while eating the goulash, say things like, “Mmm, this is so wonderful; I just love it!” Because of this, you might come to desire to eat the goulash. This is another way in which desires can be transmitted, in the same way that beliefs can be transmitted.

However, the present case is not a case of desire on trust, for the same reasons that the previous case is not a case of desire on trust. Your wanting to eat the goulash is not constituted by your trusting the other diners and the other diners are not accountable to you for the desirability of eating the goulash. In both cases, you infer that something is desirable from the fact that someone desires it, along with the premise that what they desire is desirable, resulting in your forming a desire for that thing. A desire based on an inference of this kind is not a desire on trust. For the same reason, your belief that I have just opened an email from the Dean is not a belief on trust.

Must there be an inference in cases of this kind? René Girard (1965) suggests that all desires are formed in imitation of the desires of others.²⁵ On this picture, there is no “spontaneous desire” (p.16), but only desire resulting from “an irresistible impulse to desire what Others desire, in other words to imitate the desires of others.” (p. 12) Thus, “[i]n the birth of desire, the third person” – or “mediator” – “is always present.” (p. 21) With this picture in mind, we might push back on my interpretation of the case of the passionate goulash-eaters and argue that your desire to eat the goulash is the result of imitation, a primitive disposition to want what others want, rather than the result of an inference concerning the desirability of eating the goulash. Alternatively, we might interpret the case of the passionate goulash-eaters as involving social influence or conformity. Consider the Asch paradigm (1951, 1952, 1956), in which subjects are caused to erroneously state that two lines are equal in length, which they can easily see are not equal in length, by being given misleading evidence that other people unanimously believe that the lines are equal in length. While the vast majority of Asch’s subjects either inferred that the lines were equal in length on the basis of the apparent consensus to that effect or gave what they believed was the wrong answer so as not to appear different, some subjects, whom Asch describes as undergoing a “distortion of perception” (1951, pp. 183-4, 1952, pp. 469-470; cf. 1956, pp. 42-3), seem to have been influenced by the appearance of consensus without realizing it. Rather than reporting that they inferred that their own perception of the lines was probably mistaken, these subjects reported perceiving the lines as equal in length. If it is possible for other people’s beliefs to influence us in this non-inferential way, it seems likely that other people’s desires can influence us in a corresponding way. If a disposition to conform or agree with others can cause lines to appear equal in length, surely it can also cause goulash to appear delicious. Let’s grant that desires can be transmitted in both of these ways – that it is possible to desire what someone else desires through imitation (Girard) or conformity (Asch) and without the mediation of an inference concerning the desirability of the thing desired. Still, such desires do not represent cases of desire on trust, because neither the accountability nor the trust-constitution conditions on having an attitude on trust are met.²⁶

²⁵ See also Girard 1977, Chapter 6, Larmore 2010, pp. 36-43

²⁶ Rae Langton (2012) argues that you can be caused to form both beliefs and desires as a result of accommodating the pragmatic presuppositions made by those with whom you are conversing. In one kind of case, you might infer that something is true on the basis of the fact that someone presupposed that it is true, and as a result believe it, and likewise you might infer that something is desirable on the basis of the fact that someone presupposed that it is

Third, we sometimes come to believe what someone else believes by drawing an inference from something they have told us (cf. §3). If I tell you that Sasha is coming to dinner, and you believe me, you might infer that Masha is coming to dinner, because those two go everywhere together. Assuming that I also believe that Masha is coming to dinner, we now share that belief. There is an analogous way in which desires can be transmitted, although it does not involve inference. If I tell you that the goulash at this restaurant is made from wagyu beef, and you believe me, you might as a result want to eat the goulash, because you antecedently wanted to eat wagyu beef. If I also want to eat the goulash, we now share that desire. Just as your belief that Sasha is coming to dinner (which is a belief on trust) interacts with your antecedent belief that Sasha and Masha go everywhere together, resulting in your believing that Masha is coming to dinner, your belief that the goulash is made from wagyu beef (which is a belief on trust) interacts with your antecedent desire to eat wagyu beef, resulting in your desiring to eat the goulash.²⁷ This is another way in which desires can be transmitted, in the same way that – or, at least, in a way similar to a way in which – beliefs can be transmitted.

desirable, and as a result desire it (cf. §6). However, that is not the kind of case Langton has in mind. She argues that, “just as a hearer’s belief can spring into being, after the speaker presupposes that belief, so too a hearer’s desire can spring into being, after the speaker presupposes the hearer’s desire.” (p. 86) The idea is that, just as I might end up believing something on account of accommodating your presupposition that I believe it, I might end up desiring something on account of accommodating your presupposition that I desire it. How is this supposed to work? Let’s grant that the common ground in a given conversational context includes both a set of things accepted, for the purposes of that conversation, as believed by the participants (or, alternatively, accepted as true) and a set of things accepted, for the purposes of the conversation, as desired by the participants (or, alternatively, accepted as desirable). By what mechanism or process might accepting something as believed or desired, in this way, cause you to believe or desire it? Langton suggests (p. 88) that accepting something as believed or desired, in the present way, involves pretending that you believe or desire it. And such pretense can plausibly lead to your actually having the relevant belief or desire. As Ken Walton (1994) argues, “imagined experiences of believing, desiring, and feeling can, over time, lead to the real thing.” (p. 32) So, that is our mechanism. In the case of desire, accommodating your presupposition that I desire something involves pretending that I desire it, which has the potential to cause me to actually desire it. Let’s grant that desires can be formed in this way. Still, such desires do not represent cases of desire on trust, because neither the accountability nor the trust-constitution conditions on having an attitude on trust are met. The process we are describing does not involve trusting the speaker, but rather being manipulated by them, and although you might appropriately blame someone for manipulating you in this way, they would not be accountable to you for the fittingness of your desire, in the way that is required for having an attitude on trust.

²⁷ It seems to me that this is how advertising can change your desires: by changing your relevant beliefs. Peter Railton (2012) suggests that advertising can change your non-instrumental desires (p. 12), by representing something as attractive or appealing (p. 24; cf. Railton 2017, pp. 270-1). However, it seems to me that such cases change desires only by changing belief: when we see an image of a “pure white porcelain demitasse ... tilted up toward us against a background of glistening, dark-roasted coffee beans, offering an intimate, inviting view of the rich brown froth of fresh espresso awaiting us within,” (2012, p. 24) we are asked to believe that the coffee advertised looks, smells, and tastes a certain way and that it is luxurious and sophisticated; when we see “lovingly photographed watches in the presence of attractive, confident people,” (2017, p. 270) we are asked to believe that attractive and confident people enjoy wearing that brand of watch and that if we wore one, we would be attractive and confident, too. For this reason, I disagree with Langton’s (2012) suggestion that advertising typically “create[s] a desire to buy something, independent of anything the hearer might have desired before.” (p. 89)

However, the present case is not a case of desire on trust. First, your wanting to eat the goulash is not constituted by your trusting me. Your belief that the goulash is made from wagyu beef is constituted by your trusting me. But your resulting desire to eat the goulash isn't constituted by any such instance of trust. Second, I am not accountable to you for the desirability of eating the goulash. You would not be entitled to blame or otherwise hold me accountable if the goulash turned out to be bad to eat, but only if the goulash turned out not to be made from wagyu beef. For the same reasons, your belief that Masha is coming to dinner is not a case of belief on trust.²⁸

5 Accountability without trust-constitution

There is one more species of desire transmission that we need to consider. As we shall see, it is possible for someone to be accountable to you for the desirability of what you desire (§3). However, at least in the cases I have in mind, your relevant desires do not meet the trust-constitution condition on having an attitude on trust (§2).

Schematically, the cases I have in mind have this form: one person desires that *p* and tells another that it is desirable that *p*, the latter believes the former and thereby believes that it is desirable that *p*, and as a result desires that *p*. In such a case, the speaker plausibly *is* accountable to the hearer for the desirability of the proposition that *p*. Contrast the case of your desire to eat the goulash as a means of eating wagyu beef (§4). In that case, because I never told you that the goulash was worth eating, I am not accountable to you for the desirability of eating it. In the present kind of case, however, the speaker does tell the hearer that the proposition in question is desirable. If this kind of case is possible, the hearer's desire will meet the accountability condition on having an attitude on trust (§2).

There are two different ways of using the word “desirable” here. In some contexts, to say that something is desirable is just to say that it has some non-evaluative property such that it is presupposed that things that have that property are desired by the conversational participants. If it is common ground that we both want to eat wagyu beef, I might inform you that the goulash is made from wagyu beef by saying, “The goulash is worth eating.” In this way, I might transmit my desire to eat the goulash to you. However, this is not a case of desire on trust, but rather a case of belief on trust. Saying, “The goulash is worth eating,” in this context, is just a way of telling you that the goulash is made from wagyu beef (cf. §4).

The worry here is that what appears to be a case of instrumental desire on trust is really a case of belief on trust, in which the speaker and hearer share some antecedent non-instrumental desire. It seems to me that this worry will arise for any case of instrumental desire transmission. In principle, it seems like there could be a case in which one person tells another that it is instrumentally desirable that *p* in a bid to transmit to them both some means-ends belief (to the effect that, if *p*, then *q*) and a non-instrumental desire (that *q*). However, in such a case, it is the transmission of non-instrumental desire that we are interested in. If such a case involves a desire on trust, it will be a non-instrumental desire on trust.

²⁸ Which is not to say that you might not appropriately blame me for deceiving you, e.g. if I told you that Sasha was coming to dinner, knowing that Masha was not coming to dinner, with the intention of causing you to infer that Masha was coming to dinner.

Therefore, it will be simpler for us to consider a case in which one person tells another that something is non-instrumentally desirable.

Eating wagyu beef is great, but it is not plausibly non-instrumentally desirable. We need a different would-be object of desire. Under what circumstances might one person sensibly tell another that something is non-instrumentally desirable? We can borrow an insight from the literature on moral testimony here: believing something on the basis of moral testimony can make sense when there is a substantial disparity between your epistemic position and that of a trusted peer. Imagine that your friend, an ethicist, with whom you tend to share moral and political values, has just returned from a sabbatical year devoted to studying the question of whether biodiversity is non-instrumentally desirable. You have not given this question any thought and are not about to start now. So, you ask them and they tell you that biodiversity is non-instrumentally desirable. Let's assume, for the sake of argument, that the following is possible: when your ethicist friend tells you that biodiversity is non-instrumentally desirable, you believe them, and thereby believe that biodiversity is non-instrumentally desirable.²⁹ You might, as a result, want biodiversity – i.e. want there to be more of it, want it to be promoted and protected, and so on. Assuming your friend also wants biodiversity, they have transmitted a non-instrumental desire to you.

However, this is not a case of desire on trust. The accountability condition on having an attitude on trust (§3) is plausibly met. Your friend is accountable to you, in this case, for the desirability of biodiversity. However, the trust-constitution condition (§2) is not met. Your desire for biodiversity is not constituted by your trusting your friend. This is because desire and evaluative belief are distinct. Let me explain what I mean.

I assume that believing that something is desirable is distinct from desiring it.³⁰ You might desire something without believing it is desirable, like someone who finds themselves inexplicably wanting to drink a can of paint.³¹ More important, in the present context, you might believe that something is desirable without desiring it. Consider a depressed art historian who has lost all interest in the things they previously cared about, such that they believe it would be desirable were they to go to a new museum exhibition but have no desire to do so.³² Believing that it is desirable that *p* is distinct from desiring that *p*.³³

Because desire and evaluative belief are distinct, in the case of your ethicist friend, your desire for biodiversity is not constituted by your trusting your friend. Your belief that biodiversity is non-instrumentally desirable plausibly is so constituted: when they told you that biodiversity is non-

²⁹ Note that this assumption is consistent with the idea that moral deference is bad (Hopkins 2007, Hills 2009, Howell 2014, Hazlett 2017). All we need to assume here is that a kind of moral deference is possible. If this kind of moral deference is not possible, then so much the worse for desire on trust.

³⁰ I mean only that these are distinct attitude *types*. I want to leave open the possibility that a token attitude might be an instance of multiple attitude types, e.g. that a token attitude might be both an evaluative belief and a desire (cf. Montessori 2024).

³¹ Davidson 1963, p. 686.

³² Cf. Stoker 1979, pp. 741-2.

³³ If not (cf. Gregory 2021), then it seems that desire on trust is possible, modulo worries about the possibility of transmitting evaluative belief.

instrumentally desirable, you believed them, and thereby believed that biodiversity is non-instrumentally desirable. However, when you believed them, you did not *thereby* want biodiversity. Your trusting them amounted to your believing that something is desirable, but your trusting them did not amount to your desiring that thing. Something additional had to happen for you to not only believe that biodiversity is non-instrumentally valuable, but also want biodiversity. Trust alone got you the relevant evaluative belief, but not the corresponding desire.

We can appreciate this point by comparing the way in which desire is transmitted, in the present case, with the way in which belief is transmitted in our paradigm case of belief on trust (§1). When I tell you that there is horseradish in the fridge, you believe me, and thereby believe that there is horseradish in the fridge. There is a kind of immediacy of belief transmission here: there is no distinct attitude such that by constituting said attitude, your trusting me results in your believing that there is horseradish in the fridge. By contrast, in the present case, desire transmission is mediated: there is a distinct attitude – your belief that biodiversity is non-instrumentally desirable – such that by constituting said attitude, your trusting your ethicist friend results in your wanting biodiversity. The way in which desire is transmitted, in the present case, is fundamentally unlike the way in which belief is transmitted, in our paradigm case of belief on trust.

6 Inviting desire on trust?

Belief on trust entails a corresponding telling (§1). I think we can assume that desire on trust, if it is possible, must entail some corresponding speech act. When you tell someone that *p*, you offer to be accountable to them for the truth of the proposition that *p*. To put this another way, when you tell someone that *p*, you invite them to believe that *p* on trust. Is there a speech act such that when you make it you invite your interlocutor to desire that *p* on trust? Is there a speech act that stands to desire as telling stands to belief? Let's consider some possibilities.

First, there are idiomatic expressions in English that seem custom-made for expressing desire. Consider, for examples, “If only I hadn't used so much salt” (expressing a desire to have used less salt), “Let it snow!” (expressing a desire that it snow), “May you have a peaceful New Year” (expressing a desire that your interlocutor have a peaceful New Year), “Would that we had more champagne” (expressing a desire for more champagne).³⁴ However, when we use these expressions, we are not inviting desire on trust. In any of these cases, if your interlocutor were to come to desire the thing for which you expressed a desire, their desire would not be a desire on trust (cf. §4).

Second, consider the fact that you can tell someone to believe something by using “believe” in the imperative mood.³⁵ You might urge someone to believe something you've told them by saying, “Believe me,” or you might advise someone to accept some prediction or explanation by saying, “Believe it.” In the same way, you can tell someone to desire something by using “want” in the imperative mood. You might beg your beloved to reciprocate your affections by saying, “Want me!” However, you are not inviting your beloved to want you on trust. Were your beloved to want you, in response to your plea,

³⁴ Cf. Wittgenstein 1953, §544, Kenny 1963, p. 123, p. 207, p. 213, p. 232, Anscombe 1963, §36, Taylor 1986, p. 222, Humberstone 1987, pp. 50-1.

³⁵ Cf. Anscombe 1962, p. 181.

their desire would not be a desire on trust. (What you are doing, in this case, is more like expressing a second-order desire, along the lines of “I want you to want me.”)

Third, we sometimes transmit our desires when we tell people what to do, i.e. by issuing directives. If you want me to help you move your couch, you could get me to want to help you move your couch by saying, “Help me move my couch.”³⁶ Telling someone to ϕ can be a way of transmitting to them a desire that they ϕ . Moreover, when the speaker has a certain kind of authority over the hearer, the speaker can be accountable to the hearer: if your personal trainer tells you to lift a medicine ball over your head and you do so, you are plausibly entitled to blame or otherwise hold them accountable if something goes wrong and to refer challenges to what you are doing back to them. However, I don’t think this suggests that issuing directives stands to desire as telling stands to belief. To obey a directive requires doing what you were told to do, not wanting to do what you were told to do (contrast: to accept what someone tells you requires believing what you were told), and telling someone to do something you do not want them to do is not necessarily insincere (contrast: telling someone something you do not believe is necessarily insincere).³⁷ In the same way that, when you tell someone that p , you invite them to believe that p on trust, when you tell someone to ϕ , in the relevant cases, you invite them to ϕ on trust.³⁸ If there is an essential connection between directives and anything, analogous to the essential connection between telling and belief, is it an essential connection between directives and *action* (or intention), not an essential connection between directives and desire.

Fourth, note that we sometimes seem to attribute desires to people when we are giving advice. At a restaurant, you might say to your friend, “You want to try the falafel.” Now, if your friend has just announced a desire to eat anything made from chickpeas, this would just be a way of telling them that falafel is made from chickpeas (cf. §5). However, it would often be a way of telling them to try the falafel, by advising them to try it or recommending that they try it. Might this construction – saying that someone wants something – be used to invite them to desire it on trust? We could perhaps tell a story in which your ethicist friend (§5) tells you that biodiversity is non-instrumentally desirable by saying, “You want biodiversity.” However, as we saw, that would not give us a case of desire on trust. At the very least, inviting desire on trust does not seem to be the usual function of this construction.

We have struggled to find a speech act which stands to desire as telling stands to belief. I think this has to do with a special feature of telling. When you tell someone something, you simultaneously represent yourself as believing it and offer to be accountable to them for its truth. It is possible to represent yourself as desiring something without offering to be accountable to anyone for its desirability – consider the voracious diners expressing their desire to eat goulash (§4). And it is possible to offer to be accountable to someone for something’s desirability without representing yourself as desiring it – you might tell someone that something is desirable, without implying that you desire it. Indeed, we have considered numerous cases in which the speaker does not represent themselves as desiring the relevant thing – the cases of telling someone to want something, telling someone to do something, saying that someone wants something, and telling someone something that makes them want something are all cases

³⁶ Cf. Coady 1992, p. 56; see also Kenny 1963, p. 207.

³⁷ Cf. Wiland 2021, pp. 117-9.

³⁸ For further discussion of these two species of telling, see Anscombe 1962, pp. 179-80, Williams 2002, pp. 76-9, Wiland 2021, Chapters 6 and 7.

of this kind. A speech act inviting desire on trust, analogous to telling, would be one such that, when you make it, you simultaneously represent yourself as desiring something and offer to be accountable to your interlocutor for its desirability. There seems to be no such speech act.

7 Why there is no such thing as desire on trust

We have considered and rejected a number of candidates for desire on trust. It seems that there is no such thing as desire on trust. We are now in a position to explain why.

One way to explain why there is no such thing as desire on trust is to reject the assumption that a desire that *p* is fitting if and only if it is desirable that *p* (§3). This is the upshot of the famous metaphor of “direction of fit”: beliefs have mind-to-world direction of fit, but desires have world-to-mind direction of fit. Beliefs are fitting if and only if they fit the world. Desires do not have a fittingness condition – at least not in the same sense of “fittingness.” When I believe that *p* on trust, I trust the speaker as to the fittingness of believing that *p*. Given the accountability condition on having an attitude on trust (§3), you cannot have an attitude on trust if it has no fittingness condition. However, it seems to me that desire (along with many other non-doxastic attitudes) does have a fittingness condition, so I am inclined to seek an alternative explanation of why there is no such thing as desire on trust.

Here’s the explanation I propose. First, for your desire that *p* to meet the accountability condition on having an attitude on trust (§3), it has to be a response to someone telling you that it is desirable that *p*. There are other ways of transmitting desire (§4), but only telling someone that something is desirable will yield the accountability required for desire on trust. It would be otherwise if there were a speech act, analogous to telling, whereby you could invite someone to desire something on trust, but it seems there is no such speech act (§6). The only way to offer to be accountable to someone for something’s desirability is to tell them that it is desirable. When you tell someone that *p*, you represent the proposition that *p* as true, without explicitly invoking its truth. Once you tell someone that there is horseradish in the fridge, there is no need add “and, by the way, it is true that there is horseradish in the fridge.” You can offer to be accountable to someone for the truth of a proposition that *p* without telling them that it is true that *p*; you need only tell them that *p*. We have no analogous way of implicitly offering to be accountable to someone for the desirability of a proposition. We have various ways of expressing our desires, whereby we represent ourselves as desiring something, and thereby implicitly represent it as desirable. What we lack is a way of going further and offering to be accountable to someone for the desirability of that which we desire, without telling them that it is desirable.

However, second, any desire formed in response to someone telling you that something is desirable cannot meet the trust-constitution condition on having an attitude on trust (§2). If someone tells you that *p*, and you believe them, you thereby believe that *p* (§1). Indeed, we can say something slightly stronger: if someone tells you that *p*, and you trust them, you thereby believe that *p*. Thus, if someone tells you that it is desirable that *p*, and you trust them, you thereby believe that it is desirable that *p*. You do not *thereby* desire that *p* (§5). Therefore, in response to someone’s telling you that it is desirable that *p*, you can have a trust-constituted belief that it is desirable that *p*, but you cannot have a trust-constituted desire that *p*.

To meet the accountability condition on having an attitude on trust, a desire would have to be a response to someone telling you that it is desirable that *p*. However, any desire had in response to someone telling

you that it is desirable that p would not meet the trust-constitution condition on having an attitude on trust. Therefore, there is no such thing as desire on trust.

8 Conclusion

I have argued that, and hope to have explained why, there is no such thing as desire on trust. My argument is based on the idea that having an attitude on trust requires both that there is someone such that your trusting them constitutes your having said attitude and that there is someone who is accountable to you for the fittingness of said attitude. Desires, I argued, cannot meet both of these conditions.

We began by considering the idea that testimony is essentially a means of transmitting belief. We are now in a position to sketch an explanation of why something like this might be true. The reason there is no such thing as desire on trust, I suggested, is that you can't offer to be accountable to someone for the fittingness of a desire without offering to be accountable for the truth of the proposition that it is fitting, which ensures that any attitude on trust formed in response to such an offer will be a belief, not a desire. If this is right, it seems we can generalize: you can't offer to be accountable to someone for the fittingness of an attitude without offering to be accountable for the truth of the proposition that said attitude is fitting, which ensures that any attitude on trust formed in response to such an offer will be a belief. Consider some examples. If you want to be accountable to someone for the fittingness of fearing something, you have to tell them that it is dangerous, in which case, if they trust you, they will thereby believe that it is dangerous, but not thereby fear it. If you want to offer to be accountable to someone for the fittingness of admiring someone, you have to tell them that that person is admirable, in which case, if they trust you, they will thereby believe that they are admirable, but not thereby admire them. If you want to offer to be accountable to someone for the fittingness of being angry, you have to tell them that they were wronged, in which case, if they trust you, they will thereby believe that they were wronged, but not thereby be angry. If all this is right, only beliefs can be had on trust.³⁹

References

Anscombe, G.E.M. (1962), "Authority in Morals," in J.M. Todd (ed.), *Problems of Authority* (Darton, Longman, and Todd), pp. 179-88.

Anscombe, G.E.M. (1963), *Intention*, second edition (Harvard University Press).

Anscombe, G.E.M. (1979), "What Is It To Believe Someone?," in C.F. Delaney (ed.), *Rationality and Religious Belief* (University of Notre Dame Press), pp. 141-51.

Asch, S.E. (1951), "Effects of Group Pressure Upon the Modification and Distortion of Judgments," in H. Guetzkow (ed.), *Groups, Leadership, and Men: Research in Human Relations* (Russell & Russell), pp. 177-190.

³⁹ I presented a version of this paper at Rice University in 2024; thanks to my audience there, as well as to Anne Baril, Akshan deAlwis, Simon Feldman, Alyssa Ney, Matt McGrath, Maria Waggoner, Gabby Zhang, and the students in my Fall 2024 seminar on "Knowing, Trusting, and Intending."

- Asch, S.E. (1952), *Social Psychology* (Prentice-Hall).
- Asch, S.E. (1956), "Studies of Independence and Conformity: I. A Minority of One against a Unanimous Majority," *Psychological Monographs: General and Applied* 70(9), pp. 1-70.
- Audi, R. (1997), "The Place of Testimony in the Fabric of Knowledge and Justification," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 34(4), pp. 405-22.
- Austin, J.L. (1946/1979), "Other Minds," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society Supplement* 20, pp. 148-87, reprinted in J.L. Austin, *Philosophical Papers*, third edition (Oxford University Press), pp. 76-116.
- Benton, M., and van Elswick, P. (2018), "Hedged Assertions," in S. Goldberg (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Assertion* (Oxford University Press), pp. 345-63.
- Brandom, R. (1983), "Asserting," *Noûs* 17(4), pp. 637-50
- Brandom, R.B. (1994), *Making It Explicit: Reasoning, Representing, and Discursive Commitment* (Harvard University Press).
- Coady, C.A.J. (1992), *Testimony: A Philosophical Study* (Oxford University Press).
- Davidson, D. (1963), "Actions, Reasons, and Causes," *Journal of Philosophy* 60(23), pp. 685-700.
- Drucker, D. (2022), "Reasoning beyond Belief Acquisition," *Noûs* 56(2), pp. 416-42.
- Enoch, D. (2014), "A Defense of Moral Deference," *Journal of Philosophy* 111(5), pp. 229-58.
- Faulkner, P. (2011), *Knowledge on Trust* (Oxford University Press).
- Fricker, E. (2006), "Second-Hand Knowledge," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 123(3), pp. 592-618.
- Girard, R. (1965), *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure*, trans. Yvonne Freccero (Johns Hopkins University Press).
- Girard, R. (1977), *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. Patrick Gregory (Johns Hopkins University Press).
- Goldberg, S. (2006), "Reductionism and the Distinctiveness of Testimonial Knowledge," in J. Lackey and E. Sosa (eds.), *The Epistemology of Testimony* (Oxford University Press), pp. 127-44.
- Goldberg, S. (2011a), "The Division of Epistemic Labor," *Episteme* 8(1), pp. 112-25.
- Goldberg, S. (2011b), "Putting the Norm of Assertion to Work: The Case of Testimony," in J. Brown and H. Cappelen (eds.), *Assertion: New Philosophical Essays* (Oxford University Press), pp. 175-95.
- Goldberg, S. (2015), *Assertion: On the Philosophical Significance of Assertoric Speech* (Oxford University Press).
- Graham, P. (2021), "Typing Testimony," *Synthese* 199, pp. 9463-77.

- Graham, P. (2022), "Testimony Is Not Disjunctive," *Asian Journal of Philosophy* 1(25).
- Greco, J. (2016), "What is Transmission*?," *Episteme* 13(4), pp. 481-98.
- Gregory, A. (2021), *Desire as Belief: A Study of Desire, Motivation, and Rationality* (Oxford University Press).
- Harman, G. (1986), *Change In View: Principles of Reasoning* (MIT Press).
- Hawley, K. (2014), "Trust, Distrust, and Commitment," *Noûs* 48(1), pp. 1-20.
- Hawthorne, J., Rothschild, D., and Spectre, L. (2016), "Belief Is Weak," *Philosophical Studies* 173, pp. 1393-1404.
- Hazlett, A. (2017), "Towards Social Accounts of Testimonial Asymmetries," *Noûs* 51(1), pp. 49-73.
- Hazlett, A. (2022), "Desire and Goodness," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 105(1), pp. 160-80.
- Hills, A. (2009), "Moral Testimony and Moral Epistemology," *Ethics* 120(1), pp. 94-127.
- Hinchman, E. (2005), "Telling as Inviting to Trust," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 120(3), pp. 562-87.
- Hopkins, R. (2007), "What is Wrong with Moral Testimony?" *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 74(3), pp. 611-34.
- Holton, R. (1994), "Deciding to Trust, Coming to Believe," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 72(1), pp. 63-76.
- Howell, R. (2014), "Google Morals, Virtue, and the Asymmetry of Deference," *Noûs* 48(3), pp. 389-415.
- Humberstone, L. (1987), "Wanting as Believing," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 17(1), pp. 49-62.
- Kenny, A. (1963), *Action, Emotion, and Will* (Routledge).
- Langton, R. (2012), "Beyond Belief: Pragmatics in Hate Speech and Pornography," in I. Maitra and M.K. McGowan (eds.), *Speech and Harm: Controversies over Free Speech* (Oxford University Press), pp. 72-93.
- Larmore, C. (2010), *The Practices of the Self*, trans. Sharon Bowman (University of Chicago Press).
- Lawlor, K. (2013), *Assurance: An Austinian View of Knowledge and Knowledge Claims* (Oxford University Press).
- Lipton, P. (1998), "The Epistemology of Testimony," *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science* 29(1), pp. 1-31.
- McGrath, S. (2009), "The Puzzle of Pure Moral Deference," *Philosophical Perspectives* 23, pp. 321-44.

- McGrath, S. (2011), "Skepticism about Moral Expertise as a Puzzle for Moral Realism," *Journal of Philosophy* 108(3), pp. 111-37.
- McGrath, S. (2019), *Moral Knowledge* (Oxford University Press).
- McMyler, B. (2011), *Testimony, Trust, and Authority* (Oxford University Press).
- Montessori, A. (2024), "Overlap: On the Relation Between Perceiving and Believing," *Synthese* 203(6), pp. 1-15.
- Moran, R. (2005), "Getting Told and Being Believed," *Philosopher's Imprint* 5(5), pp. 1-29.
- Moran, R. (2018), *The Exchange of Words: Speech, Testimony, and Intersubjectivity* (Oxford University Press).
- Oddie, G. (2005), *Value, Reality, and Desire* (Oxford University Press).
- Owens, D. (2006), "A Simple Theory of Promising," *Philosophical Review* 115(1), pp. 51-77.
- Parfit, D. (2011), *On What Matters, Volume One* (Oxford University Press).
- Railton, P. (2012), "That Obscure Object, Desire," *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 86(2), pp. 22-46.
- Railton, P. (2017), "Learning as an Inherent Dynamic of Belief and Desire," in J.A. Deonna and F. Laura (eds.), *The Nature of Desire* (Oxford University Press), pp. 249-76.
- Ross, A. (1986), "Why Do We Believe What We Are Told?," *Ratio* 28, pp. 69-88.
- Saul, J. (2012), *Lying, Misleading, and What Is Said: An Exploration in Philosophy of Language and Ethics* (Oxford University Press).
- Schroder, T. (2004), *Three Faces of Desire* (Oxford University Press).
- Stocker, M. (1979), "Desiring the Bad: An Essay in Moral Psychology," *Journal of Philosophy* 76(12), pp. 738-53.
- Taylor, C.C.W. (1986), "Emotions and Wants," in J. Marks (ed.), *The Ways of Desire: New Essays in Philosophical Psychology on the Concept of Wanting* (Precedent Publishing), pp. 217-31.
- Tenenbaum, S. (2007), *Appearances of the Good: An Essay on the Nature of Practical Reason* (Cambridge University Press).
- van Elswick, P. (2022), "Hedged Testimony," *Noûs* 57, pp. 341-69.
- Walton, K. (1994), "Morals in Fiction and Fictional Morality," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society Supplement* 68, pp. 27-50.
- Wiland, E. (2021), *Guided By Voices: Moral Testimony, Advice, and Forging a "We"* (Oxford University Press).

Williams, W. (2002), *Truth and Truthfulness: An Essay in Genealogy* (Princeton University Press).

Wittgenstein, L.W. (1953), *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G.E.M. Anscombe (Blackwell).

Zagzebski, L.T. (2012), *Epistemic Authority: A Theory of Trust, Authority, and Autonomy in Belief* (Oxford University Press).