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WHEN TO TRUST AUTHORITATIVE TESTIMONY:
GENERATION AND TRANSMISSION OF KNOWLEDGE IN
SAADYA GAON, AL-GHAZĀLĪ, AND THOMAS AQUINAS

By

Brett A. Yardley

A Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School,
Marquette University & KULeuven
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Milwaukee, Wisconsin United States of America
& Leuven, Flanders, Belgium

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ABSTRACT
 WHEN TO TRUST AUTHORITATIVE TESTIMONY:
 GENERATION AND TRANSMISSION OF KNOWLEDGE IN
 SAADYA GAON, AL-GHAZĀLĪ, AND THOMAS AQUINAS

Brett A. Yardley
 Marquette University & KULeuven, 2021

People have become suspicious of authority, including epistemic authorities, i.e., knowledge experts, even on matters individuals are unqualified to adjudicate (e.g., climate change, vaccines, or the shape and age of the earth). This is problematic since most of our knowledge comes from trusting a speaker—whether scholars reading experts, students listening to teachers, children obeying their parents, or pedestrians inquiring of strangers—such that the knowledge transmitted is rarely personally verified. Despite the recent development of social epistemology and theories of testimony, this is not a new problem.

Ancient and Medieval philosophers largely took it for granted that most human knowledge primarily comes from listening to a trustworthy speaker whose virtuous character serves to mitigate against the twin concerns of inaccuracy and dishonesty. Thus, unlike contemporary Social Epistemology, few testimonial theories were explicitly laid out despite the crucial role testimony plays throughout a wide range of topics and teachings. To date, the working theory of testimony underpinning the works of medieval philosophers are just now being codified. This is particularly relevant for the Abrahamic faiths since they originate with testimony from God himself. The goal of this dissertation is to explore how the generation and transmission of religious knowledge (i.e., testimonial theory) appears in an exemplary thinker from each faith: Saadya (Sa'adiah) Gaon of Judaism (882-942), al-Ghazālī of Islam (1058-1111), and Thomas Aquinas of Christianity (1225-1274). While not contemporaries, these exemplars are theological philosophers who are like-minded in their desire to maintain an orthodox faith while possessing philosophical approaches to truth. Thus, they maintained sophisticated epistemological theories of generation and transmission within their own religious contexts (e.g., revelation, scripture, and prophecy).

Cataloguing these medieval testimonial theories reveals a historical incongruity with the current contemporary concept of testimony and its frameworks. Based on the testimonial theories of these three thinkers, I argue for a "transhistorical" concept of testimony that does not presume an evidentialist framework to account for pre-modern theories of testimony which predominantly rely on virtue theoretic frameworks. To test the proposed neutral framework, I offer a virtue epistemological account of testimony in which trust is not an intellectual virtue, but the intellectual aspect of the historic virtue of autonomy. I argue that intellectual autonomy and trust are inversely related in one's interactions with authority (both practical and theoretical).

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Brett A. Yardley

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION - AUTHORITY, TRUST, AND THEIR RELATION

1.1 Trusted Authority and the Bootstrapping problem

What authority should you trust? Put differently, *whom*, or perhaps *what*, should you trust?

This question underlies the quest for knowledge acquisition. In line with the ideals of autonomy and egalitarianism, contemporary society frequently adopts a skeptical or suspicious, even cynical, stance toward authority. This includes epistemic authorities, experts, even on matters individuals are completely unqualified to adjudicate. People tend to trust either themselves, even on complex macro-level issues impossible for an individual (e.g., climate change),¹ or in small epistemically protectionist communities even when more authoritative expert consensus contradicts their beliefs (e.g., anti-vaxxers, flat-earthers, and young-earthers).² In answering the question of authority, the former engage in self-trust while the latter engage in blind-trust. As the history of philosophy shows, we have changed whom, or rather what, we trust as epistemically authoritative.

In philosophy's quest for the ideal of certain knowledge, the source of authority for ancient philosophers such as Plato was in external reason. Under medieval thinkers, external reason became the divine reason until Scotus shifted the source of authority to the

¹ For information about climate change, 79% Americans respondents reported trusting their "own observations" as "a lot" or "some". This exceeded epistemically superior sources such as scientists at 78%, local meteorologists at 67%, United Nations at 57%, mainstream news media at 51%, and the U.S. government agencies at 45%. Cf. Jennifer De Pinto, Fred Backus, and Anthony Salvanto, "Most Americans Say Climate Change Should Be Addressed Now — CBS News Poll," CBS News, September 15, 2019, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/cbs-news-poll-most-americans-say-climate-change-should-be-addressed-now-2019-09-15/>; Benjamin Fearnow, "Americas Trust Their 'Own Observations' on Climate Change Over Scientists, Meteorologists: Poll," Newsweek, September 15, 2019, <https://www.newsweek.com/climate-change-humans-cause-poll-trust-information-stats-scientists-survey-meteorologists-prediction-1459313>.

² The lack of public trust in authorities has become an important issue academically and politically, David Kearns, "Eroding Trust in Experts to Be Quizzed as UCD Researchers Awarded €3m Horizon 2020 Grant," University College Dublin, accessed August 23, 2019, <https://www.ucd.ie/newsandopinion/news/2019/july/31/erodingtrustinexpertstobequizzedasucdresearchersawarded3mhorizon2020grant/>.

divine will. Immanuel Kant arguably brought the source of authority down from the divine will into my rational will, which has now morphed into merely my will (regardless of its rationality).³ Emphasizing autonomy,⁴ epistemologists have traditionally focused on the ideal conditions for personally justified beliefs. This heavily individualistic focus of knowledge acquisition, in which "the emphasis was on evaluating doxastic attitudes (beliefs and disbeliefs) of individuals in abstraction from their social environment" per Alvin Goldman, has been challenged by the rise of social epistemology in the late 20th century and the so-called "social turn."⁵ This social turn acknowledges that most of our knowledge comes from the testimony of others, namely what we learn from the speaking or writings of trusted authorities. Whom you should trust is fundamentally a question of identifying epistemic or intellectual authorities—"experts"—and evaluating their testimony. Transmission of knowledge thus requires a community with established relationships. As John Hardwig writes, "appeals to epistemic authority are essentially ingredient in much of our knowledge," but it comes at the cost of autonomy, and even egalitarianism.⁶ An expert, by definition, implies rational authority over laypeople. To trust

³ Cf. Linda Trinkaus Zagzebski, *Epistemic Authority: A Theory of Trust, Authority, and Autonomy in Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

⁴ I use Zagzebski's definition of autonomy: "the right or ideal of submitting to nothing but one's own rational will" or "the state of exercising the natural right of a self-conscious being to govern itself" *Ibid.*, 19, 234.

⁵ Alvin Goldman and Thomas Blanchard, "Social Epistemology," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Summer 2018 (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2018), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2018/entries/epistemology-social/>.

⁶ The full passage: "If I am correct, appeals to epistemic authority are essentially ingredient in much of our knowledge. Appeals to the authority of experts often provide justification for claims to know, as well as grounding rational belief. At the same time, however, the epistemic superiority of the expert to the layman implies rational authority over the layman, undermining the intellectual autonomy of the individual and forcing a reexamination of our notion of rationality. The epistemic individualism implicit in many of our epistemologies is thus called into question, with important implications for how we understand knowledge and the knower, as well as for our conception of rationality." John Hardwig, "Epistemic Dependence," *The Journal of Philosophy* 82, no. 7 (1985): 336. Zagzebski concurs saying "The most important theoretical reason for the rejection of epistemic authority, I think, is the perceived conflict between epistemic authority and two deep modern values: egalitarianism and autonomy." Zagzebski, *Epistemic Authority*, 6.

them reveals vulnerability, areas where the layperson lacks power or knowledge and thus must rely on another.⁷ The fact that everyone begins as a vulnerable novice who lacks knowledge, confidence in what knowledge they do possess, and/or the expertise to adjudicate judgments within a particular domain, reveals a bootstrapping problem.

The bootstrapping problem of knowledge and epistemic authority emerges since novices lack in knowledge, including the knowledge of who are trustworthy epistemic authorities and how to reliably obtain knowledge from them. First, novices lack the prerequisite knowledge to reasonably determine who qualifies as a knowledgeable expert. Novices learn to identify authorities on the authority of authorities. Second, novices lack both the means of verifying that the beliefs are accurate and of determining the sincerity of experts. To advance, novices can only accept the epistemic direction and support of experts as genuine. In this way, a novice's reliance on, or trust in, an epistemic authority is inescapably/necessarily blind.⁸ Yet this trust is host to ideals and concepts (products of the social environment) furnishing the very authorities who teach subsequent authorities on how to identify authorities. Everyone is thus born in, shaped by, and reliant on a community and its epistemic structures. Realizing that all authority is inherently cultural or communally defined leads to a new problem analogous to moral conventionalism in ethics: if the validity of epistemic authority is dependent on communal cultivation and acceptance,

⁷ A position which requires you to trust indicates you have recognized the person or object of trust either has more knowledge or more accurate knowledge for the relevant topic than yourself. Annette Baier famously argued that trust is different than reliance by its accepting vulnerability to the will of another. Annette Baier, "Trust and Antitrust," *Ethics* 96, no. 2 (1986): 231–60. Also cf. the ten article special edition by PErTiA (Policy, Expertise, and Trust in Action): Maria Baghramian, Danielle Petherbridge, and Rowland Stout, "Vulnerability and Trust: An Introduction," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 28, no. 5 (October 19, 2020): 575–82.

⁸ Cf. John Hardwig, "The Role of Trust in Knowledge," *The Journal of Philosophy* 88, no. 12 (1991): 693, 699.

then either there are no universally valid authorities, or universal authorities can never be "known." This problem has led to two "communities" within social epistemology.

There is disagreement within social epistemology as to whether the discipline is continuous with traditional truth-oriented epistemology. Social constructivists claim that all expert beliefs are constructed via experts negotiating with one other.⁹ Belief formation processes never reflect reality (or "real" facts), but reflect the opinions and interests of the community's epistemic authorities.¹⁰ The constructivist view is admittedly extreme and scholars have largely chosen the latter route maintaining that traditional epistemology can accommodate social knowledge without discarding notions such as truth vs. falsity or knowledge vs. error. However, the problem remains. Like moral conventionalism, if there is no objective (i.e., culturally neutral) epistemic standard beyond any/all communal epistemic authority to which we could compare, we seem barred from saying the epistemic authority of another culture is wrong, or inferior to those our own communal authorities. The knowledge generated or transmitted by each community's recognized epistemic authorities is (as instituted) trustworthy. One of philosophy's enduring quests has thus been to secure access to an objective standard that transcends cultural communal authorities whether in Plato's forms, the divine mind, or a rational will.

The history of epistemology, however, in pursuing some form of reason as an objective standard has produced one categorical method after another in attempts to determine truth. Yet in presuming an "epistemic individualism," philosophers have settled for less and less epistemic confidence resulting in skepticism and epistemic defeat. The

⁹ I presume this claim regarding all knowledge being constructed necessarily includes itself.

¹⁰ Cf. the journal *Social Epistemology* edited by Steve Fuller and Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar, *Laboratory Life: The Construction of Scientific Facts*, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1979).

"dismal verdict", according to Robert Pasnau, is that history seems to have left us two options, naturalism or idealism, both of which change the subject of epistemology.¹¹ Calls to reject "epistemic individualism" and return to accepting knowledge based on authority have already been made by scholars like John Hardwig and Linda Zagzebski.¹² The role of trust has also received renewed interest in works within the resurgence of virtue in ethics and epistemology following G.E.M. Anscombe's "Modern Moral Philosophy" and Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue*. However, as Roger Pouivet points out there is a "double origin" to the rise of virtue theoretic approaches: contemporaries inspired by Anscombe and Thomists who "never abandoned the project."¹³ If the way forward is to recapture concepts of authority and testimony before the shift to individual will and autonomy, it is fitting to fully document and examine the theories of authority and testimony present in Medieval origin.

¹¹ Epistemology is naturalized in thinkers Hume and Quine, who embrace epistemic defeat and settle for biological and psychological descriptions of how our cognitive faculties actually are. Idealists like Berkeley create a new privileged mental domain through revisionary metaphysics. Robert Pasnau, *After Certainty: A History of Our Epistemic Ideals and Illusions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 133–34.

¹² Cf. Hardwig, "Epistemic Dependence." Zagzebski argues in *Epistemic Authority* for the rationality in adopting the authority of experts and communities even while accommodating the contemporary primacy of the autonomous self as authoritative. The argument for accepting outside authority is based on self-authority with variations on the following idea: "It follows that because I place particular trust in myself when I am conscientious, I must place particular trust in others whose conscientiousness I discover when I am being conscientious. The general principle is that insofar as I trust myself in virtue of having certain properties, I owe the same trust to others whose possession of those properties is something I discover when I am behaving in a way I trust." Zagzebski, *Epistemic Authority*, 56–57. Later she even develops the Principle of Epistemic Trust in Others: "In any case in which, by believing in a way I trust in myself, I am led to believe that others have the same property I trust in myself (to the same degree as I have myself), I have a *prima facie* reason to trust them as much as I trust myself." *Ibid.*, 211.

¹³ Roger Pouivet, *Épistémologie des croyances religieuses* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2013), 73. My translation from French. Jonathan Sanford points out that neither G.E.M. Anscombe nor Alasdair MacIntyre likely sought to start a movement and contemporary virtue theory in many ways fails to heed the concerns of "Modern Moral Philosophy" but embrace the post-Enlightenment rule-based approach to ethics that is willing to suspend moral absolutes. Jonathan J. Sanford, *Before Virtue: Assessing Contemporary Virtue Ethics* (Washington, D.C: The Catholic University of America Press, 2019), 60, 74.

Unlike contemporary social epistemology, Ancient and Medieval philosophers largely took it for granted that most human knowledge comes from listening to a reliable speaker and is never personally verified—whether scholars reading experts, students learning from teachers, the faithful listening to religious authorities, or children obeying their parents. Thus, few testimonial theories were explicitly laid out despite aspects of them interspersed throughout a thinker’s writings. To date, the working theory of testimony underpinning the works of medieval philosophers are just now being codified. This is particularly relevant for the Abrahamic faiths of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam since they originate with testimony from God. Since none can escape the bootstrapping problem of knowledge, everyone being born in, shaped by, and reliant on a community, my aim is to explore how the role of trust and authority in generation and transmission of knowledge—the pinnacle being religious knowledge—appears in three medieval thinkers from each of the Abrahamic faiths: Saadya (Saadiyah) Gaon’s Jewish perspective (882-942), al-Ghazālī’s Islamic perspective (1058-1111), and Thomas Aquinas’s Christian perspective (1225-1274). Each maintained a rational theory for the role of epistemic authorities in the production and transmission of communal, and by extension religious, knowledge.

Since this topic lies at the intersection of medieval philosophy and contemporary epistemology (two fields which rarely draw on one another), chapter two will provide a brief history of social epistemology and recent scholarship on medieval accounts of testimony to show that a rethinking of the contemporary categories of testimony is needed. After accounting for the recent interest in "social" knowledge, the chapter introduces social epistemology’s standard framework for knowledge generation and transmission—the positions of reductionism, anti-reductionism, and the interpersonal view of testimony (or

the assurance view)—which determine whether testimony qualifies as a source of knowledge or justifies testimonial knowledge. Chapters three, four, and five chronologically present the testimonial theory of Saadya Gaon, al-Ghazālī, and Thomas Aquinas. While each thinker maintained sophisticated epistemological theories of transmission within their own religious contexts, I show they each held to the same approach to ground testimony (despite the very different processes of testimonial transmission for human vs. divine speakers) best accounted for via virtue epistemology given the central role trust and virtue play for both speakers and listeners whether human or divine. In fact, trust and virtue explain the disparity between the reliability and certainty of human and divine testimony.¹⁴ These three chapters begin by outlining each thinker's temporal and cultural milieu to grasp their structures of communal authority and their theories of knowledge to show how their approach to testimony (for both human and divine speakers) fits within. Each chapter closes claiming that their accounts of human and divine testimony are grounded through virtuously trusting the speaker via a virtue theoretic framework. The process of detailing their theories of testimony reveals that the contemporary testimonial framework is beholden to an evidentialist approach to knowledge which is anachronistic to pre-Enlightenment thinkers. Chapter six thus traces the historical development of the two concepts "evidence" and "evidentness" to show that philosophers prior to the 18th century appreciated a richer variety of evidentiary distinctions than is typical of contemporary epistemologists. Since a theory of testimony that cannot adequately account for half of history's concept of testimony needs to be addressed, I then

¹⁴ This presentation must table how the credibility of revealed religious knowledge in propositional form allows humans to subsequently pass the same propositional knowledge to other humans with the same level of testimonial certainty or "warrant" (avoiding the thorny issue of translating ineffable revelatory experiences into propositional words of God).

propose a neutral framework using John Greco's "rethinking" of testimonial categories.¹⁵ To test the framework, I offer a virtue theoretic account in which reasonable reliance on the testimony of others is best understood through the notion of epistemic trust. I argue trust is the inverse correlation of the intellectual aspect of the virtue of autonomy where listeners should strive to achieve a virtuous mean of intellectual autonomy between the vices of being too trusting (i.e., not autonomous enough) and not trusting enough (i.e., too autonomous). In the seventh and final chapter, I conclude with a project summary before applying the issues of trust's inherently social nature to the particulars of *whom*, *what*, and even *how* we trust within our communal epistemic authorities in the present day. Recognition of this fact indicates that epistemology, even social epistemology, needs to occur in dialogue with other branches of philosophy and science. I reflect on what this project has accomplished and then treat it as a case study to address the dark side of trust's role in knowledge for a post-2020 world alongside the opportunities this presents. I conclude by arguing that issues in contemporary epistemology parallel those of G.E.M. Anscombe's modern moral philosophy and that moving forward we should seriously heed her call to first establish a philosophy of psychology, namely a philosophy of human nature.

In the remainder of this chapter, I analyze the nature of authority and argue that using the so-called "social turn" we can identify three answers to what authority one should trust. I will use these approaches to show the epistemic similarities between Saadya Gaon, al-Ghazālī, and Thomas Aquinas. I identify the three approaches to authority as: self-trust in applying rational methods which I will refer to as "closed rationalism"; blind-trust in the

¹⁵ Cf. John Greco, "The Role of Trust in Testimonial Knowledge," in *Trust in Epistemology*, ed. Katherine Dormandy (New York: Routledge, 2019), 91–113.

dogmas of protectionist communities I term "rational fideism"; and virtuous-trust in trustworthy speakers I call "open rationalism."¹⁶ Regarding the first two approaches, I argue both undermine the goal of knowledge acquisition: self-trust and the ideal of self-reliance renders knowledge acquisition too difficult;¹⁷ and blind-trust renders knowledge acquisition too easy and is prone to manipulation. I argue the best path forward is virtuous-trust with its emphasis on remaining open to epistemic authorities, even divine testimony. This approach can be found in Ancient and Medieval thinkers who understood trust as one of the key senses of "faith." The sense of faith as trust, considered alongside reason as an authoritative source or ultimate standard for knowledge, must be distinguished from an "act of religious faith," i.e., believing a proposition firmly by attaching high credence to it despite insufficient evidence.¹⁸ Faith as "trust" is "faithfulness" especially as it pertains to "trust in a person or thing" which produces *confidence*.¹⁹ Since this trust grounds knowledge received from another agent, then, assuming God speaks as the Abrahamic traditions claim, knowledge by faith is testimonial. I focus on the class of philosophers who maintained two channels to knowledge: natural reason and "faith" not as groundless belief

¹⁶ The categorization of strong rationalism—the idea that reason is "strong" enough to reach the *telos* on its own—is akin to what I have termed closed-rationalism given its reliance on self-trust. The categorization of limited rationalism—the idea that reason is useful but limited in its inquiry toward the *telos* thus requiring another science to go beyond its limits (typically "faith")—I have divided into rational-fideism and open-rationalism to capture faith methods that reach the same conclusions as rational ones while recognizing that some knowledge is only obtainable via one method or the other.

¹⁷ Zagzebski claims that the faculties we trust in ourselves reveal the same trustworthy faculties in others such that it is inconsistent to distrust others. Zagzebski, *Epistemic Authority*, 52.

¹⁸ *Pace* the sense in which "To hold a proposition on faith, as I will here use that term, is to believe it firmly, and thus to attach high credence to it, even though one does not suppose that the evidence warrants such confidence. Believing on faith, so understood, directly clashes both with evidentialism and with Locke's proportionality, which is why it strikes so many as utterly disreputable." Pasnau, *After Certainty*, 135.

¹⁹ Recovering the notion of "faith" as trust is not novel and can be found in works such as Martin Buber's *Two Types of Faith* where he distinguishes between the Hebrew *Emunah* of Judaism and Greek *pistis* of Christianity. While his relegation of each type of faith to Judaism and Christianity is overly simplistic, he accurately captures the sense in which faith (*Emunah*) is based on a relationship, the defining relationship of trusting God, and not "reasons" underlying a faith (*pistis*) as belief (*credo*) in God. Martin Buber, *Two Types of Faith: Interpretation of Judaism & Christianity.*, trans. Norman P. Goldhawk (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1951).

but as trust in a speaker allowing the possibility of objective knowledge to remain open, even for divine speakers. These philosophers anticipate the limits of reason and escape the traps of self-reliance and socially constructed authority.

Before explicating the three epistemic responses, namely self-trust, blind-trust, and virtuous trust, and why Saadya Gaon, al-Ghazālī, and Thomas Aquinas fit within the final approach, I must identify the concept of intellectual authority and the form it takes in both persons and communities. I will thus unpack the notion of epistemic authority, the challenge of identifying those who have it, and its roles in communities to both disseminate and shape knowledge.

1.2 What is Authority?

1.2.1 Practical vs. Epistemic Authority

Authority is ultimately the ability to override acts or thoughts of another individual or entire community. Linda Zagzebski defines "authority" in *Epistemic Authority* as "a normative power that generates reasons for others to do or to believe something preemptively."²⁰ The anti-autonomy and anti-egalitarian nature of authority is precisely what has made it so unattractive to modern thinkers. The fear of authority's abuse has stigmatized the entire notion at best rendering it a necessary evil in social and political philosophy. It seems the same fear has historically caused epistemologists to reduce the role of authority in knowledge transmission and belief formation.

Immediately we must identify two types—practical and epistemic—and two states—reputational and objective—of "authority."²¹ Practical authority possesses a legal/moral right to be obeyed or power to compel others to do what they command, e.g.

²⁰ Zagzebski, *Epistemic Authority*, 102.

²¹ I will adopt the usage of Elizabeth Fricker and Linda Zagzebski *Ibid.*, 18, 102.

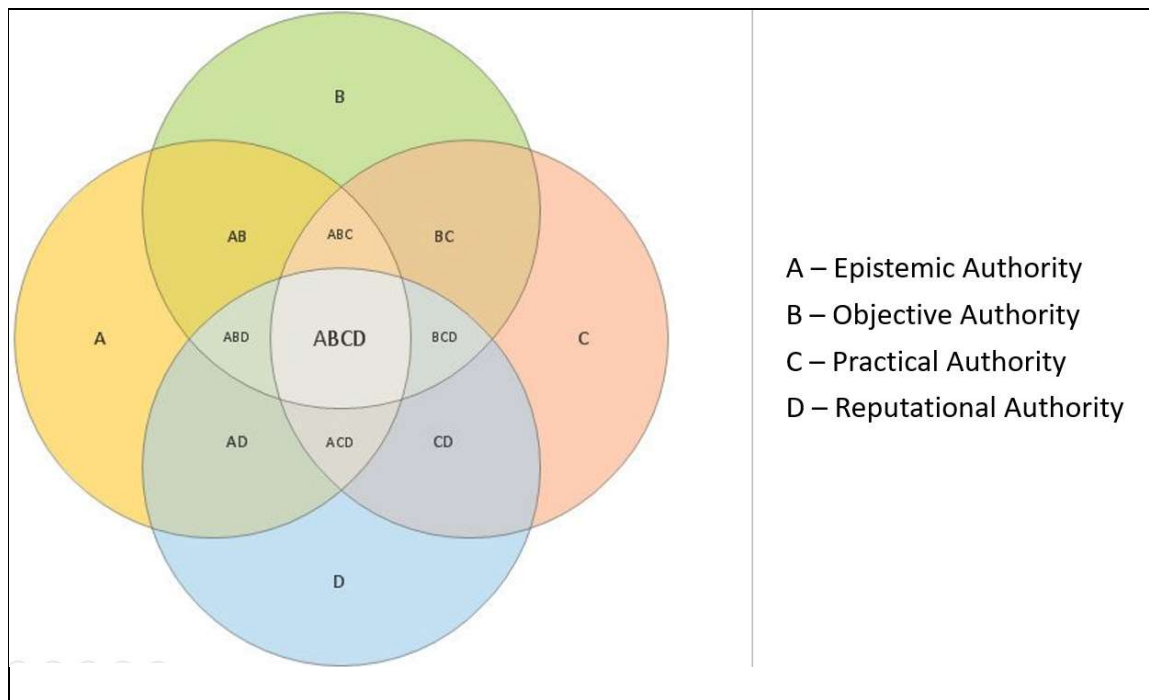
"officers in the army have authority over their soldiers."²² Epistemic authority claims to possess reliable knowledge and to be trustworthy regarding a particular topic, e.g. "Dr. Jones is an authority on heart disease."²³ Generally, practical authority is possessed by "leaders" while epistemic authority is possessed by "experts" and the two senses are understood by context (I will use the terms "expert" and "epistemic authority" interchangeably). The key distinction is that practical authority is directed by the possessor's will, hence commands can be given, rescinded, and contradicted across time without impugning the authority which gives the commands weight. Conversely, claim to epistemic authority is lost, actively denied even, if the possessor asserts, retracts, and contradicts across time. This is because epistemic authority is directed not by the will, but by the truth about a body of knowledge. The two types occur in two states of reputational and objective authority. Extrapolating from Alvin Goldman's epistemic categories, "a reputational expert is someone widely believed to be an expert (in the objective sense), whether or not he really is one."²⁴ In short, a claim to authority does not an authority make. While conflating the two senses or the two types of authority can undermine trust and, by extension, knowledge transmission, the senses and types are not mutually exclusive. Great explanatory power comes from the potential permutations of the two types and two states of authority (see Chart 1.2.1.1).

²² John R. T Lamont, *Divine Faith* (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2004), 20–21.

²³ According to John Lamont, "A claim to teach with authority binds the person making the claim to his assertions, in a way that a claim to the right to command does not." *Ibid.*, 21.

²⁴ Alvin I. Goldman, "Experts: Which Ones Should You Trust?," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 63, no. 1 (2001): 91.

Chart 1.2.1.1



Once Chart 1 is given a context, we can identify socially beneficial and harmful positions (I will focus on epistemic authority, but similar claims can be made for political authority).²⁵ Positions which cause epistemic harm include AB (objective epistemic authority lacking reputation) since knowledge is overlooked or lost when an objective expert's contributions are not recognized (e.g. the contribution of minority views as feminist philosophers and philosophers of race have demonstrated); or AD (reputational epistemic authority lacking objectivity) when non-experts are falsely identified resulting in the transmission of opinions and falsehoods as facts. The intersection of epistemic and practical authority allows for greater harm if: a) BC (objective practical authority lacking epistemic) can obscure a lack of epistemic authority or conflate practical with epistemic

²⁵ Context determines who occupies each intersection and their potentiality for, and kinds of, beneficence or harm. In the context of a courtroom, examples of AB/D could be an eyewitness, BC/D a bailiff, and ABCD the judge. A bailiff is beneficial in keeping courtroom order, but harmful if relied upon for knowledge of the case or if their practical authority pressures AB/D into distorting facts.

authority; b) ACD (reputational practical and epistemic authority lacking objectivity) quells objections to its false epistemic claims made by people under its practical authority; and c) BCD (reputational and objective practical authority lacking epistemic) claims epistemic justification for claims (which are otherwise unjustifiable) to the subjugation of others.²⁶ Ideally, knowledge should be obtained from some intersection of epistemic and objective authority (i.e. AB, ABC, ABD, and ABCD).²⁷ Such objective experts, regardless of reputation, earn authority by collecting and developing facts pertinent to their area of expertise. However, objective authorities are more than receptacles of accurate information, they also require the propensity to apply their knowledge to new questions by knowing both where to obtain relevant knowledge and how to apply it.²⁸

Given these distinctions, Zagzebski shows how Joseph Raz's theses of "content independence" and "preemption" of political authority also apply to epistemic authority. For political authority, the "content" of a command is neutral in that the subject would have reason to comply with an alternative act had a different command been given. Zagzebski claims the parallel is true for epistemic authority: "If the epistemic authority had believed a different proposition, the subject would have had reason to believe the other proposition instead."²⁹ Raz's second thesis of preemption is more controversial. Most philosophers

²⁶ Wolfhart Pannenberg has raised concerns regarding authoritarian testimony. Cf. Wolfhart Pannenberg, "Response to the Discussion," in *Theology as History*, ed. James M. Robinson and John B. Cobb, 1st ed., New Frontiers in Theology, v. 3 (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 224–28.

²⁷ Intersections AB and ABC would at least need to be recognized to obtain knowledge from them thus slowly moving occupying entities into intersections ABD and ABCD.

²⁸ Goldman, "Experts: Which Ones Should You Trust?," 91. Zagzebski reminds that this trust in epistemic authorities is ultimately grounded in one's self-trust through the "Dependency Thesis for the authority of another's belief – If the belief *p* of a putative epistemic authority is authoritative for me, it should be formed in a way that I would conscientiously believe is deserving of emulation." Thus, "an epistemic authority is someone who does what I would do if I were more conscientious or better than I am at satisfying the aim of conscientiousness—getting the truth." Zagzebski, *Epistemic Authority*, 108–9.

²⁹ As we shall see, this is the result of the fact that: "Given that trust is directed towards the way in which the authority gets her belief, that is what we would expect" Zagzebski, *Epistemic Authority*, 107.

follow John Locke in assuming that while practical authorities can command subjects to obey, epistemic authorities cannot command others to believe.³⁰ Yet, going back to Zagzebski's definition of "authority," to be an epistemic authority is to have the power to cause others to believe something *preemptively*, namely just as "the fact that an authority requires performance of an action is a reason for its performance that replaces other relevant reasons and is not simply added to them" so too does "The fact that the authority has a belief *p* is a reason for me to believe *p* that replaces my other reasons relevant to believing *p* and is not simply added to them."³¹ Zagzebski offers the following justification thesis to defend a person having such epistemic authority:

Justification Thesis 1 for the Authority of Belief (JAB 1) - The authority of another person's belief for me is justified by my conscientious judgment that I am more likely to form a true belief and avoid a false belief if I believe what the authority believes than if I try to figure out what to believe myself.³²

The typical objection is that an epistemic authority's belief should not replace an agent's other reasons but merely be added to them, even if it is more heavily weighted.³³ This objection makes several assumptions: that an authority's belief automatically qualifies as evidence for me; and that all reasons are of the same kind, namely objective evidence.

³⁰ "For it is absurd that things should be enjoined by laws which are not in men's powers to perform. And to believe this or that to be true, does not depend on our will"; "Nobody is obliged in that matter to yield obedience unto the admonitions or injunctions of another, further than he himself is persuaded, Every man in that has the supreme and absolute authority of judging for himself." John Locke and Mario Montuori, *John Locke. A Letter concerning toleration: Latin and English texts revised and edited with variants and an introduction by Mario Montuori*. (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1963), 77, 81.

³¹ Zagzebski calls this the "Preemption Thesis for epistemic authority." Zagzebski, *Epistemic Authority*, 102, 107.

³² Zagzebski also offers a second thesis based on her overall argument from autonomy that "truth is what survives conscientious self-reflection, and we always need to trust the connection between conscientious self-reflection and success in reaching the truth" "JAB 2–The authority of another person's belief for me is justified by my conscientious judgment that I am more likely to form a belief that survives my conscientious self-reflection if I believe what the authority believes than if I try to figure out what to believe myself." *Ibid.*, 110–11.

³³ *Ibid.*, 114.

However, all reasons are not necessarily evidential, especially for medieval thinkers.³⁴ A crucial non-evidential reason is trust. The idea, however, that trust is blind in some capacity raises fears of epistemic tyranny, namely that authorities are insincere and/or have ulterior motives and thus gain power (perhaps practical authority) over others and infringe on their freedom.³⁵ Simultaneously, the division of cognitive labor and the incoherence of epistemic self-reliance necessitates communal epistemic authority. So, when should one trust a communal epistemic authority?

1.2.2 Communal Epistemic Authority

Despite the parallels between political and epistemic authority, Zagzebski notes two disanalogies in *how* the authorities function: the risk of tyranny and the limits of community size. The fear of bad practical authorities (e.g., tyrants) condones the separation of power and overrides any desire for benevolent dictators who are better able to bring about individual and collective good.³⁶ If truth is both the grounds of authority and a community's final goal, then there is no immediate risk of epistemic tyranny. Fear of epistemic tyranny only arises if the authority is insincere because their end is not truth but the tyrant's own personal ends.³⁷ Pointing to feminist thought, Zagzebski claims we should not fear epistemic tyranny, but "a more subtle kind of epistemic oppression" where authorities manipulate the beliefs of others "making it appear to the subject that she formed the belief through a rational process."³⁸ The problem is removed not by limiting authority as with the practical, but the historic aim of identifying epistemic authorities who are both

³⁴ This will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 6.

³⁵ Zagzebski, *Epistemic Authority*, 141.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 140.

³⁷ Historically this is more likely when practical and epistemic authority reside in the same entity. *Ibid.*, 141.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 142.

sincere and accurate.³⁹ The fear of strong epistemic authorities is thus mitigated if not removed entirely. The second disanalogy is that practical authority works with large populations even assuming the authority has no trusting relationship with, has different aims than, and is distant from the subjects.⁴⁰ Conversely, epistemic authorities struggle with larger communities because they require trust, a shared goal, and, often, intimacy. These differences render Joseph Raz's normal justification thesis⁴¹ of practical authority inadequate for epistemic authority so that Zagzebski offers a new justification thesis tailored to the difference of both small and large communities.⁴²

Given that the tested justification theses for practical authority prove inadequate for epistemic authority, Zagzebski provides the General Justification of Authority Thesis.⁴³ The thesis shows how adopting communal beliefs on authority is justified insofar as one prudently judges that the belief accepted on authority is superior to beliefs obtained via independent efforts. Variations of this thesis aim to answer two questions: 1) what justifies

³⁹ Ibid., 143. The problem can reassert itself in identifying authorities if privileged and discriminatory ideas color what traits an "expert" should exhibit.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 140–41.

⁴¹ The *Normal Justification Thesis* (NJ thesis) states that the normal way to establish that a person has authority over another person is to show that the alleged subject is likely better to comply with reasons that apply to him if he accepts the directives of the alleged authority as authoritatively binding and tries to follow them, rather than by trying to follow the reasons that apply to him directly. Ibid., 108.

⁴² Our topic assumes large communities, but it should be noted that the justification of epistemic authority is different for small communities on account of four unique features. First, both practical and epistemic authority in small communities (e.g., construction teams, orchestras, monasteries, etc.) are defined by the "purpose" of the community, not that of its individual members. The result is the community's reasons for acting become the member's reasons only upon joining and cease upon leaving. Second, members have reasons to modify their personal end on the word of the authority. As is common in learning philosophy, students can be reasonable to modify their goals of study on their teacher's authority "even though it was trust in the teacher's ability to aid him in acting on those reasons that led him to accept the authority of the teacher." Third, small community authorities often resemble exemplars rather than leaders, hence an individual's trust in their admiration for the leader justifies their authority more so than leader's ability to help individuals reach personal goals. However, the final reason indicates that successfully learning a desired practice justifies the authority of the teacher. Ibid., 145–51.

⁴³ "The authority of another person is justified for me by my conscientious judgment that if I do what the authority directs (or believe what the authority tells me), the result will survive my own conscientious self-reflection better than if I try to figure out what to do/believe myself." Ibid., 148.

my community in taking a belief on authority? and 2) what justifies *me* in taking a belief that *my community* is justified in believing on authority? In response to the first, it is reasonable for a member to adopt beliefs in accordance with the community's system of epistemic prudence, i.e., a member will more effectively obtain truth by trusting the system with its authority structure than by alternative means. However, this reasoning must be more sophisticated than accepting an authority because someone I trust accepts that entity as authoritative.⁴⁴ Instead, such a transitive adoption of authority must follow a "hierarchy of experts" in which justification comes "from the judgment of the experts on the experts,"⁴⁵ which Zagzebski account for using the:

Expansion of Authority Principle 1 (EAP 1): The authority of B's testimony for me is justified by my conscientious judgment that A is more likely to get the truth in some domain than I am, and A judges that B is more likely to get the truth than she is.⁴⁶

Recognition of epistemic authority can thereby extend beyond persons one has met (and hence trust). The community develops a structured epistemic hierarchy, but only in a weak sense of communal epistemic authority since the impersonal nature is only effective in transmitting information, not individual community members' experiences, emotions, or prior beliefs.⁴⁷

To answer the 2nd question, Zagzebski modifies EAP 1 to permit epistemic authority to pass by "chains of interpersonal trust," but only for more homogeneous communities (e.g., similar life experiences, background beliefs, and dispositions):

⁴⁴ Zagzebski refers to this as the "General Expansion of Authority Principle" which fails because individual conscientious self-reflection differs between individuals.

⁴⁵ Keith Lehrer (1977) and Hardwig also refer to a "hierarchy of experts" (1985). Zagzebski 152 Hardwig, "Epistemic Dependence." 341

⁴⁶ Zagzebski, *Epistemic Authority*, 152. This thesis assumes truth is objective and thus the same for everyone.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

Expansion of Authority Principle 2 (EAP 2) – The authority of B's testimony for me is justified by my conscientious judgment that A's judgment about who the authority is in some domain is more likely to satisfy my conscientious reflection than my own judgment, and A judges that B is an authority in that domain.⁴⁸

This mechanism can provide a strong sense of communal epistemic authority, but the requisite homogeneity cannot be expected of large communities. The solution comes from seeing a community as an extended self and accepting its structure of authority as amenable with one's own.⁴⁹ Since the communal goal of truth can differ from individual goals of truth, the beliefs of collective doxastic agents should be seen as mirroring those of individuals where assertions within the community are akin to self-reflection and assertions to those outside are akin to person-to-person testimony.⁵⁰ The result is that Zagzebski modifies her earlier justification of epistemic authority for individuals—"I"—to fit the extended communal self—"we":

The fact that We believe *p* can give me a preemptive reason to believe *p*, but since I am part of the community and accept it as an extended self, the authority that We have is not something alien to me, as the authority of the political state often is. The ultimate authority over me is still myself, and what I take to be the authority is an extension of myself.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ "A community in the sense I mean is an extended self because it has many of the features of a person, and the persons who are its members relate to it in the same *sort* of way they relate to themselves, although in healthy individuals there is never any doubt about the difference between self and community. A community has a communal consciousness with the same components upon which its members can reflect as individuals have when they engage in self-reflection. A community has a history of experiences; it has communal beliefs; it may have communal emotions expressed and fostered in the community's stories. It often has hopes and plans for the future. It has values. It often acts as an agent. A member of the community will refer to these components of the community consciousness as 'our' experiences, beliefs, values, and so on, and its acts as 'our' acts." Ibid., 153–54.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 154.

⁵¹ Zagzebski also provides two communal variants of the theses for Justification of Epistemic Authority: **Justification of Communal Epistemic Authority 1 (JCEA 1)**- "The authority of my community is justified for me by my conscientious judgment that I am more likely to believe the truth and avoid falsehood if I believe what We believe than if I try to figure out what to believe in a way that is independent of Us" and **Justification of Communal Epistemic Authority 2 (JCEA 2)** The authority of my community is justified for me by my conscientious judgment that if I believe what We believe, the result will survive my conscientious self-reflection better than if I try to figure out what to believe in a way that is independent of Us." Ibid., 155.

The individual justification for accepting communal epistemic authority flows from blurring the line distinguishing "my reasons to believe" and "why my extended self believes."⁵²

Given the pervasive role of communal epistemic authority, the social turn and the bootstrapping problem seem to inevitably lead to constructivism. Knowledge seems to only have currency within a given epistemic community governed by its own structure and hierarchy of experts. The analysis of the reality all communities share is ultimately determined by each community's interpretation, interpretations which are effectively predetermined by assumptions and methods previously established. In this sense Bertrand Russell's critique of Thomas Aquinas applies to all, including himself.⁵³ Escape from this circularity can only be found through an objective (i.e., culturally neutral) epistemic authority beyond all communal epistemic authority to which we could compare. The history of philosophy is the story of what neutral objective authority one should trust for knowledge.

⁵² Ibid., 156. This notion is complicated by what Stephen John calls a natural vs. artificial consensus: "In a natural consensus, typically, each individual comes to accept some claim, which she then asserts; in an artificial consensus, it is possible that each member of the group may be willing to endorse some statement as the group's assertion while, herself, not accepting that claim." Stephen John, "Epistemic Trust and the Ethics of Science Communication: Against Transparency, Openness, Sincerity and Honesty," *Social Epistemology* 32, no. 2 (2018): 80.

⁵³ Bertrand Russell critiqued Aquinas for knowing the truth before philosophizing: "There is little of the true philosophic spirit in Aquinas. He does not, like the Platonic Socrates, set out to follow wherever the argument may lead. He is not engaged in an inquiry, the result of which it is impossible to know in advance. Before he begins to philosophize, he already knows the truth; it is declared in the Catholic faith. If he can find apparently rational arguments for some parts of the faith, so much the better: If he cannot, he need only fall back on revelation. The finding of arguments for a conclusion given in advance is not philosophy, but special pleading. I cannot, therefore, feel that he deserves to be put on a level with the best philosophers either of Greece or of modern times." Bertrand Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996). 463.

1.3 Self-Trust, Blind-Trust, and Virtuous-Trust

Having established the nature of authority, we can see that the quest for an objective epistemic standard, or the solution to "what authority should you trust?", reveals three cognitive approaches to knowledge: 1) closed-rationalism which exhibits self-trust in only accepting knowledge in accordance with one's employment of an epistemic method thought to be demanded by reason; 2) rational-fideism on account of its blind-trust in accepting any claim until opposing details emerge; and 3) open-rationalism whose hallmark is virtuous-trust in accepting knowledge from virtuous epistemic authorities.⁵⁴ Insofar as trust is a form of faith, it is often overlooked as a means to ultimate authority since philosophers tend to maintain the faith-reason dichotomy best summarized by Boethius of Dacia in the 13th century:

For the view of the philosophers' rests on demonstrations and on other possible arguments in those matters whereof they speak, but in many instances faith (*fides*) rests on miracles and not on rational arguments. But that which is held because it follows from rational arguments is not faith but knowledge (*scientia*).⁵⁵

Broadly construed this division presumes rationalism vs. fideism in which either the epistemic rules of logic, demonstration, and dialectics frequently work contrary to revealed truths resulting in agnosticism or irrationalism, or there are different epistemic levels such

⁵⁴ These three approaches mirror Harry Wolfson's distinction between "rationalist single faith theory" (assent to teachings "only as derivatively known by demonstration"), "authoritarian single faith theory" (assent to teachings "only as immediately known by revelation") and their joint usage in "double faith theory" in "The Double Faith Theory in Clement, Saadia, Averroes and St. Thomas, and Its Origin in Aristotle and the Stoics." Harry Austryn Wolfson, "The Double Faith Theory in Clement, Saadia, Averroes and St. Thomas, and Its Origin in Aristotle and the Stoics," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 33, no. 2 (1942): 223.

⁵⁵ Tr. mod. Boethius of Dacia, "On the eternity of the world," in *On the supreme good, On the eternity of the world, On dreams*, trans. John F. Wippel (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1987), 36. *sententia enim philosophorum innititur demonstrationibus et certis rationibus possibilibus in rebus de quibus loquuntur, fides autem in multis innititur miraculis et non rationibus: quod enim tenetur propter hoc quod per rationes conclusum est, non est fides, sed scientia.* Boethius of Dacia, "De Aeternitate Mundi," in *Boetii de Dacia Tractatus de aeternitate mundi*, ed. Geza Sajo, Quellen und Studien zur Geschichte der Philosophie 4 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1964), 31–32.

that, per Boethius, "it is foolish to seek rational argumentation for things which should be believed by reason of Law."⁵⁶

1.3.1 Closed Rationalism & Self-Trust

The most prevalent position in the history of philosophy rejects (or fails to recognize) the influence of communal epistemic authority. The most trustworthy, or least doubtful, source of knowledge is yourself. The ideal is captured in Ibn-Tufail's philosophical tale *Hayy ibn Yaqzān* of a boy who was raised by a doe on a deserted island isolated from language, society, and tradition whose uncorrupted self-teaching allows him to ascertain ultimate truth.⁵⁷ When Hayy ibn Yaqzān finally encounters humans he is able to distinguish ultimate truth from religious imagery and materialism, calling those who are able to recognize reason to abandon such distractions. Ibn-Tufail's key lesson is epistemic self-reliance: the only authority you should trust is yourself.⁵⁸ Other people, your community, even your faith, are unreliable. *Hayy ibn Yaqzān* should evoke the concept of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's "noble savage" since the fruit of the European Enlightenment, as Samar Attar argues, can be traced back to the roots of Ibn Tufail's story.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Boethius of Dacia, "On the eternity of the world," 36.

Quia sicut in his quae ex lege credi debent, quae tamen prò se rationem non habent, quaerere rationem stultum est, — quia qui hoc facit, quaerit quod impossibile est inveniri, Boethius of Dacia, "De Aeternitate Mundi," 31.

⁵⁷ Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Malik Ibn Ṭufayl and Lenn Evan Goodman, *Ibn Tufayl's Hayy Ibn Yaqzān: A Philosophical Tale Translated with Introduction and Notes* (Los Angeles: Gee tee bee, 2003).

⁵⁸ Linda Zagzebski refers to this as "epistemic egoism", of which there are two forms, extreme and standard. Zagzebski, *Epistemic Authority*, 54. Elizabeth Fricker refers to this as being an "autonomous knower" writing "this ideal type relies on no one else for any of her knowledge...tak[ing] no one else's word for anything, but accepts only what she has found out for herself, relying only on her own cognitive faculties and investigative and inferential powers" and is explicitly espoused by Descartes and Locke. Elizabeth Fricker, "Testimony and Epistemic Autonomy," in *The Epistemology of Testimony*, ed. Jennifer Lackey and Ernest Sosa (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 225.

⁵⁹ Samar Attar says that "Hayy Ibn Yaqzan could be considered one of the most important books that heralded the beginning of modern science in Europe." She shows that the ideas expressed in Hayy ibn Yaqzan appear in the thought of major European thinkers including: Roger Bacon (1220-1292), Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), Rene Descartes (1596-1650), John Locke (1632-1704), Isaac Newton (1642-1727), Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1646-1716), Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), and even Charles Darwin (1809-1882). The parallel idea is found in Hayy ibn Yaqzan: "Ibn Tufayl's protagonist, Hayy Ibn Yaqzan, had no religion. He was not a

Despite the importance of the self, knowledge from others is not dismissed. Hume is famous for his theory of testimony, but it reduces to traditional individual knowledge sources (such as perception and memory).⁶⁰ Testimony cannot be a generative source of knowledge since it reduces to other non-subspecies of knowledge (primarily intuition). Likewise, transmission typically reduces to back-to-back instances of generation.⁶¹ Hume exhibits this ideal of epistemic self-reliance most poignantly in section 10 of "An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding" regarding miracles where he denigrates the authority of scripture or tradition as "merely founded in the testimony of the apostles, who were eye-witnesses to those miracles of our Savior", claiming Christianity rests on testimony which is a weaker form of evidence than perception and should therefore yield in the face of "just reasoning."⁶² In short, trust should be placed in oneself and never in outside epistemic authorities (even communal ones), for the inferior evidence of testimony must yield to the stronger evidence of personal experience. For this self-reliance to be authoritative, individuals must trust in their reliable performance of an epistemic method. Roger Pouivet calls this "Epistemological Methodism" in which "the determination of what we know or

Muslim, a Christian, or a Jew. He was not white, or black. When he matured on his own without the help of parents, society, or religious mentors, he managed to discover some power in the universe, and he gave it a name from the science of mechanics, i.e., the Mover of the Universe, not as God, Allah, or Yehua. When he became acquainted with other human beings, he did not convert to their religion, or use subservient means to convert them to his. He realized that conventional rituals, literary interpretations of scriptures and abandonment of reason and evidence in favor of blind faith could be very harmful. He endeavored to reason with other human beings, but never sensationalized their shortcomings, or spoke with contempt about their religion. There is no doubt that he felt immense pity for those who neglected to use their reason, and thought that they would eventually use it if they had the will to do so. Hayy did not condemn religions *per se*. He saw some benefits to those who needed it. On the other hand, he realized that truth was something relative, and that people who did use their reason did not exactly reach his own conclusions." Samar Attar, *The Vital Roots of European Enlightenment: Ibn Tufayl's Influence on Modern Western Thought* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2010), 52, 10.

⁶⁰ Reductionism as a theory of testimony will be discussed at length in chapter 2.

⁶¹ Cf. chapter 6 and Greco, "The Role of Trust in Testimonial Knowledge."

⁶² David Hume, "An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding," in *The Complete Works and Correspondence of David Hume.*, ed. T. H Green, T. H Grose, and Norman Kemp Smith, vol. 5 (Charlottesville, Va.: InteLex Corporation, 2000), 109, <http://crkn.nlx.com/xtf/view?docId=hume/hume.xml>.

can know assumes the prior formulation of epistemic criteria."⁶³ Since trust returns to the ground-up epistemic method to evaluate knowledgeable experts to form a closed-loop, I call this first cognitive approach closed-rationalism.

Insistence on an epistemic method that determines how *evidentia* leads to knowledge is a form of rationalism. "Reason" has a systematic task to build knowledge from the ground-up using natural causes. We see this clearly in Aristotelian science as outlined in *Posterior Analytics* 1.2 which medieval thinkers perceived as the sole path to certain (philosophical or scientific) knowledge.⁶⁴ Certain knowledge was obtained by the method of demonstration based on Aristotle's logic (and often metaphysics), in which validly formed syllogisms built on true premises necessarily reveal true conclusions.⁶⁵ A side-effect of epistemological methodism is it also erects the boundaries of truth limiting what counts as knowledge.⁶⁶ Anything beyond the limits set by the epistemic method are "out of bounds" or must fall under the judgment of the method. The strong-rationalism of thinkers like Averroes and Maimonides reduces testimony to an epistemic method in this way. As an example, prophecy must be merely another form of rational knowledge using the same epistemology as science and metaphysics. For Maimonides, prophecy is a rational

⁶³ My translation. Pouivet, *Épistémologie des croyances religieuses*. 83. The ethical parallel might be found in adherents to Anscombe's "Modern Moral Philosophy" whose notion of morality is "that acting in a morally right manner is dependent on the correct application of a particular rule." Sanford, *Before Virtue*, 47.

⁶⁴ Cf. *Posterior Analytics* 1.2, 70b19-70b24.

⁶⁵ For a concise discussion of the method of medieval demonstration, cf. Richard C. Taylor, "Ibn Rushd/Averroes and 'Islamic' Rationalism," *Medieval Encounters* 15, no. 2-4 (2009): 225-35. 229. Since Aristotelian demonstrative knowledge is the strongest and most certain form of knowledge, any claim unprovable by reason cannot obtain certainty, and if certainty equals knowledge, then such claims are effectively unknowable.

⁶⁶ Scholars such as Quentin Meillassoux has not un-controversially argued that reason has no limits in which the only absolute is the necessity of contingency; however, Christopher Watkins argues this comes perilously close to proving the very object of faith Meillassoux set out to disprove. Cf. both Quentin Meillassoux, *Après la finitude: essai sur la nécessité de la contingence* (Paris: Éd. du Seuil, 2012).; And Christopher Watkin, *Difficult Atheism: Post-Theological Thinking in Alain Badiou, Jean-Luc Nancy and Quentin Meillassoux* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011).

process, an emanation of an intelligible form from God via the causality of the Agent Intellect. Prophets require the necessary rational faculties to receive the intense degree of the intellectual emanation and the necessary imaginative faculties to concretely represent what they received intellectually. Averroes likewise describes a true prophet not as revealing knowledge beyond the limits of natural reason but making knowledge and laws known that "are in accordance with the truth and which bring about acts that will determine the happiness of the totality of mankind."⁶⁷ The theories of prophecy implied by Averroes and set out by Maimonides reveal that once demonstration was accepted as the method to obtain certain knowledge, sacred texts must yield to demonstration. However, whether there is a transcendent reason that humans imperfectly participate in, every epistemic method is necessarily anthropocentric and will be limited as much as human intellectual capacity.

Self-trust as the ultimate epistemic authority is a non-starter. There are no Ḥayy ibn Yaḡzāns. Ibn Tufail's allegorical novel of the epistemic ideal in which an autodidactic feral child discovers and employs rational methods to reach ultimate truth should underscore several realities. First, the value of truth and the value of self-reliance are competing goods; they are opposed to one another. If knowledge is perceived as superior to other epistemic states, then self-reliance undercuts knowledge, since most of the information we possess

⁶⁷ Averroës, *Tahafut Al-Tahafut (The Incoherence of the Incoherence)*, trans. Simon van den Bergh (London: Luzac, 1954), 316. tr.mod. Averroes maintains a skeptical view of testimony such that divine testimony would undermine the certainty of revelation compared to his notion that prophets are philosophers working through demonstration. The truth of the prophet and the Qur'an are recognized through the consequences of what they have done for humans (not miracles which could be mere trickery). Cf. Taylor R.C, "Averroes and the Philosophical Account of Prophecy," *Studia Graeco-Arabica Studia Graeco-Arabica*, no. 8 (2018): 291.

comes from what others say or write, otherwise known as testimony.⁶⁸ If one's aim is knowledge (even mere belief justified by available evidence) all but those who Zagzebski calls the "extreme epistemic egoist" should accept authoritative testimony when their epistemic position is inferior to that of the expert. Self-reliance comes at the cost of less knowledge, so that relying on the self ultimately limits the self. Second, it is impossible for an individual to ascertain knowledge, let alone (ultimate) truth, without an epistemic or cognitive division of labor (whether authoritarian or egalitarian).⁶⁹ Human life-expectancy is simply too short. Third, the ideal of self-reliance is incoherent. As Zagzebski claims, the faculties we trust in ourselves reveal the same trustworthy faculties in others so that it is inconsistent to distrust others.⁷⁰ Finally, epistemological methodism's requirement that one trust themselves to reliably perform a rational epistemic imperative is a dead-end. Robert Pasnau's *After Certainty* tells a story about the history of epistemology from Aristotle to Hume through the establishment of epistemic ideals and their subsequent loosening when those ideals cannot be reached. Settling for less and less epistemic confidence, the epistemic quest provides one failed epistemic method after another leading to the impossibility of certain knowledge. Pasnau claims that certainty is unachievable and instead we should believe "hopefully."⁷¹ This dead-end led to the recent anti-evidentialist turn in general epistemology away from the idea that *all* knowledge (justified belief,

⁶⁸ "The person who values self-reliance presumably also wants true beliefs, but he values them more if he gets them a certain way—by using his own powers. One way to express this desire is that we want to get credit for the truths we acquire; we want the truths we get to be attributed to us as agents." Zagzebski, *Epistemic Authority*, 117–18.

⁶⁹ Robert Pasnau's account is strongly egalitarian, cf. Robert Pasnau, "Divisions of Epistemic Labour: Some Remarks on the History of Fideism and Esotericism Knowledge, Mind and Language," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 189 (2013): 83–117. Also cf. Fricker, "Testimony and Epistemic Autonomy."

⁷⁰ Zagzebski, *Epistemic Authority*, 52.

⁷¹ This remains intellectually honest since hope is an affective rather than cognitive state. Pasnau, *After Certainty*, 136–38.

reasonable belief, rational belief) must accord with an "epistemic imperative" in the form of beliefs supported by evidence.⁷² The subsequent "social turn" sees the path forward in stepping past philosophy's heavily individualistic focus on knowledge acquisition via doxastic rules by accurately reflecting the complex reality of social relationships and institutions.⁷³ Ultimate epistemic authority must include trusting others.

1.3.2 Rational Fideism & Blind-Trust

As illustrated above, trusting epistemic authority is in some sense blind, for if one were in a position to know then they would not need to trust someone else. In the contemporary testimonial debate, some hold that testimony as a source of knowledge is justified by an entitlement or "a kind of *presumptive right* to take every understood utterance as knowledge-generating and hence knowledge-imparting."⁷⁴ Trust is placed in a testimonial faculty or the testimony itself (at least until given a reason not to).⁷⁵ John Lamont observes this amounts to following a rule, such that it likewise falls under Pouivet's "epistemological methodism", to justify the acceptance of testimony as a unique source of knowledge.⁷⁶ Opponents like Elizabeth Fricker see such *presumptive trust* leading to massive gullibility or the transmission of what John Greco refers to as "garbage," neither of which help in obtaining truth.⁷⁷ In fact, blind trust is often attributed to religious groups on account of its

⁷² John Greco, "Transmitting Faith (And Garbage)," *European Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 10, no. 3 (2018): 86–88.

⁷³ Alvin Goldman claims epistemology's historical "emphasis was on evaluating doxastic attitudes (beliefs and disbeliefs) of individuals in abstraction from their social environment." Goldman and Blanchard, "Social Epistemology."

⁷⁴ Bimal Krishna Matilal and Arindam Chakrabarti, eds., *Knowing from Words: Western and Indian Philosophical Analysis of Understanding and Testimony* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 1994), 8.

⁷⁵ This approach might be seen as a predecessor to the anti-reductionist theory of testimonial justification typically traced back to Thomas Reid, as discussed in chapter 2.

⁷⁶ Lamont, *Divine Faith*, 144.

⁷⁷ Cf. Elizabeth Fricker, "Against Gullibility," *Synthese Library*, no. 230 (1994): 125–61; Greco, "Transmitting Faith (And Garbage)."

similarities to Christian scripture's famous definition of faith as "the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."⁷⁸ This alignment with fideism fits since testimony as the sole *evidentia* permits high credence in a belief without any other criteria in the absence of defeaters.⁷⁹ Since this theory includes blind trust in non-supernatural *evidentia*, I call this second approach rational fideism.

Given the rationalism-fideism dichotomy, the disreputable alternative of fideism emboldens those holding to self-trust's application of rational methods. Historically, several philosophers like Averroes and Maimonides castigated the *Mutakallimūn* for relying on blind-trust and thereby making reason subservient to religion by building rational arguments on presupposed revelatory premises unproven by reason. Maimonides devotes four full chapters in I.71 of his *Guide for the Perplexed* (*Dalālat al-Hā'irīn*) to refuting *kalam*'s *post-hoc* demonstrations to promote religious doctrines.⁸⁰ Averroes

⁷⁸ Hebrews 11:1 RSV

⁷⁹ Alvin Plantinga's "Properly Basic Beliefs" arguably fit here, cf. Alvin Plantinga, "The Reformed Objection to Natural Theology," *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 54 (1980): 49–62. and Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Faith and rationality, reason and belief in God* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983).

⁸⁰ Sections 1.74-76. These include: an atomistic and occasionalist understanding of the physical world; the creation of the world; inferring God's existence from creation; and finally the unity and incorporeality of God. Herbert A. Davidson, *Moses Maimonides: The Man and His Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 89. Herbert Davidson summarizes the philosopher's view succinctly saying, "Maimonides' opinion...was that the Kalam thinkers failed to grasp the criteria whereby propositions regarding the universe can properly be judged true or false, and their failure to do so disqualified them from being classified as philosophers." *Ibid.*, 87. To support his claim, he cites both the *Guide for the Perplexed* 1.73 (10, excursus) and al-Fārābī's *Risālah fi'l-'aql*. See al-Farabi, *Risālah fi'l-'aql*, ed. Maurice Bouyges (Beyrouth: Dar El-Machreq Sarl, 1983), 7–8. Shlomo Pines likewise points out in the introduction to his translation of the *Dalālat*, "Maimonides unreservedly accepts al-Fārābī's view that the unique function of *kalam* consists in the defense of religion, which means that it does not regard the grasp of theoretical truth as an end in itself." Moses Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed, Volume 1*, trans. Shlomo Pines (University of Chicago Press, 1974), CXXVI. Pines does note that al-Fārābī's view "does not seem to be wholly correct, especially with regard to the early period of Mutazilite kalam". This attitude has also been found in Averroes by Richard Taylor: "Hence, it seems reasonable to conclude that Averroes found in philosophy and its sciences the most complete and precise truth content and highest levels of knowledge and understanding and from them constructed his worldview. Given that perspective, religion — which is indispensable for proper human political development— is like an Aristotelian practical science in that it concerns good and right conduct in the achievement of an end attained in action, not truths to be known for their own sake". Richard C. Taylor,

likewise criticizes arguments made by the *Mutakallimūn* as non-demonstrative in *Uncovering [Religious] Methods (al-Kashf ‘an manāhij)*.⁸¹ Even al-Ghazālī attacked *Ta'limism*, the new *Shi'ite* view of *batinism* (i.e. Ismailis), which taught all things have an apparent and a hidden aspect than can only be known through the direction of an infallible teacher, namely the Imam from the *Shi'ite* line of succession back to Muhammad. Al-Ghazālī castigates the *Ta'limites* as seeing an authoritative teacher's "categorical pronouncements without needing any proof" as the only path to certain knowledge.⁸² While al-Ghazālī himself affirms an infallible teacher in Muhammad, he differentiates *Ta'limism* as "deceiving the common folk and the dim-witted by showing the need for the authoritative teacher, and to disputing men's denial of the need for authoritative teaching by strong and effective argument."⁸³ In short, *Ta'limism* rests on blind-trust, which al-Ghazālī denounces as *taqlīd* (blind and unwavering imitation), a charge that al-Ghazālī similarly leveled at philosophers in his *Incoherence of the Philosophers*.⁸⁴

"Averroes and the Philosophical Account of Prophecy," *Studia Graeco-Arabica*, no. 8 (2018): 304. It seems plausible such a view could be attributed to Maimonides as well.

⁸¹ Cf. Averroës, *الكشف عن مناهج الأدلة في عقائد الملة، أو، نقد علم الكلام ضدا على الترسيم الأبيولوجي للعقيدة ودفاعا عن العلم وحرية الاختيار في الفكر والفعل / al-Kashf ‘an manāhij al-adillah fī ‘aqā'id al-millah*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Ābid Jābirī (Bayrūt: Markaz Dirāsāt al-Waḥdah al-‘Arabīyah, 2007). For an English translation see Averroës, *Faith and reason in Islam: Averroes' exposition of religious arguments*, trans. Ibrahim Y Najjar (Oxford: Oneworld, 2001). 19. Also commonly known as "Uncovering the Methods of Proofs with respect to the Beliefs of the Religious Community".

⁸² "A fourth respondent would have had contact with the Ta'limites. So, he would declare: 'The truth is doubtful, the way to it hard, there is much disagreement about it, and no one view is preferable to any other. Moreover, rational proofs contradict one another so that no reliance can be placed on the opinion of independent thinkers. But the advocate of authoritative teaching makes categorical pronouncements without needing any proof. How, then, can we give up the certain because of the uncertain?'" al-Ghazālī, *Freedom and Fulfillment: An Annotated Translation of al-Ghazālī's al-Munqidh Min al-Ḍalāl and Other Relevant Works of al-Ghazālī*, trans. Joseph McCarthy (Boston, Mass.: Twayne Publishers, 1980), 104.

⁸³ "In fact, the right way to proceed is to acknowledge the need for an authoritative teacher who must also be infallible. But our infallible teacher is Muhammad-God's blessing and peace be upon him!" Ibid., 83, 89.

⁸⁴ Al-Ghazālī rebukes the philosophers for merely trading in the *taqlīd* of the Imam for the *taqlīd* of the Greek philosophers. Richard M. Frank, "Al-Ghazālī on Taqlīd: Scholars, Theologians and Philosophers," *Zeitschrift Für Geschichte Der Arabisch-Islamischen Wissenschaften* 7 (1991): 245.

In juxtaposing faith with a rational approach to truth, faith must be irrational creating a type of fideism. Assuming the rationalism-fideism dichotomy in which rationalism trusts the self to acquire knowledge and fideism blindly trusts others results in knowledge that is either too hard or too easy. Neither option offers a suitable objective standard for knowledge to escape from social constructivism. However, there is another sense to *fides* other than an "act of religious faith" which Augustine and other medieval thinkers understood, namely *fides* as "trust" or "faithfulness" especially as it pertains to "trust in a person or thing," which produces *confidence*.

1.3.3 Open Rationalism & Virtuous-Trust

Recovering the historical aspect of faith as "trust" grants access to an often-overlooked epistemological approach to knowledge based on trusting virtuous speakers which offers at least a middle ground between self-trust and blind-trust and at most a truly objective source in divine speech. This second approach or "source" of knowledge alongside philosophical demonstration is commonly referred to as "faith" since it captures knowledge from God. The Latin *fides* is a polysemic term, which Christophe Grellard shows means faith, trust, reliability, and fidelity, and thus plays a larger role under social epistemology as "trust."⁸⁵ The Greek *pistis* in Aristotle reveals the same polysemic nature. Owen Goldin argues that *pistis* is a *pros hen equivocal* such that a "state of being rationally led by what another says is the core sense of *pistis*."⁸⁶ The exact epistemic nature of "trust" is debated (as discussed in chapter 2), but trust fits best in a virtue-theoretic framework. We see this

⁸⁵ Grellard explores this "polysemic concept" in Christophe Grellard, P Hoffmann, and Laurent Lavaud, *Genèses antiques et médiévales de la foi*. (Turnhout: Brepols, 2019). Also Cf. Christophe Grellard, "Beyond the Ideal, the Social?," in *Medieval and Early Modern Epistemology: After Certainty*, ed. Alexander W Hall, Gyula Klima, and Martin Klein, vol. 17, Proceedings of the Society for Medieval Logic and Metaphysics (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2020), 71–86.

⁸⁶ Owen Goldin, "Pistis and Persuasion in Aristotle," *Elenchos* 41, no. 1 (2020): 59.

historically since the emphasis was not in trusting testimony itself, but in trusting both one's own epistemic virtues and those of the speaker. The listener cannot attach high credence to a telling without recognizing the situation they find themselves in and assessing if the speaker is knowledgeable and virtuous. Roger Pouivet calls this "Epistemological Particularism" in which "the determination of epistemic criteria consists in generalizing from particular cases of knowledge."⁸⁷ Listeners must determine the legitimate value of the belief, but are not forced back to the epistemic method.⁸⁸ As such, virtuous-trust in epistemic authority aligns outside the rationalism and fideism dichotomy.⁸⁹ Since virtuous-trust remains open to the transmission of knowledge of a speaker (via the epistemic virtues of both the speaker and the listener), I call this third approach open-rationalism. Since open-rationalism is not confined to an epistemic method but remains open to virtuous speakers it permits knowledge from outside the community. However, developing trust in a non-community source requires additional vetting. In understanding faith as trust suggests, one non-communal epistemic authority whose testimony can be accepted is God.

⁸⁷ My translation. Pouivet, *Épistémologie des croyances religieuses*. 83. Alvin Goldman's seminal article "Experts: Which Ones Should You Trust?" directly addresses this issue with a lengthy evaluation of five sources potentially available to hearers to assess whether or not to trust a speaker: "(A) Arguments presented by the contending experts to support their own views and critique their rivals' views. (B) Agreement from additional putative experts on one side or other of the subject in question. (C) Appraisals by "meta-experts" of the experts' expertise (including appraisals reflected in formal credentials earned by the experts). (D) Evidence of the experts' interests and biases vis-a-vis the question at issue [e.g., the speaker's sincerity]. (E) Evidence of the experts' past 'track-records'" Goldman, "Experts: Which Ones Should You Trust?," 93.

⁸⁸ Such notions can be found as early as Aristotle's work in the *Rhetoric* in which one must assess the *ethos* of the speaker, especially as speakers use *rhetoric* to convince hearers to believe them. For a concise summary and contemporary appeal for a return to Aristotle's three modes of proof cf. Krista C McCormack, "Ethos, Pathos, and Logos: The Benefits of Aristotelian Rhetoric in the Courtroom," *Washington University Jurisprudence Review*, 7, no. 1 (2014): 131–55.

⁸⁹ Due to the role of trust, this view most resembles the interpersonal view of testimony (IVT), also called "assurance theory" where a speaker gives assurance to the hearer that the statement is true. Cf. Richard Moran, "Getting Told and Being Believed," in *The Epistemology of Testimony*, ed. Jennifer Lackey and Ernest Sosa (Oxford University Press, 2006), 272–306.

Said another way, open-rationalists are not limited to a single method of acquiring truth, but open to a second.⁹⁰

Openness to two paths of knowledge is not of course "double truth." Even though Boethius of Dacia, along with Siger of Brabant, were accused of holding to contrary truths (such that the same proposition may be false in philosophy and true in theology or vis versa), Richard Dales is convinced "there never was such a doctrine."⁹¹ Neither is faith's role to address matters of ultimate concern left unresolved due to natural reason's limitations.⁹² Faith as trust is not believing because of miracles but trusting God as a speaker. In the Abrahamic faiths, revelation is testimony.⁹³ As such, they perceive the teachings of their faith community as authoritative whether the Rabbinic Court and

⁹⁰ Such thinkers readily adopt reason, but often have a different perspective of it as Robiglio notes with Scotus: "We see that here Scotus refers to the use of philosophical or human reason not, so to speak, originally and autonomously, but as the final links to his argumentative chain. Human reason is a criterion for truth when, and only when, its thinking is performed in the space opened by divine teaching and authority. *Philosophy has a critical, rather than systematic task. The unity of truth is like a large room, which human reasoning can clean and keep bright and orderly, yet the walls and boundaries of which are not established, but rather found by reason.* This last point, by the way, is not something which contrasts with reason's nature, since the human mind can see its own limits and, on its own, seek a "common doctor" to guide it." Andrea A. Robiglio, "A Thomistic Ring to Scotus's Hermeneutics? : The Doctor Communis, John Duns Scotus, and the Will," in *John Duns Scotus, Philosopher Proceedings of "The Quadruple Congress" on John Duns Scotus Part 1*, ed. Mary Beth Ingham and Oleg Bychkov, vol. 3, Archa Verbi, Subsidia (St. Bonaventure, NY: Franciscan Institute Publications, 2010), 72.

⁹¹ "When someone puts aside rational arguments, he immediately ceases to be a philosopher; philosophy does not rest on revelations and miracles. You yourself hold and ought to hold that many things are true, which, however, if you did affirm them to be true only insofar as human reason could allow you to do so, you should never grant them." tr.mod. Boethius of Dacia, "On the eternity of the world," 65.

Statim enim quando aliquis dimittit rationes, cessat esse philosophus, nec innitur philosophia revelationibus et miraculis.' Cum ergo tu ipse dicis et dicere debes multa esse vera, quae tamen, si non affirmes vera nisi quantum ratio humana te inducere potest, illa nunquam concedere debes ... Boethius of Dacia, "De Aeternitate Mundi." 60. Also Cf. Luca Bianchi, *Pour une histoire de la double vérité*, Conférences Pierre Abélard (Paris: Libr. philosophique J. Vrin, 2008). Also Cf. Richard C. Dales, "The Origin of the Doctrine of the Double Truth," *Viator* 15 (1984): 178; Philip P. Wiener, *Dictionary of the History of Ideas. Studies of Selected Pivotal Ideas*, vol. 2 (New York: Charles Scribner's, 1973), 31–37.

⁹² Cf. Richard Amesbury, "Fideism," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Fall 2017 (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2017), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2017/entries/fideism/>.

⁹³ While the totality of sacred scripture is ultimately seen as the speech of God for all three Abrahamic faiths, this is not to gloss over the distinctions made by each primary text, namely that Yahweh is speaking in the Tanach (Pentateuch, Prophets, and Hagiographa), Jesus and/or the Holy Spirit is speaking in the New Testament, and Allah is always speaking, always testifying in the Qur'an.

"Tradition" such as the Mishna and Talmud, the *Ummah* (Muslim community) and its hadiths and *fatwas*, or the Church and its *sacra doctrina*. At first this seems contrary to the certainty of revealed knowledge since, testimony was deemed an inferior source compared to demonstration.⁹⁴ Virtuous-trust in epistemic authority, however, explains these extremes as lack of trust in the virtue of human speakers and maximum trust in the virtue of the divine speaker.

Using these epistemic approaches to authority as a selection criterion reveals that Saadya Gaon, al-Ghazālī, and Thomas Aquinas are a better fit for the exploration of communal and religious knowledge/authority on account of their desire to maintain an orthodox faith while possessing philosophical approaches to truth.⁹⁵ While these three thinkers provide a solid representation of medieval thought across each of the three Abrahamic faiths and across three centuries, they were not contemporaries nor were any of them explicitly engaged in a dialogue with another's work.⁹⁶ Thus, it may be argued that more notable or more influential thinkers from their tradition and time (e.g. Moses Maimonides, Avicenna, or Averroes) are being overlooked. The normal trio of paragon (or at least the most renowned) thinkers from each faith is normally Averroes (d. 1198), Moses Maimonides (d. 1204), and Thomas Aquinas (d. 1274), however, other than historical

⁹⁴ E.g. Thomas says at *ST* I.1.8: "For although the argument from authority based on human reason is the weakest, yet the argument from authority based on divine revelation is the strongest." Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae. Prima pars, 1-49*, trans. Laurence Shapcote, Latin/English edition of the works of St. Thomas Aquinas 13 (Lander: The Aquinas Institute, 2017), 11–12. Also Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* (Alba; Roma: Editiones Paulinae, 1962).

⁹⁵ Further evidence they belong to open-rationalism are epistemic incongruencies that arise when they placed within either closed-rationalism or rational fideism. The example of these three thinkers highlights new questions that open-rationalism must answer, e.g., the influences of the Platonic and Aristotelian traditions on human and divine testimony between strict adherence to the sublunar causes of the natural realm and the various interpretations granting access to the divine ideas; and the esotericism of some medieval thinkers which requires testimony be evaluated in accord with the speaker's mode of discourse for the intended audience.

⁹⁶ Aquinas did make use of al-Ghazālī's *Maqāsid* in Latin translation.

precedent, the selection criterion used to arrive at these three thinkers is not readily apparent. This common grouping may have emerged since Averroes may well have influenced Maimonides and both Averroes and Maimonides clearly influenced Aquinas, which allows for the tracing of philosophical ideas across time and faith. At worst, the grouping reflects an Orientalist mentality beginning with Aquinas and moving to the non-Christian thinkers he relied on. Viewing this trio through the "social turn," reveals that Averroes and Maimonides fit more comfortably in the closed-rationalism epistemological approach on account of their strong-rationalism and Aquinas in the open-rationalism group. The "social turn" also shows that Saadya Gaon, al-Ghazālī, and Thomas Aquinas are a better fit for the exploration of communal and religious knowledge/authority making them exemplars who are like-minded in their desire to maintain an orthodox faith while possessing philosophical approaches to truth. This is best seen in their attempts to establish an alternative ground beside strong-rationalist accounts of reason embraced by thinkers such as Maimonides and Averroes, and more hardline faith-based approaches embraced by groups such as the Karaites, the Kalamists, and the Augustinians by developing understandings of revelation as truths told by God himself, or God revealing through a rational account of testimony. Each thinker distinguishes between propositions known "by natural reason" and propositions known "by faith", or more clearly as knowledge by divine testimony and knowledge not by divine testimony.⁹⁷ This distinction can be found in multiple thinkers including Albert the Great who claims theological and philosophical contemplation are similar but distinct due to differing *habitu*, end, and object, but not

⁹⁷ These do not "map onto the modern distinction between knowledge and 'mere belief.'" Mats Wahlberg, *Revelation as Testimony: A Philosophical-Theological Study* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014), 31.

rationem.⁹⁸ Their focus is thus on the speaker's character, i.e. trustworthiness, as a precondition listeners must assess prior to accepting a speaker's report, whether human or divine.

1.3.3.3 Saadya Gaon

In his *Book on Beliefs and Opinions*, Saadya Gaon establishes two approaches to knowledge through natural reason and revealed "Tradition." Saadya lauds the intuitions of the intellect and rejects the condemnation of speculation via scientific laws out of fear that they lead to heresy.⁹⁹ He condemns man's dismissal of revelation in lieu of private reason.¹⁰⁰ He even goes so far as to call it a sin since even "professional thinkers" are not: i) guaranteed to find truth, ii) will be without faith until they find truth, and iii) even if they singlehandedly find the truth which religion teaches, nothing prevents them from losing it. This is because human knowledge is distinguished from God's knowledge in that while the latter is unconditioned, timeless, and certain, the former is always mediated whether by sense data or principles of the mind making knowledge acquisition time consuming and difficult.¹⁰¹ God gave "complete instructions" regarding religious requirements through his prophets as confirmed by miracles. However, what intellectual truth God has provided can

⁹⁸ Cf. Albertus Magnus (1968): *Super Ethica*, l. 10, lec. 16, ed. Wilhelm Kübel (Opera Omnia, Editio Colon. XIV/1) Münster, p. 774, v. 80 - p. 775, v. 17. I am grateful to Lisa-Maria Knothe for bringing this text to my attention.

⁹⁹ Saadya maintains that everything relates back to sense, the first root of knowledge under the laws of reason and that "anything that is conceived in our mind in complete freedom from accidents [of any sort] is to be regarded as true knowledge about which no doubt [is to be entertained]." Sa'adia ben Joseph, *The Book of Beliefs and Opinions*, trans. Samuel Rosenblatt (New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press, 1976), 20, 26.

¹⁰⁰ "What the sages forbade was only to lay the books of the prophets aside and accept any private notion that might occur to an individual about the beginning of place and time." Ibid., 27. Richard Sorabji's thesis that Philoponus is Paul of Persia's source for his preface to the King to study philosophy illustrates the intricate relationship between faith and reason in arguing Jewish and Christian texts tell the faithful to pursue something better than faith, i.e. philosophy, cf. Richard Sorabji, "The Cross-Cultural Spread of Greek Philosophy (and Indian Moral Tales) to 6th Century Persian and Syriac," *Studia Graeco-Arabica* 9 (2019): 147–64.

¹⁰¹ Gyongyi Hegedus, *Saadya Gaon: The Double Path of the Mystic and the Rationalist* (Boston: Brill, 2013), 18.

also be achieved by diligent speculation and inquiry and thus it is impossible for anyone to provide a sound argument that injures the divine teaching.¹⁰² Thus, Saadya answers why God transmitted the same knowledge via prophets supported by miracles if all matters of religious belief can also be obtained by intellectual demonstration (research and correct speculation) saying "the conclusions reached by means of the art of speculation could be attained only in the course of a certain measure of time", such that humanity would be without religious guidance for a long time (until the reasoning process was complete).¹⁰³ Since many would never complete the process, or engage in flawed reasoning, God provided "quick relief" in transmitting the truths via messengers. The faithful are still to authenticate what has been provided (but sustained by faith during the process), but those without an aptitude for speculation can also have "a perfect and accessible faith".¹⁰⁴

1.3.3.2 *Al-Ghazālī*

Al-Ghazālī similarly upholds a duplex approach valuing both knowledge rendered by human reason while maintaining the superiority of knowledge from God.¹⁰⁵ In his major

¹⁰² "He [God] has furthermore informed us, however, that, if we would engage in speculation and diligent research, inquiry would produce for us in each instance the complete truth, tallying with His announcement to us by the speech of His prophets." And "Hence it is impossible that he [a wise or distinguished man] should be able to produce an argument against you in the matter of your religion or do injury to your creed, because, my knowledge is all-embracing and I have imparted it to you." Sa'adia ben Joseph, *The Book of Beliefs and Opinions*, 28, 31.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 31.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 32. Saadya follows the chauvinism of his day by explicitly mentioning women and young people as examples of "those who have no aptitude for speculation." However, he is impressed by God's inclusiveness in that his revelation permits even such as these to be blessed with this knowledge by faith.

¹⁰⁵ This follows more recent scholarship maintaining that al-Ghazālī did not seek to destroy philosophy as evidenced by the fact that al-Ghazālī rarely denies the philosophers' conclusions in his infamous *Incoherence of the Philosophers*, instead showing their conclusions are unproven due to the inadequacy of the method. Alexander Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought: Al-Ghazālī's Theory of Mystical Cognition and Its Avicennian Foundation* (London; New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2012), 84. Al-Ghazālī claims in the *Tahāfut* that since the philosophers' method ultimately do not succeed, then Qur'anic interpretation is not rationally impossible. Cf. al-Ghazālī, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers: A Parallel English-Arabic Text*, trans. Michael E. Marmura (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, 2000), 76–78; al-Ghazālī, *Deliverer from Error*, 89.

theological work *Moderation in Belief*, al-Ghazālī rejects seeking knowledge through either reason or revelation alone to endorse their combined usage (which do not conflict) to free one from error.¹⁰⁶ Reason and revelation provide a more complete picture since, as he states in *Deliverer from Error*, reason is limited¹⁰⁷ making knowledge via prophets necessary.¹⁰⁸ "Reason," al-Ghazālī states in *On Legal Theory of Muslim Jurisprudence*, "can lead one to the truthfulness of the Prophet, but then abdicates itself" since reason "cannot independently comprehend, nor determine its impossibility" regarding God, the Last Day, and similar matters.¹⁰⁹ Frank Griffel has even argued the goal of the *Incoherence of the Philosophers* is to create room for revelation by showing the limits of philosophy.¹¹⁰ Al-Ghazālī thus holds that certain knowledge is obtainable via philosophical demonstration and the Sufi concept *dhawq*, literally a "tasting" of the divine comparable to *mushāhadah* ("actual seeing and handling") the divine objects of knowledge.¹¹¹ However, such higher

¹⁰⁶ al-Ghazālī, *Moderation in Belief*, trans. Aladdin M. Yaqub, Annotated edition (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 2–4.

¹⁰⁷ "I also realized that reason alone is incapable of fully grasping all problems or of getting to the heart of all difficulties."; "This is the limit reached by the faith of those who have studied the philosophy of the theistic philosophers: that is known from the books of Ibn Sina and Abu Nasr al-Fārābī!" al-Ghazālī, *Deliverer from Error*, 81–82, 104.

¹⁰⁸ "Remedies for the body effectively procure health because of a property in them which men endowed with intellect cannot perceive by virtue of their intellectual resources, but rather it must be the object of blind obedience to the physicians who learned it from the prophets, who, because of the special attribute of prophecy, came to know the special properties of things. In a similar fashion it became necessarily evident to me that the reason for the effectiveness of the remedies of the acts of worship, with their prescriptions and determined quantities ordained by the prophets, cannot be perceived by means of the intellectual resources of men endowed with intellect. On the contrary, they must be the object of blind obedience to the prophets who perceived those qualities by the light of prophecy, not by intellectual resources." *Ibid.*, 101.

¹⁰⁹ al-Ghazālī and Aḥmad Zakī Maṣṣūr Ḥammād, "Abu Hamid Al-Ghazālī's Juristic Doctrine in al-Mustasfa Min 'ilm al-Uṣul with a Translation of Volume One of al-Mustasfa Min 'Ilm al-Uṣul" (Chicago, University of Chicago, 1987), 312.

¹¹⁰ Alexander Treiger agrees with Griffel's assessment: Frank Griffel, *Al-Ghazali's Philosophical Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 99.

¹¹¹ Avicenna uses the Sufi concept of *dhawq* in his *al-Iṣārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt*, albeit with philosophical meaning, cf. Michael A. Rapoport, "Sufi Vocabulary, but Avicennan Philosophy: The Sufi Terminology in Chapters VIII–X of Ibn Sīnā's al-Iṣārāt Wa-l-Tanbīhāt," *Oriens* 47, no. 1–2 (May 13, 2019): 145–96. Alexander Treiger argues convincingly that al-Ghazālī's analysis of *dhawq* is indebted to Avicenna's usage, cf. Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought*, 60–63; Jules Janssens, "Book Review: Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought: Al-Ghazālī's Theory of Mystical Cognition and Its Avicennian Foundation," *Journal of American Oriental Society* 135, no. 2 (2015): 397.

forms of knowledge are only obtainable by the *Ulamā'* (scholars) or the *Ḥokmā'* ("the learned ones", "the wise"). While he maintained a twofold approach, it is more esoteric since knowledge from philosophy can be dangerous to the *'avāmm* ("masses", "commoners").¹¹² He famously illustrates that just as a snake charmer does not retrieve antidote in front of his son lest the child likewise attempt and be bitten, the learned should not openly extract truth from philosophy lest the masses imitate and fall into despair.¹¹³

1.3.3.1 Thomas Aquinas

Thomas Aquinas famously stated that there is a "twofold mode of truth", commonly referred to as the "preambles of faith" (objects of knowledge obtainable by natural reason) and the "articles of faith" (objects of knowledge which exceed the ability of human reason and thus only obtained by revelation or faith).¹¹⁴ To obtain the end of truth, both modes must be employed, with faith being the more egalitarian, faster, and more reliable.¹¹⁵ Thomas claims not only that it is necessary for man to receive objects of belief beyond human reason from God, but also that this necessity can be proven.¹¹⁶ As a result, self-trust, or self-reliance, is the "mother of error."¹¹⁷ This is because, even though faith exceeds

¹¹² An example of this attitude and these terms can be found in the *Mishkāt al-Anwār* and *al-Munqidh min al-dalāl*, cf. al-Ghazālī, *The niche of lights = Mishkat al-anwar*, ed. David Buchman (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1998), 1–2; al-Ghazālī, *Deliverer from Error*, 78–79.

¹¹³ al-Ghazālī, *Deliverer from Error*, 79.

¹¹⁴ *Summa Contra Gentiles (SCG)* I. 3, "Now, in those things which we hold about God there is truth in two ways. For certain things that are true about God wholly surpass the capability of human reason: for instance, that God is three and one. But there are certain things to which even natural reason can attain, for instance, that God is, that God is one, and others like these, which even the philosophers, being guided by the light of natural reason, proved demonstratively about God." Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles, Books I-II*, trans. Laurence Shapcote, vol. 11, Latin/English edition of the works of St. Thomas Aquinas (Green Bay: The Aquinas Institute, 2018), 4.

¹¹⁵ *SCG* I.4, Thomas describes three "inconveniences" that would follow if reason were humanity's sole mode of inquiry: few would possess knowledge of God; those who did discover divine truth would barely reach it after a great deal of time; and human reason's investigations are always plagued with flaws such that no truth could ever be held with certainty. *Ibid.*, 11:6–7.

¹¹⁶ Cf. *SCG* I.5, *Ibid.*, 11:7–8.

¹¹⁷ *SCG* I.5, "Another advantage results from this, namely, the checking of presumption, which is the mother of error. For there are some who presume so far on their wits that they think themselves capable of measuring

the human capacity of reason, human reason and faith are harmonious since God is also the author of nature and thus natural reason is also contained in divine wisdom.¹¹⁸ Thomas avoids double truth stating that if an argument concludes against revealed truth, something is wrong not with reason or demonstration, but in the way the conclusion is "derived from the first and self-evident principles imbedded in nature."¹¹⁹ For, as the *Liber de Causis* teaches, all human reason is an effect from the cause of divine reason and all effects bear a likeness to their cause.¹²⁰ The relation of the two modes then is faith professes and reason investigates.¹²¹

1.4 Conclusion: The Nature of Testimony and Revelation

Since testimony, broadly defined, covers knowledge obtained from other minds, Abrahamic thinkers sought to explain ways in which 1) it is evident that God is the speaker and 2) the process by which God speaks.¹²² Regarding the first, *that* God speaks is uncontroversial, e.g., "this is the word of the Lord." However, identifying that it is indeed God who is the speaker behind a given proposition becomes paramount. One of the often-cited ways of confirmation is through miracles since only God can subvert or suspend the laws of nature. However, the faith in view here is not trust in "miracles" (manifestational

the whole nature of things by their intellect, namely, thinking all things are true that seem so to them, and false which do not."

Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Cf. *SCG* I.7, Ibid., 11:10–11.

¹¹⁹ Cf. *SCG* I.7, Ibid.

¹²⁰ Cf. *SCG* I.8, Ibid., 11:11–22.

¹²¹ Cf. *SCG* I.9, Ibid., 11:12–13.

¹²² Each thinker held to divine agency, e.g.: In defending creation *ex nihilo* against 12 other theories, Saadya claims contrary that God is an agent who is free to choose and not merely a cause. Cf. Sa'adia ben Joseph, *The Book of Beliefs and Opinions*, 69–70. Al-Ghazālī claims God has agency in the traditional sense contra philosophers like Avicenna who attributes agency to God in an equivocal sense meaning God is the cause of an effect. al-Ghazālī, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, 56–60. Thomas gives three ways that God is an intellectual and voluntary agent and not the mere cause of things. Cf. *ST* I.19.5 Aquinas, *Summa theologiae. Prima pars, 1-49*, 214–15.

signs of the actuality revealed) or even "revelation" (broadly, the actuality revealed) but the speaker, i.e., to trust God (or *credere deo* as Thomas states).¹²³ What separates operationalism as virtuous trust from rational fideism through blind trust may rest entirely on the perceived role of miracles in *what* they are proof of. When a prophet proclaims "thus sayeth the Lord, *p*" immediately followed by a miracle where *p* is what God says, the miracle can be seen as confirming the truth of *p* directly, i.e., acting as a form of supernatural *evidentia*, or as confirming the truth of "thus sayeth the Lord", i.e., confirmation of the speaker's identity. In both cases the miracle is seen as performing a proof, but the audience's understanding of *what* the miracle is a proof of completely alters their epistemic approach. If the miracle is seen as proof of *p*, then the miracle is a kind of *evidentia* justifying *p*. The speaker's identity is irrelevant compared to their ability to perform signs and wonders. This falls precisely into the *fideism* divide presented by Boethius of Dacia that I have labeled rational fideism on account of the listener's blind trust in the speaker. However, if the miracle is proof not of *p*, but of the speaker's identity, namely that the speaker is God and the prophet truly delivers God's message, then the true epistemic weight shifts from the miracle to the virtues of the speaker and the listener. The truth of *p* is confirmed indirectly through the perfectly virtuous character of God. Establishing that God speaks requires a subsequent explanation of *how* God speaks to maintain divine testimony as an epistemic authority.

¹²³ Wolterstorff notes that reading a sacred text to "discern what God said or is saying by way of the text" requires different commitments than the more comfortable academic practiced of reading a sacred text "to discern the literary qualities" or "to discern the theology of biblical writers." Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse: Philosophical Reflections on the Claim That God Speaks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 17. Cf. *ST* II-II.2.2

Regarding the second question, the process of God speaking tends to vary by thinker.¹²⁴ However, there are also different approaches to the nature of divine testimony. As Nicholas Wolterstorff stresses in his landmark book *Divine Discourse*, "speaking is not revealing" and thus "divine discourse is not divine revelation."¹²⁵ Revelation only occurs when ignorance is dispelled, not by "discovery", but by an intentional act that discloses what is hidden either through a manifestational (non-assertoric) act or non-manifestational (assertoric) speech act.¹²⁶ One can speak and not reveal, and one can reveal without speaking, but for speaking to reveal is to be propositional.¹²⁷ How then can sacred texts be the speech of God? Wolterstorff outlines many modes of discourse by which human words can be or can become God's words via dictation or a form of double agency discourse such as authorization or appropriation.¹²⁸ After likewise arguing for the existence of divine speaking, John Lamont distinguishes the nature of God speaking, including how God utters his message.¹²⁹ Lamont distinguishes the nature of God speaking between: 1) deistic speaking, which asserts that a typical believer assents to reports about what God has said to others through a chain of transmission, and 2) direct speaking which asserts that God speaks to every person who has faith (not just an initial group).¹³⁰ Lamont answers how

¹²⁴ Each thinker's method of prophecy, i.e., *how* a being without a tongue can still communicate via linguistic utterances, is treated in their respective chapter.

¹²⁵ Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse*, 19.

¹²⁶ The difference between manifestational and non-manifestational revelation is the means. The former is "by a sign of the actuality revealed" whereas the latter is not since it "always goes through the knowledge of the revealer". Thus, manifestational revelation is any means of revelation other than assertion, e.g. "God directly bringing about a true conviction in a person, God bringing about a text which, when properly interpreted, transmits knowledge from God to us, God planting in a person - or in all persons - some disposition which, when activated, yields true Conviction." Ibid., 23–29.

¹²⁷ "If speaking is a species of revelation, it will be a species of agent self-revelation; and more particularly, a species of propositional rather than manifestational revelation." Ibid., 31–32.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 38–74.

¹²⁹ Lamont, *Divine Faith*, 5–27.

¹³⁰ Lamont's deistic divine speaking arguably also falls under what I have categorized as rational fideism insofar as it requires blindly trusting in propositions justified by a private sense of immediate conviction often producing irrational beliefs. Ibid., 150–52.

God produces sacred texts (with the Catholic Church in mind, but his thought is applicable to other faiths) by addressing the scope of what Wolterstorff calls "double-agency" through three views. The first "scriptural view" holds that God only speaks in the scriptures via the original authors and followers believe his speech only in believing the text, but it is often objected the text is insufficient for doctrine leading to the second view. The "magisterial view" also holds that God only speaks in the scriptures but adds that to believe God includes not only the text but also propositions taught by religious epistemic authorities even though such propositions are not themselves divine speech. The inclusion of religious authorities settles the textual insufficiency objection but introduces questions of whether divine utterances only become dogma when formally proposed by the religious authorities thus omitting the oral teachings passed down from the original witnesses. This challenge leads Lamont to present the third "ecclesial view" where God speaks *in* the teachings of the religious authorities such that by believing them one also believes God. This incorporates scripture since it is included in the religious authorities' teachings.¹³¹ Divine speech thereby encompasses more than scriptural revelation. As Mats Wahlberg highlights in *Revelation as Testimony*, revelation includes divinely asserted sacred texts not merely as collections of propositions (e.g., knowledge transmission) but as a discourse by which one comes to know another person.¹³² This requires not blind-trust, but an informed-trust based on the relationship of the speaker and listener. Such a trusting relationship, I argue, relies on a virtue theoretic approach present in Ancient and Medieval thinkers.

¹³¹ Ibid., 163–65. Doctrinal teachings of the Church thus qualify as God's speech and scriptures are God's speech *because* they are part of the teaching of the Church. Both require the same involvement of human author. The key objection to this view is that Tradition teaches that revelation ended with the last apostle. This view thus requires that the closure of scripture should be understood as no new salvific realities can or will be revealed. Ibid., 177.

¹³² Wahlberg, *Revelation as Testimony*, 14. Personal divine speech requires agency for trust.

CHAPTER 2: THE INTERSECTION OF SOCIAL EPISTEMOLOGY AND MEDIEVAL TESTIMONIAL KNOWLEDGE

2.1 Introduction

Testimony and knowledge transmission from speaker to listener is, perhaps curiously, a new epistemic concept invigorated by the rise of Social Epistemology in the late 20th century. In his seminal work *Testimony: A Philosophical Study* (1991) C.A.J. Coady explained that ancient and medieval thinkers' "view of knowledge as a kind of thoroughgoing rational understanding militated against treating beliefs based upon testimony as part of knowledge" and post-Renaissance Western thinkers were too dominated by an "individualist ideology" granting testimony "little or no epistemic importance."¹³³ Since that time, a plethora of studies have come out in the past decades to the contrary.

This chapter outlines a brief history of the relatively new discipline of social epistemology including its relation to traditional epistemology. Maintaining this timeline approach and the "social" nature of knowledge, I will loosely follow the chronological emergence of social epistemology's primary areas of study with a focus on testimony proper. In doing so, I track the introduction of key testimonial categories followed by both existing and proposed frameworks related to testimony's role as an epistemic source either through knowledge generation or transmission. Then I present the *status quaestionis* of research into historic testimonial accounts stimulated by the rise of social epistemology. As of 2020, new articles on historical accounts of testimony are being published exponentially, hence I focus on medieval accounts related to Saadya, al-Ghazālī and

¹³³ C. A. J. Coady, *Testimony: A Philosophical Study* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 6, 13.

Thomas Aquinas (namely accounts of thinkers who were likely influenced by or responded to these thinkers' testimonial theories). While testimony makes an appearance in epistemological summaries of thinkers such as Avicenna and Averroes, treatises specifically presenting medieval testimonial accounts are primarily limited to Latin thinkers. Given social epistemology's work on trust and theories reliant upon a virtue-theoretic framework, I will touch upon the concurrent reemergence of virtue epistemology following G.E.M. Anscombe's seminal paper "Modern Moral Philosophy."¹³⁴ Following the contributions of virtue epistemology to social epistemology, I raise the epistemic question (fully addressed in chapter 6) of "justification" and its historical role as it pertains to testimonial knowledge. I will close with a review of recent scholarship "rethinking" the standard categories and framework of testimony which solves long running challenges and provides more categories for assessing non-contemporary testimonial theories. I will adopt this expanded framework of testimony to analyze the theories of human and divine testimony in the chapters to follow on Saadya, al-Ghazālī, and Thomas Aquinas.

2.2 Brief History of Social Epistemology

The term "social epistemology" first appeared in Jesse Shera's book *Sociological Foundations of Librarianship* (1970) which sought the social effects of reading.¹³⁵ However, the groundwork for Shera's work was arguably laid by Thomas Kuhn's infamous *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962), emphasizing the social influences on how phenomena appear to scientists in contrast to Baconian facts waiting to be discovered.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ G. E. M. Anscombe, "Modern Moral Philosophy," *Philosophy* 33, no. 124 (1958): 1–19.

¹³⁵ J. H. Shera, *Sociological Foundations of Librarianship*, vol. 23, Ranganathan Series in Library Science (Bombay: Asia Publ. House, 1970).

¹³⁶ Thomas S Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

This socializing method of thought can be traced further back to Michel Foucault, the "Strong Programme" in the sociology of science, and other thinkers who questioned the nature of truth and objectivity. However, in keeping with the original study proposed by Shera for a discipline which provided a framework to understand how communities produce, disseminate, perceive, and accept information, Alvin Goldman published promissory notes that continued the work of traditional epistemology by identifying a positive form of social epistemology in 1978/79.¹³⁷ A special 1987 issue of *Synthese* juxtaposed Goldman's truth-oriented "veritistic" approach (classical epistemology) with Steve Fuller's truth-debunking "constructivist" approach (anti-classical epistemology) to social knowledge.¹³⁸ After this "split", the discipline of social epistemology embraced Goldman's approach in keeping with classical epistemology's goals pertaining to truth and justification—maintaining rational beliefs—as applied to the social realm. While the catalyst behind the rise of social epistemology was the launch of a dedicated journal—*Episteme*—in 2004, it was the publication of multiple seminal works in the late 1980s and early 90s that established the three major branches of social epistemology: 1) Collective Agents, addressing collective doxastic agents (i.e. juries, committees, and other group agents), following the work of Margaret Gilbert's *On Social Facts* (1988); 2) Institutions & Systems, addressing system-level influences on member beliefs, following the work of Philip Kitcher's "The Division of Cognitive Labor" (1990) and *The Advancement of*

¹³⁷ Cf. both: Alvin I. Goldman, "Epistemics: The Regulative Theory of Cognition," *The Journal of Philosophy* 75, no. 10 (1978): 509–23. and Alvin I. Goldman, "What Is Justified Belief?," in *Justification and Knowledge: New Studies in Epistemology*, ed. George S. Pappas (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1979), 1–23.

¹³⁸ Cf. Alvin I. Goldman, "Foundations of Social Epistemics," *Synthese* 73, no. 1 (1987): 109–44.; and Steve Fuller, "On Regulating What Is Known: A Way to Social Epistemology," *Synthese* 73, no. 1 (1987): 145–83. Steve Fuller went on to found the journal *Social Epistemology* in 1988. The journal has become a venue for science studies and "does not express what most philosophers now pursue under the heading of social epistemology." Goldman and Blanchard, "Social Epistemology."

Science (1993); and 3) Testimony & Peer Disagreement, addressing individual knowledge stemming from other people, based on the work of C.A.J. Coady's *Testimony* (1992).¹³⁹

2.2.1 Standard Framework of Social Epistemology

The third branch of social epistemology sees testimony as a distinctive type of social evidence undergirding vast amounts of knowledge and innumerable beliefs. Testimony itself is thus divided into several related but different areas of study. One is the speakers behind testimony including: experts and their epistemic authority, identifying experts, and peer disagreement (how to proceed when qualified experts disagree). Another is testimony proper identifying whether testimony transmits or merely generates knowledge, i.e., whether testimony falls under ("reduces to") a more traditional source (e.g., intuition) or is a unique species of knowledge. The focus here is on the latter area of testimony proper in which much of the literature centers around settling two questions: whether testimony transmits vs. generates knowledge and what justifies testimonial knowledge.

2.2.1.1 Testimony: Transmission vs. Generation of Knowledge

In the issue of whether testimony transmits or generates knowledge, contemporary social epistemology highlights that not all testimonial knowledge is necessarily transmitted knowledge. While nearly all hold that testimony can transmit knowledge, some hold that transmission has a unique epistemological role. The traditional understanding of the "Transmission View" explains how a speaker's transmission is either a sufficient (Michael

¹³⁹ Cf. Margaret Gilbert, *On Social Facts* (London: Routledge, 1988). Based on her thesis Margaret Gilbert, "On Social Facts" (Oxford, University of Oxford, 1978)..; Philip Kitcher, "The Division of Cognitive Labor," *The Journal of Philosophy* 87, no. 1 (1990): 5–22.; Philip Kitcher, *The Advancement of Science: Science Without Legend, Objectivity Without Illusions* (New York: Oxford university press, 1993).; Coady, *Testimony*.

Dummet, 1994) or necessary condition (Robert Audi, 1997) for knowledge.¹⁴⁰ Jennifer Lackey provides a concise summary in her chapter on "Testimonial Knowledge" in *The Routledge Companion to Epistemology* (2014):

[Transmission View-Necessary] TV-N: For every speaker, A, and hearer, B, B knows that *p* on the basis of A's testimony that *p* only if A knows that *p*...

[Transmission View-Sufficient] TV-S: For every speaker, A, and hearer, B, if (1) A knows that *p*, (2) B comes to believe that *p* on the basis of the content of A's testimony that *p*, and (3) B has no undefeated defeaters for believing that *p*, then B knows that *p*.¹⁴¹

In an earlier work explicitly on transmission, Lackey likens testimonial knowledge to a chain of people passing buckets of water to douse a fire, "each person must have a bucket of water in order to pass it to the next person, and moreover there must be at least one person who is ultimately acquiring the water from another source."¹⁴² In this sense, testimony parallels memory as Dummet claimed, with testimony transmitting knowledge from one person to another just as memory preserves knowledge from one time to another.¹⁴³ Hence, as Audi claimed, if a speaker does not know *p*, then the speaker cannot transmit *p* to the listener.¹⁴⁴ Just as memory does not generate knowledge neither does testimony generate knowledge. However, scholars have revealed instances for which the Transmission View cannot account.¹⁴⁵ TV-N fails in instances when listeners believe

¹⁴⁰ Cf. Michael Dummet, "Testimony and Memory," in *Knowing from Words: Western and Indian Philosophical Analysis of Understanding and Testimony*, ed. Bimal Krishna Matilal and Arindam Chakrabarti (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 1994), 251–72; Robert Audi, "The Place of Testimony in the Fabric of Knowledge and Justification," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 34, no. 4 (1997): 405–22.

¹⁴¹ Jennifer Lackey, "Testimonial Knowledge," in *The Routledge Companion to Epistemology*, ed. Sven Bernecker and Duncan Pritchard (New York, NY: Routledge, 2014), 316–17.

¹⁴² Jennifer Lackey, "Testimonial Knowledge and Transmission," *Philosophical Quarterly* 49, no. 197 (1999): 471.

¹⁴³ Cf. David James Barnett, "Is Memory Merely Testimony from One's Former Self?," *Philosophical Review* 124, no. 3 (2015): 353–92.

¹⁴⁴ Audi, "The Place of Testimony in the Fabric of Knowledge and Justification," 410.

¹⁴⁵ Cf. John MacFarlane, "Knowledge Laundering: Testimony and Sensitive Invariantism," *Analysis* 65, no. 286 (2005): 132–38; Sanford Goldberg, "Testimonial Knowledge through Unsafe Testimony," *Analysis* 65, no. 288 (2005): 302–11; Jennifer Lackey, "Learning from Words," *Philosophy and Phenomenological*

knowledge that the speaker does not believe and thereby does not know. The most famous example describes students learning evolutionary biology from a creationist teacher. Since the teacher does not believe evolution and thereby does not know it, knowledge appears to be generated in students who believe and know on account of the teacher's testimony. TV-S fails in instances where the speaker has the knowledge, speaks sincerely, and yet the listener only obtains belief and not knowledge despite the absence of "undefeated defeaters."¹⁴⁶ An example would be a three-year-old sincerely asserting that she brushed her teeth. Since a three-year-old often believes the "right" answer is what her parents want to hear regardless of whether she brushed her teeth, the listener's belief cannot qualify as knowledge. Lackey claims that these counterexamples and subsequent Generation theories "show that testimony is not merely a transmissive epistemic source, as the TV assumes, but that it can instead generate epistemic features in its own right."¹⁴⁷ If testimony can generate knowledge, then it must be a source of knowledge alongside traditional sources like perception and intuition.

2.2.1.2 Testimony: Justification

Whether testimony is a source of knowledge is related to the second question of when listeners may rightly believe a speaker's testimony. As Lackey and John Greco note, TV-N and TV-S line up with two theories on testimonial justification that predominate the

Research 73, no. 1 (2006): 77–101; Jennifer Lackey, *Learning from Words: Testimony as a Source of Knowledge* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Charlie Pelling, "Testimony, Testimonial Belief, and Safety," *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition* 164, no. 1 (2013): 205–17.

¹⁴⁶ A defeater identifies conditions (internal or external) that prevent a justified true belief from qualifying as knowledge, an "undefeated defeater" is a defeater that itself is not defeated by further evidence.

¹⁴⁷ Lackey, "Testimonial Knowledge," 318–19. Lackey offers the Statement View of testimony in which: "For every speaker, A, and hearer, B, B knows that *p* on the basis of As testimony that *p* only if (1) As statement that *p* is reliable or otherwise truth-conducive, (2) B comes to truly believe that *p* on the basis of the content of As statement that *p*, and (3) B has no undefeated defeaters for believing that *p*."

literature: reductionism and anti-reductionism as advanced as early as Coady who linked them to David Hume and Thomas Reid respectively.¹⁴⁸ A third view, the interpersonal view of testimony (IVT) was recognized following Edward Hinchman and Richard Moran in 2005/6 (commonly referred to as the "assurance" view following Moran's usage).¹⁴⁹ 1) Reductionism argues that while testimonial claims may be accepted based on the reliability of the speaker, testimony itself does not provide justification, but ultimately reduces to another source for justification, such as perception or memory.¹⁵⁰ Within reductionism there are two forms, global and local reductionism.¹⁵¹ The key difference between the two is whether listeners, independently of testimony, possess the belief that testimony is generally reliable. This belief is inferred from experience that reliable sources of information include certain speakers, reports, or other contextual clues. Global reductionism thus claims that testimony is justified in that it reduces to the general reliability of testimonial knowledge based on previous experiences. Local reductionism, in contrast, is the stronger form since it denies the general reliability of testimony on the basis that such a general reliability would lead to widespread gullibility. Since most listeners maintain a healthy level of skepticism, testimony is only justified when the speaker is judged to be an expert or at least reliable regarding the topic in question (generally aligning

¹⁴⁸ Cf. Coady, *Testimony*, 22–23; Elizabeth Fricker, "Telling and Trusting: Reductionism and Anti-Reductionism in the Epistemology of Testimony C. A. J. Coady: *Testimony: A Philosophical Study*," *Mind* 104, no. 414 (1995): 393–411.

¹⁴⁹ Cf. Edward S. Hinchman, "Telling as Inviting to Trust," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 70, no. 3 (2005): 562–87; Moran, "Getting Told and Being Believed," 2006.

¹⁵⁰ For other articles endorsing reductionism cf. Jack Lyons, "Testimony, induction and folk psychology," *Australian Journal of Psychology* 75, no. 2 (1997): 163–78; Peter Lipton, "The Epistemology of Testimony," *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science*. 29, no. 1 (1998): 1; Keith Lehrer, "Testimony and Trustworthiness," in *The Epistemology of Testimony*, ed. Jennifer Lackey and Ernest Sosa (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 145–59; Fricker, "Testimony and Epistemic Autonomy"; Elizabeth Fricker, "Knowledge from Trust in Testimony Is Second-Hand Knowledge," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 73, no. 3 (2006): 592–618.

¹⁵¹ Cf. Fricker, "Against Gullibility."

with the speaker's expertise). However, a weakness of reductionism is accounting for normal social interactions when the reliability of a speaker is completely unknown (e.g., asking for directions), is completely unseen (e.g., airport loudspeaker announcements), or how children without the requisite experiences learn through testimony. 2) Anti-reductionism argues that testimony does not provide justification by reduction to other sources, but testimony itself *is* a justified form of social evidence.¹⁵² Thus, listeners do not need additional positive reasons to accept a speaker's claims as justified. Testimony is justified or warranted by default unless proven false or unreliable. However, a weakness of anti-reductionism is accounting for deceptive or unjustified claims (e.g., email scams, televangelists, and fake news).¹⁵³ 3) IVT (or assurance view) argues that testimonial justification comes from the assurance of the speaker that their claim is true.¹⁵⁴ The inherent evidentialism assumed by the reductionist and anti-reductionist views is denied. Since testimony is inherently interpersonal, justification comes from either the responsibility of

¹⁵² For other articles endorsing anti-reductionism cf. Hardwig, "The Role of Trust in Knowledge"; Michael Welbourne, "Testimony, Knowledge and Belief," in *Knowing from Words: Western and Indian Philosophical Analysis of Understanding and Testimony*, ed. Bimal Krishna Matilal and Arindam Chakrabarti (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 1994), 297–313; C. A. J. Coady, "Testimony, Observation and 'Autonomous Knowledge,'" in *Knowing from Words: Western and Indian Philosophical Analysis of Understanding and Testimony*, ed. Bimal Krishna Matilal and Arindam Chakrabarti (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 1994), 225–50; John McDowell, "Knowledge by Hearsay," in *Knowing from Words: Western and Indian Philosophical Analysis of Understanding and Testimony*, ed. Bimal Krishna Matilal and Arindam Chakrabarti (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 1994), 195–224; Alvin I. Goldman, *Knowledge in a Social World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); M Weiner, "Accepting Testimony," *The Philosophical Quarterly* 53 (2003): 256–64; Robert Audi, "Testimony, Credulity, and Veracity," in *The Epistemology of Testimony*, ed. Jennifer Lackey and Ernest Sosa (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 25–49; David Owens, "Testimony and Assertion," *Philosophical Studies* 130, no. 1 (2006): 105–29; Sanford Goldberg, "Reductionism and the Distinctiveness of Testimonial Knowledge," in *The Epistemology of Testimony*, ed. Jennifer Lackey and Ernest Sosa (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 127–44; Owens, "Testimony and Assertion"; Ernest Sosa, "Knowledge: Instrumental and Testimonial," in *The Epistemology of Testimony*, ed. Jennifer Lackey and Ernest Sosa (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 116–23.

¹⁵³ This weakness of the theory would also apply to discrediting or dismissing true claims as false by a speaker, which is both a historical and contemporary problem societies face especially relating to religious and political authorities.

¹⁵⁴ For other articles endorsing IVT cf. Angus Ross, "Why Do We Believe What We Are Told?," *Ratio* 28 (1986): 69–88; Hinchman, "Telling as Inviting to Trust"; Moran, "Getting Told and Being Believed," 2006; Paul Faulkner, *Knowledge on Trust* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

the speaker to stand by the truth of their claim or from the speaker's invitation to the listener to trust them (not trust in the claim). Testimonial justification is akin to "taking the speaker's word for it."¹⁵⁵ While the IVT excels at explaining parent-child or friend-friend exchanges, such interpersonal features are questioned as epistemologically irrelevant, since trust has no effect on reliability, proper functioning, truth-tracking, or other features of "true" testimony. The best way to accommodate the insights of IVT and the role of trust is within a virtue-theoretic framework, such that those who place a high emphasis on the role of trust in testimony tend to be virtue epistemologists.¹⁵⁶ The aforementioned objections that recipients of testimony do not deserve credit for much of their knowledge parallel objections leveled against virtue epistemology which has generated several responses arguing for the virtues of reliable speakers and listeners with emphasis on the possession of character traits by both speakers, such as trustworthiness, and listeners, such as discernment of reliable experts.¹⁵⁷ I will return to an analysis of virtue epistemology below.

2.3 Historical Assessment of Testimony

Despite social epistemology's contemporary beginning dating back to 1970s, social epistemology claims historical precedent with the formal treatment of testimony by David Hume's and Thomas Reid's discussions in the 1700s. David Hume is the father of

¹⁵⁵ Richard Moran, "Getting Told and Being Believed," in *The Epistemology of Testimony*, ed. Jennifer Lackey and Ernest Sosa (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2011), 272–306. 274.

¹⁵⁶ It is technically conceivable that one is an IVT theorist and not a virtue epistemologist.

¹⁵⁷ For objections, Jennifer Lackey argues that such "free" knowledge disproves Virtue Epistemology's definition of knowledge and shows Virtue epistemology cannot explain virtue's knowledge. Jennifer Lackey, "Why We Don't Deserve Credit for Everything We Know," *Synthese* 158, no. 3 (2007): 345–61. For responses cf. John Greco, "The Nature of Ability and the Purpose of Knowledge," *Philosophical Issues* 17, no. 1 (2007): 57–69. Wayne Riggs, "Two Problems of Easy Credit," *Synthese* 169, no. 1 (2009): 201–16.; and Ernest Sosa, *A Virtue Epistemology*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2007). For the role of character traits cf. John Greco and Jonathan Reibsam, "Reliabilist Virtue Epistemology," in *The Oxford Handbook of Virtue*, ed. Nancy E. Snow (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 725–46; Jason Baehr, "Intellectual Virtues and Truth, Understanding, and Wisdom," in *The Oxford Handbook of Virtue*, ed. Nancy E. Snow (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 800–819.

reductionism laying the formal groundwork in *An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748). Hume discusses testimony in section 10 regarding miracles, where he recognizes the epistemic importance of testimony writing "there is no species of reasoning more common, more useful, and even necessary to human life, than that which is derived from the testimony of men, and the reports of eye-witnesses and spectators."¹⁵⁸ However, the value in testimony is found solely in our being accustomed to find conformity between witness reports and reality. The epistemic value of testimony is not found *a priori* or the result of a cause-and-effect relationship. The impact this has on the reports of miracles is profound. Hume claims the authority of scripture "is merely founded in the testimony of the apostles, who were eye-witnesses to those miracles of our Savior," and that testimony is an inferior evidence compared to alternative sources of knowledge:

Text 2.3.0.1

Our evidence, then, for the truth of the Christian religion is less than the evidence for the truth of our senses; because, even in the first authors of our religion, it was no greater; and it is evident it must diminish in passing from them to their disciples; nor can any one rest such confidence in their testimony, as in the immediate object of his senses. But a weaker evidence can never destroy a stronger; and therefore, were the doctrine of the real presence ever so clearly revealed in scripture, it were directly contrary to the rules of just reasoning to give our assent to it.¹⁵⁹

The reason for this is nicely summarized in *Testimony* (Coady, 1992) with a chapter devoted to the "Reductive approach" where Hume serves as the principal case study.¹⁶⁰ There Coady explains: "Essentially his [Hume's] theory constitutes a reduction of testimony as a form of evidence or support to the status of a species (one might almost say, a mutation) of inductive inference. And, again, in so far as inductive inference is reduced

¹⁵⁸ Hume, "An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding," 111.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 109.

¹⁶⁰ Coady, *Testimony*, 79–100.

by Hume to a species of observation and consequences attendant upon observations, then in a like fashion testimony meets the same fate."¹⁶¹ Interestingly, a more recent account of Hume's theory of testimony affirms the role of induction without employing the language of reduction.¹⁶²

Thomas Reid's status as father of anti-reductionism is traced by Coady back to his *Inquiry Into The Human Mind* (1785).¹⁶³ In chapter 6 section 24 titled "the analogy between perception, and the credit we give to human testimony," Reid claims there are two kinds of language, natural vs. artificial, that both employ "signs." Nature speaks directly through signs of sensation which humans believe without having to infer the nature or existence based on those signs. Analogously artificial human languages speak through signs representing thoughts and dispositions of the mind.¹⁶⁴ Reid thinks both languages provide knowledge through "a particular principle of our constitution." For artificial language, humans are divinely disposed for the reception of testimonial claims based on two further principles:

Text 2.3.0.2

The wise and beneficent Author of Nature, who intended that we should be social creatures, and that we should receive the greatest and most important parts of our knowledge by the information of others, hath, for these purposes, implanted in our natures two principles that tally with each other. The first of these principles is, a propensity to speak truth, and to use signs of language, so as to convey our real sentiments.¹⁶⁵

Another original principle implanted in us by the Supreme Being, is a disposition to confide in the veracity of others, and to believe what they tell us. This is the counter-part to the former; and as that shall be called *the*

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 79.

¹⁶² Fred Wilson, "Hume and the Role of Testimony in Knowledge," *Episteme* 7, no. 1 (2010): 58–78.

¹⁶³ Coady, *Testimony*, 120–30. Thomas Reid, *An Inquiry into the Human Mind, on the Principles of Common Sense*, ed. Derek R Brookes (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), 193.

¹⁶⁴ Coady, *Testimony*, 120.

¹⁶⁵ Reid, *An Inquiry into the Human Mind, on the Principles of Common Sense*, 193.

principle of veracity, we shall, for want of a more proper name, call this *the principle of credulity*.¹⁶⁶

Reid's parallel between perception and testimony is given a full treatment by James Van Cleve who ultimately disagrees with Reid that beliefs based on testimony are "basic or foundational" in the same way as perception.¹⁶⁷

While the opposing inquiries of David Hume and Thomas Reid are cited as the first formal discussion on testimony and then used to frame the rest of the conversation, many have noted that the concept of testimony has served a large role within traditional epistemologies long before the Enlightenment. The cataloguing of medieval testimonial accounts using the framework of social epistemology has recently developed in the field and here I will focus this overview on:¹⁶⁸ 1) testimonial accounts of the focal thinkers Saadya, al-Ghazālī, and Thomas Aquinas; 2) prior thinkers' who likely impacted the focal three; and 3) immediately subsequent thinkers who were likely impacted by the focal three.

2.3.1 Testimony in St. Augustine

2.3.1.1 C.A.J. Coady. 1992: Testimony

C.A.J. Coady gives minor attention to medieval thinkers, but in a dismissive way — a trend which has only begun to be subverted in recent years. Coady mentions Aquinas and Augustine in the first chapter of his book *Testimony* as examples of medieval philosophers for whom testimony is in a sense homeless within their epistemology since testimony is

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 194.

¹⁶⁷ Cf. James Van Cleve, "Reid on the Credit of Human Testimony," in *The Epistemology of Testimony*, ed. Jennifer Lackey and Ernest Sosa (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), 50–74.

¹⁶⁸ Many accounts occur within larger works: Benjamin McMyler highlights aspects of testimony in Plato, Descartes, and Locke in the first chapter of his book *Testimony, Trust, and Authority* (2011); and Linda Zagzebski briefly touches on the theories of Plato, Descartes, Locke, and Kant in her first chapter of her book *Epistemic Authority* (2012). Cf. Benjamin McMyler, *Testimony, Trust, and Authority* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Zagzebski, *Epistemic Authority*.

not certain enough to count as *scientia*, but certain enough to consider seriously.¹⁶⁹ Influenced by Platonic ideals, Augustine has a strong vs. weak thesis on knowing: hard *episteme* excludes perception and testimony while soft *episteme* includes them (which is a harmless yet intelligible "widespread misuse" of hard *episteme* for pragmatic concerns).¹⁷⁰ Coady sees this dichotomy as being inconsistent: generally testimony is not considered knowledge since it is a matter of believing, yet other times knowledge does consist of "things seen and things believed."¹⁷¹ The result, he claims, is that testimony fits poorly into Augustine's overall epistemology.

2.3.1.2 Peter King and Nathan Ballantyne. 2009: "Augustine on Testimony"

Peter King and Nathan Ballantyne elucidate some of Coady's concerns in their 2009 article "Augustine on Testimony," arguing that, while the early Augustine did reject testimony (likely due to residual Platonic Skepticism) the mature Augustine embraced an anti-reductionist position long before Thomas Reid.¹⁷² Their article considers three questions about testimony raised by Augustine: "the analytical question of what sources count as testimony (Section I); the epistemological question about the status of testimony-based

¹⁶⁹ Coady has common everyday testimony in mind. Coady does identify the notion of a believer "testifying" to their faith, however, this quite different from a divine speaker, a concept which is arguably not homeless in Augustine or Aquinas but considered under faith requiring divine grace. Coady, *Testimony*, 52–53. The closest Coady comes to any idea of divine testimony is footnote 17 of his chapter on Thomas Reid, in which Reid sees God as the speaker behind the "natural language" of nature. *Ibid.*, 128.

¹⁷⁰ Coady, *Testimony*. 18

¹⁷¹ Coady, citing Augustine's *Letters*, letter 147 to Paulinus, in *The Fathers of the Church*, XX, ed. and trans. by Sr. M. I. Bogan (Washington, DC, 1953), 176 also quotes: 'Not without reason do we say that we know not only what we have seen or see, but also what we believe, when we yield assent to some fact under the influence of suitable evidence or witnesses.' *Ibid.* 20.

¹⁷² Peter King and Nathan Ballantyne, "Augustine on Testimony," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 39, no. 2 (2009): 195–214. 199, 212-213.

belief (Section II); and the doxastic question about the circumstances in which it is appropriate to believe on the basis of testimony (Section III)."¹⁷³

To answer what sources count as testimony, they claim Augustine uses testimony both as a signifier and as an intentional activity of affirmation in the transfer of information that includes speech, writing, and "other means" such as gestures. Speakers, or testifiers, are said not to need firsthand authority or to be an eyewitness for Augustine. The result is "distant" reports, such as historical accounts, can still be believed even though it is impossible for the listener to check them with non-testimonial evidence. However, the strength of the report is increased if the listener can and does verify the speaker's claim.¹⁷⁴

To answer the epistemological status of testimony, King and Ballantyne show that Augustine's attitude toward testimony as "knowledge" evolves over time. Early works such as *De magistro*, argue that "it is impossible to gain knowledge from testimony, since the mark of knowledge is an 'inner episode' of illumination which cannot be transmitted from one person to another," while his late work such as *De Trinitate* or *De Civitate*, "claims in no uncertain terms that testimony is a source of knowledge."¹⁷⁵ The reason for this shift is thought to follow Augustine's overall epistemological theory shaped by his transitions from Academic Skepticism to Platonism and finally to Christianity.¹⁷⁶ The mature Augustine thus held all human knowledge originated in: "(a) the interior or mental sense, (b) the

¹⁷³ The key passages they use include: *De libero arbitrio* 2.2.5.14-15, *Confessiones* 6, *De Trinitate* 15, *De civitate Dei* 11, and most importantly *De utilitate credendi*, *De fide rerum inuisibilium*, and *Epistula* 147. Ibid. 196.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid. 197.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid. 198-199.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid. 199. King and Ballantyne speculate the reasons why Augustine embraced testimony could be for several reasons: 1) toward the end of his life Augustine may have revisited and commented on his works distinguishing between strict and ordinary usage term usage; 2) Augustine may have overcome skepticism and accepted that some things can be known based on the senses and testimony; and 3) as a bishop, Augustine's international experience of gaining and imparting wisdom influenced his position on whether testimony is a source of knowledge. Ibid. 200.

external or bodily senses, and (c) testimony."¹⁷⁷ Augustine exhibits two models of testimony. The first or "standard" model is straightforward since the testifier knows "the places, people, and events that the testimony is about."¹⁷⁸ The unique exception to this is when testifiers know an event they did not perceive, such as the resurrection of Jesus Christ. King & Ballantyne suggest that in such cases the listener's testimonial knowledge is a combination of inference and received reports: "the premisses are known by testimony, the conclusion is drawn from the premisses rather than directly from the testifier."¹⁷⁹ The second model is a less restrictive version that allows for testimonial situations in which the listener comes to believe a speaker's report even when the speaker does not believe it.¹⁸⁰

To answer when a listener can believe on the basis of testimony, King and Ballantyne argue Augustine maintains that a "hearer should believe a testifier's report unless it seems to the hearer either that the testifier or the report is untrustworthy."¹⁸¹ This position stems from Augustine's position on friendship and that "friendship demands belief in things unseen..." and "doesn't require gathering reasons and evidence for a friend's trustworthiness."¹⁸² Since Christian charity requires friendship, Augustine extends this friend-like trust even to strangers as his default position on testimony.¹⁸³ Hence, listeners ought to believe: a) a speaker if they are deemed trustworthy or b) a claim if it "seems appropriate."¹⁸⁴ The result, per King and Ballantyne, is that the mature Augustine position reflects that of Thomas Reid and what is now known as anti-reductionism.

¹⁷⁷ King and Ballantyne, "Augustine on Testimony." 200.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid. 202

¹⁷⁹ Ibid. 205.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid. 207.

¹⁸¹ Ibid. 207-208.

¹⁸² Ibid. 208.

¹⁸³ Ibid. 210.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid. 211.

2.3.1.3 Matthew Siebert. 2018: "Augustine's Development on Testimonial Knowledge"

Following his 2014 dissertation on testimony in Augustine and Aquinas, Siebert makes the claim that Augustine was "the first in western philosophy to defend the thesis that we can know something on everyday human testimony explicitly."¹⁸⁵ Siebert also notes shifts in Augustine's account of testimony, but sees the works of Coady, Peter King, and Nathan Ballantyne to be "misleading." He argues that textual evidence rules out Augustine being an anti-reductionist for "in the first stage, Augustine says that testimony can yield nothing more than belief (*credere*); in the second, that it can yield *scientia*; and in the last, that it yields lower-level knowledge (*notitia*), but not *scientia*, strictly speaking."¹⁸⁶

In the first stage (the "Classical" position), Augustine held to a hard *epistēmē* heavily influenced by Platonism and saw all knowledge as a matter of seeing intelligibles (direct or firsthand experience) or a systematic discipline.¹⁸⁷ Regarding intelligibles, Augustine claims in *On the Teacher* that nothing is learned from words (*De magistro* 10.33),¹⁸⁸ and the discipline or *technē* for belief formation is far more involved than accepting a speaker's testimony. Siebert is quick to point out however that Augustine does not simply laud *epistēmē* while denigrating *doxa*. This is because Augustine holds two forms of *doxa*: acceptable *credere* beliefs which are plausible even though one cannot claim to "know"; and unacceptable *opinio* which is falsely believing that one knows.¹⁸⁹ This allows Augustine to join his epistemology with Christian doctrine and escape from

¹⁸⁵ Cf. Matthew Kent Siebert, "Knowing and Trusting: The Medieval Social Epistemologies of Augustine and Aquinas" (Thesis, Toronto, University of Toronto, 2014); Matthew Kent Siebert, "Augustine's Development on Testimonial Knowledge," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 56, no. 2 (2018): 217.

¹⁸⁶ Siebert, "Augustine's Development on Testimonial Knowledge," 217.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 218–20.

¹⁸⁸ "Words can do no more than either (a) prompt us to see things for ourselves (*mag.* 11.36, 14.45–46) or (b) enable us merely to believe historical claims, while recognizing that such historical claims cannot be known" Siebert, "Augustine's Development on Testimonial Knowledge." 218.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.* 220.

the "paradox of inquiry."¹⁹⁰ A systematic Christian discipline results since God and Jesus of Nazareth fit even the Platonic ideals of a wise teacher. Hence, Christians are required to provide "non-provisional" assent to a set of teachings provided by Christ the teacher.¹⁹¹ For early Augustine, however, these beliefs do not count as knowledge despite the believer's faith and God's authority.¹⁹²

In the second stage (the "Ordinary Language" position), Augustine reverses his position by making natural science a sort of knowledge and forms of testimony qualify as *scientia*.¹⁹³ Siebert admits the reason for the change is unclear and offers three possible motivations stemming from Augustine's adoption of Christianity.¹⁹⁴ This introduces two functions of the mind: higher reason aimed at wisdom (*sapientia*) concerning eternal things and lower reason aimed at knowledge (*scientia*) concerning temporal things. *Scientia* is now a product of the mind resulting from the senses and from testimony.¹⁹⁵ Siebert disagrees with King and Ballantyne's assessment that this new position is anti-reductionist claiming it is neither supported by recent scholarship nor by Augustine's own works which claim it is imprudent to believe everything one hears, especially from strangers.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁰ The "paradox of inquiry" is when an ignorant person cannot achieve wisdom since they are ignorant of how to or cannot identify a wise teacher without relying on the testimony of someone with a reputation of being wise. Ibid. 222.

¹⁹¹ Augustine refers to these teachings as either "the Apostle's Creed" or the "Rules of Faith" which none could learn by reasoning.

¹⁹² Siebert, "Augustine's Development on Testimonial Knowledge." 223.

¹⁹³ Ibid. 223-224

¹⁹⁴ The three possibilities are: first, his study of Scripture informed his epistemology more than philosophical theories; second, Augustine's shift away from a Platonic epistemological *disciplina* to Christian one marked by faiths; and third, "once Augustine had recognized a kind of knowledge of the sensory world (Stoic *cognitio*), it became more plausible that there is inferential knowledge of the sensory world (which the Stoics also defended), including testimonial knowledge (Augustine's innovation)." Ibid. 224

¹⁹⁵ Ibid. 224-225. Siebert and King & Ballantyne appear to be talking past each other. Siebert focuses on instances of knowledge generation (i.e., knowledge from strangers) while King & Ballantyne focuses on instances of knowledge transmission (i.e., knowledge from friends). This disagreement seems to result from trying to fit Augustine into social epistemology's contemporary categories which, as shown below, need to be rethought.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid. 227

Augustine gives "permission" for testimonial belief and for "judging" whether to believe testimony using Roman legal procedure for identifying "suitable" (*idoneus*) witnesses.¹⁹⁷ Siebert argues that Augustine became an "inferentialist" in which testimony is a kind of knowledge of induction like other knowledge forms. In short, testimony allows listeners to obtain very certain inferential knowledge about unseen things using the evidence from reliable speakers.

In the final stage (the "Compromise" position), Siebert cites Augustine's *Retractationes* near the end of his life in which Augustine holds two senses of knowing (*scire*): a proper sense of knowing in the classical Platonic sense and another ordinary sense of knowing which includes *cognition* and *notitia*.¹⁹⁸ Siebert points out this two-sense position is what Coady criticizes. However, Augustine reaffirms this compromise position in *City of God* 19.18 and again in *De Trinitate*. Augustine's mature position puts testimony under a *notitia* which is so certain that not believing it would be "absurd," taking *notitia* to be factive "in the sense that, necessarily, if you have *notitia* that *p*, then *p* is true (*Trin.* 15.10.17, 15.12.22)."¹⁹⁹ *Notitia* comes from a fallible yet reliable source to provide "an indirect acquaintance with truth." Testimony is thus a kind of knowledge that fits Augustine's journey, which can be doubted, but would be absurd not to believe.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid. 228-229.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid. 231-232.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid. 233.

2.3.2 Testimony in Avicenna & Averroes

2.3.2.1 Deborah L. Black. 2013: "Certitude, justification, and the principles of knowledge in Avicenna's epistemology"²⁰⁰

Deborah Black notes that Avicenna, like most ancient and medieval philosophers "did not identify any branch of philosophy that would map neatly onto the contemporary field of epistemology." Still in her entry on Avicenna's overarching account of knowledge, she devotes a few pages to an Avicennian social epistemology. Avicenna uses the Arabic term *al-tawātur*, which describes reliable and unbroken chains of transmission back to the prophet Muhammad, to refer to any true beliefs about unseen historical figures (e.g., Galen & Euclid) or distant places (e.g., Mecca). These "testimonial propositions" are certain (free from doubt) when multiple witnesses agree on non-suspicious objects. Black reasons that for Avicenna there is a hidden syllogism in which "it would be impossible for all these witnesses to be mistaken, lying, or colluding."²⁰¹ While Islamic jurisprudence debated exactly how many witnesses were needed for a *hadith* to qualify as authentic, Avicenna (and al-Ghazālī after him) dismissed such quotas. A claim was known to be true and certain not due to any quality of the proposition itself but on the knower's tranquil psychological state: "we know that the witnesses are sufficiently numerous *because* certain assent has been evoked and doubt, while objectively possible, has been removed."²⁰² Thus, the same proposition will frequently cause different levels of certitude in different minds. However, Avicenna's overall philosophical system limits testimonials and their certitude to sensibles (e.g., existence and actions of particulars). Essential universal knowledge cannot be

²⁰⁰ Deborah L. Black, "Certitude, Justification, and the Principles of Knowledge in Avicenna's Epistemology," in *Interpreting Avicenna: Critical Essays*, ed. Peter Adamson (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2013), 120–42.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 132–33.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 133.

obtained by *tawātur*.²⁰³ Hence, Avicenna's testimonials fall under dialectical and rhetorical arguments in which beliefs are derived from authority via a form of *al-mashhūrat* (akin to Greek *endoxa*). Such received claims may be true or demonstrable, but they have a "lower epistemic value" without additional evidence to verify them. This lower value stems from the practice of using unverified testimonials as premises which "can only be verified by a discursive inferential process — they represent potential conclusions of arguments, not their premises."²⁰⁴ In such a case, the testimonials are blindly accepted based on authority and hence fall under *taqlīd*—"partisan adherence to a belief on the basis of authority alone."²⁰⁵ Even moral beliefs that are not products of authority are denied as innate but seen as mere products of social and political customs.²⁰⁶ For primary truths cannot be doubted while ethical maxims can be. However, Avicenna maintains that the social consensus is the only, and therefore legitimate, basis for accepting moral claims even though they do not rise to the level of necessary beliefs.²⁰⁷

2.3.2.2 Deborah L. Black. 2018. "Avicenna on Knowledge"²⁰⁸

In another treatment of Avicenna's epistemology, Black states that by appropriating views from the *Mutakallimūn*, most notably the distinction between natural or innate knowledge (*'ilm badīh*)— i.e., "necessary knowledge" (*darūrī*)—and acquired knowledge (*'ilm muktasab*), Avicenna developed "new lines" of knowledge for the Aristotelian tradition

²⁰³ "I may say that I know that $e=mc^2$ because I know from testimony that Einstein was a brilliant physicist, but unless I myself understand the equation, it is not an item of knowledge for me. And once I do understand the equation fully, the reliability of physics textbooks and Einstein's reputation is irrelevant to my knowledge." Ibid., 133–34.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 134–35.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 135.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 136–37.

²⁰⁸ Deborah L. Black, "Avicenna on Knowledge," in *Knowledge in Medieval Philosophy*, ed. Henrik Lagerlund, vol. 2, 4 vols., *The Philosophy of Knowledge: A History* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), 9–34.

including testimony as a source of knowledge.²⁰⁹ Avicenna, Black claims, has an "inchoate" or non-explicit concept of social epistemology that draws on both philosophers like al-Fārābī and dialectical theologians like the *Mutakallimūn*. From the former, Avicenna accepts that most forms of testimony give rise to dialectical and rhetorical assent. From the latter he accepts *tawātur*, the technical juridical term ascertaining which sayings accurately descend from the Prophet Muhammad, but broadens it to include geographical and historical facts.²¹⁰ *Tawātur* is akin to experiential knowledge (*tajriba*) via repeated tellings which trigger a hidden syllogism "that warrants our confidence in the veracity and dependability of those witnesses," by inferring from corroborating reports that error, conspiracy, and/or coincidence are implausible.²¹¹ As stated in 2013, Avicenna rejects *tawātur* quotas and the "only criterion" for knowing a proposition is certain is that "the reliable mechanism that naturally removes doubted has in fact been triggered", which is the *Mutakallimūn* subjective experience of "repose of the soul" (stated clearly in her 2013 article and far less so here). Black does say here that Avicenna acknowledges that testimony cannot lead to certain knowledge of any universal since *tawātur* is limited to the historical and geographical. All other testimony is based on authoritative testimony that is merely probable since it is acquired. However, testimony about demonstrations or scientific proofs can lead to certain knowledge once a listener works the claim out for themselves.²¹²

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 9–10.

²¹⁰ Ibid., 21.

²¹¹ Ibid., 22.

²¹² Ibid., 22–23.

2.3.2.3 Deborah L. Black. 2018: "Constructing Averroes' Epistemology"²¹³

As in her article on Avicenna's epistemology, Black notes that while medieval philosophers "did not recognize a distinct area of philosophical inquiry under the rubric of epistemology, epistemological speculation was unusually predominant in classical Arabic philosophy..." and thereby includes a section on "Testimonial Knowledge: Averroes' Social Epistemology." Black maintains that Averroes' position on testimony differs from Avicenna since no form of testimony can yield certain knowledge. One caveat, however, is that Black notes that Averroes holds two notions of certitude, absolute and accidental. Accidental certitude—"hold[ing] a strong, true belief from a source that is not naturally capable of conferring certitude"—can result from *tawātur* in some cases (e.g. that historical figures like the prophet and unseen places exist).²¹⁴ Even then Averroes rejects both witness quotas and a subjective sense of certainty as essential causes for knowledge of sensibles.²¹⁵ Sharing al-Fārābī's views, Averroes sees *tawātur* as a species of testimony (*shahāda*) which is *al-mashhūrat* and thereby only suitable as a source for dialectic and rhetoric. In fact, Averroes holds low appraisals of dialectical and rhetorical arguments *because* they are grounded in testimony.²¹⁶ However, Averroes does place a higher epistemic value on ethical principles and other "most noble" (*ashraf*) beliefs that are unanimously accepted, even though they are still "mere opinions" and thereby

²¹³ Deborah L. Black, "Constructing Averroes' Epistemology," in *Interpreting Averroes: Critical Essays*, ed. Peter Adamson and Matteo Di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 96–115.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 105–6.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 109–10. "Even if these things function as signs of some underlying, relevantly essential grounds for belief, it will be those grounds that justify those beliefs and thereby render them certain. And if such grounds do exist, they will be open to investigation and discovery in the appropriate science, namely, the psychological study of sense perception. But what such a study instead shows us is that testimony on its own is just not up to the task of justifying either sensory or intelligible knowledge."

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 103–4.

"epistemically deficient."²¹⁷ In his *Commentary on Aristotle's Rhetoric*, Averroes agrees with Avicenna on the Aristotelian notion that testimony is restricted to sensibles and thus cannot provide certain knowledge of intelligible matters and universals. Since knowledge begins with perception and the human cognitive apparatus, testimony is denied any positive role when the senses can provide more certain knowledge. How people obtain knowledge of sensory objects via testimony relies on their internal sensory apparatus in which reports or *tawātur* are constructed into an image of a sensible particular based on previous experience.²¹⁸

2.3.3 Testimony in Thomas Aquinas

2.3.3.1 C.A.J. Coady. 1992: Testimony

In his first chapter introducing testimony to contemporary philosophy, Coady defends testimony from the prominence of first post-Renaissance individualist ideologies and then the rise of probability theory in the 17th century that deemed testimonial knowledge unimportant. He treats testimony in ancient and medieval epistemology together as beholden to self-evident principles and subsequent deductions lowering the epistemic status of testimonial knowledge.²¹⁹ Coady devotes several paragraphs to Thomas Aquinas as his example that pre-modern philosophers "...deny testimony the title of knowledge

²¹⁷ Ibid., 104–5.

²¹⁸ Ibid., 108.

²¹⁹ Coady sees these as distinct breaks with the medieval tradition: "Ian Hacking has presented a case in favour of the view that probability theory as initiated by thinkers like Pascal in the mid-seventeenth century was only possible because of a certain sort of breakdown in the medieval distinction between science and opinion." And then, "They gave the title 'opinion' to beliefs or doctrine not so demonstrable and they used the term 'probable' in connection only with opinion." Since 'probable', made no reference to reason or evidence, testimony was *ipso facto* not considered appropriate reasoning or evidence for knowledge. Coady, *Testimony*, 14. This reflects the largely Medieval view of Aristotle's Posterior Analytics, but this does not reflect the contemporary understanding that Aristotle is a foundationalist in regard to explanation but not justification. Cf. Myles Burnyeat, "Aristotle on Understanding Knowledge," in *Explorations in Ancient and Modern Philosophy*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 115–45; Owen Goldin, "Circular Justification and Explanation in Aristotle," *Phronesis* 58, no. 3 (2013): 195–214.

[but] do concede it a significant role in the formation of true and sometimes highly advantageous belief."²²⁰ Aquinas's concern was the relation of testimony to *scientia* — theoretical knowledge providing both knowledge *that* and knowledge *why*. Coady indicates that Aquinas and other medieval thinkers' hesitancy with testimony reveals a "latent tension" between what today amounts to individuals' "justified true beliefs" and objective certain truth in the form of scientific understanding. Thus, Aquinas talks about testimony as a type of faith in his *Commentary on Boethius's De Trinitate* question III, article 1 which falls in-between knowledge and opinion.²²¹ Coady thus paints Aquinas like Augustine as one who recognizes (or is beginning to recognize) the importance of testimony but cannot give an adequate epistemological account of it without upending the Greek epistemological system he is wed to.²²²

2.3.3.2 Eleonore Stump. 2014: "Faith, Wisdom, & the Transmission of Knowledge through Testimony"²²³

Eleonore Stump argues that not only does Aquinas advocate for an assurance view of testimony, but also that his account answers contemporary objections leveled against the assurance view. Aquinas's account of faith and wisdom demonstrates how interpersonal trust can allow for knowledge to pass from speaker to listener while maintaining that the listener is not entirely passive in the transmission since they generate intellectual virtue. Citing the *Summa Theologiae* on the will, Stump elucidates two ways in which a veridical state can be achieved in the intellect.²²⁴ In the first way, "the object of the intellect's act"

²²⁰ Coady, *Testimony*, 16.

²²¹ Coady also notes *ST* II-II.4.1 and II-II.2.1. *Ibid.*

²²² *Ibid.*, 18.

²²³ Eleonore Stump, "Faith, Wisdom, and the Transmission of Knowledge through Testimony," in *Religious Faith and Intellectual Virtue*, ed. Laura Frances Callahan and Timothy O'Connor (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014), 204–30.

²²⁴ *Ibid.* 209. cf. *ST* I.82.2, 4.

(i.e., evidence) is sufficient for the intellect to assent to a belief without the will. In the second way, the "object of the intellect" is insufficient to move the intellect to assent without the will (when the will is cooperating with the intellect's purpose), and thus the will has the final say in assenting to a belief (the will can move the intellect to either indirectly or directly assent to a belief).²²⁵ The most notable case for the second way is the interpersonal process of coming to faith in God, which results in gaining wisdom, namely the will acting on the intellect to assent to the propositions of faith.²²⁶ Stump describes a person coming to faith as moving through two sequences in which the will influences the intellect. First, the person has their will drawn to God because of his goodness in cooperation with the intellect's purpose of achieving *eudaimonia* in seeing God.²²⁷ Furthermore, Stump claims that "because these truths are important and have far-reaching epistemic impact on a person's intellect, for Aquinas faith contributes to the perfection of the intellect; and so faith is an intellectual virtue."²²⁸ Recognizing God's goodness provides the necessary ground to establish an interpersonal relationship between the believer as listener and God as the speaker. The subsequent trust from this relationship allows the believer to assent to the propositions of faith. Citing ST II-II q.45 a.2., Stump argues that the second sequence begins once the relationship is established. The relationship develops in the person of faith some degree of "connaturality" or "sympathy" with God enabling a disposition in the intellect, namely the intellectual virtue of wisdom, such that "this virtue will manifest itself in [a believer's] intuitively knowing things she would not otherwise

²²⁵ Ibid. 210.

²²⁶ Ibid. 212-213.

²²⁷ Ibid. 213.

²²⁸ Ibid. 214.

have known by the exercise of reason or would not have known as readily or as well."²²⁹ She claims that this process fits the assurance view of testimony since God voluntarily and intentionally shares some part of his mind with another person.²³⁰

Stump spends the rest of the paper arguing that this two-step basis for the transmission of knowledge through trust accounts for human-to-human testimony (regardless of creed) in addition to coming to faith in God via divine testimony. She draws heavily on contemporary neuroscience and developmental psychology to show the parallels between Aquinas's relational connaturality and "neurological systems and the interpersonal connections of empathy."²³¹ This scientific connaturality is referred to as the cognitive social skill of "mind-reading," which allows for persons to not only have knowledge *that* but *understanding* of other persons and their mental states. This is accomplished through a process known as "the mirror neuron system" which explains empathy as the same firing of neurons in an observer's brain as in the first-person experiencer's brain establishing an *intrasubjective* link.²³² On account of this "intellectual virtue," all humans neurologically mirror the mind of another human being, allowing them to assess the speaker's goodness and form the basis for the trust to accept the speaker's claims. Stump also sees this as a defeater to an objection against virtue epistemology that listeners are epistemic free-riders passively obtaining knowledge from the speaker's epistemic labor's since the intellectual virtue *in* the listener also labors to examine the evidence or assess the reasons pertaining to the speaker's claims.²³³ In sum, Aquinas holds

²²⁹ Ibid. 215.

²³⁰ Whether the information pertains to the natural world or beyond is irrelevant. Ibid. 216.

²³¹ Ibid. 217.

²³² Ibid. 218.

²³³ Ibid. 227. "If she were impaired in this capacity, she would not succeed in gaining knowledge through testimony by means of trust." Ibid. 228.

to a theory of testimony in which connatural knowledge is a kind of testimonial knowledge transmitted from a speaker and is justified in an empathic experience by which a listener comes to initially trust a speaker, namely God.

2.3.3.3 *Matthew Siebert. 2016: "Aquinas on Testimonial Justification: Faith and Opinion"*²³⁴

Summarizing two chapters of his 2014 dissertation, Matthew Siebert presents Thomas Aquinas's account of general (i.e., human) testimonial justification as the "pluralist view" since it does not neatly fit into any predefined categories.²³⁵ This pluralism results from Aquinas generally accepting reductionism while reserving the interpersonal assurance view for certain cases. Siebert builds on Stump with a general account of interpersonal testimony that does not rely on the special case of faith in God and does not count connatural knowledge as testimonial knowledge. His analysis shows a non-empathic experience in having "faith in" or coming to trust a speaker.

Two sections of the paper focus on the term "faith" and explain specifically how everyday testimonial "faith" works in Aquinas's epistemology. The first section outlines three ways testimonial faith contributes to society: 1) a vertical epistemic division of labor extending from knowledge experts (i.e., talented intellectuals who can demonstrate certain truths) to those who believe that truth on faith since they cannot perform the demonstration themselves due to a lack of time, talent, or training;²³⁶ 2) a "horizontal epistemic division of labor" between epistemic equals since societies would halt unless individuals acted in

²³⁴ Matthew Kent Siebert, "Aquinas on Testimonial Justification: Faith and Opinion," *Review of Metaphysics* 69, no. 3 (2016): 555–82.

²³⁵ Siebert, "Knowing and Trusting."

²³⁶ Siebert, "Aquinas on Testimonial Justification." 557-558. Interestingly, such a vertical epistemic division of labor is seen when "lower" disciplines take conclusions demonstrated by "higher" scientific disciplines on faith (e.g., physics adopts principles from geometry).

faith on reports from other people despite not being in a position to personally verify claims for themselves;²³⁷ and 3) a student-teacher epistemic evolution necessary for learning the sciences since the faith of a student in their teacher is provisional until the student becomes an expert and understands why the principles they accepted at the beginning of their education are true.²³⁸

The second section explicates the broad and narrow senses of "faith." The broad sense is akin to Augustine's definition of assent to the unseen, since insofar as an object is unseen assent cannot be fully automatic and requires an act of will.²³⁹ Siebert argues that Aquinas's adoption of the broad sense of faith makes him a reductionist since most testimonial claims are justified by reducing to other sources.²⁴⁰ This includes a form of faith called "strong opinion", which is the result of inductive or "probable" inference based on "signs" or "probable" (non-demonstrative) syllogisms. Citing the *Summa Theologiae*, Siebert points to a common form of strong opinion when "other things being equal, we should give more weight to p when more witnesses say p than not, because 'it is probable that the saying of many contains the truth more than the saying of one.'"²⁴¹ The narrow sense of "faith" adopted by Aquinas is similar to the interpersonal assurance view as advocated by Stump, but extends it beyond a Christian's faith in God to human

²³⁷ Siebert points to Aquinas's *Commentary Boethius de Trinitate* 3.1 and also *ST II-II.109.3*. Ibid. 559.

²³⁸ Citing Thomas's commentary on *Boethius de Trinitate*, 3.1 again – "some of the preexisting knowledge required for learning a science must be testimonial" Ibid. 560.

²³⁹ Siebert notes that one's assent be determined partly by the will is essential to faith, but this does not lead to any sort of doxastic voluntarism since "assent is not commanded by the will alone, but by the will under the direction of one's reason." Ibid. 563.

²⁴⁰ Siebert claims that although Aquinas looks like he would endorse an anti-reductionist view of testimony considering his attitude that one should "presume the good"), Aquinas never actually endorses the view. For Aquinas, "presume the good" implies one should presume people are not lying, but not presume that they are telling the truth (i.e., they could be making an honest mistake). Thus, this is a moral and not an epistemic "presume the good." Ibid. 566-567.

²⁴¹ Ibid. 568. Cf. *ST II-II.70.2*

testimony.²⁴² Siebert gives the following definition of the narrow sense of faith and then explains each part in detail: "When one has faith that *p*, one (i) believes the speaker's statement in order to adhere to the speaker, (ii) with a special act of will not present in opinion, and (iii) typically for the reason that the speaker is truthful."²⁴³ First, Aquinas presents propositions as "material objects" with different "formal objects" for believing them.²⁴⁴ The formal object of faith is the reason one assents to a proposition (the material object of faith), which in this case is due to faith in the person of the speaker.²⁴⁵ Aquinas identifies this as *Credere Deo* ("believing God")—reason's act of inclining the will to assent, where the object is the proposition believed, but only as spoken by that speaker.²⁴⁶ The reason for assent does not reduce to inductive reason, but merely "because God said them."²⁴⁷ The key difference of narrow faith is the formal object as means to assent, which here is a trusting belief out of loyalty for the speaker (whereas opinion is based on evidence regardless of the speaker).²⁴⁸ Second, narrow faith must be a special act of the will. This is what differentiates faith from science (which is forced by evidence) and opinion (which does not have firm assent), and what makes faith a meritorious act.²⁴⁹ Third, the typical motivation for faith is that the speaker is truthful. Since society requires a minimum level of truth for epistemic divisions of labor, knowledge can be gained from faith in speakers.

²⁴² Ibid. 569.

²⁴³ Ibid. 569

²⁴⁴ "the material objects of my faith are propositions (the same theorems James knows), while the formal object of my faith is believing the speaker (in this case, James), just as the Christian with faith believes God (*credere Deo*)." Ibid. 571-572.

²⁴⁵ Citing this Summa, this is contra with: *Credere Deum* ("believing that God [exists]")—the intellect's act of being determined to the one proposition believed—or *Credere in Deum* ("believing in God")—the will's act of believing out of love of God, where the will's object is God himself. Ibid. 570.

²⁴⁶ Cf. III Sent. 23.2.2.2 and ST II-II.2.2

²⁴⁷ Christian faith only occurs when one believes because it is said by God.

²⁴⁸ Siebert, "Aquinas on Testimonial Justification." 573.

²⁴⁹ Ibid. 574.

Siebert concludes by discussing how Aquinas's view of testimony is unique, first in being "pluralist" by holding to both a reductionist and an assurance view, and second in how his assurance view is different from contemporary accounts. Aquinas does not focus on the speaker's role or the means by which speakers take responsibility for their claims. Aquinas sees a speaker's saying of a proposition as a preemptive reason to assent to the proposition which in turn makes the listener "more sensitive to the speaker's knowledge" and "less sensitive to your own evidence."²⁵⁰ This introduces a virtue account of testimonial trustworthiness, in which speakers fulfill the responsibility to speak the truth out of a virtuous motivation. This is superior to contemporary approaches which define a trustworthy speaker just as sincere and competent for several reasons: first, since non-virtuous speakers can be sincere and competent, but not worthy of a listener's faith; second, truthfulness is a more fundamental reason for faith in a speaker since "having faith in a speaker does not require taking the speaker to be an authority, but it does require taking the speaker to be truthful, even when the speaker is an epistemic authority."²⁵¹

2.3.3.4 Richard Cross. 2018: *"Testimony, Error, and Reasonable Belief in Medieval Religious Epistemology"*²⁵²

Richard Cross compares Thomas Aquinas's and Duns Scotus's disparate accounts of reasonable belief which he shows flow from their underlying positions on testimony and error. Cross highlights the distinction between the two as: "Aquinas holds that the only ground for Christian belief is *divine* testimony; Scotus, contrariwise, holds that Christian

²⁵⁰ Ibid. 580.

²⁵¹ Ibid. 581

²⁵² Richard Cross, "Testimony, Error, and Reasonable Belief in Medieval Religious Epistemology," in *Knowledge, Belief, and God: New Insights in Religious Epistemology*, ed. Matthew A Benton, John Hawthorne, and Dani Rabinowitz (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 29–53.

belief can be made fully credible simply on the basis of *human* testimony."²⁵³ This is because Aquinas is more doubtful than Scotus that we can identify when our cognitive processes malfunction to have confidence in our beliefs. This is largely a result of their different epistemological approaches with Aquinas's externalist reliabilism vs. Scotus's internalist justification.

Starting with Thomas, Cross identifies Aquinas as amenable to an error theory that could deny certainty to internalist justifications for religious faith. This follows from Thomas's distinction between "externalist" objective certainty, which is "without fear of error" because it is the effect of a certain cause—God—through the reliable process of divine testimony, and "internalist" subjective certainty, which is "probable certainty" on account of the "felt level of credence attaching to a belief."²⁵⁴ Even though human testimony is only "liable to undiagnosed error in a minority of cases," the concern is ever-present, earning it a low epistemic appraisal. This leads to an explanation of Thomas's process for belief formation which is more error prone the farther it proceeds from the source. Thus, the imagination is more prone to error than the senses, which is important due to the imagination's key role for beliefs. These epistemic attitudes combined with the Medieval assumption "that Christian faith must be as epistemically robust as scientific knowledge" mean Christian faith cannot be grounded in human testimony.²⁵⁵ Natural reason (*scientia*) based on compelling evidence and what it entails reaches a limit proving at best that the Christian faith is not impossible. In contrast, the certainty of faith is caused externally as the effect of a cause that cannot err, namely, faith is a gift infused by God.

²⁵³ Ibid., 29.

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 31–32.

²⁵⁵ Ibid., 37.

For Aquinas, faith is a "hyper-reliable" habit or intellectual virtue to automatically assent to true propositions and to preclude assenting to propositions contradicting true sacred doctrine.²⁵⁶ This raises questions about the human will and whether it is coerced to believe; however, God bestows the habit of faith by moving a person's will to accept the habit which subsequently "causes the will to accept — and the intellect to assent to — the contents of Christian faith."²⁵⁷ The section concludes by addressing two problems that arise on an internalist reading of infused faith in which the human knowing of propositions revealed by God also justifies their belief. First, this is circular (which Scotus notes). Second, the will is superfluous in Christian faith if human belief is caused by infallible testimony. Cross addresses the first question in his section on Scotus who raised this objection and claims the second fails since Aquinas does not claim humans are "antecedently aware" that faith propositions are revealed by God since humans assent to the revealed contents after receiving infused faith (i.e. the habit).²⁵⁸ Cross's conclusion is that Aquinas pursues his insight that human testimony cannot be sufficient for faith to its absolute logical conclusion: "It is not the Prophets, Apostles, and Evangelists who are relevantly trustworthy: it is God alone."²⁵⁹

Cross then moves on to Scotus, who argues the best response to the challenge of skepticism is not divine illumination but epistemological naturalism. This leads Scotus in the opposite direction of Aquinas with an internalist account of rational Christian beliefs based on human testimony. The certainty of faith does not come from outside, but inside

²⁵⁶ Ibid., 38. Cross here directly borrows "hyper-reliable" from John Hawthorne cf. John Hawthorne, "Aquinas on Faith and Knowledge: Response to Robert Pasnau," *Proceedings of the British Academy*. 189 (2013): 119–33.

²⁵⁷ Cross, "Testimony, Error, and Reasonable Belief in Medieval Religious Epistemology," 39.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 40.

as something humans "experience in ourselves", namely a subjective "felt credence level."²⁶⁰ Scotus hence gives arguments against skepticism showing that human epistemic faculties are mostly reliable. Even in the cases of illusion, humans always have some mechanism to detect and correct to avoid error. This leads to an "optimistic internalism" which puts testimonial beliefs on the same credence level as knowledge (*scientia*). This is because humans accept the truth of speakers by default, presumably because humans assume the truthfulness of speakers unless there is a defeater.²⁶¹ *Pace* Aquinas and infused faith, faith is acquired through human testimony, specifically that of the Church. He even gives examples of how peoples' beliefs can possess the same content and subjective certainty through human testimony as infused faith without divine testimony. A main difference is that "for Aquinas, the Church's teaching amounts to divine testimony; for Scotus, it is merely *human*."²⁶² Scotus argues the reason for such a high credence is that the Church and the Bible are highly credible witnesses, and he gives ten ways to rationally convince unbelievers. Several ways presume the rationality of following what our community believes unless there is a defeater.²⁶³ This leaves infused faith which Scotus first rejects before adopting a modified form himself. Scotus objected to infused faith as being both propositional content (i.e., articles of faith) and causal assent from divine testimony because his internalism saw the ground for divine testimony being divine testimony itself to be circular. In short, Scotus searched for a ground for Christian belief outside of divine testimony, such as a direct "encounter with the realities that the relevant

²⁶⁰ Ibid., 40–41.

²⁶¹ Ibid., 44–45.

²⁶² Ibid., 46. This follows upon a deeper disagreement as to whether Scripture (and derivatively Church teachings) are God's words per Aquinas or merely witnesses to God's words per Scotus. Cf. Lamont, *Divine Faith*, 13–27.

²⁶³ Cross, "Testimony, Error, and Reasonable Belief in Medieval Religious Epistemology," 46–47.

propositions—the articles of faith, for example—are about.”²⁶⁴ Those who do not have such direct experiences, Scotus argues, have ways of rationally accepting the (human) testimony of those who received revelation.

2.3.4 Testimony in William of Ockham

2.3.4.1 Robert Pasnau. 2010: "Medieval Social Epistemology: *Scientia for Mere Mortals*"²⁶⁵

Robert Pasnau provides a basic overview explaining how the contemporary field of social epistemology fits within medieval philosophy. He provides a more optimistic appraisal of medieval thinkers than Coady arguing that Medieval thinkers are engaging in social epistemology when they attempt to relax or weaken the strict standards of attaining certain *scientia* set out by Aristotle’s *Posterior Analytics*. While Pasnau devotes less than a page to testimony, his account of William Ockham maintains that testimony falls under *scientia* as a kind of faith insofar as both are "a certain apprehension of something true" since knowing about the unseen (like Rome or who one’s parents are) without doubt qualifies as knowledge. Ockham perceived common knowledge as still requiring evidence, but not evidence that demands demonstration.²⁶⁶ Thus, individuals can be said to possess knowledge with differing degrees of certainty with demonstration being strongest (since it logically entails the conclusion) followed by perception, and finally testimony. The latter two are considered contingent and unstable since they deliver knowledge *that* without knowledge *why*. Such knowledge is tolerated since it is practical, corresponding with lived

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 51–52.

²⁶⁵ Robert Pasnau, "Medieval Social Epistemology: *Scientia for Mere Mortals*," *Episteme* 7, no. 01 (2010): 23–41. MacDonald made the same distinction earlier as "paradigmatic" and "non-paradigmatic" forms of scientific knowledge Scott MacDonald, "Theory of Knowledge," in *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, ed. Norman Kretzmann and Eleonore Stump (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 160–95.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., 28

experience: "So if we want to engage with the sorts of knowledge claims that we mere mortals make, we need a theory that accommodates the sorts of doxastic practices that ordinary folk actually engage in—in particular the testimony of others and direct observation."²⁶⁷

2.3.4.2 Jennifer Pelletier. 2018: "William Ockham on Testimonial Knowledge"²⁶⁸

Jennifer Pelletier's aim is to show that despite Ockham's lack of interest in testimonial knowledge, he has both a notion of and addresses sources of testimonial knowledge. Testimonial knowledge is even included under *scientia*, albeit the weakest of the four senses of the term as "truths known only on trust (*fides*)" quoting the prologue to Ockham's commentary on Aristotle's *Physics*. These truths known by testimony are certain, but not always "cognized evidently," as part of a twofold act of forming and then assenting to an apprehended proposition.²⁶⁹ Testimonial knowledge for Ockham occurs when "a subject can be said to know that *p* if (i) *p* is true and (ii) she firmly adheres to *p* because (iii) some speaker says that *p*."²⁷⁰ Pelletier points out key differences between Ockham's and contemporary accounts of testimonial knowledge:

Contemporary accounts of testimonial knowledge include other conditions that [Ockham's] knowledge-acts fail to meet: for example, (1) the speaker invites the hearer to understand and believe his testimony (Adler 2015: sec. 1), (2) the speaker has the competence or authority to state that *p* (Coady 1992: 42), and (3) the speaker's testimony that *p* is important for resolving a question and aimed at those who require clarification on the matter (*ibid.*).²⁷¹

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 29

²⁶⁸ Jennifer Pelletier, "William Ockham on Testimonial Knowledge," in *Knowledge in Medieval Philosophy*, ed. Henrik Lagerlund, vol. 2, 4 vols., *The Philosophy of Knowledge: A History* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), 145–65.

²⁶⁹ While one can only *know* true propositions, belief states apply to both true and false propositions.

²⁷⁰ Pelletier, "William Ockham on Testimonial Knowledge," 151.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.* Also cf. Jonathan Adler, "Epistemological Problems of Testimony," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2017), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2017/entries/testimony-episprob/>.

Another key difference is Ockham's position on religious sources of knowledge (e.g., Scripture) having infallible testimony since, by definition, their authority cannot be deceived, err, or disproved.²⁷² For non-religious testimony, Ockham maintains a form of Aristotelian *endoxa* that is deemed plausibly true (*probabilia*) since it is accepted by the many or the wise. Interestingly this means that the articles of faith are not plausible sentences since those who rely solely on natural reason (i.e. "the wise") do not accept them (the possible exception being a predominantly Christian society where the wise are open to truths beyond natural reason).²⁷³ As for what causes testimonial knowledge, Pelletier points out Ockham's distinction between assenting to a speaker's testimony (because they say so) and assenting to that speaker as an authority (whose testimony ought to be believed).²⁷⁴ The possible cause for the intellect to assent to a proposition is thus either assent to authority or the will willing to believe on account of underlying evidence (e.g. that the speaker is trustworthy).²⁷⁵

2.4 Virtue Epistemology's Contribution to Testimony

Parallel to the development of social epistemology, Virtue Epistemology made a return in 1958 following Elizabeth Anscombe's article "Modern Moral Philosophy." A historical assessment of virtue epistemology is beyond my scope here, but in his 2013 book *Epistémologie des croyances religieuses*, Roger Pouivet argues that in the past 30 years contemporary epistemology has shifted from the Evidentialist and Deontological models

²⁷² Pelletier, "William Ockham on Testimonial Knowledge," 153.

²⁷³ Ibid., 156.

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 157.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., 158–59. There is a fear of doxastic voluntarism here that Pelletier believes Ockham can avoid insofar as the intellect determines whether the speaker's testimony ought to be assented to, but the will can choose to accept or ignore the intellect.

by dispensing with rules that designate truth or justification of beliefs.²⁷⁶ Thus, epistemology is no longer "...a normative discipline in charge of defining the rules of truth and knowledge."²⁷⁷ Instead, two approaches to epistemology have (re)emerged. One form merely describes why individuals form beliefs, a psychology or sociology of knowledge. Citing Richard Rorty, Michael Foucault, and Thomas Kuhn, Pouivet's description of the form aligns with the "constructivist" or "anti-classical" positions outlined at the beginning of this chapter. Within this framework, religious beliefs are thus naturalized to explain why some are led to hold them through the evolutionary process. Religious belief is at best confined to a "phenomenological meadow" examining experiences of the divine by describing "subconceptual modalities, the ineffable surge of the Divine as the invisible in the Visible, the encounter of the Absolute Other in Love."²⁷⁸ The other "new" approach is virtue epistemology comprising the followers of Anscombe's 1958 article and the unbroken epistemological lineage of Thomists.²⁷⁹

Increasingly as social epistemology's two dominant testimonial views of reductionism and anti-reductionism are found wanting, virtue epistemologists have begun offering an alternative type of theory relying on a virtue-theoretic framework.²⁸⁰ In these theories trust and trustworthiness emerge as crucial for accepting testimony. Two kinds of virtue theory have arisen based on what kind of virtue trust is. Paul Faulkner identifies that there are "those that trace their lineage to Aristotle's conception of 'intellectual virtues',

²⁷⁶ Pouivet, *Épistémologie des croyances religieuses*, 74. This arguably includes a shift away from rules that qualify a true justified belief as knowledge. For more on the relationship between historic and contemporary virtue epistemology Cf. Sanford, *Before Virtue*.

²⁷⁷ My translation. Pouivet, *Épistémologie des croyances religieuses.*, 71.

²⁷⁸ My translation. Ibid. 72.

²⁷⁹ My translation. Ibid. 73. Cf. Anscombe, "Modern Moral Philosophy."

²⁸⁰ Pouivet, *Épistémologie des croyances religieuses*, 77–91; Paul Faulkner, "A Virtue Theory of Testimony," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 114, no. 2pt2 (2014): 190–91.

where virtues are conceived as *excellences*, like the sharpness of a knife; and those that trace their lineage to Aristotle's *Ethics*, where virtues are conceived as character traits, like kindness or generosity, which are manifested in judgement and action."²⁸¹ The two groups are commonly referred to as "virtue reliabilism" and "virtue responsibilism" respectively.²⁸² Virtue reliabilism sees trust as a reliable faculty or cognitive disposition through which true beliefs are acquired.²⁸³ Intellectual virtues are conceived of as intellectual abilities that reliably produce true belief (given appropriate circumstances and environments). Virtue reliabilism emerged in the late 20th by shifting process reliabilism's focus from cognitive processes to intellectual virtues.²⁸⁴ Unlike traditional virtues these dispositions are not necessarily acquired through habituation or involve a motivational component. Virtue reliabilists claim their perspective best accords with the "traditional epistemological task", i.e., "providing an account of knowledge in terms of necessary, sufficient, and informative conditions...by understanding the virtue condition on knowledge in terms of cognitive abilities or reliable faculties."²⁸⁵ In short, truth via testimony is achieved directly via a reliable process.

Virtue responsibilism sees trust as an intellectual virtue akin to moral virtues (e.g. intellectual courage, carefulness, open-mindedness, and humility) as one of the personal qualities of a believer.²⁸⁶ Sarah Wright claims the "distinctive characteristic" of

²⁸¹ Faulkner, "A Virtue Theory of Testimony," 189.

²⁸² These names are credited to Guy Axtell, cf. Guy Axtell, *Knowledge, Belief, and Character Readings in Virtue Epistemology* (Lanham, Md.; Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000).

²⁸³ Cf. Ernest Sosa, "The Raft and the Pyramid: Coherence versus Foundations in the Theory of Knowledge," *Midwest Studies In Philosophy* 5, no. 1 (1980): 3–26; Alvin I. Goldman, "Epistemic Folkways and Scientific Epistemology," *Philosophical Issues* 3 (1993): 271–85; Greco and Reibsam, "Reliabilist Virtue Epistemology."

²⁸⁴ Greco and Reibsam, "Reliabilist Virtue Epistemology," 725.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 727.

²⁸⁶ Cf. Linda Trinkaus Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind: An Inquiry into the Nature of Virtue and the Ethical Foundations of Knowledge* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Michael DePaul and Linda

responsibilists is "a focus on developed traits of intellectual character that reflect on the evaluation of their possessor."²⁸⁷ Pouivet claims this responsibilism is closer to the views of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas since believers have an epistemic responsibility in utilizing intellectual virtues in belief acquisition (*pace* impersonal rules of justification). Pouivet also argues it preserves the normative project in epistemology through the development of epistemic virtues in individuals with a "good" intellectual life. By developing epistemic virtues and avoiding epistemic vices the virtuous epistemic actor will always be seeking truth.²⁸⁸ The difference is in the person and a focus on the intellectual character of persons who possess natural epistemic virtues that "ensure our success in discovering the truth" (as far as our finiteness allows).²⁸⁹ The virtuous epistemic actor is thus one who "thinks well." The key to truth is developing intellectual virtues and avoiding vices and thus is being epistemologically virtuous and not vicious. Since there is no internal control of beliefs through a "categorical epistemological imperative" or rule which guarantees the truthfulness or justification of a set of beliefs, truth via testimony is achieved indirectly through moral virtues.²⁹⁰ Faulkner argues that "moral trust can give epistemic reasons that support testimonial uptake" via a bridge between the virtue ethics of trust and

Zagzebski, *Intellectual Virtue: Perspectives from Ethics and Epistemology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003); Pouivet, *Épistémologie des croyances religieuses*, 74; Faulkner, "A Virtue Theory of Testimony"; Baehr, "Intellectual Virtues and Truth, Understanding, and Wisdom."

²⁸⁷ Sarah Wright, "Virtue Responsibilism," in *The Oxford Handbook of Virtue*, ed. Nancy E. Snow (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 747.

²⁸⁸ Pouivet lists these as: "an open mind, firmness, attention, honesty or intellectual prudence, but also the love of truth. These are epistemic virtues that oppose vices, such as intellectual dispersion, lack of curiosity, inattention, dishonesty, indifference to the truth." My translation. Pouivet, *Épistémologie des croyances religieuses*, 74–75..

²⁸⁹ This is part of Pouivet's definition of epistemic virtues which includes: dispositions acquired from natural ability that make humans excel intellectually according to their *eudaimonic telos* and thus motivate a search for truth that will ultimately be successful. *Ibid.*, 76.

²⁹⁰ Pouivet, *Épistémologie des croyances religieuses*. 75

the epistemology of testimony.²⁹¹ Andrea Robiglio provides an example of such a bridge between character, specifically "nobility", and truthfulness for testimony in his article "Testes nobilitatis: una riflessione sul nesso tra verità e nobiltà."²⁹² The meaning of trust (or reliability) presupposes intellectual and moral virtues in both the speaker and listener. Thus, no conversation about testimony is complete without discussing social reputation, the opinions of others, and the guarantees of personal dignity.²⁹³ Citing Aquinas's comments on the Gospel of John, Robiglio reasons that testimony can be understood as not just probable, but certain insofar as Jesus the teacher has both impeccable knowledge and an impeccable character.²⁹⁴ Insofar as scripture is based on divine witness, then both the bible and the Qur'an are based on testimony of the highest credibility.²⁹⁵ Robiglio stresses the necessary link between virtue and legitimate testimony with the legal setting which truly brings out the key difference of an epistemology of virtue in testimony: "is the witness reliable because he attests to the truth or is the truth attested because a reliable witness says so?"²⁹⁶

²⁹¹ Faulkner, "A Virtue Theory of Testimony," 204. Faulkner's overall argument demonstrates this: He sees the challenge as the need to explain how our uptake of testimony can be immediate and yet be informed (a view between reductionism and anti-reductionism). Virtue ethics can show how perception can deliver a judgment of trustworthiness via a testimonial sensibility. This faculty thus underlies trusting bits of testimony. However, trust is epistemically virtuous only if this testimonial sensibility is reliable. Unfortunately, ethical disagreement and prejudice seem to show that our testimonial sensibility is fallible and *always* requires a judgement of trustworthiness. While there cannot be epistemic grounds for trust, there can be presumption of trust if trust and trustworthiness are seen as ethical virtues such that trust gives a "reason" to uptake testimony through a trust-based explanation of the utterance (this is a good reason given the shape of our society). Faulkner draws heavily on Miranda Fricker and her notion of epistemic prejudice, cf. Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

²⁹² Andrea A. Robiglio, "Testes nobilitatis: una riflessione sul nesso tra verità e nobiltà," in *La nobiltà nel pensiero medievale*, ed. Alessandro Palazzo, Francesca Bonini, and Andrea Colli, *Dokimion* 41 (Fribourg: Academic Press Fribourg, 2016), 201–14.

²⁹³ Ibid. 204.

²⁹⁴ Ibid. 207-208.

²⁹⁵ Ibid. 210.

²⁹⁶ The issue raised is analogous to the issue of Plato's *Euthyphro*. Ibid. 210-211, 204.

Despite the differences in these two views' conception of intellectual virtues, the conflict has yielded "something of a consensus" in recent years with some scholars seeing the two views as being compatible within their respective broader and narrow epistemic domains. However, there are still objections to general accounts of knowledge in terms of the character of virtues alone or abandoning traditional epistemological projects that aim to give an account of knowledge.²⁹⁷ Given the historical goals of this dissertation, responsibilism will be relied on more regularly.

2.5 Rethinking the Contemporary Categories of Testimony

In light of the external challenges from virtue epistemology and internal challenges facing the predominant views on the transmission and justification questions, social epistemologists have started questioning the prevailing answers and thus the categories and framework they form to assess testimonial theories. These challenges to the traditional framework have led to speculation about new frameworks. Since these new frameworks provide additional tools for analyzing historical accounts of testimony while maintaining room for virtue and trust, they will be incorporated into the following chapters' assessment of Saadya Gaon, al-Ghazālī, and Thomas Aquinas.

In "Testimonial Knowledge and the Flow of Information" (2015), John Greco fleshes out the three prevailing issues.²⁹⁸ First, on whether testimonial knowledge can be "reduced" to some other kind of knowledge. Neither reductionism nor anti-reductionism provide an adequate account of testimonial knowledge since testimonial knowledge is too hard under reductionism and too easy under anti-reductionism. Furthermore, under both

²⁹⁷ Greco and Reibsam, "Reliabilist Virtue Epistemology," 727–28.

²⁹⁸ John Greco, "Testimonial Knowledge and the Flow of Information," in *Epistemic Evaluation: Purposeful Epistemology*, ed. David K Henderson and John Greco (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 275–79.

theories "there is nothing epistemically special going on in testimonial knowledge" when intuition indicates otherwise. Second, whether testimonial knowledge involves knowledge transmission or not, neither the transmission nor generation views provide an adequate account of testimony. Testimonial knowledge is again too hard if testimonial knowledge does not include knowledge transmission and too easy if it does.²⁹⁹ Third, is whether testimonial knowledge is distinctively social. Since reductionism does not include knowledge transmission, testimonial knowledge is no longer distinctively social. Conversely, anti-reductionism is distinctively social because it includes transmission, but creates "a disconnect between the requirements for testimonial knowledge and the requirements for knowledge of any other kind."³⁰⁰

In light of the objections to the transmission view (TV) of testimony, theorists are generating stronger rather than weaker forms of TV. Following John Greco's notion of "special transmission" (a narrowly defined epistemic phenomenon often outside typical epistemic concepts such as evidence and reason, etc.),³⁰¹ Stephen Wright recasts the traditional views of TV-N as the "weak sense" and TV-S as the "moderate sense" of transmission in his book *Knowledge Transmission* (2019).³⁰² Wright proposes a "strong

²⁹⁹ Ibid., 279–81.

³⁰⁰ Ibid., 281–82.

³⁰¹ John Greco, "What Is Transmission*?," *Episteme* 13, no. 4 (2016): 481–98. 482 Greco refers to this special notion of transmission as "transmission*." Transmission* is marked by four themes: 1) it serves a different role in that it does not generate knowledge like perception, reasoning, etc., such that a speaker cannot transmit knowledge they do not possess; 2) it relieves the hearer of the usual burden associated with non-testimonial knowledge; 3) it allows for epistemic dependence and an epistemic division of labor; 4) some phenomenon akin to transmission* must exist to account for most of our knowledge and avoid skepticism. Ibid., 483–84.. It should be noted that Greco admits, "on the level of individual knowers, it is hard to draw a meaningful distinction between knowledge transmission and knowledge generation. In both cases, the hearer comes to know something that she did not know before. And testimony is often called a source of knowledge, along with perception, reasoning, etc." Ibid., 490–91.

³⁰² Stephen Wright, *Knowledge Transmission* (New York: Routledge, 2019). Wright notes that Fricker gives a more recent example of the "moderate sense in Elizabeth Fricker, "How To Make Invidious Distinctions Amongst Reliable Testifiers," *Episteme* 12, no. 2 (2015): 173–202.

sense" position where the transmission of knowledge is defined in terms of the transmission of epistemic grounds since epistemic grounds are a necessary condition for the transmission of knowledge but the transmission of knowledge is not a necessary condition of the transmission of epistemic grounds.³⁰³ Unlike the weak and moderate sense, strong notions of transmission (i.e. Greco's "transmission*") relieve listeners of the usual epistemic "burdens" associated with non-testimonial knowledge (e.g. perception, reason) and argues listeners depend on the speaker in an "epistemically interesting way."³⁰⁴

Following objections to testimonial justification, Greco draws on Edward Craig's idea of knowledge to propose that testimonial norms are (and should be) applied differently to two separate activities governed by the concept of knowledge: information acquisition and information distribution.³⁰⁵ Information acquisition involves activities that introduce information into a community of knowers. For testimony, information acquisition occurs when the speaker is not a member or is outside of the listener's community. Information distribution involves passing acquired information as effectively and efficiently as possible within a community of knowers and hence occurs when both the speaker and listener are members or inside the same community. Under such a distinction, Greco claims: "different norms govern the different kinds of testimonial exchange, some of which are at the service of information distribution within a community of knowers, others of which are at the service of information uptake for first use in a community of knowers" and that it follows that "we should make it harder to get information into the system than we make it to

³⁰³ "The transmission of epistemic grounds is a matter of a subject's epistemic grounds for ϕ becoming the listener's epistemic grounds for ϕ , in virtue of the fact that they are the subject's epistemic grounds for ϕ ." Wright, *Knowledge Transmission*, 7–9..

³⁰⁴ Greco, "What Is Transmission*?," 486.

³⁰⁵ "Craig's idea can be summed up as this: The concept of knowledge serves to govern the production and flow of actionable information, or information that can be used in action and practical reasoning, within a community of information sharers." Greco, "Testimonial Knowledge and the Flow of Information," 282–83.

distribute that information, once in."³⁰⁶ As a result, it would be reasonable for thinkers to employ the testimonial theory of reductionism during information acquisition and anti-reductionism during information distribution.

While Greco does not spell out why different testimonial norms should be applied in cases of information acquisition vs. distribution the obvious answer implies trust. This explains why Greco presents a further level of rethinking for the traditional categories and framework of testimony in "The Role of Trust in Testimonial Knowledge" (2019).³⁰⁷ In this new framework, the terms reductionism and anti-reductionism are maintained not as independent theories of testimonial justification, but as types of approaches to the key questions of testimony proper: 1) testimony as source of knowledge and 2) testimony as knowledge transmission. Regarding the first question of whether testimony is a source of knowledge, either testimonial knowledge does or does not reduce to some other non-testimonial species of knowledge. Answering in the affirmative that knowledge *does* reduce to or can be "subsumed" under some other species of knowledge (e.g., induction), and thus is not a generative species of knowledge in itself, is the position of "source-reductionism." Answering in the negative that testimonial knowledge *does not* reduce to or cannot be subsumed under another species of knowledge because testimony is itself a generative species of knowledge or its "own kind of thing", is the position of "source-anti-reductionism."³⁰⁸ Regarding the second question of whether testimonial knowledge is transmitted knowledge, either knowledge transmission does or does not reduce to a form of knowledge generation. Answering in the affirmative that knowledge transmission *is*

³⁰⁶ Ibid., 283–85.

³⁰⁷ Greco, "The Role of Trust in Testimonial Knowledge."

³⁰⁸ Ibid., 95.

reducible to knowledge generation, that is, "back-to-back" cases of knowledge generation, is the position of "transmission reductionism." Under transmission reductionism, knowledge is first generated in the speaker via a non-testimonial source of knowledge (e.g. perception) and then on the basis of speaker testimony knowledge is generated in the listener by a non-testimonial source of knowledge (e.g. intuition).³⁰⁹ Per Greco's analysis, this is a conservative view of testimony in which "nothing epistemically special is going on in transmission."³¹⁰ Answering in the negative that knowledge transmission *is not* reducible to knowledge generation, but is its own distinct phenomenon, is the position of "transmission anti-reductionism."³¹¹ I conceive of this new framework as follows:

Chart 2.5.0.1

	Source: 1 - Can testimonial knowledge be reduced to a non-testimonial species of knowledge?	Transmission: 2 - Can knowledge transmission be reduced to knowledge generation?
Reductionism:	"Source Reductionism" Yes: Testimony is NOT a generative species of knowledge since it "reduces" to a non-subspecies of knowledge	"Transmission Reductionism" Yes: Transmission "reduces" to back-to-back instances knowledge generation
Anti-Reductionism:	"Source Anti-Reductionism" No: Testimony IS a generative species of knowledge in its own right	"Transmission Anti-Reductionism" No: Transmission does not reduce to knowledge generation but is a distinct phenomenon.

Under this new schema, theories of testimony result from combining a position on source and a position on transmission resulting in conceivably four permutations. First, the most

³⁰⁹ Ibid., 97–98.

³¹⁰ This would account for the counterexamples to testimonial knowledge being transmitted knowledge where hearers acquired knowledge that the speaker did not have (e.g. if the hearer's powers of intuition surpassed that of the speaker to arrive at knowledge). Ibid., 97.

³¹¹ Ibid.

conservative option Greco labels "traditional epistemology" would hold to both source and transmission reductionism in which testimony amounts to nothing more than repeated instances of traditional methods of knowledge generation. The second option maintains source anti-reductionism and transmission reductionism so that knowledge is generated in the listener via testimony as its own irreducible source of knowledge. The third option holds to both source and transmission anti-reductionism in which case there are two ways of coming to know either by generation or by transmission. The fourth option (which fits the view Greco ultimately endorses) is source-reductionism and transmission anti-reductionism. Greco ultimately adopts this position in which he proposes the process of knowledge acquisition in bringing new information into a community of knowers be governed by source reductionism while the distribution of acquired information within the community be governed by transmission anti-reductionism.³¹² In this rethinking, trust is considered a form of anti-reductionism such that a thinker's theory of testimony can involve trust in three possible combinations: in the production of knowledge as a source, during the transmission of knowledge, or both.³¹³

The result of this rethinking is that the three typical theories of reductionism, anti-reductionism, and IVT give way to a much more complicated array of possible positions and thus better account for the wide-ranging diversity found amongst historical thinkers.

³¹² "The proposal is now this: we can understand the knowledge generation/ knowledge transmission distinction in terms of the information acquisition/information distribution distinction. Specifically, knowledge generation is to be understood in terms of the norms and standards associated with the acquisition of information, for an individual or for an epistemic community. Knowledge transmission is to be understood in terms of the norms and standards associated with the distribution of information within an epistemic community." *Ibid.*, 102.

³¹³ *Ibid.*, 97–99.

2.5.1 Evaluating Social Epistemology's relation to other Epistemological Theses

The discipline of social epistemology has fit the various testimonial theories within existing epistemic theses. Within evidentialism, testimony is itself a form of evidence in anti-reductionism or reduces to other forms of evidence under reductionism. Within reliabilism, testimony is valid only when it follows reliable cognitive processes or faculties. While a wide number of combinations are possible, several theories better accommodate one another. Reductionism and anti-reductionism presume an evidentialist thesis. The interpersonal view of testimony lends itself to a virtue-theoretic framework (however testimony can be understood as a type of evidence "justified" by the speakers' offer of assurance or invitation to trust). In expanding the types of source and transmission (chart 2.5.0.1), accounts can be unified or non-unified: unified accounts maintaining the same epistemic thesis (e.g., evidentialism) for both source and transmission; non-unified accounts maintaining mixed theses for source and transmission combination.³¹⁴

It is important, as I see it, to draw attention to the relation of testimonial theory to broader epistemological theses since these broader theses do not persist through the history of philosophy. Contemporary epistemology typically follows reliabilist or evidentialist conceptions. Reliabilism is traced back to F.P. Ramsey in 1931.³¹⁵ The epistemic role of evidence only emerged in the 13th to 14th C. with Duns Scotus and William Ockham and

³¹⁴ An example of a unified account is a thinker who holds source-reductionism and transmission anti-reductionism and explains both knowledge generation and transmission using reliable methods. Thus, they maintain one reliable process for knowledge generation by testimony and a separate reliable process for knowledge transmission. Alternatively, an example of a non-unified account is a thinker who holds to source-reductionism but transmission anti-reductionism and explains knowledge generation via evidentialism, but a transmission via reliabilism.

³¹⁵ Regarding Frank Plumpton Ramsey, "Knowledge," in *The Foundations of Mathematics and Other Logical Essays*, ed. Frank Plumpton Ramsey, Richard Bevan Braithwaite, and G. E Moore (London: Kegan Paul, 1931), 126–28.

the role of "justifying" belief in the 18th C..³¹⁶ As Robert Pasnau points out in his history of epistemology *After Certainty* (2017), there are three distinguishable notions of evidentness that are entwined:

- A. The evidentness of a cognitive object; that is, *a thing's being evident*.
- B. The evidentness of a cognition that grasps such an object; that is, *an evident cognition*.
- C. That which makes something be evident; that is, *the evidence*.³¹⁷

Modern and contemporary epistemology predominately only speak of the final sense:

The last of these senses is most deeply entrenched in epistemology today. Moreover, whether we are dealing with Latin (*evidentia*), French (*évidence*), or English (*evidence*), modern readers find it natural to suppose that we are talking about type-C evidence. In fact, however, it is not until the later eighteenth century that this third sense became prevalent in philosophical texts. Before that time, the predominant senses were A and B.³¹⁸

Cases of notion B largely trace back to cases of notion A, which trace back to metaphysical foundations. The bridge from the metaphysical to the cognitive was typically considered to be the powers or "virtues" of human nature. Knowledge was the fruit of a causal process or the proper use of their intellectual and moral virtues. Starting in the times after Thomas Aquinas, the strong metaphysical underpinning of knowledge was rejected giving way to cognitive and explanatory processes of knowledge acquisition.³¹⁹ This shift from historic "evidentness" to modern "evidence" likely explains why the historical assessment of testimony is only traced back to David Hume and Thomas Reid. Insofar as the epistemic thesis of "evidentialism" is assumed, Hume and Reid's use of evidence-based theories of

³¹⁶ The primacy of evidence in distinguishing knowledge from belief, insofar as knowledge is defined as assent to a true proposition with evidence or evidentness, was introduced by William Ockham (d. 1347). For John Buridan (d. ca. 1360) and his contemporaries, the notion of evidence varied to allow for different levels of knowledge, whether absolute, natural, or moral. Henrik Lagerlund, ed., *Knowledge in Medieval Philosophy*, vol. 2, *The Philosophy of Knowledge: A History* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), 5–7.

³¹⁷ Pasnau, *After Certainty*, 32–33.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 33.

³¹⁹ Lagerlund, *Knowledge in Medieval Philosophy*, 2:4.

testimony are early accounts which readily fit the contemporary presumption of justification for assent to propositions. This leads to two problems, one contemporary and one historic. First, a concept of testimony that is incongruent with entire traditions of historical thought reveals an incomplete theory that needs to be revised or replaced.³²⁰ While contemporary thought often dismisses historical concepts as no longer relevant, the problem is not one of replacing outdated theories of *how* testimony occurred, but on *what* testimony is and its fit within knowledge frameworks which is essential insofar as testimony is the transmission of knowledge and history itself is a kind of testimony of the past. Second, a concept of testimony beholden to any one epistemic thesis cannot be applied across history (transhistorical) without distorting the accounts of thinkers past and present. Rendering the testimonial accounts of Saadya Gaon, al-Ghazālī, and Thomas Aquinas will show that pre-Enlightenment theories of testimony are best captured by a virtue-theoretic framework and confirm the need for a "transhistorical" notion of testimony, i.e., one that does not presuppose a single concept of "evidence." I will then return to this problem in chapter 6 to offer thoughts on such a transhistorical concept that does not repeat the mistake of being beholden to a particular historical era (albeit a different one) in which *a telling* serves as *a reason* to believe (which can include but is not equivalent to evidence).

³²⁰ This criticism would apply to the concept of any source of knowledge experiencing historical incongruity, not just the concept of testimony.

CHAPTER 3: SAADYA GAON'S THEORY OF HUMAN AND DIVINE TESTIMONY

3.1 Introduction

Rabbi Saadya ben Yosef al-Fayyūmi³²¹ lived from 882-942 and was appointed Gaon (or chief) of the Babylonian academy in Sura (south of Baghdad) in 928.³²² He was an influential thinker in linguistics, poetics, exegesis, philosophy and Jewish *Kalām*; his commitment to reason allowing him to survive questions regarding his status as a philosopher, albeit as a limited-rationalist in contrast to Maimonides's strong-rationalism.³²³ Saadya is frequently cited as one of the first distinctly Jewish philosophers who strongly influenced subsequent thinkers in the Jewish tradition.³²⁴ He was a prolific writer covering Halakhic (legal) and religious works including translations and commentaries on the Written and Oral Law traditions. Two of his works have more philosophical aims. His most famous work is the *Kitāb al-Amānāt wal-I'tiqādāt* (commonly translated as *The Book of Doctrines and Beliefs*, or *Emunoth ve-Deoth* in

³²¹ רבי סעדיה בן יוסף אלפיומי גאון (سَعْدِيَا غَاوُونُ بْنُ يُوسُفَ الْفَيُّومِي) in Hebrew) "Sa'adya", "Se'adyah", "Saadia", and "Saadiyah" are common alternative spellings (Scholars of Wissenschaft des Judentums believe "Saadya" is a "Hebrewised" form of the Arabic name سعيد).

³²² The Gaonim (גאונים, literally "the magnificent") served as the leaders of two major Babylonian academies specializing in Talmudic studies. The Gaonim were thereby widely accepted as the spiritual leaders of the Jewish community from approximately 500 to 1038.

³²³ Steven Harvey answers "Was Saadya really a philosopher?" in the affirmative (vs. a dialectic theologian in the same vein as the *mutakallimūn*), Cf. Steven Harvey, "Logic, Theology and the Beginning of Medieval Jewish Philosophy," in *The Word in Medieval Logic, Theology and Psychology*, ed. Tetsuro Shimizu and Charles Burnett (Turnhout: Brepols, 2009), 233–44. The question is often raised because Saadya considers divine revelation or the religious oral tradition as a source of truth. At the same time, Saadya has an extremely high view of logic such that "for Saadya, to attain true knowledge it is not enough to use one's intellect. One must know how to distinguish a valid proof from one that is not, and one must patiently persevere in one's argumentation until the proof is completed" *Ibid.*, 239. Even though Saadya does not explicitly follow Aristotelian logic, Harvey points out that neither do many Jewish Neoplatonists and yet their status as philosophers is unquestioned. Furthermore, Saadya "strongly rejects the manipulation of premises to reach desired conclusions," and "he explicitly claims that through correct theoretical speculation alone one can arrive at the revealed truths of religion." *Ibid.*, 241. All taken together, Harvey claims "these seem to be good reasons for considering even a theologian a philosopher." *Ibid.*, 242.

³²⁴ Cf. Eliezer Schweid and Leonard Levin, *The Classic Jewish Philosophers: From Saadia through the Renaissance* (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

Hebrew) (henceforth *al-Amānāt*),³²⁵ which is the first systematic presentation of Judaism as a rational body of beliefs, reportedly written in Baghdad circa 933.³²⁶ Saadya's overall goal in the work is to confirm that trusting traditional religious authorities leads to rational beliefs that are to be internalized where such trust (or belief), per Gyongyi Hegedus in *Saadya Gaon: The Double Path of the Mystic and the Rationalist* (2013), "is completed and strengthened by correct speculation about the fundamental questions of the faith."³²⁷ Said another way, his aim is to lead believers to a second order awareness of the correctness of Tradition received from their ancestors through rational verification. Saadya's second most philosophical work is his commentary on the mystical *Sefer Yeẓirah* (*Commentary on the Book of Creation*) (henceforth *Yeẓirah*), a text which Tradition claims descended from Abraham and which explains the ontological nature of the cosmos and the role of the Hebrew numbers and letters as the building blocks of reality.³²⁸ Saadya's aim, per Haggai Ben-Shammai, is to rationalize or philosophize the enigmatic text.³²⁹

³²⁵ All reference to Saadya's *Kitāb al-Amānāt wal-I'tiqādāt* (كتاب الامانات والاعتقادات تاليف) are to the Arabic edition by Samuel Landauer (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1880), with page numbers provided in parentheses to the English translation by Samuel Rosenblatt, *The Book of Beliefs and Opinions*, (New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press, 1976). For an abridged English translation. Cf. Sa'adia ben Joseph, *The Book of Doctrines and Beliefs*, ed. Alexander Altmann (Indianapolis: Hackett Publ. Co, 2002). *Al-Amānāt* is also commonly referred to by the Hebrew title (*Sefer ha-Emunot we-ha-De'ot or just Emunoth ve-Deoth*) following Judah ben Saul ibn Tibbon's first Hebrew translation in 1186.

³²⁶ Ronald Kiener notes that Saadya reedited individual compositions into one work with an introduction on epistemology as shown by comparing the Oxford and Leningrad recensions of the Judeo-Arabic text. Ronald C Kiener, "The Hebrew Paraphrase of Saadiah Gaon's *Kitāb al-Amānāt Wa'l-I'tiqādāt*," *AJS Review* 11, no. 01 (1986): 1–25. 2, footnote 3.

³²⁷ Hegedus, *Saadya Gaon*, 49.

³²⁸ While Saadya does not accept Abraham wrote the *Yeẓirah*, he says Abraham conceived the subjects of the numbers and letters in his mind and these were passed down via Tradition. Raphael Jospe, "Early Philosophical Commentaries on the *Sefer Yeẓirah*: Some Comments," *Revue des Études juives* 149, no. 4 (1990): 375. Hegedus clarifies Saadya's view: "that the content of the book was inspired by God, while the grammatical formulation, the redaction, and the division into chapters and paragraphs are the work of scholars (*'ulamā*')." Hegedus, *Saadya Gaon*, 10.

³²⁹ Haggai Ben-Shammai, "Saadya's Goal in His Commentary on *Sefer Yeẓira*," in *A Straight Path: Studies in Medieval Philosophy and Culture. Essays in Honor of Arthur Hyman*, ed. Arthur Hyman and Ruth Link-Salinger (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1988), 1–9.

These two works establish a key role for testimony in Saadya's epistemology which moves in both directions across both rational and revealed laws including divine and human speakers. Divine testimony dovetails with human testimony and human testimony complements divine testimony to ensure its accuracy in transmission from generation to generation. This makes separating divine and human testimony not only challenging, but oftentimes impossible for revelation. The key to understanding testimony in Saadya is that while the fourth root of knowledge, Trustworthy Tradition, is a unique source of knowledge, "testimony" itself is not. For while all Tradition is testimony, not all testimony is Tradition. Testimony ultimately reduces, for Saadya, to perception and rational intuition (*'ilm al-'aql*) except when knowledge comes from God where perception and intuition are impossible. The difference is in how a particular instance of testimony, a telling, occurs for divine and human speakers. Despite how a telling is received, the testimonial framework, or epistemic process of testimony operates in the same way for both, namely that testimony transfers knowledge once the speaker is verified to be trustworthy as understood in accordance with virtue. Virtue's role also accounts for the disparities between human testimony and divine testimony. The former is open to falsification given humanity's natural propensity to vice while the latter is immediate and certain since God is the most trustworthy speaker making his reports the best form of knowledge.

Since testimonial knowledge is grounded in who the speaker is, it is necessary to understand the nature of authority for Saadya. In what follows, I will introduce Saadya and his milieu including the medieval Jewish perspective on communal authority. I will also give an overview of Saadya's epistemology providing context for his views on testimony. The bulk of the chapter will then explore Saadya's account of testimony, including its

human and divine forms. I conclude with a contemporary assessment of Saadya's theory of testimony utilizing the framework established in chapter 2 differentiating reductionist and anti-reductionist forms of knowledge generation and transmission.

3.2 Saadya Gaon and his Milieu

3.2.1 Medieval Jewish Communal Authority

According to many Jewish traditions, authority traces back to God and subsequently Moses, Israel's divinely chosen leader, and the Law he received directly by God's testimony. The Law was given to Moses in two forms. The first form is the Written Law (the Torah) Moses was commanded to write down and the laws which emanate from it (*Mid'Oraite*) which are often covered by the second form, the Oral Law. The Oral Law (*Torah Shebe'al Peh*) thus includes the Laws God taught orally to Moses (*Halachah LeMoshe MiSinai*) who transmitted them in the same way to Israel along with the hermeneutical and exegetical principles to interpret the Torah in applying it to everchanging societal needs.³³⁰ The Rabbinical Tradition emerges because "the written laws themselves, detailed as they may appear to be," according to Arnold Cohen, "are only a skeleton of the Law and cannot in any way be meaningfully understood without the traditions, Rabbinic interpretation and exegesis which form the *Torah Shebe'al Peh*—the Oral Law which surrounds it."³³¹ The advice Moses received from his father-in-law Jethro in Exodus 18:13-26 to establish a hierarchical division of "trustworthy authorities" (*'enowsh 'emeth*, literally "men of truth" or "faithful men") to serve as judges over smaller and smaller subsets of the population also serves as the basis for practical authority through a system of Jewish legal courts

³³⁰ Arnold J Cohen, *An Introduction to Jewish Civil Law* (Jerusalem; New York: Feldheim, 1991), 29–30, 51–52.

³³¹ *Ibid.*, 27.

(*battei din*).³³² The ideal was thus a series of lower courts starting in one's own town which passed difficult cases on to the court of the next nearest town and then up to the court which sat at the gates of the Temple Mount, and finally the court of the Sanhedrin with its 71 members (one of which was the High Priest) who sat in the Hall of Hewed Stone (an opening off the courtyard of the temple).³³³ In addition to acting as the equivalent of the modern US Supreme Court, the Sanhedrin also served as the legislative branch. Only the King, the undisputed Head of State per the Torah, had comparable executive power. After the loss of the Jewish nation state, the king's practical authority was replaced by the office of the Exilarch, which tradition holds was established after the first fall of Jerusalem and the exile of King Jeconiah in 597 BCE, while the authority of the Sanhedrin fell to Talmudic scholars in the Rabbinites. However, the King's or Exilarch's power was contingent upon his (1) faithful observation of the Torah and (2) his fair ruling consistent with the Torah's precepts. The members of the Sanhedrin were the experts in Torah.³³⁴

Since much of Jewish Law is derived from Rabbinical hermeneutical principles applied to scripture (such as *a fortiori* reasoning),³³⁵ the Rabbis took on the dual role of interpreters of Scriptural Law and legislators of Rabbinic Laws. As a result, Jewish communal epistemic authority was simultaneously theological (epistemic) and political (practical), as Cohen summarizes:

The close connection of religion and law is the essence of the Jewish legal system, and the Civil and Criminal Law is regarded by the Jew as an integral part of the Torah. Therefore, grounded in Scripture and centered on God, it

³³² 'enowsh 'emeth אֱנוֹשׁ יִשְׁפֹּט. *Battei din* is the plural of *beit din*, בית דין, literally "house of judgement". Cf. *Shemot* 18:23 of the *parashah* (annual Jewish cycle of Torah reading) and *Sanhedrin* 88b of the Talmud.

³³³ Cf. *Sanhedrin* 88b; William Davidson, "Talmud Bavli," Sefaria, 2015, <https://www.sefaria.org/Sanhedrin.88b.3-5>.

³³⁴ Cohen, *An Introduction to Jewish Civil Law*, 22–23.

³³⁵ *Ibid.*, 37.

is not like other legal systems, rooted in the creation of the State, nor did it ever draw its inspiration from political feeling. For the Jew, the Torah is an independent and positive source of inspiration, regulating individual and corporate action; and on the Torah is to be raised the whole structure of the Jewish legal system. Consequently, morality is a dominant factor in Jewish communal life and the underlying principle in all social and economic legislation. The object of the Jewish legal system is not to preserve a particular dynasty or certain form of government, but to establish social righteousness and to maintain thereby a close, constant, inseparable connection between ethics and law, both flowing from the same source.³³⁶

Cohen thus states that it should be clear "that the role of the Talmudic Scholar cannot be over-emphasized," for they not only serve as the conduit of Tradition, but also "interpret and expand the written law by applying their tradition, dialectic, exegesis, and logic; so much so that they are also able to alter what is the apparent Scriptural meaning."³³⁷ This power of the Rabbis created a rivalry first with the Sadducees, and then their spiritual successors the Karaites, who denied a role for the Oral law since the Written Law was to be interpreted literally leaving no room for Rabbinic authority.³³⁸ Yet, while the Karaites were dismissive of the validity of the Oral Law, they were not dismissive of the power of testimony, which they held proved the authority of the Written Law (and the Rabbis had yet to prove for the Oral Law).³³⁹

³³⁶ Ibid., 14.

³³⁷ Ibid., 52–53.

³³⁸ The Karaites (קראית, meaning "readers"; also commonly rendered as "Qaraites") are a Jewish religious movement that only recognizes the Tanakh (תנ"ך, or Hebrew Bible) as authoritative in stark contrast to Rabbinic Judaism which also recognizes the authority of the Midrash (מדרש) and Talmud (תלמוד), the oral tradition. Much of Saadya's defense of the oral tradition, and thus testimony, could be credited to his debates with the Karaites.

³³⁹ The poem *Book of the Wars of the Lord*, Canto I by Karaite Salmon Ben Jeroham against Saadya and Rabbinic Judaism still sings the praises of testimony:

- 12 We believe firmly that the written Law
 Was in truth given to Israel by the right hand of the Almighty
 According to the testimony of the whole congregation of the Lily [Israel],
 Who are scattered in every land.
- 13 All of them, believers as well as unbelievers,
 Divided as they are by language and tongue,
 All Israel, from the east to the westernmost ends of the world,

While the Sanhedrin and subsequently the Rabbis had a considerable amount of both epistemic and practical authority, the source of their practical authority was from the people themselves.³⁴⁰ As representatives of the people, the Rabbis could not institute laws the people rejected.³⁴¹ This was because the power of legislation came from the nation as a whole which could be broken down into smaller communal parts which received power from its members over its members.³⁴² Disputes were run up through appointed representatives with final resolution under the Talmudic scholar. This led to an interesting distinction between practical and religious authority laid out in the Mishnah, in which practical authorities do not implement the law of the Torah thereby allowing a cultural diversity to legislate with the caveat that their Talmudic scholar does not disagree with them.³⁴³ The result is Jewish Law serves as the foundation for a Jewish community to thrive

Testify to the sanctity of the written Law, all of them, the little and the great.

- 14 This testimony has become firmly established in their midst
By their united and universal consent, without challenge.
Likewise, the signs and miracles which the Dweller of the heavenly abode has wrought
Are written therein and are explained for them who wish to understand.
- 15 Selah! They remember the splitting asunder of the Red Sea
And they do not deny the words spoken by the Almighty on Mount Sinai;
And with their mouths they sing of the glory of the Law and of the other miracles.
Israel and all other nations speak of this as one.
- 16 Now if Israel and Judah are both united
Concerning the validity of the Oral Law, which is, as they [the Rabbanites] say, perfect,
Let them offer their testimony, and let their voices be heard;
If not, then the Fayyumite's [Saadia Gaon's] words are void and his tongue has been silenced.

Leon Nemoy, ed. and trans., *Karaite Anthology*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952), 73–78.

³⁴⁰ Cohen, *An Introduction to Jewish Civil Law*, 80.

³⁴¹ Avodah Zarah 36a of the Talmud explains whether a decree can be voided is contingent upon its spread among a majority of the Jewish people: "The Sages issue a decree upon the community only if most of the community is able to abide by it." Davidson, "Talmud." https://www.sefaria.org/Avodah_Zarah.36b.1?lang=bi&with=all&lang2=en.

³⁴² Cohen writes: "To make the process less cumbersome it may delegate its power to its representatives so that not all members of the community must become involved in any particular piece of legislation." Cohen, *An Introduction to Jewish Civil Law*, 83. As an example, by the late 13th and early 14th century Abraham Adret wrote in Responsa 3:411 "The kahal [the local governing body of a former European Jewish community administering religious, legal, and communal affairs] agreed to appoint us to eliminate sins. And we have taken an oath to do so. And the charter of the mandate states that we are authorized by the [gentile] government to impose penalties, whether corporal or fiscal, as we see fit." Cf. Michael Walzer et al., *The Jewish Political Traditions. Vol. 1, Vol. 1*, (New Haven, Conn.; London: Yale University Press, 2000), 402.

³⁴³ Cohen, *An Introduction to Jewish Civil Law*, 85–86.

anywhere, as a unique political entity within a foreign state, thus preserving the uniqueness and independence of the Jewish identity.³⁴⁴

Historical periods of Rabbinic authority are classically known by the title given to the top Rabbinic authorities of the age.³⁴⁵ The Geonim (c. 609-1040CE), the title given to the heads of the two Babylonian academies of Sura and Pumbedita,³⁴⁶ fundamentally shifted the nature of rabbinic authority away from one of institutional power. David Sklare indicates this change stemmed from 1) "the gaonic yeshivot which viewed themselves as preservers of rabbinic tradition", 2) "the Karaite claim that Rabbanite practice was merely the uncritical support (*taqlīd*) of humanly created rabbinic law," and 3) the adoption of the epistemological structure of Islamic jurisprudence such that the authority or legitimacy of legal sources (e.g. Scripture, tradition, analogy, or consensus i.e. *tawātur*) were determined by whether they rendered certain knowledge or probable opinion.³⁴⁷ David Sklare rightly notes that "the concept of tradition had to make sense within the conceptual world of the gaonim, and this world was Mu'tazili in nature."³⁴⁸ The more creative role of the rabbi using the Torah and Talmud as a springboard to solve problems was replaced with a more

³⁴⁴ Ibid., 89.

³⁴⁵ "In the classical periodization of this history, each era is known by the designation given to the leading rabbinic figures of the time, beginning with the Tannai'im ("Reciters," first through third centuries C.E.) and Amora'im ("Sayers," third through fifth centuries), who produced the classic works of rabbinic literature, including the Mishnah and the two Talmuds, the Jerusalem and the Babylonian. These were followed by the Savora'im ("Opiners"), Geonim ("Eminences"), Rishonim ("Earlier" Authorities), and Aharonim ("Later" Authorities)." Robert Brody, *The Geonim of Babylonia and the Shaping of Medieval Jewish Culture* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1998), 4.

³⁴⁶ For more on the Geonim cf. footnote 322. Precise dates for the Geonic period are disputed, but according to Sherira Gaon, Mar Rab Mar was the first Gaon assuming office in 609CE. Samuel ben Ḥofni, sometimes noted as the last Gaon of the Sura academy, died in 1034 CE (or Isaac Gaon until c. 1038) while Hezekiah Gaon, the last Gaon of Pumbedita academy either died in 1040 (via torture by the Buyid dynasty) or sometime after 1046 CE (arguably having escaped). Jacob Mann, "The Last Geonim of Sura," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 11, no. 4 (1921): 409–22.

³⁴⁷ David E Sklare, *Samuel Ben Ḥofni Gaon and His Cultural World: Texts and Studies* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 158–60.

³⁴⁸ Ibid., 160.

consistent and defensible role for the rabbis as linked to transmission which Robert Brody, in *The Geonim of Babylonia and the Shaping of Medieval Jewish Culture* (1998), describes as "promulgation, interpretation, and application."³⁴⁹ Saadya himself states that the thirteen hermeneutical principles for interpreting the Torah were not to be used to create new laws.³⁵⁰ The Talmud thus was considered a "closed literary corpus no longer open to revision."³⁵¹ Despite this change, the Geonim saw themselves as the successors to the Sanhedrin and organized the Babylonian academies accordingly. With little competition to the claim of Talmudic authority, questions from even the most distant lands were forwarded to the Babylonian centers of Jewish learning effectively making the Geonim the worldwide spiritual leaders of the Jewish community during the Medieval era. The authority of the Geonim only diminished as Talmudic scholarship was decentralized and fewer questions were forwarded to Babylon.³⁵² It was this decline of the Babylonian academies, and thus the Gaonic period, that allowed for Saadya's unique contributions including the writing of systemic treatises on legal and Talmudic topics.³⁵³ Brody reports that:

³⁴⁹ This is an interesting change from their immediate predecessors the Savora'im (c. 500-600) who did modify the Talmud the Geonim received. Brody, *The Geonim of Babylonia and the Shaping of Medieval Jewish Culture*, 7.

³⁵⁰ Cf. Sa'adia ben Joseph, "Fragments of the 'Kitāb Taḥṣīl Al-Sharā'i' Al-Samā'iyah' / קטעים מכתאב ג' תחציל אלשראיע אלסמעיה לרס"ג," ed. Moses Zucker, *Tarbiz / מא*, no. 378 (1972): 7.

³⁵¹ Brody, *The Geonim of Babylonia and the Shaping of Medieval Jewish Culture*, 7.

³⁵² "For the first time since the exodus from Egypt, the center of gravity migrated westwards, from Palestine and Babylonia to North Africa and Europe. But in actuality, this move was accompanied by a far-reaching decentralization: No individual or institution of this period could lay claim to the same sort of worldwide recognition and influence which has been enjoyed by the leading academies of the ancient Jewish heartland." *Ibid.*, 11.

³⁵³ Brody cites three related factors that brought about the end of the Gaonic period: first, "a decline in the stature of the Babylonian academies" due to economic distress and a "decline in intellectual stimulation and moral support"; second, "a corresponding rise in the self-confidence of scholars and academies located elsewhere"; and third, "a weakening of the links between center and periphery, which found expression in the reduced flow of queries and contributions." *Ibid.*, 16–17.

The appointment of the outsider Se'adyah to the Geonate of Sura in 928 already represents an attempt to come to grips with the growing crisis. Se'adyah himself undertook numerous unconventional initiatives – some of them at the expense of the Exilarch who had appointed him – which contributed to a temporary revival of the institution's prestige. Still, his protracted struggle against the same Exilarch and his allies certainly did nothing to strengthen the academy, and he left no worthy successor, so that the academy was forced to close shortly after his death in 942.³⁵⁴

The Babylonian academy at Pumbedita, despite following Saadya's lead (including the writing of systematic works), carried on a little longer, but ultimately the center of Jewish epistemic authority decentralized and shifted to the West.³⁵⁵

Unfortunately, other than Saadya being born in Fayyûm Egypt (hence the common title "The Fayyûmite" marking him an outsider), "next to nothing is now known about his immediate forebears, his youth, or his education."³⁵⁶ Following up on minor reports, textual analysis has led some to suspect Saadya studied under Jewish philosopher al-Muqammas and possible Karaite Abu Kathir Yahya al-Tabarani, but while such contacts would have been possible (especially given their common language) nothing exists to confirm such links.³⁵⁷ However, according to Sarah Stroumsa in *Saadya and Jewish Kalām* (2003), "although we have no definite landmarks of Saadya's education, we can be quite certain that, by the time he wrote his theological summa, he must have had access to practically everything on the intellectual market."³⁵⁸ Stroumsa thus summarizes Saadya's historical role as more systematizing than groundbreaking:

³⁵⁴ Ibid., 18.

³⁵⁵ "The center of gravity of the Jewish world had shifted to the West, and with the death of Hayya Gaon, the once-proud Babylonian center was reduced to the status of a backwater, which retained only traces of its former glory." Ibid.

³⁵⁶ Sa'adia ben Joseph, *The Book of Beliefs and Opinions*, xxiii.

³⁵⁷ Sarah Stroumsa, "Saadya and Jewish Kalām," in *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, ed. Daniel H. Frank and Oliver Leaman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 79–80.

³⁵⁸ Ibid., 80.

Saadya's predecessors, al-Muqammas and Isaac Israeli, delineate the spectrum of influences to which an educated Jew would be exposed: Christianity and Islam, Christian *Kalām* (which includes some Aristotelian philosophy), Muslim *Kalām*, and Neoplatonic thought. The role of pioneer belongs to these predecessors, who legitimize these influences and show the way for their integration into Judaism. It was then Saadya who, creatively and systematically, shaped, smoothed the rough ends, and consolidated the foundations laid by his predecessors, and presented the outcome as "Jewish philosophy," with an authority that his predecessors lacked.³⁵⁹

This introduces us to the intellectual milieu of Saadya's day which was characterized by either the "liberal" embracing of rationalism or the "conservative" return to more traditional orthodoxy. This tension between arrogant unbelief and faithful dogma is what led Saadya to write *al-Amānāt* in the first place. The same controversy was also playing out concurrently in the Islamic tradition. Israel Efros identifies 912 (16 years before Saadya took the position of Gaon) as the "climax of the controversy" when al-Ash'ari publicly "repented" of being a liberal Mu'tazilite from the mosque pulpit in al-Basra where he called the faithful "to realign their forces around the Sunnite banner of anthropomorphism, determinism, and the pre-existence of the Koran."³⁶⁰ Al-Ash'ari's affirmation comes nearly 50 years after the Abbasid Caliph al-Ma'mun's infamous *Mihna* or inquisition on the createdness of the Qur'an ended. The same questions pertaining to these topics are reflected in Saadya's major works, especially when dealing with the idea that scripture is a product

³⁵⁹"Unlike al-Muqammas, who was a marginal figure in the Jewish community, Saadya was, from an early age, a dominant one. His charismatic personality contributed to his reputation as a religious and intellectual authority, and although he did not belong to one of the aristocratic Babylonian families, he soon penetrated their stronghold in the academies. Saadya introduced *Kalām* into the world of Talmudic scholarship and endowed it with his authority. After Saadya, hardly anyone questioned the legitimacy of the rationalistic approach, and for a while *Kalām* is identified with the theology of mainstream Judaism." Ibid., 79, 88.

³⁶⁰ Israel Efros, *Studies in Medieval Jewish Philosophy* (New York & London: Columbia University Press, 1974), 3.

of God's speech or divine testimony. This is evident in *al-Amānāt*, which was influenced by *Kalām*, the *Mutakallimūn*, and Saadya's polemical relationship with Karaite Judaism.³⁶¹

3.2.2 Saadya's Account of Knowledge

Many of Saadya's works have been pieced back together from incredible archeological finds like the Cairo Genizah fragments which has made it possible to likewise piece together Saadya's epistemic thought. Since it is clear that Saadya was deeply influenced by *Kalām* and specifically Mu'tazilite thought, gaps in his epistemology (because they are lost, Saadya took for granted, and/or Saadya did not feel the need to expound upon) can be explored and oftentimes filled using like-minded thinkers from his milieu who employed the same structures and terminology. Sarah Stroumsa describes Saadya's philosophy as being built "on a *Kalām* technique of analysis of (possible) arguments", in which, he combines "the *Kalām* fascination with heresiography, and incorporates it within a conventional *Kalām* structure of theological discussion." His "innovation," per Stroumsa, is the "calculated upgrading of the technique into a comprehensive methodology, which dictates the framework of the discussion and informs it with an almost obsessively controlled search for the one, perfectly constructed truth."³⁶² This considerable influence of *Kalām* has led many scholars, including Maimonides, to view Saadya and the other Geonim as *Mutakallimūn*, but as Stroumsa points out "the question arises, however, how

³⁶¹ The *Mutakallimūn* (متكلمون) were scholars of *ʿIlm al-Kalām* (علم الكلام, literally "science of discourse") or *Kalām* for short. *Kalām* as a discipline incorporates reasoning to explain, argue for and defend fundamental Islamic beliefs and doctrines which are necessary for a Muslim to believe in. Collette Sirat points out that: "In his inquiry, Saadiyah often uses arguments drawn from *Kalām*, and the plan of the *Amānāt* immediately delimits his intellectual context. The first two chapters treat of the unity of God, as is generally done at the beginning of Mu'tazilite treatises, the next seven of the justice of God, the second Mu'tazilite principle." Colette Sirat, *A History of Jewish Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 22.

³⁶² Stroumsa, "Saadya and Jewish *Kalām*," 84.

to reconcile Maimonides' devastating evaluation of the Kalām with the stature of Saadya and the magnitude of his contribution to Jewish thought" in addition to other significant differences between Saadya's approach and Kalām.³⁶³ While I will not address whether Saadya is a *Mutakallim*, the influences on his thought cannot be denied such that accounting for Saadya's theory of testimony should also reveal insights into a *Mutakallimūn* (e.g. Mu'tazilite) theory of testimony.

Truth for Saadya is directly tied to speech.³⁶⁴ Truth relies on a correspondence between statements (propositions) and reality such that, according to Hegedus, "Truths are conceived of as statements out of which further statements can be deduced by strictly logical methods."³⁶⁵ Saadya even states a proof (*burhān*) consists of speech (*Kalām*):

Text 3.2.2.1

For the sake of elucidation let it be assumed that a person is looking for proof (*burhana*) by means of which he might arrive at the truth (correctness, *ṣahiḥi*). Now such a proof (*burhān*) is a statement (*kalām*), and a statement (*kalām*) is a kind of sound, and sounds are of many types.³⁶⁶

To find the truth, Saadya employs a method that consists of a formal analysis influenced by a Kalām structure of discussion and review of alternative positions or arguments. The first step in Saadya's method is to systematically reduce each problem to its smallest

³⁶³ Michael Schwarz argues that there are differences between Maimonides' and Saadya's *Mutakallimūn*. Cf. Michael Schwarz, "Who Were Maimonides' Mutakallimūn? Some Remarks on Guide of the Perplexed Part 1 Chapter 73 (First Part)," in *Maimonidean Studies, Vol 2* (New York, 1992), 159–209. Lenn Goodman likewise argues that Saadya was very different from his *mutakallim* contemporary al-Ashari. Cf. Lenn Evan Goodman, "Maimonides' Responses to Saadya Gaon's Theodicy and Their Islamic Backgrounds," in *Studies in Islamic and Judaic Traditions II*, ed. William M Brinner and Stephen D Ricks (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 3–22. Stroumsa thus concludes that "Saadya's affinities with the Kalām must therefore be examined with care, and the nature of his Kalām defined more precisely." Stroumsa, "Saadya and Jewish Kalām," 76.

³⁶⁴ Falsity is also directly tied to speech as Saadya indicates that a word can cause heresy. Cf. "The sixth [cause of heresy] may be a word that a person hears from the mouth of the godless that touches his heart and unnerves it, so that he remains for the rest of his life in this state of nervous prostration, occasioned by this word." Saadia Gaon, *Kitāb al-Amānāt*, 27. Intro.; (Rosenblatt trans., 34).

³⁶⁵ Hegedus, *Saadya Gaon*, 42.

³⁶⁶ Saadia Gaon, *Kitāb al-Amānāt*, 7. Intro.; (Rosenblatt trans., 10).

وشرح ذلكي كمن يطلب برهانا ليقف به على الصحيح ونحن نعلم ان البرهان كلام، والكلام فهو نوع من انواع الصوت والاصوات فكثيرة الضروب

components often resulting in a linguistic analysis. Knowledge then can be understood as being built up first from sounds, then syllables, and finally words and propositions.³⁶⁷ Air serves as a medium to transmit the sounds.³⁶⁸ Then Saadya provides the alternatives to a given question in a list which he whittles down one by one with an accumulating number of arguments (the objections to the first apply to the second, and so on). Once all the incorrect views have been refuted, Saadya proves the remaining correct view with prooftexts from scripture.³⁶⁹ Failure to obtain knowledge results from terminating the process prematurely (making doubt the agent's fault), such that one is left with an unexplored or unexplained cognitive state.

Saadya's epistemology is influenced by Mu'tazilite thought which begins with an agent who "finds oneself" (*wajad nafsah*) in a cognitive state: "being convinced" (*mu'taqid*) or "reflecting" (*nāzir*). The experience of finding oneself in a state of knowing (*ḥāl*) is the beginning of one's personal epistemology which requires one to deduce whether one is knowing because of a cause (*sabab* or *'illa*) or an assumption (*zann*).³⁷⁰ Since all knowledge

³⁶⁷ Cf. Sa'adia ben Joseph, *The Book of Beliefs and Opinions*, 10–11. Efros provides an excellent summary: "This process of elimination beginning with the widest possible base of possibilities, is illustrated by a rather extreme and artificial example which Saadia gives for the time-taking character of thought. We can conceive, he says, of ten steps in a quest of proof. (1) Proof is speech, speech is sound, and sound is of many kinds. (2) We eliminate sounds of inanimate things, then (3) sounds of irrational animals, (4) natural human sounds, (5) sounds of single letters, (6) single words, (7) combinations of words which are not complete sentences, (8) necessary and impossible propositions which require no proof, leaving only the possible proposition, which (9) we prove, and then (10) drawing the conclusion. Thus, Saadia says, the thinker begins with a tangle of things, upon which he applies the process of elimination, obtaining nine possibilities from ten, then eight from nine, and seven from eight, until all the alloy is removed and the tested and purified remain." Israel Efros, "Saadia's Theory of Knowledge," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 33, no. 2 (October 1942): 151–52.

³⁶⁸ "Air receives the sound of a speaker and transmits it to us. When it is not struck by a sound, however, we hear nothing. Yet we do not on that account say that the air, which does not transmit any sound, is the opposite of sound, but merely that it betokens the absence of sound." Air is also the medium for light (sight) and smell. Saadia Gaon, *Kitāb al-Amānāt*, 54. Treatise I; (Rosenblatt trans., 65).

³⁶⁹ Hegedus, *Saadya Gaon*, 5.

³⁷⁰ Jan R. T. M Peters, *God's Created Speech: A Study in the Speculative Theology of the Mu'tazilī Qādī l-Qudāt Abū l-Ḥasan 'Abd al-Jabbār Bn Aḥmad al-Hamadānī* (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 48.

(except God's) has a cause (*sabab*), being convinced (*mu'taqid*) requires a cause, specifically conviction (*i'tiqād*).³⁷¹ The agent is thus tasked with ascertaining the cause of their cognitive state based on the combination of two criterion: i) an objective criterion of truth, and ii) a subjective repose or tranquility of the soul (*sukûn an-nafs*).³⁷² Following J.R.T.M. Peters assessment of Mu'tazilite 'Abd al-Jabbār's (935-1025) epistemology, conviction (*i'tiqād*) is a genus with various species.³⁷³ As shown in Chart 3.2.2.2, the species of conviction include: ignorance (*jahl*, either the absence of knowledge or "mis-conviction" i.e. beliefs that do not correspond with reality) results from having neither the criterion of truth nor repose of the soul (repose of the soul but no criterion of truth, often understood as *zann*—assumption—collapses into this category); uncritical adherence (*taqlīd*, to accept words without verification) results from having the criterion of truth but no repose of the soul; and, the goal, knowledge (*'ilm*) which results from having both the criterion of truth and repose of the soul.

³⁷¹ This is not because the agent made a conviction or willed to believe (Saadya rejects doxastic voluntarism). Sa'adia ben Joseph, *The Book of Beliefs and Opinions*, 15.

³⁷² In the *Amānāt* Saadya says "he who is capable of knowledge without depending upon a cause (*sabab*) is none other than the Creator of the universe." and gives *sukûn an-nafs* a confirmatory function in his account of testimony. Cf. Saadia Gaon, *Kitāb al-Amānāt*, Intro & Treatise III, 10, 126–27; (Rosenblatt trans., 13, 155–57).

³⁷³ 'Abd al-Jabbar is antecedent to Saadya; however, from Saadya's reliance on Kalām it is clear that 'Abd al-Jabbar accurately reflects the thought and milieu of the time. Peters, *God's Created Speech*, 41.

Chart 3.2.2.2

		Does agent have "the criterion of truth"?	
		Yes	No
Does agent have "repose of the soul"?	Yes	Knowledge ('ilm)	(Not explained, but conceptually possible) An "assumption" (<i>zann</i>) that is false fits here, but understood by the mis-conviction sense of <i>jahl</i>
	No	Uncritical adherence (<i>taqlīd</i>)	Ignorance or Mis-conviction (<i>jahl</i>)

This framework fits Saadya's stated goal for *al-Amānāt* and provides a better translation and understanding of the book's title—*al-Amānāt wal-'Iṭiqādāt*—which Efras translates as "The Book of Dogmas and Convictions" as in turning dogmas (blind-faith) into conviction (reasoned/confirmed knowledge).³⁷⁴ Knowledge is traceable to four sources: sense perception (eye-witness), reason (intuition of the intellect), inference (logical necessity), and Trustworthy Tradition (*al-khabar al-sādiq*, literally "trustworthy reports") which is the revealed Written and Oral Law.³⁷⁵ Saadya sets the fourth root of knowledge

³⁷⁴ Efras, "Saadia's Theory of Knowledge," 163–64. Hegedus confirms both the Mu'tazilite framework and Efras's translation as keeping with Saadya's overall goal in *al-Amānāt*: "Conviction is measured against its objective content, i.e., how far it agrees with reality, and secondly against its intensity, i.e., how firmly it is rooted in the soul. The objectively defined set of beliefs is referred to as *amāna*, and in this way the title of Saadya's magnum opus [*al-Amānāt*] refers to the external, objective present and articulated doctrine of faith (*amānāt* 'beliefs') and its internalized subjective dimension (*iṭiqādāt* 'opinions, convictions'). The concept of 'conviction' functions as a general epistemological category which is based on the attitude of the soul towards the object of knowledge. ...For Saadya, conviction is always generated by the translation of information coming from an external source into the categories existing in the intellect. Where they coincide, we can speak of the institution of meaning. ...The definition of the concept of 'conviction' appears to rely on the description of the process of internalization. Thus, conviction is equal to (objective) truth internalized in the soul by way of speculation by the intellect." Hegedus, *Saadya Gaon*, 25.

³⁷⁵ Efras notes that Saadya is indebted to the Mutakallimūn once more for these four sources. Efras interprets the four as "Sensation," "Nous," "Necessity", and "Tradition." Efras, "Saadia's Theory of Knowledge," 134. Cf. Saadia Gaon, *Kitāb al-Amānāt*, Intro, 12–13; (Rosenblatt trans., 16–17).

وإذ قد انقضى ما اردنا للحاقه بالقول الاول فينبغي ان نذكر موادّ للحقّ ومعطيات اليقين التي هي معدن لكلّ معلوم وينبوع لكلّ معروف | ونتكلم عليها بمقدار ما يوافق قول صدر هذا الكتاب ونقول أنّها موادّ الاول علم الشاهد والثانية علم العقل والثالثة علم ما دفعت الضرورة اليه | ونتبع ذلك بشرح واحد من هذه الاصول ونقول أنّ علم الشاهد فهو ما ادركه الانسان باحد ال حواسّ أمّا يبصر او يسمع او بمشتمّ او بذوق او بلمس

apart arguing it is both derived by means of the first three roots and simultaneously "corroborates" (*yuḥaqqiqu*) their validity.³⁷⁶ A distinction thus emerges between sources of earned and received knowledge stemming from Islamic jurisprudence and the Kalām school's dual basis of rationality and scripture which are not seen as contradictory but two pillars supporting human knowledge.³⁷⁷ This overlaps the Mu'tazilite conception between intuitive knowledge (*'ilm ḍarūrī*, also referred to as "immediate" or "necessary" knowledge) resulting from one's personal effort or acquired knowledge (*'ilm muktasab*) obtained from someone else.³⁷⁸ David Sklare points out that Saadya rather confusingly applies the terminology differently referring to intuitive knowledge as *'ilm al-'aql* and

³⁷⁶ "As for ourselves, the community of monotheists, we hold these three sources of knowledge to be genuine. To them, however, we add a fourth source, which we have derived by means of the [other] three, and which has thus become for us a further principle. That is [to say, we believe in] the validity of trustworthy tradition (*al-khabar al-sadiq*), by reason of the fact that it is based upon the knowledge of the senses as well as that of reason, as we shall explain in the third treatise of this book. At this point however, we remark that this type of knowledge (I mean that which is furnished by trustworthy tradition (*al-khabar al-sadiq*), and the book of prophetic revelation), corroborates (*yuḥaqqiqu*) for us the validity of the first three sources of knowledge. Thus it enumerates the senses in connection with the denial of their functioning in the case of the idols, making them a total of five with two more added to them." Saadia Gaon, *Kitāb al-Amānāt*, Intro, 14; (Rosenblatt trans., 18). Tr. Mod.

وأما نحن جماعة الموحدين فنصدق بهذه الثلاث مواد التي للعلم ونضيف اليها مادة رابعة استخرجناها بالثلاث فصارت لنا اصلا وهي صحة الخبر الصادق فانه مبنى على علم للحس وعلم للعقل كما سنبين في المقالة الثالثة من هذا الكتاب | فنقول هاهنا ان هذا العلم اعنى الخبر الصادق والكتاب المنزلة يحقق لنا هذه ال ٣ اصول | انها علوم صحيحة لانه يحصى الحواس في باب نفيها عن الاوثان فيجعلها يضم اليها

³⁷⁷ Regarding the Islamic influence, Stroumsa notes, "The epistemology of the Jewish *Mutakallimūn* is built upon a firm belief in human rationality as a tool for obtaining a true picture of the world and a sound interpretation of Scripture. The intellectual endeavor is perceived as both a natural human drive and a religious duty. The basic sources of knowledge for each individual are sense perception and rational thought. The knowledge accumulated over the years by generations of scholars is added to these, in the form of transmitted interpretive information ('the veridical tradition')." Stroumsa, "Saadya and Jewish Kalām," 73.

³⁷⁸ The division can be traced at least as far back as Bishr ibn al-Mu'tamir (d. 825) who founded the Baghdad school of Mu'tazila (and thus a plausible source for Saadya). Another possible influence might be Mu'tazili al-Gahiz (d. 869), who also studied in Baghdad. His monograph *Hugag al-nubuwwa* offers the two traditional Islamic proofs for the verification of prophets as miracles and *tawātur* which also appear in Saadya's thought. In *The Economy of Certainty* which details the Islamic *ḥadīth* tradition as *tawātur* knowledge, Aron Zyzow claims that holding knowledge from *tawātur* is *muktasab* goes back to al-Mu'tamir. Aron Zyzow, *The Economy of Certainty: An Introduction to the Typology of Islamic Legal Theory*, Resources in Arabic and Islamic Studies 2 (Atlanta: Lockwood Press, 2013), 15.

inductive knowledge as *'ilm ḍarūrī* where inductive knowledge is acquired from another following rational reflection (*nāẓir*).³⁷⁹

Intuitive knowledge is non-discursive and rationally available to all because of the agent's activity. There are two kinds of intuitive knowledge: direct and indirect.³⁸⁰ First, direct knowledge is the immediate apprehension of one's inner experience, i.e., to "find oneself" (*wajad nafsah*) in a cognitive state. This includes perceiving that one is either convinced (*mu'taqid*) or reflecting (*nāẓir*). If one finds that one is convinced, then one recognizes a stable connection between themselves and a thing. Even though this first kind of intuitive knowledge is direct, experience does not define or provide knowledge. This turns to the second type, indirect knowledge which occurs "by way of something." The primary "way" to knowledge is sense perception, which is not knowledge itself, nor does it generate knowledge. Likewise, the knowledge sources of reason (intuition of the intellect) and inference (logical necessity) serve as ways to knowledge (like ethical principles). Acquired or inductive knowledge, by contrast, is discursive knowledge

³⁷⁹ "Saadya uses the term *'ilm ḍarūrī* to refer to inductive knowledge ...For him, it [*'ilm ḍarūrī*] therefore refers to a type of discursive knowledge which the Mu'tazilis labeled "acquired knowledge...i.e., to assumptions that we are forced to make in order to explain perceived phenomena as that if we see smoke there must be fire." Saadya uses the term *'ilm al-'aql* (intellectual knowledge, as opposed to sensual knowledge), to refer to intuitive knowledge." Sklare, *Samuel Ben Hofni Gaon and His Cultural World*, 145–47. For more on Mu'tazilite epistemology, cf. Jan R. T. M Peters, *God's Created Speech: A Study in the Speculative Theology of the Mu'tazilī Qādī l-Quḍāt Abū l-Ḥasan 'Abd al-Jabbār Bn Aḥmad al-Hamadānī* (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 51. Marc Herman makes a misleading statement saying that received tradition possess the characteristics of "necessary" knowledge (*'ilm ḍarūrī*; as opposed to "acquired" knowledge, *'ilm muktasab*) seemingly unaware that Saadia's usage of the terminology is not consistent with the Mu'tazilite usage: "Saadia also articulated his understanding of extrascriptural traditions using the terminology of contemporary Mu'tazilites, asserting that received tradition, which he considered to be rabbinic teachings, possesses the characteristics of "intuitive" or "necessary" knowledge (*'ilm ḍarūrī*; as opposed to "acquired" knowledge, *'ilm muktasab*). Marc Herman, "Prophetic Authority in the Legal Thought of Saadia Gaon," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 108, no. 3 (2018): 283. It is possible Herman is referring to a direct perception of "knowing," a blind knowing (*taqlīd*), or an assumption (*ẓann*) that is "awakened" by testimony, but this does not qualify as knowledge (*'ilm*) in the strict Mu'tazilite framework (even though Saadya does not restrict his use of *'ilm* to the latter).

³⁸⁰ Peters, *God's Created Speech*, 51.

acquired from another following rational reflection (*nāẓir*). Testimony, whether human or divine, does not create immediate or necessary knowledge since it must be verified through reflection. Since this rational reflection (*nāẓir*) is the basis for knowing the truths of the fourth source of knowledge, all testimony, including revelation, which Saadya defines as "that which is furnished by Trustworthy Tradition (*al-khabar al-sādiq*, literally "trustworthy reports") and the books of prophetic revelation," falls under acquired knowledge. The result is the fourth source of knowledge is literally the "hearing" of "trustworthy reports" from both the Jewish religious community and God. Samuel Rosenblatt translates the fourth root as "Authentic Tradition," which tends to obscure the testimonial connection, but does reflect Saadya's inclusion of religious communal authority.³⁸¹ In this way, the earned vs. received distinction between knowledge sources serve as: 1) coequal approaches to knowledge since both build on the same underlying reality making them unable to contradict one another (when properly interpreted),³⁸² and 2) a means to validate and verify the other sources.³⁸³ Hence, Saadya claims that

³⁸¹ Rosenblatt renders للخبر الصادق as "Authentic Tradition." Alexander Altmann uses the translation "Reliable Tradition", Stroumsa prefers "Veridical Tradition", and Michael Linetsky also translates it as "Trustworthy Tradition."

³⁸² "Saadiyah was convinced that Torah and science spring from the same branch; they cannot contradict each other in any way". Sirat, *A History of Jewish Philosophy in the Middle Ages*. 23. For example, both human reason and revelation can grasp even moral principles independently as Saadya states in the introduction to his commentary on Job. Cf. Sa'adia ben Joseph, *The Book of Theodicy: Translation and Commentary on the Book of Job*, trans. Lenn Evan Goodman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 124. Unaided reason, being capable of grasping universal ethical principles, has been recognized as another potential Mu'tazilite influence on Saadya. However, while reason can outline universal moral principles, it is revelation that outlines the proper way to follow rational commandments. For alternative reading of the same claim cf. Richard C. Taylor, "'Truth Does Not Contradict Truth': Averroes and the Unity of Truth," *TOPOI* 19, no. 1 (2000): 3–16.

³⁸³ Verification is a crucial epistemic function for Saadya, even for divine testimony, which he often likens to handling money using the proof-text "like tested silver is the speech of the righteous" (Prov. 10:20). Saadya uses a moneylending example for his claim that the role of perceptible miracles is to verify revelation until reason can later provide confirmation. Diana Lobel contrasts Saadya with a similar example in later Bahya ibn Paquda stating that for Saadya, "the matter is purely an epistemological one: how we verify truth." Diana Lobel, *A Sufi-Jewish Dialogue Philosophy and Mysticism in Bahya Ibn Paquda's "Duties of the Heart"* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, Inc., 2007), 52–53. Cf. Saadia Gaon, *Kitāb al-Amānāt*, Intro, 3, 24-26; (Rosenblatt trans., 6, 31-33).

Trustworthy Tradition simultaneously is "based upon the knowledge of the senses as well as that of reason" and verifies (via prooftexts) the knowledge via sense perception, intuition, and logical necessity.³⁸⁴ The result of this dual approach and verification is that reason and revelation complement or mutually reinforce one another.

Reason needs revelation to corroborate or verify the first three roots because there is a limit beyond which these three roots can provide no further knowledge.³⁸⁵ Israel Efron describes Saadya's view of thought as "pyramidal": "We begin with a broad and concrete basis; and as we climb, the material thins until we have nothing to hold on."³⁸⁶ Hegedus describes a "flash-like" illuminative knowledge in Saadya (most prominent in *Yezirah*) which "appears to be the only way to have an understanding about this 'other reality'; i.e. 'the first principles of things' beyond the reach of the senses."³⁸⁷ Thus while sense perception is the primary source, it is only a sufficient and not a necessary condition for knowledge.³⁸⁸ Even though God is the most trustworthy speaker making his reports the most certain form of knowledge, revelation requires reason. Oral reports can never be accepted blindly for Saadya, but must be tested and confirmed by the other three roots of knowledge: "Moreover this last source of knowledge [the senses] also confirms (*ḥaqqāqa*)

³⁸⁴ Saadia Gaon, *Kitāb al-Amānāt*, Intro, 14-15; (Rosenblatt trans., 18-19).

³⁸⁵ "I have furthermore stated that man advances from one idea to another until he arrives at a point which no further knowledge is possible. There are three reasons for this." Saadya then lists: 1) the limited, finite, powers of human bodies; 2) science is finite; and 3) sensation, by which the sciences are learned is finite. Thus, it is impossible to derive the infinite from the finite. Saadia Gaon, *Kitāb al-Amānāt*, Treatise II, 74; (Rosenblatt trans., 89).

وقلت ان الانسان يترقى من معلوم الى معلوم حتى ينتهي الى معلوم لا معلوم وراءه لتلات خلال

³⁸⁶ Efron, "Saadia's Theory of Knowledge," 152-53. "Saadia does not state like Halevi that religion goes further in its discovery of divine truth than philosophy. According to him wherever religion asserts, reason can prove. This does contradict his admission of the limitation of philosophy, noted in §8, for to prove the existence of a thing does not necessarily mean to understand its essence or causes." *Ibid.*, 161.

³⁸⁷ Hegedus, *Saadya Gaon*, 34.

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 30.

for us the validity of trustworthy reports."³⁸⁹ Revelation is linked to language and its flexible or ambiguous nature on account of its extensiveness (*ittisā*), which is, according to Hegedus, "able to open a window onto the invisible realm which is otherwise inexpressible."³⁹⁰ Saadya states that multiple connotations underly a single expression which can only be unlocked by reason and proper interpretation. In order to transmit multiple connotations "grasped by our minds at one blow" multiple expressions must be employed since the literal meaning of one expression cannot express the full import of its own intelligible content.³⁹¹ Saadya later adds "unless there existed the possibility of an extension of meaning in language, nothing more than the barest reference to substances would have been within its competence—I have seen fit to indicate the various ways in which they are to be interpreted so as to harmonize with reason."³⁹² Revelation needs reason to methodically eliminate erroneous interpretations so the true meaning can emerge.

Given the broad division between knowledge as either earned or received, Israel Efros and Abraham Heschel note a "dualism" or "contradiction" in Saadya's epistemology between the first and second roots of knowledge (sense perception & rational intuition) in their contributions to the *Jewish Quarterly Review* (1942-43). Heschel sees an epistemological dualism emerging from Saadya's ontological dualism: "On the one hand, he [Saadya] insists that all knowledge is derived from sense experience, that all our notions are based on perception" and "On the other hand he speaks of an immediate knowledge

³⁸⁹ Saadia Gaon, *Kitāb al-Amānāt*, Intro, 15; (Rosenblatt trans., 19). Saadya here uses Job 15:17-19 as proof-text and his commentary on the verse is also illuminating, cf. Text 3.3.1.6.

ثم حَقَّقْ لَنَا الْإِخْبَارَ الصَّادِقَةَ إِنَّهَا حَقٌّ بِقَوْلِهِ

³⁹⁰ Hegedus, *Saadya Gaon*, 52.

³⁹¹ Saadia Gaon, *Kitāb al-Amānāt*, Treatise II, 74-75; (Rosenblatt trans., 101-2).

³⁹² Saadia Gaon, *Kitāb al-Amānāt*, Treatise IV, 159-160; (Rosenblatt trans., 196-97).

that is inherent in the soul and independent of sense experience"³⁹³ Efros likens the two approaches to Aristotelian sensation-based knowledge (e.g. empiricism) and Platonic innate knowledge (e.g. rationalism) which Saadya combined such that the mind "is not a blank tablet, but...comes endowed with all knowledge", and yet "this knowledge requires awakening through experience and through reason working on the material of experience; and that in so far as our innate knowledge has to be discovered and made articulate, it is at the same time all based on our sensation" (e.g. "empirical rationalism").³⁹⁴ Hegedus bases his book *Saadya Gaon: The Double Path of the Mystic and the Rationalist* (2013) on this epistemological tension and appears more in agreement with Efros claiming Saadya combines the two distinct epistemological frameworks.³⁹⁵ These differing frameworks appear in his two main philosophical works: *al-Amānāt* describes an "externally oriented foundationalism" while the *Yeẓirah* "displays features of an internalist (imagination-based) coherentism."³⁹⁶ In his commentary on the book of Ecclesiastes, Saadya desires proofs for two types of wisdom, which Hegedus neatly summarizes:

[Saadya] attempts to arrive at an understanding of wisdom as an easily attainable, evident type of knowledge (based on sense perception), while simultaneously maintaining an understanding of it as a remote, challenging and ultimately unattainable realm (involving such processes as the precise understanding of the creation, of the soul, etc.). After having established this double nature of wisdom, he emphasizes the necessity of striving for

³⁹³ Efros, "Saadia's Theory of Knowledge," 147–48; Abraham Heschel, "The Quest for Certainty in Saadia's Philosophy," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 33, no. 3 (January 1943): 280.

³⁹⁴ Efros, "Saadia's Theory of Knowledge," 147–49.

³⁹⁵ "I cannot but agree with the above-mentioned authors concerning the following three statements: (1) in the epistemology of the KAI [al-Amānāt] there exists a tension, or rather bi-polarity, between the sources of sense perception and the immediate knowledge of the soul, (2) an ontological duality between body and soul is expressed as well, and (3) similar epistemological structures existed in antiquity." Hegedus goes on to argue "that Saadya attempts to make use of two distinct epistemological frameworks based on different philosophical traditions in order to attain two goals, namely, (1) to justify Judaism as a network of convictions based on objective reality, and (2) to offer an appropriate reading for an enigmatic text that seems to contradict the Biblical story of creation." Hegedus, *Saadya Gaon*, 12–13.

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 14.

the latter type of wisdom as well, even if it does not promise the same concrete results as the first type.³⁹⁷

The result is what Hegedus calls a "double foundationalism" or two frameworks with different approaches to the same epistemological problem "examined from different angles and expressed with different terminologies."³⁹⁸ The picture in *al-Amānāt* is humans build up knowledge from sensation (epistemology precedes and thus shapes ontology) while in *Yeẓirah* divine knowledge disseminates down into the human mind (ontology precedes and supersedes epistemology). Saying the two works are "analogous is not strong enough," according to Hegedus, "rather, they are better described as being homologous, or even isomorphic."³⁹⁹ Since God is understood as the ultimate source of knowledge, Saadya indicates that even rational knowledge is really "acquired" since God puts knowledge in the Reason of all humans and sense perception is merely a way to "awaken" it.⁴⁰⁰

Within this epistemological dualism, testimony seems to belong to acquired knowledge while simultaneously providing a vital role for rational knowledge. Even though testimony is discursive and requires verification, Saadya seems to want testimony to be an intuitive kind of knowledge. Efron notes that Saadya's illustrations "seem to show that the assent to tradition is meant to belong to the second class ["root"] of knowledge, to be intuitive rather than reasoned, though discursive reason too approves the contents of

³⁹⁷ Ibid., 39 footnote 87.

³⁹⁸ Ibid., 69.

³⁹⁹ Ibid., 115.

⁴⁰⁰ 'Abd al-Jabbar claimed God created knowledge in the perceiving subject at the time of perception. Saadya like the Mu'tazilites, and unlike al-Fārābī, did not hold to the Aristotelian philosophical conception of Reason or *'aql* as a distinct intellect, but as the summation of things known. Sklare reports that Mutazilite "'Abd al-Jabbār explicitly rejects the view of *'aql* as a substance, instrument, sense or faculty. In the Mu'tazili conception, reason distinguishes not only between true and false but also between good and evil. People who have enough life experience and who have developed their moral intuition to the point of being able to distinguish between good and evil are said to have a mature or perfected reason (*kamāl al-'aql*)." Sklare, Samuel Ben Ḥofni Gaon and His Cultural World, 145.

tradition."⁴⁰¹ The result is Saadya gives testimony a unique role that is simultaneously highlighted and obfuscated between divine and human speakers.

3.3 Testimony in Saadya Gaon

In the prolegomena to his commentary on the Psalms, Saadya outlines eighteen different categories of speech explicitly demarcating divine and human speech.⁴⁰² The result is that for Saadya, revelation, or Tradition, is unmistakably testimonial.⁴⁰³ Saadya speaks of acquired knowledge and revelation almost synonymously since revelation is literally words heard from God and transmitted by humans. As shown above, Trustworthy Tradition, i.e., revelation, is a unique source of knowledge that works in collaboration with reason. Tradition has a tradition it would seem since the Mu'tazilite view of Tradition came from the Persians, who in turn acquired it from the Aristotelian commentators.⁴⁰⁴ However, it is important not to collapse the fourth source of knowledge and testimony proper.

⁴⁰¹ Efros adds: "This is in keeping with the general Jewish and Arabic view, which...goes back to Alexander of Aphrodisia, that the *mekubalot* or traditions require no proof." Efros, "Saadia's Theory of Knowledge," 162.

⁴⁰² Saadya divides the five main types of Speech (Exhortation, Inquiry, Narrative, Imperative, and Intercession) into " 1. Exhortation. 2. Inquiry; Hyperbole. 3. Inquiry; Rhetorical. 4. Narrative: Past, Divine; prehistoric. 5. Narrative: Past, Divine; historic good. 6. Narrative: Past, Divine; historic - bad. 7. Narrative: Past, Human; pre-historic. 8. Narrative: Past, Human; on behalf of Israelites. 9. Narrative: Present, Divine. 10. Narrative: Present, Human. 11. Narrative: Future, Divine; Invitation. 12. Narrative: Future, Divine; Intimidation. 13. Com- mand; Singular. 14. Command; Plural. 15. Prohibition; Singular. 16. Prohibition; Plural. 17. Intercession; Singular. 18. Intercession; Plural." Sa'adia ben Joseph, "Saadia Gaon's Prolegomenon to Psalms," ed. Moshe Sokolow, *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 51 (1984): 137, 143.

⁴⁰³ Saadya explicitly says as much in his commentary on the book of Job referring to "the book's testimony (*shahāda*, شهادة, שְׁהָאָדָה) that he [Job] was a blameless, upright, and godfearing man (1:1)." Sa'adia ben Joseph, *The Book of Theodicy*, 130. Sa'adia ben Joseph, *Version Arabe Du Livre de Job de R. Saadia Ben Iosef al-Fayyūmī, Publiée Avec Des Notes Hébraïques Par W. Bacher. Accompagnée d'une Traduction Française d'après Farabe Par J. Derenbourg et H. Derenbourg*, ed. Wilhelm Bacher, vol. 5, *Œuvres Complètes de r. Saadia Ben Iosef al-Fayyūmī* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1899), 7.

⁴⁰⁴ "The idea of tradition as a source of knowledge, Saadia took over from the Mutakallimūn. But they did not originate it. It came to them from the Syrians; for Paula Persa in his *Logica* says: "Knowledge, either a man seeks and finds, or it is acquired by instruction. Instruction is partly transmitted directly from man to man, and partly by men who came with a message, i.e., from the angels." The Syrians in turn took it over from the Aristotelian commentators; for, as J. P. N. Land shows, from the opening words of Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics*: "all doctrine and all intellectual discipline arise from preexistent knowledge," Alexander of Aphrodisia inferred authority of tradition." Efros, "Saadia's Theory of Knowledge," 159–60.

"Testimony" is not revelation and revelation is not "testimony." In the same vein, it is important not to assume revelation is *ipso facto* acquired knowledge (*'ilm muktasab*).

In *al-Amānāt* Treatise III chapter 6, Saadya gives a lengthy explanation of what, why, and how God made Scripture available to humans (what: namely historical summaries; why: to make people more virtuous).⁴⁰⁵ The how of Scripture is via testimony. Saadya argues *a fortiori* from the necessity of trusting human testimony to that of divine testimony. This passage also reveals the depth of Mu'tazilite influence ranging from the use of the technical term *ṣaḥiḥa*, the repose of the soul, allusion to the consensus verification of reports (*tawātur*), and concluding using the term *thabit*.⁴⁰⁶ Rosenblatt provides a faithful translation from the Arabic Landauer translation which I have reproduced here with modification since Rosenblatt (perhaps to better capture Saadya's argument) glosses any mention of a correct or trustworthy reports as "Authentic Tradition" which can have the unfortunate effect of unnecessarily linking the whole of testimony to the fourth root of knowledge.

Text 3.3.0.1

Furthermore, let me say that it was well known to the All-Wise, exalted and magnified be He, that His precepts and the reports (*'akhabār*) of His signs would in the course of time require transmitters, in order that these matters might seem as correct (*ṣaḥiḥa*) to posterity as they did to the early ancestors.

⁴⁰⁵ Saadya states only three basic themes are communicated by all the prophetic and scholarly work in Scripture: 1) commands and prohibitions; 2) rewards and punishments; and 3) "an account of the men that lived virtuously...and were, therefore, successful, as well as of those who dealt corruptly in them and perished as a result." These three themes fully serve the "interests of human well-being." Saadia Gaon, *Kitāb al-Amānāt*, 126-127. Intro.; (Rosenblatt trans., 154-155). Saadya gives a parallel account in the prolegomena to his Commentary on the Psalms. Sa'adia ben Joseph, "Saadiah Gaon's Prolegomenon to Psalms," 137.

⁴⁰⁶ *Ṣaḥiḥa* – "This is the most general term to qualify a proposition which is true, the contents of which correspond with reality. The noun "being correct" is rendered by "*ṣaḥḥa*" (correctness), and the act of demonstrating that a proposition is correct by the verbal noun "*taṣḥiḥ*"; to be correct is rendered by the verb "*ṣaḥḥ*".

thabit – "This qualification, given to a proposition, indicates that the proposition concerned 'stands firm and immobile', expresses an established fact, and, consequently, is certain. 'Abd al-Jabbar happens to use this term sometimes by way of conclusion, to indicate that a proposition because of the argumentation given has become to express an established fact." Peters, *God's Created Speech*, 80, 84.

Therefore did He render the human mind susceptible to the acceptance of trustworthy tradition (*al-khabar al-sādiq*) and the human soul capable of finding repose (*sukûn*) therein, so that His Scriptures and traditions [reports, (*akhabār*)] might be acknowledged as true (in perfect condition, *ṣalaha*).

I deem it proper also to call to mind the following details that lend color to the correctness of reports (*ṣahḥa al-khabar*). For example, were it not for the fact that man felt satisfied in their hearts that there is such a thing in the world as correct reports, (*khabara ṣaḥiḥa*), no person would be able to cherish legitimate expectations on the basis of the reports he receives about the success of a certain commercial transaction, or the usefulness of a specified art—and, after all, the realization of man’s potentialities and the satisfaction of his needs depend upon enterprise. Nor would he heed the warnings about the dangers of a certain road, or the announcement of the prohibition of a certain act. [However,] without such expectations and apprehensions he would fail in his undertakings*.

Again, were it not for the assumption that there exists in the world {such a thing as} correct reports (*khabar ṣaḥiḥa*), men would accept neither the command nor the interdict of their ruler, except when they saw him with their own eyes and heard his words with their own ears. In the event of his absence, however, the acceptance on their part of his command and interdict would cease. But if things were like that, it would mean the end of law and order, and the death of many human beings.

Also, were it not for the existence in the world of such a thing as correct reports (*khabara ṣaḥiḥa*), no man would be able to identify the property of his father or his inheritance from his grandfather. Nay, he would not even be certain of being the son of his mother, let alone of his being the son of his father. The result would then be that the affairs of men would always be subject to doubt, to the point where human beings would believe only what they perceive with their senses at the time of perception. Such a viewpoint would we have mentioned be close to the theory of the Skeptics, whom we have mentioned in the first treatise.

Now the Scriptures, too, assert that trustworthy tradition (*al-khabar al-sādiq*) is as correct (*ṣaḥiḥa*) as things perceived with our own eyes. That is the import of their statement: *For pass over to the isles of the Kittites, and see, and send unto Kedar, and consider diligently* (Jer. 2:10). But why, in the portion of this verse pertaining to the report, were the words *and consider diligently* added? My answer is that a report is subject to falsification [corruption/imperfection, (*fasad*)] in two directions from which direct observation is immune. It may be due either to false impression or else to deliberate misrepresentation. That is why Scripture says: *and consider diligently*.

Now when we ponder these two criteria of the trustworthiness of reports (*al-khabar*), our reason arrives at the conclusion that it is only the individual who is subject to and fooled by false impression or deliberate deception. In the case of a large community of men, however, it is not likely that all of its constituents should have been subject to the same wrong impressions. On the other hand, had there been a deliberate conspiracy to create a fictitious tradition, that fact could not have remained a secret to the masses, but wherever the tradition had been published, the report of the conspiracy would have been published along with it. When, therefore, a tradition is free from the above-mentioned two flaws, there is no third means of invalidating it. Accordingly, if the traditions transmitted to us by our ancestors are viewed in the light of these [three] principles, they will be found to be proof against these arguments, correct and unshakable (stable/firm, *thabit*).⁴⁰⁷

From Text 3.3.0.1, several aspects of Saadya's account of testimony become apparent.

First, there is such a thing in the world as "correct reports" (*khabara ṣaḥīḥa*) and that even the most rationalist of thinkers is forced to rely on them.⁴⁰⁸ Saadya claims life would be impossible without trustworthy testimony, for, just as Hume would later claim, daily affairs

⁴⁰⁷ Saadia Gaon, *Kitāb al-Amānāt*, 126-128. Intro.; (Rosenblatt trans., 155-157). Tr mod.

ثم اقول لان الحكيم، جلّ وعزّ، من علمه ان شرائعه واخبار اعلامه تحتاج عاى طول الزمان الى ناقلين لتصحّ للأخريين كما صحتّ للأولين | جعل في العقول مكانا لقبول الخبر الصادق وقى النفوس محلاً للسكون اليه لتصحّ به كتبه واخباره | وارى ان اذكر جزئيات من صحة الجبر لولا ان للنغوس تسكن الى ان في الدنيا خيرا صحيحا لم يكن الانسان يرجو ما سبيلة ان يرجوه ممّا يبشّر به من صلاح التجارة الفلانيّة والنفعة في الصناعة الفلانيّة اذ قوة النسان وحاجته موضوعة على التكتسب | ولم يكن ايضن يخاف ما يحذر منه من فساد الطريق الفلاني ومن النداء بالمنع من العمل الفلاني ما لم يرج ويخف فسدت عليه

(the original Arabic text is defective here, see Hebrew below*)

ولو لم يوضع في الدنيا خبر صحيح كان الناس لا يقبلون أمر سلطانهم ولا نهيهم الا في وقت ما يرونه بعيونهم ويسمعون كلامه بأذانهم | متى غاب منهم ارتفع منهم قبول امرة ونهيهم | ولو كان كذلك لبطل التدبير وهلك كثير من الناس | ولولا ان في الدنيا خيرا صحيح لم يحصل للابسان ان هذا ملك ابيه وان هذا ارث جدّه | بل لم يحصل للابسان انه ابن امّه فضلا عن ان يكون ابن ابيه | ثم كانت امور الناس لا تزال في شكوك حتى لا يصدقوا الا بما وقع عليه حسّهم في وقت وقوعه فقط | وهذا المذهب قريب من قول المتجاهلين التي نكرناه في المقالة الاولى | وقد قالت الكتب ان للخبر الصادق صحة كصحة الشيء المدرك عيانا ذاك قولها (ירמיה 2,10) כי עברו איי כתיים וראו וקדר שלחו והתבוננו מאר ولم زاد في باب الجبر והתבוננו מאר | فاقول ان الخير قد يقع فيه فساد ما ليس يقع في المحسوس من جهتين احدهما من طريق الظنّ والاخرى من طريق التعمّد | فلذلك قال והתבוננו מאר | فعند اجتهدنا في هذين الامرين كيف نامن الخبر عليهما وجدنا في العقل ان الظنّ والتعمّد لا يقعان فيخفيان الا من الفراد | واما الجماعة الكثيرة فان ظنونهم لا تتفق لكنهم ان تعمدوا وتواطوا على ابداع خبر لم يخف ذلك على الملائم منهم بل يكون خبرهم الى حيث ما خرج يخرج معه خبر تواطئهم | فاذا سلم الخبر من هذين فلا وجه ثالث يوجب فساده | فاذا عرض خبر اباتنا على هذا الاصول وجده العارض سليما من هذه المطاعن صحيحا ثابتا

*The Hebrew of Ibn-Tibbon's text renders the defective section as "if he did not hope and fear, all his affairs would be lost" (אם לא יקוה ויירא יפסרו לו כל עניניו אמתי). Sa'adia ben Joseph, *Ha-Emunot V'eha-De'ot: He'etiko Li-Sefat Kodshenu Yehudah Ibn Tibon.*, trans. Yehudah ibn Tibbon (Jósefów: Bi-defus B. Zetser, 1885), 114, <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/100557881>.

Alexander Altmann's translation is more word for word and does reflect the distinction made between types of reports.: Cf. Sa'adia ben Joseph, *The Book of Doctrines and Beliefs*, 109–11.

⁴⁰⁸ Even Maimonides, like all Medieval philosophers, allows for instances of deriving beliefs from others, or accepting their testimony, but as an unreliable source of knowledge. Thus, even strong-rationalists such as al-Fārābī, Avicenna, and Averroes who built upon Aristotle's teachings received them through a long transmission of reports.

would be plagued by doubt with people only believing what is immediately before their senses.⁴⁰⁹ Second, the human mind is prepared to accept testimony such that it is not in a perpetual state of doubt or unknowing. The mind for Saadya is its own agent "in the process of percepts becoming concepts" since he did not hold to an Active or Agent Intellect.⁴¹⁰ Thus, Saadya is likely referring to faculties/powers (*quwwa*) of the soul, or a combination thereof: first, knowing (*i'lam*) results from the "gathering faculty" (*al-quwwa al-ḥāšira*); the 'faculty of discernment' (*al-quwwa al-mumayyiza*) then "discerns" (*yaftakir, yumayyiz*) true facts by verification and false ones by invalidation; and finally the 'faculty of conviction' (*al-quwwa al-mu'taqida*) receives this information and, after becoming convinced of its truth, preserves it.⁴¹¹ Third, reliable reports are susceptible to forms of corruption that perception is not: i) an error in judgement and ii) willful distortion. This simultaneously introduces a rational and moral component which makes knowledge experts and virtuous figures more qualified speakers. Fourth, given these two corruptions, tellings cannot cause conviction unless they are verified as not being susceptible to either. However, if a telling's assertion is shown to be neither an error in judgement nor willful deception, then it cannot be invalidated and causes conviction. As a result, Saadya maintains that it is rational to accept tellings that overcome testimony's two corruptions. This is the main thrust of the passage arguing for the rationality of Trustworthy Tradition: God ordained human minds to be constituted in such a way as to receive reliable reports

⁴⁰⁹ Saadya here seems to anticipate Hume's skepticism in *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* Chapter 4, Part 2: "As to past experience, it can be allowed to give direct and certain information of those precise objects only, and that precise period of time, which fell under its cognizance: But why this experience should be extended to future times, and to other objects, which for aught we know, may be only in appearance similar; this is the main question on which I would insist." Hume, "An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding," 32.

⁴¹⁰ Efros, "Saadia's Theory of Knowledge," 133.

⁴¹¹ Hegedus, *Saadya Gaon*, 22.

and accepting divine testimony is no more controversial than accepting day-to-day human testimony which is necessary and ubiquitous. To quote Sklare: "Since the veracity of revealed knowledge is essentially founded on universal reason, knowledge of revelation is cogent and is theoretically known to be true by all rational men."⁴¹² Saadya treats the two as nearly indistinguishable (or is himself equivocating) by implicitly claiming that rejecting Trustworthy Tradition (*al-khabar al-sādiq*) is tantamount to rejecting correct reports (*khabara ṣihiha*) which would be the pinnacle of irrationality. Verification for the revealed law comes from reason and the Mu'tazilite conception of consensus (*tawātur*) arguing that fabrication or conspiracy would be impossible in communal groups without some report of it.⁴¹³ As we shall see below, the absence of a counter report for such large groups renders the telling not only verified, but certain.

From Text 3.3.0.1 it follows that testimony proper best fits under acquired knowledge requiring reflection for both human reports and divine reports transmitted by humans; however, Saadya also treats hearing a speaker as a form of perception meaning that testimony does not escape Saadya's epistemic dualism and cuts across both necessary and acquired knowledge. Since testimony is tied to language, it is also tied to sensation. Testimony, like all perception, is thus one of the "ways" necessary knowledge awakens God given knowledge within. In the introduction to *Kitāb Ṭalab al-ḥikma* (*The Book of the Search for Wisdom, Tafsir Mishlei* in Hebrew) his translation and commentary on Proverbs, Saadya explains everyone needs guidance from a wise man (*chacham*) who helps awaken

⁴¹² Sklare, *Samuel Ben Hofni Gaon and His Cultural World*, 148.

⁴¹³ *tawātur* (تواتر)

inner knowledge by dispensing advice (and "the Wise One", i.e., God, saw it necessary to provide the expressions of the wise man Solomon son of David).⁴¹⁴ Saadya writes:

Text 3.3.0.2

The audible things are discovered by the organ of hearing, and man testifies (*shahid*): this is what I have heard and none other. The same is true of the other organs of sensation. Similarly there is in the mind (*al-'aql*) a knowing force (*quwa*) which, when confronted by intellectual matters, verifies them, so that the person becomes convinced that they are undoubtedly the concepts. According to this example all knowledge (*'ilm*) lies concealed (*maknun*) in the mind; and the purpose of coming to know (*bil'ta'ilm*) and acquisition (*iktisāb*) is only to discover it after its awakening, so that when it stands before the mind, the mind testifies concerning it that it is the truth. That is why he [Solomon] made this book and its vision in order to wake/alert them in the mind and awaken to what was unknown to it and in that he said: "O simple ones, understand prudence; and O fools, understand the heart [wisdom] (Proverbs 8:5)."⁴¹⁵

⁴¹⁴ The purpose of Proverbs, per Saadya, is guidance in pursuing wisdom. He understands Proverbs 1:1-7 to be part of Solomon's introduction and thus interprets the list of terms as stages in the learning process: "*haškel*, 'instruction', is what the aspirant learns from the sage and from all rational matters such as multiplication, division, and equations, such as one hundred is equal to one hundred, and one hundred is half of two hundred. *Tsedek*, 'veracity', is what the student acquires by way of scrupulous proof, such as geometrical proofs which require one, two, three or more steps. *Mishpat*, 'justice', is what the aspirant learns with regard to rational religious requirements, which are already embedded in his mind, such as the distinction between good and evil. *Mejšarim*, 'equity', are the commandments that are not required or rejected by the intellect. They are the commandments and prohibitions that he follows in an upright manner." Ilana Sasson, "The Book of Proverbs between Saadia and Yefet," *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World* 1, no. 1–2 (2013): 161–63. For a Hebrew translation, cf. Sa'adia ben Joseph, *Mishle 'im Targum Uferush Ha-Ga'on Rabbenu Se'adyah Ben Yosef Fayyumi*, trans. Yosef Qāfiḥ (Jerusalem: Ha-Va'ad le-Hoša'at Sifrei Rasag, 1976).

⁴¹⁵ English translation from Efros, "Saadia's Theory of Knowledge," 146–47. Tr mod. Saadya uses terms loaded with epistemological meaning based on his other works so I have rendered learning as "coming to know" (بالتعلم) and clarified inference as acquisition (الاکتساب).

Judeo-Arabic:

אלמסמועאת אמ'הרתהא פמ'הר פשהד אלאנסאן עלי ד'לך אלשי אנה הו אלמסמוע לא נירה ועלי הד'א באקי אלהואס. כד'לך פי אלעקל קוה" עאלמה" פאד'א טאלעתהא אלאמור אלמעקולה" איקנת בהא וצה ענד אלאנסאן אנהא הי לא סחאלה" אלמעקולה". פעלי הד'א אלמת'אל כל עלם פהו מכנון פי אלעקל ואנמא אלמראד באלתעלם ואלאבתסאב נ'מיעא ליט'הרא ד'לך בער אלאת'ארה" פאד'א הו אנתצב ללעקל שהד עליה אנה אלחק. פלד'לך ג'על הד'א אלכתאב ונט'ארה לינבהו עמא פי אלעקל וייקט'ו עלי מא כאן מנפולא ענה ופי ד'לך יקול הבינו פתאים ערמה וכסילים הבינו לב.

Hebrew Translation:

[ואם היה הדבר מן] הדברים הנשמעים יגלה אותן [כח השמיעה] ויעיד האדם על זה הדבר כי זה הוא ששמע ולא זולתו וכן בשאר החושים. כמו זה יש בשכל כח יודע וכשיערכו לפניו הדברים המושכלים יאמיתם ויתברר לאדם שהם בלי ספק המושכלים. ועל זה הדמיון כל ידיעה מעונתה בשכל והכוונה בלימוד וההבנה היא רק שיגלו שניהם זאת הידיעה אחר שנתעוררה וכשהיא נצבה לפני השכל יעיד עליה שהיא אמת. ולפיכך חובר זה הספר והדומים לו להעיר האדם על מה שהוא בשכל ולעוררו על מה שלא שם לב עליו ועל זה אמר הבינו פתאים ערמה וכסילים הבינו לב (משלי ח' ה').

Sa'adia ben Joseph, *Versio Arabae Des Proverbes, Surnommés Livre de La Recherche de La Sagesse de r. Saadia Ben Iosef al-Fayyûm*, trans. Joseph Derenbourg and Mayer Lambert, *Œuvres Complètes de r. Saadia Ben Iosef al-Fayyûmî*, Publiées Sous La Direction de J. Derenbourg, v. 6 (Paris: E. Leroux, 1894), 9.

Efros summarizes this text saying that, for Saadya, "Knowledge then lies concealed in the mind, and reflection only discovers it, even as the ear discovers sound."⁴¹⁶ Whether the knowledge awakens necessarily or requires reflection depends on what knowledge is being awakened (e.g., moral truths such as the difference between right or wrong is a consistent example of knowledge within that requires no reflection). This captures that all knowledge is ultimately given by God.

Awakening knowledge via testimony occurs regardless of whether the speaker is human or divine. Testimony in this sense clearly seems reducible to perception.⁴¹⁷ Any speech, according to Saadya in his prolegomena to the Psalms, "which rationally, could not have been said by man (i.e., all things future or prehistoric)" must be divine speech.⁴¹⁸ This explains why Trustworthy Tradition must stand apart as a unique source of knowledge and why Saadya references human and divine testimony in the same sentence. Reports of what is beyond human limitations must originate with God and can only be known because they are heard by a prophet who tells the people in an uninterrupted chain of transmission.⁴¹⁹ Parallel to the Arabic tradition, Saadya sees the Torah as dictated, from Genesis 1:1 to Deuteronomy 34:4, by God to Moses, who told the officer of one thousand who told the officers of one hundred so that all the nation learned what God taught them from generation to generation. Despite the human role in transmitting the Laws of Revelation to subsequent generations, Saadya gives it the weight of divine authority almost entirely denying human

⁴¹⁶ Efros, "Saadia's Theory of Knowledge," 148. Also Cf *Amānāt* VI, 153.

⁴¹⁷ Divine knowledge beyond human perception would be an exception.

⁴¹⁸ Sa'adia ben Joseph, "Saadia Gaon's Prolegomenon to Psalms," 139.

⁴¹⁹ This is not a blind acceptance based on authority, for Saadya claims early in the *Amānāt* that he will deliver people from such "*taqlīd*" Saadia Gaon, *Kitāb al-Amānāt*, 14. Intro.; (Rosenblatt trans., 18).

authority.⁴²⁰ To do so, "Saadia turned to methods found in Islamic literature to explain internal Talmudic 'harmonization' of rabbinic disagreements," per Marc Herman, given "Karaites' allegations that disagreements in rabbinic literature undermine claims of the Oral Torah's unbroken transmission."⁴²¹ Thus, as shown above, Saadya devises his epistemology such that revelation needs reason and vis versa. Despite Saadya's overlapping account of human and divine testimony I will evaluate them separately.

3.3.1 Human Testimony

While most of Saadya's discussions of testimony occur within the context of Trustworthy Tradition, there are a few clear exceptions. The clearest example is *Kitab al-Shahadah wa'l-Watha'iq* (*The Book of Testimony and Legal Documents* or *Sefer ha-Shetarot* in Hebrew), a halakhic monograph thought lost but largely reconstructed from Genizah fragments. The majority of the work deals with "standard clauses that recur in all or most legal documents," and then specific legal documents (the last chapter is subdivided into 54 sections "devoted to the text of a single type of document and the rules associated with it").⁴²² The legal purview largely presumes a banking or financial context (such as

⁴²⁰ "Consistent with the characterization of the rabbis as transmitters of tradition, and not as its producers, Saadia portrayed rabbinic tradition as prophetic and of great antiquity. He referred to rabbinic tradition as *naql* (tradition), *naql al-aslāf* (tradition of the pious forbears), and *āthār al anbiyā'* (traditions of the prophets). Saadia also described rabbinic traditions as having 'reached' him (using Arabic phrases such as *jā'a al-āthār bi-* and *jā'a fī al-fiqh*)." Herman, "Prophetic Authority in the Legal Thought of Saadia Gaon," 283–84.

⁴²¹ Herman notes Saadya felt the need to reconcile disagreements in addition to apparent contradictions unlike his predecessors since "the amoraim were not troubled by the existence of disagreement per se but by contradictions between earlier and later generation and by internal inconsistencies in the Mishnah." Herman thus claims, that Saadya "appears to have been the first Rabbanite to attempt to harmonize conflicting Talmudic traditions." Herman identifies three reasons Saadya gives for Torah transmitter disagreements by Karaite Ya'qūb al-Qirqisānī (10th C): "(1) temporary misunderstanding; (2) a transmitter heard only one aspect of a prophetic report, and (3) a transmitter assumed that a statement was of general application (*'āmm*) when it actually referred to a specific case (*khāṣṣ*)." Herman concludes Saadya followed Islamic jurisprudence in rooting the Oral Torah and other extra-biblical in primarily divine authority and not to "parry Karaite claims" (without necessarily believing his own claims as some scholars have suggested. This is because Muslim jurists likewise "attempted to jettison nonprophetic elements of religious law and sought to root Islamic law solely in prophetic dictates." *Ibid.*, 284–85, 292–93, 271.

⁴²² Brody, *The Geonim of Babylonia and the Shaping of Medieval Jewish Culture*, 258.

testifying that a debtor is delinquent, that a loan has been repaid, or who may sign and co-sign a bill). However, the first four chapters discuss testimony in general providing a clear view of human testimony in a non-theological setting.

As a legal scholar, Saadya has legal testimony in view, not testimony proper in this work. Since legal testimony is not restricted to the courtroom, such as legally "testifying" that one does not have a testimony on a litigant's behalf (i.e., an adjuration), distinguishing between ordinary and legal testimony required Saadya write the treatise. One section is devoted to distinguishing legal from proper testimony to determine what is admissible in court:

Text 3.3.1.1

That which is knowledge of testimony should know that audible speech/words between people does not qualify as legal testimony, such as by Ruben saying to Simon: "you owe me 1,000 dirhams do you not?". He says to him "yes"; and he had sat witnesses behind a curtain, [such that] they heard it. It is not permissible to testify against him according to the wise men Rabbi Yehuda and Rabbi Zarid...⁴²³

Being a halakhic text, however, Saadya makes frequent allusions to the Talmud and the Mishna without citation or explanation of concepts (e.g., chapter 3 of the Sanhedrin

⁴²³ Sa'adia ben Joseph, "Fragments from Saadya's 'Sefer Ha-Edut Ve Ha-Shetarot' / שרידים מספר העדות / והשטרות לרב סעדיה גאון ed. M. Ben-Sasson, *Shenaton Ha-Mishpat Ha-Ivri: Annual of the Institute for Research in Jewish Law* / 75–173 : (1984) : שנתון המשפט העברי של המכון לחקר המשפט העברי יא"ב (1984). Translation mine of the Judeo Arabic:

יגזו אן יתערפאה בקול מרה או קריב לה לק ואשתמודענוהי דהו <א> פלוני בד פלוני דהוא אחוהי דפלוני מיתנא דמן אבוהי אפילו אשה ואפילו קרוב פלמא כאן הדא הו אלאצל אלמוצוע וגב אן יכון מן וגדנא כתאמתה עלי כתאב תם קאל אנה שהד עלי מא לם נקבל מנה לאן פי אצול אלאחכאם אלמכתום עלי אלכתאב פהו כמן חצר ענד אלהאכם ואדא שהרתה לקו עדים החתומין יערפה לם על השטר נעשו כמי שנחקרה עידותן בבית דין: וחכם כל מן אדי שהאדתה לא נקבל מנה נקצהא לק איצא כיון שהגיד שוב אינו חוזר ומגיד אלהם אלא אן יכון אלמשהוד עליה אמראה ואלשאהד.

Saason's Hebrew translation:

שהוא ידיעת איכות העדות ראוי 7 לדעת שהדברים הנשמעים בפי הבריות לא חלה 8 בהם עדות ומשל אומר בראובן שאמר לשמעון 9 האם אין לי בידך אלף דרהם והלה אמרלו הן 10 והושיב לו עדים מאחורי פרגוד ושמעו אותו 11 אין העדים רשאים להעיד על שמעון בשום דבר 12 עד שיאמר להם העידו עליי, כמו שאמרו החכמים אמר רב 13 יהודה אמר רב וצריך שיאמר אתם עידי 14 (שווה) =ואין חלוק (לעדים בין אמר להם מישמעידים בו 15 העידו עליי, בין אמרלהם מישמעידים לו העידו 16 עליו והתאפק =)ושחק) מי שמעידים עליו או אמרהתובע 17 לנתבע הנה אלה יעידו עליך.

includes witnesses hidden under bed curtains as a lender questions a debtor).⁴²⁴ Such references could be taken as Saadya's endorsement of a broadly Jewish theory of testimony stemming from the Written and Oral Law.

Despite this distinction between common and legal testimony, Saadya discusses testimony in a way that applies to both. In his introduction, he simultaneously highlights the importance of testimony and its pitfalls:

Text 3.3.1.2

...whoever looks at this book will be astonished at what [the trial] is called, being very amazed and say 'are not the pillars of the trial built on the statements of the litigants? And in turn on the witnesses' statements?' And you do not have a litigant who will make or respond to a claim without it being possible to express what he has in mind. And likewise you have no witness whatsoever without it being possible that he will neglect in the story or expand, until he exceeds what he has to tell. And if both of these things are the roots (of the law), then how will the branches be true?⁴²⁵

Saadya thus reiterates not only the centrality of testimony but also its two corruptions. He goes on to identify the "greater defect" of testimony as wrongly accepting false testimony (i.e., the judge thinks the witness speaks justice when in truth they are false). This problem cannot completely be avoided, but Saadya claims injustice in the Earthly courtroom will

At the time of this writing Ben-Sasson informed me his forthcoming "Sa'adya Gaon's book of deeds and testimonies (a critical edition, translation and notes)" is still unavailable.

⁴²⁴ Also Cf. Sanhedrin 29 and Shevuot 4 for instances of testimony.

⁴²⁵ Sa'adia ben Joseph, "Fragments from Saadya's 'Sefer Ha-Edut Ve Ha-Shetarot' / שרידים מספר העדות / והשטרות לרב סעדיה גאון," 66–165

פאקול אן אלנאטר פי הדא אלכתאב יתעגב מן תסמיתיה חקא עגבא טוילא פיקול כיה ויהי מוצועה קואעדהא עלי כלאם אלכצום דאירה אקטאבהא עלי מקאל אלשהוד. ומא מן כצם יתכלם בדעווי או בגואב ענהא אלא וימכן אן יכון לם יחכם אלעארה בלפטא עמא פינפסה. וכדלך מא מן שאהד אן יחכי מא חצרה אלא וימכן אן יקצר פי אל חכאיה או יתסע חתי יכרג ען חד אלשי אלמחכי פאדא כאן הדאן אצלהא פכיף תכון פרועהא חקא.

Sasson's Hebrew translation:

ואומר שהמסתכל בספר הזה (22) ישתומם על מה ש(המשפט) נקרא אמת השתוממות רבה ויאמר איך (23) והלא עמודי המשפט בנויים על דברי בעלי הדין ומסתובבים (24) קטביו על דבר העדים ואין לך בעל דין אשר יטען (25) טענה או ענה מענה עליה מבלי שיהיה אפשרי שלא היטיב (26) להביע את אשר בנפשו (27) וכמו כן אין לך עד מגיד דבר מה (28) מבלי שיהיה אפשרי שיתרשל (29) בסיפור או שירחיב, עד שיצא מגבול מה שעליו לספר. ואם שני הדברים האלה הם (2) שרשי (הדין) איך יהיו ענפיו אמת

ultimately be corrected in the afterlife.⁴²⁶ With the problem established, Saadya gives the reason for the treatise saying:

Text 3.3.1.3

...that the purpose of this book is to verify the story of the witness's words [testimonies] orally and in writing and it is possible to encompass both of these matters in the quotation of chapters and I will mention their names and then their details. And it is all this book and this book will be small in scope and great in its usefulness.⁴²⁷

Most of Saadya's discussions on verifying testimony focus on the witnesses and the particular situation. The halakhic rule of two witnesses is presumed, but considerable attention is paid to who constitutes a witness (such as women and family members of the litigants) and their character.⁴²⁸ Saadya gives the first qualification in his introduction pertaining to the witnesses' faithfulness to religion stating "scripture said and told me: faithful witnesses, they must be faithful and trustworthy about their religion and others."⁴²⁹ Saadya echoes the Talmud in identifying undependable witnesses by either a bodily defect that would prevent a complete testimony (such as being deaf, blind, or a fool) or a moral defect that calls their testimony into question (such as moneylenders, thieves, and "those who play the cube" i.e., gamblers). Remaining factors are to be determined by the judge.⁴³⁰

⁴²⁶ Ibid., 166.

⁴²⁷ Ibid., 170. My translation of the Judeo Arabic:

אוגב אן יכונא אומנא מאמונין עלי דינהם ועלי גירהם ואיד קד סוקת אלכלאם אלי הדא פינבגי אן אקול אן גרץ הדא אלכתאב הו תחקיק חכאיה אלפאט אלשהוד לאל [שאה]דה פי קול ופי כתאב ואלאחאשה באח [צארהדין] תתבית ח' אביאב פאדכר א אל לאס מאהא תם שרוחהא והו גמיע הדא אלכתאב פיכון הדא אלכתאב יסירא מקדארה כבירא מנפועה.

Sasson's Hebrew translation:

ולכן אמר הכתוב ואעירה לי (22) עדים נאמנים חובה עליהם להיות נאמנים ואמינים (23) על דתם ועל זולתם ומאחר שהגעתי בדבר (24) אל זה יהיה צורך שאומר: כי תכלית ספר זה (25) הינה אימות סיפור מילות העדים [אתהעדות] (26) בעל פה ובכתב ואפשר להקיף את הבאת (27) שני העניינים האלה בהבאת ח' שערים ואזכיר ה (1) שמותיהם ואחר כך פרטיהם והוא כל (2) הספר הזה וספר זה יהיה קטן (3) בהיקפו וגדול בתועלתו

⁴²⁸ Cf. *Gerushin* 13 regarding exceptions for one witness.

⁴²⁹ Translation mine of the Judeo Arabic. Sa'adia ben Joseph, "Fragments from Saadya's 'Sefer Ha-Edut Ve Ha-Shtarot' / 170",

⁴³⁰ Ibid., 172–73. Cf. *Ketubot* 2; *Sanhedrin* 5, 8, 11, 12

Despite Saadya's overall positive outlook on testimony proper, Saadya foreshadows Maimonides's future position by not believing that human reports can be automatically or blindly accepted based on authority (*taqlīd*) until verified.⁴³¹ Saadya makes this point even more clearly in *Tafsir Rasag* (*Commentary on the Torah by Saadya*, specifically on Genesis, *Perushe Li-Bereshit* in Hebrew).⁴³² After succinctly reiterating his claims regarding Trustworthy Tradition from Text 3.3.0.1 (shown below in Text 3.3.2.1), Saadya discusses human testimony using the example of when it is acceptable for persons to accept the report of an eclipse to expound upon overcoming testimony's two corruptions:

Text 3.3.1.4

When the one who seeks the truth wishes to find what the path to recognize the trustworthy reports (trustworthy tradition, *al-khabar al-sādiq*) is he finds at the outset that the path to this is first to recognize the deceitful reports, which may be one of two kinds. They are: that the one who is reporting either [1] intends to lie or [2] [just] conjectured something but it did not turn out as he thought. For example one who came into somebody's house and tells {the people} [in the house] that there is a solar eclipse. As a result of the two reasons that I have mentioned, they are not obligated to believe this [report] even though he is the only one reporting [it] and even though this is on a day that there may be an eclipse. The first is for the reason that he may have intended to lie and the other is that he may have seen a cloud forming under the sun and thought it to be an eclipse. But if those who spread the rumor are many it is not possible that they should [all]

⁴³¹ "If you are one of those who are persuaded by what the Mutakallimūn say, and if you believe that the demonstration with regard to the creation of the world in time is correct, bravo for you. If, however, it is not demonstrated in your opinion, and if you take over from the prophets, through obeying their authority (*taqlīd*), the doctrine that it was created in time, there is no harm in that." Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed, Volume 1*. Moses Maimonides, *Dalālat al-hā'irīn*, ed. Hüseyin Atay (Ankara: Ankara University Press, 1974). 188.

فان كنت ممن يقتنع بما قالوه المتكلمون وتعتقد أن قد صح البرهان على حدوث العالم فيا حبذا! وإن لم يتبرهن عندك بل تأخذ كونه حادثا من الانبياء تقليدا فلا ضير.

⁴³² "Rasag" is an acronym for Rabbeinu Saadia Gaon. For an Arabic translation cf. Sa'adia ben Joseph, *Torah: Original Commentary in Arabic*, ed. Yomtov Chaim ben Yaakov Daknish Hacohen (Jerusalem: Project Saadia Gaon, 2015). All references to Saadya's *Perushe Li-Bereshit* (פירושי לבראשית) are to the Judeo-Arabic edition by Moshe Zucker (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1984) with page numbers provided in parentheses to the English translation by Michael Linetsky, *Rabbi Saadia Gaon's Commentary on the Book of Creation*, (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 2002). Saadya Gaon, *Perushe Li-Bereshit*, Intro, 15; (Linetsky trans, 24-25).

commit the same error nor would they make {the error} intentionally for it would manifest if they invented the report...⁴³³

Reports must be tested or verified by the other three roots of knowledge. In his book on prophecy in Jewish Philosophy, Howard Kreisel summarizes Saadya's role of reason in reports as: "[1] to verify 'actively' what was passively received from the prophets and [2] to be able to refute rationally the arguments advanced against the teachings of Judaism."⁴³⁴

Both roles mirror Kalām methodology. Drawing from Islamic jurisprudence, Saadya verifies testimony of an eclipse, and even the miracle of manna in the desert, by differentiating reports (*khobar*) into two kinds: individual (*āḥād*) reports traced through a transmission chain to one person or *tawātur* (or *mutawātir* reports) traced to a collective.

Sklare provides a neat summary of the Mu'tazilite conception of *tawātur*:

The *tawātur* tradition is a report of something experienced by a group of people large enough to preclude them from acting in collusion, which is then transmitted by similarly large groups of people. The criterion of the large group is to guarantee that the story was not made up by the initial reporters. Such a tradition provides certain knowledge, although there was a disagreement as to whether this knowledge was *daruri* (intuitive)* or *muktasab* (acquired). The Qur'an itself can be considered a *mutawātir* tradition, since "Its transmission is equivalent to a report that the Prophet spoke the text of the Qur'an in the name of God."⁴³⁵

⁴³³ Unfortunately the manuscript is damaged at the end of the passage reading: "...my heart...since he himself saw... in the Torah: 'His heart softened and cried like...' when he heard the reproach of God to him like Yoshiahu praised when he says: 'Because your heart was tender and you humbled yourself in front of me,' (2 Kings 22:19) and also 'You have rent your clothes and wept before me,' (2 Chronicles 34:27) for God scrutinizes everything he does as the verse ends and says: 'I have heard, God spoke' (1 Kings 22:19)." Saadya Gaon, *Perushe Li-Bereshit*, Intro, 23-24; (Linetsky trans, 42). Judeo Arabic:

וואד'א אלתמס טאלב אחק כיה אלסביל ליקף עלי אלכ'בר אלצאדק וג'ד אלונג'ה פי ד'לד אלוקוף אולא עלי אלכ'בר אלכ'אד'ב אלד'י אנמא לה וג'האן לא תאלא להמא. והמא אן יכון אלמכ'בר בה תעסד אן יכד'ב אן תוהם ש'א פלם יכן כמא ט'ן. מת'לא אקול כמן דכל' אלי קרם פי בית פאכ'ברהם באן אלטמס קד אנכספת ואן כאן אלמכ'בר ואחדא פלן ילזמהם אעתקאד ד'לד פעלי אנה פי יום יג'וז אן תנכספ פייה ללכ'לתין אלתי וצפתהמא. אחדאהמא לעלה' קצד אן יכד'ב ואלאכ'ר לעלה ראי סחאבא קד סתרת דון אלשמס פתוהמה כסופא. ואמא אן כאן אלמכ'ברין ג'מאעה' פלא יג'וז אן יתוהם ג'מיעהם תוהמא ואחדא ולא יתעמדה ג'מיעהם איצ'א אלכד'ב אלא וט'הר פאד'א בדא כיברהם.

⁴³⁴ Howard Kreisel, *Prophecy: The History of an Idea in Medieval Jewish Philosophy*. (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publisher, 2003). 31.

⁴³⁵ Note: This is the Mu'tazilite usage of *darūrī*, not Saadya's, cf. footnote 379. "The basic type of the *ahad* tradition is a report by one person which is transmitted by a chain of individuals, each one reporting to the next. This is the core of the *usul al-fiqh* discussion of tradition, in which the controversy centers on whether

Sklare continues claiming that a subsequent Gaon, Samuel ben Ḥofni (d. 1034), also explained Jewish revelation by explicitly adopting *tawātur* as verification for revelation:

Samuel ben Ḥofni states that rabbinic traditions are true because they are *mutawātir*, i.e., have been reported by a large number (*kathra*, perhaps meaning "majority" here) of the people. In an approach identical to that of Muslim legal theory, he goes on to say that we know the authenticity of the Torah through this type of tradition."⁴³⁶

Saadya is clearly drawing on this Mu'tazilite conception when defending the use of speculation to verify revelation. Saadya describes multiple miraculous events using the notion of *tawātur* even using the verbal form of *tawātur* for the Israelite's consensus on the miracle of manna in the desert:⁴³⁷

Text 3.3.1.5

When furthermore He says: *And ye are My witnesses* (Isa. 44:8), He alludes to the marvelous signs and the manifest proofs (*burhāni*) witnessed by the [Jewish] people. These [were revealed] in many forms, such as the visitation of the ten plagues and the cleaving of the [Red] Sea and the assemblage at Sinai. Personally, however, I consider the case of the miracle of the manna as the most amazing of all miracles, because a phenomenon of an enduring nature excites great wonderment than of a passing character. Aye it is hard for the mind to conceive of a scheme whereby a people numbering something like two million souls could be nourished for forty years with nothing else than food produced for them in the air by the Creator. For had there been any possibility of thinking up a scheme for achieving something of this nature, the philosophers of old would have been the first to resort to it. They would have maintained their disciple therewith, taught them wisdom, and enabled them to dispense with working for livelihood for asking for help.

Now it is not likely that the forbears of the children of Israel should have been in agreement (*tawātawū*) upon his matter if they had considered it a lie. Such [proof] suffices, then, as the requisite of every trustworthy tradition (*khobar sadiq*). Besides, if they had told their children: 'We lived in the wilderness for forty years eating naught except manna,' and there had been no basis for that in fact, their children would have answered them:

the *ahad* tradition has only the presumption of authenticity or whether it can be considered certainly authentic. " Sklare, *Samuel Ben Hofni Gaon and His Cultural World*, 162.

⁴³⁶ Samuel ben Hofni goes a step further collapsing claiming that the consensus of the people (*ijmā'*) can serve as an authoritative source of law effectively collapsing consensus with *tawātur* tradition. *Ibid.*, 163.

⁴³⁷ تواطؤوا from وطاء. Cf. Hans Wehr and J. Milton Cowan, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic: (Arabic-English)*, 4th ed. (Urbana, Ill.: Spoken Languages Services, 1994), 1264.

'Now you are telling us a lie. Thou, so and so, is not this thy field, and thou, so and so, is not this thy garden from which you have always derived your sustenance?' This is, then, something that the children would not have accepted by any manner of means.⁴³⁸

In turning to his commentary on Job 15:17-19 (a proof-text for the fourth root of knowledge), Saadya reiterates the twofold division of knowledge but inserts the caveat that Tradition is only reliable insofar as it is unbroken:

Text 3.3.1.6

His words, *what the wise relate*, following what he has just said, *and this, which I have seen. I shall narrate* (v. 17), teach us [by the juxtaposition] that sound knowledge of a thing may be obtained in two ways, either by personal experience, as he puts it, *and this, which I have seen, I shall narrate*, or by trustworthy report, of which he says, *what the wise relate*—that is, barring conjecture and collusion; for he goes on to say, *concealing naught of what their fathers*. . . . This means that the tradition must be continuous, each generation receiving it from another as reliable as themselves.⁴³⁹

Relying on *tawātur*, Saadya deemed trustworthy tradition (and correct reports) reliable since it would have been impossible for such extensive agreement to have formed across so many people unless it really happened. For if the proposed agreement or consensus had been a grand conspiracy, the following generations would have detected it. For Saadya,

⁴³⁸ Saadia Gaon, *Kitāb al-Amānāt*, 23-24. Intro.; (Rosenblatt trans., 29-30).

وقوله وَأَتَمُّ عَدِي يَشِيرُ بِهِ إِلَى مَا شَاهَدَ الْقَهْمَ مِنَ الْآيَاتِ الْمَعْجِزَةِ وَمِنَ الْبِرَاهِينِ الْبَاهِرَةِ. وَهِيَ عَلَى أَنَّهَا كَثِيرَةٌ مِنْ حُلُولِ لَعْنَةِ آفَاتِ وَشَقِّ الْبَحْرِ وَمَوْقِفِ سِيْنِي. فَاتَى أَرَى أَمْرَ آيَةِ الْمَنْ أَعْجَبَ الْآيَاتِ كُلَّهَا لِأَنَّ الشَّيْءَ الدَّائِمَ أَشَدَّ تَعْجَبًا مِنَ الْغَيْرِ الدَّائِمِ. لِأَنَّهُ لَا يَخْطُرُ عَلَى الْبَالِ حِيلَةٌ فِي أَنْ يَعْالَ قَوْمٌ مَقْدَارَهُمْ شَبِيهَ بِالْفِي أَنْسَانٍ أَرْبَعِينَ سَنَةً لَا مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا مِنْ طَعْمِ مَنْتَدَةٍ يَبْتَدِئُهُ الْخَالِقُ لَهُمْ فِي الْهَوَاءِ. وَلَوْ كَانَ هَلْهِنَا وَجْهٌ لِلْحِيلَةِ إِلَى بَعْضِ هَذَا لَسَبِقَ إِلَيْهَا. الْفَلَسَفَةُ الْمَتَقَدِّمُونَ فَكَانُوا بِهَا يَمُونُونَ تَلَامِيذَهُمْ وَيَعْلَمُونَهِمْ الْحِكْمَةَ وَيَغْنُوهُمْ عَنِ التَّكْسَبِ وَعَنِ الْإِسْتِرْفَادِ. وَلَوْ جَازَ أَنْ يَكُونَ سَلْفُ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ تَوَاطَوْا عَلَى هَذَا الْمَعْنَى أَنْ يَكْذِبُوهُ. فَكَفَى بِشَرْطِ كُلِّ خَبَرٍ صَادِقٍ. وَمَعَ ذَلِكَ فَكَانُوا إِذَا قَالُوا لِبَنِيهِمْ: "أَنَا أَقْمْنَا فِي الْقَفْرِ أَرْعِينَ سَنَةً نَأْكُلُ الْمَنْ". وَلَمْ يَكْ لِنَظَرِ أَصْلٍ لِذَلِكَ أَصْلًا يَقُولُونَ لَهُمْ بَنُوهُمْ "هُوَذَا يَكْذِبُونَا. أَنْتَ يَا فُلَانُ الْيَسَّ هَذِهِ ضَيِّعْتَدَ وَأَنْتَ يَا فُلَانُ الْيَسَّ هَذِهِ رَوْضَتَكَ الَّتِي مِنْهَا لَمْ تَزَالُوا تَتَّقَوْتُونَ." هَذَا مَمَّ يَكُنُ الْبَنُونَ يَقْبَلُونَهُ مِنْهُمْ بَوَجْهِ وَلَا سَبَبٍ وَقَوْلُهُ

⁴³⁹ Sa'adia ben Joseph, *The Book of Theodicy*, 264; Sa'adia ben Joseph, *Version Arabe du Livre de Job*, ed. Joseph Derenbourg and et al, vol. 5, *Œuvres Complètes de R. Saadia Gaon* (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1899), 49. Original Judeo-Arabic: <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=hvd.ah174n&view=2up&seq=170>

ביאור: אמרו אשר החמים יגידו אחר שאמר וזה חזיתי ואספרה ריל שחידיעת השלמה תהיה על שגי דרכים או בהרגשת התושים וזה אמרו וזה חזיתי ואספרה או בהגדה גאמגת וח אמרו אשר החמים יגידו ותוא כאשר ירתיקו מתהגדה דמיון שוא והסכמת [ניא ולא כחזו מאבותם ריל שכל כת המגידים תעתיק מהגדה מכת כמות]. - עיין מה שכתב הגאון בהקדמתו לסי אויד (דף 15): ואחר כן אמת לנו המאמרים העדיקים שחם אמת כאמרו אתוך שמע לי וגר ויש לתם תגאים כבר ביארגום בפיארוש אלה הפוסקים במקומם

reason's verification of reports mirrors contemporary inferential reasoning, but instead of being merely probably it produces certain knowledge:

1. If all people report p about event X and nobody reports $\neg p$ about event X , then p about event X is true
2. Generations upon Generations say p about event X (and nobody reports $\neg p$ about event X)
3. therefore, p about event X is certain⁴⁴⁰

On purely epistemic grounds, p about event X being certain (as opposed to highly probable) appears unwarranted even having overcome the falsifications of willful distortion and error in judgement.⁴⁴¹ What makes this argument work is that Saadya does not have mere numbers in mind, but who is included in "generations", specifically "the wise." Hence, the second premise might be rendered "Generations upon generations of the wise (i.e., expert scholars upon expert scholars) say that p ." This leads to the best grounds for accepting testimony, reports from the wise who possess both intellectual and moral wisdom.

This reveals the core of Saadya's use of reason to verify "trustworthy reports," or what does the true epistemic work: determining whether or not the speaker is trustworthy in a thick sense, i.e., the speaker is epistemically a trusted source of accurate information and is morally a trusted person who will honestly report their knowledge. These two traits account for testimony's falsifications. Saadya is clear: the best speakers are those who are members of the wise, and others are to defer to their authority. In his commentary on the book of Job, he notes that not only were the transmitters the wise, but that common people

⁴⁴⁰ The contemporary parallel, following epistemic shifts to probability, has proposed a similar inferential argument:

1. If most people say p , then probably p
2. Generations upon Generations say p
3. therefore, probably p

⁴⁴¹ This view assumes that religious leaders honestly report their own orthodox beliefs as opposed to distinguishing between the apparent and inner meaning of Scripture as Taylor attributes to Averroes or scholars who advocate for Straussian interpretations. See Taylor, "Truth Does Not Contradict Truth."

should "submit to their authority."⁴⁴² To be one of the wise entails that the speaker is not just knowledgeable, but also exhibits the moral character epitomized in Jewish wisdom literature and subsequent Jewish wisdom tradition. Knowledge and character are intrinsically linked under the notion of wisdom. In the introduction to *al-Amānāt*, Saadya remarks that scholars and students will "improve in their inner being as well as in their outer conduct" as a result of their striving for certain knowledge and the removal of doubt (cf. Text 3.4.3.2).⁴⁴³ This connection reappears through his works as if it is implicitly assumed, such that the wise man appears without explanation in sections on doubt and certainty with true beliefs being the hallmark of the wise and false beliefs those of the foolish. The difference between the foolish and the "praiseworthy" wise man is that the wise "relies only on what is deserving of trust and is wary wherever caution is in order."⁴⁴⁴

One of the clearest accounts linking wisdom and character also appears in Saadya's commentary on the book of Job where the themes of God's speech and silence predominate. Saadya sees the transmission of knowledge to Job without the use of speech. God's silence in suffering serves two roles: an act of grace (moral) and an act of knowledge transmission (knowledge). Saadya is clear that Job's suffering is a test of his character. God's silence is portrayed as grace since telling Job the answer to his question directly

⁴⁴² "He adds, *to whom alone the land was given*, implying that since the tradition was handed down by the learned and the wise, it was the duty of the people of the land, the masses, to submit to their authority. No one could say, I will not accept this, unless the common people vouch for it as well. This was not necessary. Rather, the transmitters were the wise, as he says, *what the wise relate*, while the general public were their followers, as he puts it, *to whom alone the land was given*. And when he says, *and no stranger passed among them*, he means that no one alien to the transmitters of the tradition was permitted to interject himself amongst them and demand that they produce the logical or perceptual support for their traditions, since what they had reported was possible. Thus you see, in accordance with what I have shown, that the ancients of earliest times were involved in the same sort of discourse (*Kalām*) and traditions that are current among the people of our times." Sa'adia ben Joseph, *Version Arabe du Livre de Job*, 5:49; Sa'adia ben Joseph, *The Book of Theodicy*, 265.

⁴⁴³ Sa'adia ben Joseph, *Kitāb al-Amānāt*, 6. Intro.; (Rosenblatt trans., 9).

⁴⁴⁴ Saadia Gaon, *Kitāb al-Amānāt*, 11. Intro.; (Rosenblatt trans., 15).

would rob him of the meaning of his suffering. If God told Job the meaning of his trial before it reached its conclusion, then it would cease to be a trial and the suffering would be for naught. Suffering thereby becomes a medium for the transmission of knowledge and makes Job even more righteous. Goodman's assessment is Job's suffering raises him from conventional piety to prophecy which could not occur otherwise:

Only those who have come through the crucible of suffering doubt, as Job did, can comprehend the glory and the justice in nature as Job is seen to have comprehended it. There is no means, then, by which we could receive enlightenment, as Job did, except by such means as he received it. And we cannot simply be told that a price is worth paying unless we have known Job's affirmation from within. Perfect assurance from a supernal Source would trivialize our sufferings but would not necessarily reassure.⁴⁴⁵

Thus, when God does speak, he does not directly answer Job's question. Instead, Saadya claims God has Job reflect on the pure grace of creation, the constitution of nature in things, and the providential provision for each creature within the whole world.⁴⁴⁶ God's speech causes Job to see and appreciate God's creation and God's wisdom and justice in it. The force of God's speech is to point Job to the answer to his question. The result is Job's renunciation of his former position and that God, and his ways, is higher than humans. The testing of Job follows Saadya's interpretation of character development claiming that through it he achieves even greater wisdom.

The most obvious connection between wisdom and character is God himself. Most medieval thinkers were, at least in part, influenced by the Platonic tradition which saw both *nous* and "the good" as the highest forms of truth and reality. Philosophical thinkers from the Abrahamic faiths understood this either to be God or to be the supreme reflection of his

⁴⁴⁵ Sa'adia ben Joseph, *The Book of Theodicy*, 114–15.

⁴⁴⁶ Cf. Job 38

essence. Saadya is no exception often referring to God as "the Wisdom" or "the Allwise." To improve intellectually and morally is to imitate the Creator, making the Wise closer to God in a certain sense. This connection allows for the same theory of testimony to carry over from human testimony to divine testimony. Human testimony requires the additional work, however, of verifying the character of the speaker which is done either by reason or by confirmation through the agreement of generations as in the Oral Tradition.⁴⁴⁷ Just as in human testimony, however, even divine testimony must be critically assessed case by case, but since the speaker is God (the definition of morality and knowledge) knowledge from divine testimony is immediate once it is verified that the speaker truly is God. As shown below, Saadya follows the traditional view which understands miracles as perceptual verification for divine testimony, but the miracles verify not the testimonial claim but the identity of the speaker as God. So, it is not trust in revelation as a report that is immediate, but trust in God (the most trustworthy agent).

3.3.2 Divine Testimony

Trustworthy Tradition, God's testimony, the fourth source of knowledge is verified in the same way as human testimony, i.e., on account of the virtue of the speaker, because Saadya is explicit that "trustworthy revelation can come about only by means of prophecy."⁴⁴⁸ However, God as a speaker presents its own unique challenges. As with all Abrahamic accounts of God's revelation, Saadya faces two questions regarding the relation of God's highest revelation—divine speech or Logos in the communication of the Torah, the Qur'an,

⁴⁴⁷ As shown, Saadya deems Tradition reliable on account of *tawātur* (no agreement could have formed across so many people unless it really happened). This is an example of Grellard's claim that social epistemology's *fides* mitigates epistemic risk across an entire community, cf. Grellard, "Beyond the Ideal, the Social?"

⁴⁴⁸ Saadia Gaon, *Kitāb al-Amānāt*, 51-52. Treatise I; (Rosenblatt trans., 63). Tr. mod.

or Christ—to the divine essence. First, is divine speech the result of divine action or a manifestation of the divine essence?⁴⁴⁹ Either answer poses unique challenges to God's oneness: affirming that God's speech is a manifestation seems to introduce multiplicity into the divine essence; affirming that God's speech results from divine action typically renders God's wisdom co-eternal with God to create a form of dualism. Recalling that Abbasid Caliph al-Ma'mun's infamous *Mihna* (inquisition) on the createdness of Qur'an ended a little over 30 years before Saadya was born, we know that the question was particularly live for Saadya.⁴⁵⁰ The second question is how should God's speech be interpreted when scripture describes God with anthropomorphic language such as in the form of a man, sitting on a throne, or Moses's seeing God face to face? Saadya's answers reveal his motivations regarding reason, orthodoxy, and the crucial role of testimony. While Saadya was well versed in the Islamic rationalist tradition of the Mu'tazilites who resolved this problem by interpreting Qur'anic texts where God anthropomorphically speaks either as allegory (*taw'il*) or as inner vision within the prophet's imagination where God speaking is a psychological phenomenon in the mind of the prophet, he avoids these solutions. While occasionally adopting the Mu'tazilites allegorizing hermeneutic, Saadya wishes to remain faithful (not literal) to the plain meaning of the biblical text. However, Saadya also wishes to maintain a rational account that avoids anthropomorphism and

⁴⁴⁹ Alexander Altmann, "Saadya's Theory of Revelation: It's Origin and Background," in *Studies in Religious Philosophy and Mysticism*, ed. Alexander Altmann (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969), 148. Cf. A. J. Wensinck, *The Muslim Creed: Its Genesis and Historical Development*, 2nd ed (New Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint Corp, 1979), 150.

⁴⁵⁰ This question, while central to Muslim theology, remained of marginal interest in Jewish *Kalām*. Cf. Stroumsa, "Saadya and Jewish Kalām," 74. Saadya maintained that Scripture is created and thus reason is prior as shown by the notion of the "Created Speech". Efros also notes that "In *Em. [al-Amānāt]*, VII, 163, he states that he examined four sources of knowledge: nature (i.e., sense-perception), reason, Scriptures, and tradition, to see whether there is any refutation to the dogma of resurrection, and that he 'began with nature because its priority is that of substance.' Thus in an arrangement according to substance, i.e., epistemological indispensability, reason is prior to the Bible." Efros, "Saadia's Theory of Knowledge," 167.

introduces multiplicity into the divine essence while simultaneously accounting for Jewish tradition including texts such as *Shi'ur Qomah* which affirmed a pseudo dualism with a co-extensive mediating angel parallel to the Philonic Logos.⁴⁵¹

As with human testimony, the two objections to testimony stand; however, God, being all goodness and the source of all knowledge, cannot lie and cannot err. Verification vs. interpretation thus come to the fore. Verification applies less to understanding than to identifying the speaker. Thus, unless an assertion is rationally false (in which case God obviously is not the speaker), the question becomes a matter of interpretation to properly understand what God is communicating. Verification of divine testimony occurs according to two kinds of precepts of the Torah: intellectual and auditory precepts. First, there are intellectual precepts which align with reason and can be discovered by the intellect even if they were not reported in the Law. For Saadya, God's intellectual commandments have rational explanations or else God would not command them.⁴⁵² The fact that the command is rational provides additional verification that it originated with God (and conversely any irrationality in a command denotes false prophecy). In this role, reason not only augments what revelation teaches but guides the principles and patterns of biblical exegesis. Saadya only deviates from a literal interpretation of Scripture if it conflicts with the teachings of reason and any apparent contradiction is due to truths beyond human reason, faulty human reasoning, or human failure to interpret revelation correctly.⁴⁵³ Second, there are auditory precepts which can only be known if they are recorded (because they are in principle

⁴⁵¹ Altmann, "Saadya's Theory of Revelation: It's Origin and Background," 154.

⁴⁵² As discussed, auditory commandments lack rational explanations.

⁴⁵³ Cf. both Kreisel, *Prophecy*. 33; and Sirat, *A History of Jewish Philosophy in the Middle Ages*. 23.

unintelligible or to preserve the means of fulfillment).⁴⁵⁴ Since these reports are not *ipso facto* intellectual, and thereby testable by reason, they must be verified by a miracle from God to confirm a prophet speaks on his behalf (often two, an immediate sign to confirm the prophetic message, e.g. fire from heaven; and a miracle occurring over a long period for many people to confirm for later generations, e.g. the mana in the desert), as explained in Text 3.3.0.1, and succinctly in his earlier commentary on the book of Genesis:⁴⁵⁵

Text 3.3.2.1

Now the faith of the believers will not be perfected until he believes that in this world there are trustworthy traditions (*khavar sadiq*). [This is] because being that the precepts commanded upon the worshippers are of the third kind,⁴⁵⁶ which are optional, [i.e.] there is no way to know them unless it is through the messenger who provides them for {the people} and lets {the people} understand them. Since they are only obligated to receive from the messenger if there is a verification by which it is certain for them that God endowed him with it and thus he does something that the other creations cannot do like them He required that there be trustworthy traditions (true reports, *al-khavar sahiha*) in order that the person that was with the messenger, when he tells one who was not present with him which of his acts he saw and which commands he heard, it is upon the one to whom it is transmitted to accept his statement ('*akhaba*, "report") of the knowledge (*al-'ilm*) and fulfilling it just as the one who was present and saw {it}. The Scripture already describes this for it says: "Which we heard and knew it of what our fathers related us" (Ps. 88:3).⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵⁴ A distinction between the oral tradition received by Moses and that arrived through Talmudic exegesis is preservation of the common knowledge of how the Israelite community fulfilled the commands recorded in the Torah, e.g., which grain to make matza from or how much a *zav* is in abstaining from impurities. Sages felt it necessary to preserve this information during the exiles which disrupted the community and thus might be forgotten. The Mishnah records the wisdom from the first exile and the Talmud the second. Saadya Gaon, *Perushe Li-Bereshit*, Intro, 13,15; (Linetsky trans, 21, 25).

⁴⁵⁵ Saadya's "definition" of a miracle in *al-Amānāt*: "But these extraordinary miracles can come about only through the creation of what does not correspond to nature or to the habitual course of things." Saadia Gaon, *Kitāb al-Amānāt*, 51-52. Treatise I; (Rosenblatt trans., 63).

⁴⁵⁶ Saadya claims acts are in three levels: "The first level is the things that are pleasant for us so our intellect demands doing them, like righteousness and fairness. The second level consists of things that are unpleasant for us and we find that our intellect negates and warns against them, like deceit and extortion. The third level is those things that are optional that the intellect neither prompts to do nor does it preclude them, rather it is something possible like standing, sitting, combining, and separating" Sa'adia ben Joseph, *Rabbi Saadiyah Gaon's Commentary on the Book of Creation*, trans. Michael Linetsky (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 2002), 40.

⁴⁵⁷ Saadya Gaon, *Perushe Li-Bereshit*, Intro, 23-24; (Linetsky trans, 41-42). Tr. Mod. Judeo Arabic:

However, Saadya aims to demystify prophecy by showing how it parallels human testimony since prophecy is verified by perception and reason.⁴⁵⁸ To explain how an incorporeal God (as proven by rational proofs) can be seen and heard by human prophets Saadya claims prophets do not physically see God sitting on a throne or hear God speaking (for God has no physical tongue), but experience God's Created Glory (*khavod nivra*) and Created Speech (*dibbur nivra*).⁴⁵⁹

To preserve divine testimony, Saadya claims God's speech is created in a metaphysical substrate of God's Glory under numerous names with "subtle air" (or "second air") being the most explanatory since the substrate conducts God's created speech audibly

ולם יתם ללמונעין דין דון אן יעתקד אן קד יכון פי הדיא אלעאלם כ'בר צאדק. לאן אלשראיע אלמשרועה עלי אלעבאד מן אלקסם אלת'אלת' אלדיי הו אלמבאח לא סביל אלי מערפתהא אלא מן אלרסול יבעת' בה ויוקפהם עליהא. ולמא כאן אלרסול לא יגיב עליהם אלקבול מנה אלא בתאייד יתביין להם מגה אן אללה אידה בה והו אן יפעל מא לים פי טאקה אלמכילוקין אן יפעלו מת'ילה וגיב אן תכון פי מא בין אלכילק אכ'באר צחיחה חתי יכון מן חציר מע אלרסול אדיא הו נול מא שאהדה מן אפעאלה ומן שראיעה אלי מן לם יחציר וגיב עלי אלמנקול אליה קבול כ'ברה ד'לך אלעלם ואלעמל בה כוגיובה עלי אלחאציר אלמשאהד. וקד וצפת אלכתב איצ'א ד'לך אד' תקול אשר שמענו ונדעם ואבתינו ספרו לנו לא נכחד מבניהם וג' וקאל למען ידעו דור אחרון וג'.

⁴⁵⁸ "That is [to say, we believe in] the validity of trustworthy traditions, by reason of the fact that it is based on knowledge of the senses as well as that of reason." Saadia Gaon, *Kitāb al-Amānāt*, 18. Intro.; (Rosenblatt trans. tr.mod., 37).

⁴⁵⁹ The terms Created Glory (כבוד נברא) and Created Speech (דבר נברא) come from the Hebrew translations. In the *Amānāt*, Saadya equates the Created Glory with: the "light of the glory" (*ha-khavod*), "great light" (*gadol*), the "resplendent light" (*ha-bahir*), and even the "God of Israel" which Moses sees. In *Sefer Yeẓirah*, Saadya equates the Created Glory with the *Shekhinah*, the Holy Spirit (*ruach ha-qodesh*), the throne of glory (*khisse' ha-khavod*) a la chariot mysticism, and the Created Speech with *bat qol* (בת קול). This is because Saadya claims that " 'spirit' and 'word' are things specially created by God, constituting the detailed speech revealed by God to His prophet linking several concepts to argue for the unity of God contrary to the Christian Trinity as shown in *al-Amānāt*: "If, again, they derive their proof from Scripture, as, for example, someone of them might assert: 'I see that Scripture says that God is possessed of a spirit and a word, as it is borne out by its statement: The spirit of the Lord spoke by me and His word was upon my tongue' (II Sam. 23:2), our answer thereto is that this *spirit* and *word* are things specially created by God, constituting the detailed speech revealed by God to His prophet. We know, in fact, that the Scriptures call the name of God 'soul' (*nephesh*), as Scripture says: Who hath not taken My soul in vain (Ps. 24: 4) instead of My name, Now inasmuch as in the case of the creatures 'soul' (*nephesh*) and 'spirit' (*ruach*) have one connotation and the Creator also has a 'soul' (*nephesh*), by which is meant His name, the 'spirit' (*ruach*) which is attributed to Him means 'revelation' and 'prophecy.' The misinterpretation of these terms on the part of these individuals who cite them as proof of their theory is, then, due to unfamiliarity with the Hebrew language." Saadia Gaon, *Kitāb al-Amānāt*, 87-88. Treatise II; (Rosenblatt trans., 105).

ואן כאנוא אסטדלוא מן המכתוב כמה לעל בעצמיהם יקול ראיב הכתוב יקול אן ללה רוחא וכמלה זאק קולה (2 שמואל 2, 23) רוח י' דבר בי ומלתו על לשוני קלנא לה אן הנה הרוח והמלה מלוקאן והמלה זאק המלל המفضلל הזי אוחי ללה בה אלי נביה וקד עלמנא אן הכתב תסמי אסמ ללה נפש כמה קאל (תהלים 4, 24) אשר לא נשא לשוא נפשי מקמ שמי פכמא כאן פי המלוקין נפש ודדח מעני ואחדא וכאנת נפש ללחאלק מענהא אסמ כאנת לה רוח מענהא וחי ונבוה ודהא מן הולוא המסטדלין קלה בשר בלגה העבראניין וכזלכ וחדת בעצמיהם יסטדלון

into the realm of manifest air.⁴⁶⁰ This substrate is described most clearly in Saadya's Commentary on *Sefer Yezirah* since the original work explicates both how God spoke the world into being and how the initiated can likewise "create" using the 22 Hebrew letters and numbers one to ten.⁴⁶¹ According to the text, the first and highest of the ten numbers, i.e. *Sefirot*, which emanate from God is the *ruach*—Spirit, breath, air—of God identified as God's Holy Spirit, Voice and Word.⁴⁶² Saadya comments that this "subtle air" is a figurative description of the biblical *khavod* or God's "Glory" which Saadya explicitly says elsewhere is produced from light.⁴⁶³ The Glory is described as a created hypostasis which acts as a substrate or medium through which God created the world and in which God reveals himself to prophets via two distinct creations. This is seen most clearly in Saadya's commentary on *Yezirah*:

Text 3.3.2.2

According to the holy writings, they name the subtle second air "Glory" as it is said "all the earth is full [of] his glory [Isaiah 7:3]," and as He said "[as] I live and the glory of the Lord fills the whole earth [Numbers 14:21]." And the [Jewish] people call it "*Shekinah*" ["dwelling" or "abode"] for what is said "and the Glory of the Eternal abode" [Exodus 24:16] and also "for the Glory dwells in our land/Earth" [Psalms 85:9]. And the author of this book named [it] the spirit/breath (*ruach*) of the Living God (*Elohim*), [and] regarding it, it was said "and my spirit (*ruach*) is standing in your midst do not fear" [Haggai 2:5]. And by means of this subtle second air the word of prophecy is conveyed as it said, "the breath/Spirit (*ruach*) of The Lord God (*Elohim*) [was] upon me" [Isaiah 61:1]. And by it, the entirety of its proofs (*burhāni*) appear to the prophets, as it is said "in appearance with the breath/spirit (*ruach*) of God (*Elohim*)" [Ezekiel 11:24]. And it is a

⁴⁶⁰ The designation of "first" or "second" air can vary from scholar to scholar depending on whether they maintain an ontological top-down such that the "subtle air" ontologically precedes or an epistemic bottom-up approach such that it is epistemically known second.

⁴⁶¹ Ben-Shammai, "Saadya's Goal in His Commentary on *Sefer Yezira*."

⁴⁶² *Sefer Yezirah* 1:9 "These are the ten emanations of number. First, is the Spirit (רוח) of the Living God, blessed and more than blessed be the name of the Living God of Ages. The Holy Spirit is his Voice, his Spirit, and his Word." "Sefer Yetzirah," Sefaria, accessed June 7, 2019, //www.sefaria.org/Sefer_Yetzirah. https://www.sefaria.org/Sefer_Yetzirah.1?lang=bi

⁴⁶³ Sa'adia ben Joseph, *The Book of Beliefs and Opinions*, 121,129. Saadya opts for the imagery of air since it more fully pervades the entire world than light. Kreisel, *Prophecy*, 71.

creaturely/created (*makhluq*) thing not changing, because everything is a creature, except the Creator—may his name be blessed, bless his name!— as it is said "there is nothing apart from Him" [Deuteronomy 4:35]. And with this, the creaturely/created (*al-makhluq*) subtle second air which is in the world, like the life-breath is in the human, exists [in] the created word which Moses heard in the visible (*al-zahir*) air, the speech which the fathers heard in the visible air, and "he heard this the voice of the living God" [Deuteronomy 5:26]...⁴⁶⁴

First is God's speech or Logos which is created as God's Created Speech (*dibbur nivra*). Second are prophetic visions which are created as God's "Created Glory" (*khavod nivra*) and serve to verify to the prophet that the voice they hear is indeed from God. Both are manifested in the Glory, the "second air", before being conducted into the realm of manifest air ("first air") where they are sensibly heard or seen by a prophet. The prophets do not see

⁴⁶⁴ My English translation of the Judeo-Arabic:

פאלכתב אלמקדסה תסמי אלהוא אלתיאני אללטיף כבוד כמא קאל מלא כל הארץ כבודו, וכמא קאל הו ואולם חי אני וימלא כבוד ה' את כל הארץ. ואלאמה תסמיה שכינה עלי מא קאל וישכן כבוד ה', ואיציא לשכן כבוד בארצנו. וצאחב הדיא אלכתאב סמאה רוח אלהים חיים, עלי מא קאל ורוחי עומדת בקרבכם אל תיראו. ובהדיא אלהוא אללטיף אלתיאני יתאדא כלאם אלנבוה כמא קאל רוח ה' אלהים עלי. ובה תטיהר גימיע אלבראהין אלמראה ללאנביא כמא קאל במראה ברוח אלהים. והו שי מכילוק לא מחאלה, לאן כל מא הו סוי אלבארי יתברך שמו פמכילוק, כמא קאל אין עוד מלבדו. ובהדיא אלהוא אללטיף אלתיאני אלמכילוק אלדיי הו פי אלעאלם אלטיאהר, [עה] ואלדיברות אלתי סמעוהא אלאבא פי כאלחיוה פי אלאנסן יכון אלכלאם אלמכיתרע אלדיי סמעוה משה פי אלהוא אלהוא אלטיאהר, וסמי דילך קול אלהים חיים, וענה קילת גימיע אוצאף קול ה' אלסבעה.

Sa'adia ben Joseph, *Sefer Yetsirah = Kitab almabadi*, ed. Yosef Kafah (Jerusalem: Va'ad le-hotso'at sifre Rasag, 1972), 108.

French Translation:

"Et les Ecritures saintes appellent le second air, qui est plus ténu, *gloire*, comme il est dit: *Toute la terre est remplie de sa gloire*, et comme (Dieu) dit lui-même: *Mais aussi vrai que je vis, ma gloire remplira toute la terre*. Le peuple l'appelait résidence, comme il est dit: *La gloire de l'Éternel résida*, et ailleurs: *Pour que la gloire réside dans notre pays*; et l'auteur de ce livre l'a appelé: *Souffle du Dieu vivant*, comme il est dit: *Et mon souffle se tiendra au milieu de vous, ne craignez point*. C'est par cet air ténu, qui est le second, qu'était apportée la parole de la prophétie, comme il est dit: *Le souffle de l'Éternel Dieu est sur moi*, et c'est par lui qu'apparaissent tous les miracles visibles aux prophètes, comme il est dit: *Dans une vision, par le souffle de Dieu*, et c'est une chose évidemment créée, car ce qui est en dehors du Créateur — que son nom soit béni! — est une chose créée, comme il est dit: *Il n'y a rien en dehors de lui*. C'est par ce second air ténu mais créé, qui est dans le monde comme la vie dans l'homme, que se produit la parole créée qu'a entendue Moïse dans l'air visible, et le décalogue qu'ont entendu nos peres dans l'air visible, et cela a été appelé: *Voix du Dieu vivant*, et c'est d'elle qu'ont été dites toutes les sept qualifications de la *voix de l'Éternel*." For a complete French translation Cf. Sa'adia ben Joseph, *Commentaire sur le "Sefer yesira ou Livre de la création"*, ed. Mayer Lambert (Paris: Bibliophane, 1986), 94–95. A heavily abridged English translation of the French version by Scot Thompson and Dominique Marson (San Francisco, 1985) can be found online at <https://www.themathesontrust.org/papers/judaism/saadia.pdf>. For a complete analysis of English translations of the *Sefer Yetzirah* (not just Saadya's commentary), cf. Don Karr, "Notes on Editions of Sefer Yetzirah in English," *Academia.Edu*, 2020, https://www.academia.edu/22875900/Notes_on_Editions_of_Sefer_Yetzirah_in_English.

God physically sitting on a throne or hear God audibly speaking but do truly see God's Created Glory and hear God's Created Speech as they are conducted from the substrate of God's Glory. Sarah Pessin maintains an even more robust sense of *khavod* where the second air pulses the prophecy into the prophet.⁴⁶⁵ Thus, Saadya preserves both the rational oneness of the incorporeal God and Scripture's physical perceptions of the divine by shifting the object of perception.

Saadya's metaphysical solution is less a product of the Mu'tazila than rationalizing Jewish mystical ideas. Alexander Altmann argues convincingly the doctrine of the Created Glory did in fact originate with Saadya and was not a carryover from either the Karaites or the Mu'tazilites through them.⁴⁶⁶ Despite the similar conception of the "created Speech" of Allah, the Mu'tazilites posit that divine speech is created in the Prophet (and possibly the reader) whereas Saadya posits that the speech is created in a special metaphysical substrate.⁴⁶⁷ Since divine speech for the Mu'tazilites is created in human minds, their reliance on allegory and psychologizing has no need to posit a created Glory.⁴⁶⁸ Altmann

⁴⁶⁵ Sarah Pessin, "The Manifest Image: Revealing the Hidden in Halevi, Saadya, and Ibn Gabirol," in *History of Platonism: Plato Redivivus*, ed. Robert Berchman and John Finamore (New Orleans: University Press of the South, 2005), 258–60; Sarah Pessin, "Saadya [Saadia]," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2008 Edition), accessed February 21, 2019, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2008/entries/saadya/>.

⁴⁶⁶ Saadya's innovative use of the Created Glory and Created Speech for revelation has been disputed. Wolfson follows Jacob Guttman and Saul Horowitz in maintaining that Saadya pulled the idea from Mu'tazilite thinkers such as Al-Nazzām traceable back to Philo, but Alexander Altmann argues against the Mu'tazilite influence view claiming Saadya drew on the Jewish mystical tradition to introduce a new concept. See Altmann, "Saadya's Theory of Revelation: It's Origin and Background."; Harry Austryn Wolfson, *Repercussions of the Kalām in Jewish Philosophy*. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979). 90-91; Harry Austryn Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Kalām* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1976). 274-276.; Jacob Guttman, *Die Religionsphilosophie Des Saadia* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1882).; and Saul Horowitz, *Die Prophetologie in der jüdischen Religionsphilosophie* (Breslau: T. Schatzky, 1883). For an overview of Created Glory and Created Speech see Kreisel, *Prophecy*. 56-93.

⁴⁶⁷ Al-Djubba'i extends the creation of speech in both the prophet and the reader of the Qur'an. Altmann, "Saadya's Theory of Revelation: It's Origin and Background," 150.

⁴⁶⁸ Mu'tazilites such as Josef al-Basir were so adverse to anthropomorphic conceptions of God (even going so far as to deny the faithful will "see" God in the afterlife), that *khavod nivra* likely would have been unwelcomed. *Ibid.*, 144.

shows that Saadya's concept of the Created Glory comes from synthesizing Jewish mysticism, which Ben-Shammai suggests Saadya desires to rationalize.⁴⁶⁹ As with the Spirit of God in the *Yeẓirah*, both Kabbalah mysticism and the Midrashic text *Shi'ur Qomah* maintain an angel or *deuterous theos* acts as a demiurge or living spiritual substance parallel to the Neoplatonic world soul which mediated creation (likely motivated by biblical passages including Proverbs 3 and Isaiah 55:11). By replacing this mediating being with the Glory of God (perceived as a proxy for God by the prophets, e.g., Exodus 33:18), Saadya eliminates the concern of dualism. While Saadya does not appear to accept the mystical views at face value, he seems to embrace the cosmological hierarchy which parallels Neoplatonism to explain that the Glory, being created from light, is more noble than angels which are produced from the lower element of fire.⁴⁷⁰

Unfortunately, Saadya's theory of revelation has not come down to us in a particularly clear fashion. An artifact of synthesizing these Jewish traditions is that the Glory goes by several names in being equated with several entities including the divine light of glory, the *Shekinah*, God's throne, the Holy Spirit, and sometimes seemingly God himself. Furthermore, the Glory is described both as a passive instrument and as comparable to an angel being an active living intermediary. The many roles and names belonging to the Glory make it difficult to fully comprehend and a full explanation requires interpretation. By the time Saadya wrote *al-Amānāt*, the more mystical origins of the Glory and its status as a separate hypostasis are downplayed or omitted entirely: the Glory is never referred to as the "second air" or a medium for creation; the created voice is not

⁴⁶⁹ Ben-Shammai, "Saadya's Goal in His Commentary on *Sefer Yezira*."

⁴⁷⁰ Kreisel notes that the Glory is also identified as the "will" of God, the animate force of the world, and Intellect of the world which suggest a Neoplatonic influence. Kreisel, *Prophecy*, 79.

treated as a distinct entity; the Glory and the Created Glory are often treated as one with roles originally ascribed to God's Glory spoken of God directly and whether the Glory has agency or is a mere instrument becomes less clear. Whether these differences are because Saadya changed his views or merely was more sensitive to a wider audience is indeterminable. Howard Kreisel is convinced Saadya was not interested in establishing a theory of prophecy complete with gradations and biblical examples.⁴⁷¹ Our limited and fragmentary collection of Saadya's works may prevent a full answer. However, the distinction between the speech of God and the light (or glory) of God confirming the speech's divine origin remains consistent. *Al-Amānāt* does affirm that many of the mystical entities are in fact a special creation from light that serve a justificatory role in divine testimony:

Text 3.3.2.3

Our answer to this objection is that this form was something [specially] created. Similarly the throne and the firmament as well as its bearers, were all of them produced for the first time by the Creator out of light for the purpose of assuring His prophet that it was *He* that had revealed His word to him, as we shall explain in the third treatise of this book. It is a form nobler even than [that of] the angels, magnificent in character, resplendent with light, which is called *the glory of the Lord*. It is this form, too, that one of the prophets described as follows: *I beheld till thrones were placed, and one that was ancient of days did sit* (Dan. 7:9), and that the sages characterized as *šēkhinah*. Sometimes, however, this specially created being consists of light without the form of a person. It was, therefore, an honor that God had conferred on His prophet by allowing him to hear the oracle from the mouth of a majestic form created out of light that was called *the glory of the Lord*, as we have explained.⁴⁷²

⁴⁷¹ Ibid., 62.

⁴⁷² Saadia Gaon, *Kitāb al-Amānāt*, 99-100. Treatise II; (Rosenblatt trans., 121). Italics original to Rosenblatt signifying where the Landauer retains the original Hebrew.

اجبنا بان هذه الصورة مخلوقة وكذلك الكرسي والعرش وحملته كلهم محدثون احدثهم الخالق من نور ليصير عند نبيه انه هو الذي اوحى اليه بكلامه كما سنبين في المقالة الثالثة | وهي صورة شريفة من الملائكة عظيمة الخلق بهيئة النور وهي تسمى כבוד | وعنهما الذي وصف بعض الانبياء (دنيا 7,9) حנה הוית עד די כרסון רמיו ועתיק יומין יתיב ועنها الذي وصف العلماء שכיוה | وقد تكون نور بلا صورة شخص فشرّف الله نبيه بان اسمعه الوحي من صورة عظيمة مخلوقة من نور تسمى כבוד | على ما بيّنّا

The key takeaway is that Saadya postulated an intermediary bridge created between the incorporeal and corporeal to explain how God could provide reports which human listeners could both receive and verify as divine, thereby maintaining both revealed scripture as a report and the accuracy of the prophets' reports without falling into anthropomorphism. As Elliot Wolfson summarizes in his book on Jewish mysticism, the mediating hypostasis allows Saadya to maintain justice to the biblical text of a real miraculous experience without impugning God by shifting the object of prophetic or mystical visions from God to his Created Glory.⁴⁷³ The substrate allows prophecy to parallel normal hearing from human speakers since prophecy is based on the first three roots of knowledge.⁴⁷⁴

3.4 Conclusion: Testimonial Assessment

Trying to analyze Saadya's theory of testimony using contemporary social epistemology raises challenges. His thought does not fit cleanly into the existing categories as seen in Text 3.3.0.1. In discussing human testimony and divine testimony, Saadya appeals to what is now categorized under either anti-reductionist or reductionist theories of justification in the same breath claiming on the one hand God "render[ed] the human mind susceptible to the acceptance of true reports...so His Scriptures and traditions might be acknowledged as true" in keeping with anti-reductionism, and on the other hand that reason must "confirm for us the validity of trustworthy reports" falling squarely in line with reductionism.⁴⁷⁵ To

⁴⁷³ "It may be concluded, therefore, that Saadiah's response to the challenge of anthropomorphism avoids the extremes of allegorism and psychologism, for he flatly denies that prophetic or mystical visions are of God, yet at the same time they are not simply psychic phenomena or inner perceptions. Prophetic and mystical visions lie within the sphere of outer perception, for in both cases a real, luminous form, albeit created and therefore ontologically distinct from God, is apprehended, in the former case by human beings and in the latter by angels." Elliot R. Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines: Vision and Imagination in Medieval Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997). 127.

⁴⁷⁴ "That is [to say, we believe in] the validity of trustworthy traditions, by reason of the fact that it is based on knowledge of the senses as well as that of reason." Saadia Gaon, *Kitāb al-Amānāt*, 18. Intro.; (Rosenblatt trans. tr.mod., 37).

⁴⁷⁵ Saadia Gaon, *Kitāb al-Amānāt*, 127-128. Treatise III; (Rosenblatt trans., 155-156).

close this chapter I will look at Saadya's epistemology of testimony from an anti-reductionist and reductionist standpoint before arguing that Saadya is best understood through a virtue-theoretic framework (particularly the John Greco inspired framework introduced at the end of chapter 2).⁴⁷⁶

3.4.1 Is Saadya Gaon an anti-reductionist?

One could be forgiven for thinking Saadya is an anti-reductionist based on a casual understanding of his epistemology, a cursory read of *al-Amānāt*, or limited exposure to isolated texts. Saadya's claim that God intentionally prepared the human mind to receive testimony sounds remarkably similar to what Thomas Reid, reputational father of anti-reductionism, said, namely that God "implanted in our natures two principles" enabling us to learn via testimony.⁴⁷⁷ Moreover, Saadya's claims that Trustworthy Tradition, literally the hearing of reliable reports, is a unique source of knowledge fits a key claim of anti-reductionism.

Even though Saadya lists trustworthy reports as a "source" of knowledge, he clearly does not mean the same thing that contemporary social epistemologists mean as a non-reducible genus of knowledge. We are clued to this fact by Saadya offsetting the fourth root of knowledge from the other three. When Saadya states that "trustworthy reports" are a source of knowledge he seems to include both the contemporary notion that testimony is a genuine source of knowledge and serves the unique role of knowledge transmission. Following Text 3.3.01, Saadya's presentation of Trustworthy Tradition as a unique source of knowledge appears to be open to two possible interpretations regarding testimony: 1)

⁴⁷⁶ Cf. Chart 2.5.0.1

⁴⁷⁷ Cf. Text 2.3.0.2 of Chapter 2

correct reports (*al-khabar al-ṣahiha*), upon which Trustworthy Tradition is based, are a non-reductive source of knowledge whether human or divine; or 2) Trustworthy Tradition (*al-khabar al-sadiq*) is a way to knowledge and often the sole way to a source of knowledge beyond perception, reason, and inference, namely God. The former can seem plausible since Saadya's goal of moving from dogma (*amānāt*) to conviction (*'i'tiqādāt*) implies two epistemic stages: an initial acceptance of religious propositions without personally ascertaining if the claim is true, followed by a later rational confirmation of what was originally believed. While it might seem Saadya advocates for a position in which testimony can be accepted without verification (or until proven false) such that rational verification of revealed claims may occur later, Saadya clearly maintains that revelation must be verified by the senses, e.g., miracles, as shown at length in the next section on reductionism. The only parallel that exists in Saadya's epistemology for propositions unverified by either reason or perception is *taqlīd* (blind assent without repose of the soul) and it would be a misnomer to render *taqlīd*, a species of conviction, as an acceptable form of knowledge acquisition. Doing so would allow all religions to be equally true. Saadya thus explicitly distinguishes *taqlīd* from *'ilm* (knowledge). Furthermore, Saadya's purpose in writing *al-Amānāt* was to move believers away from an unreasoned acceptance of dogma (*amānāt*) to conviction (*'i'tiqādāt*) by means of rational reflection (*nāẓir*). As shown, Saadya repeats in multiple works in multiple places that testimony only furnishes unshakable knowledge when it is verified not to be the result of willful distortion or an error in judgement. This leaves the second interpretation which is clearly more in line with Saadya's claims: divine testimony is a source for objects of knowledge that cannot be

obtained by means of the first three. The question is thus whether divine testimony is a generative source of knowledge since it cannot reduce to other sources of knowledge.

Unlike the Christian tradition which maintains that God's eternal speech or Logos is a manifestation of God's essence, the Mu'tazilites (possibly inspired by Jewish influence) held that the eternal word of Allah (the Qur'an) resulted from a divine act. Saadya, in following the Rabbinic tradition (i.e., "in Talmudic and Midrashic thought the pre-existent Torah was considered to be a creation Of God, but was never taken to be an eternal entity in the sense of Logos" per Altmann), thus refers to the *dibbur nibra* (created speech).⁴⁷⁸ So while transmission is clearly a key component to Trustworthy Tradition, it could be argued that knowledge via divine testimony is being created and thus generated which is in keeping with anti-reductionism. Divine testimony would thus serve as either a reductive or non-reductive source depending on whether the claim can be verified by the first three sources of knowledge. The difficulty here appears to be a conflation of theological and epistemological concepts outside of the purview of social epistemology. Before one even turns to the hermeneutic question of whether God's act of speaking or creating the divine Logos is metaphorical, the act of creating rationality and knowledge itself far outstrips the testimonial act of creating words or speech. Instead of claiming that testimony is a source of knowledge alongside traditional sources like perception and inference, this would imply the more radical position that the traditional sources ultimately reduce to divine testimony. Furthermore, anti-reductionists presume that testimony generates knowledge in the listener, whereas Saadya's unique solution generates it in the Glory, an enigmatic metaphysical substrate used to transmit the knowledge to humans. Even then the Logos is

⁴⁷⁸ Altmann, "Saadya's Theory of Revelation: It's Origin and Background," 147–48.

only generated once before even the creation of the world. The creation of the divine Logos is thus irrelevant to understanding a thinker's theory of testimony.

3.4.2 Is Saadya Gaon a reductionist?

The dualist tension of Saadya's epistemology often treats testimony as if it is a form of "intuitive" knowledge, but even then tellings require reflection (*nāzīr*) to verify if a telling overcomes testimony's two falsifications. This means testimony most comfortably falls under the Mu'tazilite epistemic framework as acquired knowledge.⁴⁷⁹ As a result, Saadya often sounds reductionistic. In *al-Amānāt*'s introduction, the pursuit of knowledge is frequently likened to moneylending in which uncertainty is the product of being unfamiliar with the craft and thus making mistakes because agents do "not know the art of weighing."⁴⁸⁰ Saadya even prooftexts this analogy from revelation:

Text 3.4.2.1

Scripture does indeed liken the sorting of just statements to the sorting of money when it says, *Like tested silver is the speech of the righteous whilst the heart of the wicked is of little worth* (Prov. 10: 20). Those whose knowledge of the art of sorting is limited or who have but little patience are presented as wrongdoers, because they wrong the truth...⁴⁸¹

It could be said of Saadya that, like David Hume, "justification" reduces to sense perception or reason. Prophets rely on the perceptual experience of the Created Glory. Claims that God created the world in time are verified by the rational demonstrations of Kalām

⁴⁷⁹ The agent will thus have both prerequisites for *'ilm*: repose of the soul and possession of truth criterion.

⁴⁸⁰ "The seeker does not know what he is seeking. Such a one would be even further removed and more distant from his goal, so much so that he would fail to recognize the truth even if it should by chance occur to him or he should happen to come upon it. He is thus like a creditor who does not know the art of weighing, or even the nature of a balance and weights, nor yet how much money is due him from his debtor." Saadia Gaon, *Kitāb al-Amānāt*, 2-3. Intro.; (Rosenblatt trans., 5).

⁴⁸¹ Saadia Gaon, *Kitāb al-Amānāt*, 3. Intro.; (Rosenblatt trans., 6). Rosenblatt notes that the usual translation of Proverbs 10:20 is *The tongue of the righteous is as choice silver; the heart of the wicked is little worth*.

وقد شَبَّه الكتاب انتقاد كلام العدل بنقد المال اذ قال (משלי 10,20) כסף נבחר לשון צדיק לב רשעים כמעט יחבלון الذين علمهم بصناعة النقد قليل او صبرهم قليل ظالمين لانهم يظلمون الحق...

theologians. In short, the acceptance of a telling reduces to other non-testimonially based positive reasons.⁴⁸² This is clearly seen in Saadya's explanation of logical inference where he totals seven points "that must be observed to make possible for us the emergence of truth" and concludes that "should, therefore, someone come to us with an allegation in the realm of inferential knowledge, we should test his thesis by means of these seven [criteria]."⁴⁸³ Only after testing ("weighed by their balance") should one assent. He claims the same level of verification is required for divine testimony: "Similarly also must we proceed with the subject matters of Trustworthy Tradition—I mean the books of prophecy."⁴⁸⁴ In his subsequent defense of speculation (i.e. that it does not lead to heresy), he reiterates at length the role of perception for miracles to verify revelation until reason can later provide confirmation (again using a moneylending example) in keeping with his aim of moving from dogma (*148mānāt*) to conviction (*'i'iqādāt*):⁴⁸⁵

Text 3.4.2.2

That is why God, exalted and magnified be He, afforded us a quick relief from all these burdens by sending us His messengers through whom He transmitted messages to us, and by letting us see with our own eyes the signs and the proofs supporting them about which no doubt could prevail and which we could not possibly reject...

Thus it became incumbent upon us immediately to accept religion, together with all that we embraced in it, because its authenticity had been proven by

⁴⁸² For a relevant summary of testimony in social epistemology as it pertains to religious belief, see Jennifer Lackey, "The Epistemology of Testimony and Religious Belief," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Epistemology of Theology*, ed. William J Abraham and Frederick D Aquino (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 203–17. The parallel between Reductionism's requirement that hearers possess non-testimonially based positive reasons post-hoc for accepting a speaker's report and Kalām theologians using reasoning-in-the-service-of-pre-established-ideas is striking.

⁴⁸³ Saadia Gaon, *Kitāb al-Amānāt*, 19-20. Intro.; (Rosenblatt trans., 25-26).

⁴⁸⁴ Sa'adia ben Joseph, *The Book of Beliefs and Opinions*, 26. Saadya, however, does not explain the "properties of these books" here claiming that is "something that I have already done for an extensive portion of this subject in the introduction to my commentary on the Torah" as shown in Texts 3.3.2.1 and 3.3.1.4.

⁴⁸⁵ "Now someone might, of course, ask: "But how can we take it upon ourselves to indulge in speculation about the objects of knowledge and their investigation to the point where these would be established as convictions according to the laws of geometry and become firmly fixed in the mind, when there are people who disapprove of such an occupation, being of the opinion that speculation leads to unbelief and is conducive to heresy?" Ibid.

the testimony of the senses. It's acceptance is also incumbent upon anybody to whom it has been transmitted because of the attestation of trustworthy tradition (*al-khabar al-sadiq*), as we shall explain. Now God commanded us to take our time with our speculation (*nanzuru*) until we would arrive thereby at these selfsame conclusions...

So, then, even if it should take a long time for one of us who indulges in speculation (*nāzīr*) to complete his speculation (*nāzīr*), he is without worry. He who is held back from engaging in such an activity by some impediment will, then, not remain without religious guidance (hadith). Further women and young people and those who have no aptitude for speculation (*nāzīr*) can thus also have a perfect and accessible faith, for the knowledge of the senses is common to all men. Praised, then, be the All-Wise, who ordered things thus. Therefore, too, dost thou often see Him include in the Torah the children and the women together with the fathers whenever miracles are marvels are mentioned.

Next I say, in further elucidation of this matter, that one might compare the situation to that of a person who out of a total of 1,000 drachmas weighs out 20 to each of five men, and $16 \frac{2}{3}$ to each of six, and $14 \frac{2}{7}$ to each of seven, and $12 \frac{1}{2}$ to each of eight, and $11 \frac{1}{9}$ to each of nine, and who wishes to check with them quickly on how much money is left. So he tells them that the remainder amounts to 500 drachmas, supporting this statement by the weight of the money. Once, then, it has been weighed by them quickly and found to be 500 drachmas, they are compelled to credit his statement. Then they can take their time until they find out [that] it [is really so] by way of calculation, each one according to his understanding, and the effort he can put into it and the obstacles he might encounter.⁴⁸⁶

Here we see the two stages in Saadya's process of knowledge acquisition relying on two different types of verification. The second stage leads to conviction after rationally

⁴⁸⁶ Saadia Gaon, *Kitāb al-Amānāt*, 25-26. Intro.; (Rosenblatt trans., 31-33).

وتذهله فكفانا عزّ وجلّ هذه المؤمن كلّها وبعثّ النبي برسوله اخبرنا بها خيرا واورانا بعيوننا علامنت-عليها وبراهاين عنها ما لمر يتسلط عليه الشكّ ولمر نجد الى دفعة سبيلا كما قال (שמות 20,22) אתם ראיתם כי מן השמים דברתי עמכם וखाطب رسوله بحضرتنا فجعل موجبا لتصديقه دائما كما قال (שמות 19,9) בעבור ישמע העם בדברי עמך וגם כך יאמינו לעולם فوجب علينا من وقته قبول امور الدين بجميع ما انطوت عليه لانه قد تبرهن بالشاهد المحسوس ووجب قبوله على ما نقل النبي بدليل الخبر الصادق كما سنبين وامرنا ان ننظر على مهل الى ان يخرج لنا ذلك بالنظر فلم نزل من ذلك المقف حتى وجبت علينا حجّته ولزمتنا اعتقاد دينه بما رآته عيوننا وسمعته اذاننا فان طال الزمان بالنظر منا الى ان يتم نظره لمر يبال ومن تأخر بعائق عن ذلك لمر يبق بلا دين ومن كان من النساء والاحداث ومن لا يحسن ان ينظر فدينه تامّ له حاصل اذ كل الناس مشتركون في العلوم الحسيّة فسبحان الحفكيم المدبّر ولذلك تراه في التوراة كبيرا ما يجمع البنين والنساء مع الأباء في ذكر الآيات والبراهين | ثمّ اقول في تقريب ذلك كمن وزن من هل هو ألف درهم الخمسة رجال كل واحد وثلثين ولسبعة رجل كل واحد واحد وسبعين وثمانية رجل كل واحد ونصف ولسبعة رجل كل واحد وتسعا وازاد بالعاجل ان يحقّق عندهم ما بقي من المال فهو يقول لهم ان الباقي 500 درهم ويجعل دليله على قوله وزن المال فاذا وزنه بالعاجل فوجد 500 درهم وجب عليهم التصديق بما قاله لهم وهم ممهلون الى ان يعرفو من طريق الحساب دلّ واحد على قدر فهمه وعنايته واعتراض العوائق آيا

There is a citation typo in both texts: Landauer inaccurately reports the second citation as Exodus 19:19 (not 19:9), but Rosenblatt (1984 edition) inaccurately applied the fix to the first citation as Exodus 20:19 (not 20:22).

"weighing" the given facts which is clearly reductionistic. However, what is doing the epistemic work in the first stage? Saadya's moneylending example from text 3.4.2.2 seems straightforwardly reductionistic: the lender says p and verifies p with a scale. However, this kind of reductionist verification is impossible for the divine testimony he is advocating for. A miraculous subversion of the natural order is unconnected to the assertions of prescribed divine law (e.g., how does turning a rod into a snake verify the assertion that the Israelites should leave Egypt?). For Saadya to remain consistent in both the case of the moneylender and the prophet, a visual guarantor for a speaker's telling needs to verify not the assertion or proposition, but that the speaker is trustworthy. As shown regarding divine revelation, when a prophet announces "Thus sayeth The Lord, p !" followed by the perception of a miracle there exists two options as to what the miracle is verifying: 1) p or 2) "Thus sayeth the Lord." In recalling Text 3.3.2.2, Saadya is clear that miracles do not justify the speaker's claim, but that the speaker is God, and the prophet speaks on his behalf: "Similarly the throne and the firmament as well as its bearers, were all of them produced for the first time by the Creator out of light for the purpose of assuring His prophet that it was *He* that had revealed His word to him". Miracles serve as necessary but not sufficient proofs that a prophet speaks for God since all three Abrahamic faiths claim prophets and miracles. What differs is the trust in particular prophets and associated communal epistemic authority structures. As Stroumsa notes, prophets are normal, accomplished human beings who are only recognized as a prophet by: "the miracles he performs, by his moral and intellectual perfection, and by the concord of his message with the content of the revelation received by previous prophets."⁴⁸⁷ Thus, the work of verification is being performed by

⁴⁸⁷ Stroumsa, "Saadya and Jewish Kalām," 74.

who the speaker is, their identity and thus how trustworthy they are given their intellectual and moral virtues. In discussing prophets, Saadya explains that even though a prophet comes from God, having mingled with the evil of this world their "veracity would become impaired, with the result that the souls of men would not repose confidence in him anymore."⁴⁸⁸ This moral skepticism means knowledge (*'ilm*) could not be obtained from a prophet, but mere *taqlīd*. Hence miracles are required to verify a prophet is trustworthy allowing them to overcome the objections to testimony. While it seems trust naturally appears to alleviate the moral concerns regarding a speaker's honesty leaving a more reductionist approach to assess their accuracy later, Saadya, as a product of his milieu, directly correlates moral character and intellectual expertise. As shown above, trust is thus a thick concept for Saadya. This understanding receives further support from the full analysis of Saadya and his blending of knowledge and moral expertise.

3.4.3 Saadya Gaon's Virtue-Theoretic Account of Testimony

There appears to be a strong and weak interpretation for the epistemic role of virtue in Saadya's theory of testimony. In the weak sense, trust predicated for the speaker's virtue only serves a role in stage one outlined under reductionism. The virtuous character of a speaker deeming them trustworthy performs the authenticating work necessary to accept a telling by overcoming testimony's inherent corruption of willful distortion. However, it is still up to the agent to use their own reason in stage two to confirm that the speaker's telling did not contain an error in judgement. Only after the successful rational verification of stage two does the listener achieve conviction and thereby certainty (which simultaneously confirms the trustworthiness of the speaker). In the strong sense, trust in a worthy speaker

⁴⁸⁸ Saadia Gaon, *Kitāb al-Amānāt*, 52-53. Treatise I; (Rosenblatt trans., 63).

overcomes both objections in stage one. Stage two merely provides the "internalization" of the knowledge obtained in stage one, a sort of second order awareness that one knows that they know, the subjective removal of doubt and thus obtainment of certainty.

Attaining this strong sense of trust is possible since in Saadya's milieu moral and intellectual wisdom are nearly indistinguishable. In returning to the moneylending example of sorting and weighing statements, the continuation of Text 3.4.2.1 shows that Saadya holds the same view:

Text 3.4.3.1

(Continuation of Text 3.4.2.1) ...Scripture says, namely, *The heart of the wicked is of little worth*. On the other hand, those expert in sorting are presented as righteous men on account of their knowledge as well as their patience, as it is stated first, *Like tested silver is the speech of the righteous*. Thus praise is bestowed on the learned, and doubts are removed from them, only on account of their patient penetration into all the phases of their art after acquainting themselves thoroughly with it, as the saint said, *Behold, I waited for your words, I listened for your reasons whilst ye searched out what to say* (Job 32: 11). In like manner did the other saint say, *And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth* (Ps. 119:43).⁴⁸⁹

A little later in *al-Amānāt*, Saadya claims that becoming wiser entails moral improvement:

Text 3.4.3.2

If now, the scholar and the student will pursue such a course in the perusal of this book, then he that strives (*mutahaqqiq*) for certainty will gain in certitude (*tuhaqqiqā*), and doubt will be lifted from the doubter, and he that believes by sheer authority (*taqlīd*) will come to believe out of insight (*nāzir*) and understanding. By the same token the gratuitous opponent will come to a halt, and the conceited adversary will feel ashamed, whilst the righteous and upright will rejoice.

⁴⁸⁹ Saadia Gaon, *Kitāb al-Amānāt*, 3. Intro.; (Rosenblatt trans., 6).

...כִּי לֵב רִשְׁעִים כִּמְעוּטָה וַיַּעַל הַמִּנְתַּדִּיּוֹת סַלְחִין לִבְסוּרָם וְצִיּוּרָם וְשִׁיבָרָם בְּתַקְדֵּיהֶם כִּסְף נִבְחַר לַשׁוֹן צְדִיק וְאַתָּה יְחַמְדֵם הַעֲלָמִים וְתִזְוֹל עֲנֵהֶם
 الشُّكُوكُ بِصَبْرِهِمْ عَلَى اسْتِغْرَاقِ اجْزَاءِ الصَّنَاعَةِ بَعْدَ بَصَرِهِمْ بِهَا كَمَا قَالَ الْوَلِيُّ (أَيُّوب 32,11) هُوَ الْوَحْلَةُ لِذُبْرِيكُمْ أَزِينُ عَدِ تَكُونَتِيكُمْ عَدِ
 תַּחְקִרוּן מְלִיךְ וְקָל הַוְלִי אַחֵר (תְהִלִים 119,43) וְאַל תִּצַל מִפִּי דָבָר אִמַת עַד מָאֵד.

Thus will men improve in their inner being as well as in their outer conduct. Their prayers, too, will become pure, since they will have acquired in their hearts a deterrent from error, an impulse to do what is right...⁴⁹⁰

Moral and intellectual character thus appear coterminous. If one is an intellectual expert, they are also a moral expert and vis versa. This naturally follows from the authority of the Torah as source of both moral and intellectual wisdom. Transmission of knowledge within the established community and its epistemic rules naturally allows for trust. As such, rabbis and Talmudic scholars emerge as trustworthy communal epistemic authorities. Hegedus confirms this claiming that *al-Amānāt's* key argument is that trusting communal epistemic authority is normal and rational, and problems emerge from not trusting communal authority (or not trusting enough):

Saadya's basic aim in the [*al-Amānāt*] is to demonstrate that a primary belief in authority, where it is completed and strengthened by correct speculation about the fundamental questions of the faith, leads to a firm and solid belief, which is internalized by speculation. As such, belief is infinitely more meaningful to the believer and more effective against external critics than the initial naïve faith. On these grounds, free-thinking alone is to be avoided, as it lacks the element of internalization. Thus, the soul tends not to retain the results attained, or, if it does in fact hit the mark, it can always be corrupted by uncertainties, even if the person is a 'keen-eyed' professional thinker (*nazzār*).⁴⁹¹

I would add that Saadya also points out the error of being too trusting or trusting too much. As we have seen, Saadya defends rational speculation vehemently. His desire is to move people away from *taqlīd* or mere belief to internal conviction via reason. Saadya even goes so far as to claim that one can trust God too much! Efros shows that the tenth and final

⁴⁹⁰ Sa'adia ben Joseph, *Kitāb al-Amānāt*, 6. Intro.; (Rosenblatt trans., 9).

فإذا سار العالم والتلميذ بالكتاب هذا المسير ازداد المتحقق تحققا وانكشف عن الشاك شكه وصار المؤمن تقليدا يؤين نظرا وفهما ووقف الطاعن بتلبيس واستحا المعاند المكابر وفرح الصالحون والمستقيمون...وبذلك تنصلع بواطن الناس مثل ظواهرهم وتخلص صلواتهم اذا صار معهم في قلوبهم الزاجر لهم عن الخطاء المحرك لهم على الصواب...

⁴⁹¹ Hegedus, *Saadya Gaon*, 49.

treatise of *al-Amānāt* refutes Sufi abstinence which debated whether they could partake of necessary provisions like medicine.⁴⁹²

It is interesting that in his criticism, Saadia attacks especially the element of trust, the Sufic complete trust in God (Ar. *tawakkul*), which indeed exposed the Sufists to attack among the Moslems themselves, and because of which they were called *mutawakkilun*, trusters, and were debating the question whether a *mutawakkil* may avail himself of medicine or not.⁴⁹³

Saadya thus works to balance two extremes: being afflicted with doubt and skepticism because one refuses to rely on others and relying on others (presumably outside communal authority structures) too readily which leads them to doubt and skepticism. Said differently, Saadya implicitly maintains that believers can trust too little or too much. We see implicitly in his works that the trustworthiness of testimony is situation dependent.⁴⁹⁴ Saadya thereby encourages people to trust, but trust wisely. This is seen by Saadya's emphasis and support for Jewish communal epistemic authority, for without a historical chain of wise and moral leaders, trustworthy tradition (and thus the law of revelation), would be unavailable.

In contemporary terms, Saadya is more reductionist than anti-reductionist, but his openness to knowledge sources beyond natural means via testimony and his emphasis on trust disrupts his placement in the contemporary framework. As I have shown, Saadya's overall theory of testimony remains the same regardless of whether God or humans are the speaker (the mechanics of how each produces tellings is inconsequential). Listeners should

⁴⁹² "There exist many people who assert that the highest endeavor of the servant of God in this world ought to be to dedicate himself exclusively to the service of his Lord. That is to say, he should fast by day and arise at night in order to praise and glorify God, abandoning all mundane cares, in the belief that God will provide his sustenance, medicaments, and all his other needs... Nevertheless, the objection must be raised against this view because of the exclusive devotion to this one [activity which it advocates] and the remark of its proponents that one should not engage in any other. For if a person were not to concern himself about his food, his body could not exist." Sa'adia ben Joseph, *The Book of Beliefs and Opinions*, 395.

⁴⁹³ Israel Efros, "Saadia's General Ethical Theory and Its Relation to Sufism," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 57 (1967): 174–75.

⁴⁹⁴ This follows the manner Pouivet outlines on the virtues of testimony and "epistemic particularism" Pouivet, *Épistémologie des croyances religieuses*, 87.

assent to reports if they originate from a trustworthy source, specifically one that possesses both knowledge and character. Using the framework developed in Chapter 2 (Chart 2.5.0.1) from John Greco's rethinking, we can see that Saadya maintains that testimonial knowledge reduces to non-testimonial species of knowledge like perception, rational inference, and even the divine Logos itself marking him a source-reductionist. Saadya also maintains that knowledge transmission is a crucial and distinct phenomenon, not merely back-to-back cases of knowledge generation which makes him a transmission anti-reductionist. These two positions permit trust, which I argue is the cornerstone of Saadya's detailed understanding of knowledge from testimony.

CHAPTER 4: AL-GHAZĀLĪ'S THEORY OF HUMAN AND DIVINE TESTIMONY

4.1 Introduction

Abū Hāmid Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad al-Ghazālī lived from 1058-1111 and was appointed head of the Nizāmiyya Madrasa in Baghdad in 1091. He was an influential thinker in jurisprudence, Kalām, and philosophy. His chief aim, as captured by his central work *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* (*Revival of the Religious Sciences*, henceforth *Iḥyā'*), was to revive the Islamic community by turning believers back to the Science of the Path of the Afterlife.⁴⁹⁵ He is seen, and in fact he saw himself, as fulfilling the ḥadīth that Allāh will send a reviver every 100 years such that he became known as the "Proof of Islam" (*hujjat al-Islām*).⁴⁹⁶ Due to *Tahāfut al-Falāsifa* (*The Precipitance of the Philosophers*, henceforth *Tahāfut*) and *al-Munqidh min aḍalāl* (*Deliverer from Error*, henceforth *al-Munqidh*), al-Ghazālī is frequently cited as a dogmatist who, because of his affiliation with Ash'arism, forced the rationalist movement into retreat.⁴⁹⁷ Contemporary scholarship recognizes that al-Ghazālī did not single handedly destroy philosophy in Islam.⁴⁹⁸ In many ways, al-Ghazālī's contribution is in modifying Avicenna's philosophy by combining it with Ṣūfism

⁴⁹⁵ All reference to al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* (إحياء علوم الدين) are to the Arabic 2005 edition published by Dār ibn Hazm (المغني على صملا لأنفا نمي الأنفار (بيروت: دار أبو حامد محمد بن محمد الطوسي الغزالي, إحياء علوم الدين) (ابن حزم, 2005) with page numbers provided in parentheses to the English translation series published by Fons Vitae (unless stated otherwise).

⁴⁹⁶ "Allāh will raise for this community at the end of every 100 years the one who will renovate its religion for it." 37: 4278 from the *Kutub al-Sittah* collected by Abu Dawood.

⁴⁹⁷ All references to al-Ghazālī's *al-Munqidh min aḍalāl* (المنقذ من الضلال) are to the Arabic edition edited by Mahmood Bejou (Damascus, 1992) with page numbers provided in parentheses to the English translation by Joseph McCarthy, al-Ghazālī, *Deliverer from Error*. Cf. Mehdi Mozaffari, *Authority in Islam from Muhammad to Khomeini*, trans. Michel Vale (Armonk, New York: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 1986), 12.

⁴⁹⁸ This is largely due to two important articles, cf. Richard M. Frank, "Al-Ghazālī's Use of Avicenna's Philosophy," *Revue Des Etudes Islamiques*, no. 55–57 (89 1987): 271–85; Abdelhamid Ibrahim Sabra, "The Appropriation and Subsequent Naturalization of Greek Science in Medieval Islam: A Preliminary Statement," *History of Science* 25 (1987): 223–43; Frank Griffel, ed., *Islam and Rationality: The Impact of al-Ghazālī. Papers Collected on His 900th Anniversary.*, vol. 2 (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2015), ix–x.

to create room for a more traditional understanding of Islamic revelation.⁴⁹⁹ The same applies to his testimonial account. However, al-Ghazālī "camouflages" his indebtedness to Avicenna by rebranding philosophical concepts using theological language.⁵⁰⁰ These changes may have been to endear philosophy to theologians, using terms and concepts they would readily understand, or as a defense against accusations that he was a philosopher. Given his aim to guide readers away from doubt and relying blindly on testimony toward a personal experience with Allāh, al-Ghazālī's works can carry a level of esotericism since not everyone can or should be able to access all truths.⁵⁰¹ As such, al-Ghazālī needs to be

⁴⁹⁹ Frank Griffel notes in *Philosophical Theology* (2009) that al-Juwaynī "was the first Muslim theologian who seriously studied Avicenna's books", that he understood both the challenges and solutions inherent in philosophy, and al-Ghazālī's knowledge of philosophy "likely began in the seminary of al-Juwaynī, where reading philosophical literature may have been part of the higher curriculum." Griffel, *Al-Ghazali's Philosophical Theology*, 29–30. Jules Janssens suggests al-Ghazālī wrote the *Maqāsid al Falāsifa* (*Intentions of the Philosophers*, henceforth, *Maqāsid*) in his student days and was "repackaged" as the introduction to the *Tahāfut* much later with a new introduction and conclusion of its own during the *Nishapur* controversy when he was accused of being a philosopher. Jules Janssens, "Al-Ghazālī and His Use of Avicennian Texts," in *Problems in Arabic Philosophy*, ed. Miklós Maróth (Avicenna Institute of Middle Eastern Studies, 2003), 37–49; Jules Janssens, "Al-Ghazālī's 'Tahāfut': Is It Really A Rejection Of Ibn Sīnā's Philosophy?," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 12, no. 1 (2001): 1–17. Treiger also advocates that the *Maqāsid* served as al-Ghazālī's philosophical "dissertation" (*ta'līqa*) under the likely tutelage of al-Juwaynī. Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought*, 3–4. Jules Janssens holds that al-Ghazālī frequently cites Avicenna without naming his source and works such as his *Maqāsid* is largely a slightly free rewording of Avicenna's Treatise on Logic (*Daneshname*), cf. Jules Janssens, "Le Dānesh-Nāme d'Ibn Sīnā: Un Texte à Revoir?," *Bulletin de Philosophie Médiévale* 28 (1986): 163–77; Jules Janssens, "Al-Ghazālī's Use of Avicennian Texts in His *Maqāsid al-Falāsifa*," in *Ежегодник Исламской Философии : 2019. № 9. = Ishraq : Islamic Philosophy Yearbook : 2019. № 9.*, ed. А.И. Магочкина and А.К. Аликберов (М.: ООО «Садра», 2019), 80–121. Deborah Black also sees Avicenna's epistemological categories as the blueprint for al-Ghazālī, cf. Deborah Black also sees Black, "Certitude, Justification, and the Principles of Knowledge in Avicenna's Epistemology." Also cf. Ulrich Rudolph, "Die Neubewertung Der Logik Durch Al-Gazālī," in *Logik Und Theologie: Das Organon Im Arabischen Und Im Lateinischen Mittelalter*, ed. Dominik Perler and Ulrich Rudolph (Brill, 2005), 73–97; Dimitri Gutas, "The Empiricism of Avicenna," *Oriens* 40, no. 2 (2012): 391–436.

⁵⁰⁰ E.g., the rational soul is rebranded 'heart;' the material intellect, 'an intrinsic feature;' ethics, 'the science of practice;' and theology, 'the science of unveiling.' Other Avicennian concepts like 'tasting' (*dhawq*) are mystified. Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought*, 6. Cf. Griffel, *Al-Ghazali's Philosophical Theology*, 257. Treiger notes that al-Ghazālī appears to distance himself from Avicenna's concepts of the material intellect, intellect in *habitu*, and actual intellect by obscuring his own usage with references to the Mu'tazilites epistemological distinction between necessary (*'ilm ḍarūrī*) and acquired knowledge (*'ilm muktab*) in the *Scale of Action* and *Ihyā'* Book 21 and then in explicitly attributing these ideas to the Mutakallimūn in *Ihyā'* Book 1. Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought*, 26–28.

⁵⁰¹ Whether certain works are considered esoteric or exoteric is tied to whether one interprets al-Ghazālī as an Asharite occasionalist or more of a crypto-Avicennian. Alexander Treiger sums up the issue succinctly: "Al-Ghazālī is a versatile and prolific thinker, who wrote in different genres and for diverse audiences. His

understood considering his stated audience, what kind of information he is conveying, and how much of that information he wishes to convey.⁵⁰²

I show that al-Ghazālī maintains knowledge from testimony is obtained through the listener's development of their own epistemic and moral virtues to verify reports they receive in accordance with their potential through polishing the "mirror" of their heart, a thick concept frequently used interchangeably with the soul and/or intellect. I argue that al-Ghazālī works within this framework and maintains one theory of testimony for both human and divine testimony which is reductionist in its acquisition but ultimately best accounted for via Virtue Epistemology due to the central role that the trustworthiness of speakers plays in transmitting knowledge. Since trust in the speaker is the most crucial element of al-Ghazālī's theory of testimony, I will first provide an overview of the basic framework of Islamic communal authority. Next, I overview al-Ghazālī's account of knowledge to show in the following section how testimony fits for both its human and divine forms. To conclude, I provide a contemporary assessment of al-Ghazālī's theory of

elusive style of writing, 'fluctuating' and seemingly imprecise terminology, and tantalizing allusions to undisclosed 'mysteries' make an accurate interpretation of his thought extremely complicated." Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought*, 4–5. A representative debate is the disagreement regarding al-Ghazālī's cosmology. Cf. W. H. T Gairdner, *Al-Ghazālī's Mishkāt al-Anwār and the Ghazālī-Problem*. (Strassburg: Trübner, 1914); Binyamin Abrahamov, "Al-Ghazālī's Theory of Causality," *Studia Islamica*, no. 67 (1988): 75–98; Richard M. Frank, *Creation and the Cosmic System: Al-Ghazālī and Avicenna* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1992); Michael E. Marmura, "Ghazālīan Causes and Intermediaries," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 115, no. 1 (1995): 89–100; Jon McGinnis, "Occasionalism, Natural Causation and Science in al-Ghazālī," in *Arabic Theology, Arabic Philosophy: From the Many to the One: Essays in Celebration of Richard M. Frank*, ed. Richard M Frank and James E Montgomery (Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2006), 441–63.

⁵⁰² Averroes chides al-Ghazālī in *Decisive Treatise* 2.50 saying, "An indication that he wished thereby to alert people's minds is that he adhered to no single doctrine in his books. Rather, with the Asharites he was an Asharite, with the Sufis a Sufi, and with the philosophers a philosopher..." Averroës, *The book of the decisive treatise: determining the connection between the law and wisdom & the epistle dedicatory = Kitāb faṣl al-maqāl wa-taqrīr mā bain aṣ-ṣarī'a wa-'l-ḥukūma min al-ittiṣāl*, trans. Charles E Butterworth (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young Univ. Press, 2001), 22.

testimony utilizing the framework established in chapter 2 differentiating reductionist and anti-reductionist forms of knowledge generation and transmission.

4.2 al-Ghazālī and his Milieu

4.2.1 Medieval Islamic Communal Authority

Islam is unequivocal that ultimate authority rests in Allāh and, thanks to the "night of power" (*laylat al-qadr*), his prophet Muhammad who received Allāh's testimony to report the Qur'an. Al-Ghazālī affirms this position in his juridical work *al-Mustasfa min 'ilm al-usul* (*On Legal Theory of Muslim Jurisprudence*, henceforth *al-Mustasfa*).⁵⁰³ Divine authority granted Muhammed the authority to establish a new community (*ummah*) based on faith to replace the former Arab Bedouin communities defined by blood or tribe. In absorbing existing political and theocratic communities (based on various tribal and religious laws) the Medina community blurred the lines between epistemic and practical authority (whether religious, political, or military) under one seat of authority, Allāh. Instituted and administered by Allāh's Prophet, the Medina community serves as the ideal model for authority for all subsequent Islamic communities. In *Authority in Islam*, Mehdi Mozaffari studies the "Constitution of Medina" (eight treaties of alliance written and signed in 622-629 at Medina between the Prophet and his partners) to show that Muhammad filled the seat of legitimate power serving as prophet, apostle, and tribal chief (i.e., supreme judge

⁵⁰³ All reference to al-Ghazālī's *al-Mustasfa Min 'Ilm al-Usul* (المستصفى من علم الأصول) are to the Arabic edition by Ahmad Zaki Hammad (Cairo: Sidra, 2009), with page numbers provided in parentheses to the English translation by Aḥmad Zakī Maṣṣūr Ḥammād, (Chicago, University of Chicago, 1987). *Al-Mustasfa* 1:100, "Know, upon actual examination, that the source of rules is one, that is, the statements of Allāh, for the statements of the Messenger of Allāh, do not establish rules nor obligations. Rather, he informs on the authority of Allāh, that He has ruled on such and such. Therefore, ruling is for Allāh. Ijma' indicates the Sunna, and the Sunna, the ruling of Allāh." al-Ghazālī *al-Mustasfa Min 'Ilm al-Usul*, 151; (Ḥammād trans., 451)

and arbiter).⁵⁰⁴ The structure of the Medina community unfolded beneath the Prophet starting with his Companions (*Ṣaḥābah*), his "politicomilitary general staff" (the famous Council of Ten, *'Ashara Mubashshara*), and then the rest of the Believers (*mu'minin*), supporters, and sympathizers (*muslimūn*).⁵⁰⁵ After 23 years, when Muhammed proclaimed he had completed his work, the result was a political and religious community seen as nothing short of miraculous.⁵⁰⁶ This "original locus in space and time" which captured "the totality of statements revealed by Allāh to his Emissary" is what Mozaffari refers to as the "fact of the Koran" which was universalized in its subsequent transmission and expansion as the "fact of Islam" giving rise to the Islamic state.⁵⁰⁷ Since Muhammed never formally institutionalized the community (or the Qur'an) there were immediate questions from minor issues, such as what title Muhammed's immediate successor Abu Bakr should use (Caliphate was eventually chosen), to the major, such as whether Ali ibn Abi Talib should have succeeded instead. The Sunni-Shi'ite divide arose over questions of authority and thereby who should lead after Muhammad. The Sunni tradition based political leadership on piety while the Shiite tradition based it on bloodline. In the resulting traditions, Shiites developed a more hierarchical structure and held to the infallibility of the Imam while Sunnis developed a more decentralized structure. These early questions would have impacted the official codification of the Qur'an approximately twenty years after Muhammad's death.⁵⁰⁸ With no clearly established authoritative structure defined by

⁵⁰⁴ Mozaffari, *Authority in Islam*, 24. Published simultaneously as Mehdi Mozaffari, "Authority in Islam from Muhammad to Khomeini," trans. Michel Vale, *International Journal of Politics* 16, no. 4 (1986): 1-127.

⁵⁰⁵ Mozaffari, *Authority in Islam*, 4.

⁵⁰⁶ Cf. Qur'an V, 3. "The works of Muhammad, that is, Islam, are regarded by Muslims as a miracle. In effect, Islam's 'miracle' consists in its extraordinary art and capacity of transforming the secular into the theocratic, the specific into the universal, and the everyday into the eternal." *Ibid.*, 28.

⁵⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 3-5.

⁵⁰⁸ "In the endeavor to avoid institutionalization, the verses of the Koran would remain for some time in the same state as Muhammad had left them: scattered, diffuse, and uncoded. Collations of them would begin

Muhammed, Mozaffari identifies four approaches to an "Islamic state" and at least five different models of power.⁵⁰⁹ The caliphate model (under Sunni), following the seminal Medina model, serves as the primary model of power as seen in the first caliphate model and subsequently the monarchic caliphate model of the Umayyads (661-750) and the Abbasids (750-1258). This diversity might be a consequence of the fact that "Islam has not evolved a term of its own to specifically designate authority (*Auctoritas*)" per Mozaffari, such that the expressions *al-Amr*, *al-Hukm*, and *al-Mulk* have been applied to both authority and power.⁵¹⁰ Despite this linguistic ambiguity, the Qur'an is explicit that Allāh alone has authority, and any Islamic State relies on Allāh for its power.

Every Islamic community thus draws upon two universally recognized authoritative sources: 1) a written law, the dictated speech of Allāh written down in the Qur'an; and 2) an oral law, the ways (Sunna) and speech (ḥadīth) of the Prophet orally recited by the Companions. The Qur'an is Allāh's words come down to Muhammed and is recognized as a known and completely intact source with no question regarding either its

under the first two caliphs, but would not be completed until the third, 'Uthmān b. 'Uffan (24-35/634-656). One of these collations, that of Zayd b. Thābit, would be chosen by 'Uthmān as the authentic version and made official. The others, those ascribed by tradition to 'Ali, 'Ubay, or 'Abd Allāh Mas'ud (who would be sentenced by 'Uthmān to flagellation because he refused to destroy his collation of the Koran) were eliminated." Ibid., 5–6.

⁵⁰⁹ Per Mozaffari, the approaches include: 1) the philosophical approach, e.g., al-Fārābī (259-339/872-950); 2) the administrative approach, e.g., al-Mawardi (974-1058); 3) the dogmatic approach, e.g., al-Ghazālī's (1058-1111); 4) and the sociological approach, e.g., Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406). Al-Fārābī's philosophical approach is depicted as both "organic" (the parts of the city reflecting bodily organs echoing Plato's *Republic*) and "utopian" (the Leader is a philosopher-prophet-*imam*-king, the perfection of humanity, who is the cause of the city). Al-Mawardi's administrative approach depicted a "centralized hierarchized" institution which oversaw a vast bureaucracy built on defined norms and precise rules. Al-Ghazālī's dogmatic approach called for a "revival" of *shari'a* and the "dogmatization of the state" to protect the Caliphate by unifying believers. Ibn Khaldun's sociological approach "demystified" the Muslim state making it "merely an organization fashioned by men, with its origins here on earth, and not in heaven." Ibid., 8–18.

⁵¹⁰ *Al-mulk* means "sovereignty" or "kingdom" which is also used to refer to the physical sensible world. Ibid., 21.

authenticity or infallibility.⁵¹¹ The *Sunna* and ḥadīth are the observations and hearings by those closest to Muhammed and range in authenticity from near infallible to dubious.⁵¹² The study and analysis of these sources is a science unto itself with an excellent treatment by Aron Zyzow in *The Economy of Certainty* (2013).⁵¹³ All Islamic jurisprudence and the subsequent legal systems turns on the transmission, authentication, and interpretation of these sources. This also meant the Islamic community was "cut off" from the Lawgiver with the death of Muhammad and juridical interpretation became the only viable path to new laws.⁵¹⁴ Epistemic and practical authority in the Islamic world is largely found in the custodians of the divine law, namely the jurists (*mujtahid*) or scholars (the '*Ulamā'*, literally "the learned ones") who were found at the right hand of the caliph since it was their duty to interpret the scriptures and apply them analogically.⁵¹⁵ So while the executive position of the caliph emerged due to the necessity of the office (both theologically and politically) the '*Ulamā'* served as the intermediary between the Law and Muslims that legitimized the caliph, sultanate, or emirate that served beneath him. An executive ruler's power came from

⁵¹¹ A common proof-text which states God not only created humans but taught them is Qur'an 96:1-5 "Proclaim! In the name of thy Lord and Cherisher, Who created—Created man, out of a clot of congealed blood: Proclaim! And thy Lord is Most Bountiful—He Who taught the pen—Taught man that which he knew not." Abdullah Yusuf-Ali, trans., *The Holy Qur'an* (Faithpoint Press, 2005), 431.

⁵¹² These are based on the three types of ḥadīth: 1) *Sunnah Qawliyah*, transmitted sayings of Prophet Muhammad; 2) *Sunnah Fi'liyah*, reports of the deeds and acts of Prophet Muhammad; 3) *Sunnah Taqririyah*, reports of sayings or deeds of others which the Prophet either approved of or did not disapprove of.

⁵¹³ Zyzow, *The Economy of Certainty*. The expanded book publication of his dissertation.

⁵¹⁴ "Therefore, while the science of legal theory [*usul al-fiqh*] rationalized the process by which legal interpretation was to be carried out, interpretation, by itself, could not succeed in creating definitive new rules unless a particular interpretation, against huge odds, was able to generate a consensus [*ijmā'*] among the jurists. Negatively, *ijtihād* could show what could not be the rule. Positively, it could only point to what could be the rule. In the absence of consensus, then, all positions held by qualified interpreters of the law (*mujtahids*) were deemed equally correct in practice." Mohammad Fadel, "The Social Logic of *Taqlid* and the Rise of the *Mukhtaṣar*," *Islamic Law and Society* 3, no. 2 (1996): 198–99.

⁵¹⁵ Zyzow, *The Economy of Certainty*, 7. In the chapter on sovereignty in *The Caliphate of Man* (2019), Andrew March clarifies that the scholars "administered courts in the name of their own epistemic authority, and the law enforced by courts was drawn from the scholars' tradition of interpretation, which was almost entirely outside the authority of the executive." Andrew F. March, *The Caliphate of Man: Popular Sovereignty in Modern Islamic Thought* (Harvard University Press, 2019), 19.

applying and enforcing laws he did not create and could not change for the scholars possessed "ultimate legislative authority" with their ability to reject an executive ruling on *shari'a* grounds.⁵¹⁶ The '*Ulamā*' even had influence over the appointment of the Caliph either selecting one from among the scholars or via *ijmā'* (consensus).⁵¹⁷

The power of the jurists and '*Ulamā*' appears most clearly in the concept of *ijmā'* (consensus) which plays a central yet controversial role in Islamic law. A full analysis is beyond the present scope since it prescribes permissions and prohibitions without a clear underlying text. *Ijmā'*, per Zyzow, acts as a limited "substitute for the infallible guidance of the Prophet," not by replacing revealed law, or even "creating" new ones, but "declaring" what Islamic law has to say to extra-scriptural situations.⁵¹⁸ Consensus presupposes that Allāh graciously ensures at least one person in the Islamic community rightly interprets a given law since scripture promises Islamic law will continue until the day of Judgment.⁵¹⁹

⁵¹⁶ March unpacks the division of legal labor or a "dualistic" legal arrangement of *al-siyāsa al-shar'iyya* (literally "religiously legitimate governance" or "governance in accord with the *sharī'a*," "The term refers to the authorization of discretionary public policy exercised by public authorities beyond the letter of the *sharī'a*. This is partly a division of labor. Most areas of social and economic life are in the hands of jurists who derive their legitimacy from their administration of the *sharī'a*. Their authority is moral and epistemic, and derived not from popular or even sultanic authorization but from the general moral obligation to "Obey God and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you" (Q. 4:59; *The Study Quran*). On this view, the scholars are at least part of what is meant by the "powers that be" appointed as "God's and the Prophet's lieutenants on Earth." March, *The Caliphate of Man*, 21–22. Per Mozaffari "the caliph was obliged by circumstances to give his power a purely religious quality" and thus "the Şerif's political support of the caliph was not enough in itself and that the caliph could ill do without the guarantee of the '*Ulamā*', expressed solemnly and publicly." As the Abassid caliphate declined, the '*Ulamā*' "endeavored to bring the *facts* in line with the law" by brokering compromises between the political authority *de jure* of the Caliph and the political authority *de facto* of the sultans and kings by legitimizing the latter so "the caliph had only to bestow upon them honorary titles, often having a religious connotation." Mozaffari, *Authority in Islam*, 45.

⁵¹⁷ Mozaffari records five means of appointment: 1. Deliberation in assembly (vestibule/*saqifa*); 2. Nomination by the caliph in office (*'ahd*); 3. Nomination by a conclave (shūrā); 4. The caliphate resulting from a revolt (*fitna*); and 5. Heredity (*irth*). Mozaffari, *Authority in Islam*, 32–33. "The ideal caliph was not quite a philosopher-king, but was definitely something of a scholar-statesman, with the virtues of character necessary for rulership (resolve, courage, self-restraint, *phronesis*), as well as the moral virtues necessary for justice (including religious knowledge up to the *mujtihād* level)." March, *The Caliphate of Man*, 26.

⁵¹⁸ Zyzow, *The Economy of Certainty*, 156–57.

⁵¹⁹ The number of solutions (*ijtihād* the jurist's application of the law through *qiyas i.e.*, juridical analogy) is thus fixed to those proffered by the community at the time of the question.

Ijmā' occurs when a majority of communal authorities identify and declare the correct solution acquired via *ijtihād* (literally "effort" or "exertion") which "fixes it beyond the reach of dispute."⁵²⁰ Al-Ash'arī and subsequently both al-Juwaynī and al-Ghazālī were extremely critical of *ijmā'*, with al-Ghazālī insisting that *ijmā'* is only established with unity within the *entire* community including commoners and even heretics.⁵²¹

To summarize, textual scholars held the keys to understanding the authoritative written and oral law and justified their authority (including al-Ghazālī) from the Qur'an and the ḥadīth report: "the scholars are the heirs of the prophets."⁵²² So while authority *de jure* comes from the community (*umma*), authority *de facto* resides in the jurists.⁵²³ This authority was transmitted in a chain from Allāh to Muhammad and then to the Companions. The disciples of the companions (*tābi'ūn*) then adopted the mantle of "authorized" transmitters and interpreters of the Qur'an and Sunna.⁵²⁴ This strategy allowed the '*Ulamā'*

⁵²⁰ Zyzow, *The Economy of Certainty*, 117.

⁵²¹ An entire chapter on consensus follows the one on *mutawātir* in al-Mustasfā 1:173-1:216. al-Ghazālī *al-Mustasfā Min 'Ilm al-Usul*, 258-297; (Ḥammād trans., 662-739). Consensus could only be established on common experience (*al-'āda*) and the *hadith* tradition. Consensus could never be established on prior consensus. Al-Mustasfā 1:173-4, al-Ghazālī *al-Mustasfā Min 'Ilm al-Usul*, 257-259; (Ḥammād trans., 662-666). Regarding the inclusion of common people, heretics and unbelievers cf. Cf. 1:181-1:186, al-Ghazālī *al-Mustasfā Min 'Ilm al-Usul*, 268-276; (Ḥammād trans., 685-697).

⁵²² This hadith was a favorite of many jurists. For al-Ghazālī's usage cf. Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought*, 35, endnote 1. cf. Qur'an 4:59 9:122

⁵²³ "If authority in Islam was only authorized to protect the worldly and otherworldly interests of the Muslim *umma*, those interests were known primarily through the law, and if the scholars were the custodians of the law, then the rulers derived their authority from the approval of the scholars." March, *The Caliphate of Man*, 19.

⁵²⁴ Per Mozaffari: "With that guarantee, the caliph could be sure that the way was barred to any challenges of a juridical nature to this authority. Of course, the degree and the weight of the influence of the '*Ulama'*' depended on the personality and political power of the caliph. For a caliph who was strong politically, the justificatory act of the '*Ulama'*', in the form of the *bay'a* or the *fatwa* (issuance of a writ of juridical and political relevance on the *shari'a*) had more of a *declarative* and *symbolic* value. Conversely, the same act could also have a constitutive and real value if the caliph was not sufficiently strong." Mozaffari, "Authority in Islam from Muhammad to Khomeini," 43-44. March confirms this: "During other periods (most notably, the 'Abbāsīd era from the tenth century to the Mongol conquest, and then in Cairo during the Mamlūk period), worldly power was fictitiously delegated by the caliph to a sultan with actual executive and coercive power. But in most times and places, Muslims were ruled by 'mere' sultans (kings, shahs, beys, khans, etc.), and

to maintain the balance of power (a role al-Ghazālī himself played). However, the '*Ulama*' as the legitimizers of power may have led to his spiritual crisis of 1095 and vow to never serve political aims again.⁵²⁵

Al-Ghazālī was a member of the '*Ulamā*' who began studying jurisprudence in his hometown of Tūs (now modern Iran). He then moved to train under Ash'arite theologian al-Juwaynī Imām al-Ḥaramayn at the Nizāmiyya Madrasa near Nishapur, who introduced him to Grand-Seljuq Sultan Malikshāh's court. By the time of al-Juwaynī's death in 1085, al-Ghazālī had become part of the court of Nizām al-Mulk, grand-vizier of the Seljuq Sultan and namesake for the schools he founded. Nizām al-Mulk appointed al-Ghazālī to the Nizāmiyya Madrasa in Baghdad in 1091 to defend Sunni doctrine against Chiism (African spiritual religion), Shi'a teachings, and Ismailism. There he was introduced to the caliphal court in Baghdad such that Mozaffari notes that "Ghazālī was simultaneously in the service of three different institutions."⁵²⁶ Frank Griffel thus refers to al-Ghazālī as "undoubtedly the most influential intellectual of his time," and contemporaries estimated the value of his opulent robes.⁵²⁷ He was given three honorary titles: "Proof of Islam"

there followed juridical theories that explained why their coercive authority was just as valid and obedience-worthy (if not as exalted) as those of caliphs." March, *The Caliphate of Man*, 20.

⁵²⁵ Al-Ghazālī says in the Exordium of the *Iḥyā'*, he sought to point believers back to the earlier authorities (i.e. "departed *imams*"): "Since this is a calamity afflicting religion and a grave crisis overshadowing it, I have therefore deemed it important to engage in the writing of this book; to revive the science of religion (*Iḥyā' an li-'ulūm al-dīn*), to bring to light the exemplary lives of the departed *imams* (*ala'imma al-mutaqaddimīn*), and to show what branches of knowledge the prophets and the virtuous fathers regarded as useful." *Iḥyā'*, 8. Introduction; (Faris trans., xi).

⁵²⁶ "First, there was the *wizara*, under the leadership of the powerful *wazir* (vizir) Nizam al-Mulk, who raised his compatriot (both were from Tūs) from anonymity, charging him with the defense of the *shafi'i* credo against the *batini* criticisms. Through the *wizara* Ghazālī would serve the Seljuq sultanate: first Malikshāh and then Sanjar. It was in honor of Sanjar that Ghazālī wrote his *Nasihāt al-muluk* (Mirror of Princes). The caliphate was the third institution to benefit from Ghazālī's services. His book *Mustazhiri*, dedicated to the caliph Al-Mustazhir, was a treatise in defense of the institution of the caliphate." Mozaffari, *Authority in Islam*, 13.

⁵²⁷ Frank Griffel, "Al-Ghazālī," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Summer 2020 (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2020),

(*hujjat al-Islām*), "Brilliance of the Religion" (*zayn al-dīn*), and "Eminence among the Religious Leaders" (*sharaf al-a imma*), the latter two by al-Mulk. Following the assassination of Vizier al-Mulk in 1092 and Sultan Malikshāh's fatal illness a month later, Baghdad and the Seljuk Empire entered a period of political uncertainty (which al-Ghazālī took an active part in) so violent and disease ridden that Griffel reports "within sixteen months of Nizām al-Mulk's assassination, the whole political elite of the Seljuq state was dead, including the caliph."⁵²⁸ Relying on al-Ghazālī's autobiography *al-Munqidh*, we learn the next few years form what is termed his "spiritual crises" when he began to study Ṣūfism and left his position at the *Nizāmiyya* vowing at the tomb of Abraham never again to serve or teach in institutions with political ties.⁵²⁹ The stated reasoning for this departure was to better accord his lifestyle with Ṣūfī teachings and the virtuous life, but little substantial change occurred in al-Ghazālī's thinking per Griffel (the most substantial change is the link between a person's knowledge—convictions—and moral actions "gain center stage").⁵³⁰ As such he controversially accepted a position at the *Nizāmiyya* Madrasa

<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2020/entries/al-ghazali/>; Griffel, *Al-Ghazali's Philosophical Theology*, 34.

⁵²⁸ Terken Khatun agreed to the Caliph's terms to appoint her 4-year-old son Sultan only after the caliph sent al-Ghazālī to mediate and literally lay down the law. Their subsequent deaths from disease nullified the arrangements and it is unclear where al-Ghazālī stood politically with the rise of Sultan Berk-Yaruq. Ten years later al-Ghazālī wrote to then vizier Mujīr al-Din stating that the violent deaths of the previous four viziers was a lesson about reaping what you sow. Griffel, *Al-Ghazali's Philosophical Theology*, 34, 36–39.

⁵²⁹ A physical ailment that prevented al-Ghazālī from speaking and eating which baffled physicians saying it was an affliction of the soul not the body gave him the resolve to give up his position and renounce his titles and prestige to leave Baghdad. The vow occurred during his travels to Hebron after learning from Abu l-Fath Nasr's practice of rejecting payments "illicitly" acquired thus vowing never again "to go to any ruler, to take a ruler's money, or to engage in one of his public disputations." After making arrangements for his family, he lived a wanderer's life for 10 years traveling to Damascus (reportedly living in a minaret), Jerusalem (visiting the Dome of Rock), and Medina and Mecca teaching from the *Ihyā'*. He returned to Ṭūs to build a "private" school (*zāwiya*) and Ṣūfī convent (*khānqāh*). *Ibid.*, 44.

⁵³⁰ "Although the weight of certain motifs in al-Ghazālī's writing changes after 488/1095, none of his theological or philosophical positions transform from what they were before." *Ibid.*, 43.

in Nīsāpūr in 1106 (prompting his writing of *al-Munqidh* to help justify his decision).⁵³¹ Such experiences clarify his overall aim to reform Islam by directing Muslims to devote themselves to the afterlife and not this world as evidenced by the *Ihyā'*.⁵³² As we shall see, the role of testimony for al-Ghazālī is thus to guide people to direct divine testimony and *not* rely on human testimony.

4.2.2 al-Ghazālī's Account of Knowledge

Al-Ghazālī's epistemology is the nexus of multiple influences from Avicenna, Ash'arism, Mu'tazilism, and mysticism. Metaphorically the heart of al-Ghazālī's epistemology (due to his cosmology to which we will return under divine testimony) is literally the human "heart" (*qalb*) which is the locus of both material and spiritual being reflected by his interchangeable terminology of heart (*qalb*), soul/"self" (*nafs*), spirit (*rūḥ*), and intellect (*'aql*).⁵³³ Al-Ghazālī consistently likens the heart to a metal mirror (*speculum*) that reflects reality (in accordance with two "modes") from both *al-mulk*—the sensible physical world—and *al-malakūt*—the non-sensible world of spirit and intelligible meaning (variously named, e.g. the "World of Dominion", but always beyond the limits of the philosophical method).⁵³⁴ This is made clear in Book 21, *bayān* 6 of the *Ihyā'*:

⁵³¹ Treiger notes that at this time several scholars took issue with "philosophical influence" in al-Ghazālī's thought and had him brought before the court of vizier Sanjar where he vindicated himself. *Ibid.*, 47, 54–55; Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought*, 96–101.

⁵³² "Revival was an unusual book for its time. It was conceived as a work on the "knowledge of the path to the afterlife" (*'ilm ṭarīq alākhirā*), a practical guidebook on how its readers may gain the afterlife through the actions they perform in this world." Griffel, *Al-Ghazali's Philosophical Theology*, 48.

⁵³³ This is in keeping with Aristotle's position. Avicenna famously housed intellect in the brain so al-Ghazālī either deviates from Avicenna on this point or omits (possibly obscures) this fact for the sake of the mirror metaphor since heart, mind, and soul are all used interchangeably. Mohamed Ahmed Sherif, *Ghazālī's Theory of Virtue*. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1974), 25.

⁵³⁴ Al-Ghazālī also describes a third intermediary world, *al-jabarūt*, that "bridges" *al-mulk* and *al-malakūt*. There is no scholarly consensus on how to translate this term (Gianotti opts for [Divine] "Almightiness") since there is no consensus on what this world is. In *kitab al-tawhid wa'l-tawakkul (Faith in Divine unity and trust in Divine providence*, book 35 of the *Ihyā'*), it is likened to a ferry with no additional explanation. Timothy J. Gianotti, *Al-Ghazālī's Unspeakable Doctrine of the Soul: Unveiling the Esoteric Psychology and*

Text 4.2.2.1

Know that the seat (*mahall*) of knowledge (*'ilm*) is the heart, by which I mean the subtle [sic] tenuous substance (*latīfah*) which rules all the parts of the body and is obeyed and served by all its members. In its relationship to the real nature of intelligibles (*ma'lūmāt*) it is like a mirror in its relationship to the forms (*suwar*) of changing appearances (*mutalawwināt*). For even as that which changes has a form, and the image (*mithāl*) of that form is reflected in the mirror and represented therein, so also every intelligible has its specific nature, and this specific nature has a form which is reflected and made manifest in the mirror of the heart. Even as the mirror is one thing, the forms of individuals another, and the representation of their image in the mirror another, being thus three things in all, so here too there are three things: the heart, the specific nature of things, and the representation and presende [sic] of these in the heart. The 'intellect' (*al-ālim*) is an expression for the heart in which there exists the image of the specific nature of things. The intelligibles (*al-ma'lūm*) is an expression for the specific nature of things. 'Intelligence' (*al-'ilm*) is an expression for the representation of the image in the mirror.⁵³⁵

Noticeably, al-Ghazālī does not use the word '*aql*' for intellect like the philosophers, but more in the sense of "intelligence."⁵³⁶ He clarifies in *Ihyā'* Book 1, *bāb* 7, *bayān* 2 "the word '*aql*' is a term used interchangeably for four distinct meanings," and the first of these is the mirror:

Text 4.2.2.2

First it [*'aql*] is the quality which distinguishes man from the other animals and prepares him to understand and grasp the theoretical sciences (*nāziriyah*), and master the abstract (*fikriyah*) disciplines. This is exactly what Al-Harith ibn-Asad al-Muhasibi meant when he said in defining the intellect (*'aql*) as an instinct (*gharizah*) through which the theoretical sciences are grasped and understood. It is as though it were a light cast into the heart preparing it thereby to grasp things and understand them. ... This is just like the mirror which is distinguished from other objects by its ability

Eschatology of the Ihyā' (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 151–53. These presumed cosmological divisions do not origin in kalam.

⁵³⁵ *Ihyā'*, 888. Book 21. (Skellie Trans. *The Religious Psychology of Al-Ghazzali: A Translation of His Book of the Ihya' on the Explanation of the Wonders of the Heart*, trans. Walter James Skellie (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1978), 46–47).

اعلم: أن محل العلم هو القلب؛ أعني اللطيفة المدبرة لجميع الجوارح، وهي المطاعة المخدومة من جميع الأعضاء، وهي بالإضافة إلى حقائق المعلومات كالمرأة بالإضافة إلى صور المتلونات؛ فكما أن للمتلون صورة، ومثال تلك الصورة ينطع في المرأة ويحصل بها، كذلك لكل معلوم حقيقة ولتلك الحقيقة صورة تنطع في مرآة القلب وتنتضح فيها، وكما أن المرأة غير، وصور الأشخاص غير، وحصول مثالها في المرأة غير، فهي ثلاثة أمور. فكذلك ههنا ثلاثة أمور: القلب، وحقائق الأشياء، وحصول نفس الحقائق في القلب وحضورها فيه. فالعالم: عبارة عن القلب الذي فيه يحل مثال حقائق الأشياء، والمعلوم: عبارة عن حقائق الأشياء. والعلم: عبارة عن حصول المثال في المرأة.

⁵³⁶ Treiger's assessment as "Intelligence" is accurate. Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought*, 18.

to reflect images and colours through a particular quality peculiar of it, namely its polish.⁵³⁷

Al-Ghazālī continues: second, *'aql* refers to *a priori* or axiomatic (*darūrīyah*) knowledge regarding the possibility and impossibility of things (his examples include: two is greater than one and a person cannot be in two places at once). Third, *'aql* is "that knowledge which is acquired through experience (empirical knowledge), in the course of events." The fourth is a kind of prophetic knowledge obtained when the power is morally and intellectually trained (able to suppress the appetite) to the extent that it is "able to tell what the end will be."⁵³⁸ However, al-Ghazālī explicitly states that the first understanding of *'aql* as a mirror is the "foundation" to the others.

Text 4.2.2.3

As to these four usages of the word *'aql* it should be pointed out that the first is the foundation of the other three, their origin and fountain-head. The second is the branch nearest to the first while the third is an offshoot of both the first and the second combined, since through the power of the instinct and axiomatic knowledge, are the empirical sciences acquired. The fourth is the final fruit and ultimate aim. The first two are native (*bi-al-tabr*), while the last two are acquired (*bi-al-iktisab*).⁵³⁹

To clarify, while the concept of the heart represents the Avicennian intellect, the term *'aql* primarily refers to the heart's potentiality to receive intelligibles, or the Avicennian material intellect, as determined by one's moral and intellectual attainment.⁵⁴⁰ The *'aql* as

⁵³⁷ *Ihyā'*, 101. Book 1. (Faris Trans. *The Book of Knowledge*, 218–19).

فالأول: الوصف الذي يفارق الإنسان به سائر البهائم وهو الذي استعد به لقبول العلوم النظرية، وتدبير الصناعات الخفية الفكرية وهو الذي أرادته الحارث بن أسد المحاسبي حيث قال في حد العقل: إنه غريزة يتهيأ بها إدراك العلوم النظرية، وكأنه نور يقذف في القلب به يستعد لإدراك الأشياء... وهو كالمرآة التي تفارق غيرها من الأجسام في حكاية الصور والألوان بصنة اختصت بها الصقالة.

⁵³⁸ *Ihyā'*, 101. Book 1. (Faris Trans. *The Book of Knowledge*, 220).

⁵³⁹ *Ihyā'*, 101. Book 1. (Faris Trans. *The Book of Knowledge*, 220).

فالأول: هو الأس والسنخ والمنبع. والثاني: هو الفرع الأقرب إليه. والثالث: فرع الأول والثاني؛ إذ بقوة الغريزة والعلوم الضرورية تستفاد علوم التجارب. والرابع: هو الثمرة الأخيرة وهي الغاية القصوى، فالأولان بالطبع والأخيران بالاكتساب.

⁵⁴⁰ "It should be noted, at this point, that the four meanings of the term "intelligence" correspond to Avicenna's hierarchy of the three lower grades of theoretical intellect (the material intellect, the intellect *in habitu*, and the actual intellect), with the prophetic, so-called 'sacred intellect' (*al-'aql al-qudsī* in Avicenna's terminology) superadded." Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought*, 25, 29.

potentiality is indistinguishable from the polish and thus capability to reflect.⁵⁴¹ The mirror analogy thus serves as a pseudo-theory of abstraction that serves al-Ghazālī's skepticism of epistemic realism. In experiencing an external object, whether in *al-mulk* or *al-malakūt*, the qualities of the object are understood as intelligible forms in the mirror, but not the object (the form) itself.⁵⁴² In this, al-Ghazālī's "Avicennian Nominalism" is apparent since modalities are compared to universals and relocated from the outside world exclusively as concepts of the mind.⁵⁴³ This allows al-Ghazālī to hold that necessity, contingency, and impossibility are not ontological predicates (as with Avicenna) but epistemological predicates of judgments.⁵⁴⁴ This solves doctrinal problems (Allāh is not necessitated to create) while creating difficulties (the nature of causality). It also effects the practice of logic (i.e., which propositions qualify as certain and thus suitable for use in a syllogism)

⁵⁴¹ Treiger, in analyzing Text 4.2.2.2, captures this nicely: "It [*'aql*] is a quality of the heart, its specific configuration in virtue of which the heart becomes receptive of the imprints of intelligible forms. If the heart is analogous to a mirror, intelligence [*'aql*] can be compared to this mirror's specific configuration – its polish – in virtue of which it is able to receive imprints of the forms of visible objects." Ibid., 17–19.

⁵⁴² "Notice that al-Ghazālī is careful to say that it is not the objects of knowledge themselves but their realities (*ḥaqā'iq*), i.e., their intelligible forms, that are reflected in the mirror of the heart and, furthermore, that it is not the forms themselves but their likes, or images (*mithāl*, pl. *amthila*), that appear therein... Al-Ghazālī's insistence that the knower is doubly removed from the object of knowledge is not accidental. Its significance lies in precluding any possibility of union with the object of knowledge, of the type sometimes affirmed by the philosophers when they claim that the subject of intellection (*'āqil*) becomes identical with the intellected object (*ma'qūl*) in the act of intellection (*'aql*). According to al-Ghazālī, the object of knowledge does not become united or identical with the heart, nor can it be said to indwell (*ḥulūl*) it; it is merely reflected in it, which means that only an 'image' of its 'reality' is impressed upon the heart." Ibid., 32.

⁵⁴³ Griffel claims "What distinguishes al-Ghazālī from Avicenna...is that he remained ontologically uncommitted to the existence of the universals outside of individual human minds." He thus ascribes nominalism to al-Ghazālī but is keen to point out that al-Ghazālī "was not a nominalist in the sense of his contemporary Roscelin (d. c. 1120) or William of Ockham (d. 1347) in the Latin West. These nominalists outspokenly denied any ontological coherence between things and their formal (and universal) representations in our minds." Griffel accurately reflects the aim of the *Tahāfut* in that for al-Ghazālī: "Although the universals may exist as entities in the active intellect, such an existence cannot be demonstrated. The realist understanding of the universals may or may not be true." Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*, 176–78. Taneli Kukkonen also supports this reading. Cf. Taneli Kukkonen, "Possible Worlds in the *Tahāfut* Al-Falasifa: Al-Ghazālī on Creation and Contingency," *Journal of the History of Philosophy Journal of the History of Philosophy* 38, no. 4 (2000): 479–502. In *Tahāfut*, al-Ghazālī claims that in perceiving particulars the mind effectively "abstracts" intelligibles which do not have an ontological existence in the real world. Cf. al-Ghazālī, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, 37–38, 44.

⁵⁴⁴ Cf. Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*, 79, 162–73, 201–4.

which is crucial to his theory of testimony. As we will see, the certainty of knowledge likewise occurs in the "heart" leading to critiques that the certainty obtained is subjective and not objective. In Book I section 7 of the *Iḥyā'*, he distinguishes between a philosophical and a theological application of the term "certainty" (*yaqin*). For the philosophers (*huzzar*) and the Mutakallimūn, *yaqin* "signifies lack of doubt (i.e., certainty)" in four possible states of readiness to believe.⁵⁴⁵ For the jurists and the Ṣūfīs, *yaqin* (Faris translates as the state of "faith") is not about "conjecture or doubt" but conviction. The former is the elimination of doubt while the latter is a state of conviction so strong there is no room for doubt. Both applications thus refer to a subjective psychological state (making certainty available by those unable to perform philosophical demonstration).

Like Saadya, al-Ghazālī starts with the Mu'tazilite framework of "finding oneself" in a particular cognitive state (*ḥāl*), like doubting or conviction (*i'tiqād*), and then verifying if this state results from a cause (*'illa*) or an assumption (*ma'na*).⁵⁴⁶ True conviction results from "the criterion of truth" and experiencing "repose of soul" (*sukun al-nafs*). Al-Ghazālī

⁵⁴⁵ "The first is where the evidence for believing and disbelieving is even; it is described by doubt", this is the state of doubt (*shakin*); "The second state is where you are more inclined to accept one position while realizing that the contrary is possible. But this possibility does not prevent you from giving preference to the former," this is the state of presumption (*zann*); "The third state obtains when one is inclined to believe a thing so earnestly that he is taken up by it to such an extent that nothing else seems possible to him and if such a thing ever comes to his mind, he will refuse to believe it", this is the state of conviction approaching certainty (*I'tiqād muqarib li-l-yaqin*); "the fourth state is that of definite knowledge (*marifah haqiqiyah*) resulting from evidence which leaves no place for doubt or any possibility of doubt" which is the state of certainty (*yaqin*). al-Ghazālī, *The Book of Knowledge*, 184–92. Al-Ghazālī's ultimate rescue from systemic doubt via a "divine light cast into his breast" in the *Munqidh* fits this understanding. Also cf. Frank, "Al-Ghazali on Taqlid," 227–28.

⁵⁴⁶ Cf. Section 3.2.2 on Mu'tazilite influence in Saadya Gaon's epistemology. Al-Ghazālī takes issue with the notion of *i'tiqād* (opinion/conviction), but Treiger explains how it relates to knowledge in that "Al-Ghazālī compares opinion to a 'knot' on a person's heart – a clever pun, exploiting the fact that the Arabic words for knot (*'uqda*) and opinion (*i'tiqād*) come from the same root. True knowledge is, thus, the untying of the knots of opinions (*inhilāl al-'uqad*), characterized by unveiling and dilation of the chest (*kashf wānshirāh*)." Treiger explains that al-Ghazālī criticizes their *I'tiqād* conception of knowledge for being both "too restrictive" (it does not apply to knowing non-existent things do not exist) and "too inclusive" (it would imply that *i'tiqād* based on *taqlīd* would happen to be knowledge if correct). Cf. Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought*, 30.

adopted and modified the Ash'arite position: "real knowledge" could only be obtained by the elite (via a more "rigid" verification process than his teacher al-Juwaynī) while everyone else can only obtain "knowledge in broad sense."⁵⁴⁷ The search for the causes of belief states leads to the sources of knowledge (which in the mirror analogy is what provides the intelligibles that are "reflected"). While all knowledge ultimately comes from Allāh, al-Ghazālī notes up to seven sources of knowledge across his works.⁵⁴⁸ Five sources are said to provide certain knowledge (*'ilm yaqīni*) suitable for a syllogism: 1) *a priori* concepts (*awwaliyyāt*); 2) inner sense perceptions (*mushāhadāt bātina*); 3) outer sense perception (*mahsūsāt zāhira*); 4) *tajriba* (experiential confirmation), i.e. learning from repeated experience, e.g. fire burns;⁵⁴⁹ and 5) *mutawātir* reports, knowledge that is concurrently reported by a sufficient number of people.⁵⁵⁰ After the certain sources, al-Ghazālī names two uncertain sources not permitted in syllogisms since they cannot be

⁵⁴⁷ For the Ash'arites, the criterion of truth is generally knowledge (*'ilm* or *ma'rifa*) but "knowledge" is a broad and difficult notion to pin down as the relevant terms (*'ilm*, *ma'rifa*, *'imān*, *i'tiqad*, *tasdiq*) are often used interchangeably and their meaning is context dependent. *'Imān* is one of several terms that are commonly translated as "belief", but *'imān* implies *tasdiq*. The Greek *endoxa* might be the closest equivalent of *Mashhūr*, while *testes* (and potentially *superstes*) would be the Latin equivalent of *ahad* reports. *I'tiqad* is also sometimes translated as "belief," but it is a belief that does not imply *tasdiq*. The Greek and Latin equivalent of *i'tiqad* would be *doxa* and *opinio*. Frank, "Al-Ghazali on Taqlid," 208. Cf. al-Ghazālī, *Munqidh Min Al-Dalāl*, 29-30.; (McCarthy trans. 61,63). Griffel notes that this distinction helps makes sense of al-Ghazālī's epistemology and is clearly found in al-Juwaynī, but less so in al-Ghazālī's works save perhaps *Ihyā'* III. Frank Griffel, "Taqlid of the Philosophers: Al-Ghazālī's Initial Accusation in His Tahāfut," in *Ideas, Images, and Methods of Portrayal: Insights into Classical Arabic Literature and Islam*, ed. Sebastian Günther, Islamic History and Civilization 58 (Boston ; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 280.

⁵⁴⁸ His works on logic and jurisprudence denote which sources are suitable for use as premises in syllogisms, hence both juridical works *Mihakk al-nazar fi al-mantiq* (*Touchstone of Reasoning in Logic*, henceforth *Mihakk*) and *al-Mustasfa min 'ilm al-usul* (*A distillation of the Science of the Principle of Jurisprudence*) show these seven. Cf. *Mihakk* 51 and *Al-Mustasfa* 1:44-49. For more on this list and al-Ghazālī's portrayal, Cf. Griffel, *Al-Ghazali's Philosophical Theology*, 204–5, endnote 159.

⁵⁴⁹ Al-Ghazālī's other examples include bread leads to satiety, water quenches thirst, hitting an animal causes it pain, a cut in the neck causes death, and scammony has a laxative effect on one's bowels. *Tajriba* can be translated as "experiment" but not in the contemporary sense of a designed and statistically analyzed experiment.

⁵⁵⁰ A modified list of four appears in the *Ihyā'* with demonstration (*burhān*) in lieu of both inner and outer sensation which (in addition to the assessment of sources for use in a syllogism) indicates demonstration is clearly considered a certain source of knowledge. For more knowledge sources cf. Griffel, *Al-Ghazali's Philosophical Theology*, 204–5.

"sufficiently verified:" 6) data from the estimative faculty that seems true, but cannot be verified (*wahmiyyāt*);⁵⁵¹ and 7) *mashhūrat* which are reports that are deemed authentic by inference in later generations of transmission (comparable to Greek *endoxa*).⁵⁵² Even though al-Ghazali does not list it as a source of knowledge, *taqlīd*—blind uncritical acceptance or imitation of authority—is a significant cause of people's cognitive states. Al-Ghazālī classifies the sources of knowledge under the Mu'tazilite distinction between necessary knowledge (*'ilm darūrī*, unreflective or non-discursive) and acquired knowledge (*'ilm muktab*, require reflection, *nāẓir*) which he fits within his four meanings of *'aql* with a developmentalist progression following Avicenna's stages of human development.⁵⁵³ Every human is born with the divine gift of a material intellect (their mirror) ready to receive intelligibles and *a priori* or innate knowledge.⁵⁵⁴ Text 4.2.2.3 shows the first two forms of *'aql* are "native" which he calls necessary knowledge (*al-'ulūm al-darūrīya*, in the *Munqidh*) while the latter two forms are "acquired" through a reflective and evaluative

⁵⁵¹ Cf. Farid Jabre, *Essai sur le lexique de Ghazālī*, vol. V, Section Des Etudes Philosophiques et Sociales (Beyrouth, Liban: Publications de L'Universite Libanaise, 1970), 279.

⁵⁵² The *Mashhūr* tradition describes *ahad* reports that subsequently became so widespread among scholars to be transmitted by a number impossible to maintain a conspiracy to lie. These reports are often claimed to be *mutawātir* by inference, i.e., if the second generation accepted the report, then they were certain of its authenticity. *Mashhūr* might be considered a near *mutawātir* failing to achieve a requirement somewhere between initial testimony and final report. The widespread acceptance of such an *ahad* report thus parallels the concept of consensus (*'ijma*). Zyzow, *The Economy of Certainty*, 17–18.

⁵⁵³ Also cf. *Munqidh*, al-Ghazālī, *Munqidh Min Al-Dalāl*, 72-73.; (McCarthy trans. 96-97).

⁵⁵⁴ *Mishkat* and *Munqidh* add the power of sensation to innate knowledge which appears at the age of discernment (age 7) while theoretical knowledge at the age of reason (age 15). Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought*, 23. For a summary of Avicenna's four developmental stages of the soul Cf. Gutas, "The Empiricism of Avicenna," 404–5.

thought process.⁵⁵⁵ He even defines thinking as a syllogistic process carried out in the heart.⁵⁵⁶

Al-Ghazālī brings the cognitive states and different sources for knowledge together in his famous epistemological hierarchy of cognitive states, in which different epistemic grounds provide increasing levels of cognitive assurance and even certainty. This hierarchy is given most clearly in *al-Arba'in fi usul al-din* (*The Book of Forty*, henceforth *al-Arba'in*),⁵⁵⁷ in three progressing cognitive states: 1) *'īmān* (opinion or belief); 2) *'ilm* (knowledge); and 3) *dhawq* (literally "tasting" which McCarthy translates as "fruitful experience").⁵⁵⁸ Each level is caused by or grounded in: 1) *taqlīd* (imitation); 2) *burhān* (demonstration); 3) *mushāhadah* (personally witnessing):⁵⁵⁹

Text 4.2.2.4

Know that belief (*al-'īmān*), knowledge (*al-'ilm*) and taste (*dhawq*) are three degrees apart: So if the commoner (literally "the impotent" *al-'innin*), for example, imagines (*yataṣawwara*) the desire of love making is true by its existence in others, in that he accepts [the report] from whom he thinks well of (*yuḥassinu*) [i.e. trusts] and does not accuse him of lying, that is belief (*'īmān*). And he who imagines (*yataṣawwara*) that he knows by demonstration (*al-burhān*) the existence belonging to others, and it is knowledge (*'ilm*). He gathers it [by] analogy (*qiyas*), that is he looks to his desire for food, for example, and measures by it the desire of love making, and all this is far from realizing the true sense of desire found belonging to it. And just as with disease, the commoners know it correctly and believe (*yu'amminu*) in it, and the physician knows it correctly by demonstration (*burhān*) and it is knowledge (*'ilm*) and he is aware, and not from becoming sick, not obtaining for him taste (*dhawq*). So too the proposition regarding annihilation in oneness (*tawḥīd*). So taste (*dhawq*) is witnessing

⁵⁵⁵ The corresponding sources for the former are *a priori* concepts, inner sense perception, and outer perception while *tajriba* and *mutawātir* reports for the latter. However, as we will see, al-Ghazālī redefines these categories to maintain a middle ground as both necessary *darūrī* and reflective *nāzīr*. Al-Ghazālī understands the judgments which result from *tajriba* "are different from sense perception," Griffel explains, "as they express universal judgment rather than merely individual observations of isolated events." Griffel, *Al-Ghazali's Philosophical Theology*, 205.

⁵⁵⁶ Cf. book 39 of the *Ihyā'* entitled, *The Book about Thinking* (*Kitab al-Taffakur*).

⁵⁵⁷ *Arba'in* is a condensed summary of the *Ihyā'* written for an Arabic audience (ca. 1102-3).

⁵⁵⁸ al-Ghazālī, *Deliverer from Error*.

⁵⁵⁹ For more on the tripartite division cf. Frank, "Al-Ghazali on Taqlid," 215–16.

(*mushāhadah*), and knowledge is analogy (*qiyas*), and belief (*īmān*) is proper acceptance of thought with the dismissal of suspicion. So strive to become the people of witnessing (*mushāhadah*). For the report (*al-khabar*) is not like eye witnessing.⁵⁶⁰

These three epistemic levels can be obtained in what Frank and Treiger describe as "two modes" of knowing: one for *al-mulk* via learning and acquisition and a second for *al-malakūt* via divine inspiration and unveiling.⁵⁶¹ This is most evident with personal experience. While perception of physical objects is available to even the *‘avāmm*, perception of non-physical objects can only be achieved by the *khāṣṣ al-khavāṣṣ* and even then, it is extremely rare.⁵⁶² Such cognition for non-physical objects is captured by his usage of the Ṣūfī concept *dhawq*—an unmediated "fruitful experience" or literally a

⁵⁶⁰ My translation from *Arba'in* Section 2 book 6. For Treiger's translation cf. Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought*, 51.

واعلم أن الإيمان والعلم والذوق ثلاث درجات متباعدة: فإن العَيْن مَثَلٌ يتصور أن يصدق بوجود شهوة الوقاع لغيره، بأن يقبل ذلك ممن يحسن ظنه به، ولا يتهمه بالكذب، وذلك إيمان. ويتصور أن يعلم بالبرهان وجوده لغيره، وهو علم. ومأخذه قياس أن ينظر إلى شهوته للطعام مثلاً فيقيس بها شهوة الوقاع، وكل ذلك بعيد عن إدراك حقيقة الشهوة بوجودها له. وكذلك المرض يعرفه العامي الصحيح يؤمن به، ويعرفه الطبيب الصحيح بالبرهان وهو علم، ومن لم يصبر مريضاً لم يحصل له الذوق. فكذلك القول في الفناء في التوحيد. فالذوق مشاهدة، والعلم قياس، والإيمان قبول بحسن الظن مع الانفكاك عن التهمة. فاجتهد أن تصير من أهل المشاهدة. فليس الخبر كالمعاينة.

al-Ghazālī, *Kitāb Al-Arba'in Fī Usūl al-Dīn*, ed. 'A. 'A. 'Urwānī and M.B. al-Shaqfa (Damascus: Dār al-qalam, 1424), 70–71. Al-Ghazālī gives a common illustration to these differing states regarding whether Zayd is in the house. Cf. *Ihyā'*, Book 21, *bayān* 6. This illustration is used for both the cognition of physical and non-physical objects. Cf. *Ihyā'*, Book 2, *fasl* 2. This is a proto theory of proportionality where knowers maintain their belief in proportion to the strength of the "evidence." Cf. Frank, "Al-Ghazali on Taqlid," 228–29.

⁵⁶¹ "The clarity of presentation (*al-'idah*, *al-inkishaf*) differs in the two modes of knowing. Al-Ghazālī recognizes the availability of a higher and more perfect knowledge of God, which is that of a kind of infused knowledge or revelation (*‘ilham*, *kashf*), but this is unusual, given only to the "elite" (*al-khawass*), the prophets and the saints. It is the former level of knowledge which is made generally accessible in the Koran and the Sunna and in the formal teaching of the orthodox Muslim community. To whatever perfection one aspire and whatever level of knowing he may ultimately attain, it is with this knowledge that he has necessarily to begin." Frank, "Al-Ghazali on Taqlid," 212. Per Treiger, "al-Ghazālī asserts that with regard to knowledge, human beings differ in several respects: in the quantity of what they know (*kathrat al-ma'lūmāt wa-qillatuhā*); in the nobility (*sharaf*) of the subjects they know; in the speed of their acquisition of knowables; and finally, and most importantly, in their *mode of cognition* of them (*tarīq taḥṣīlīhā*). There are two such modes: 1 - divine inspiration by way of direct intimation and unveiling (*ilhām ilāhī 'alā sabīl al-mubāda'a wa-l-mukāshafa*) on the one hand, and 2 - learning and acquisition (*ta'allum wa-kṭisāb*) on the other." Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought*, 64.

⁵⁶² Treiger explains that *dhawq* is intellectual vision parallel to normal vision where vision for physical objects is the perfect cognition of the elementary cognition "imagination" and *mushāhadah* (witnessing) for non-physical objects is the perfect cognition of the elementary cognition "intellection." Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought*, 57.

"tasting" of the divine.⁵⁶³ Al-Ghazālī explains *dhawq* is preferred to both simple faith, which is insufficient since the revelation of miracles in the Qur'an can be likened to magic and deception, and *'ilm* based on logic which can be broken by well-ordered arguments because *dhawq* is immune from error.⁵⁶⁴ The knowledge generated from *dhawq* is the same as that from demonstration (i.e. philosophical knowledge) but is the "perfection" (*istikmal*) of such knowledge due to superadded assurance or a greater sense of certainty since it is no longer mediated.⁵⁶⁵ This "witnessing" (*mushāhadah*) thus omits any logical structure which makes it *immediate* and *direct* (as opposed to mediate and indirect) in the same way as a physical face-to-face encounter.⁵⁶⁶ This highest level of cognition fits the fourth stage of development of prophetic or saintly knowledge which requires "polishing the mirror", i.e. obtaining the highest levels of virtue, typically by following the Sūfī path. However, personal development does not guarantee *dhawq* since the mirror must be properly oriented and the "veil" lifted.⁵⁶⁷

⁵⁶³ Practicing of the *Sufi* way leads him to state in the *Munqidh* that certain knowledge comes "not by study," but rather by *dhawq*—"fruitional experience and the state of ecstasy and 'the exchange of qualities.'" al-Ghazālī, *Munqidh Min Al-Ḍalāl*, 74.; (McCarthy trans. 99).

⁵⁶⁴ al-Ghazālī instructs: "let such preternatural events be one of the proofs and concomitants that make up your total reflection on the matter." al-Ghazālī, *Deliverer from Error*, 100. Treiger explains that the witnessing behind *dhawq* is "sure and certain (*yaqīniyah*)," and thus immune from error unlike *taqlīd* and attempts at *burhān*, due to the "light of certainty" made possible by an unspecified type of divine illumination.

⁵⁶⁵ The contemporary thought experiment "Mary's Room" seems to capture this greater sense of certainty. Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought*, 51.

⁵⁶⁶ Treiger points out the Avicennian foundation for al-Ghazālī's usage of *mushāhadah* and *dhawq*, the primary difference being "Avicenna repeatedly insists that *mushāhadah* is always accompanied by *the middle term* of the syllogism that underlies the witnessed intelligible, and hence is always discursive in the sense of having a syllogistic structure. It is only on one occasion that Avicenna comes close to suggesting that in *mushāhadah*, the middle term becomes redundant and could be dispensed with, yet even in this passage the carefully placed 'as if' indicates that he regarded the presence of the middle term to be as essential for *mushāhadah* as it is for any other type of knowledge." Treiger goes on to say that al-Ghazālī did not feel compelled to maintain this logical structure because he was not a philosopher, but this is an unfair assessment given al-Ghazālī's commitment to logic. Most philosophers agree that direct perceptual experience is preferred to knowledge from deduction or induction. *Ibid.*, 63.

⁵⁶⁷ This lines up with Treiger's analysis that even this last level admits of variation in the scope of knowledge and "degree of unveiling" (*darajāt al-kashf*) in which "The former type of variation is analogous to seeing also 'Amr and Bakr in the house rather Zayd alone; the latter type of variation, to seeing details of Zayd's face more clearly, depending on the quality of the light in the house, the time of the day, etc." *Ibid.*, 55–56.

It is also apparent from text 4.2.2.4 that not everyone can or does fully actualize the potentiality of their material intellect.⁵⁶⁸ Adopting a Sūfī idiom, al-Ghazālī formalizes developmental realities in *Mishkat al-Anwar* (*the Niche de Lights* henceforth *Mishkat*) and a personal letter to the Seljuq Vizier to distinguish three levels: ‘*avāmm* (heedless masses), *khavāṣṣ* (intelligent elite); and *khāṣṣ al-khavāṣṣ* (elite of the elite).⁵⁶⁹ Humans are supposed to learn (engage in syllogistic reasoning) or acquire theoretical knowledge (*al-‘ulūm al-nāẓirīya*) for themselves through study, reflection, and "polishing the mirror" which can sometimes, rarely, develop prophetic or saintly knowledge. Depending on what level an individual achieves, different grounds for cognitive states are acceptable for one group, but not for higher ones which explains both al-Ghazālī's esotericism and differing notion of *taqlīd*. Ultimately, al-Ghazālī is driven by doubt (expressly felt in the autobiographical *Munqidh*).⁵⁷⁰ His twin aim is to never introduce doubt where there is none (especially in people who lack the capacity to remove it) and always eliminate doubt where it exists.⁵⁷¹

⁵⁶⁸ In *il-Jam al-awwaam 'an 'ilm al-Kalām* (*Bridling the Masses from the Science of Kalām*, henceforth *il-Jam*), Al-Ghazālī states "Allāh created men of diverse and varying degrees, like the mines of gold, silver, and other jewels—so look at their disparity and the great dissimilarity between them in shape, color, special quality, and preciousness. Likewise, hearts are mines for the other jewels of spiritual knowledge and cognizance." This is my translation of the title which is typically translated as "The restraining of the Commonality From the Science of Theology" or the overly friendly "A Return to Purity in Creed". All references to al-Ghazālī's *il-Jam al-awwaam 'an 'ilm al-Kalām* (الجام العوام عن علم الكلام) are to the Arabic edition published by Dār al-Minhāj (Jiddah: Dār al-Minhāj, 2017).with page numbers provided in parentheses to the English translation by Abdullāh bin Hamid 'Ali (Philadelphia, PA: Lamppost Productions, 2008). *il-Jam*, 98. Chapter 1 *wazayīf* 7; (Hamid Trans. 68).

⁵⁶⁹ Jonathan Brown explains as a "ranking of mystical awareness, from the uninitiated masses, the Sūfī neophyte and finally the accomplished mystic." Jonathan A. C. Brown, "The Last Days of Al-Ghazzālī and the Tripartite Division of the Sufi World," *The Muslim World* 96, no. 1 (2006): 103. Cf. al-Ghazālī, *The niche of lights = Mishkat al-anwar*, 2, 45–46.

⁵⁷⁰ In the *Munqidh*, al-Ghazālī famously foreshadows Descartes's hyperbolic doubt by embarking on a journey of radical skepticism of sense-data and rational thought (including an appeal to dreaming) such that that Ignacio Götz addresses the question as to "whether Descartes was more indebted to al-Ghazālī than he would have been willing to admit." Cf. Ignacio L Götz, "The Quest for Certainty," *Journal of Philosophical Research* 28 (2003): 1–22. Also Cf. Tanelli. Kukkonen, "AL-Ghazālī's Skepticism Revisited," in *Rethinking the History of Skepticism: The Missing Medieval Background*, ed. Henrik Lagerlund (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 29–60.

⁵⁷¹ Al-Ghazālī states in *il-Jam* that the "means to firm faith is of little importance" answering the objection that people should obtain true spiritual cognizance, not mere belief saying: "the happiness of the creation

Thus, blind acceptance is even welcome for the *'avāmm* if it prevents doubt and keeps them from unbelief.⁵⁷² Such individuals need progress no further, even if their *i'tiqad* is achieved through rote memorization that lacks understanding.⁵⁷³ This is why the *il-Jam* and the *Munqidh* argue that Kalām and philosophy should be kept from them lest it unnecessarily introduce doubt.⁵⁷⁴ However, if an individual does not achieve "repose of the soul" because doubt persists, then they should continue to seek answers.. For the *khavāṣṣ* and *khāṣṣ al-khavāṣṣ*, *taqlīd* is always unacceptable. However, as *il-Jam* makes plain, one aspect of *taqlīd* is that those who rely on it (*muqallid*) do not realize they are doing so but are wrongly

[lies] in believing unshakably in something according to how it really is, so that their hearts would be engraved with the image of that which is in conformity with the true nature of truth...When the image of the truth is engraved and impressed on his heart, then there is no reason to look at the cause that produced it, whether it be from evidence that is direct, illustrative, convincing, an acceptance of the belief based on how one views] the one who says it, or an acceptance premised merely on blind uncritical imitation [*taqlīd*] without a cause. What is sought is not the evidence that realizes the resulting benefit, it is the benefit itself. It is to know the reality of the truth as it really is, so whoever believes in the reality of the truth with regard to Allāh, His attributes, His books, His messengers, and the Last Day as they really are, then he is happy and fortunate, even if that does not happen with polemical theological and detailed illustrative evidence." *il-Jam*, 156-161. Chapter 3 *fasl* 5; (Hamid Trans. 117-18).

⁵⁷² This acceptance of *taqlīd* is largely relegated to emulating the prophets given their proven moral and intellectual virtues, for to do so for anyone else overlooks and diminishes the prophets. Griffel, "Taqlīd of the Philosophers," 280–82. Cf. *Faysal al-Tafriqa bayn al-Islam wa l-Zandaqa (The Clear Criterion for Distinguishing between Islam and Godlessness, henceforth Faysal)* al-Ghazālī, "Faysal Al-Tafriqa Bayn al-Islam Wa l-Zandaqa," in *Freedom and Fulfillment: An Annotated Translation of al-Ghazālī's al-Munqidh Min al-Dalāl and Other Relevant Works of al-Ghazālī*, trans. Joseph McCarthy (Boston, Mass.: Twayne Publishers, 1980), 147–49.

⁵⁷³ A member of the *'avāmm* who has orthodox belief (*'īmān*) via *taqlīd* still has true belief, but their *i'tiqad* (conviction) is unwarranted (one can also experience *i'tiqad* regarding a false belief, such as with the Jews, Christians, and often the philosophers, based on *taqlīd*). Frank, "Al-Ghazali on Taqlid," 249. The *'avāmm* need not possess understanding (which is required for assent) of what they believe or merely memorize, but as a result they never have knowledge for which understanding is required. In Part 1 chapter 4 of *al-Maḥṣad al-asnā fi sharh asmā Allāh al-husnā (The Ninety-nine Beautiful Names of God)*, al-Ghazālī explains understanding is more than knowing linguistic meaning but requires comprehension of what the words indicate. Cf. David B Burrell, *The Ninety-Nine Beautiful Names of God = al-Maḥṣad al-Asnā: Fī Sharh Asmā' Allāh al-Husnā* (Cambridge, UK: Islamic Texts Society, 2007), 30–31.

⁵⁷⁴ Al-Ghazālī gives several analogies about skilled practitioners who need to be conscious of who is watching while they engage in their craft lest others, such as their own children, try to imitate them are harmed. In the *Munqidh*, al-Ghazālī speaks of the money lender who can reach into the bag of the Forger to remove pure gold and not be fooled by fakes and the snake-charmer who can extract the antidote from the snake without being bitten as analogies for working with philosophy and other religions. Just as the untrained is likely to end up with fool's gold because they cannot distinguish it from real gold and the unskilled is likely to be bitten because they do not know how to charm a snake, so too will the untrained and unskilled be led astray in knowledge and belief if they are not able or unprepared to navigate it. Cf al-Ghazālī, *Munqidh Min Al-Dalāl*, 51-53.; (McCarthy trans. 78-79). cf. Griffel, "Taqlīd of the Philosophers," 280–84.

convinced they have real knowledge. For even at a higher level, those who memorize and understand, but do not do the intellectual work themselves, are still reliant on *taqlīd*. Even those who blindly follow the philosopher's explanations are still basing their knowledge on *taqlīd* (e.g., *Tahāfut*). Combining al-Ghazālī's rigid conditions for knowledge and his spiritual discipling goals, he readily accuses the elite if they have not independently reasoned out the belief for themselves to call them to a higher level of knowledge and morality.

In summation, listeners aim to find the cause of their cognitive state from either of the modes of knowing. Necessary knowledge sources (*'ilm ḍarūrī*) provide greater certainty than acquired knowledge (*'ilm muktab*) sources like testimony. *Dhawq* ("fruitful experience") is the most desirable form of certain knowledge, being grounded in witnessing (*mushāhadah*), that all the faithful should pursue since it allows one to personally verify what they know. However, those not granted *dhawq* can achieve certain *'ilm* grounded in apodictic proofs or demonstration. Those not capable of *'ilm* due to the restraints of *burhān* and *qiyas* can still obtain *'īmān* (belief or faith) which is often synonymous with *i'tiqād* (opinion) either grounded in *tasdiq* (assent/faith), by verifying the speaker is a trustworthy authority, or *taqlīd* based on nothing more than hearsay and favorable acceptance of others.

4.3 Testimony in al-Ghazālī

The most comprehensive account of testimony given by al-Ghazālī occurs in *al-Mustasfā*, a work on *usul al-fiq* (literally "roots/principles of jurisprudence") where he follows the typical juridical outline in naming the Qur'an as the first principle in the sources of Islamic law and then an extensive section dedicated to reports (*khābar*) as a key source of Shari'a

law.⁵⁷⁵ Even though theology is considered above legal theory in the hierarchy of religious sciences, *al-Mustasfa* serves as an excellent insight into al-Ghazālī's theory of testimony since it is written for other jurists and the '*Ulamā*' which reduces the likelihood of esoteric or metaphorical discourse.⁵⁷⁶

In explicating the Qur'an as a source, he explains that the truth (*ḥaqqiqa*) and meaning (*ma'na*) of the Qur'an "refers to the speech (*qawlu*) subsisting in the being of Allāh."⁵⁷⁷ The Qur'an is speech which subsists in Allāh as one of His eternal attributes. Hence, "speech" refers to utterances that indicate what is in the mind or expressions of meanings in the mind. Either way, speech presumes a mental reality. This permits divine speech to be compatible with the divine attributes of incorporeality and *tawḥīd* (divine oneness) since the multiplicity of speech occurs in its expression.⁵⁷⁸ Unlike the divine mind, speech in the mind of creatures "is multiple just as knowledge is multiple" and creatures can only express "words inherent in the mind" via utterances, signs, or gestures.⁵⁷⁹

⁵⁷⁵ *al-Mustasfa* 1:129-1:173; al-Ghazālī *al-Mustasfa Min 'Ilm al-Usul*, 197-257; (Ḥammād trans., 541-661).

⁵⁷⁶ Further, the work is not only epistemological in nature, but al-Ghazālī states in the preface that the combination of rational and religious approaches results in the "noblest knowledge." *al-Mustasfa* 1:3, "The noblest knowledge is where Reason and Tradition are coupled, where rational opinion and the *Shari'a* are in association. The sciences of jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and its principles [*usul*] are of this sort, for they take from the choicest part of the *Shari'a* and Reason. They can be neither manipulated purely by Reason, such that the *Shari'a* could not accept them, nor based upon blind following (*taqlīd*), where Reason could not attest to their sanctity or rectitude." al-Ghazālī *al-Mustasfa Min 'Ilm al-Usul*, 3; (Ḥammād trans., 303).

⁵⁷⁷ Cf. *Al-Mustasfa*, 1:100-101, al-Ghazālī *al-Mustasfa Min 'Ilm al-Usul*, 151-153; (Ḥammād trans., 451-55).

⁵⁷⁸ *Al-Mustasfa* 1:101, "The speech inherent in the mind is divisible into predicates, inquiries, commands, prohibitions, and admonitions. These are meanings that differ in their genre by [their] various volitions and cognitions. They are by their essence related to their objects, just as power, will, and knowledge are likewise related. Some people claim that they are reducible to knowledge and will, and are not independent genres. But establishing this is the task of a theologian, not a jurist." al-Ghazālī *al-Mustasfa Min 'Ilm al-Usul*, 152; (Ḥammād trans., 453).

⁵⁷⁹ Cf. *al-Mustasfa* 1:101, al-Ghazālī *al-Mustasfa Min 'Ilm al-Usul*, 152; (Ḥammād trans., 453). Also cf. *il-Jam* where al-Ghazālī distinguishes between four levels of existence: 1) existence in the eyes, e.g., the image of fire; 2) existence in the mind, e.g., the true nature of fire; 3) existence on the tongue, e.g., the oral word used to denote "fire"; and 4) existence on the paper that it is written on, e.g., the symbol or markings used to denote "fire." *il-Jam*, 141-147. Chapter 3 *fasl* 3; (Hamid Trans. 105).

The expression of the inner word occurs via *khabar*, a report, which al-Ghazālī explicitly defines as a proposition or assertion with a true or false value:

Text 4.3.0.1

Before this [discourse], however, we should define ‘*khabar*.’ This is a statement which is liable to be true or false; or, it is a statement which either truth *or* falsehood may enter. This definition is better than when they say "...Truth *and* falsehood enter," for one report cannot be characterized by both. Indeed the speech of Allāh, s.w.t., cannot by any means be characterized by falsehood. Nor can reports of impossible things be characterized by any means as truth.⁵⁸⁰

Reports fall into three possible "classifications": those that must be assented to; those that must be denied; and those which require suspension of judgement. Seven types of reports compel assent: 1) reports repeated a sufficient number of times to achieve *tawātur*; 2) reports from Allāh who cannot lie; 3) reports from the Messenger who was confirmed by miracles; 4) reports from the *ummah* (the whole Muslim community) based on the report of the Messenger; 5) reports in agreement with the previous types; 6) *ḥadīth* reports verified to have been said in the presence of Messenger and he did not object (i.e. the Prophet's silence is consent); and 7) reports mentioned in the presence of a group who did not object or call it a lie (i.e. no conspiracy). Conversely there are four types of reports that compel denial: 1) reports contrary to any of the sources of knowledge; 2) reports contrary to the Qur'an, *mutawātir* Sunna/ḥadīth, or ‘*ijmā’*’ of the Ummah; 3) reports denied by a group too large for conspiracy; and 4) reports that would have been reported by a large number of people but have not been. Finally, reports that compel the suspension of judgement are "whose truth or falsehood is unknown." This final category is a catch-all for reports that do

⁵⁸⁰ *Al-Mustasfa* 1:132, al-Ghazālī *al-Mustasfa Min 'Ilm al-Usul*, 201; (Ḥammād trans., 548).

ولنقدم عليه حد الخبر. وحده أنه <<القول الذي يتطرق إليه التصديق أو التكذيب>>، أو <<هو القول الذي يدخله الصدق أو الكذب>>. وهو أولى من قولهم: يدخله الصدق والكذب، إذ الخبر الواحد لا يدخله كلاهما. في كلام الله تعالى لا يدخله الكذب أصلاً، والخير عن المحالات لا يدخله الصدق أصلاً.

not meet the assent or deny criteria but can still be regarded for practical matters like "the rules of Shari'a and worship."⁵⁸¹

Al-Ghazālī primarily has the *ḥadīth* tradition in view as a source for the purpose of jurisprudence, however, these classifications reveal the crucial criteria of *ṣadīq* in testimony. *Ṣadīq* is a thick concept applied to reports, agents, and collective agents which captures truthfulness, honesty, and/or trustworthiness, the necessary quality for assent.⁵⁸² Reports that compel assent are *ṣadīq* and come from a reporter who is *ṣadīq*, but reports that compel denial contradict what is verified *ṣadīq* or comes from a reporter who is *takdīb* (someone who lost their *ṣadq*).⁵⁸³ However, the truthfulness and trustworthiness of the report and reporter cannot be assumed. It must be verified through a proof:

Text 4.3.0.2

For there are no reports (*al-'akhabār*) whose truth (*ṣadīq*) can be known (*yu'lamu*) purely through reporting (*mujarrad al-ikhbar*), except the *mutawātir*. As for other reports, their truths (*ṣadīq*) are known only through a proof (*dalīl*) indicating (*yadullu*) it is independent of the report (*al-khabar*) itself.⁵⁸⁴

The proof for *ṣadīq*, whether of the report or the reporter, is ultimately found not in the report but in the attributes of the reporter or the attestation of another verified *ṣadīq* reporter

⁵⁸¹ *Al-Mustasfa*, 1:140-1:145, al-Ghazālī *al-Mustasfa Min 'Ilm al-Usul*, 212-218; (Ḥammād trans., 571-84).

⁵⁸² Cf. *Iḥyā'* book 37, chapter 3, bayan 1

⁵⁸³ Griffel provides an excellent summary: "Al-Gazali's two definitions of belief and unbelief rely on the opposition between *tasdiq* and *takdīb*. Both terms cannot be easily translated into English. *Tasdiq* originally means to assume that a person is *sadiq* or has *sidq*. In order to be *sadiq* someone must fulfill two conditions not combined in any English word. A person who is *sadiq* is first of all trustworthy, *i.e.*, the person reports information to the best of his or her knowledge and does not lie. Secondly, the information that a person, who is *sadiq*, conveys is true. *Tasdiq* is both the acceptance of the claim for truthfulness of the messenger and the truth of the message. This claim is lost if the person violates only one of these two conditions. *Takdīb*, the assumption that someone has lost his or her *sidq*, occurs if either the message that the person conveys turns out to be false, or if it turns out that the messenger did not report it to the best of his or her knowledge." Frank Griffel, "Al-Gazali's Concept of Prophecy: The Introduction of Avicennan Psychology into As'arite Theology," *Arabic Sciences and Philosophy* 14 (2004): 122–23.

⁵⁸⁴ *Al-Mustasfa* 1:140, al-Ghazālī *al-Mustasfa Min 'Ilm al-Usul*, 213; (Ḥammād trans., 571). Tr. Mod.

فليس في الأخبار ما يعلم صدقه بمجرد الإخبار إلا المتواتر. وما عداه فإنما يعلم صدقه بدليل آخر يدل عليه، سوى نفس الخبر.

The exception of *mutawātir* reports is complicated, but as discussed below this is because *mutawātir* reports contain their own proof via a hidden syllogism.

(and their attributes). The *ṣadīq* of the report is the matter at hand and while passing the criterion for compulsory denial is a necessary condition it is not a sufficient condition to compel assent (a report can be shown not to be *ṣadīq* if it expressly contradicts established trusted sources of knowledge, but it cannot be shown to be *ṣadīq* if it does not). Hence, the report of Allāh is verified *ṣadīq* "because lying is impossible for Him." Two subsequent proofs are given for this divine attribute via the attestation of the Messenger and because Allāh's speech is self-subsisting.⁵⁸⁵ The prophet's *ṣadīq* is confirmed by miracles where the miracle's epistemic role is not to verify the report of the prophet, but to verify that the prophet is a trustworthy messenger from Allāh.⁵⁸⁶ The proof of the Ummah's *ṣadīq* is the attestation of the Messenger. Here we see the beginning of a chain (*'isnād*) of attestation regarding *ṣadīq*: Allāh, the source of *ṣadīq*, attests to the *ṣadīq* of the Messenger who attests to the *ṣadīq* of the Ummah and then "whosoever they [the Ummah] have affirmed as being truthful (*ṣadīq*)." With the Ummah enters the epistemic role of communal epistemic authorities and group numbers as a safeguard against conspiracy.

While verification of a report focuses on the speaker, it is the "quality" (i.e., polish) of the listener's heart that determines what cognitive state is generated in the listener in three levels of increasing certainty. Different kinds of reports and the listener's ability to

⁵⁸⁵ It is odd that al-Ghazālī calls Muhammad's attestation the "stronger" of the two proofs since this makes the proof circular given that the proof for the Messenger's *sādiq* is attestation by Allāh via miracles (and al-Ghazālī elsewhere notes the problematic nature of miracles). The latter is more compelling given the relation of divine speech to the divine mind. This is in line with Allāh being the primary source of knowledge, morality, authority, and thus *sādiq* itself which grounds all subsequent reporters' *sādiq*. The emphasis here may be to give precedence to human attestation to another's trustworthiness in jurisprudence. *Al-Mustasfa* 1:141, al-Ghazālī *al-Mustasfa Min 'Ilm al-Uṣul*, 213-214; (Ḥammād trans., 571-72). Regarding miracles cf. *Munqidh*, al-Ghazālī, *Munqidh Min Al-Dalāl*, 74-75.; (McCarthy trans. 100).

⁵⁸⁶ "The evidence of his [the Messenger's] truthfulness [*sadiq*] is the proof of his miracles, which indicate his truthfulness [*sadiq*], together with the impossibility of miracles being manifested at the hands of imposters. For if that were possible, then the Creator would be unable to confirm the messengership of His messengers, and inability is impossible for Him." *Al-Mustasfa* 1:141, al-Ghazālī *al-Mustasfa Min 'Ilm al-Uṣul*, 214; (Ḥammād trans., 572).

perform verification can cause *'imān* or even *'ilm* to accrue in the listener's heart as a result of *taqlīd* (or *tasdiq*), *burhān*, or *dhawq*. The first two levels occur with human testimony as a form of acquired knowledge. In the first level, listeners "find" *i'tiqad* (or *'imān*) resulting from the uncritical acceptance of a report through *taqlīd* or belief (*'imān*) by assent to or faith (*tasdiq*) in a report where the listener works to verify the *ṣadīq* of the report and/or the reporter commonly found with verifiable *ahad* reports and *Mashhūr* reports. Such reports cannot produce certainty without additional "circumstantial evidence."⁵⁸⁷ In the second level, listeners "find" that they possess certain *'ilm* after a report comes from a sufficient number of trustworthy reporters qualifying as *tawātur*. These reports take on a non-discursive epistemological status which requires no external proof as a result of a hidden syllogism.⁵⁸⁸ The third level occurs with divine testimony. Only the *khāṣṣ al-khavāṣṣ* may obtain *dhawq* as a result of prophecy or inspiration. This only occurs (and rarely) after the listener's mirror is sufficiently polished— heart/soul made virtuous— and Allāh graciously removes the "veil" putting the listener in direct perceptual contact with divine knowledge. If at any level, whether a member of the *'avāmm*, *khavāṣṣ*, or *khāṣṣ al-khavāṣṣ*, the listener does not personally carry out the task of verifying the epistemic grounds of a report but merely accepts them (as he accuses scholars who adopt the axioms, principles, theses, and proofs of their religion from an authority i.e. "books and lectures"), then they are guilty of *taqlīd* and the cognitive state of their "knowledge" is mere conviction

⁵⁸⁷ Such reports are not suitable for use in syllogisms, but they may still be actionable.

⁵⁸⁸ Since the obtainment of knowledge is in view, the third "suspend judgement" categorization is deemed only suitable for practical judgements while the former two aim at acquiring truth and avoiding falsehood. E.g., while one should suspend judgement regarding truth on the testimony of two, but one is permitted to act when truthfulness is conceivable.

or presumption (*zann*).⁵⁸⁹ Thus, for al-Ghazālī, the same telling can be assented to with differing levels of cognitive surety.

Chart 4.3.0.3

	Cognitive State	Epistemic Ground	Report Type
Human Testimony (first mode)			
Level 1	<i>i'tiqad / 'īmān</i>	<i>taqlīd</i>	<i>ahad, tawātur</i>
	<i>'īmān</i>	<i>tasdiq</i>	<i>ahad</i>
Level 2	<i>'ilm</i>	<i>burhān, qiyas</i>	<i>tawātur</i>
Divine Testimony (second mode)			
Level 3	<i>dhawq</i>	<i>mushāhadah</i>	<i>nabuwa, ilhām</i>

4.3.1 Human Testimony

Following the progression in Chart 4.3.0.3, I will start with the first mode of knowledge in this section and the second mode of knowledge in the next section. Al-Ghazālī maintains his theory of testimony within the existing framework of Kalām and jurisprudence making him less of an innovator and more of a refiner. Report types serve different epistemological functions but rely on an identical reporting process. The testimonial framework consists of an initial original "eye-witness" testimony (*al-shahāda*, literally witness) that generates a report (*khabar*) or *matn* ("text") which is then transmitted (*ruwiya*) down a chain (*'isnād*) of people until the final transmitter who is the "reporter."⁵⁹⁰ After the initial testimony is deemed acceptable, the report is considered under less stringent guidelines for transmission. To illustrate al-Ghazālī's contribution, first I review his development in the application of *taqlīd*. Regarding *ahad* and *mutawātir* reports, I will show how he

⁵⁸⁹ Again, we see al-Ghazālī is expanding and nuancing the Ash'arite relegation of *taqlīd* to only the *'awamm* to the *Mutakallimūn* and the philosophers if their individual knowledge of their demonstrative knowledge comes from "books and hearing (*sama*)" and not from conducting the demonstrations for themselves. Cf. *Ihyā'* book 1, chapter 6.

⁵⁹⁰ This original testimony needs to be perceptual but not necessarily visual with "I heard" being the most common formula in the tradition of oral reports. Zyzow, *The Economy of Certainty*, 8.

synthesizes more theologically orthodox Islamic positions like *Ash'arism* with the more philosophical positions of the *Mu'tazilites* and the *falsafa*, most notably Avicenna, as seen in his promotion of the syllogism as the proof within *mutawātir* reports.⁵⁹¹

Testimonially derived belief, or cause of conviction, resulting from *taqlīd* is the most prevalent understanding of testimony which accounts for its reputation as a poor source of knowledge. Understanding testimony as any belief transmitted from another agent, *taqlīd* is not a type of report but a possible testimonial ground.⁵⁹² Al-Ghazālī famously accuses the followers of philosophy of *taqlīd* in *Tahāfut*.⁵⁹³ Without critical "speculative investigation," some people blindly trade the teaching of the prophets for the teachings of the philosophers.⁵⁹⁴ Thus, the *Tahāfut* can be read as more a condemnation of

⁵⁹¹ Gutas notes that even Avicenna acknowledged the twofold division with "Sequentially and multiply reported data [*mutawātir*]" and "data approved on authority (*maqbulat*)" (Avicenna's reference to knowledge from Tradition, i.e. *sam'iyyat*, "heard things") stating that both are based on perception but can provide "unmediated knowledge" due to social context." Gutas, "The Empiricism of Avicenna," 401.

⁵⁹² The concept of *taqlīd* is broad and complex, taking on different meanings depending on the situation within which it is employed. Within the confines of testimony, I follow R.M. Frank in "Al-Ghazālī on *Taqīd*" that the particular use in view pertains to "knowledge and belief with regard to matters that, in the view of Ash'arite orthodoxy, may as such be properly subject to rational inquiry, determination and verification." Frank, "Al-Ghazālī on *Taqīd*," 207.

⁵⁹³ In the preface to *Tahāfut*, al-Ghazālī states the principal charge against "a group" who have rejected orthodox Islam for the teachings of the philosophers is *taqlīd*; their unwavering trust in demonstration and the Greek epistemological grounds results from trading one *taqlīd* for another upon "hearing high-sounding names such as 'Socrates,' 'Hippocrates,' 'Plato,' 'Aristotle,'" and their likes...". He continues saying "There is no basis for their unbelief other than traditional, conventional imitation (*taqlīd*), like the imitation of Jews and Christians, since their upbringing and that of their offspring has followed a course other than the religion of Islam, their fathers and forefathers having [also] followed [conventional imitation]..." al-Ghazālī, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, 2. This critique is leveled at other groups as well. Cf. *Fada'ih al-Batiniyya* (Disgraces of the Batinites)

⁵⁹⁴ Jules Janssens and Frank Griffel are largely in agreement that *Tahāfut* is not a rejection of Avicenna's philosophy but of his followers who blindly accept philosophical teachings. Janssens humbly admits that it is possible Avicenna and his philosophy are al-Ghazālī's target but concludes that "the disciples are more likely than the master [Avicenna] to be guilty of *taqlīd*." Griffel takes a stronger stance stating, "it is clear that the accusations are leveled against contemporaries of al-Ghazālī." In a footnote he dismisses the possibility Janssens recognizes and argues "This flexibility [of his position in the 20th discussion] points to the fact that he is indeed dealing with 'living' individuals, and not with the authors of philosophical books from the past, such as Ibn Sina." Janssens, "Al-Ghazālī's 'Tahāfut,'" 17; Griffel, "Taqīd of the Philosophers," 285 & footnote 39. Treiger goes so far as to call *Tahāfut* "pseudo-refutation" or "stage combat" that "creates the illusion of a real fight, while intending to inflict no damage on the opponent." Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought*, 81, 84.

taqlīd based testimony than a condemnation of the philosophers.⁵⁹⁵ In *il-Jam*, al-Ghazālī delineates levels of conviction caused by *taqlīd* based testimony. The lowest levels result in false belief: The first is confirmation bias since believing a heard statement is dependent on the listener's desired perspective ("merely because it suits his natural inclinations and preferences"). A negative statement applied to an enemy result in immediate conviction, but hearing the same statement applied to a friend results in immediate rejection;⁵⁹⁶ the next is when listeners rely on insufficient or inconsequential evidence by jumping to conclusions or being impressed by appearances. The two highest levels of *taqlīd* induced conviction can result in correct belief: the first of these is the listener assenting because they have a positive opinion of the speaker whether because they know them to be virtuous or because they have a positive reputation in the community (this is how children first learn by emulating their parents and students begin by emulating or memorizing their teachers' instruction); last is affirmation resulting from "oratory rhetorical proofs," such as most Qur'anic proofs, e.g. proverbs which contain a logical structure but are not syllogisms. Since *taqlīd* based testimony is the blind trusting of a speaker, al-Ghazālī has a mixed view. It has ruinous potential, but it is also the only way *'avāmm* can follow the prophets.⁵⁹⁷

⁵⁹⁵ This reading follows al-Ghazālī's fondness for Avicenna. Evidence in the *Tahāfut* itself comes from his concluding remarks where only three philosophical positions are rejected as *kufīr* and he refrains from "pronouncing those who uphold heretical innovation to be infidels (*kufīr*) and of which pronouncement is valid and which is not." al-Ghazālī, *The Incoherence of the Philosophers*, 227. Griffel has also advanced this idea. Cf. Griffel, "Taqlīd of the Philosophers," 278; Griffel, *Al-Ghazali's Philosophical Theology*, 99.

⁵⁹⁶ I have reversed the order of presentation from highest-to-lowest to lowest-to-highest. Al-Ghazālī, *il-Jam*, 148-155. Chapter 3 *fasl* 4; (Hamid Trans. 109-17). Frank notes that al-Ghazālī even has *Mutakallimūn* in view: "The way scholars are psychologically and intellectually bound to the teachings of their masters and to the schools to which they belong al-Ghazālī characterizes as a *ta'assub*, employing an expression that originally describes one's bond, his self-identification with and his loyalty to, his immediate kinship group (at *'asabah*) or to a small party of men of which he is one (*al 'ubah*). Al-Ghazālī's view of academic theologians is amply illustrated where, talking of the almost reflex tendency to reject immediately and out of hand any thesis or argument that is explicitly presented as the teaching of an opposing school." Frank, "Al-Ghazali on Taqlid," 221, 232–33.

⁵⁹⁷ Per Frank this is in contrast to the Ash'arites complete disapproval of *taqlīd*. Frank, "Al-Ghazālī on Taqlīd," 211.

Furthermore, it is the default epistemic starting position. Al-Ghazālī's autobiography *Munqidh* describes his journey from *taqlīd*, which "lost its hold" on him when he was young, to begin independent investigation.⁵⁹⁸ Lapsing into *taqlīd* thus always remains a possibility for all the types of reports al-Ghazālī discusses.

To explain how the Sunna, *ḥadīth*, and Qur'an reach subsequent generations solely by means of "the tongue of the transmitters," al-Ghazālī adopts and refines the established juridical distinction of reports between *khābar al-wahid* (literally "the report of one", henceforth *ahad* reports) and *al-khābar al-mutawātir* (literally "concurrent reports").⁵⁹⁹ Reports that do not meet the stringent qualifications of *tawātur* are *ahad* reports.⁶⁰⁰ Despite the name, *ahad* reports frequently include multiple reporters.⁶⁰¹ There were two primary positions on *ahad* reports between the formalists who follow the traditional (*sam'i*, literally "heard") approach claiming lineage to the Companions and the materialists who employed a rational (*ma'qūl*) approach (like the Mu'tazilites). The positions disagree on whether a report can be presumed authentic and therefore used as a source for juridical action. Formalists like the Ḥanafīs accepted *ahad* reports by default for a report was presumed (*zann*) authentic (unconcerned if its authenticity was certain) to serve as a valid source for

⁵⁹⁸ al-Ghazālī, *Munqidh Min Al-Ḍalāl*, 30-31.; (McCarthy trans. 63).

⁵⁹⁹ *Al-Mustasfa* 1:129, al-Ghazālī *al-Mustasfa Min 'Ilm al-Usul*, 197; (Ḥammād trans., 541). Both *tawātur* (تَوَاتُر) and *mutawātir* (مُتَوَاتِر) are used interchangeably to denote the same concept but reflect grammatical variations (*tawātur* typically appears as a verbal noun while *mutawātir* typically appears as a participle as an adjective or part of a participial phrase). Ulrich Rudolph shares this sentiment regarding al-Ghazālī and jurisprudence: "In this case, his works may have been more conventional than in Sufism, but his impact on the field was nonetheless considerable and in many respects innovative." Ulrich Rudolph, "Al-Ghazālī on Philosophy and Jurisprudence," in *Philosophy and Jurisprudence in the Islamic World*, ed. Peter Adamson (De Gruyter, 2019), 67.

⁶⁰⁰ Most *hadīths* fall short so works in jurisprudence primarily focused on this report type. Zyzow thus calls *ahad* reports "the focus of concern." Zyzow, *The Economy of Certainty*, 22.

⁶⁰¹ "What has been transmitted by five or six individuals, for example, may be a solitary report." *al-Mustasfa* 1:145, al-Ghazālī *al-Mustasfa Min 'Ilm al-Usul*, 219; (Ḥammād trans., 584).

norms until it is proven that one of the transmitters either lied or erred.⁶⁰² Materialists, on the other hand, only accepted *ahad* reports as a valid source if its authenticity was verified as certain.⁶⁰³ Al-Ghazālī not only sided with the Materialists (and Mu'tazilites) in insisting that reports be deemed authentic, but also made the verification more stringent, so much so that, if a ḥadīth is known to be authentic, then it is not an *ahad* report.⁶⁰⁴ Only rarely did *ahad* reports serve as the last "bit of circumstantial evidence" to establish certain 'ilm.⁶⁰⁵ Thus, *ahad* reports served a more practical than a theoretical function, either being "accepted" or "rejected" indicating whether they are actionable or not.⁶⁰⁶ If an *ahad* report is more probable than not, it is sufficient to establish practical obligations.⁶⁰⁷

⁶⁰² The Hanafis did recognize the two falsifications of testimony, namely trustworthiness based on moral integrity (*adāla*) and accuracy (*ḍabt*), and that it is impossible to remove their possibility from any given chain (*isnad*) of transmission, but "to reject all unit-traditions would undoubtedly mean rejecting some elements of truth. To accept them all indiscriminately would mean accepting falsehood. To refuse to do anything (*tawaqquf*) would also mean rejecting truth." Zyzow, *The Economy of Certainty*, 25.

⁶⁰³ As a result, there was no distinction between authentic and valid. "To realize their aim of building the law out of absolutely sound materials, the materialists need criteria for judging traditions that enable them to have certain knowledge and not mere presumption." *Ibid.*, 22–23.

⁶⁰⁴ *Al-Mustasfa*, 1:272, al-Ghazālī *al-Mustasfa Min 'Ilm al-Usul*, 321; (Ḥammād trans., 563). Jonathan A. C. Brown, "Did the Prophet Say It or Not? The Literal, Historical, and Effective Truth of Ḥadīths in Early Sunnism," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 129, no. 2 (2009): 226, footnote 34.

⁶⁰⁵ *Al-Mustasfa* 1:135, Individual *ahad* reports "are liable to doubt. But with them the mind is inclined to form a weak opinion, while the second and the third [bits of evidence] confirm it. But when each exists in isolation, then doubt may enter them. However, certain [knowledge] accrues with their conjunction, just as the statement of each member of the *tawātur* reporters is liable to doubt if each is taken individually, while decisiveness accrues as a result of their conjunction." al-Ghazālī *al-Mustasfa Min 'Ilm al-Usul*, 205-206; (Ḥammād trans., 557). Also cf. 1:136-1:137, 1:138

⁶⁰⁶ Cf. *Al-Mustasfa* 1:148, al-Ghazālī *al-Mustasfa Min 'Ilm al-Usul*, 222-223; (Ḥammād trans., 591-92). The justification for basing practical judgements on uncertain theoretical judgements stems from the generational consensus which notes that it is permissible, but not mandatory, to act in accordance with *ahad* reports. This acceptability is because no report of an objection to the practice had been transmitted from the original *ummah* and al-Ghazālī claims such an objection "would have necessarily become well known" and there would have been "a great impetus" to transmit it, that is the absence of an objection indicates a consensus (*ijma'*) of the earliest generation. *al-Mustasfa* 1:150, al-Ghazālī *al-Mustasfa Min 'Ilm al-Usul*, 224-226; (Ḥammād trans., 598).

⁶⁰⁷ *Al-Mustasfa* 1:146 "What is the impossibility of Allāh, saying to His worshippers, 'When a bird flies by and you think it is a crow, then I have made 'such and such' obligatory upon you, and I have made your supposition a sign for the necessity of acting, just as I have made the declination of the sun to be a sign for the obligatoriness of prayer.' Therefore, *zan* itself would become the sign of obligatoriness, while the existence of *gan* is known through sense perception." al-Ghazālī *al-Mustasfa Min 'Ilm al-Usul*, 219-220; (Ḥammād trans., 587). Zyzow explains that "our own state of being is a condition for the obligation of action" such that "uncertain authenticity of the tradition is of no importance." Zyzow, *The Economy of Certainty*, 28.

The determining factor for the acceptability of a report is the same as compulsory assent, namely the *ṣadīq* of the reporter which now becomes indistinguishable from their moral stature and/or religious piety. Even though al-Ghazālī recognizes the twin falsifications of error and dishonesty, he unequivocally holds that acceptable testimony is based on the trustworthy character of the reporter in a section titled "The Transmitter and His Character (*sifa*)" stating: "it is incumbent upon us to accept the statement of a trustworthy (*ʿadala*) reporter though he may lie or err, while it is not permissible to accept the statement of a *fasiq* [unvirtuous, law breaker] though he may tell the truth."⁶⁰⁸ Again, the identity of the speaker performs the epistemic work. For example, if an audience is not familiar with the "messengership" of Muhammad, then they cannot be expected to obey his commands for only "after believing in him, it becomes possible for them to give heed to the envoys conveying his command and to listen to them."⁶⁰⁹ If one does not know Muhammad, then al-Ghazālī concedes that people should accept an *ahad* report "only if there is a decisive proof indicating the obligatoriness of acting on its basis."⁶¹⁰ Yet, he also recognizes that it is better to follow someone who should know better even if they are not fool-proof, but even this requires knowing that this person knows better. Determining whether a reporter is trustworthy is tantamount to determining how upright they are. There was an existing debate as to how the trustworthiness of a reporter was to be determined between Abū Hanīfa and his followers, and the followers of al-Shafi'i and ibn Hanbal. The Hanafīs maintained that any reporter who by all appearance was faithful in keeping Islamic

⁶⁰⁸ *Al-Mustasfa* 1:154, al-Ghazālī *al-Mustasfa Min 'Ilm al-Usul*, 230-231; (Ḥammād trans., 612). *ʿadala* (عَدْل) is the notion of justice and righteousness, which applied to a person means to act justly or to be righteous or honest as "the quality of religious piety and personal morality which lends legal credibility to a reporter or a witness" al-Ghazālī *al-Mustasfa Min 'Ilm al-Usul*, 235; (Ḥammād trans., 617, footnote 63).

⁶⁰⁹ *Al-Mustasfa* 1:152, al-Ghazālī, *al-Mustasfa Min 'Ilm al-Usul*, 227-228; (Ḥammād trans., 602-3).

⁶¹⁰ *Al-Mustasfa* 1:152, al-Ghazālī, *al-Mustasfa Min 'ilm al-Usul*, 227-228, (Ḥammād trans., 602-3).

law (including status as a *mujtahid*) was to be deemed trustworthy and their report accepted by default.⁶¹¹ Al-Ghazālī explicitly rejects this insisting that trustworthiness is only acknowledged through familiarity with the reporter's "inner character" and both public and private conduct.⁶¹² He attacks the Ḥanafī position adamantly stating that the report of the unacknowledged is analogous to that of *fasiq* (unvirtuous, impious person). Only pragmatic concessions are made for entering contracts or transactions (where *fasiq* are prevalent but necessary) and the direction for prayer or purity of water in which case one may accept reports if one accrues "repose of the soul" (*sukun al-nafs*).⁶¹³ Both schools agreed however that higher standards for reporter trustworthiness were required for original reports—testimony (*mushāhadah*)—vs. merely passing on a report from some other trustworthy reporter—transmission (*ruwiya*).

To accept the transmission (*ruwiya*) of a report, al-Ghazālī outlines five conditions a reporter must meet. Transmission (*riwāya*) is acceptable from speakers who are trustworthy (*'adala*), which includes being "a Muslim, and accurate, whether he is transmitting alone or with others."⁶¹⁴ The first condition notes a concession on numbers; one reporter is permitted since transmission merely passes on a formerly vetted report. Second, the reporter must possess "responsibility" (*al-taklif*), which is a thick concept that captures two requirements: the reporter is "capable of discernment" upon receiving the report and deterred from lying (explicitly "fear of Allāh") upon delivering it.⁶¹⁵ Third, the

⁶¹¹ Cf. Bernard G Weiss, *The Search for God's Law: Islamic Jurisprudence in the Writings of Sayf al-Din al-Amidi* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1992), 302.

⁶¹² AL-*Mustasfa*, 1:158, al-Ghazālī *al-Mustasfa Min 'Ilm al-Usul*, 236-237; (Ḥammād trans., 619).

⁶¹³ AL-*Mustasfa*, 1:159-1:160, al-Ghazālī *al-Mustasfa Min 'Ilm al-Usul*, 237-240; (Ḥammād trans., 622-25).

⁶¹⁴ AL-*Mustasfa*, 1:155, al-Ghazālī *al-Mustasfa Min 'Ilm al-Usul*, 232-3; (Ḥammād trans., 612).

⁶¹⁵ AL-*Mustasfa*, 1:156, al-Ghazālī *al-Mustasfa Min 'Ilm al-Usul*, 233-234; (Ḥammād trans., 614-615). An exception is made for a minor's report if "the minor was capable of discernment when he received the report, and of age when he delivered it."

reporter should be accurate. Even the reports of otherwise trustworthy reporters should be rejected if the reporter was: not capable of discernment or was inattentive at the time of receiving, or "does not properly retain what he has received." Fourth, the reporter must be a Muslim (a non-*fasiq*), even if the reporter is trustworthy in their own religion. This limitation is largely because *Islamic* legal decisions are in view such that al-Ghazālī indicates *ijmā'* (consensus) deprives non-believers the capacity of exercising authority in a religion they reject. Thus, not only are unbelieving reporters considered higher than *fasiq* reporters, but also non-Muslim testimonies about other non-Muslims are to be accepted.⁶¹⁶ Fifth, the reporter must be trustworthy (*'adāla*) which captures both virtuous character and religious piety. While "impeccability from all sins" is not required, any sin that belies honesty can deem one untrustworthy (as determined by the judgement of the *ijtihād*, judge). Al-Ghazālī cites Qur'anic sura 49:6 as a proof (*dalīl*) for both the fourth and fifth condition i.e., for rejecting the reports of *fasiq* and for requiring trustworthiness (*'adāla*) in both transmission (*riwāya*) and testimony (*shahāda*) since "trustworthiness (*'adāla*) expresses uprightness in conduct and in religion and is reducible to a stable disposition of the heart (*nafs*) that enforces consistency of both righteousness and virtuousness so that trust of the people in one's truthfulness accrues."⁶¹⁷

In order to accept an original testimony (*shahāda*), al-Ghazālī specifies additional qualifications a reporter must meet: freedom, maleness, sight, kinship, fixed number, and animosity. These stricter requirements aim at filtering out unreliable reports by insisting

⁶¹⁶ *Al-Mustasfa* 1:156-157, al-Ghazālī *al-Mustasfa Min 'Ilm al-Uṣul*, 233-236; (Ḥammād trans., 616-17).

⁶¹⁷ *Al-Mustasfa* 1:157, al-Ghazālī *al-Mustasfa Min 'Ilm al-Uṣul*, 234-235; (Ḥammād trans., 617-18). Qur'an 49:6, "... If a wicked person (*fasiq*) comes to you with any news (*naba'*), ascertain (*tabīnū*, make evident) the truth, lest ye harm people unwittingly..." Yusuf-Ali, *The Holy Qur'an*, 355.

on personal autonomy (*contra* slaves⁶¹⁸ and women⁶¹⁹), perceptual evidence (sight⁶²⁰ and fixed number⁶²¹), and virtuous character (kinship⁶²² and animosity⁶²³). All are considered outward indicators of inward piety and thus helpful in determining the trustworthiness of the speaker. Actions are also taken into account including the act of stepping forward to attest to or discredit the trustworthiness of another speaker. This act can impugn one's own trustworthy character, for to vouchsafe an untrustworthy report is *fisq* (sin) and nullifies the attestors' trustworthiness.⁶²⁴ Al-Ghazālī states the correct opinion on attestation is: "When trust (*thiqa*) accrues regarding his [the attestor's] insight and accuracy, his unqualified statement is sufficient," but even for an attestor "whose trustworthiness (*'adala*) is known" he may be vetted if "acquaintance with the conditions of his trustworthiness is not known."⁶²⁵ Interestingly, this introduces a regress since a reporter's attestation or discrediting is accepted or rejected based on *their* trustworthiness. In conflicts, the speaker understood to be most knowledgeable (on the pertinent issue) and the

⁶¹⁸ In early Islam, Muslims, Jews, and Christians were prohibited from being enslaved, thus slaves are *ipso facto* unbelievers (*kufir*). Cf. Zuhaili 8:260. Since lawful enslavement was restricted to prisoners of war and children of slaves, it was a common position, including that of al-Shafī', that matters of state did not belong to slaves and thus their report was not accepted for matters of testimony (*shahāda*). Cf. Zuhaili 6:563. However, a slave's report could be accepted regarding matters of transmission (*ruwiya*). Cf. Zuhaili 6:16 in *وهبة الزحيلي* and Wahbah Al-Zuhaili, *الفقه الإسلامي وأدلته* (Damascus: Dar al-Fikr, 1989). Al-Ghazālī follows al-Shafī' cf. *al-Mustasfa* 1:156, al-Ghazālī *al-Mustasfa Min 'Ilm al-Usul*, 233-234; (Ḥammād trans., 614).

⁶¹⁹ A husband was traditionally seen as having authority over his wife, and the Qur'anic Sura 2:282 indicates that a (financial) trial requires two male witnesses or one male witness and two women "so that if one of them errs, the other can remind her," which was frequently understood to mean women possessed inherent shortcomings. Cf. Yusuf-Ali, *The Holy Qur'an*, 28. and "Tafsir Ibn Kathir: Surah Al Baqarah Pt II".

⁶²⁰ As established with *mutawātir* reports, the best reports are grounded in first-person experience.

⁶²¹ The number of witnesses is a necessary but unknown entity to protect against conspiracy.

⁶²² A known genealogy secures against unacknowledged speakers and provides witnesses to the speaker's trustworthiness.

⁶²³ Al-Ghazālī appears to be thinking of people who have an unvirtuous habit that interferes with the quality of their testimony in *Al-Mustasfa*, 1:157: "There may be a person who is accustomed to backbiting and the judge is aware of this habit which he cannot refrain from." al-Ghazālī *al-Mustasfa Min 'Ilm al-Usul*, 234-235; (Ḥammād trans., 618).

⁶²⁴ *Al-Mustasfa* 1:163, al-Ghazālī *al-Mustasfa Min 'Ilm al-Usul*, 243-244; (Ḥammād trans., 633).

⁶²⁵ *Al-Mustasfa* 1:162, al-Ghazālī *al-Mustasfa Min 'Ilm al-Usul*, 241-243; (Ḥammād trans., 631-32). *Thiqa* (ثقة) indicates trust or confidence. When applied to a person or a source it means they are trustworthy, reliable, and/or an authority.

most trustworthy is to be deferred to. However, since the inner character of another can never be fully known, the only way a single report can generate certain knowledge in the mind of a listener is if it is the n^{th} time a report is heard causing it to achieve *tawātur* status.

Al-Ghazālī accepts the traditional view that the Qur'an, via the angel Gabriel, "is manifested to us [the Ummah] through the utterances of the Messenger." Thus, human testimony must also be capable of providing certain *'ilm* via *mutawātir* reports; however, he argues this *'ilm* accrues due to a syllogism that the agent may or may not be conscious of. Bernard Weiss (1985) and Wael Hallaq (1990) have addressed this unique Islamic epistemic concept but find al-Ghazālī's inclusion of a syllogism to be a sticking point.⁶²⁶ Outside of detailing the conditions for *mutawātir* reports, most literature focuses on two internal debates. First was whether or not *tawātur* produced *'ilm*, which few questioned because to deny that *tawātur* caused *'ilm* was to deny the certainty of the Qur'an.⁶²⁷ The second was whether the *'ilm* that accrued qualified as *ḍarūrī* (i.e., "necessary" or "immediate" non-discursive knowledge) or *muktasab* (acquired knowledge via reflection or intuition). In *al-Mustasfa*, al-Ghazālī dissects *tawātur* many ways, but makes it clear that the identity of the speaker is of paramount importance until a sufficient number of

⁶²⁶ Hallaq clarifies a further distinction of *tawātur* reports between *al-tawātur al-lafzī* which maintains the exact wording of the original report, and *al-tawātur al-ma'nawī* which maintains the central point by a sufficient number of variously worded transmissions. In practice, only the Qur'an meets *al-tawātur al-lafzī*, for Weiss notes that outside of the Qur'an, few *ḥadīths* were successfully argued as achieving the status. The most reliable *ḥadīth* typically qualified as *al-tawātur al-ma'nawī* while less reliable fell under *ahad* reports. Bernard G. Weiss, "Knowledge of the Past: The Theory of 'Tawātur' According to Ghazālī," *Studia Islamica*, no. 61 (1985): 81–105; Wael Hallaq, "On Inductive Corroboration, Probability, and Certainty in Sunnī Thought," in *Islamic Law and Jurisprudence*, ed. Nicholas Heer and Farhat Jacob Ziadeh (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1990), 1–31. Also cf. Bernard G Weiss, *The Search for God's Law: Islamic Jurisprudence in the Writings of Sayf al-Dīn al-Āmidī*, Revised ed. (Salt Lake City: University Of Utah Press ; International Institute of Islamic Thought, 2010), 283.

⁶²⁷ Two "non-Islamic sects, the Sumaniyya and the Barāhima, the archetypic deniers of prophecy" claimed that *tawātur* did not produced certainty; however so did "the Mu'tazilī al-Nazzām (d. 231/846) and [his denial] was deemed one of his infamies (*fadā'ih*)". Zyzow, *The Economy of Certainty*, 13.

reports ultimately renders the speaker's identity superfluous. He delineates five ranks of reports that can be taken as originating from Muhammed where the best reports confirm the identity of the speaker via personal experience, e.g. reports which include "I heard the Prophet say...".⁶²⁸ On this foundation are laid the four conditions of *tawātur*: First, the reporter must possess certain knowledge (not *zann*, assumption), for "the state of the informed is no more than the state of the informer," in an allusion to the principle of "no effect can be greater than its cause." Second, the reporter's knowledge must be necessary and based in perception. Third, the number of reporters must be *kāmil* (literally "complete") which is the technical term meaning "sufficient to rule out the possibility of collaborative fabrication", i.e. conspiracy.⁶²⁹ While previous scholars gave a definitive number based on significant revealed accounts, al-Ghazālī states explicitly that the number is known only to Allāh (according to Hallaq this became the dominant view sometime in the 10/11th century).⁶³⁰ Fourth is what Weiss rightly identifies as a "super condition", that all transmitters in between the original speaker and listener, whether intermediaries or the final reporter, also must maintain the first three conditions.⁶³¹

⁶²⁸ The first and best reports are based on personal experience of the Prophet, e.g. "I *heard* the Messenger of Allāh". Al-Ghazālī even states that "this [form] is impenetrable to doubt". Second are indirect reports, i.e., based on the report of another, where the Companion is "relying on what has been related to him, though not [actually] hearing it from him." Even though this statement might rely on a *tawātur* report, it permits doubt to enter. Third are reports of commands which open themselves to multiple interpretations (e.g., they can be an imperative form of an indirect report or at an least indicative that was interpreted as a command). Fourth are reports in which it is unknown whether the speaker is the prophet (in fact the speaker is completely unknown, e.g., "we are commanded."). Last are reports on historical behavior (e.g., "they used to do") which only prove that the observed action was permitted but is in no way tied to a speaker let alone that the speaker was the Prophet. 1:129-1:132, al-Ghazālī *al-Mustasfa Min 'Ilm al-Usul*, 196-200; (Ḥammād trans., 542-48).

⁶²⁹ In the original ordering, al-Ghazālī lists the number of transmitters as the fourth condition as a transition to a discussion on the sufficient number. Weiss, "Knowledge of the Past," 88–89.

⁶³⁰ Frequent numbers include 5, 12, 20, 40, 70, or 313 based on important numbers in the Qur'an. The number 70, for example, "is based on the alleged number of the followers of Moses, and 313 on the number of Muslim fighters in the battle of Badr." Hallaq, "On Inductive Corroboration, Probability, and Certainty in Sunnī Thought," 11.

⁶³¹ Weiss, "Knowledge of the Past," 90.

Al-Ghazālī's specific criteria regarding *tawātur* allow him to give theoretical answers to theological questions (such as why the reports in Judaism and Christianity do not qualify as *tawātur*, namely their failure qualifies them as *Mashhūr*) but also obscures the listener's actual epistemic processes in accepting testimony. The challenge in accepting a report as *tawātur* is that the listener does not have access to the first two conditions (namely that the reporter's knowledge is certain and based on perception). Al-Ghazālī does not see this as problematic, for in his section "Proof (*thabat*) that *tawātur* produces knowledge (*'ilm*)," the picture of *tawātur* he provides is a hybrid of experience (based on perception) and demonstration. He clearly desires for testimony to serve as a unique form of perception even for past events as if "hearing" a report was like listening to the original speaker. Hypothetically, just as normal perceptible sound emanates out and travels through the medium of air to reach the listener's ear, historical events seemingly create a "perceptible" (the *matn*) that emanates out and travels through the medium of other people to the listener's ear. The time it takes for the perceptible to travel is irrelevant permitting even distant observers a "direct" experience. So analogously even observers centuries removed from the original event can be said to experience the original event via the echo traveling through the populace.⁶³² The obvious point of dis-analogy is that testimony's medium is people which, unlike air, is not an unbiased failsafe transmitter. So, knowledge from *tawātur* must occur in the same way that one comes to know that "fire burns", "bread

⁶³² Hallaq includes a footnote regarding al-Ghazālī and the view of *tawātur* in his milieu: "The immediate knowledge which the *tawātur* engenders in the intellect eliminates, as we have already seen, any possibility of inference, thus connecting the original with the comprehension and sense-perception of the hearer. Therefore, when one hears a *mutawātir* number of identical reports transmitted, the knowledge that accumulates therefrom carries with it the actual original experience, almost as if it were the direct experience of the hearer himself. In *tawātur*, knowledge of past events stands on the same footing with particular sensory experiences, such as seeing a bird fly or experiencing pain when your finger touches fire." Hallaq, "On Inductive Corroboration, Probability, and Certainty in Sunnī Thought," 19 footnote 43.

satiates", or "alcohol intoxicates" through repeated perceptual experiences without being aware of how many experiences is necessary for the knowledge to accrue. A lone experience or hearing of a report that "Baghdad exists" is insufficient to produce knowledge. If the report is blindly accepted (*taqlīd*), then it merely generates *i'tiqad* (conviction). Thus, he syllogizes *tawātur*'s unique *kamil* recurrence condition. To determine that a report successfully managed to pass through generations undistorted requires the mind to engage in a rational deduction based on two premises provided in *al-Mustasfa*:

Text 4.3.1.1

But if you mean by it that the mere statement of a reporter (*al-mukhbiri*) does not yield decisive knowledge (*al-'ilm*) so long as two premises (*muqaddimatani*) are not set in the mind (*nafs*)—the first of which is that these [reporters], despite the difference of their circumstances, the diversity of their objectives, and their large number cannot together conspire to lie under any circumstance and that they will not agree except on truth; and the second being that they do agree on the reports (*al-ikhbar*) about the event and that knowledge about the truth is based upon these two premises (*muqaddimatani*) having come together—then to this we concede.⁶³³

We can reformulate this argument as follows:

- 1) If the only explanation for agreement about an event among a number of reporters (with different circumstances and objectives, and a number large enough to exclude the possibility of conspiracy) is the truth of that event, then the report of that event is decisive.
- 2) Such a group does agree in their report of an event.
- 3) The report of the event yields decisive knowledge (*al-'ilm*).⁶³⁴

⁶³³ *Al-Mustasfa*, 1:133, al-Ghazālī *al-Mustasfa Min 'Ilm al-'Usul*, 202-203; (Ḥammād trans., 551).

وان عنيتم به أن مجرد قول المخبر لا يفيد العلم ما لم ينتظم في النفس مقدمتان: إحداهما: أن هؤلاء مع اختلاف احوالهم، وتباين أغراضهم، ومع كثرتهم: على حال لا يجمعهم على الكذب جامع، ولا يتفقون إلا على الصدق. والثانية: أنهم قد اتفقوا على الإخبار عن الواقعة. فبيئتي العلم باصدق على مجموع المقدمتين. فهذا مسلم

⁶³⁴ In the nature of recurrence, Opwis likewise homed in on the same argument, rendering it as: "I – adequate information leads to inner conviction (I'tiqad); II – inner conviction leads to certainty; III – adequate information leads to certainty" which she pairs with: "I – if an adequate number has been reached, knowledge obtains (experience); II – we know that knowledge has been obtained. (conviction/internal observation); III – an adequate number has been reached." Felicitas Opwis, "Syllogistic Logic in Islamic Legal Theory: Al-Ghazālī's Arguments for the Certainty of Legal Analogy (Qiyās)," in *Philosophy and Jurisprudence in the Islamic World*, ed. Peter Adamson (De Gruyter, 2019), 108–9.

The first premise contains two criteria: the truth of the report, and the widespread recurrence of the report. Al-Ghazālī has the *entire* community in view including familial kinship (children of one father), homeland ("same quarter"), religion (all denominations), commoners (non-*walīs*), and even unbelievers (which many other schools omitted).⁶³⁵ This reflection (*nāẓir*) by itself would only allow the mind to assent (*tasdiq*) to the report producing mere belief (*'īmān*). However, with enough recurrences of the same report by many different reporters eventually the report emerges as *tawātur*. This is identical to how the knowledge regarding Baghdad's existence accrues for a listener after an unknown number of times experiencing the recurring report "Baghdad exists". Based on the given argument, al-Ghazālī is convinced no one can deny this and thus confirms that *tawātur* accrues by means of reflection (*nāẓir*) saying: "knowledge about the truth of a *tawātur* report accrues through these premises."⁶³⁶ At the unknown moment when the report becomes *tawātur* the importance of the reporters' trustworthiness, individually or collectively, becomes irrelevant. For *tawātur*, once accrued, is its own source of knowledge.

Recognizing a report as *tawātur* follows the Mu'tazilite notion where the agent "finds oneself" (*wajad nafsah*) convinced (*mu'taqid*) or in a state of certainty upon introspection. In the debate on whether *tawātur* is immediate or acquired knowledge, everything depended on how indubitable *tawātur* emerged from a series of merely probable reports.⁶³⁷ Using Mu'tazilite *Abu'l-Qasim al-Ka'bi* (d. 931) as a foil, however, al-Ghazālī

⁶³⁵ *Al-Mustasfa* 1:139, 1:140, al-Ghazālī *al-Mustasfa Min 'Ilm al-Usul*, 210-212; (Ḥammād trans., 566, 569).

⁶³⁶ *Al-Mustasfa* 1:133, al-Ghazālī *al-Mustasfa Min 'Ilm al-Usul*, 202-203; (Ḥammād trans., 552).

⁶³⁷ Hanbali Mujtahid scholar Abu Ya'la al-Farra' (d. 1066) provided an occasionalist answer in which Allāh directly created the knowledge in the listener on achieving the *kamil* number. Al-Ghazālī does not even hint

disrupts the traditional Mu'tazilite categories of necessary/immediate (*darūrī*) knowledge and acquired/reflective (*nāzīr*) knowledge, arguing "discursive knowledge is that in which it is possible for doubt to enter and for its conditions to change"⁶³⁸:

Text 4.3.1.2

All discursive (*nāzīr*) knowledge is such that a scholar [who has it] would find (*yajud*) himself doubting it and then seeking [it]. But we do not find (*nujud*) ourselves (*anfusana*) doubting the existence of Mecca, or the existence of al-Shafi'i...then seeking after them. If you mean by being discursive (*nāzīriyan*) anything pertaining to this, then we deny it.⁶³⁹

This argument can likewise be reformulated as:

- 1) All discursive (*nāzīr*) knowledge is possible to doubt (or change to enter).
- 2) Introspection indicates ("we find") that knowledge from *tawātur* (e.g., the existence of famous places and people) is not doubted.
- 3) Therefore, *tawātur* generates non-discursive (non-*nāzīr*) knowledge.⁶⁴⁰

Al-Ghazālī thus maintains that despite *tawātur*'s reliance on a syllogism, the knowledge it produces is classified not as *muktasb* but as *darūrī* (immediate), which on the face of it is an odd claim. However, he seems bound by the tradition of al-Shafi' to keep *tawātur* under necessary knowledge so as not to be doubted, despite his inclusion of a syllogism which would require *nāzīr*. Al-Ghazālī claims that the debate over whether *tawātur* is *darūrī* varies with the technical use of terminology, so instead he calls knowledge that does not

at this solution, but instead introduces the notion of a "hidden syllogism" which would be completely unnecessary if Allāh just created this knowledge (which is not to say that Allāh could not provide such knowledge which Hallaq notes. Hallaq, "On Inductive Corroboration, Probability, and Certainty in Sunnī Thought," 16–17.) This is further evidence that al-Ghazālī was not an occasionalist and should weigh on the discussion of al-Ghazālī's notion of causality especially in Discussion 17 of the *Tahāfut*.

⁶³⁸ *Abu'l-Qasim al-Ka'bi* was a famous Mu'tazilī in the Baghdādī school during the beginning of the scholastic phase of Mu'tazilī history. Cf. Racha Moujir el Omari, *The Theology of Abu L-Qasim Al-Balkhi/al-Ka'bi* (d. 319/931), vol. 99, Islamic Philosophy, Theology, and Science (Boston: Brill, 2016).

⁶³⁹ 1:133, al-Ghazālī *al-Mustasfa Min 'Ilm al-Usul*, 202; (Hammād trans., 550-51).

وكل علم نظري فالعالم به قد يجد نفسه فيه شاكاً، ثم طالبا. ونحن لا نجد أنفسنا شاكين في وجود مكة ووجود الشافعي رحمه الله، طالبين لذلك. فإن عنيتم بكونه نظريا شينا من ذلك، فنحن ننكره؛

⁶⁴⁰ Opwis likewise homes in on this argument rendering it as: "I – all necessary knowledge is certain; II – some necessary knowledge is speculative knowledge; III – some speculative knowledge is certain" Opwis, "Syllogistic Logic in Islamic Legal Theory," 107.

require reflection (*nāzīr*) "primary" (*bi-'awwaliyy*).⁶⁴¹ In so doing, al-Ghazālī creates enough room for the distinction that all "primary" knowledge is necessary, but not all necessary knowledge is "primary":⁶⁴²

Text 4.3.1.3

There may be an intermediary (*wāsiṭa*) present in the mind (*dihn*), though the person is not conscious of the way it intermediates and how knowledge accrues through it. Hence, it is called *primary* (*bi-'awwaliyy*); but it actually is not so, as in our statement "Two is half of four." For this is not known except through an intermediary, i.e., a half of the whole's parts equals the other half, where 'two' is one of the two parts, which is equal to the second part of the total, which is four; therefore, it is half. Thus, this kind of knowledge has accrued through an intermediary (*wāsiṭa*) that is clear and [actively] present in the mind. This is why when it is said, "Is thirty-six half of seventy two?" one needs to think about it until one knows this totality is divisible into two equal parts, each of them being thirty-six. Therefore, knowledge about the truth of a *tawātur* report accrues through these premises [Text 4.3.1.1]—and that which is similar cannot be primary (*bi-'awwaliyy*).⁶⁴³

⁶⁴¹ *Bi-'awwaliyy* (بأولى) is a derivative of 'awwal (أول), first) indicating the notion of first, original, initial, fundamental, elementary, etc. Al-Ghazālī inserts a passage that is best understood as presenting the Mu'tazilite distinction between necessary (unreflective) and non-necessary knowledge (reflective) based on what he immediately follows with in text 4.3.1.3. The reason for its inclusion appears to be explaining how the classification of *tawātur* became a debate, but perhaps ironically it appears to have been a source of confusion: "It is necessary for the mind to become conscious of these two premises so that it can acquire knowledge to assent with. Even if these premises are not formed in the mind systematically by words, [the mind] is conscious of them. Thus, the affirmation is obtained while one is not conscious of being conscious of it. The truth of the matter about this is that it becomes necessary knowledge if it is an expression of what accrues to [the mind] without any intermediary, like our statement that the eternal cannot be that which is originated, and the originated cannot be that which is nonexistent. Therefore, this is not necessary, for it resulted through the intermediacy of the two mentioned premises. But if it is an expression of what accrued to without the formation of an intermediary in the mind, then it is necessary." *Al-Mustasfa* 1:133, al-Ghazālī *al-Mustasfa Min 'Ilm al-Uṣul*, 202-203; (Ḥammād trans., 551).

ولا بد وأن تشعر النفس بهاتين المقدمتين. حتى يحصل العلم والتصديق. وإن لم تتشكل في النفس هذه المقدمات بلفظ منظوم. فقد شعرت بها حتى حصل التصديق وإن لم يشعر بشعورها بها. وتحقيق القول فيه أن: الضروري إن كان عبارة عما يحصل بغير واسطة. كقولنا: ((القديم لا يكون محدثاً))، ((والموجود لا يكون معدوماً)) فهذا ليس بضروري، فإنه حصل بواسطة المقدمتين المذكورتين. وإن كان عبارة عما يحصل بدون تشكل الواسطة في الذهن، فهذا ضروري،

⁶⁴² Weiss's commentary is helpful: "It would be in keeping with Ghazālī's way of thinking to speak of necessary knowledge as 'source knowledge' and discursive knowledge as 'derived knowledge.' It must be emphasized, however, that the terms 'source' and 'derived' are used here in a logical rather than strictly epistemological sense. All logical deduction must start somewhere. Necessary knowledge is this starting point." Weiss, "Knowledge of the Past," 99.

⁶⁴³ *Al-Mustasfa* 1:133, al-Ghazālī *al-Mustasfa Min 'Ilm al-Uṣul*, 202-203; (Ḥammād trans., 551-52).

ورب واسطة حاضرة في الذهن لا يشعر الإنسان بوجه توسطها، وحصول العلم بواسطتها، فيسمى أولياً، وليس بأولي— أعني العلم- كقولنا: ((الاثنتان نصف الأربعة)) فإنه لا يعلم ذلك إلا بواسطه، وهو أن النصف أحد جزئي الجملة المساوي للآخر، والاثنتان أحد الجزئين المساوي الثاني من جملة الأربعة فهو إذن نصف. فقد حصل هذا العلم بواسطة، لكنها جلية في الذهن حاضرة. ولهذا لو قيل: ستة وثلاثون هل

He describes non-primary yet necessary knowledge as "that which we find ourselves compelled to" which includes *tawātur* and the mathematical sciences since they require reflection (*nāzīr*) and yet yield certain knowledge.⁶⁴⁴ This is a departure from the traditional use of *darūrī*, (necessary).⁶⁴⁵ Those who maintain that *tawātur* is *darūrī* (necessary) in the sense of "primary" do so mistakenly because they believe it results without an intermediary when they are merely unconscious of it. Since such a reflection must be present in the soul to acquire knowledge from *tawātur*, al-Ghazālī claims it *is* present in the soul even when the knower "is not conscious of the way it intermediates and how knowledge accrues through it." Here we can see the influence of Avicenna and his "hidden syllogism."⁶⁴⁶ Al-Ghazālī uses the phrase "hidden syllogism" (*qiyās khafī*) in *al-Mustasfa* and *Mahakk* to explain how *tajriba* creates universal judgements through repeated observations: "And if you contemplate this you will know that *al-'aql* has already understood after repetition of the senses by means of a hidden syllogism (*qiyās khafī*) that sketches in it, and it is not cognizant of that syllogism."⁶⁴⁷ In text 4.3.1.1, al-Ghazālī appears to have an assumed

هو نصف اثنين وسبعين؟ يفكر فيه إلى تأمل ونظر، حتى يعلم أن هذه الجملة تنقسم بجزأين متساويين أحدهما ستة وقلاتون. فإذا العلم بصدق خبر التواتر يحصل بواسطة هذه لمقدمات، وما هو كذلك فهو ليس بأولى.

⁶⁴⁴ Griffel makes a similar observation saying "Mathematics and to a certain extent also the natural sciences count for him as apodictical sciences that yield necessary knowledge which is indeed indubitable." Griffel, "Taqlīd of the Philosophers," 288. Footnote 49.

⁶⁴⁵ Citing *tawātur*, Opwis also recognizes this: "In this he departs from the view commonly held among Muslim theologians (Mutakallimūn) that acquired knowledge (*muktasab*) is not necessary (*darūrī*) and, hence, not certain." Opwis, "Syllogistic Logic in Islamic Legal Theory," 102. Cf. Binyamin Abrahamov, "Necessary Knowledge in Islamic Theology," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 20, no. 1 (1993): 20–21.

⁶⁴⁶ Deborah Black notes that in Avicenna *tawātur* relies on a hidden syllogism that is the real cause for certitude Black, "Constructing Averroes' Epistemology," 103.

⁶⁴⁷ *Al-Mustasfa* 1:46, al-Ghazālī *al-Mustasfa Min 'Ilm al-Usul*, 68; My translation.

وإذا تأملت هذا عرفت أن العقل قد باله بعد التكرار على الحس بواسطة قياس خفي ارتسم فيه، ولم يشعر بذلك القياس؛
Al-Ghazālī offers a nearly identical explanation of the hidden syllogism in his explanation of *tajriba* as a source of knowledge in *Mahak*. Cf. al-Ghazālī, *Mahakk al-nazar (fi fann al-mantiq)*, ed. تاليف الامام المجدد (Jiddah: Dār al-Minhāj lil-Nashr wa-al-Tawzī', 2016), 120.

premise, just as Black sees in Avicenna's solution, "that it is impossible for all these witnesses to be mistaken or colluding – a sort of anti-conspiracy principle."⁶⁴⁸

It is here regarding the role of the syllogism that I differ from both Weiss and Haeq's interpretation of knowledge from *tawātur*. While Weiss nowhere mentions Avicenna or his influence via a hidden syllogism, his analysis of al-Ghazālī's understanding of *tawātur* is spot on with one exception. He states that al-Ghazālī maintains that experiential and testimonial knowledge "must be regarded as necessary precisely because the reasoning upon which they are based *is* hidden."⁶⁴⁹ This makes sense assuming the common Mu'tazilite distinction, however, al-Ghazālī redefines the terms and, as text 4.3.1.3 shows, *tawātur* is not *ḍarūrī* because knowers are unaware of the syllogism (i.e. it is hidden), but because the knowledge is *compelled* by the syllogism whether one is conscious of it or not. Its hidden status is irrelevant. Since al-Ghazālī compares *tawātur* to experience, Hallaq assumes that the syllogism must be based on inductive logic as opposed to deductive logic.⁶⁵⁰ While Haeq is accurately picking up on testimony's (and *tajriba*'s) ultimate reduction to perception and, in this case, inductive inference, the hidden syllogism of *tawātur* is built on deductive Aristotelian logic.⁶⁵¹ As we will recall, al-Ghazālī maintains

⁶⁴⁸ Black, "Constructing Averroes' Epistemology," 103. Footnote 19. Griffel speculates similarly regarding experience in Avicenna that recurrence is either due to chance (and thus *'ilm* will never accrue) or due to truth (and thus *'ilm* will necessarily accrue): "[*Tajriba*] in Avicenna seems to be based on the underlying assumption that when two things repeatedly happen together, they do so either due to chance or due to necessity." Griffel, *Al-Ghazali's Philosophical Theology*, 209.

⁶⁴⁹ Weiss continues: "Where knowledge occurs without there being a clear-cut consciously utilized logical basis which the intellect is able to retain and refer back to, it makes perfect sense to say that the knowledge imposes itself upon the intellect." Weiss, "Knowledge of the Past," 101.

⁶⁵⁰ He claims that "it is precisely here [tawātur] where the Muslim juristic conception of logic drastically differs from its Aristotelian and Western post-Aristotelian counterpart." Hallaq, "On Inductive Corroboration, Probability, and Certainty in Sunnī Thought," 18. In a lengthy footnote he questions Weiss (1984) for differentiating *tawātur* from "inductive knowledge" based on "a generalization from particular experiences." Ibid. Footnote 43

⁶⁵¹ Since Hallaq's project focuses on Sunni legal thought and not al-Ghazālī specifically, he may be speaking of common jurists and religious scholars whom al-Ghazālī was intentionally trying to teach how to apply

that "thinking" is syllogistic: "Know that the meaning of thought is to bring two pieces of knowledge (*mariftayni*) into the heart to produce from them a third [piece of] knowledge."⁶⁵² Ulrich Rudolph argues al-Ghazālī thought that "every scholar should learn how to use syllogisms correctly [and] in order to do so, he should study Aristotelian logic, which is the authoritative and unsurpassed presentation of syllogistic reasoning."⁶⁵³ It remains that both Avicenna and al-Ghazālī utilized deductive syllogisms to generate what today would qualify as inductive knowledge.

Al-Ghazālī desires to work within the tradition of orthodoxy, but the question remains if syllogizing *tawātur* truly emerges as a source of knowledge on the same level as demonstration, in providing certain knowledge, *'ilm*. Two problems have been raised. The first problem comes by al-Ghazālī's own admission, namely he is skeptical of people's ability to accurately conduct logic which seems to indicate that obtaining certain knowledge via *tawātur* is the ideal rather than the rule. Rudolph compiles a list of ways al-Ghazālī sees the *'avāmm* and *khavāṣṣ* incorrectly using logic and thus the "limits of his own methodological programme."⁶⁵⁴ Insufficient methodological knowledge and thus mixing argument types is common, but the most damaging is a failure to use proven

Aristotelian logic. Opwis credits al-Ghazālī a "major role" in "The conscious and deliberate application of Aristotelian syllogistic logic in legal reasoning." Opwis, "Syllogistic Logic in Islamic Legal Theory," 95.

⁶⁵² *Iḥyā'*, 1801. Book 39, bayan 1. My translation.

اعلم: أن معنى الفكر هو إحضار معرفتين في القلب ليستثمر منهما معرفة ثالثة.

⁶⁵³ Al-Ghazālī wrote a number of works "stressing the importance of Aristotelian logic", to use Rudolph's words. These include *Mi'yar al-ilm* (The Standard of Knowledge), *Mihakk al-nazar* (The Touchstone for Speculation), *al-Qistas al-mustaqim* (The Correct Balance), and prominent portions of *al-Mustasfā* and *al-Munqidh*. Rudolph summarizes the goal of these works: first to explain the terminology (which he used in *Tahāfut*); "Second and more important, they were supposed to teach religious scholars how to apply Aristotelian logic within their own disciplines. Apparently, al-Ghazālī was convinced that everybody working in the religious sciences had to learn the methods of proof and the conditions of demonstration. This seems to be the reason why he explained these rules in more than one introductory writing and why his various explanations were situated on different intellectual levels." Rudolph, "Al-Ghazālī on Philosophy and Jurisprudence," 73–74.

⁶⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 75–76.

premises. The latter occurs because the jurists presume the premise is evident (*wadih*) or use the juridical sources of the Qur'an and the ḥadīth as premises in ways that are incompatible with demonstration (parallel to al-Fārābī and Maimonides' complaint regarding Kalām).⁶⁵⁵ The clearest example is the acceptability of the *mashhūr* tradition in practical juridical decisions, but not for establishing *'ilm*.⁶⁵⁶ However, al-Ghazālī (following Avicenna) does not bar the use of religious propositions in syllogism.⁶⁵⁷ The problem becomes one of hermeneutics and interpretation.⁶⁵⁸ This leads to the general

⁶⁵⁵ "They [premises from the Qur'an and hadith] are neither universally valid nor do they meet the conditions of certainty (*yaqīn*), which would be the prerequisites of being a premise in a demonstrative syllogism." Ibid., 76.

⁶⁵⁶ Cf. *al-Mustasfa* 1:134 & 1:139. Zyzow notes that al-Ghazālī follows the position of al-Nazzām in using the concept of the *mashhūr* tradition to explain why the traditions of the Jews and Christians failed to meet *tawātur* criteria. Martin Whittingham explores this in his aptly titled article "How Could So Many Christians Be Wrong?". Regarding Christianity, the early reports regarding Christ are merely *ahad* reports that later gained widespread acceptance but were either based on a lie or were non-perceptual. Hence, in *al-Mustasfa* al-Ghazālī claims Christians did not lie but perceived the Romans crucifying a man who Allāh made to look like Jesus. Per Whittingham, in "following the implicit logic of al-Ghazālī's discussion, the Christian error over the crucifixion is based on an innocent mistake, rather than on a conspiracy to defraud. Nevertheless, the report is not *mutawātir*, since it was not based on sound sense perception." Al-Ghazālī turns to consensus to dismiss the claims of "the Jews [who] have decisively held the falsity of the prophethood of Jesus and Muhammad...and they exceed the number [required] for *tawātur*. But their decisiveness is improper, for they assumed what is not decisive to be decisive." Cf. *Al-Mustasfa* 1:180, al-Ghazālī *al-Mustasfa Min 'Ilm al-Usul*, 267-268; (Ḥammād trans., 681). Zyzow, *The Economy of Certainty*, 18–19.; Martin Whittingham, "How Could So Many Christians Be Wrong? The Role of Tawātur (Recurrent Transmission of Reports) in Understanding Muslim Views of the Crucifixion," *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* 19, no. 2 (2008): 173.

⁶⁵⁷ Ömer Mahir Alper claims religious propositions can be counted among true and certain propositions and thus used in syllogisms. Ömer Mahir Alper, "The Epistemological Value Of Scriptural Statements In Avicenna: Can Religious Propositions Provide The Premises Of Philosophical Demonstrations?," in *Philosophy and the Abrahamic Religions: Scriptural Hermeneutics and Epistemology*, ed. Torrance Kirby, Rahim Acar, and Bilāl Başal (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2013), 175–90. Opwis makes the same claim: "The premises used in legal analogy, namely Qur'anic statements and recurrent hadiths, constitute certain premises from which certain conclusions obtain. Yet, the dilemma persists that most of the textual bases of analogy are not known with certainty. Rather, the majority of hadiths, which make up the bulk of the source material of Islamic law, are classified as isolated or singular (*ahad*) reports; only a handful of Prophetic sayings are deemed to belong to the category of recurrent hadiths." Opwis, "Syllogistic Logic in Islamic Legal Theory," 106.

⁶⁵⁸ Al-Ghazālī agrees with Avicenna's assessment except he rejects that Qur'anic language is symbolic. Per Alper: "Although Avicenna recognizes the truth, certainty, and superiority of prophetic knowledge, he does not approve of using all religious propositions dependent upon this knowledge as premises of philosophical demonstration. This is because the prophet recasts revealed knowledge and conveys it to his society in symbolic terms in order to ensure its comprehension by everybody." Alper, "The Epistemological Value Of Scriptural Statements In Avicenna: Can Religious Propositions Provide The Premises Of Philosophical Demonstrations?," 182–83.

incompatibility of jurisprudence and philosophical logic. While al-Ghazālī held that *qiyas* (analogy), the primary tool of legal reasoning, could be technically converted into a syllogism, "in practice," to quote Rudolph, "his advice is nuanced."⁶⁵⁹

The second problem is raised by Weiss and Hallaq who point out that the certainty from *tawātur* is subjective, not objective. "Finding" that what one once knew as merely probable is now known certainly after an unknown number of recurrences varies with each person's experience. Worse, the objective conditions of *tawātur* are inaccessible at the time of hearing: 1) that the reporter possess certain knowledge is "the desideratum of the dispute"; 2) that the original report is based on perception is indeterminable by the listener; and most importantly 3) a large (ultimately unknown) number of reporters is a poor objective basis for knowledge.⁶⁶⁰ To the first, al-Ghazālī will turn to the trustworthy character of the speaker, which for the prophet is infallible. To the second, the perceptual nature is incorporated in the report itself, e.g. "I heard the prophet say...", but truly this amounts to two claims, "I heard the prophet say *p*" and "*p*" where the perceptual requirement only applies to the first. To the third, al-Ghazālī is unconcerned with the numbers given the epistemic work of the hidden syllogism even though it too is dependent on numbers. All that notwithstanding, al-Ghazālī is ultimately content with the subjective nature of the knowledge produced: "If the complete number [for *tawātur*] is reported and certain knowledge does not accrue about their truthfulness, then necessarily the [report] is

⁶⁵⁹ Rudolph elaborates with examples before concluding that "the connection between logic and jurisprudence as established by al-Ghazālī is less firm than we might have expected. In this respect his goal seems to have been theoretical rather than practical. The *fuqaha* should know the general rules of Aristotelian logic but they were not expected to apply them to every legal question." Rudolph, "Al-Ghazālī on Philosophy and Jurisprudence," 79.

⁶⁶⁰ Cf. Weiss, "Knowledge of the Past," 96–97; Hallaq, "On Inductive Corroboration, Probability, and Certainty in Sunnī Thought," 12.

decisively a lie." If the listener does not find certain knowledge within despite a *kamil* number of reporters, he concludes the reporter made a mistake or lied.⁶⁶¹ So while a report must meet the conditions to become *tawātur*, it is the subjective experience of whether or not the listener "finds themselves" in a state of certainty that serves as the indicator as to whether a report has met the conditions and is therefore true. His goal is contentedly subjective with the aim of showing that the knowledge and repose of the soul produced by *tawātur* is as certain as one's own inner experience that they are sad or knowledge from *tajriba* that bread satiates hunger.⁶⁶² This fits his primary goal to establish the trustworthiness of the *'ulama* or *khāṣṣ al-khavāṣṣ*⁶⁶³ and thus his Ṣūfī goal to lead, or deliver, people to their own personal encounter with Allāh and his word.⁶⁶⁴ As a result, these difficulties may explain why al-Ghazālī and the materialist camp were reluctant to consider anything outside the Qur'an as *tawātur*, and since the Qur'an itself is considered a miracle this may indicate that for a report to obtain *tawātur* status is nothing short of miraculous.

⁶⁶¹ The testimony of one erroneous or unvirtuous testifier spoils the batch, but there is no means of determining who or when: "Either all the reporters lied or one of them lied," and since "testimony is not accepted from four who are known to have a liar or conjecturer among them." *Al-Mustasfa*, 1:138, al-Ghazālī *al-Mustasfa Min 'Ilm al-Usul*, 208-210; (Ḥammād trans., 564).

⁶⁶² Opwis arrives at a similar reading: "In al-Ghazālī's interpretation, the Qur'an and recurrent *ḥadīths* as sources of knowledge lead to certain, necessary knowledge (*tawātur* yields *'ilm ḍarūrī yaqīnī*), the truthfulness of which is not objectively verifiable but determined in the mind (soul) of a person, subjectively. It is reached upon a person's 'knowledge' or 'conviction' that a report is true." Opwis, "Syllogistic Logic in Islamic Legal Theory," 110.

⁶⁶³ Opwis concludes: "His emphasis on the psychological factors of establishing certainty puts the focus not so much on the source of law itself as on the interpreters of the sources, the *'ulama*. They are the ones who know with certainty that the sources of the law and the analogies derived therefrom are true." *Ibid.*, 112.

⁶⁶⁴ This solution ultimately parallels William James understanding of religious experience in that such experiences are justified for the experiencer, but such justification cannot be shared. Cf. William James, "The Varieties of Religious Experience," in *Writings 1902-1910*, ed. Bruce Kuklick (New York: Library of America, 1987), 1-478.

4.3.2 Divine Testimony

The third and highest level of knowledge, and second mode of knowing, is from revelation (*wahy*) which al-Ghazālī covers under the "science of unveiling" (*'ilm al-mukāshafa*) alongside the science of practice (*'ilm al-mu'āmalā*) as the two parts of the Science of the Path to the Afterlife (*'ilm tarīq al-ākhirā*), the science al-Ghazālī wishes to revive (one science for *al-malakūt*, the spiritual world, and *al-mulk*, the physical world, respectively).⁶⁶⁵ In the science of unveiling, prophecy (*nabuwwa*) and inspiration (*ilhām*) emerge as the two ways humans may obtain knowledge from *al-malakūt*, but are rare. Prophecy is reserved for the prophets and thus ceased with Muhammad. Inspiration, however, is a nearly identical alternative available to scholars who, according to the famous ḥadīth, are heirs to the prophets.⁶⁶⁶ This reopens "knowledge from on high", however, these unveilings are reserved for the *khāṣṣ al-khavāṣṣ*, so al-Ghazālī states: "These sciences are not recorded in books and are not discussed by him whom God has blessed with any of them except among his own circle of intimates who partake with him of them through discourses and secret communication."⁶⁶⁷ So while al-Ghazālī slips tantalizing glimpses into his major works, he never provides a full and consistent account. Al-Ghazālī's concept of prophecy has already been extensively studied, so my aim is to analyze prophecy and inspiration as forms of testimony from a divine speaker to a human listener and his

⁶⁶⁵ Treiger explains that the science of practice (i.e., polishing the mirror) is the means to the science of unveiling which is the means to "the attainment of the cognition of God (*ma'rifat Allāh*) in this world and of felicity (*sa'āda*) in the afterlife." It should also be noted that al-Ghazālī uses "Unveiling" (*mukāshafa*) in his own unique way, but the term, like the concept *dhawq*, is Sufi in origin. Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought*, 39, 42.

⁶⁶⁶ As we will see in Text 4.3.2.2, al-Ghazālī claims inspiration only differs from revelation in that prophets are able to see the angel who imparts knowledge in the latter. This is made possible by following Avicenna's account in which prophecy is merely the highest power of the human intellect.

⁶⁶⁷ *Iḥyā'*, Book 1, *bāb* 2, *bayān* 2. al-Ghazālī, *The Book of Knowledge*, 42.

subsequent audience despite their "perceptual" description.⁶⁶⁸ Even though neither prophecy or inspiration follow the common corporeal process of hearing spoken or reading written words, insofar as an agent receives the transmission of knowledge from the mind of another agent, that transmission qualifies as testimonial in nature. However, the rare and esoteric nature of certain divine knowledge raises an important question, how can such knowledge be verified? The answer aligns with al-Ghazālī's desire to revive the Science of the Path to the Afterlife, personal experience.

Traditional Ash'arism offered two means of verifying the truth claims of a prophet, miracles and/or the trustworthiness (*ṣadīq*) of the prophet. Al-Ghazālī finds both wanting. Miracles (alone) are denounced as a verification for prophethood in the *Munqidh* since they are easily confused with magic and deception making them susceptible to doubt through logical defeaters.⁶⁶⁹ Verification of prophethood via the prophet's virtuous life becomes circular if the prophet reveals what it means to live a virtuous life. Without fully denying miracles, al-Ghazālī opts more for the latter option but escapes the circularity per Griffel, by adopting Avicenna's notion of prophecy with verification through personal experience.⁶⁷⁰ Al-Ghazālī does not accept Avicenna's notion of prophecy wholesale, but

⁶⁶⁸ Cf. Griffel, "Al-Gazali's Concept of Prophecy"; M. Afifi al-Akiti, "The Three Properties of Prophethood in Certain Works of Avicenna and Al-Ghazālī," in *Interpreting Avicenna: Science And Philosophy In Medieval Islam-Proceedings Of The Second Conference Of The Avicenna Study Group*, ed. Jon McGinnis and David C. Reisman (Brill, 2004), 189–210. M. Afifi al-Akiti clearly outlines al-Ghazālī's reliance on Avicenna for the "three properties of prophethood", and their relation to the imaginative faculty, intellectual faculty (i.e. intuition and ḥads), and the human soul (i.e. motive faculty as opposed to the perceptive faculty).

⁶⁶⁹ "Therefore, seek sure and certain knowledge of prophecy in this way [i.e., *dhawq*], not from the changing of the staff into a serpent and the splitting of the moon. For if you consider that sort of thing alone, without adding the many, indeed innumerable, circumstances accompanying it, you might think it was a case of magic and deception, and that it was a 'leading astray' coming from God Most High, because 'He leads astray whom He will and rightly guides whom He will', and the problems connected with apologetic miracles would confront you. Furthermore, if your faith were based on a carefully ordered argument about the way the apologetic miracle affords proof of prophecy, your faith would be broken by an equally well-ordered argument showing how difficulty and doubt may affect that mode of proof." al-Ghazālī, *Munqidh Min Al-Dalāl*, 75.; (McCarthy trans. 100).

⁶⁷⁰ Griffel, "Al-Gazali's Concept of Prophecy."

rejects: first, its distinctly syllogistic process, i.e. the prophet intuiting (*hads*) the middle term;⁶⁷¹ and second, akin to Plato's "noble lie", its symbolic rendering of the Qur'an with the intent of virtuously bettering the masses who are incapable of obtaining philosophical knowledge by any other means since this indicates the prophets and their messages are not *ṣadīq* but *takdīb*, i.e., lying.⁶⁷² Al-Ghazālī opts for an experiential rather than demonstrative form of prophecy and a plain sense rather than imagistic reading of the Qur'an. In the *Faysal al-Tafriqa bayna al-Islam wa-al-zandaqa* (*On the Boundaries of Theological Tolerance in Islam*, henceforth *al-Tafriqa*), he shifts the traditional Ash'arite emphasis on *tasdiq* through Allāh (*tasdiq bi-Allāh*) to *tasdiq* through a messenger (*tasdiq bi-rasul*) to provide a method of verifying Muhammad's *ṣidq*. According to Griffel, "only this transformation allows al-Gazalī to develop an elaborate system to verify the *ṣidq* of the Islamic message and of its messenger."⁶⁷³ Thus the propositions of the prophet can be verified, and assented to, insofar as they correspond to a proper object of being. The Qur'an is thus the propositions of the Prophet's reports of real objects of being. *Al-Tafriqa* then outlines five possible degrees of being to account for types of revealed propositions.⁶⁷⁴ Thus, to deny the correspondence between revealed reports and one of these degrees of being is *kufir* (unbelief). This is because revelation, Griffel states, is a "literal representation

⁶⁷¹ Al-Ghazālī does maintain that the intellect is the highest faculty, and this is most developed in the prophet.

⁶⁷² Griffel, "Al-Gazalī's Concept of Prophecy," 120. For more on the noble lie in philosophy in the Islamic world, cf. Nicholas Oschman, "Al-Fārābī Metaphysics, and the Construction of Social Knowledge: Is Deception Warranted If It Leads to Happiness?" (Milwaukee, Marquette University, 2020).

⁶⁷³ The latter is a more philosophical attitude per Griffel, "Al-Gazalī's Concept of Prophecy," 123–25.

⁶⁷⁴ These are: real being (*wujud dati*), comprising all objects outside the human mind; sensible being (*wujud hissi*), comprising being perceived through sense perception; imaginative being (*wujud hayali*), comprising being within the imaginative faculty; conceptual being (*wujud 'aqli*), comprising being of a conceptual or intellectual nature (often to explain metaphorical language); and similar being (*wujud sibhi*) comprising accidental attributes (often to explain emotions and other attributes used of Allāh but not univocally applicable to Allāh). *Ibid.*, 127–30.

of objects that are outside the text" or "being" "which is outside of language."⁶⁷⁵ Regardless of whether the being corresponds to historical or psychological events, what matters is the prophet's capacity to accurately reflect the knowledge of those events in a report (this assumes the Qur'an is both a divine and human created text where Allāh is the "ultimate author" by causing the mental states of Muhammad who then coined the words).⁶⁷⁶ Verification once again draws on experience (*tajriba*). *Munqidh* shows that just as one identifies a jurist or a physician via one's knowledge of jurisprudence and medicine, one can verify that one like Muhammad is a prophet:

Text 4.3.2.1

If it occurs to you to doubt whether a particular individual is a prophet or not, certainty will be gained only by becoming acquainted with his circumstances, either through witnessing (*mushāhadah*) or from *tawātur* and hearsay. For when you are familiar with medicine and jurisprudence, you can recognize jurists and physicians by witnessing (*mushāhadah*) their circumstances, and also by hearing their sayings, even if you have not witnessed (*tashahada*) them. Moreover, you are quite capable of knowing that al-Shafī'i (God's mercy be upon him!) was a jurist and that Galen was a physician-and that with a knowledge based on fact, not by *taqlīd* from another. But by your learning something about jurisprudence and medicine and then perusing their writings and works: thus you will acquire a necessary (*ḍarūrī*) knowledge of their scientific status.⁶⁷⁷

Just as with *tawātur* and experiential knowledge (e.g. bread satiates, etc.), knowledge that Muhammad is a prophet and his report is true becomes *ḍarūrī* "by sampling what he said about the acts of worship and their effect on the purification of hearts."⁶⁷⁸ Thus, for the

⁶⁷⁵ The purpose of *al-Tafrīqah* is "to develop a criterion how to distinguish a tolerated interpretation (*ta'wil*) of revelation from one that is considered unbelief and apostasy from Islam." Ibid., 134–36.

⁶⁷⁶ "His capacity to represent correctly his knowledge of past and future events or his mental states is what the unbelievers deny. The believers assume that Muhammad has expressed the right words that represent the events in past and future or the states of his soul exactly as they were or will be." Ibid., 140.

⁶⁷⁷ al-Ghazālī, *Munqidh Min Al-Dalāl*, 74.; (McCarthy trans. 99). Tr. mod.

فإن وقع لك الشك في شخص معين، أنه نبي أم لا، فلا يحصل اليقين إلا بمعرفة أحواله، إما بالمشاهدة، أو بالتواتر والتسامع، فإنك إذا عرفت الطب والفقہ، يمكنك أن تعرف الفقهاء والأطباء بمشاهدة أحوالهم، وسماع أقوالهم، وإن لم تشاهدهم، ولا تعجز أيضاً عن معرفة كون الشافعي رحمه الله فقيهاً، وكون جالينوس طبيباً، معرفة بالحقيقة لا بالتقليد عن الغير. بل بأن تتعلم شيئاً من الفقہ والطب وتطالع كتبهما وتصانيفهما، فيحصل لك علم ضروري بحالها.

⁶⁷⁸ Ibid.; (McCarthy trans. 99).

'*avāmm*, the personal experience of soul purification (and experiencing the truth of proverbial sayings) after following the Prophet's dictates leads to certain knowledge that Muhammad was indeed Allāh's prophet.⁶⁷⁹ For the *khavāṣṣ*, Avicenna's understanding of the soul provides verification.⁶⁸⁰ This is fitting since his psychology is understood as an extension of his cosmology.⁶⁸¹ For the *khāṣṣ al-khavāṣṣ*, they must verify the prophet through their own divine experience.

The focus in *al-Tafriqa* is on the end result of prophecy, on *what* is received, namely a word or proposition in the mind of the Prophet who then reports it to his listeners, but in the *Ihyā'* al-Ghazālī reveals *how* one can obtain their own experience and a glimpse of *how* the experience occurs. In one sense it would be sufficient if al-Ghazālī, keeping with Ash'arite tradition, left transmission a mystery as he does in both the *Faysal* and the *Munqidh*, but he repeatedly offers foretastes, arguably to entice his readers to obtain their own experience or from his own suppressed desire to share his experience. Sūfism's influence is on full display in al-Ghazālī's guidance: 1) disavowal of material concerns and connections; and 2) seek solitude for prayer and meditation. The meditative practice consists of no distractions (even the Qur'an) and an "empty heart and concentrated purpose"

⁶⁷⁹ Al-Ghazālī also offers experiencing the truth of Qur'anic sayings as proof: "Consider, for example, how right he was-God's blessing and peace be upon him!-in his saying: 'Whoever acts according to what he knows, God will make him heir to what he does not know'; and how right he was in his saying: 'Whoever aids an unjust man, God gives the latter dominion over him'; and how right he was in his saying: 'Whoever reaches the point where all his cares are a single care, God Most High will save him from all cares in this life and the next.' When you have had that experience in a thousand, two thousand, and many thousands of instances, you will have acquired a necessary knowledge which will be indisputable." al-Ghazālī, *Munqidh Min Al-Dalāl*, 74-75.; (McCarthy trans. 99-100).

⁶⁸⁰ According to Griffel, "the body of theoretical knowledge that verifies the prophet's claim is knowledge of the soul, i.e., psychology. Such an explanation of prophecy in terms of psychology is part of al-Gazali's project in the *Faysal*. The yardstick for the verification of a prophet lies, therefore, in the judgment whether his deeds and words fulfill the criteria and have the effects that knowledge about the soul (laid down in psychological literature) ascribes to the actions of a true prophet." Griffel, "Al-Gazali's Concept of Prophecy," 143.

⁶⁸¹ Giannotti calls al-Ghazālī's psychology "inextricably woven into the fabric of his cosmology." Giannotti, *Al-Ghazālī's Unspeakable Doctrine of the Soul*, 148.

so nothing but Allāh enters the mind. He describes an exercise speaking "Allāh, Allāh" aloud repeatedly until it disappears from the tongue but is preserved in the heart and continuing still until the form and letters disappear from the heart so only "the ideal meaning" remains. Then, al-Ghazālī says: "Upon doing this, if his desire is sincere, his intention pure, and his perseverance good, and if his lusts do not draw him aside nor the suggestions of the self (*ḥadīth al-nafs*) engross him with the ties of this present world, there will shine forth the gleams of reality into his heart."⁶⁸² The realities are those recorded on the Preserved Tablet (*lawḥun mahfuz*) from Sura 85:21-22 which contains all divine knowledge, material or immaterial, and occupies a prominent place in his cosmology. These are described first "like a blinding flash of lightning" but may become more frequent or continue for longer with greater superiority of one's nature and "moral characteristics."⁶⁸³ Later in book 35 of the *Iḥyā'*, this is described as the first step in which one eyewitnesses the Pen (another item in his cosmology) inscribing certain knowledge on the heart.⁶⁸⁴ This emphasis on *how* leads to five impediments which can "veil" the mirror and thus an explanation of how prophecy and inspiration work.

Al-Ghazālī builds on the mirror metaphor to discuss five ways the reflection of knowledge in the heart can be veiled by five obstructing causes (covered in *bayan* 6). Knowledge of divine realities can be prevented by intellectual, moral, and willful imperfections attributed to the mirror namely: 1) being incompletely formed, i.e. imperfect nature found in youths; 2) being corroded with dirt, rust, and dullness, i.e. disobedience to

⁶⁸² *Iḥyā'*, 894-896. Book 21. (Skellie Trans. *The Religious Psychology of Al-Ghazzali*, 74-75).

⁶⁸³ *Iḥyā'*, 894-896. Book 21. (Skellie Trans. *The Religious Psychology of Al-Ghazzali*, 75-76). For more on "light" as knowledge or intelligence cf. Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought*, 21.

⁶⁸⁴ Cf. *Iḥyā'*, Book 35. al-Ghazālī, *Faith in divine unity & trust in divine providence = Kitāb al-Tawḥīd wa'l-Tawakkul; book XXXV of the revival of the religious sciences = Ilḥa' 'ulum al-dīn*, trans. David B. Burrell (Louisville, Ky.: Fons Vitae, 2001), 19-20.

Allāh and lustful appetites; 3) being "turned away from" the Preserved Tablet, i.e. focused on livelihood or never trying to reflect on divine realities; 4) being veiled, i.e. a *taqlīd* belief held since youth or on account of dogma;⁶⁸⁵ 5) not being correctly oriented toward the Preserve Tablet due to ignorance, i.e., combining two items of knowledge in the "process of deduction" (*tariq al-'itibar*) to acquire knowledge (allusion to the syllogism).⁶⁸⁶ The notion of these personal failings serving as a veil, however, leads to an explanation of how knowledge is transmitted from Allāh to the human heart. In *Ihyā'* book 21, *bayan* 8, al-Ghazālī provides a dense explanation that establishes a process linking divine knowledge to the Preserved Tablet for both prophecy and inspiration in contradistinction to humanly acquired knowledge:

Text 4.3.2.2

The true doctrine is that the heart has the capacity to have revealed in it the true nature of reality in all things. But this is prevented by the intervention of the five aforementioned causes. These are as a veil which hangs down between the mirror of the heart and the Preserved Tablet (*al-lawh al-mahfūz*), which is engraved with all that Allāh has decreed until the day of resurrection. The reflection of the real nature of knowledge from the mirror of the Tablet upon the mirror of the heart is like the reflection of an image from one mirror to another mirror opposite it. The veil between the two mirrors is sometimes removed by the hand, and at other times by a gust of wind which moves it. Thus the winds of divine favor sometimes blow and the veils are drawn aside from the eyes of hearts so that there is reflected in them something of that which is written upon the Preserved Tablet. Sometimes this takes place during sleep, and thereby there is revealed that which will come into being in the future. The veil is completely lifted by

⁶⁸⁵ Al-Ghazālī is adamant that *taqlīd*, accepting human testimony blindly, prevents the reception of divine testimony: "The obedient man who has overcome his appetites and devotes himself exclusively to a certain specific reality may not have this revealed to him because it is veiled from him by some belief which he has held from his youth and which he has blindly followed and accepted in good faith. This belief walls him off from the true nature of the Real and prevents there being revealed to his heart anything contrary to the strict interpretation of the doctrines which he has blindly accepted. This too is a great veil which overshadows most Muslim theologians (*Mutakallimūn*) and those who are fanatical followers of the schools (*madhahib*), may indeed most righteous men who think upon the kingdom of the heavens and the earth for they are veiled by their blindly followed dogmas which are hardened their souls and firmly fixed in their hearts, and have become a veil between them and the perception of realities." *Ihyā'*, 889. Book 21. (Skellie Trans. *The Religious Psychology of Al-Ghazzali*, 50–51).

⁶⁸⁶ *Ihyā'*, 888–892. Book 21. (Skellie Trans. *The Religious Psychology of Al-Ghazzali*, 48–54).

death when the covering is withdrawn. At other times revelation is made during waking hours and the veil is lifted by a secret favor from Allāh, and some of the marvels of knowledge glisten in the heart from behind the curtain of the unknown. This may be like a dazzling flash of lightning, or it may be continuous up to a certain point, but its continuance is most rare. Revelation then does not differ from acquiring as regards the knowledge itself, its seat, and its cause, but it differs only in the removal of the veil for this is not accomplished by man's volition. General inspiration does not differ from prophetic inspiration in any of these respects, but only in the matter of the witnessing (*mushāhadah*) the angel who imparts the knowledge; for our hearts attain knowledge only by means of the angels. To this the Most High refers in the statement, "It is not for any mortal that Allāh should speak to him, except by inspiration, or from behind a veil; or by sending a messenger who reveals, by His permission, what He pleases" (42:50-51).⁶⁸⁷

In the following *bayan*, al-Ghazālī gives two analogies to clarify this reality. The first is a pool fed by water from the surface or by digging and removing dirt from the bottom until "pure water is reached." The heart is likened to the pool and knowledge to the water fed by two doors (i.e., two modes): one door is the five senses as incoming surface streams of knowledge from *al-mulk*. The second door is a "secret" of the heart's inner fountain only opened to those who devote themselves to "the remembrance of Allāh" which flows "purer and more constant, and perhaps more copious and abundant" from the real natures of things written on the Preserved Tablet.⁶⁸⁸ The second metaphor describes a contest between

⁶⁸⁷ *Ihyā'*, 895. Book 21. (Skellie Trans. *The Religious Psychology of Al-Ghazzali*, 71–72). Tr mod.

وحقيقة القول فيه: أن القلب مستعد لأن تنجلي فيه حقيقة الحق في الأشياء كلها، وإنما حيل بينه وبينها بالأسباب الخمسة - التي سبق ذكرها -، فهي كالحجاب المسدل الحائل بين مرآة القلب وبين اللوح المحفوظ الذي هو منقوش بجميع ما قضى الله به إلى يوم القيامة. وتجلي حقائق العلوم من مرآة اللوح في مرآة القلب بضاهي انطباع صورة من مرآة في مرآة تقابلها، والحجاب بين المرأتين تارة يزال باليد وأخرى يزول بهبوب الرياح تحركه. وكذلك قد تهب رياح الألفاظ وتتكشف الحجب عن أعين القلوب فينجلي فيها بعض ما هو مسطور في اللوح المحفوظ، ويكون ذلك تارة عند المنام فيعلم به ما يكون في المستقبل. وتمازج ارتفاع الحجاب بالموت فيه ينكشف الغطاء، وينكشف أيضاً في اليقظة حتى يرتفع الحجاب بلطف خفي من الله تعالى، فيلمع في القلوب من وراء ستر الغيب شيء من غرائب العلم تارة كالبرق الخاطف، وأخرى على التوالي إلى حد ما. ودوامه في غاية الندور فلم يفارق الإلهام الاكساب في نفس العلم ولا في محله ولا في سببه، ولكن يفارقه من جهة زوال الحجاب، فإن ذلك ليس باختيار العبد ولم يفارق الوحي الإلهام في شيء من ذلك بل في مشاهدة الملك المفيد للعلم، فإن العلم إنما يحصل في قلوبنا بواسطة الملائكة، وإليه الإشارة بقوله تعالى: <<وما كان لبشر أن يكلمه الله إلا وحياً أو من وراء حجاب أو يرسل رسولا فيوحي بإذنه ما يشاء>>.

⁶⁸⁸ "The heart then is like the reservoir and knowledge like the water. The five external senses are like the streams. Knowledge may possibly be conducted to the heart by means of the streams of the senses and the consideration of things observed until it is thus filled with knowledge. It is also possible to stop up these streams from it by solitude and retirement and averting the eyes from seeing, and then to resolve in the depths of the heart upon purifying it and taking away from it the layers of coverings until the fountain of knowledge

Chinese and Byzantine Greeks to impress a king with their craftsmanship on opposite walls of a portico. A veil is erected between the walls while the groups work. The Byzantines create a colorful scene on their wall while the Chinese only furbish and polish their wall. When the veil is lifted, the Byzantine work reflects in the Chinese wall which has become like a polished mirror.⁶⁸⁹ Both illustrations explain the difference between learned or philosophic knowledge (surface waters and Byzantine colorful wall) and prophetic or saintly knowledge (inner pool and Chinese reflective wall). Prophecy and inspiration are both forms of inner perception (eye of prophecy) tied to the psychology of the prophet or saint as opposed to outer perception. The knowledge obtained is the same but is achieved by two different modes requiring labor of a different sort. The inspirational knowledge promoted by Ṣūfism obtains a higher degree of certainty due to its non-discursive nature as personal experience immune from doubt and error.

The two analogies reveal strong Neoplatonic influences on al-Ghazālī for the *how* of both prophecy and inspiration rely on his cosmology.⁶⁹⁰ First, al-Ghazālī describes how the soul must be prepared for an unmediated experience with the divine parallel to *Enneads*

bursts forth from within it." *Ihyā'*, 896-898. Book 21, *bayan* 9; (Skellie Trans. *The Religious Psychology of Al-Ghazzali*, 78-84).

⁶⁸⁹ "The story is told that once the Chinese and the Byzantine Greeks vied with one another before a certain king as to the beauty of their workmanship in decorating and painting. So, the king decided to give over to them a portico so that the Chinese might decorate one side of it and the Byzantine Greeks the other side and to let a curtain hang down between them so as to prevent either group from looking at the other. And he did so. The Byzantines gathered together numberless strange colors, but the Chinese entered without any color at all and began to polish their side and to furbish it. When the Byzantines had finished the Chinese claimed that they had finished also. The king was astonished at their statement and the way in which they had finished the decorating without any color at all. So, they were asked, 'How have you finished the work without any color?' They replied, 'You are not responsible for us; lift the veil.' So, they lifted it, and behold on their side there shone forth the wonders of the Byzantine skill with added illumination and dazzling brilliance, since that side had become like unto a polished mirror by reason of much furbishing. Thus, the beauty of their side was increased by its added clearness." *Ihyā'*, 898-900. Book 21 *bayan* 9. Trans. Skellie *The Religious Psychology of Al-Ghazzali*, 84-85.

⁶⁹⁰ Al-Ghazālī's silence regarding Neoplatonism comes as no surprise since prophecy and cosmology (upon which it is dependent) are key topics in the science of unveiling, which as an esoteric science is not to be committed to writing. Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought*, 39.

V.1.6-8. Second, he assumes a Neoplatonic cosmology structured in accordance with Avicenna's cosmological structure with several modifications,⁶⁹¹ including (like other philosophical ideas) theological language masking the Neoplatonic elements:⁶⁹² the One is Allāh; the Universal Intellect (Avicenna's Active Intellect) is the Pen (*qal'am*) representing various ideas (including Allāh's plans for the world or judgement, *hukm*) which goes by various names (e.g. Fire, Holy Spirit, and an angel), but serves to record Allāh's decree (*qadā*) on the Preserved Tablet; the World Soul is the Preserved Tablet (*al-lawh al-mahfūz*) and contains Allāh's ideal plans for the world. The differentiating factor of "better sight" for prophets manifests as a direct connection to the Universal Intellect while inspiration must proceed through the World Soul. The human soul as a mirror "polished" by increasing in virtue that can be turned inward in hopes that the last "veil" is removed to reflect the engravings on the Preserved Tablet which is also a mirror that reflects Allāh. Polishing the mirror is thus a precondition for, but not a guarantee of, inspiration. This direct experience of the Preserved Tablet is the *how* of prophecy which he relates to *dhawq* as "the real meaning of prophecy."⁶⁹³

Putting everything together, this prophetic sequence qualifies as testimony despite its perceptual description (i.e., tasting and witnessing) since objects of knowledge

⁶⁹¹ Al-Ghazālī rejects al-Fārābī's and Avicenna's theory of emanationism and makes the active intellect the First Intellect as opposed to the tenth and lowest intellect. For more on al-Ghazālī's cosmology see Appendix A of Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought*. al-Ghazālī's nominalism and possible occasionalism can also create problems causality for the causal chains required for the cosmology of the *falsifa*.

⁶⁹² Given the esotericism of the topic, these correlations have led to scholarly disagreement. Treiger states that Griffel's assessment that "in al-Ghazālī's thought, just as in Avicenna's Throne Philosophy, 'the well-guarded tablet' refers to both the first creation as well as the active intellect, without clearly distinguishing between these two," is incorrect, claiming that the Preserved Tablet cannot be identified with the Active Intellect. Cf. Griffel, *Al-Ghazālī's Philosophical Theology*, 194; Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought*, 107 endnote 27.

⁶⁹³ This is further evidenced by frequent references to light, the light of prophecy, and al-Ghazālī's autobiographical experience of light being cast into his breast. al-Ghazālī, *Munqidh Min Al-Ḍalāl*, 36-37, 74-75.; (McCarthy trans. 66, 99-100).

(including propositions & words) are being communicated from a speaker to a listener, albeit in a manner that is not audible or written in the traditional sense. Al-Ghazālī describes all knowledge as coming from Allāh, oftentimes inscribing it on the heart directly, but the full explanation of the process incorporates intermediating angelic intelligence.⁶⁹⁴ Using Muhammad as our example of the *khāṣṣ al-khavāṣṣ* or the prophet due to his superior virtues, he is able to prepare himself for a *dhawq* experience in which he receives divine intelligibles from Allāh transmitted through the Pen and/or the Preserved Tablet. Muhammed then reports these realities (beings) from his psychological experience as the propositions (*muhbar*) of the Qur'an. The faithful place their trust in the Prophet Muhammad to accurately report the knowledge Allāh provided to form the Qur'an.⁶⁹⁵ Thus the Qur'an is Muhammed's testimony to what Allāh transmitted to his heart, i.e. divine testimony.⁶⁹⁶ In this sense, the prophet is yet another instrument in a chain of Allāh's transmission: this preserves the means by which Allāh "speaks" inwardly through the heart and also drives people to polish the mirror of their heart to hear Allāh speak directly.

As a result, there is only one method of testimonial grounding for both human and divine testimony. Prophets are deemed trustworthy like any other expert insofar as revealed

⁶⁹⁴ Frank, "Al-Ghazali on Taqlid," 226. This ambiguity can be attributed to al-Ghazālī's strong penchant for instrumental causality, i.e., secondary causality, but the result is he often collapses the efficient and final cause since the causation of the final cause is more attributable to Allāh than the intermediary efficient cause(s). Al-Ghazālī appears to have relied on secondary causality even more so than Avicenna per Griffel who shows how al-Ghazālī "reproduces al-Farabi's explanation of how 'the First, which is God, is the proximate cause of the existence of the secondary causes and of the active intellect'". Griffel cites the London Manuscript attributed to al-Ghazālī which references al-Fārābī, *al-Siyāsa al-madaniyya*. Griffel, *Al-Ghazali's Philosophical Theology*, 145.

⁶⁹⁵ Listeners put their faith in the Prophet and his revelation when they "trust the veracity of the report...he affirms the relationship that these objects have to one another just as they are reported." Griffel, "Al-Gazali's Concept of Prophecy," 127.

⁶⁹⁶ *Al-Mustasfa* 1:100, "When we consider the manifestation of rules in relation to us, they do not become manifest except by the statements of the Messenger, for we do not [directly] hear the words from Allāh, nor from Jibril. Thus, the book is manifested to us through the utterances of the Messenger. So, if we consider that which manifests these rules, it is only the utterances of the Messenger, since *ijma'* indicates that they [jurists] relied on his statements." al-Ghazālī *al-Mustasfa Min 'Ilm al-Usul*, 151; (Ḥammād trans., 451-52).

propositions fit the internal knowledge people already have whether through previous: a) testimony due to the propositions accurately reporting the "being" of historical and non-sensory events; or b) rational cogitation due to conformity to reason or verification (often via syllogisms). Insofar as Muhammad's claims conform to the knowledge a listener has within and those claims prove effective in purifying one's soul, Muhammed's trustworthy nature is verified and his status as prophet speaking on behalf of Allāh is confirmed.⁶⁹⁷ As with the certainty of *tawātur*, knowledge from the prophet, or even through *dhawq*, provides a subjective certainty. In verifying a prophetic word, the listener compares the revealed message with what has already been firmly established in their mind and in testing the prophet. Certainty is thus achieved through *the immediate notion of truth the believer finds within*. For the few who can obtain *dhawq*, the knowledge from their experience is not only subjective (personal to them), but even if it were communicable, they are not able to do so. Any knowledge conveyed could only be verified by the same means of prophecy where listeners would once again test and experience inner peace. So long as the agent obtains certainty, even if it is subjective, al-Ghazālī has achieved his aim.

4.4 Conclusion: Testimonial Assessment

As with Saadya, al-Ghazālī's theory of testimony does not fit cleanly within contemporary frameworks. Due to differing cognitive states and phenomenological experiences of epistemic grounds, al-Ghazālī could be understood as granting different testimonial theories to different social positions: anti-reductionism is acceptable for the masses but it does not truly provide knowledge (and acts as a veil to divine testimony for scholars and

⁶⁹⁷ Griffel argues that a prophet's work falls into the field of psychology whether as an ordinary believer's personal experience on matters of the soul as reflecting the Qur'an or as a scientist's grasp of Avicenna's books on the soul where a prophets' words correspond with lived experience (regardless of how the correspondence is obtained). Griffel, "Al-Gazali's Concept of Prophecy." 143.

saints); reductionism for scholars who should obtain knowledge for themselves or verify all testimonial knowledge they receive; and conceivably IVT for saints who verify received knowledge through an inner assurance via a religious experience. The common denominator for all three is trust and the necessity of the virtues. Ghazālī's theory of testimony is thus best captured by Virtue Epistemology to account for his strictest vetting of original speakers and looser acceptance of testimony from confirmed trustworthy speakers. *Tawātur* becomes less VE since it turns to reductionism to avoid circularity when paired with an ethical divine command theory. However, *tawātur* ultimately draws on the trustworthiness of a multitude of speakers, meaning listeners must develop their own epistemic and moral virtues in order to acquire testimony by relying on trust.

4.4.1 Is al-Ghazālī an anti-reductionist?

Al-Ghazālī is clearly very critical of the anti-reductionist position that one may assent to a proposition without verification, yet al-Ghazālī also: makes anti-reductionistic allowances for the *'avāmm*; claims that some forms of testimony qualify as sources of knowledge; and holds a potential testimonial faculty. These seem to be a product of al-Ghazālī's developmentalist epistemology which assumes everyone must begin by blindly relying on authority. In the early stages, namely before the age of reason, an anti-reductionist approach is a viable path to knowledge. However, trust can also account for this early stage, which al-Ghazālī explicitly states. In describing the grounds of belief amongst the Bedouin who followed Muhammad without seeing miracles or evidence, al-Ghazālī names a responsible faculty (*quwa*), the estimative faculty (*al-wahm*). Relying only on one's *wahm* however results in *taqlīd*, the worst epistemic ground for belief.⁶⁹⁸ The effects of *al-wahm*

⁶⁹⁸ Frank describes *wahm* as what Aristotelian rhetoric appeals to or the contemporary notion of seemings. "Wahm, however, is fundamental to our apperception and sense of the world in which we live. Its judgements

are what lead to the bootstrapping problem introduced in chapter 1 and people are called to forsake, especially scholars.⁶⁹⁹ Practically speaking, al-Ghazālī must make an allowance for *taqlīd* since for the vast majority of people *taqlīd* can never fully be expunged and true knowledge never fully obtained. The best practice is a form of risk mitigation through identifying trustworthy speakers as seen in his attitude toward the Companions who he claims should be trusted until shown *fisq* (impious).⁷⁰⁰ These necessary allowances aside, al-Ghazālī firmly comes out against anti-reductionist positions found in the Ḥanafīs who advocated for accepting the report of any Muslim until proven otherwise. As shown in the discussion on human testimony, he advocates for only believing reports which have been authenticated.

As we saw with Saadya, al-Ghazālī also lists *tawātur* as a "source" of knowledge but only in an equivocal sense to the contemporary notion of a non-reducible genus of knowledge. First, *tawātur* accounts for a small percentage of all testimony such that even if it did qualify as a source of knowledge, it would be the exception that proved the rule. While al-Ghazālī desires *tawātur* to be a non-reducible source of knowledge akin to

are founded in the complexly articulated world that experience gives us formed and structured by habit and language; it is the source of our initial reactions to things, people, and events. It is the foundation of common sense and so is of signal importance in influencing, if not in determining, what we will accept as plausible or will reject as absurd." Frank, "Al-Ghazali on Taqlid," 237.

⁶⁹⁹ This passage on *wahm* and *taqlīd* from Frank effectively captures the bootstrapping problem: "When one undertakes formal study and inquiry in order to achieve a greater and more rigorously founded knowledge of things, the capacity of the *wahm* to impose its unreflected judgements remains, often undiminished. One is impressed by his masters. His acceptance of them as experts who really know tends to impose a new layer of *taqlīd* and one in which *wahm*, since it is one of the leading powers of the soul, continues to function, albeit in a kind of higher realm, one in which the objects one deals with are the expressions and terms of the formal language that appear as bearers of formal concepts. The student's intellectual habits are formed by what he reads under the direction of his masters ("bil-kutubi was-sama'") and he comes to see things more or less as they see them, articulating his understanding according to their conception and language and taking for granted what they take for granted." Ibid., 238.

⁷⁰⁰ Al-Mustasfa, 1:164; al-Ghazālī *al-Mustasfa Min 'Ilm al-Usul*, 244-245; (Ḥammād trans., 635). Also Cf. 1:172 where al-Ghazālī claims no criterion or permissibility can be given for what the Messenger has been obligated to promulgate. al-Ghazālī *al-Mustasfa Min 'Ilm al-Usul*, 256-257; (Ḥammād trans., 600).

perception, it only produces necessary knowledge within the mind after reflection. Thus, the epistemic work obtaining certainty is performed neither by the report nor by the fact of an unknown number of concurring reports, but from a hidden syllogism which deduces knowledge from these facts about the reports. As such, al-Ghazālī parallels knowledge from *tawātur* to knowledge from experience which is the result of inductive inference. In both cases, the knowledge clearly reduces to a species of observation which nearly fits Hume's reductionism.

As with Saadya Gaon, this leaves the question of divine testimony which at first appears to be a source of knowledge with no means of verification. Unlike Saadya who held the Mu'tazilite view that the scripture was created to preserve *tawhīd*, al-Ghazālī maintains that the Qur'an is uncreated (Muhammad's presumed coinage of the words can be accounted for via a robust divine determinism).⁷⁰¹ Nevertheless, even if the Qur'an came into being through the Prophet's reports of the beings existing within his psychology, this would require the appearance of a reflection of a real object to qualify as generation when such a reflection qualifies more naturally as transmission. For where al-Ghazālī speaks of Allāh directly inscribing on the heart with the Pen, these analogies are clear allusions to the transmission of divine knowledge through divine instruments. It remains a category mistake to render Allāh's creation of the Pen (agent intellect) or Preserved Tablet as the generation of knowledge in a substrate via testimony.⁷⁰² Thinkers in the lands of Islam clearly maintained that Allāh's very being is the true source of knowledge of which all

⁷⁰¹ On the uncreated nature of the Qur'an, cf. *al-Jam*, 137-138. Chapter 3 *fasl* 2; (Hamid Trans. 102).

⁷⁰² This holds true for the Mutazilite view. cf. Altmann, "Saadya's Theory of Revelation: It's Origin and Background," 150-51.

other knowledge is a mere reflection such that the Preserved Tablet and the human heart are metaphorically described as mirrors merely receiving the reflection of this knowledge.

4.4.2 Is al-Ghazālī a reductionist?

A strong case can be made that al-Ghazālī is a reductionist. As Text 4.3.0.2 shows, no truth can come from reports save through *tawātur* (which itself depends on inductive inference reducible to non-testimonial sources). *Taqīd*, the default understanding of testimony, is roundly criticized because people blindly accept reports without performing any personal verification. In juridical testimony, compulsory assent only comes from seven types of reports based on their form of verification. The verification of a prophet requires trying and testing what is reported to see if they correspond with reality or advance one's moral purity. Al-Ghazālī provides even stronger theoretical verification in the form of syllogisms in *al-Qistas al-Mustaqim* (*The Just Balance*, henceforth *al-Qistas*). There he claims the Qur'an can be trusted since it provides proofs which conform to reason. Al-Ghazālī gives the perfect example arguing how it is logical that Allāh sent the words of Qur'an upon mortal men:

1. Moses is a man.
2. Moses is one upon whom the Scripture was sent down.
3. Some man has had sent down upon him the Book [the Qur'an].⁷⁰³

Al-Ghazālī even claims that "the greater number of the proofs [*adilla*] from the Qur'an follow in this manner" which aid in dispelling doubt and verifying for believers that the claims are trustworthy.⁷⁰⁴ Thus, al-Ghazālī says he "gives credence to the veracity of

⁷⁰³ All reference to al-Ghazālī's *al-Qistas al-Mustaqim* are to the Arabic edition by Mahmood Bejou (Damascus: Damascus International Press, 1993), with page numbers provided in parentheses to the English translation by D.P. Brewster al-Ghazālī, *The Just Balance*, ed. D. P Brewster (Lahore: Ashraf, 1978), 32. al-Ghazālī's *al-Qistas al-Mustaqim*, 32-33. Chapter 4.; (Brewster trans. 32). Cf. Martin Whittingham, *Al-Ghazālī and the Qur'an: One Book, Many Meanings* (London: Routledge, 2011), 92.

⁷⁰⁴ al-Ghazālī's *al-Qistas al-Mustaqim*, 32-33. Chapter 4.; (Brewster trans. 33).

Muhammad and of Moses" not on account of their miraculous signs and wonders, but in the same way as one's doubts about mathematics are dispelled by their teacher in arithmetic.⁷⁰⁵ In all these instances, it can be claimed that one should not accept knowledge via testimony unless it is "verified" in a way that reduces to sense perception or reason. Listeners ultimately assess the truthfulness of the Prophet like any other knowledge expert. Even knowledge transmitted from *al-malakūt* is accepted via personal experience such that Treiger likens mystical *dhawq* to "intellectual vision."⁷⁰⁶

Verification undeniably plays a major role in al-Ghazālī's theory of testimony, but, more often than not, what is being verified is not the report itself, but the identity of the speaker and whether or not they can be trusted: "acting becomes necessary only when the source is identified so that his condition and trustworthiness can be examined."⁷⁰⁷ Arguably it is this crucial distinction of what is being verified that causes al-Ghazālī to be considered so radically different than al-Fārābī, Avicenna, and Averroes. The seven reports that compel assent all contain an element of trust: 1) the hidden syllogism of *tawātur* requires the premise of a sufficient number of trustworthy reporters such that lying and conspiracy is impossible; 2) Allāh cannot lie and thus is automatically trustworthy; 3-7) are based on the trustworthiness of Muhammad who derives his trustworthiness from Allāh (or the Ummah which derives its trustworthiness from Muhammad). Even the mystical experience of Allāh, which seems so committed to a personal perceptualizing, is achieved through a process that begins with repentance and ends with trust to achieve the "final aim and highest station" which is "love of God."⁷⁰⁸

⁷⁰⁵ al-Ghazālī's *al-Qistas al-Mustaqim*, 58-59. Chapter 8.; (Brewster trans. 72-73).

⁷⁰⁶ Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought*, 57.

⁷⁰⁷ *Al-Mustasfā* 1:167; al-Ghazālī *al-Mustasfā Min 'Ilm al-Uṣul*, 249-250; (Ḥammād trans., 644).

⁷⁰⁸ Cf. *Iḥyā'*, Book 35

4.4.3 al-Ghazālī's Virtue-Theoretic of Testimony

As with most classical and medieval thinkers, al-Ghazālī's thought is built on a theory of virtue. Space does not permit a full analysis, but Mohamed Ahmed Sherif has argued in *Ghazālī's Theory of Virtue* that ethics is the central theme most representative of the disciplines al-Ghazālī contributed to and virtue "pervades all the important characteristics of the [ethical] theory."⁷⁰⁹ Virtue (*fadilah*) or good character (*khuluq*), which are used interchangeably, and are the product of a mean obtained through habituation, learning (authority), and divine gifting.⁷¹⁰ Since the heart is the locus of both material and spiritual being as reflected in his terminology of heart (*qalb* and soul/"self" (*nafs*), spirit (*rūh*), and intellect (*'aql*),⁷¹¹ it is unsurprisingly, the four principal virtues (literally "mothers of character" *ummahāt al-akhlāq*) are psychologically based in a faculty or passion (*hawā*): wisdom (obtained by the trained deliberative faculty, *'aql*), temperance (obtained by the concupiscent faculty), courage (obtained by the irascible faculty), and justice (obtained though both temperance and courage).⁷¹² Al-Ghazālī's quest to "revive" the Islamic community to the Science of the Path to the Afterlife consists of both the practical and theoretical in which each requires the other for its obtainment. Reason is declared the noblest faculty obtainable by ethics, i.e., polishing the mirror, and yet it is reason (not jurisprudence) that permits the discovery of what is good and bad.⁷¹³ Ethics is classified in

⁷⁰⁹ Sherif, *Ghazālī's Theory of Virtue.*, 2, 22.

⁷¹⁰ In *Iḥyā'* Book 24, chapter 4, al-Ghazālī likens the virtuous mean to an "ant tossed into the middle of a circle surrounded by fire" in which the ant will settle on a point in the middle. al-Ghazālī, *Abstinence in Islam: Kasr al Shahwatayn (Curbing the Two Appetites) from Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-Dīn (Revivification of the Sciences of Religion)*, ed. Caesar E Farah (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1992), 85. Obtaining virtue by divine gift, namely being born virtuous as in the case of Jesus, is what truly offsets al-Ghazālī's conception from Aristotle's. Sherif, *Ghazālī's Theory of Virtue.*, 29–34.

⁷¹¹ Sherif, *Ghazālī's Theory of Virtue.*, 25.

⁷¹² *Ibid.*, 39.

⁷¹³ Rudolph explains that Al-Ghazālī answers the question "Is there a serious relationship between Jurisprudence and ethics?" in the negative. Instead, "Al-Ghazālī's answer refers to neither the Qur'an nor to

different sections of the *Iḥyā'* as a religious science, a rational science, and a mystical discipline. This shows, to quote Sherif, al-Ghazālī "purposefully brings all of them together and blends them in such a way that they complement each other and form a whole, which is not merely the sum of the parts, but has its own characteristics as an ethical theory."⁷¹⁴ So we see that just as with Saadya, moral and intellectual wisdom are considered coextensive. What differentiates the *khavāṣṣ* from the *'avāmm* is not just their intellectual capacity, but also their moral virtue. Timothy Gianotti explains that in the *Iḥyā'*, "The term 'knowledge' then, is used to mean both the practical and theoretical dimensions of the Science of the Way of the Afterlife."⁷¹⁵ This mirrors that "intelligence" (one of al-Ghazālī's renderings of *'aql*) is a quality of the heart.⁷¹⁶ Since intelligibles are the reflections of real beings in the heart as a mirror, they are obscured by the "rust and dullness" of vice. Each person's intelligence is thus directly linked to their virtuous character.

It is the predominant role of trust in al-Ghazālī's theory of testimony which is best accounted for via a virtue-theoretic framework thus placing it within VE. I have identified at least five separate terms used in the verification of speakers that are connected to the current notion of trust (*ṣadīq*, *'amana*, *'adala*, *yuhasinu*, *thiqa*). Trust is also linked to the heart, the center of al-Ghazālī's epistemology. Just as *'aql* was identified as the differentiator between humans and animals (cf. Text 4.2.2.2), al-Ghazālī quotes the Qur'an

legal assessments but simply to human intellect. As he explains, it is our intellect that enables us to solve this problem and to distinguish what has to be distinguished, namely 'true' and 'false' in propositions or beliefs. Rudolph, "Al-Ghazālī on Philosophy and Jurisprudence," 80–81.

⁷¹⁴ Sherif, *Ghazālī's Theory of Virtue.*, 21–22.

⁷¹⁵ Gianotti, *Al-Ghazālī's Unspeakable Doctrine of the Soul*, 119. Also Cf. Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought*, 18.

⁷¹⁶ Cf. Treiger, *Inspired Knowledge in Islamic Thought*, 19 footnote 23. As shown above, al-Ghazālī outlines five reasons a heart is like a mirror in its inability to reflect truth: Cf. *Iḥyā'*, 890. Book 21, chapter 6; (Skellie Trans. *The Religious Psychology of Al-Ghazzali*, 48–52).

to make the same claim of the heart and specifically its "special property and noble quality" to receive Allāh's trust (*'amana*): "This refers to his possession of a special characteristic which distinguishes him from the heavens, the earth, and the mountains, by which he is enabled to bear the trust (*'amana*) of Allāh. This trust is experiential knowledge and the divine unity."⁷¹⁷ Al-Ghazālī here is referencing a discussion in Book 35 of the *Ihyā'* on mystical virtues (i.e., Nearness to God, Fear of God, and Trust in God) which are developed in a sequence starting with repentance and ending on trust to achieve the ultimate aim of Divine Love.⁷¹⁸ Sherif provides a succinct summary of *Ihyā'* book 35 part 1:

Knowledge of divine unity combined with belief in the perfection of the existing world produces the positive disposition of trust in God or reliance of the heart on God alone. Once a man is convinced that God is the only doer, and that He has complete knowledge and power over men together with absolute mercy and providence, then his heart will inevitably rely on Him and have complete trust in Him.⁷¹⁹

In book 35, part 2 of the *Ihyā'* al-Ghazālī further outlines three levels of trust in God: That of one's trust in their lawyer whom they must assist and feel compelled to check; that of a child in their mother whom they have complete trust (but safeguards their will); and the highest is to make oneself Allāh's willing instrument in every regard.⁷²⁰ This final state is described in a mix of both the practical and theoretical as a stage of completion: "Such a one is confirmed in his certainty by the fact that he is a channel for action, willing, knowing,

⁷¹⁷ *Ihyā'*, 890. Book 21, chapter 6; (Skellie Trans. *The Religious Psychology of Al-Ghazzali*, 53–54). Cf. Qur'an 33:72: "Verily we offered the Trust (*al'amana*) to the heavens and earth and the mountains, but they refused to bear it, but man bore it".

⁷¹⁸ The sequence is: repentance, patience, gratitude, hope and fear, hope, fear, poverty, asceticism, divine unity and trust, and finally love.

⁷¹⁹ Sherif, *Ghazālī's Theory of Virtue.*, 143.

⁷²⁰ *Ihyā'* 35, bayan 2, "The third stage is the highest: it is to be in the presence of God Most High, whether active or at rest, like a corpse in the hands of the one washing, differing only in that while one regards oneself to be dead, the eternal omnipotence moves one to action, as the hand of the one washing it moves the corpse." al-Ghazālī, *Faith in divine unity & trust in divine providence = Kitab al-Tawhid wa 'l-Tawakkul ; book XXXV of the revival of the religious sciences = Ilha' 'ulum al-din*, 61.

and other attributes, in such a manner that nothing happens by constraint, for any expectations regarding how things will proceed with him will be made known clearly."⁷²¹

In contemporary terms, al-Ghazālī is more reductionist than anti-reductionist, but like Saadya he is open to knowledge sources beyond natural means via testimony which is dependent on trust which defies typical reductionist categorization. As I have shown, al-Ghazālī's theory of testimony is best categorized under VE given the role of verified trust from being too trusting via *taqlīd*, to juridical pronouncements based on trust, to divine revelation as the perfection of trust. Using the assessment established in Chapter 2 from John Greco's rethinking, al-Ghazālī clearly maintains that testimonial trust reduces to non-testimonial species of knowledge, namely perception and inductive inference, making him a source reductionist. Transmission however is crucial to obtaining knowledge such that transmission is made distinct from originating testimony with lessened restrictions if it occurs within the community of trusted authorities: "First, the transmission (*ruwīya*) of an *individual* is accepted even though his testimony (*shahāda*) is not acceptable"⁷²² This clearly does not fit transmission-reductionism's understanding of transmission as back-to-back cases of generation but indicates the passing of a report. This makes him a transmission anti-reductionist which can accommodate the crucial element of trust in al-Ghazālī's theory of testimony.

⁷²¹ Ibid. Forms of this highest level of trust are likely part of Saadya's critique of Sufis being "too trusting."

⁷²² *Al-Mustasfa* 1:155, al-Ghazālī *al-Mustasfa Min 'Ilm al-Usul*, 231-233; (Ḥammād trans., 612). Also cf. *Al-Mustasfa* 1:156-7 on the additional evidence required to verify the reports of *fasiq* and those "outside" the community.

CHAPTER 5: THOMAS AQUINAS'S THEORY OF HUMAN AND DIVINE TESTIMONY

5.1 Introduction

Thomas Aquinas lived from 1225-1274 and had a storied academic career as a Dominican friar and Catholic priest who was deeply influential through teachings in theology, philosophy, and scholastic natural law. His thought was shaped by the influx of new texts and ideas translated from Arabic and Greek into Latin in the 12th and 13th century.⁷²³

Thomas was the pupil of Albert the Great who Pasquale Porro calls the "architect" of the plan to bring the philosophy of Aristotle and his "Arab" commentators to Latin Christianity.⁷²⁴ Albert's influence is seen in Thomas's incorporation of Aristotelian thought via two channels: the Islamic rationalist tradition shaped by Aristotelianism and Neoplatonism and the increasingly available Latin translations of Aristotle's Greek texts.⁷²⁵

After studying with Albert in Paris, Thomas accompanied Albert to Cologne to start the Dominican order's *studium generale* (its institute of higher learning) where Thomas served

⁷²³ John Wippel provides a fine summary: "The newly translated sources included practically all of Aristotle's works which are known to us, a series of classical commentaries on Aristotle, important pseudo-Aristotelian works such as the *Liber de causis*, philosophical writings originally written in Arabic by thinkers such as al-Kindi, al-Fārābī, Avicenna and Averroes along with Moses Maimonides' Guide and Avicenna's *Fons vitae*, and a host of previously unknown scientific and mathematical works." John F. Wippel, "Thomas Aquinas and the Condemnation of 1277," *The Modern Schoolman* 72, no. 2/3 (1995): 233. For more on the transmission of texts cf. Dimitri Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture: The Graeco-Arabic Translation Movement in Baghdad and Early 'Abbāsīd Society (2nd-4th/8th-10th Centuries)* (Routledge, 1998); Alexander Fidora Riera and Nicola Polloni, eds., *Appropriation, interpretation and criticism: philosophical and theological exchanges between the Arabic, Hebrew and Latin intellectual traditions*, 2017.

⁷²⁴ Pasquale Porro, *Thomas Aquinas: A Historical and Philosophical Profile*. (Washington, D.C: Catholic University of America Press, 2015), 5.

⁷²⁵ It is well known that Thomas Aquinas drew heavily from the classical rationalist tradition in the Islamic world (*dār al-islām*) including Moses Maimonides and Avicenna (especially his distinction between essence and existence at the foundation of his metaphysical thought). Less well known is that Thomas and Albert incorporated concepts from Avicenna and Averroes into their philosophical and theological accounts from natural theology to the beatific vision. Cf. Adriano Oliva, "Philosophy in the Teaching of Theology by Thomas Aquinas," *The Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly Review* 76, no. 3 (2012): 397–430; R. E. Houser, "Avicenna and Aquinas's De Principiis Naturae, Cc. 1–3," *The Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly Review* 76, no. 4 (2012): 577–610; Richard C. Taylor, "Arabic/Islamic Philosophy in Thomas Aquinas's Conception of the Beatific Vision in IV Sent., D. 49, Q. 2, A. 1," *The Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly Review* 76, no. 4 (2012): 509–50.

as his assistant ordering Albert's notes on Dionysius's *De Divinis Nominibus* and on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* as set out in Albert's *Super Ethica*.⁷²⁶ Shortly thereafter Thomas received a dispensation and completed his Commentary on the Sentences in Paris before being appointed Regent Master in theology at the University of Paris in 1256. He later became the papal theologian in Rome upon the request of Pope Clement IV in 1265, and then a second appointment to regent master in Paris in 1269. Thomas was thus an authority who could recognize authorities within the Christian, Greek, and Islamic traditions. The influx of Arabic and Greek texts and ideas also led to questions regarding Thomas's authority, with some of Thomas's propositions being included in the expanded Paris condemnation of 1277 (a complicated event reacting to developments in theology and philosophy with the reception of Aristotle and his "Arab" commentators).⁷²⁷ Thomas's reputation and influence nonetheless survived even to the point of his canonization in 1323.

Despite being an authority writing on authoritative topics, Thomas never discussed "authority" or "testimony" as central topics. Yet, Thomas's primary aim was essentially testimonial via the instruction of both beginners and the proficient in *sacra doctrina* which, as discussed below, is God's testimony transmitted by human testifiers. The works that

⁷²⁶ Porro, *Thomas Aquinas*, 5.

⁷²⁷ The number of propositions condemned (possibly 20) is disputed. John Wippel states "it seems clear the condemnations of 1277 marked the triumph within the Theology Faculty of a highly conservative group of theologians who were uncomfortable with many of the new developments in philosophy and theology and who were only too ready to recommend them to Tempier for condemnation." Wippel, "Thomas Aquinas and the Condemnation of 1277," 239. Malcolm de Mowbray argues that students, not masters, espoused prohibited views. Cf. Malcolm De Mowbray, "1277 and All That—Students and Disputations," *Traditio* 57 (2002): 217–38. Luca Bianchi argues students were not solely responsible and that (echoing al-Ghazālī's concerns) some masters may have been irresponsible with philosophical ideas, "since 1269 theologians such as Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventure deplored that philosophy was taught at the Paris Arts Faculty in a way that might scandalize young students or lead them astray." Luca Bianchi, "Students, Masters, and 'heterodox' Doctrines at the Parisian Faculty of Arts in the 1270s," *Recherches de Théologie et Philosophie Médiévales* 76, no. 1 (2009): 106. Also cf. Andrea A. Robiglio, "Breaking the Great Chain of Being. A Note on the Paris Condemnations of 1277, Thomas Aquinas and the Proper Subject of Metaphysics," *Verbum* 6, no. 1 (April 2004): 51–59.

provide the clearest depictions of his stance toward testimonial knowledge are: *Scriptum super Sententiarium* (his commentary on the *Sentences of Peter Lombard*, henceforth *Scriptum*); *Expositio super librum Boethii De trinitate*, (his commentary on *Boethius's De Trinitate*, henceforth *De trin.*); *Liber de Veritate Catholicae Fidei Contra Errores Infidelium* more commonly known as the *Summa Contra Gentiles* (henceforth *SCG*), and the *Summa Theologiae* (henceforth *ST*). Unlike the testimonial accounts of Saadya Gaon and al-Ghazālī, modern day assessments of Thomas's testimonial theory have already been published. The nature of divine testimony in Thomas has received the most attention in the works of John Lamont (2004), Eleonore Stump (2014), and Richard Cross (2018), however, Lamont also speaks to human testimony with the most thorough examination coming from Matthew Siebert (2016).⁷²⁸ Testimony in Thomas is linked to the notion of *fides* (faith) which Christophe Grellard has shown is a polysemic Latin term that means faith, trust, reliability, and fidelity, and can thus play a larger role under social epistemology as "trust."⁷²⁹ Faith has two primary modes for Thomas: 1) a broad sense of faith which is believing in the unseen (what is not evident) where knowledge accrues inferentially from signs;⁷³⁰ and 2) a narrow sense of faith which is believing a speaker on

⁷²⁸ Lamont, *Divine Faith*; Stump, "Faith, Wisdom, and the Transmission of Knowledge through Testimony"; Siebert, "Aquinas on Testimonial Justification"; Matthew Kent Siebert, "Testimonial Trustworthiness: Truthfulness and Trust," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 92, no. 2 (2018): 249–76; Cross, "Testimony, Error, and Reasonable Belief in Medieval Religious Epistemology."

⁷²⁹ Grellard explores this "polysemic concept" in Grellard, Hoffmann, and Lavaud, *Genèses antiques et médiévales de la foi*. Cf. Grellard, "Beyond the Ideal, the Social?"

⁷³⁰ Augustine speaks of such faith explicitly in *De fide rerum quae non videntur* ("Faith in things which are not seen") *e.g.*, section III says, "Since, therefore, merely human society, through the destruction of concord, will not remain stable, if we do not believe what we do not see, how much more ought faith to be placed in divine things, even if they are not seen!... But, you may say, 'Although I am not able to see the good will of a friendly person towards me, yet I can detect it (*indagare*) by many indications (*indiciis*); whereas you, on the contrary, can furnish (*ostendere*) no proofs (*indiciis*) for the things not seen which you wish us to believe.' Again, it is quite significant that you admit that through certain clear indications (*indiciorum*) some things, even some not seen, ought to be believed." Augustine, *De fide rerum quae non videntur: a critical text and translation with introduction and commentary*, ed. and trans. Mary Francis McDonald (Newburg, New York: Catholic University of America, 1950), 89–91. Also Cf. *De utilitate credenda* sec, 31 in Augustine, *Nicene*

account of their character and thereby assenting to the propositions they say. My contribution to the conversation is twofold: first, I posit that Thomas held a virtue theoretic account of testimony vs. an evidentialist account since knowledge is both the product of the listener's virtue and grounded by the speaker's possession of virtue.⁷³¹ Since Thomas maintains that knowledge is acquired through the employment of attuned habits, testimonial knowledge entails the possession of virtues.⁷³² Even in the broad sense of faith, signs include the virtues themselves or point to virtues of the speaker. Furthermore, it is the virtues of the listener which discern the presence of a speaker's virtues providing the epistemic ground for assent to tellings. Second, I maintain that despite differing processes of knowledge transmission, Thomas held one consistent and unified theory of testimony applicable to both human and divine testimony in the employment of those virtues. Human testimony requires the operation of common intellectual virtues to determine whether speakers are a) knowledgeable and b) honest which are both captured by their possession of the virtue "truthfulness."⁷³³ The process is the same for divine testimony since listeners must employ their virtues to ascertain the identity of the speaker as God which automatically determines the speaker's possession of truth and honesty. The only

and *Post-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Philip Schaff, trans. C.L. Cornish, vol. 3, 1 (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887), <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/1306.htm>. and King and Ballantyne, "Augustine on Testimony."

⁷³¹ As discussed in chapter 6, Thomas also distinguishes "evidence" from both the evidentness of a cognitive object or the evidentness of a cognition, i.e., a thing's *being evident* or an evident cognition. E.g., The often-cited definition of "self-evidence" is "Self-evident propositions" which "are those which are known as soon as their terms are known" (*evidentiam sciendum, quod propositiones per se notae sunt quae statim notis terminis cognoscuntur*), cf. IV *Met.* Lect. 5 sec. 595. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics*, trans. John P. Rowan (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1961), 278; Thomas Aquinas, *In duodecim libros metaphysicorum Aristotelis expositio*, ed. Raimondo M Spiazzi and M.R. Cathala, 3rd ed. (Torino: Marietti, 1977), 165.

⁷³² The intellect is the power of the soul responsible for understanding. Knowledge in humans is thus caused by the actualization of a power. Repeated intellectual acts develop a *habitus* (virtue or vice) by either the proper or defective actualization of pre-existing potencies. In this way, habits are in the soul via its powers. Cf. ST I-II.49.1; 50.2

⁷³³ Cf. ST II-II.109.1-4

significant difference is divine testimony requires the divine infusion of a habit (i.e., *fides*) to assent to, i.e., believe in, objects of *fides*.⁷³⁴

Since assent to testimony is grounded on account of who the speaker is, it is necessary to review multiple aspects of Thomas's thought. To begin, I will explore his conception of authority, especially communal authority within the Christian tradition. Then, I will highlight aspects of Thomas's theory of knowledge to show how both human and divine testimony fit within it. After that, I will provide a contemporary assessment of Thomas's theory of testimony to conclude that the framework established in chapter 2 differentiating reductionist and anti-reductionist forms of knowledge generation and transmission best captures his virtue-theoretic testimonial conception.

5.2 Thomas and his Milieu

5.2.1 Medieval Christian Communal Authority

Christianity, like its Abrahamic counterparts, understands God to be the ultimate authority and the source of authority for all subsequent persons or institutions. This is only cemented by the inclusion of Anselmian perfect being theology. The divine authority established in God the Father by (what became known as) the Old Testament was claimed by Jesus Christ: "All *exousia* (power/authority) in Heaven and on Earth has been given to me."⁷³⁵ Jesus then commissioned his Apostles to go and teach, but not before they received God's presence in the Holy Spirit. The authority of God thus indwells Christians via the Holy Spirit who worked through them to write and later canonize *sacra scriptura*, the written word of

⁷³⁴ Thomas uses "*fides*" for the theological virtue (habit) and its object. Cf. ST II-II.1.1-2; II-II.2.1-2; *B. De Trin.* 3.1

⁷³⁵ Matthew 28:18. Ἐδόθη μοι πᾶσα ἐξουσία ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς. Here ἐξουσία captures the right, ability, authority, and absolute power to execute one's will and translated into the Latin Vulgate as: *potestas*. Kurt Aland, Barbara Aland, and et al, *The Greek New Testament* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft., 1994), 116.

God.⁷³⁶ The work of the Holy Spirit cannot be understated as the Spirit is responsible for "governing" the universal church and thereby preventing it from error.⁷³⁷ The direct involvement of the Holy Spirit, whose name stems from the Hebrew *ruach* and Greek *pneuma* for "spirit" or "breath", caused *sacra scriptura* to be "God breathed" and thus the very words of God.⁷³⁸ The Apostles also were the leaders and founders of religious home *ekklesia* (gatherings/assemblies) that collectively would become the catholic, i.e., universal, church. However, the Apostles only had a spiritual authority, not a political one, as evidenced by their martyrdom by various political states.⁷³⁹ Spiritual authority naturally became epistemic authority which led to forms of political authority. The Apostle Peter is traditionally recognized as the first among the Apostles and the one upon whom Christ said he would build his church.⁷⁴⁰ In the Roman Catholic tradition, Peter is therefore seen as the first "pope", i.e. Christ's representative on Earth, a position endowed with authoritative, if not divine, proclamation.⁷⁴¹ The choice of Peter as the highest authority in the Church is variously interpreted but frequently seen as his being an exemplar for future church

⁷³⁶ The same process applies to St. Paul who was authorized by the Damascene Christophany and verified by the Apostles later and arguably for later saints on books whose authorship is and has been a contested issue since Origin (d.254CE) who said regarding the epistle "To the Hebrews", "But who wrote the epistle, in truth, God knows." Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 6.25.14. Cf. Eusebius, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Philip Schaff, trans. Arther Cushman McGiffert, vol. 1, 2 (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1890), <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/250106.htm>.

⁷³⁷ Cf. *ST II-II.1.9 sed contra*; Nicolas Healy states that, "Were the church to fall into such [grievous] error, it would no longer be under his [God's] authority and we would no longer have a church. The gospel promises would have been broken, which is something we cannot believe without abandoning our faith. So although the churches are all liable to confusion and error, and although they all at times obstruct the working of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit is more powerful than their sin and stupidity, so each teaches well enough and truly enough that their members can acquire saving knowledge of God." Nicholas M. Healy, "'By the Working of the Holy Spirit': The Crisis of Authority in the Christian Churches," *Anglican Theological Review*. 88, no. 1 (2006): 20.

⁷³⁸ Cf. 1 Timothy 3:16

⁷³⁹ As asserted by tradition. For a focused treatment cf. Sean McDowell, *Fate of the Apostles: Examining the Martyrdom Accounts of the Closest Followers of Jesus*. (New York: Routledge, 2016).

⁷⁴⁰ Cf. Matthew 16:18. Christ gives Simon the name Aramaic Cephas (Petros in Greek), the same word for rock.

⁷⁴¹ The earliest recording of the title pope (meaning 'father') is Pope Heraclas of Alexandria (232–248), cf. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 7.7.4.

authorities due to his moral character which, most importantly, is predicated on the forgiveness he receives from Christ.⁷⁴² In this way, bishops are called to be model teachers providing wisdom and moral examples to follow.⁷⁴³ As the position of pope was passed down in an unbroken chain of Apostolic succession and the community of spiritual leaders based on Peter's model increased, authority both grew and grew more formalized.⁷⁴⁴ The most enduring instance of communal epistemic authority is in the multi-century delineation of which works constituted *sacra scriptura*, the combination of both the Jewish Written Law and the Christian gospels and epistles.⁷⁴⁵ The first recorded instance of a Christian leader establishing a clear canon of acceptable works is Marcion of Sinope (c. 140) (before being denounced a heretic and excommunicated in 144). Subsequent lists in the Muratorian fragments or from Origin of Alexandria (3rd Century) reveal that despite debate there was an accepted common core set of texts.⁷⁴⁶ The debate officially ended via a series of Church councils attended by St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430).⁷⁴⁷ Canonicity of scriptures, per St.

⁷⁴² Matthew Levering's analysis of Peter's paragon status includes his selflessness (willing to die), a character trait he did not exhibit until humbled and reinstated enabling him to lead by example per John 21. Bishops should thus only be installed if they love Christ and not themselves all while being cognizant of the fact that leadership and authority will be given to sinners (albeit repentant ones). For even Peter is forgiven for "the most heinous sin of directly denying Christ at the time of Christ's most urgent need." Matthew Levering, "Ecclesial Exegesis and Ecclesial Authority: Childs, Fowl, and Aquinas," *The Thomist: A Speculative Quarterly Review* 69, no. 3 (2005): 460–62.

⁷⁴³ The authority given to Peter is both theoretical (epistemic) and practical (moral) empowering him to "feed/tend my sheep" aligning with humankind's three needs of: wisdom; moral exemplars to inspire charity; and bodily. *Ibid.*, 462.

⁷⁴⁴ The infallibility of the pope was recognized as dogma in 1870 but only when the pope speaks *ex cathedra* (literally "from the chair") of Saint Peter on matters of faith or morality.

⁷⁴⁵ Jesus' Apostles knew and utilized the Septuagint (LXX), a Greek translation of the Torah from the mid-3rd Century CE. The earliest existent Christian list of Old Testament books is from circa 170CE by Melito, bishop of Sardis. Cf. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 4.26.14. Debates continue on which books qualify as canonical vs. apocryphal in addition to the process of canonization itself, cf. Colby Dickinson, "Canons and Canonicity: Late Modern Reflections on Cultural and Religious Canonical Texts," *Annali Di Storia Dell'Esegesi* 30, no. 2 (July 2013): 369–92; Timothy H. Lim, *When Texts Are Canonized* (Providence: Brown Judaic Studies, 2017).

⁷⁴⁶ The earliest known list of the accepted canon is in the 39th Paschal Letter of Athanasius dates to 367CE.

⁷⁴⁷ These are the Council of Hippo (393CE), the Council of Carthage (397CE), and again the Council of Carthage (419BCE)

Augustine, should emerge from a communal consensus (or at least a virtual consensus) of churches and credence in any disagreements should be equally given to greater number and greater authority.⁷⁴⁸

This leads to the complex relationship of *sacra doctrina* and *sacra scriptura* which are often used interchangeably but are not synonymous.⁷⁴⁹ Both refer to revelatory teaching or instruction where *sacra scriptura* refers to instruction via the recorded words of God (in conjunction with and through human authors) and *sacra doctrina* refers to instruction via the words of human saints and scholars.⁷⁵⁰ Since the Christian communal authorities ultimately decided what qualifies as *sacra scriptura*, *sacra doctrina* is the more encompassing entity which Wilhelmus Valkenberg clarifies in saying "Holy Scripture as the testimony of God's revelation is both the first and normative expression of *sacra doctrina* and its lasting contents."⁷⁵¹ As more encompassing, *sacra doctrina* also includes scientific reasoning which Thomas will go on in a novel way to argue qualifies it as an Aristotelian *scientia* (science). The authority of *sacra doctrina* comes from the belief in

⁷⁴⁸ "Now, in regard to the canonical Scriptures, he must follow the judgment of the greater number of Catholic churches; and among these, of course, a high place must be given to such as have been thought worthy to be the seat of an apostle and to receive epistles. Accordingly, among the canonical Scriptures he will judge according to the following standard: to prefer those that are received by all the Catholic churches to those which some do not receive. Among those, again, which are not received by all, he will prefer such as have the sanction of the greater number and those of greater authority, to such as are held by the smaller number and those of less authority. If, however, he shall find that some books are held by the greater number of churches, and others by the churches of greater authority (though this is not a very likely thing to happen), I think that in such a case the authority on the two sides is to be looked upon as equal." On Christian Doctrines 2.12, Augustine, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Philip Schaff, trans. Shaw James, vol. 2, 1 (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1887), <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/12022.htm>.

⁷⁴⁹ Nor does the common distinction of "theology" and "scripture" readily map onto the Medieval understanding. *Theologia* (from the Greek), for example, ranged in meaning from discourse or teaching on any god(s) to the Christian God or Bible and later is generally accepted as an academic science, cf. Mariken Teeuwen, *The Vocabulary of Intellectual Life in the Middle Ages* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), 379–81.

⁷⁵⁰ Wilhelmus Valkenberg offers the translation "the instruction of faith" or "holy teaching" for *sacra doctrina*. Wilhelmus G. B. M Valkenberg, *Words of the Living God: Place and Function of Holy Scripture in the Theology of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 9.

⁷⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 10.

the Holy Spirit's guidance of the Church and her leaders looking to the "articles of faith" to appoint authorities who, per Levering, "...have heard Christ's teaching and who embody divine *doctrina* in a set of practices that flow from Scripture and enable believers to interpret Scripture."⁷⁵²

While Christianity does not have an "oral tradition" in the same way that Judaism has the Talmud and Mishna or that Islam has the Sunna and ḥadīth, Christianity does have what R. Francis Martin calls "a theory of faith-communication" correlated with *sacra doctrina* in that it transmits unassailable teachings found implicitly but not explicitly in *sacra scriptura* (i.e. the Trinity, Incarnation, or the Church).⁷⁵³ This faith-communication is authoritative only insofar as it transmits from the community leaders such that they literally come to be distinguished as *auctoritates* (authorities) alongside human reasoning (*rationes*).⁷⁵⁴ *Auctor* and *auctoritas* had "strong connotations of 'veracity' and 'sagacity'" and thus worthy of study and imitation.⁷⁵⁵ Taken from Roman law, *auctoritates* first applied to individuals, which Valkenberg defines as "the quality by virtue of which someone who assigns his rights is creditworthy or trustworthy", and then to authenticated documents (i.e. not corrupt or erroneously attributed), which were collected and

⁷⁵² Levering, "Ecclesial Exegesis and Ecclesial Authority," 458.

⁷⁵³ R. Francis Martin, "Sacra Doctrina and the Authority of Its Sacra Scriptura: According to St. Thomas Aquinas," *Pro Ecclesia* 10, no. 1 (February 1, 2001): 84.

⁷⁵⁴ "*Auctoritas* derives from *auctor* (cause, initiator, sponsor, promoter, surety) which derives from the verb *augere* (to increase [active and passive], to enrich). *Auctoritas* first designated a surety in a transaction, responsibility for a child, or the weight of an opinion. The root *aug*, thus implies a certain initiative, a causality or ability to effect something, be this an objective reality, legal responsibility, knowledge, or even confidence." Naturally, God is the first and ultimate *auctor*. *Ibid.*, 94–95.

⁷⁵⁵ Teeuwen, *The Vocabulary of Intellectual Life in the Middle Ages*, 222–23. Also cf. "Auctoritas" (par C. Du Cange, 1678), dans Du Cange, *et al.*, *Glossarium mediae et infimae latinitatis*, éd. augm., Niort : L. Favre, 1883-1887, t. 1, col. 467b. <http://ducange.enc.sorbonne.fr/AUCTORITAS1>; "Auctoritas" Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften, *Thesaurus linguae Latinae*. (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co, 2021), <https://publikationen.badw.de/en/thesaurus/lemmata#14390>.

systematized by the Medieval period.⁷⁵⁶ The sayings of real *auctoritates* possess more authority than the sayings of contemporary scholars (*dicta magistralia*) who came to be known as the *Magisterium* (or "teaching authority")—the community authorized to interpret and thus teach *sacra doctrina*. Theological schools (11th century) thereby gave the title of *Magister* (Master) to its teachers.⁷⁵⁷ Nevertheless, the *magisterium* felt liberated to identify and correct erroneous thought of earlier thinkers to better conform with the higher authority of *sacra scriptura*.⁷⁵⁸ So while *magister* and *magisterium* were originally applied more broadly to differing areas of responsibility and competence (e.g. pastoral ministry), by the time of the 12th and 13th Century Mahoney explains they had a specific meaning:

It was with the rise, however, of the Universities—which Pantin describes as 'a new organ in the Church'—to become literally international bodies in their staffing, students, interests, and prestige, that the great medieval theologians, Albert, Thomas, Bonaventure, Scotus, and many others, were able to influence their contemporaries not only on account of the inherent brilliance of their teaching but also because of their status in the Church as Magister and because of the coveted University chairs in theology which they occupied.⁷⁵⁹

The Universities (and their doctors and faculties), thus came to exert authority within the Church on account of their "public recognition" regarding pronouncements on public

⁷⁵⁶ "Instead of scattered fragments of classical and Patristic texts in *compendia* and *florilegia*, scholars in the eleventh and twelfth centuries began to write systematic treatises, collecting these *auctoritates* in a systematic manner and explaining them. These authoritative texts formed the foundations for the medieval process of learning: all medieval *artes* were based on a canon of *auctoritates*. The meaning of *auctoritates* thus became specialized: in theology, only the right words in the appropriate context by authors approved by the Church have a valid authority." Valkenberg, *Words of the Living God*, 12.

⁷⁵⁷ The term *magister* broadly means "one who leads or teaches" while *magisterium* came to mean "doctrinal authority and the content of Church doctrine." Teeuwen, *The Vocabulary of Intellectual Life in the Middle Ages*, 95–99.

⁷⁵⁸ Healy, "By the Working of the Holy Spirit," 18.

⁷⁵⁹ John Mahoney, *The Making of Moral Theology: A Study of the Roman Catholic Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 117.

controversies, which was sometimes at odds with the pope, served the pope, or required the pope to arbitrate.⁷⁶⁰

While the *auctoritas of sacra scriptura*, and by extension *sacra doctrina*, focused on matters of faith and salvation (and necessarily since such matters transcend human reason), the teachings of the *magisterium* affected secular concepts including that of civil authority. The "conventional" view of civil authority, stemming from St. Augustine and the theological problem of evil, aims to answer "how is it that God would subject one man to another, and worse yet, how is it that tyrants are allowed to thrive?"⁷⁶¹ Malloy writes that, "The answer of the conventionalist view [i.e. Augustinian] is that civil authority is imposed on man, not as a natural condition (for subjection and tyranny are unnatural), but as a punishment and a test in his fallen state."⁷⁶² This is because coercive authority can only be legitimized by human's free and thus fallen nature. This traditional and patristic view which saw the pope as having "primacy over the temporal lord" and "temporal power as a tool for the punishment of the wicked", was challenged by the rediscovery of the Aristotelian view that humans were a "political animal" and thus civil authority was "natural."⁷⁶³ Thus, civil society is a natural and positive feature when it governs for the

⁷⁶⁰ Ibid., 118.

⁷⁶¹ Cf. St. Augustine *De Civitate Dei*, 11:16-18

⁷⁶² Michael P Malloy, *Civil Authority in Medieval Philosophy Lombard, Aquinas and Bonaventure* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1985), 19–20.

⁷⁶³ Ibid., 16. At the center of this debate are differing conceptions of human nature. Per the Conventional view: "If man is essentially a free being—radically free, constrained only by the revelation of God—then manifestations of civil authority must be viewed as coercive." Per Aristotelian naturalism: "if man is essentially a social or political being, not radically free by nature, then it is open for one to argue that civil authority and other political institutions serve a natural function and an inherent value." Ibid., 16–17. This division has carried on to even contemporary discussions, cf. Thomas Sowell, *A Conflict of Visions*. (New Delhi: Affiliated East-West Press, 1988).

sake of common well-being, but raises new challenges regarding political obligation, the limits of obedience, and the nature of political authority itself.⁷⁶⁴

Albert and Thomas accepted both that *sacra doctrina* is based on arguments from authority, and that arguments from divine authority (i.e., revelation) are the strongest.⁷⁶⁵ They were also at the center of promoting Aristotelian philosophy which created tension with the Parisian Masters. Beyond civil authority, the "new" Aristotelian concept of human nature had other profound effects on Thomas's theology including the relationship of divine to human authority. An example relevant to divine testimony is his explanation of how divine grace is dispensed in the sacraments using Aristotelian concepts of causation and motion including instrumental causality. The question centers on the proper interpretation of Augustine's commentary on St. John's Gospel 14:12, "And he shall do greater things than these", as to whether creation (of righteous beings) or justification (of ungodly beings) is the greater work (Augustine claims the latter).⁷⁶⁶ The *Magisterium* largely interpreted Augustine to mean that what applies to creation likewise applies to justification. Thus, re-creating (justifying the ungodly) is a greater act than creating (creating the righteous). Since humans cannot create, they also cannot be the cause of the greater action of justification

⁷⁶⁴ Even secular political authority was understood to derive its authority ultimately from God, such that obedience to temporal authority was obedience to God (with exceptions). Cf. Malloy, *Civil Authority in Medieval Philosophy Lombard, Aquinas and Bonaventure*, 20; Jean Porter, "Natural Equality: Freedom, Authority and Obedience," in *The Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics*, 2001., ed. Society of Christian Ethics (U.S.), John Kelsay, and Sumner B Twiss (Collegeville, MN; Washington, D.C.: The Society ; Distributor, Georgetown University Press, 2001), 275–99; Fáinche Ryan, "Auctoritas in the Theology of St Thomas Aquinas," *New Blackfriars* 88, no. 1016 (2007): 443–56.

⁷⁶⁵ "...we ought to believe on the authority (*auctoritate*) of those to whom the revelation has been made...although the argument from authority based on human reason is the weakest, yet the argument from authority based on divine revelation is the strongest (*efficacissimus*)" *ST* I.1.8.ad2, Aquinas, *Summa theologiae. Prima pars, 1-49*, 12. Also Cf. *ST* II-II.104-105 regarding obedience.

⁷⁶⁶ Cf. Augustine, *Super Joannem*, tract.72 Cf. Augustine, *Tractates on the Gospel of John*, ed. Philip Schaff, trans. John Gibb, vol. 7, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers 1 (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1888).

through the sacraments.⁷⁶⁷ Since the power to confer grace is proper to God alone, no other agent could be the cause of grace. Peter Lombard, in contrast, concluded from Augustine that it was philosophically possible for the apostles to participate in justification as "ministers" of God's grace while carefully noting the power remained in God.⁷⁶⁸ Lombard was right to be cautious since his distinction that God communicated the power to forgive sins to humans appears as the final thesis on St. Bonaventure's list of eight opinions the Parisian masters rejected.⁷⁶⁹ Thomas follows Lombard arguing that Augustine indicated instruments borrow powers not proper to themselves.⁷⁷⁰ Thomas does not even use Augustine's language of "authoritative" or "ministerial." He adopts Aristotle's language e.g. "For the principal agent is the first mover, but an instrumental agent is a moved mover."⁷⁷¹ As we shall see for divine testimony, such motion parallels Aristotle's famous discussion of the hand which moves the stick which moves the stone.⁷⁷² The source of all

⁷⁶⁷ For the Parisian masters, power belonged to or inhered in a substance absolutely: substances possess certain powers by nature of what they are such that finite causes can play no role in infinite effects.

⁷⁶⁸ Cf. Paul Pearson, "Creation Through Instruments in Thomas' Sentence Commentary," in *Philosophy and the God of Abraham*, ed. R. James Long and James Athanasius Weisheipl (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1991), 149.

⁷⁶⁹ For a succinct summary of Lombard's eight theses St. Bonaventure and the Parisian masters rejected, Cf. Edward Synan, "Brother Thomas, the Master, and the Masters," in *St. Thomas Aquinas, 1274-1974: Commemorative Studies*, ed. Arnaud Maurer and Etienne Gilson, vol. 2 (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1974), 227-240.

⁷⁷⁰ Likely from Augustine's *Super Joannem* Tractatus 5 where an "authoritative" power is said to work through a "ministerial" power in baptism, such that the power to remove sins originates in its true possessor, the author, but the power can temporarily be found in a human during the sacrament, the minister. Pearson, "Creation Through Instruments in Thomas' Sentence Commentary," 149. Augustine distinguishes between authoritative and ministerial power to explain how grace is transmitted through baptism. For a contemporary account cf. Mauro Turrini et al., "L'anthropologie sacramentelle de S. Thomas d'Aquin dans Summa theologiae 3A QQ. 60-65" (s.l., Université Paris-Sorbonne, 1996).

⁷⁷¹ *Scriptum* IV.1.1.4.q^{1a}.corp,4.32. - *Agens enim principale est primum movens, agens autem instrumentale est movens motum*. Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Sentences: Book IV, Distinctions 1-13*, trans. Beth Mortensen (Green Bay, Wis.: Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2017), 30-31. Thomas's language identifying a principal agent as a prime mover and an instrumental agent as a moved mover also clearly parallels the larger framework Thomas adopted from propositions 56, 57, and 70 of Proclus's *Elements of Theology* through the *Liber de causis* (LDC), which was crucial in the development of medieval philosophy and theology. Cf. Cristina D'Ancona and Richard Taylor, "Le Liber de causis," in *Dictionnaire des philosophes antiques.*, ed. Richard Goulet, Jean-Marie Flamand, and Maroun Aouad (Paris: CNRS Éditions, 2018), 599-647.

⁷⁷² Cf. Aristotle's Book VIII of the *Physics* (255b32-256b2)

authority remains in God, but humans (not inherently depraved creatures requiring correction and control, but social ones naturally disposed to the common good) can be vessels of that authority. This example shows several aspects of Thomas's relation to authority. First, he held God and the church's authority as absolute, but, following Albert, he also accepted Aristotle and his Islamic commentators as authoritative in interpreting reality. Second, he uses Aristotelianism to defend traditional conceptions of divine and patristic authority and power, but in a redefined way. This leads to the third observation: Thomas subtly challenged the authorities of his day which, as certain condemnations reveal, did not go unnoticed and ultimately elevated Thomas's own role as an authority.⁷⁷³

5.2.2 Thomas's Account of Knowledge

Thomas's epistemology has been shown to be a departure from traditional Augustinian illumination theory and deeply connected to his teacher Albert who was deeply influenced by the rediscovery of Aristotelian ideas through the philosophers in the lands of Islam. Knowledge, or more precisely obtaining truth by *cognitio* (understanding the form of an object *per se*), is the product of mental activity, namely the actualization of a power in the human soul. Thomas's account of personal psychology and the role of the intellect as a power of the soul is thus central to his epistemology. Unlike the traditional view which maintained plural forms within the soul, for Aquinas the soul was one substantial form of the body which had many powers. This follows Albert's new epistemological teaching that

⁷⁷³ Cf. Paul van Geest, Harm Goris, and Carlo Leget, eds., *Aquinas as Authority: A Collection of Studies Presented at the Second Conference of the Thomas Instituut Te Utrecht, December 14-16, 2000* (Leuven: Peeters, 2002).

the active agent intellect and the potential material intellect are powers and thus within the human soul as outlined in his *de homine*.⁷⁷⁴

Thomas adopts Albert's notion that knowledge occurs in the soul via knowing powers in accord with the Platonic principle "whatever is received into something is received according to the condition of the receiver."⁷⁷⁵ Thus, he establishes three possible levels of knowing for corporeal beings, incorporeal beings, and humans who occupy a "middle position," that is not by an act of an organ, but by a power of the soul, namely the rational intellect and its activity of "abstraction."⁷⁷⁶ The agent intellect has two operations:

⁷⁷⁴ Albert believed he was introducing the Latin West to the thought of Averroes in contradistinction to Avicenna for whom the agent intellect was a separate substance that did not reside in the human soul. Instead, Albert's teaching, what R. A. Gauthier calls "First Averroism", was completely new since it was a mistaken understanding of Averroes's view. In a twist of fate, Averroes's true views on the intellect as a separate substance, "Second Averroism", was thought to be a later Latin misreading. "Second Averroism" maintained that both the agent intellect (which moves abstracted intelligibles) and the material intellect (receptive of the intelligible intellect in act) are ontologically separate substances supervening in physical reality and come to be in human beings (without inhering) for epistemological purposes. Confusion persists since R.A. Gauthier's explanation, following Gomez Nogales, wrongly portrays "Second Averroism" as a later Christian misreading. Cf. Salvador Gómez Nogales, "Problemas alrededor del *Compendio sobre el alma* de Averroes," *al-Andalus* 32 (1967); Gomez Nogales, "Saint Thomas, Averroès et l'Averroïsme," in *Aquinas and Problems of His Time*, ed. Gérard Verbeke and D. Verhelst (Louvain, Belgium: Leuven University Press, 1976), 161–77; R. A. Gauthier, "Notes Sur Les Débuts (1225-1240) Du Premier 'Averroïsme,'" *Revue des Sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 66, no. 3 (1982): 321–74; Richard C. Taylor, "Remarks on the Importance of Albert the Great's Analyses and Use of the Thought of Avicenna and Averroes in the *De Homine* for the Development of the Early Natural Epistemology of Thomas Aquinas," in *Die Seele Im Mittelalter: Von Der Substanz Zum Funktionalen System*, ed. Günther Mensching and Alia Mensching-Estrakhr, vol. 16, *Contradictio: Studien Zur Philosophie Und Ihrer Geschichte* (Würzburg: Königshausen et Neumann, 2018), 131–58; Muḥammad b. Aḥmad Ibn Rushd, *Long Commentary on the De Anima of Aristotle*, ed. Richard C. Taylor and Thérèse-Anne Druart (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2009), xcvi–cvi.

⁷⁷⁵ *quidquid recipitur ad modum recipientis recipitur* Cf. *ST I.75.5*. Wayne Hankey notes that this is a Platonic rule which Thomas finds in both Dionysius and the *Liber de causis*, two works Thomas was introduced to by Albert. Wayne J. Hankey, "Aquinas and the Platonists," in *The Platonic Tradition in the Middle Ages: A Doxographic Approach*, ed. Stephen Gersh and Maarten J. F. M. Hoenen (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2002), 321. Hankey further notes Albert's boldness to contradict Augustine's conception of knowledge in the soul (e.g. Albert's *Super Mysticam*, 2, 466, lines 52–58) is grounded in Dionysius. Wayne J. Hankey, "Dionysius in Albertus Magnus and His Student Thomas Aquinas," in *The Oxford Handbook to Dionysius the Areopagite*, ed. Mark Edwards, Pallis Dimitrios, and George Steiris, (Forthcoming).

⁷⁷⁶ 1) corporeal beings (e.g., animals) know through the act of a corporeal organ, i.e. sensation, such that the object of knowing is "the form as it exists in corporeal matter"; 2) incorporeal beings (e.g., angels and God) know through the act of an "angelic intellect" (completely disassociated from corporeal matter), such that, the object of knowing is "a form subsisting apart from matter"; and 3) human beings occupy a "middle position." Cf. *ST I.85.1*; and *ST I.14.1*

intellectus is the first operation which includes the act of abstraction; *scientia* is the second operation which contains two acts for a total of three activities the agent intellect is responsible.⁷⁷⁷ This first operation of abstraction is also referred to as apprehension since it determines *what* a thing is, i.e. its quiddity. Abstraction is the epistemic process carried out by the human agent intellect, a power of the soul, responsible for deriving universals from particulars which Thomas held was in Aristotle.⁷⁷⁸ The process of abstraction is complex, but divine testimony is explained as various effects resulting from instrumental causality in the listener's psychology for which I follow Therese Cory's account of Thomas's need theory of abstraction.⁷⁷⁹ This follows Thomas's adoption of Aristotle's

⁷⁷⁷ Cf. *Expositio Libri Peri Hermeneias* I.1 (henceforth *Peri Hermeneias*). Thomas's terminology lends itself to confusion. *Intellectus* should not be confused with the Intellect just as *scientia* should not be confused with the term's usage for a science or the epistemic attitude toward an object of knowledge.

⁷⁷⁸ Aristotle does not have a clearly expressed doctrine of abstraction. In *De Anima* 3.8 he states the intelligibles are in the sensibles, but Aristotle does not give an account as to how these intelligibles are known and he does not use the language of intellectual abstraction. Richard Taylor shows that the "doctrine of intellectual abstraction for the formation of intelligibles in act by the human rational soul or intellect was first unambiguously set forth by Alexander of Aphrodisias (second century C.E.). His work was important for Porphyry and influential in both the Latin and Arabic philosophical traditions." Cf. Richard C. Taylor, "The Epistemology of Abstraction," in *The Routledge Companion to Islamic Philosophy*, ed. Richard C. Taylor and Luis Xavier López Farjeat, 2017, 273. Thomas's account of the soul and intellect in *Sentences* book 2, d. 17, q.2, a.1 closely follows Albert's *de homine*.

⁷⁷⁹ Per Cory, Thomas needed abstraction "in order to reconcile five core principles of his philosophical psychology: (1) All our knowledge originates from sensation. (2) In order for a cognitive power (sense, imagination, or intellect) to cognize some object, it must be assimilated to that object. That is to say, the cognitive power must acquire a form that is a likeness or representation of the object, making the power be "like" that object. (3) In order to inhere in a cognitive power, a form must have the same mode of existing as the cognitive power (i.e., material or immaterial). (4) The senses and imagination are material cognitive powers. (5) The human intellect is an immaterial cognitive power." The process starts with sensibles brought in via the senses which are bundled by the common sense and organized into a phantasm (form in the imagination that is the likeness of the individual object perceived). This comes from the non-intellectual cognitive sources of knowledge or material processes prior to abstraction (which require exterior and interior "senses" or powers through a complex psychology connected to the soul). As a cautious realist, Thomas understands existing objects as emitting sensibles which are received by an animal's exterior senses and then processed via an interior sense, namely the "common sense" (following Avicenna), to distinguish the information. Since animals clearly exhibit cognition beyond immediate sense perception, Thomas also accepts animals have an imagination or phantasy which humans likewise possess but more developed allowing for the cognitive process of "composition and division." Cf. *De Veritate* I.3 & *Peri Hermeneias* I.3. Since animals also exhibit instinctual behaviors requiring cognition (e.g., recognizing certain animals as predators or certain items as useful in building nests), animals are said to possess an *estimative* power (or cogitative power in humans) that enables them to identify particulars as objects of thought (whether things or phenomena). An additional *memorative* power is attributed to animals' ability to retain cognitions produced by the *estimative* power, which is the *reminiscitive* power in humans. To convert the "material" phantasm,

notion that human beings start life as a *tabula rasa* (*De Anima* II.12) such that all knowledge starts with sensation and is completed in the intellect (*De Anima* III.4-5).⁷⁸⁰

This result of abstraction is an intelligible species in the intellect such that the agent is said to know the essence of the perceived object which does not have a true or false value (where truth is conformity of the mental reality to ontological reality). The intellect also grasps *intellectu* (what MacDonald calls "immediate propositions") in two ways: 1) from the real ontological relations of things known via abstraction or 2) as self-evident first principles because they are necessarily and universally true."⁷⁸¹ The human intellect is also portrayed as grasping self-evident truths through participation in divine light (i.e. divine knowledge)

the "likeness" of the perceived object, in the imagination into an immaterial in the intellect requires the agent intellect or "intellectual light." The agent intellect actively causes the intelligible species to actualize in the potential intellect as an immaterial form, essence, or quiddity of the perceived object. Cory argues persuasively using Avicenna and Averroes that Thomas's abstraction is not isolating an essential core via subtraction, but "adds" or "actualizes" the form in another mode of existing: "Aquinas explicitly presents the mechanism of abstraction as an *adding* or *actualizing*, per APM [the Active Principle Model]: intellectual light is a form or act, and abstraction is the communication of that actuality to other things." She continues: "per APM₃, intellectual light does not transform the phantasm *itself* into an intelligible. Rather, it uses the phantasm "Marengo" to generate a new intelligible form—the intelligible species "horse"—in the intellect. In other words, the agent intellect lends to the phantasm the causal power for producing something intelligible, *without giving the phantasm itself the form of intelligibility that would normally be the basis for that causal power.*" Therese Scarpelli Cory, "Rethinking Abstractionism: Aquinas's Intellectual Light and Some Arabic Sources," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 53, no. 4 (2015): 609–10, 619–22.

⁷⁸⁰ Cf. *Questiones disputatae de veritate* I.11 & I.2.ad1. In discussing the concept of intentions (i.e., identifying a perceptible as a particular person or object, e.g., this I perceive as a human and this human is my friend), Francisco Romero distinguishes the "intuitionist" vs. "abstractionist" theories of Avicenna and Averroes. Avicenna's intuitionist account holds that intentions are intuited by the interior senses (without sense data or abstraction). Averroes abstractionist account holds that intentions are received with sense data and abstracted by the interior senses. Cf. Francisco J. Romero-Carrasquillo, "An Abstractionist Correction of Avicenna's Theory of Intentionality in the Early Averroes," *Acta Philosophica* 20 (January 1, 2011): 405–20. According to Romero, both Thomas and Albert drew on Avicenna and Averroes with Thomas developing a position similar to the former in contrast to Albert who interweaves both accounts. Cf. Francisco J. Romero-Carrasquillo, "The Reception of Averroes's Abstractionist Theory of Intentionality in the Latin West (Aquinas and the Arabs, Mexico City, 2011)," accessed December 8, 2020, https://www.academia.edu/4444839/The_Reception_of_Averroes_s_Abstractionist_Theory_of_Intentionality_in_the_Latin_West_Aquinas_and_the_Arabs_Mexico_City_2011_.

⁷⁸¹ Regarding the first: a predicate belongs to a subject because it belongs to the *ratio*, definition, of a given quiddity). As for the second, a proposition is "cognized (*cognita*) or known (*nota*) by virtue of themselves (*per se*) e.g. a proposition is "cognized (*cognita*) or known (*nota*) by virtue of themselves (*per se*)." Scott MacDonald, "Theory of Knowledge," in *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, ed. Norman Kretzmann and Eleonore Stump (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 171. Cf. *PA* I.19.2; *ST* I.79.8; *QDV* I.12 & 15.1; *ST* I.17.3.ad 2

or a sort of divine illumination through the light of the agent intellect.⁷⁸² The second operation contains two additional knowledge producing acts where true or false values do apply. The first is judgements (the intellect composing and dividing) where quiddities are compared or applied to one another.⁷⁸³ The second is discursive reasoning (*raciocination*) using demonstration, namely moving from known judgments to new judgments and thus new knowledge or the verification of knowledge. The three activities of the intellect introduce varying degrees of knowing or cognitive states: doubt, suspicion, *opinio*, *fides*, and *scientia*.

From these two operations emerges the categories of "acquired" discursive and "necessary" nondiscursive knowledge.⁷⁸⁴ Like Saadya Gaon and al-Ghazālī, Thomas desires for some acquired cognitions to also be necessary by two means: 1) the product of a syllogism and 2) from divine testimony. Despite being discursive, syllogistic reasoning is in accord with the second operation which produces *scientia*—a complete and certain cognition regarding the truth of a proposition.⁷⁸⁵ Thomas identifies up to three types of *scientia* by demonstration type.⁷⁸⁶ So while *scientia* results from the conclusion of a demonstration, it ultimately requires premises whose epistemic ground comes from the first operation of the intellect, which is nondiscursive.⁷⁸⁷ Thomas also states that discursive

⁷⁸² *ST* I.84.5; *De trin.* 1.1; *SCG* II.53; *QDV* 10.6, 11.1. Cf. Robert Pasnau, "Divine Illumination," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Spring 2020 (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2020), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2020/entries/illumination/>.

⁷⁸³ Cf. *Peri Hermeneias*, Prooemium, n. 1, and *ST* I.85.5).

⁷⁸⁴ Curiously, just as Arabic *'ilm* can mean both science and to know certainly, so too does Latin *scientia*.

⁷⁸⁵ From *scire*, to have reliable knowledge. Cf. *PA* I.4.5 and MacDonald, "Theory of Knowledge," 2006, 163–80.

⁷⁸⁶ According to MacDonald, the lowest form Thomas speaks of is "probabilistic *scientia*" which regards the material and natural world that obtain "for-the-most-part" to include generalizations and tendencies and thus is, oddly for *scientia*, not immune from error. *Ibid.*, 176–77. Cf. *PA* II.12.5.

⁷⁸⁷ Demonstration *quia* infers the cause from the effect (given human limitations) generating the *scientia* of natural science and theology. Cf. *PA* I.4.14, 16 & I.7.8. Demonstration *propter quid* establishes the effect from the cause on the basis of non-inferential premises. MacDonald provides a quick summary, first for the

divine testimony permits perfect knowledge by believing God (*credere deo*).⁷⁸⁸ Testimony, however, even divine testimony, only produces the cognitive states of *fides* and *opinio*. Despite not achieving *scientia*, *fides* and *opinio* provide convincing but contingent epistemic grounds since they do not ensure the truth of the proposition. Thomas's prologue to his *Commentary on the Posterior Analytics* reads:

Text 5.2.2.1

...in that process of reason which is not accompanied by every sort of certitude certain levels are found accordingly as one approaches more or less to perfect certitude. For although science (*scientia*) is not obtained by this process of reason, nevertheless *fides* or *opinio* is sometimes achieved (on account of the provability of the propositions one starts with), because reason (*ratio*) leans completely to one side of a contradiction but with fear concerning the other side.⁷⁸⁹

Opinio occurs when the intellect decides between two contradictory propositions but fear of the opposite being true remains. The fear may even be so miniscule to achieve "probable

former: "Propositions about particular sensible objects, then, are sometimes better known to us even though by nature or consider in themselves they are not better known. As such, they can constitute immediate propositions for us and function as epistemic principles grounding what is for us (though not unqualified) *scientia*," and then the latter: "To have *scientia* with respect to some proposition P is to hold P on the basis of a demonstration the ultimate premises of which are propositions we are non-inferentially justified in holding. These first principles will be (a) immediate, (b) universal, and (c) necessary, and with respect to the demonstrative conclusions they entail, they will be (d) epistemically prior, and express facts that are both (e) metaphysically prior, and (f) explanatory." MacDonald, "Theory of Knowledge," 2006, 175–76, 173.

⁷⁸⁸ *ST II-II.2.3*, "man's ultimate happiness consists in a supernatural vision of God: to which vision man cannot attain unless he be taught by God, according to John 6:45: *Every one that hath heard of the Father and hath learned cometh to Me*. Now man acquires a share of this learning, not indeed all at once, but by little and little, according to the mode of his nature: and every one who learns thus must needs believe, in order that he may acquire science in a perfect degree; thus also the Philosopher remarks (*De Soph. Elench.* i, 2) that *it behooves a learner to believe*. Hence in order that a man arrive at the perfect vision of heavenly happiness, he must first of all believe God (*credat Deo*), as a disciple believes the master who is teaching him." Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae. Secunda Secundae, 1-91*, trans. Laurence Shapcote OP, vol. 17, Latin/English Edition of the Works of St. Thomas Aquinas (Green Bay: The Aquinas Institute, 2017), 27.

⁷⁸⁹ *Expositio libri Posteriorum Analyticorum I.1.6*, Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Posterior Analytics of Aristotle*, trans. F.R. Larcher, vol. 30, The Collected Works of St. Thomas Aquinas. (Albany: Magi Books, 1970), 2. Tr. Mod. ...*in processu rationis, qui non est cum omnimoda certitudine, gradus aliquis invenitur, secundum quod magis et minus ad perfectam certitudinem acceditur. Per huiusmodi enim processum, quandoque quidem, etsi non fiat scientia, fit tamen fides vel opinio propter probabilitatem propositionum, ex quibus proceditur: quia ratio totaliter declinat in unam partem contradictionis, licet cum formidine alterius.* Thomas Aquinas, *Expositio libri Posteriorum*, ed. Ordre des Prêcheurs, altera retractata, Opera Omnia Iussu Leonis XIII P.M. Edita (Roma: Commissio Leonina, 1989), 6. Cf. PA I.44; QDV 15.2, ad 3

certitude" (e.g., many Christian doctrines qualify as *opinio* or *fides*). *Opinio* results from inductive inference and dialectical argumentation and is thus neatly categorized as acquired discursive knowledge. Thomas is clear, however, that *fides* and *opinio* are in no way to be diminished.⁷⁹⁰ If all knowledge comes through sensation, knowledge of immaterial beings like the soul, angels, or God, can only be known indirectly and after great effort. Demonstration *propter quid* deduces that God exists and with certain attributes (via apophaticism), but God's essence is beyond the reach of human knowledge in this life. This leads to the distinction between the "preambles of faith" and the "articles of faith," namely divine truths which natural reason can attain and those which "wholly surpass the capability of human reason" and thus only available via divine testimony.⁷⁹¹ The preambles of faith, are readily categorized under acquired knowledge due to their discursive nature, however, the articles of faith are not readily categorized into immediate knowledge. Knowledge from testimony, namely *fides*, straddles both types of knowledge.

Thomas inherits a long and complicated tradition on the notion of *fides* and the subsequent debate whether divine faith is acquired or infused. Commenting on the definition of faith outlined in Hebrews 11:1, "*fides* is the substance of things hoped for, the *argumentum* of things that appear not", Thomas distinguishes between *fides* in a broad and a narrow sense. Following Augustine, *fides* in the broad sense is "assent to the unseen"

⁷⁹⁰ SCG I.5, 6 "And consequently, although human reason is unable to fully grasp things above reason, it nevertheless acquires much perfection if at least it hold things, in any way whatever, by faith." Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles, Books I-II*, 11:7–10.

⁷⁹¹ Cf. SCG I.3 "Now, in those things which we hold about God there is truth in two ways. For certain things that are true about God wholly surpass the capability of human reason: for instance, that God is three and one. But there are certain things to which even natural reason can attain, for instance, that God is, that God is one, and others like these, which even the philosophers, being guided by the light of natural reason, proved demonstratively about God." Ibid., 11:4–5. Also cf. Ralph McInerny, *Praeambula Fidei Thomism and the God of the Philosophers* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2006).

or that which is not evident and thus open to the assent of faith.⁷⁹² This broad *fides* captures confident *opinio* and human testimony, saying "faith in the broad sense, namely, that by which we are said to believe that about which we have an opinion which we hold tenaciously, or to believe on the testimony of some man."⁷⁹³ Thus, if the object *is* evident to the mind or to the senses then it would compel the intellect making faith impossible.⁷⁹⁴ Thomas applies the narrow sense of faith, which is based on an interpersonal believing the speaker, to God and divine testimony, but does not bar its application to humans. It is primarily this sense that Thomas has under consideration in his commentary on *De Trinitate* where he follows Hugh of St. Victor in stating *fides* draws on both *scientia* and *opinio*:

Text 5.2.2.2

Fides has something in common with opinion (*opinio*) and also with science (*scientia*) and understanding (*intellectus*); so Hugh of St. Victor places it between science (*scientia*) and opinion (*opinione*). With science (*scientia*) and understanding (*intellectu*) it has in common unerring (*certum*) and firm assent (*fixum assensus*). In this respect it differs from opinion, which accepts one of two contraries but fears the other might be correct, and also from doubt, which hesitates between two contraries. With opinion it shares

⁷⁹² Cf. *Scriptum* III.17.1.2.1c; *ST I-II*. 17.6; *ST II-II*.1,4

⁷⁹³ *QDV* 14.2, tr. mod. Thomas Aquinas, *The Disputed Questions on Truth: St. Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Robert W. Mulligan, James V. McGlynn, S.J., and Robert W. Schmidt S.J., vol. 3 (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1953), 217.

⁷⁹⁴ Thomas says this explicitly in *QDV* 14.9.: "hence, it is impossible to have faith and scientific knowledge about the same thing." *Ibid.*, 3:249–50. Also cf. *In B. de Trin.*, 2.1ad5; but he adds that while there can be no demonstrations for faith propositions there can neither be demonstrations contrary to faith propositions. Thomas holds that any demonstration contrary to faith is mistaken. Per Lamont: "There are two kinds of human reasoning. One is demonstrative, compelling the mind's assent. There can be no place in matters of faith for this kind of reasoning, but there can be in disproving claims that faith is impossible. For although matters of faith cannot be demonstratively proved, neither can they be demonstratively disproved. If this sort of reasoning were brought forward to prove what is held on faith, the merit of faith would be destroyed, because the assent to it would not be voluntary but necessary. But persuasive reasoning, drawn from analogies to the truths of faith, does not take away the nature of faith because it does not render them evident, for there is no reduction to first principles intuited by the mind. Neither does it deprive faith of its merit, because it does not compel the mind's assent but leaves the assent voluntary." For more on this issue cf. Lamont, *Divine Faith*, 66; Christophe Grellard, *De la certitude volontaire débats nominalistes sur la foi à la fin du Moyen Âge*, Philosophie à l'oeuvre 7 (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2014), 40.

the fact that it has to do with matters that are not clear to the mind, in which respect it differs from science (*scientia*) and understanding (*intellectus*)."⁷⁹⁵

When Thomas says *fides* is in between *opinio* and *scientia*, he means intersects or possess attributes from each type. With *opinio*, *fides* shares that its object of belief is not evident. Since the object of belief is not evident, the will must move the intellect to assent. With *scientia*, the assent of *fides* shares assuredness (no fear of the opposite being true). This assuredness entails subjective certainty but not objective certainty since the certainty of *fides* provides "firm adherence to a proposition" but not the "evidentness of a proposition."⁷⁹⁶ This certainty follows from *fides* which necessarily is a theological virtue since the object of faith is God and knowledge of God surpasses the limitations of the human intellect (the subject of faith). Despite being a theological virtue, faith resides in the intellect since it is the intellect, moved by the will, which performs the act of assent. Questions arise since a non-intellectual virtue residing in the intellect provides greater assurance than *scientia* and *intellectus* through *fides*.⁷⁹⁷ One solution is that theological virtues and their object, the good of salvation, are higher than moral and intellectual virtues, but a question of circularity arises since the good of salvation obtained by *fides* presupposes beliefs acquired through *fides*.⁷⁹⁸ Thomas's conceivable escape can be found in the

⁷⁹⁵ B. De Trin. 3.1. Translation from Thomas Aquinas, *Faith, reason and theology: Questions I-IV of his Commentary on the De Trinitate of Boethius*, trans. Armand A Maurer, vol. 36, The Collected Works of St. Thomas Aquinas. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1986), 65. *Dicendum, quod fides habet aliquid commune cum opinione, et aliquid cum scientia et intellectu; ratione cuius ponitur media inter scientiam et opinionem ab Hugone de S. Victore. Cum scientia siquidem et intellectu commune habet certum et fixum assensum; in quo ab opinione differt, que accipit alterum contrariorum cum formidine alterius, et a dubitatione, que fluctuat inter duo contraria. Set cum opinione commune habet quod est de rebus que non sunt intellectui <ap>parentia; in quo differt a scientia et intellectu.* Thomas Aquinas, *Supoer Boetium de Trinitate: Expositio Libri Beotii de Ebdomadibus*, ed. Iussu Leonis XIII P.M., Opera Omnia (Roma: Commissio Leonina, 1992), 107.

⁷⁹⁶ Lamont, *Divine Faith*, 60.

⁷⁹⁷ 3 Sent. D.23, q. 1, a.3, sol. 3; ST I-II. 56.3; 62.1-2; & II-II.4.1-2. For an overview cf. Lamont, 57–58.

⁷⁹⁸ There is also a concern of differing ends, i.e. the intellectual good of obtaining truth vs. the personal good of eternal life; however, these ends do not appear all too different in Thomas's conception of the beatific vision. *Ibid.*, 58–61.

necessary disposing of the intellective appetite to desire and command an act of faith such that this good disposition can be said to be the habit of faith.⁷⁹⁹

The human role is seen in the first of two requirements for *fides*: "exterior preaching" and an "interior call from God."⁸⁰⁰ This echoes the traditional distinction between "acquired faith", which is caused by hearing (*ex auditu*) that is unaided human effort, and "infused faith", which can only be caused in the soul directly by God.⁸⁰¹ The traditional view held that acquired faith could not provide salvation but prepared one for infused faith.⁸⁰² The distinction lies not in the content of propositions but the epistemic ground for assent to those propositions. Acquired faith is thus assent to the propositions of faith transmitted by humans on the epistemic grounds of normal human testimony.⁸⁰³ Infused faith is assent to the propositions of faith transmitted by humans on the epistemic grounds of divine testimony. Thomas only refers to infused faith but maintains the above distinction of what is believed (human transmitted propositions of faith) as the material object and who is believed (fallible humans or infallible First Truth) as the formal object of faith.⁸⁰⁴ The difference is *whom* is believed. Acquired faith results from believing humans (*credere homini*), while infused faith results from believing God (*credere deo*).

⁷⁹⁹ Cf. *ST* II-II.4.2.ad2

⁸⁰⁰ Lamont, *Divine Faith*, 72. God send "truths of faith" in two ways: "immediately by God himself through internal inspiration" and "mediately on the authority of prelates, who take God's place." Cf. *Ad Romano* C.10, L1-2 Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans*, ed. John Mortensen, trans. Fabian Richard Larcher (Lander: Aquinas Institute for the Study of Sacred Doctrine, 2012), 286–87.

⁸⁰¹ Lamont notes however that "Significantly, unlike previous scholastic theologians, Aquinas does not postulate the existence of acquired faith as well as infused faith. Infused faith, for him, is the only faith there is in Christian believers." Lamont, *Divine Faith*, 68–69.

⁸⁰² *Ibid.*, 52.

⁸⁰³ Cf. *ST* I-II.62.2.ad2

⁸⁰⁴ Lamont, *Divine Faith*, 61.

5.3 Testimony in Thomas

Thomas begins the *Summa Theologiae* saying that in addition to knowledge by philosophical science through rational investigation it was necessary for human salvation to receive knowledge beyond all human wisdom by *sacra doctrina* through revelation.⁸⁰⁵ This knowledge has the highest principle and cause of the universe—God—as its source. Due to the doctrine of the trinity, Thomas is comfortable understanding this divine knowledge as a manifestation of the divine essence, namely Jesus Christ who is the divine *logos* or Word.⁸⁰⁶ Humans acquire this divine speech via human witnesses who testify to their receiving a prophetic word or a personal encounter with Jesus Christ which were collected to become *sacra scriptura*.⁸⁰⁷ Despite this profound human role, Thomas cites 2 Timothy 3:16, that "all Scripture is God-breathed", as the very first *sed contra* of the *Summa Theologiae* to state that *sacra scriptura* is inspired by God, *divinitus inspirata*.⁸⁰⁸ So while God is the ultimate source, *sacra scriptura* simultaneously has both God and men as its author which permits "acquired faith" to lead to "infused faith." Testimony for the Christian tradition, and thus for Thomas, interweaves divine and human testimony. So, while Thomas does not address testimony as a topic directly, he gives it special treatment under prophecy, biblical inspiration, and infused faith. In such instances, divine testimony provides certain knowledge. However, when discussing purely human instances of testimony, such as legal witnesses in a law court, certain knowledge is impossible. Thomas therefore needs one theory that seamlessly integrates and grounds divine and human

⁸⁰⁵ Cf. *ST* I.1.1

⁸⁰⁶ This avoids making wisdom co-eternal with God but creates tension with the doctrine of divine unity.

⁸⁰⁷ "Hence wisdom is said to be the knowledge of divine things, as Augustine says (*De Trin.* XII, 14)." *ST* I.1.6

⁸⁰⁸ Cf. *ST* I.1.1.

testimony while accounting for the disparity in certainty. To do so, Thomas addresses the same twin concerns that Saadya and al-Ghazālī sought to remedy, accuracy and honesty, by relying on both the virtues of the listener and the speaker.

Divine and human testimony rely on the role of signification and Aristotle's "semantic triangle" where words signify mental concepts which mediately signify real external objects.⁸⁰⁹ Just as with human speech, God signifies His meaning through words and things:

Text 5.3.0.1

The author of *sacra scriptura* is God, in whose power it is to signify His meaning, not by words only (as man also can do), but also by things themselves. So, whereas in every other science things are signified by words, this science has the property, that the things signified by the words have themselves also a signification.⁸¹⁰

So, words are a form of signification of inner meaning shown to have several senses by revelation's historical, literal, and spiritual senses (which itself has a threefold division).⁸¹¹

At its core, testimony is the use of signification to relate facts possessed by one agent to

⁸⁰⁹ *Peri Hermeneias*, I.2.5, "Therefore 'passions in the soul' must be understood here as conceptions of the intellect, and names, verbs, and speech, signify these conceptions of the intellect immediately according to the teaching of Aristotle. They cannot immediately signify things, as is clear from the mode of signifying, for the name 'man' signifies human nature in abstraction from singulars; hence it is impossible that it immediately signify a singular man. The Platonists for this reason held that it signified the separated idea of man. But because in Aristotle's teaching man in the abstract does not really subsist, but is only in the mind, it was necessary for Aristotle to say that vocal sounds signify the conceptions of the intellect immediately and things by means of them." Jean T. Oesterle, *Aristotle: On Interpretation* (Marquette University Press, 1962), 25. Cf. *Scriptum* I.19.5.1

⁸¹⁰ *ST* I.1.10, tr.mod. *Respondeo dicendum quod auctor sacrae Scripturae est Deus, in cuius potestate est ut non solum voces ad significandum accommodet (quod etiam homo facere potest), sed etiam res ipsas. Et ideo, cum in omnibus scientiis voces significant, hoc habet proprium ista scientia, quod ipsae res significatae per voces, etiam significant aliquid.* Aquinas, *Summa theologiae. Prima pars, 1-49*, 15.

⁸¹¹ The three spiritual senses of the medieval period include: the allegorical sense (including typology), the moral (or "tropological") sense, and the anagogic (or future) sense. Cf. Christopher T. Baglow, "Sacred Scripture and Sacred Doctrine in Saint Thomas Aquinas," in *Aquinas on Doctrine: A Critical Introduction*, ed. Thomas G Weinandy, Daniel A Keating, and John Yocum (London; New York: T & T Clark International, 2004); Nicholas M. Healy, "Introduction to Aquinas on Scripture," in *Aquinas on Scripture: An Introduction to His Biblical Commentaries*, ed. Thomas Gerard Weinandy, Daniel A Keating, and John Yocum (London; New York: T & T Clark International, A Continuum imprint, 2005), 1–20.

another. The most common word for testimony is *testimonium* which refers to the speech of a *testis* (a witness). *Testimonium* generates either the cognitive state *opinio* or *fides*. As shown, Thomas distinguished between a broad and narrow sense of *fides*. These two senses mark two ways to obtain belief states from a speaker, which I argue occurs for both human and divine speakers.

The broad sense is akin to Augustine's definition of assent to the unseen, since an unseen object cannot compel the intellect to assent but requires an act of will.⁸¹² Assent to the unseen with humans involves a sort of probability calculus including factors such as number of testifiers and character of the relevant testifiers to produce strong *opinion* as Thomas states regarding witnesses: "...the authority of testimony (*testimonium*) is not infallible but probable; and consequently the testimony (*testimonium*) for one side is weakened by whatever strengthens the probability of the other."⁸¹³ Strong opinion can even obtain probable certitude from "Demon faith" which *De Veritate* and the *ST* state results from testimony that compels assent due to the strength of evident signs and the demon's "sharp-sighted" (*perspicacitas*) natural intellect.⁸¹⁴ Demons make effectively certain predictions inferring from miracles and the character of God who cannot err and cannot lie. However, demons can neither see the future nor grasp Church teachings because they cannot obtain the narrow sense of faith since they are incapable of trusting God. The narrow sense of faith is linked with *credere deo* ("believing God") which distinguishes between believing the material object of faith—the proposition(s)—and the formal object of faith—

⁸¹² Siebert notes that one's assent being determined partly by the will is essential to faith, but this does not lead to any sort of doxastic voluntarism since "assent is not commanded by the will alone, but by the will under the direction of one's reason." Siebert, "Aquinas on Testimonial Justification," 563.

⁸¹³ *ST* II-II.70.3 Tr mod. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae. Secunda Secundae, 1-91*, 17:659–60. The original translation renders *testimonium* as "evidence" which anachronistically presumes a form of evidentialism in which testimony is a kind of "evidence" as opposed to a reason to believe as will be discussed in chapter 6.

⁸¹⁴ Cf. *QDV* 14.9.ad.4 and *ST* II-II.5.2. Siebert, "Aquinas on Testimonial Justification," 577–78.

the speaker. While narrow faith is introduced regarding divine testimony, its application can be found in human testimony as Matthew Siebert describes, "When one has faith that *p*, one (i) believes the speaker's statement in order to adhere to the speaker, (ii) with a special act of will not present in opinion, and (iii) typically for the reason that the speaker is truthful."⁸¹⁵ For the sake of parity, I call such human *fides* "*credere homini*." The result is four possibilities for testimony as seen in Chart 5.3.0.2.

Chart 5.3.0.2

	Human Speaker	Divine Speaker
Broad sense of <i>fides</i>	Inductive reasoning → Strong <i>opinio</i>	Inductive/Abductive reasoning or "Demon faith" → Probable certitude
Narrow sense of <i>fides</i>	Interpersonal faith or <i>Credere homini</i> → Strong <i>opinio</i>	Infused faith or <i>Credere Deo</i> → Certain <i>fides</i>

Regardless of whether the testimony is from a human speaker or a divine speaker and whether the listener acquires it via the broad or narrow sense of faith, the grounding of testimony cannot be divorced from virtue. Listeners must employ a *habitus*, intellectual or theological, to confirm that the speaker possesses the virtues that ensure both that the speaker is an epistemic authority for the matter under discussion (to rule out error) and the speaker is morally upstanding (to rule out the possibility of lying and deception). This notion of trustworthy epistemic authority allows Thomas to account for the disparity in certainty between human and divine testimony due to the failures of humans on matters of virtue compared to its perfection in God:

Text 5.3.0.3

Other things being equal sight is more certain than hearing; but if (the authority of) the person from whom we hear greatly surpasses that of the

⁸¹⁵ Ibid., 569, 571–72.

seer's sight, hearing is more certain than sight: thus a man of little science is more certain about what he hears on the authority of an expert in science, than about what is apparent to him according to his own reason: and much more is a man certain about what he hears from God, Who cannot be deceived, than about what he sees with his own reason, which can be mistaken.⁸¹⁶

In this way, human testimony and divine testimony are accounted for by the same process, namely trust in an expert authority due to their knowledge and sincerity grounded in virtuous character.

5.3.1 Human Testimony

Thomas discusses instances of human testimony scattered throughout his works and all of them acquire belief either through broad or narrow faith where virtue is the epistemic ground. The main concentration occurs in treatises on faith and legal testimony including: acts of religion (the swearing of oaths) and acts of a law court (witness testimony in legal proceedings). Perhaps curiously (but I argue fittingly) these discussions are not found in the *ST's Treatise on Law*, but in the *Treatise on the Cardinal Virtues* and particularly on the cardinal virtue justice.⁸¹⁷ While testimony proper should not be equated with legal testimony, the two discussions are highly instructive since oaths are not confined to the courtroom and the same testimonial principles emerge to guard against false testimony.

While an oath is something divine received by man (*aliquid divinum ab hominibus assumitur*), it should be analyzed here since the invocation of God is used to confirm

⁸¹⁶ *ST* II-II.4.8.ad2; *Ad secundum dicendum quod, ceteris paribus, visio est certior auditu. Sed si ille a quo auditur multum excedit visum videntis, sic certior est auditus quam visus. Sicut aliquis parvae scientiae magis certificatur de eo quod audit ab aliquo scientissimo quam de eo quod sibi secundum suam rationem videtur. Et multo magis homo certior est de eo quod audit a Deo, qui falli non potest, quam de eo quod videt propria ratione, quae falli potest.* Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae. Secunda Secundae, 1-91*, 17:58.

⁸¹⁷ Treatises on Law cf. *ST* I-II.90–108; on the Cardinal Virtues cf. II-II.47-170; on virtue of justice cf. II-II.57-122.

assertions between humans. In defining oaths, Thomas gives a succinct analysis of human testimony:

Text 5.3.1.1

As the Apostle says (Heb 6:16), oaths are taken *for the purpose of confirmation (confirmationem)*. Now speculative propositions (*in scibilibus*) receive confirmation from reason, which proceeds from principles known naturally and infallibly true. But particular contingent facts regarding man cannot be confirmed by a necessary reason, wherefore propositions regarding such things are wont to be confirmed by witnesses. Now a human witness does not suffice to confirm such matters for two reasons. First, on account of man's lack of truth, for many give way to lying, according to Ps. 16:10, *Their mouth hath spoken lies*. Second, on account of lack of knowledge, since he can know neither the future, nor secret thoughts, nor absent things: and yet men speak about such things, and our everyday life requires that we should have some certitude about them. Hence the need to have recourse to a Divine witness, for neither can God lie, nor is anything hidden from Him. Now to call God to witness is named *jurare* (to swear) because it is established as though it were a principle of law (*jure*) that what a man asserts under the invocation of God as His witness should be accepted as true. Now sometimes God is called to witness when we assert present or past events, and this is termed a *declaratory oath*; while sometimes God is called to witness in confirmation of something future, and this is termed a *promissory oath*. But oaths are not employed in order to substantiate necessary matters, and such as come under the investigation of reason; for it would seem laughable in a scientific discussion to wish to prove one's point by an oath.⁸¹⁸

⁸¹⁸ *ST II-II.89.1 tr. mod., Respondeo dicendum quod, sicut Apostolus dicit, ad Heb. VI, iuramentum ad confirmationem ordinatur. Confirmatio autem in scibilibus per rationem fit, quae procedit ex aliquibus naturaliter notis, quae sunt infallibiliter vera. Sed particularia facta contingentia hominum non possunt per rationem necessariam confirmari. Et ideo ea quae de his dicuntur solent confirmari per testes. Sed humanum testimonium non est sufficiens ad huiusmodi confirmandum, propter duo. Primo quidem, propter defectum veritatis humanae, quia plurimi in mendacium labuntur, secundum illud Psalm., os eorum locutum est mendacium. Secundo, propter defectum cognitionis, quia homines non possunt cognoscere neque futura, neque cordium occulta, vel etiam absentia; de quibus tamen homines loquuntur, et expedit rebus humanis ut certitudo aliqua de his habeatur. Et ideo necessarium fuit recurrere ad divinum testimonium, quia Deus neque mentiri potest, neque eum aliquid latet. Assumere autem Deum in testem dicitur iurare, quia quasi pro iure introductum est ut quod sub invocatione divini testimonii dicitur pro vero habeatur. Divinum autem testimonium quandoque inducitur ad asserendum praesentia vel praeterita, et hoc dicitur iuramentum assertorium. Quandoque autem inducitur divinum testimonium ad confirmandum aliquid futurum, et hoc dicitur iuramentum promissorium. Ad ea vero quae sunt necessaria et per rationem investiganda non inducitur iuramentum, derisibile enim videretur si quis in disputatione alicuius scientiae vellet propositum per iuramentum probare. Aquinas, Summa Theologiae. Secunda Secundae, 1-91, 17:828.*

From this we see that Thomas affirms several aspects of testimony: First, Thomas consistently maintains that assertions require confirmation. For Thomas, testimony is linked to the good of the community (especially as it pertains to justice) giving it a moral quality, such that the giving, or possible withholding of, witness testimony is interpreted as morally obligatory. However, this moral duty only holds "provided he [the testifier] can offer sufficient proof, since it is the accuser's duty to prove."⁸¹⁹ Thus, the good of stopping criminality is checked by the good of accurate testimony. The need for accuracy explains why accusations must be written since "verbal utterances are apt to escape one's memory."⁸²⁰ Society exists only insofar as justice prevails, but trust in justice necessitates that people tell the truth, which requires accuracy.⁸²¹ The harm of false testimony (due to error or lying) thereby raised objections insisting on the certitude of testimony.

Second, Thomas offers two clear paths to confirm testimony either by reason or witnesses. The fastest and easiest is confirmation by reason (*rationem*). Oaths are rendered unnecessary if assertions are discernable via natural or infallible sources. Thomas expends little effort explaining but his meaning is obvious: assertions that are supported by knowledge that obtains the level of *scientia* (e.g. from perception, natural reason, and/or demonstration) are to be assented to while assertions that contradict such knowledge are to be rejected.⁸²² Testimony regarding past or present temporal events, which presumably could be confirmed by natural reason or demonstration rendering oaths superfluous, is confirmable by a unique class of oaths, declarative oaths.⁸²³ The confirmation of testimony

⁸¹⁹ *ST* II-II.68.1, Thomas repeats the claim a little later "...if he cannot offer sufficient proof, a man is not bound to attempt to accuse, since no man is bound to do what he cannot duly accomplish." *Ibid.*, 17:639–40.

⁸²⁰ *ST* II-II.68.2

⁸²¹ Thus, it is a mortal sin to deny the truth even to avoid one's own condemnation, Cf. *ST* II-II.69.

⁸²² The type of confirming *scientia* (objective, subjective, or probable) is irrelevant since all use rational argumentation.

⁸²³ This may have bearing on Thomas's comments and arguments regarding the eternity of the world.

regarding temporal events largely falls under the second path via witnesses. Third, witnesses need further confirmation given the potential for i) error or lack of knowledge and ii) lying. The confirmation of witnesses relies on *dignitas* (cf. texts 5.3.1.5 & 5.3.1.6) which is maximally held by God allowing the confirmation of human testimony by divine witness.⁸²⁴ Thus, there is no need for an oath with divine testimony since Thomas states "an oath is required as a remedy to a defect, namely, some man's lack of belief in another man," such that to request an oath from God would not only be absurd but diminish God (cf. text 5.3.1.6).⁸²⁵

Lastly, since what is presumed to necessitate an oath is that the character of the human speaker is either unknown or insufficient to confirm their assertion, *fides* as trust is linked to the good of society and thus notions of justice and morality. To disrupt this foundational trust via false witness or lying is thus a moral offense. Thus in Text 5.3.1.2, Thomas quotes Cicero's *de officiis* who claims *fides*—"truth and fidelity to promises and agreements"—is the foundation of justice, which lends itself to being translated as "trust."⁸²⁶ This societal context undergirds Siebert's analysis that *fides* contributes to society along three divisions of labor: vertical between experts and non-experts; horizontal between peers; and vertical between teachers and students.⁸²⁷ The first vertical epistemic division of labor between knowledge experts (i.e., talented intellectuals who can demonstrate certain truths) and those who believe that truth on faith (since they cannot

⁸²⁴ This section on oaths seems to be a perfect proof-text for Richard Cross's thesis that "the only grounds of Christian belief is divine testimony: only if the relevant faith is caused by God can the process that causes it be maximally reliable," and yet it is conspicuously absent. This is likely due to Cross limiting himself to divine testimony as I will address in the next section. Cf. Cross, "Testimony, Error, and Reasonable Belief in Medieval Religious Epistemology," 29–30.

⁸²⁵ *ST II-II.89.5*. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae. Secunda Secundae, 1-91*, 17:833.

⁸²⁶ *Fundamentum autem est iustitiae fides, id est dictorum conventorumque consantia et veritas*. Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De Officiis* (Harvard University Press, 1913), 24–25.

⁸²⁷ Siebert, "Aquinas on Testimonial Justification," 557–60.

perform the demonstration themselves due to a lack of time, talent, or training) is commonly found among Medieval thinkers as outlined in chapter 1. Thus, while confirmation by reason is preferred, it is not always feasible. Siebert notes this division of labor occurs even between disciplines in which "lower" disciplines take conclusions demonstrated by "higher" scientific disciplines on faith.⁸²⁸ The second horizontal epistemic division of labor is between epistemic peers which permits societies to function since individuals must act in faith on reports from other people despite not being in a position to personally verify claims for themselves.⁸²⁹ The illustrative passage is from Aquinas's *de Trinite* in affirmatively answering "Is faith necessary for the human race?":⁸³⁰

Text 5.3.1.2

Now, as the *Metaphysics* says there can be two reasons why something is not evident (*patens*) to human cognition: because of something wanting on the part of the knowable objects themselves, and because of some deficiency on the part of our mind. Examples of something wanting on the part of objects are individual and contingent things that are remote from our senses, for example, our actions (*facta*), words (*dicta*) and thoughts (*cogitata*), which are such that they can be known (*nota*) to one person and unknown (*incognita*) to another. And because in human society one person must make use of another just as he does himself in matters in which he is not self-sufficient, he must take his stand on what another knows (*scit*) and is unknown to himself (*sibi ignota*), just as he does on what he himself knows (*cognoscit*). As a consequence, *fides* is necessary in human society, one person believing (*credat*) what another says (*dictis*). As Cicero remarks in the book *De Officiis*, this is the basis of justice. That is why there is no lie without moral fault, for every lie does some harm to this so essential faith.⁸³¹

⁸²⁸ Siebert, "Aquinas on Testimonial Justification." 557-558.

⁸²⁹ Cf. *ST* II-II.109.3.

⁸³⁰ *De Trin.* 3.1c. For Saadya's parallel account Cf. Text 3.3.0.1.

⁸³¹ This text immediately follows Text 5.2.2.2. *De Trin* 3.1c. Tr. Mod. Aquinas, *Faith, reason and theology*, 36:65. *Quod autem aliquid non sit patens humane cognitioni potest ex duobus contingere, ut dicitur in II Metaphisice: scilicet ex defectu ipsarum rerum cognoscibilium, et ex defectu intellectus nostri. Ex defectu quidem rerum, sicut in rebus singularibus et contingentibus, que a nostris sensibus sunt remote, sicut sunt facta hominum et dicta et cogitata; que quidem talia sunt ut uni homini possint esse nota et alii incognita. Et quia in conuictu hominum oportet quod unus utatur altero sicut se ipso in his in quibus sibi non sufficit, ideo oportet ut stet illis que alius scit et sunt sibi ignota sicut his que ipse cognoscit; et exinde est quod in conuersione hominum est fides necessaria, qua unus homo dictis alterius credat, et hoc est iustitie fundamentum, ut Tullius dicit in libro De officiis. Et inde est quod mendacium nullum sine peccato est, cum*

Thomas here explicitly affirms the indispensable role of *fides* in other humans and elsewhere says humans owe faith to one another as a "natural right" (*iure naturali*).⁸³² This applies for: i) non-experts who must rely on expert authority due to their epistemic lack; and ii) experts who develop future experts in the sciences via testimony despite it only being highly probable and not certain. Thus, the continuation of text 5.3.1.2 describes the second reason why something is not evident (*patens*) to human cognition as the third vertical epistemic division of labor between teachers and students where the key to learning any science is the preliminary steppingstone of *fides*.⁸³³ Students necessarily begin with faith in their teacher, but this faith is only provisional as the student begins to understand why the principles they accepted at the beginning of their education are true.⁸³⁴

With the primacy of *fides* established for human testimony, the majority of Thomas's analysis regarding the confirmation of testimony is devoted to confirmation by witnesses which requires additional verification either by the broad or narrow sense of

per omne mendacium huic fidei tam necessarie derogetur. Aquinas, *Supoer Boetium de Trinitate: Expositio Libri Beotii de Ebdomadibus*, 107.

⁸³² Cf. *ST* II-II.70.1ad2. The examples regard secrecy and when it is acceptable to testify. While it is acceptable to defy secrecy to maintain faith to humankind as in the common good, it is unacceptable to defy secrecy when the common good remains intact since it disrupts the faith between one another. There is a fair amount of literature on secrecy in the Middle Ages cf. Silvana Vecchio, "Segreti e bugie. I peccata occulta," in *Il segreto = The secret*, Certosa del Galluzzo, *Micrologus: natura, scienze e società medievali = nature, sciences and medieval societies*, XIV (Firenze: SISMEL, 2006), 41–58.

⁸³³ The continuation of *De Trin* 3.1c reads: "Owing to a deficiency on our part, divine and necessary realities, which are most knowable by nature, are not apparent to us. We are not adapted to examine them from the outset, because we have to arrive at what is more knowable and prior by nature beginning with what is less knowable and posterior by nature. But what we first know is known on the strength of what we eventually come to know; so from the very beginning we must have some knowledge of those things which are more knowable in themselves, and this is possible only by faith. The sequence of the sciences makes this clear, for the science that concerns the highest causes, namely metaphysics, comes last in human knowledge, and yet the sciences that precede it must presuppose certain truths that are more fully elucidated in that science. As a result, every science has presuppositions which the learner must believe. Consequently, since the goal of human life is perfect happiness, which consists in the full knowledge of divine realities, the direction of human life toward perfect happiness from the very beginning requires faith in the divine, the complete knowledge of which we look forward to in our final state of perfection." Aquinas, *Faith, reason and theology*, 36:65.

⁸³⁴ "Some of the preexisting knowledge required for learning a science must be testimonial" Siebert, "Aquinas on Testimonial Justification." 560.

faith. Except for Holy Spirit guided activities (e.g., the Canon Law tradition) which are connected to instrumental causality discussed under divine testimony, human testimony cannot achieve certainty. The broad sense generates *strong opinion* by inferring the probability of a proposition being true in weighing factors like the number of witnesses and their *dignitas*.⁸³⁵ Thomas relies on a probability calculus to state we can obtain probable certainty by accounting first for accurate information:

Text 5.3.1.3

According to the Philosopher (*Ethic.* i, 3), *we must not expect to find certitude equally in every matter*. For in human acts, on which judgments are passed and testimony required, it is impossible to have demonstrative certitude, because they are about things contingent and variable. Hence the certitude of probability (*probabilis certitudo*) suffices, such as may reach the truth in the greater number of cases, although it fail in the minority. Now it is probable that the assertion of several witnesses contains the truth rather than the assertion of one: and since the accused is the only one who denies, while several witness affirm the same as the prosecutor, it is reasonably established both by Divine and by human law, that the assertion of several witnesses should be upheld.⁸³⁶

And second as a defense against collusion:

Text 5.3.1.4

In the business affairs of men, there is no such thing as demonstrative and infallible proof, and we must be content with a certain conjectural probability, such as that which an orator employs to persuade. Consequently, although it is quite possible for two or three witnesses to agree to a falsehood, yet it is neither easy nor probable that they succeed in

⁸³⁵ Cf. *Ibid.*, 568. Confirmation by the number of witnesses stems from Deuteronomy's injunction on the sufficiency of two or three witnesses. Cf. Deuteronomy 17:6.

⁸³⁶ *ST* II-II.70.2, emphasis mine. *Respondeo dicendum quod, secundum philosophum, in I Ethic., certitudo non est similiter quaerenda in omni materia. In actibus enim humanis, super quibus constituuntur iudicia et exiguntur testimonia, non potest haberi certitudo demonstrativa, eo quod sunt circa contingentia et variabilia. Et ideo sufficit probabilis certitudo, quae ut in pluribus veritatem attingat, etsi in paucioribus a veritate deficiat. Est autem probabile quod magis veritatem contineat dictum multorum quam dictum unius. Et ideo, cum reus sit unus qui negat, sed multi testes asserunt idem cum actore, rationabiliter institutum est, iure divino et humano, quod dicto testium stetur.* Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae. Secunda Secundae, 1-91*, 17:658.

so doing: wherefore their testimony is taken as being true, especially if they do not waver in giving it, or are not otherwise suspect.⁸³⁷

This reasoning echoes the Islamic notion of *tawātur* in which an increasing number of testifiers safeguards against falsehood and collusion (*praevaricatio*) to ground a proposition. However, unlike *tawātur* this knowledge can never achieve certainty as Thomas states: "No matter how great a number of witnesses may be determined, the testimony might sometimes be unjust..."⁸³⁸

In discussing oaths, we can see that the *dignitas* ("standing") of the witnesses also plays an equivalent role in the probability calculus. Among acceptable witnesses the testimony of the witness with more *dignitas* is given more weight. Thomas states that the benefit of the doubt should go to the accused if both the witnesses of the prosecution and the defense are equal in number "and of equal *dignitate*."⁸³⁹ Thomas responds to an objection by dismissing the count of how many witnesses are needed to accuse differing church officials (ranging from seven to seventy-four witnesses) but affirming that the sole testimony of a witness with more *dignitas* can rival the multiple testimonies of witnesses with less *dignitas*:

Text 5.3.1.5

Reply Obj. 3: This passage [of the Papal Decretals] refers specially to the bishops, priests, deacons and clerics of the Roman Church, on account of its dignity: and this for three reasons. First because in that Church those men

⁸³⁷ ST I-II.105.2.ad8, *Ad octavum dicendum quod in negotiis humanis non potest haberi probatio demonstrativa et infallibilis, sed sufficit aliqua coniecturalis probabilitas, secundum quam rhetor persuadet. Et ideo, licet sit possibile duos aut tres testes in mendacium convenire, non tamen est facile nec probabile quod conveniant; et ideo accipitur eorum testimonium tanquam verum; et praecipue si in suo testimonio non vacillent, vel alias suspecti non fuerint.* Ibid., 17:659.

⁸³⁸ ST II-II.70.2.ad1 Ibid., 17:658.

⁸³⁹ ST II-II.70.2.ad2, Likewise, if conflicting testimony occurs within a side, then the judge must discern which side to favor using several factors including the *dignitate* of the witnesses. Ibid., 17:658–59.

ought to be promoted whose sanctity makes their testimony of more weight than that of many witnesses.⁸⁴⁰

Thomas gives three reasons to defend this inegalitarian classification of witnesses based on *dignitas*. The first (text 5.3.1.5) is that *dignitas* denotes sanctity which should be the basis for rank and authority. Second, authorities (especially judges) rendering justice generate opponents, "wherefore those who give testimony against them should not be believed indiscriminately, unless they be very numerous."⁸⁴¹ Third, the *dignitas* of the church is tied to the *dignitas* of its leaders such that the sin of a priest or bishop is taken far more seriously than the sin of the laity.⁸⁴² The takeaway is the greater the *dignitas* of a witness the more credible their testimony.

The role of *dignitas* thus explains the swearing of oaths which presumes that one's own *dignitas* is either unknown or insufficient to ground one's telling without attestation from another witness whose *dignitas* is known or exceeds one's own. The most compelling witness is obviously God, "who is the very truth", but Thomas also permits swearing an oath by other creatures "in which God's truth is reflected."⁸⁴³ This is affirmed by the fact that a speaker's testimony is impugned by their *culpa* (defects) potentially disqualifying

⁸⁴⁰ ST II-II.70.2.ad3 tr mod. *Ad tertium dicendum quod illud locum habet specialiter in episcopis, presbyteris, diaconibus et clericis Ecclesiae Romanae, propter eius dignitatem. Et hoc triplici ratione. Primo quidem, quia in ea tales institui debent quorum sanctitati plus credatur quam multis testibus.* Ibid., 17:659.

⁸⁴¹ ST II-II.70.2.ad3, "Second, because those who have to judge other men, often have many opponents on account of their justice, wherefore those who give evidence against them should not be believed indiscriminately, unless they be very numerous."

Secundo, quia homines qui habent de aliis iudicare, saepe, propter iustitiam, multos adversarios habent. Unde non est passim credendum testibus contra eos, nisi magna multitudo conveniat. ST II-II.70.2.ad3; Ibid.

⁸⁴² ST II-II.70.2.ad3, "Third, because the condemnation of any one of them would detract in public opinion from the dignity and authority of that Church, a result which would be more fraught with danger than if one were to tolerate a sinner in that same Church, unless he were very notorious and manifest, so that a grave scandal would arise if he were tolerated." Ibid.

Tertio, quia ex condemnatione alicuius eorum derogaretur in opinione hominum dignitati illius Ecclesiae et auctoritati. Quod est periculosius quam in ea tolerare aliquem peccatorem, nisi valde publicum et manifestum, de quo grave scandalum oriretur. Ibid.

⁸⁴³ ST II-II.89.6; Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae. Secunda Secundae, 1-91*, 17:834–35.

them as a witness.⁸⁴⁴ *Culpa* here is understood in a very broad sense highlighting three distinct groups whose *dignitas* is known to be poor and thus their oaths are unacceptable. First, those of poor character due to blameworthy moral failures such as the infidels, the infamous, the formerly convicted, and perjurers.⁸⁴⁵ Second, those with blameless undeveloped or defective reasoning such as children, imbeciles, and (to some extent) women.⁸⁴⁶ Third, those with conflicts of interest or those whose testimony can be easily influenced such as paupers, slaves, and those who are susceptible to be commanded (*illi quibus imperari potest*). Conversely, Thomas says that persons whose *dignitas* is known to be great need not swear oaths and asking them to do so dishonors them:

Text 5.3.1.6

The other thing to be considered is on the part of the man, whose assertion is confirmed by oath. For a man's assertion needs no confirmation save because there is a doubt about it. Now it derogates from a person's dignity (*dignitati*) that one should doubt about the truth of what he says, wherefore *it becomes not persons of great dignity to swear*. For this reason the law says (II, qu. v, can. *Si quis presbyter*) that *priests should not swear for trifling reasons*.⁸⁴⁷

Persons of such *dignitas* thus exhibit the necessary traits and habits to alleviate the twin concerns of accuracy and honesty. It would seem no further proof is required for their *dignitas* has already done the necessary confirmatory work to assent to their testimony. In short, the possession of character makes them trustworthy.

⁸⁴⁴ Cf. *ST* II-II.70.3

⁸⁴⁵ Cf. *ST* II-II.89.10

⁸⁴⁶ While Thomas holds to the essential equality of all humans, his views on women are still debated. E.g., cf. Susanne M. DeCrane, *Aquinas, Feminism, and the Common Good*, Moral Traditions Series (Washington, D.C: Georgetown University Press, 2004); Francisco J. Romero-Carrasquillo and Hilaire K. Troyer de Romero, "Aquinas on the Inferiority of Woman," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 87, no. 4 (2013): 685–710.

⁸⁴⁷ *ST* II-II.89.10; *Aliud autem est considerandum ex parte hominis, cuius dictum iuramento confirmatur. Non enim indiget dictum hominis confirmatione nisi quia de eo dubitatur. Hoc autem derogat dignitati personae, ut dubitetur de veritate eorum quae dicit. Et ideo personis magnae dignitatis non convenit iurare. Propter quod dicitur II, qu. V, cap. si quis presbyter, quod sacerdotes ex levi causa iurare non debent.* Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae. Secunda Secundae, 1-91*, 17:841–42.

The confirming role of *dignitas* makes possible for human testimony the second means of acquiring belief via narrow faith. The virtues of the speaker permit listeners to have faith, or trust, in the speaker as opposed to believing what the speaker says. Drawing on Elizabeth Anscombe, Siebert argues for this approach in which *fides* refers to a "kind of trust" saying "Aquinas focuses on the speaker's virtue of truthfulness as a reason for the audience to adhere to the speaker in a way that makes inductive inference with regard to *p* unnecessary."⁸⁴⁸ In the narrow sense of "faith", one wills to assent to a proposition by believing (trusting) the speaker on account of their *dignitas*. The interpersonal nature is seen in contrast to inferring the existence of Rome based on multiple occurrences. For if a listener infers the existence of Rome from a speaker (e.g. "I just returned from Rome"), this reveals that they do not fully trust the speaker to speak either accurately or honestly.⁸⁴⁹ Siebert sees an analogy between *credere deo* ("believing God") and believing human speakers as explained in the *Treatise on the Theological Virtues* regarding the virtue of faith such that it is applicable to humans.⁸⁵⁰ Propositions are "material objects" with different "formal objects" for believing them.⁸⁵¹ The formal object of faith is the reason one assents to a proposition (the material object of faith), which in this case is due to faith

⁸⁴⁸ Cf. G. E. M. Anscombe, "What Is It to Believe Someone?," in *Rationality and Religious Belief*, ed. C. F. Delaney (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979), 141–51; Siebert, "Aquinas on Testimonial Justification," 579.

⁸⁴⁹ Aside from degree of certainty, there is little epistemic difference between "I just returned from Rome" and "Rome exists" since in both cases (assuming no prior listener knowledge of Rome) one learns of Rome by believing the speaker.

⁸⁵⁰ Cf. *ST II-II.2.2; Super epistolam ad Romanos lectura* 4.1 (Text 5.3.2.5). Also Cf. Matthew Kent Siebert, "Aquinas on Believing God," *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 89 (2015): 97–107.

⁸⁵¹ "the material objects of my faith are propositions (the same theorems James knows), while the formal object of my faith is believing the speaker (in this case, James), just as the Christian with faith believes God (*credere Deo*)." Siebert, "Aquinas on Testimonial Justification," 571–72.

in the speaker.⁸⁵² Support is found in Thomas's explanation of heresy as believing the person:

Text 5.3.1.7

Now, whoever believes, assents to someone's words; so that, in every form of unbelief, the person to whose words assent is given seems to hold the chief place and to be the end as it were; while the things by holding which one assents to that person hold a secondary place.⁸⁵³

Here the listener's reason inclines the will to assent to the proposition, but only as spoken by that speaker. Siebert argues this special act of the will differentiates faith from science (which is forced by evidence) and opinion (which does not have firm assent) and makes faith a meritorious act.⁸⁵⁴

Since *dignitas* can confirm testimony in both the broad and narrow sense of faith, it is important to note how the two differ. In broad faith, belief is grounded by inferring from signs such as the speaker's character that they speak truly. In narrow faith, *dignitas* grounds trust in the speaker or "believing the speaker" (as opposed to believing what the speaker said). By way of example, if you tell me *p*, where *p* is "I have a headache," I can assent to *p* by believing you because of our established relationship and your *dignitas*; or I can assent by inferring from the signs of your saying "ow", wincing, and holding your head (and that you would not normally lie about having a headache), but then I would not obtain *p* by believing you. Similarly, if a speaker says *p*, but 1) the listener already knows *p*, or 2) *p* is a proof the listener can work to conclusion, then the listener believes *p*, but not by

⁸⁵² Thomas distinguishes *credere deo* from: *Credere Deum* ("believing that God [exists]") – the intellect's act of being determined to the one proposition believed—or *Credere in Deum* ("believing in God") – the will's act of believing out of love of God, where the will's object is God himself. Siebert, "Aquinas on Testimonial Justification." 570.

⁸⁵³ *ST.II-II.11.1, Quia vero quicumque credit alicuius dicto assentit, principale videtur esse, et quasi finis, in unaquaque credulitate ille cuius dicto assentitur, quasi autem secundaria sunt ea quae quis tenendo vult alicui assentire.* Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae. Secunda Secundae, 1-91*, 17:113–14.

⁸⁵⁴ Siebert, "Aquinas on Testimonial Justification," 574. Cf. *QDV* 14.1.

believing the speaker.⁸⁵⁵ For a listener to believe a speaker is thus to trust them. Siebert notes however, that "even if faith is not inferential, it still requires a reason or explanation for it seeming good to the audience to adhere to the speaker."⁸⁵⁶ What motivates such faith, Siebert claims, is recognizing that the speaker is truthful (i.e., as consequence of their *dignitas*).

Siebert clearly has Thomas's discussion on truth as a virtue in mind (which returns to the *Treatise on Justice*).⁸⁵⁷ There Thomas states that while *veritas* ("truth") is not a virtue, *veracitas* (a quality of habitually conveying the truth) is.⁸⁵⁸ Truthfulness as a virtue stems from Aristotle's discussion in *Nicomachean Ethics* IV.7, which primarily is about reputation or public displays of character. The related vices of boastfulness and self-deprecation reveal that "truthfulness", to quote Siebert's article "Testimonial Trustworthiness" (2018), "is, for Aristotle, a virtue of accurate self-representation motivated by the love of truth."⁸⁵⁹ To be truthful is to be in the habit of representing reality as it is. Two observations can be made here. First, having clarified what it means for *veritas* to be a virtue, Thomas directly links speaking truth with goodness. All four articles on "truth" in the *ST* affirm this stating *veritas* is a special virtue that makes humans good and should induce humility.⁸⁶⁰ Second, there is an indirect link to *fides* and trust or

⁸⁵⁵ Siebert provides several unlikely but interesting cases that highlight this distinction: a hypnosis case in which I know an expert hypnotizes you to say *p* (which is true) where I believe *p* but not by believing you; and a double bluff case in which we distrust one another, "so you try to mislead me by saying something true...but I see through your ruse and infer that what you say is true...I believe what you say, but not by believing you." *Ibid.*, 572.

⁸⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 575.

⁸⁵⁷ *ST* II-II.109.1 Siebert, "Aquinas on Believing God," 102.

⁸⁵⁸ *ST* II-II.109.1, "Second, truth may stand for that by which a person says what is true, in which sense one is said to be truthful. This truth or truthfulness must needs be a virtue, because to say what is true is a good act: and virtue is *that which makes its possessor good, and renders his action good.*" Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae. Secunda Secundae, 1-91*, 17:145–46. For a contemporary comparison cf. Bernard Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness: An Essay in Genealogy* (Princeton University Press.).

⁸⁵⁹ Siebert, "Testimonial Trustworthiness: Truthfulness and Trust," 262.

⁸⁶⁰ Cf. *ST* II-II.109.2-4

trustworthiness in Thomas's medieval milieu. Duns Scotus links *fides* to human testimony from persons whose truthfulness (*veritas*) he knows.⁸⁶¹ William of Ockham likewise has the Disciple in his *Dialogues* say neither *veritas* nor *veracitas* are possible where there is not *sana fides* (sound faith).⁸⁶²

However, even the human speaker with the most *dignitas* (and thus truthfulness) cannot provide certain knowledge through testimony due to the intellectual and virtuous limitation of humans. The recourse, clearly demonstrated by the role of swearing oaths, is seeking confirmation from the speaker with maximum *dignitas*, the very definition of truthfulness and goodness, God.

⁸⁶¹ "Just as I believe by acquired faith through hearing others (such as parents whose truthfulness I trust) that many ages have passed away and that the world did not begin with myself; and I believe, thanks to the report of persons worthy of trust, that Rome, which I have never seen, exists, so too I hold firmly the things revealed in Scripture through faith acquired through hearing these things said, thanks to my trusting the Church which approves the truthfulness of those [Scriptural] authors." Noone, Timothy. *Newman-Scotus Reader: contexts and Commonalities* 231-232

...sicut etiam ego fide acquisita ex auditu aliorum (scilicet parentum, quorum veritati credo) credo multa tempora transivisse et mundum non incepisse mecum; et credo Romam esse, quam nunquam, vidi, ex relatu fide dignorum; sic revelatis in Scriptura—per fidem acquisitam ex auditu—firmiter adhaereo, credendo Ecclesiae approbanti veritatem illorum scriptorium." Scotus, *Lectura III d. 23 1. Unica n. 15* (ed. Vaticana XXI 102).

⁸⁶² "It follows from this that it is consistent never will any pagan or infidel have true power which is *veritas* or *veracitas*: because there is no power without *fides*. Therefore, just as there is no justice without *sana fides* (sound trust), Augustine testifies and held at 3. q. 1. C. where he said: "Where there is no *sana fides*, there can be no sound justice." Similarly, therefore, where there is not *sana fides*, *veritas* or *veracitas* are not able to be. However it is well known that pagans did not have true *fides*. Therefore, regarding none of them was it necessary to presume that ever was the testimony which we know to be false to be admitted." William of Ockham, *Dialogus*, pars 1, lib. 6, cap. 77, my translation.

Discipulus: *Ista ratio videtur mihi mirabilis. Nam sequitur ex ipsa quod nunquam de aliquo pagano vel infideli constat quod habuerit veram virtutem quae est veritas seu veracitas: quia nulla est virtus sine sana fide. Ideo sicut nec iustitia est sine sana fide teste Aug. ut habetur 3. q. 1. c. ubi ait: Ubi sana fides non est ibi non potest esse sana iustitia. Ergo consimiliter ubi sana fides non est veritas seu veracitas esse non potest. Constat autem quod pagani veram fidem minime habuerunt. Ergo de nullo illorum praesumendum fuit quod unquam esset ad testimonium admittendum quod constat esse falsum.* William of Ockham, *Dialogus*, ed. Melchior Goldast (London: The British Academy, 1995), <http://publications.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/pubs/dialogus/w1d6cg.html>. Ockham appears to be citing Augustine's "On the Sermon on the Mount", Book 1, chapter 10., 27 cf. Augustine, "On the Sermon on the Mount," in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Philip Schaff, trans. William Findlay, vol. 6, 1 (Buffalo: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1888), <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/16011.htm>.

5.3.2 Divine Testimony

As established in the above discussion on *fides*, Thomas holds that God speaks and humans obtain *sacra doctrina* by divine testimony. The very name "*doctrina*" denotes that God's activity is that of teaching, i.e., the transmission of knowledge. Likewise, *sacra scriptura* is the joint product of God and human authors. We should therefore expect divine testimony and human testimony to be, if not equivalent, at least compatible. To this end, Martin claims God's act of transmitting knowledge is like a human agent's in "presenting what is to be known," but with a unique preceding step of "supplying someone with the light, or the capacity, to understand what is presented."⁸⁶³ Divine testimony is grounded in the same two ways as human testimony: a broad sense of faith, but given greater certitude due to the compelling evidence of God's character as seen by the unique example of "demon faith," and a narrow sense of faith by believing God (*credere deo*) grounded in the identity of the speaker especially God's maximal knowledgeability and trustworthy *dignitas*. The role of virtue consequently looms large.

While both human and divine testimony rely on the same means of grounding testimony in accordance with virtue, God's method of speaking differs in moving listeners to *fides*, that is to assent to propositions of faith. Lamont states that "the question of how the Holy Spirit acts in us so as to make us believe is not answered by Aquinas," but I contend that Thomas does provide an account of how the Holy Spirit moves the mind of the listener under prophecy.⁸⁶⁴ That God speaks at all Thomas considers an unworthy gift

⁸⁶³ Martin, "Sacra Doctrina and the Authority of Its Sacra Scriptura," 86.

⁸⁶⁴ Thomas cites 1 John 5:7, "there are three who bear witness (*testimonium dant*) in heaven, The Father, the Word (*verbum*) and the Holy Spirit," primarily to show that the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity by the fact that the Holy Spirit is also listed as an agent capable of testimony. ST I.30.2 *sed contra*; Aquinas, *Summa theologiae. Prima pars*, 1-49, 319. cf. SCG 4.18; *Expositio in evangelium Joannis* C.1 L.1:3-4.

such that the genus of prophecy is in turn part of the genus of revelation, which is individual acts of gratuitous grace.⁸⁶⁵ The effectivity of prophecy occurs by differing "degrees of grace" (*gratiae gradus*): the greatest degree occurs when the mind of the prophet is moved, next when the minds of those who record and interpret the words of the prophet are moved, and the lowest degree when the minds of the faithful who receive the revealed words of the prophet are moved.⁸⁶⁶ The first clearly refers to prophecy proper, the second to biblical inspiration which Thomas famously says in the *Summa Theologiae* "is something imperfect in the genus of prophecy",⁸⁶⁷ and the third to infused faith, the theological virtue of faith (which starts to flow to beings after sanctifying grace changes the nature of the soul). In all three instances, the Holy Spirit graciously moves the mind of a person bestowing knowledge that person would not otherwise have. As such, all three qualify as testimony insofar as an agent is responsible for the accrual of knowledge by a recipient. Thomas explains precisely how the Holy Spirit moves the human mind in these processes using the philosophical concept of instrumental causality—the theory of causal motion where the power of a principal agent works hiddenly through a lower cause to achieve an end beyond the lower cause's natural powers, saying: "In prophetic revelation the prophet's mind is moved by the Holy Spirit, as an *instrument* that is deficient in regard to the principal agent."⁸⁶⁸ In this section, I will first explicate instrumental causality to confirm that God is

⁸⁶⁵ Cf. *ST* II-II.171 on prophecy and *SCG* III.154.

⁸⁶⁶ Cf. *SCG* III.154.19-20.

⁸⁶⁷ *ST* II-II.171.5. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae. Secunda secundae, 92-189*, trans. Laurence Shapcote, vol. 18, Latin/English edition of the works of St. Thomas Aquinas (Green Bay: The Aquinas Institute, 2017), 618.

⁸⁶⁸ *ST* II-II.173.4. tr. mod. Ibid., 18:642. Cf. *Quodlibet* VII.6.1.ad 5 and *Quaestiones Disputatae De Veritate (QDV)* 5.9; 12.8.ad3, ad5; 14.10.ad7; 26.1.ad9; 29.4. I argue elsewhere that Thomas formulates a new account of instrumental causality by integrating Islamic causal accounts within Greek and Christian ones, i.e., by building upon Augustine and Proclus through the *Liber de Causis*, he incorporated Islamic influences through Arabic sources including: the Arabic *Liber de Causis*, Averroes's two sources of motion, and Avicenna's modes of efficient causation. Cf. Brett Yardley, "Biblical Inspiration & Islamic Instrumental Causality:

the principal speaker and how divine speech is transmitted to and through humans. Then, I will show what permits listeners to assent to divine testimony either via the broad or narrow sense of faith.

The concept of instrumental causality Thomas formulated underwent little change throughout Thomas's career and features prominently in his *Scriptum*.⁸⁶⁹ The theory even appears in his *principium* in 1256 to show the instrumental role of human teachers for *sacra doctrina* in accordance with the third "degree of grace". His inaugural lecture in Paris was on Psalm 103:13, *Rigans montes de superioribus suis*, demonstrating how God communicates wisdom through intermediaries and secondary causes since clouds raining on mountains that flow down in rivers to the Earth below is parallel to divine wisdom shining on learned minds who minister to faithful listeners.⁸⁷⁰ Accounts of Thomas's doctrine of biblical inspiration use the language of instrumental causality saying Scripture has two authors in which humans are God's "instruments"⁸⁷¹ (but they rarely identify or

Thomas Aquinas on Prophecy and the Two Authors of Sacred Scripture," *The Muslim World* 109, no. 3 (2019): 431–49.

⁸⁶⁹ I speak of the theory of instrumental causality itself, not Aquinas's perspective as to the theory's role in bestowing grace through the sacraments, of which there are three views: 1) Thomas shared the Parisian Masters' opinion that the sacraments only served a dispositive role in the bestowal of grace for his entire career, cf. Louis Billot, *De ecclesiae sacramentis Prior* (Romae: Univ. Gregoriana, 1932).; 2) Thomas later changed his mind regarding the sacraments from a dispositive to an instrumental role, cf. H. Dondaine, "A Propos d'Avicenne et de Saint Thomas," *Revue Thomiste* 51, no. 2 (1951): 441.; and 3) Thomas always held that the sacraments served an instrumental role and merely reports the common opinion of the Parisian Masters, cf. M. Tuyaerts, "Utrum S. Thomas Causalitatem Sacramentorum Respectu Gratiae Mere Dispositivam Umquam Docuerit," *Angelicum* 8, no. 2 (1931): 149–86.

⁸⁷⁰ Pasquale Porro notes the ease of recognizing the Neoplatonic framework inherent within this work following James Weisheipl who indicated Dionysius's influence on Thomas cf. Porro, *Thomas Aquinas*, 57.; and James A. Weisheipl, *Friar Thomas D'Aquino: His Life, Thought, and Work* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1983), 173–74. Also cf. appendix of Adriano Oliva, *Les débuts de l'enseignement de Thomas d'Aquin et sa conception de la sacra doctrina: avec l'édition du prologue de son Commentaire des Sentences* (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 2006).

⁸⁷¹ "Hence, because the Holy Ghost employed men as His instruments, we cannot therefore say that it was these inspired instruments who, perchance, have fallen into error, and not the primary author." "Providentissimus Deus (November 18, 1893) | LEO XIII," accessed February 11, 2019, http://w2.vatican.va/content/leo-xiii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_l-xiii_enc_18111893_providentissimus-deus.html.

explicate the underlying philosophical concept itself).⁸⁷² In the instrumental motion of divine speech, the Holy Spirit does not directly move the mind of the prophet. In book III of the *SCG*, Thomas depicts an entire order by which revelation and prophecy begin with single acts of gratuitous grace by God who directly manifests objects of faith to recipients who in turn pass the object to others in a chain all the way to the lowest recipient—the prophet.⁸⁷³ The *ST* states the middle positions between God and men are occupied by angels⁸⁷⁴ (and sometimes other men),⁸⁷⁵ whom Thomas also refers to as "instruments" relying on the divine "principal agent" for their action.⁸⁷⁶ Thomas never gives an account of instrumental casualty in its own right, instead providing explanations in application to a particular theological topic. Within his corpus, instrumental causality (as a form of causality) falls under the theory of "participation," the "sharing in the essential act of another, which is limited by the potency of the participating subject" as defined by John Rziha.⁸⁷⁷ Thomas identifies three types of participation in the second chapter of his

⁸⁷² Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange interprets Thomas using the language of instrumental causality to explain the two authors view, "one divine and principal, the other human and instrumental." Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange and Patrick Cummins, *Reality: A Synthesis of Thomistic Thought* (Ex Fontibus Co., 2015). Cf. Raymond Edward Brown, Joseph A Fitzmyer, and Roland E Murphy, *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1990), 1028.

⁸⁷³ Cf. *SCG* III.154.1.

⁸⁷⁴ Cf. *ST* II-II.172.2.; *QDV* 9.1.ad2.; 11.3; 12.8;

⁸⁷⁵ Cf. *ST* II-II.172.4.a1. "Some, however, receive the gift of prophecy only for the benefit of others. Who are as if instruments of divine operation (*instrumenta divinae operationis*)." tr. mod. Aquinas, *Summa theologiae. Secunda secundae, 92-189*, 18:629.

⁸⁷⁶ *ST* II-II.172.2.a3. "The work of the instrument (*instrumenti*) is ascribed to the principal agent (*principali agenti*) by whose power the instrument acts. And since a minister is like an instrument (*quia minister est sicut instrumentum*), prophetic revelation, which is conveyed by the ministry of the angels, is said to be Divine." *Ibid.*, 18:626.

⁸⁷⁷ John Rziha, *Perfecting Human Actions: St. Thomas Aquinas on Human Participation in Eternal Law* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2009), 11. Rziha also traces the contemporary recovery of Thomas's notion of participation by Cornelio Fabro, L.B. Geiger, John Wippel and Rudi Te Velde. Cf. Cornelio Fabro and B. M Bonansea, "The Intensive Hermeneutics of Thomistic Philosophy," *The Review of Metaphysics* 27, no. 3 (1974): 449–91.; Louis Bertrand Geiger, *La participation dans la philosophie de saint Thomas d'Aquin* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1953).; John F. Wippel, "Thomas Aquinas and Participation," in *Studies in Medieval Philosophy*, ed. John F. Wippel (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1987), 117–58.; and Rudi A. te Velde, *Participation and substantiality in Thomas Aquinas* (Leiden; New York: E.J. Brill, 1995).

commentary on the *De Hebdomadibus*—[1] the participation of an individual in a species and a species in a genus; [2] matter in form and a subject in an accident; and [3] an effect in its cause—so the concept applies to a wide range of doctrines.⁸⁷⁸ In the widest possible sense, instrumental causality can be seen as synonymous with all secondary causes from the bestowal of being as creatures imperfectly participate in divine being to meritorious acts as rational wills participate in God's will.⁸⁷⁹ Such a broad construal can lead to misunderstandings since, as Brian Shanley shows, it can obscure an instrument's "genuine casual capacity" since "instrumental causes normally have their own proper activity that is independent of the principal cause and is precisely what is needed by the principal cause in order to accomplish the effect."⁸⁸⁰ The differences stem from what degree acts participate in the divine act according to three different modes of participation: by nature, grace, and glory.⁸⁸¹ So whereas all human knowledge naturally participates in God's knowledge, it lacks certainty because only acts according to the mode of grace can be free from defect.⁸⁸²

Thomas's arguably most robust account of instrumental causality (and which also pertains to a mode of grace) is his first in *Scriptum* book IV which answers whether humans can be "ministers" (used synonymously with "instruments") of divine grace in the

⁸⁷⁸ E.g. prayer as participation in divine providence to creatures existence as participation in divine goodness. Rziha, *Perfecting Human Actions*, 38–39. Cf. *SCG* III.95-5; *ST* I.20.4; *ST* I-II.110.1; and *De Potencia* 3.7.

⁸⁷⁹ Cf. *Ibid.*, 54. and *ST* III.62.1.

⁸⁸⁰ Brian J Shanley, "Divine Causation and Human Freedom in Aquinas," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 72, no. 1 (1998): 106.

⁸⁸¹ Rziha points out that Thomas speaks of participation by nature, grace, and glory across his corpus including: human participated knowledge (*ST* I.12.2, 106.1); angelic participated knowledge (*ST* I.61-62; I.89.2.2; I.109.1; II-II.1.8); participated virtue (social virtues by nature, perfecting virtues by grace, and perfect virtues by glory (I-II,61.5); participation in divine sonship (*ST* I.33.3; *ST* III.23.1.1, III,.5.4); participation in the image of God (*ST* I.93.4). Rziha, *Perfecting Human Actions*, 80.

⁸⁸² Cf. *ST* I-II 58.3.a2.

sacraments.⁸⁸³ Since biblical inspiration, like sacramental justification, consists of individual acts of gratuitous grace where God brings about an effect through humans, the sacramental account of instrumental causality readily applies. The only real difference is that divine testimony deals with knowledge and objects of faith through the "light of grace" or "intellectual light." As such, motions of prophecy are discussed in terms of divine and prophetic light stemming from the influences of Augustine and Dionysius (whom scholars have called "a quasi-biblical author" in the eyes of Albert and Thomas).⁸⁸⁴ Later in the *ST*, Thomas explains that biblical authors like Moses were mediators of God's knowledge ("light") by alluding to Dionysius the Areopagite's *The Celestial Hierarchy*, which says that biblical "Fathers" passed on sacred doctrines illumed by "the Light of the Father"—Jesus—from "the Origin of Light"—the Father—down through a procession of illumination including the "Celestial Intelligences."⁸⁸⁵ To frame our discussion of instrumental causality's role in divine testimony, I will draw on four issues Paul Pearson identifies on instrumental causality in the *Scriptum* which Thomas addresses on how an instrumental agent operates: 1) the ontological status of instrumental power; 2) the distinction between proper and instrumental power; 3) proportionality in instrumental

⁸⁸³ Cf. *Scriptum* IV.1.1; *ST* III.62-65; *QDV* 27.4

⁸⁸⁴ For Augustine on illumination Cf. "On the Teacher" (*De magistro*) 12.40 and for Dionysius Cf. Wayne J. Hankey, "The Concord of Aristotle, Proclus, the Liber de Causis & Blessed Dionysius in Thomas Aquinas, Student of Albertus Magnus," *Dionysius* 34 (2016): 137–209.; and Bernhard Blankenhorn, Catholic University of America, and Catholic University of America Press, *The Mystery of Union with God: Dionysian Mysticism in Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2015).

⁸⁸⁵ In *ST* II-II.173.1 Thomas alludes to *The Celestial Hierarchy* where Dionysius says: "Calling then upon Jesus, the Light of the Father, the Real and True, 'Which lights every man that comes into the world, by whom we have access to the Father,' the Origin of Light, let us raise our thought, according to our power, to the illumination of the most sacred doctrines handed down by the Fathers." Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Celestial Hierarchy: (De Coelesti Hierarchia)* (Middletown, DE: Limovia.net, 2013), 7–8.

causes and their effects, and 4) the distinction between perfective and dispositive instruments.⁸⁸⁶

First Issue: The ontological status of instrumental power

Regarding the ontological status of instrumental power, instruments borrow powers not proper to themselves. Thomas claims sacraments are a cause in the act of conferring grace, but only insofar as they are part of an action initiated by God. The key text in the *Scriptum* addressing human roles in acts of grace explains: "an action is not attributed to an instrument, but to a principal agent, by whose power the instruments are applied to their work inasmuch as they are moved by it."⁸⁸⁷ To illustrate, Thomas uses the example of the relationship between a carpenter and a saw. The ontological status of instrumental power in an instrumental cause, the power to build a house, is not attributed to the saw but to the carpenter for the saw by itself lacks the power to produce a house. However, when the carpenter employs a saw in the production of a house, the power of the carpenter passes through the saw in a "hidden way" (*occulte*).⁸⁸⁸ It must be emphasized here that while the instrumental power must work through the proper power of the instrument's substantial form (discussed in the second issue), the instrumental power never resides in the instrument without the principal agent actively moving it. The instrument is not gifted, cannot save, or experience any residual effects of the instrumental power. In the same way as the instrumental power to build a house only resides in a saw while it remains in the hand of the carpenter and to the extent that the carpenter uses it, instrumental power only exists in

⁸⁸⁶ Pearson raises these issues in Pearson, "Creation Through Instruments in Thomas' Sentence Commentary," which draws on his dissertation Paul Pearson, "Instrumental Creation and Justification in St. Thomas' *Scriptum Super Libros Sententiarum*." (Ottawa, National Library of Canada, 1992), 117, 126, 129, and 133.

⁸⁸⁷ *Scriptum* IV.1.1.1.q^{1a}.4.ad1,4.15. Aquinas, *Commentary on the Sentences*, 13.

⁸⁸⁸ *Scriptum* IV.1.1.1.q^{1a}.4.ad1,4.15. *Ibid.*, 34.

an instrument: a) while the principal agent (to whom the power properly belongs) continues to move the instrument,⁸⁸⁹ and b) to the extent that the instrument is moved by the principal agent.⁸⁹⁰ The acts must be simultaneous.

Regarding the first issue of the ontological status of power and divine testimony, God is the principal agent and the prophets are his instruments in the transmission of divine speech.⁸⁹¹ God is the original speaker and the true source of *sacra doctrina* who ontologically has the proper power to "signify his meaning" through words and things.⁸⁹² In regard to *sacra scriptura*, God is the true source and his powers are responsible for its infallible origin and its spiritual sense.⁸⁹³ Humans are God's instruments allowing human words to be considered the word of God. Finally, the prophetic light (*lumen propheticum*) exists in the soul of the prophet only transiently.⁸⁹⁴

The Second Issue: The distinction between proper and instrumental power

While instruments are infused with the instrumental power of the principal agent during an instrumental action, the instrument must possess a power proper to its substantial form which makes it useful in the first place. Instrumental power only occurs in the instrument by moving its proper power. Hence, the proper power of the instrument must be suited to the end sought by the principal agent to receive the instrumental power. The two powers

⁸⁸⁹ *Scriptum* IV.1.4.1.q^{1a}.3,4.36. "it should be said that an instrument does not receive power in the mode mentioned, except when it is joined with a principal agent, so that his power is in a way poured out into the instrument." *Ibid.*

⁸⁹⁰ *Scriptum* IV.1.1.1.q^{1a}.4.ad1,4.15. - "an action is not attributed to an instrument, but to a principal agent, by whose power the instruments are applied to their work inasmuch as they are moved by it (*prout sunt mota ab ipso*)." *Ibid.*, 13.

⁸⁹¹ Cf. *ST* II, II 171 and *SCG* III, 154.

⁸⁹² *ST* I.1.10.; *QDV* 12.7.sed contra 3

⁸⁹³ For the two senses of Scripture cf. *Quodlibet* VII.6.1; Baglow, "Sacred Scripture and Sacred Doctrine in Saint Thomas Aquinas."; and Healy, "Introduction to Aquinas on Scripture."

⁸⁹⁴ Cf. *QDV* 12.1

must work simultaneously to produce the instrumental action just as the substantial form of a saw must have the proper power of cutting in order to be used by the carpenter to produce a house.⁸⁹⁵ In showing precisely how sacraments are a cause of grace, Thomas argues for two powers coming together to create one twofold action: "Now two kinds of action apply to an instrument: one that it has from its own nature, and another that it has to the extent that it is moved by a prior agent."⁸⁹⁶ Thomas explains in the *ST* (in denying that Christ has two wills) that *how* the proper power of an instrument is moved varies according to its form or soul: inanimate instruments by a corporeal movement; instruments with a sensitive soul by the sensitive appetite; and "an instrument animated with a rational soul is moved by its will (*voluntas*), as by the command of his lord the servant is moved to act, the servant being like an animate instrument, as the Philosopher says."⁸⁹⁷

Humans as instruments raises a concern regarding the will and its freedom. If God's power is the source and most operative agent in every action of created beings, then humans cannot contribute in any meaningful sense. If the principal agent co-opts or overrides the human instrument's rational will, then it is effectively reduced to a sensible being, or worse an inanimate object. However, Thomas claims in *De Veritate* that human minds can be moved by another and still move itself.⁸⁹⁸ James Albertson claims while "the creature does not act independently of God, nor does God act without the creature; there is no room here

⁸⁹⁵ Pearson, "Creation Through Instruments in Thomas' Sentence Commentary," 149.

⁸⁹⁶ *Scriptum* IV.1.1.4.q^{1a}.1,4.32. Aquinas, *Commentary on the Sentences*, 31.

⁸⁹⁷ *ST* III.18.1.a2. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae. Tertia Pars, 1-59*, trans. Laurence Shapcote, vol. 19, Latin/English Edition of the Works of St. Thomas Aquinas (Green Bay: The Aquinas Institute, 2017), 209. Cf. *ST* I.105.5.2; *QDV* 14.2

⁸⁹⁸ *QDV* 24.1.ad5

for either a simultaneous concursus or occasionalism."⁸⁹⁹ Instead Thomas teaches that both the principal agent and instrumental agent contribute separately to a single act:

Text 5.3.2.1

It is also clear that the same effect is ascribed to a natural cause and to God not as though part were effected by God and part by the natural agent; but the whole effect proceeds from each, yet in different ways, just as the whole of the one same effect is ascribed to the instrument, and again the whole is ascribed to the principal agent.⁹⁰⁰

This issue of two causes in one effect disrupts the proportionality of an effect to its cause (as discussed in the third issue).⁹⁰¹

The second issue of proper power explains how divine speech as *sacra scriptura* has both a divine and human author.⁹⁰² Since God the principal agent desires to produce an object of knowledge, the suitable instrument must have a rational soul. The employment of this rational soul thus explains how human authors are responsible for Scripture's literal sense and its inclusion of their unique experiences, style, and idiosyncrasies in the final text. Insofar as the writers' proper power lies in their will (*voluntas*), Thomas describes

⁸⁹⁹ James S. Albertson, "Instrumental Causality in St. Thomas," *The New Scholasticism* 28, no. 4 (1954): 434–35.

⁹⁰⁰ *SCG* III.70. *Patet etiam quod non sic idem effectus causae naturali et divinae virtuti attribuitur quasi partim a Deo, et partim a naturali agente fiat, sed totus ab utroque secundum alium modum: sicut idem effectus totus attribuitur instrumento, et principali agenti etiam totus.* Thomas Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles, Books III-IV*, trans. Laurence Shapcote, vol. 12, Latin/English edition of the works of St. Thomas Aquinas (Green Bay: The Aquinas Institute, 2018), 133.

⁹⁰¹ Avicenna's "auxiliary" mode of efficient causation helps alleviate this problem distinguishing between "true" and "auxiliary" causes that allow instrumental acts to be attributed to both God and humans. In a section that closely follows the Latin translation of Avicenna's Book I, Chapter 10 of *The Physics of the Healing*, Thomas adopts Avicenna's true efficient cause to allow for true movers lower than God to act as auxiliary efficient causes contributing to another true cause's desired end. The divine agent's status as true efficient cause can be simultaneous with its effect while maintaining temporally prior efficient causes. This allows Thomas to posit both God and humans as true agents in a simultaneous instrumental motion. cf. Kara Richardson, "Avicenna's Conception of the Efficient Cause," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 21, no. 2 (2013): 235. Thomas credits Avicenna for his distinction between four modes of efficient in the *Commentary on the Metaphysics* book 5, lesson 2, 766-767: "it should be noted that according to Avicenna, there are four modes of efficient cause, namely, perfective (*perficiens*), dispositive (*disponens*), auxiliary (*adiuvans*), and advisory (*consilians*)." Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on the Metaphysics* Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics*, 261; Aquinas, *In duodecim libros metaphysicorum Aristotelis expositio*, 212.

⁹⁰² The notion of authorship is in itself analogical, cf. A. J Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1988).

four levels where God can move the human mind to form revelatory judgements beyond the recipient's natural faculties.⁹⁰³ Each way lines up with a step in Thomas's natural abstraction process, where sense data is organized into phantasms by the common sense in the imagination before the phantasms are empowered by the agent intellect (intellectual light) to impress a likeness in the possible intellect as an intelligible species, with each subsequent way bypassing fewer steps.⁹⁰⁴ The first and second way occur in the intellect. The first is merely "the infusion of an intelligible light (*intelligibilis luminis*)"⁹⁰⁵ allowing a recipient to form infallible judgments regarding knowledge (or species) in the mind previously obtained (e.g., Joseph interpreting Pharaoh's dreams in Genesis 41:1-7 and Jesus "opening" the Apostle's minds in Luke 24:45). The second impresses intelligible species directly onto the intellect (e.g., Solomon and the Apostles receive infused scientific knowledge or wisdom). The third way either impresses new or rearranges existing phantasms within the imagination as seen with dreams (e.g. those of Pharaoh in Genesis 41:1-7 or Nebuchadnezzar in Daniel 4:1-2) or the perception of bodily likenesses (e.g. King Balthasar's seeing the hand which wrote on the wall in Daniel 5:5).⁹⁰⁶ The fourth way

⁹⁰³ Cf. *ST* II-II.173.2.

⁹⁰⁴ I follow Therese Cory's Active Principle Model (APM) of abstraction which also relies on instrumental causality. Cf. Cory, "Rethinking Abstractionism," 610, 620-621.

⁹⁰⁵ *ST* II-II.173.3. Aquinas, *Summa theologiae. Secunda secundae, 92-189*, 18:640.

⁹⁰⁶ Cf. *ST* II-II.173.2. These are examples of natural prophecy occurring to persons other than the biblical author. This is complicated by the fact that a divine prophetic act (second degree of grace) can infallibly report on natural prophetic events. Thomas draws on Avicenna's notion of natural prophecy to explain how such persons could receive supernatural knowledge, but this should not be confused with the process of biblical inspiration. Natural prophecy results when celestial agents, angels or demons act not as instruments in a motion where God is the principal agent, but when they themselves are the principal agent behind the motion. Thomas's desire for some level of *habilitas* is to explain how a prophet remains a prophet even when they are not actively prophesying and why they are more likely to be used in prophesy again. Otherwise, a person could only be considered a prophet when they are graciously moved by instrumental power and thus filled with prophetic light. For more on Avicenna's influence on Thomas's theory of prophecy Cf. Luis Xavier López-Farjeat, "Avicenna and Thomas Aquinas on Natural Prophecy," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 88, no. 2 (2014): 309-33; Samuel Pomeroy, "Accommodating Avicenna, Appropriating Augustine: Assessing the Sources for Thomas Aquinas's Doctrine of Prophecy," in *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association*, vol. 88 (Philosophy Documentation Center, 2015), 127-44.

provides sensible objects to the senses, namely interactions with angels who have assumed bodies or miracles which are often treated as signs verifying the oral teaching of God (e.g. Daniel saw the writing on the wall in Daniel 5:25).

The Third Issue: Proportionality in instrumental causes and their effects

Typically, an effect is always in proportion to its cause and objects cannot perform acts that are beyond what is natural to them, but instrumental acts produce effects greater than an instrument is capable of alone. In the *Scriptum*, Thomas argues that, because of the motion of the principal agent in the instrument, the effects may be more noble than the instrumental cause:

Text 5.3.2.2

Nor again is it necessary that an instrumental agent be simply nobler than its effect, for an effect is not proportioned to the instrument, but to the principal agent, who sometimes through lowly instruments accomplishes nobler effects, as a doctor induces health through an enema.⁹⁰⁷

Since multiple agents may be involved in an instrumental act, especially if there is a chain of instruments as secondary causes, assigning proportionality depends on how the act is dissected or which relationship between cause and effect is in view. In many ways the effect will not be in proportion to the instrument, but to the principal agent. However, the effect of the instrument must be in proportion with respect to the instrument's proper power. That is, while the total effect of the instrumental act may exceed the nobility of the instrument as cause, the effect may not exceed the nobility of the instrument's proper power as cause. For example, with respect to the saw the production of a house is an effect more noble than the saw as a cause (since the effect of the house is in proportion to the carpenter

⁹⁰⁷ *Scriptum* IV.1.1.4.q^{1a}.a3,4.33. *Nec iterum oportet quod instrumentaliter agens sit simpliciter nobilius effectu; quia effectus non proportionatur instrumento, sed principali agenti, qui quandoque per vilia instrumenta nobiliores effectus inducit, sicut medicus perducit ad sanitatem per clysterem.* Aquinas, *Commentary on the Sentences*, 32.

as the principal agent), but the production of cuts made by that saw may not be more noble than the instrument since cutting is the proper power of the saw.⁹⁰⁸ This dissection of instrumental causation reveals a distinction in the instrument's role within the complex action depending on whether or not it completes the act (as discussed in the fourth issue).

The third issue of proportionality explains how fallible humans can transmit infallible divine speech or be a reliable conduit for acquired faith. The effect of divine testimony can be more noble than its human causes, since the effect is in proportion to God, its principal cause. Yet, the actual transmission, e.g., literal sense of *sacra scriptura*, is still in proportion to the human transmitter's proper powers. Thomas points out that supernaturally moved human minds do not necessarily understand the intelligible objects they now possess and in fact never fully understand because the human mind is a limited instrument in the process of revelation. Thus, Thomas further divides prophecy into "perfect prophecy" and "prophetic instinct" according to whether the final recipient realizes he or she is being moved and/or understands what intelligibles are being received. For example, Moses is given not only divine mysteries under a "veil of figures" fitting for an uncultured people (*rudi populo*), but also the understanding to explain the images to the people.⁹⁰⁹ Despite this distinction, Thomas calls all prophets "deficient instruments" (even if they know they are being moved by the Holy Spirit) since their minds will not be perfected until after death.⁹¹⁰

The Fourth Issue: The distinction between perfective and dispositive instruments

⁹⁰⁸ Pearson, "Creation Through Instruments in Thomas' Sentence Commentary," 157–58.

⁹⁰⁹ Cf. *ST* I-II.101.2.1.

⁹¹⁰ *ST* II-II.173.4. Aquinas, *Summa theologiae. Secunda secundae*, 92-189, 18:642.

Since an instrumental action can incorporate many instruments in one long complex causal motion, Thomas distinguishes between dispositive instruments in the middle of the chain and perfective instruments which play a direct role in the final product. Thomas argues in his *Scriptum* that there are two ways instrumental causality appears as an efficient cause:

Text 5.3.2.3

[I]t should be known that an efficient cause can be divided in two ways. In one way, on the part of the effect, that is, in the disposing cause (*disponentem*), which causes a disposition to the final form; and [in another way] in a perfecting cause (*perficientem*), which introduces the final perfection.⁹¹¹

Dispositive instruments either provide the necessary materials or play an indirect role in the production of the final form while perfective instruments play a direct role in the end goal or "final perfection that the principal agent intends."⁹¹² Like the discussion above, whether an instrument is dispositive or perfective depends on how the action is dissected and what effect is in view (e.g., act vs. potency). The saw is a dispositive instrument in the production of the carpenter's ultimate desired form (the house) through the material provision of boards, but a perfective instrument in the production of the boards.

In the last issue, the production of divine testimony sees the employment of both dispositive and perfective instruments. When God moves the hierarchy of angels, they are dispositive instruments since they likewise move the lower hierarchy of angels and ultimately the prophets. However, when humans are moved by the degrees of grace to prophesy, write, or edit the final product of Scripture, they are perfective instruments.

⁹¹¹ *Scriptum* IV.1.1.4.q^{1a}.corp,4.33. ...*quod causa efficiens dupliciter potest dividi. Uno modo ex parte effectus; scilicet in disponentem, quae causat dispositionem ad formam ultimam; et perficientem, quae inducit ultimam perfectionem.* Aquinas, *Commentary on the Sentences*, 30. tr. mod.

⁹¹² *Scriptum* IV.1.1.4.q^{1a}.corp,4.33. *Ibid.*, 31.

Similarly, the *ex auditu* preaching serves as a dispositive instrument preparing the intellect and will to act and receive the infusion of faith.

Grounding Divine Testimony

Now we turn to what grounds a listener's assent to divine propositions via either the broad or narrow sense of *fides*. Recalling our discussion of *fides*, Thomas discusses two things required for faith in the *ST* (*dicendum quod ad fidem duo requiruntur*), which maintain the traditional acquired and infused faith distinction as the material objects of faith—the *what* of belief—and the act of assent to the material objects of faith which is grounded by who is being believed—the formal object of faith.⁹¹³ The analysis of instrumental causality resolves Thomas's first requirement that the material objects of faith, the propositions, necessarily originate from God. Regarding the second act of assent, Thomas delineates two causes:

Text 5.3.2.4

Man's assent to the things which are of faith, we may observe a twofold cause, one of external inducement, such as seeing a miracle, or being persuaded by someone to embrace the faith: neither of which is a sufficient cause, since of those who see the same miracle, or who hear the same sermon, some believe, and some do not. Hence we must assert another internal cause, which moves man inwardly to assent to matters of faith.⁹¹⁴

The two causes are the two ways which ground testimony where the former is the broad sense of faith and the latter is the narrow sense of faith.

⁹¹³ ST II-II.6.1 Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae. Secunda Secundae, 1-91*, 17:67.

⁹¹⁴ ST II-II.6.1; ...*scilicet ad assensum hominis in ea quae sunt fidei, potest considerari duplex causa. Una quidem exterius inducens, sicut miraculum visum, vel persuasio hominis inducentis ad fidem. Quorum neutrum est sufficiens causa, videntium enim unum et idem miraculum, et audientium eandem praedicationem, quidam credunt et quidam non credunt. Et ideo oportet ponere aliam causam interiorem, quae movet hominem interius ad assentiendum his quae sunt fidei.* Ibid. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Super Evangelium Iohannis lectura* c. 2, lectiones 1 e 3 and, c. 3, le. 1

As Text 5.3.2.4 shows, Thomas maintains listeners can assent to propositions (that are neither self-evident nor demonstrative) spoken by God on account of signs or human speakers. Signs or miracles, however, are a necessary but not a sufficient condition to ground material objects of faith. Thomas maintains that miracles do not confirm the propositions of the material object of faith but the formal object of faith, namely that the prophet indeed speaks for God stating: "proofs which urge [listeners] toward faith, like miracles, do not prove faith by itself, but prove the truthfulness (*veritatem*) of the one announcing faith."⁹¹⁵ Miracles thereby establish that God is the ultimate speaker, but it is God's authority established by his attributes that does the epistemic work of grounding divine testimony. Assent caused by signs and miracles generate strong *opinio* because it is the result of the listener's intellectual virtues. This parallels demon faith in which the intellect is compelled to assent to the unseen by inferring from *evidentia* and not by an act of the will to adhere to the speaker. The key factor is the listener grounds their testimony in an inference from the *evidentness* of signs or a trustworthy human speaker. Such assent, however, is not grounded because one believes—trusts—God as the speaker. Such faith is still valuable since it prepares for narrow faith, where humans are moved "inwardly",

⁹¹⁵ *Scriptum* III.24.1.2.q^{2a}.ad4; my translation. *Ad quartum dicendum, quod argumenta quae cogunt ad fidem, sicut miracula, non probant fidem per se, sed probant veritatem annuntiantis fidem: et ideo de his quae fidei sunt, scientiam non faciunt.* Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum Super Sententiis Magistri Petri Lombardi*, ed. R. P. Maria Fabianus Moos, vol. III (Paris: Lethielleux, 1933), 770. Interestingly, Thomas echoes Averroes in claiming that the greatest miracle (*mirabilissimum* and *maximum miraculorum*) is the sheer number of people, both simple and wise, who embraced the Christian faith and "which inculcates things surpassing all human understanding, curbs the pleasures of the flesh, and teaches contempt of all worldly things", that is which spurred them to greater good. SCG I.6 Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles, Books I-II*, 11:9–10. In the *Tahāfut al-tahāfut*, Averroes asserts, according to Richard Taylor, that the value of miracles "lies in guiding human beings to virtue...". The miraculous is not on what is logically impossible, but on what is impossible for humans, which makes the Qur'an the greatest miracle. In *al-Kašf 'an manāhiğ*, Averroes discusses prophets and miracles arguing that not every miracle worker is a prophet, but, again quoting Taylor, "it is the case that the Qur'an itself with the knowledge it provides regarding religious laws, right human conduct, and even more about the nature of God is rightly deemed miraculous for its consequences." Cf. Taylor, "Averroes and the Philosophical Account of Prophecy," 291–93.

almost as if one is tracing their assent back up the chain of instrumental causation to the principal agent. When humans believe *sacra scriptura*, they are in effect believing God through the human authors.⁹¹⁶

This leads to the notion of *credere deo* under narrow faith. As shown with human testimony, narrow faith is assent to a speaker's propositions insofar as they are grounded by the listener's trust in who the speaker is which includes their virtues, especially as they relate to accuracy and honesty. Since *credere homini* is that which is better known but not which is ontologically prior (insofar as all human virtues participate in divine virtues) our discussion on human testimony carries over to divine testimony. However, narrow faith in a divine speaker differs since it results from an infused habit, the theological virtue of faith, from God. This infusion of faith and theological habit is described by John Hawthorne as a "faith based on a supernaturally elevated will that consequently disposes the subject to assent to propositions directly or indirectly by God," in a way that is infallible or "hyper-reliable".⁹¹⁷ Thomas states that believers do not believe lightly (*non leviter credit*) for they have sufficient motive for believing that they are moved by the authority (*auctoritate*) of divine teaching.⁹¹⁸ Divine authority, he says is confirmed by miracles and by the "inward instinct of the Divine invitation" (*interiori instinctu Dei invitantis*) which must be a description of infused faith.⁹¹⁹ Hence, Thomas states in his commentary on Romans that true faith occurs when the reason (*ratione*) for the belief is that it was said by God:

⁹¹⁶ Lamont, *Divine Faith*, 61–62.

⁹¹⁷ Hawthorne, "Aquinas on Faith and Knowledge," 132, 124.

⁹¹⁸ *ST* II-II.2.10, Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae. Secunda Secundae, 1-91*, 17:38–39.; II-II.4.1, *Ibid.*, 17:46–47.

⁹¹⁹ *ST* II-II.2.9.ad 3, "Reply Obj. 3: The believer has sufficient motive for believing, for he is moved by the authority of Divine teaching confirmed by miracles, and, what is more, by the inward instinct of the Divine invitation: hence he does not believe lightly. He has not, however, sufficient reason for scientific knowledge, hence he does not lose the merit." Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae. Secunda Secundae, 1-91*, 17:37.

Text 5.3.2.5

...to believe in God (*credere Deum*) indicates the matter of faith taken as a theological virtue, having God for its object. Consequently, this act does not yet attain the nature of faith, because if one believes in God in virtue of certain human reasons and natural signs, he is not yet said to have the faith of which we now speak, but only when he believes something for the reason that it was said by God (*est a Deo dictum*)—which is indicated by the phrase, ‘to believe God (*credere Deo*).’⁹²⁰

Lamont takes care to note that to believe God does not mean a listener assents to *p* because they happen to *believe* God said *p* (whether or not God actually said *p*) but the listener assents to *p* because "God's *actually having said something* is the reason for believing it."⁹²¹ This even alleviates concerns over the assent to propositions the prophet or believer does not fully comprehend. The grounding reason is the person and being of God who is the ultimate authority and standard for not only virtues such as "truthfulness", but also Truth itself, i.e., the Logos. Andrea Robiglio implies in "Testes nobilitatis: una riflessione sul nesso tra verità e nobiltà", that what makes *credere deo* and infused faith certain whereas *credere homini* merely renders probable *opinio* is that God can present himself transparently and immediately while human self-presentation is always mediate through the slow establishment of a relationship.⁹²²

Despite the immediate disclosure of God's self, Eleonore Stump takes the analysis of infused faith one step further arguing that Thomas's accounts of faith and wisdom are based on developing a trusting interpersonal relationship between God and humans (analogous to human relationship formation) to allow for knowledge to pass from speaker

⁹²⁰ *ad Romanos* Cap. 4 lect. 1., *Credere autem Deum, demonstrat fidei materiam, secundum quod est virtus theologica, habens Deum pro obiecto. Et ideo hic actus nondum attingit ad speciem fidei, quia si aliquis credat Deum esse per aliquas rationes humanas et naturalia signa, nondum dicitur fidem habere, de qua loquimur, sed solum quando ex hac ratione credit quod est a Deo dictum, quod designatur per hoc quod dicitur credere Deo*; English translation and Latin from Aquinas, *Commentary on the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans*, 111.

⁹²¹ Lamont, *Divine Faith*, 63. Italics original.

⁹²² Robiglio, "Testes nobilitatis : una riflessione sul nesso tra verità e nobiltà," 209.

to listener.⁹²³ Her argument is built on Thomas's account of the will.⁹²⁴ She states the most notable case for when the will must move the intellect to assent is the interpersonal process of coming to faith in God, which results in gaining wisdom, namely the will acting on the intellect to assent to the propositions of faith.⁹²⁵ Stump describes a person coming to faith as moving through two sequences in which the will influences the intellect. First, the person has their will drawn to God because of his goodness in cooperation with the intellect's purpose of achieving *eudaimonia* in seeing God.⁹²⁶ The recognition of God's goodness provides the necessary grounds to establish an interpersonal relationship between the believer as listener and God as the speaker. The subsequent trust from this relationship allows the believer to assent to the propositions of faith. Citing the *ST*, Stump argues that the second sequence begins once the relationship is established.⁹²⁷ The relationship develops in the person of faith some degree of "connaturality" or "sympathy" with God enabling a disposition in the intellect, namely the intellectual virtue of wisdom, such that "this virtue will manifest itself in [a believer's] intuitively knowing things she would not otherwise have known by the exercise of reason or would not have known as readily or as well."⁹²⁸ God thus voluntarily and intentionally shares some part of his mind with the listener (whether that be information about the natural world or beyond).⁹²⁹ In sum, Aquinas holds to a theory of testimony in which connatural knowledge is a kind of

⁹²³ Stump, "Faith, Wisdom, and the Transmission of Knowledge through Testimony."

⁹²⁴ cf. *ST* I.82.2, 4.

⁹²⁵ Stump, "Faith, Wisdom, and the Transmission of Knowledge through Testimony," 212–13.

⁹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 213–14. Stump also claims: "because these truths are important and have far-reaching epistemic impact on a person's intellect, for Aquinas faith contributes to the perfection of the intellect; and so faith is an intellectual virtue." Her terminology differs from Thomas's technical distinction that faith is a theological but not an intellectual virtue.

⁹²⁷ Cf. *ST* II-II.45.2

⁹²⁸ Stump, "Faith, Wisdom, and the Transmission of Knowledge through Testimony," 215.

⁹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 216.

testimonial knowledge transmitted from a speaker and is justified by an empathic experience in which a listener comes to initially trust a speaker, namely God.

5.4 Conclusion: Testimonial Assessment

I have shown that not only is Thomas's testimonial theory unified, but also that listeners obtain testimonial knowledge through the operation of intellectual or theological virtues to assess and trust authoritative speakers via their possession of virtue to eliminate the concerns of inaccuracy and dishonesty. Given that knowledge (or cognitive states) for Thomas is caused by an agent's "discriminating habits", it is difficult to capture his theory of testimony using contemporary frameworks which presume evidentialism. Research to date has thus linked Thomas with the testimonial categories of anti-reductionism, reductionism, the interpersonal view of testimony (IVT), or some combination of the three. The prevailing interpretation is that Thomas draws on trust or assurance-based theories like IVT to account for divine testimony via infused faith and then both IVT and reductionism to account for differing forms of human testimony. However, even the reductive instances of human testimony which infer beliefs from *evidentia* still include both the operation of a virtue on behalf of the listener and the assessment of the virtuous character of the speakers. Thus, assent to testimony is ultimately grounded by virtues enabling the listener to adhere to the speaker through trust and accurately confirm the speaker's character traits.

5.4.1 Is Thomas an anti-reductionist?

No scholar to my knowledge has assessed Thomas's theory of testimony and argued he is an anti-reductionist, but scholars advancing anti-reductionist projects to secure divine testimony find a friend in Thomas or broadly "Thomistic" approaches.⁹³⁰ Given David

⁹³⁰ Wahlberg, *Revelation as Testimony*, 7, 16.

Hume's reputation as the father of reductionism in conjunction with his infamous critique of miracles and the Apostles' testimony, the evidentialist dichotomy defaults Thomas to anti-reductionism. As Robert Pasnau has argued, Thomas (or any thinker with an anti-reductionist approach to divine testimony) is ultimately a fideist due to "blind trust" as outlined in chapter 1.⁹³¹ Pasnau thereby argues that Thomas advances a common Christian fideism using *Summa Contra Gentiles* I.4 to claim a division between "those who can know and those who can only believe" (e.g., blind trust) the preambles of faith.⁹³² As we have established, Thomas does have a high view of authorities whose testimony carry more weight, especially church authorities. Yet, as John Hawthorne points out in his response to Pasnau, Thomas would negatively answer the crucial question, "Is it enough if they [the masses] simply get lucky in trusting the right people [expert authorities]?"⁹³³ Listeners cannot presume a right to believe, they must confirm tellings prior to assent.

Thomas does, however, make comments that appear anti-reductionist at first glance which seem to imply either no confirmatory work by the listener or a presumptive right to belief. In text 5.3.1.6 for example, we saw that Thomas claims human assertions do not require confirmation unless there is doubt. In another instance, Siebert notes Thomas endorses the Christian maxim "good is to be presumed of everyone unless the contrary appear" (paralleling the juridical "presumption of innocence").⁹³⁴ In both cases, the anti-reductionist position dissipates in the wider context. The first comment regards swearing oaths, which itself is an act of confirmation for testimony. Since the virtuous nature or *dignitas* of a speaker provides confirmation against the fears of accuracy and honesty, no

⁹³¹ Pasnau, "Divisions of Epistemic Labour."

⁹³² *Ibid.*, 87–88.

⁹³³ *Ibid.*, 96; Hawthorne, "Aquinas on Faith and Knowledge," 132–33.

⁹³⁴ *ST* II-II.70.3.ad2, Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae. Secunda Secundae, 1-91*, 17:659–60.

additional confirmation is needed for speakers whose *dignitas* has already been confirmed (to do so would merely question and thereby insult their character). To the second, Thomas qualifies the statement in an objection: "one ought to be careful not to believe everyone readily, according to 1 John 4:1: *Believe not every spirit.*"⁹³⁵ Thomas's qualification differentiates between moral and epistemic good meaning listeners should presume others are not lying but not presume they are accurately telling the truth.⁹³⁶

Thomas also clearly denies anti-reductionist's default presumption of belief. Regarding unjust accusation he says "it happens sometimes that a man through levity of mind proceeds to accuse someone, because he believes too readily what he hears, and this pertains to rashness."⁹³⁷ Elsewhere he agrees with Ecclesiasticus 19:4 which reads "one who trusts others too quickly is lightminded," stating probable reasons are required to assent to human testimony "because the cognition of one man is not naturally ordained toward the cognition of another, that it is regulated through itself."⁹³⁸ Perhaps as a result of his stance toward confirming testimony, Thomas never appears to list testimony as a unique source of knowledge, a hallmark criteria for anti-reductionism.

The last possibility is that testimony from God generates knowledge since it cannot be obtained by any other means (e.g., *sacra scriptura* and the articles of faith). As stated with Saadya and al-Ghazālī this is a category mistake. Furthermore, Thomas holds to the Christian tradition of the Trinity and thus Christ as the uncreated Logos. So even though

⁹³⁵ *ST* II-II.70.3.ad2, *Ibid.*

⁹³⁶ Siebert, "Testimonial Trustworthiness: Truthfulness and Trust," 566.

⁹³⁷ *ST* II-II.68.3.ad1, Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae. Secunda Secundae, 1-91*, 17:642.

⁹³⁸ *Scriptum* III.24.3.2.ad1. My translation. *Ad primum ergo dicendum, quod credere homini absque ratione probabili est nimis cito credere: quia cognitio unius hominis non est naturaliter ordinata ad cognitionem alterius, ut per ipsam reguletur. Sed hoc modo ordinata est ad veritatem primam.*

According to Lamont's assessment, Thomas's view is incompatible with a theory of testimony that maintains a presumptive right to understand each telling as a source of knowledge. cf. Lamont, *Divine Faith*, 66, 144.

the literal words of *sacra scriptura* are the twofold product of both a divine and human author, the knowledge it contains is held to be transmitted from God. This leads back to the discussion on instrumental causality as a form of secondary causality and thus the theory of participation. Insofar as all human knowledge is merely a participation in the true source, i.e., divine knowledge, there is little room to argue for testimony as a generative source of knowledge.

5.4.2 Is Thomas a reductionist?

A compelling case can be made that Thomas is a reductionist. The cognitive states of *scientia* and *opinio* are caused by nontestimonial sources insofar as they are made evident by the senses or by reason. In addition to the texts against anti-reductionism just mentioned, Thomas commends listeners' for verifying claims. In discussing the error of the Manicheans concerning Christ's incarnation, he offers the Apostles as examples of "suitable witnesses of Christ" (*idoneos Christi testes*) in confirming that Jesus had been resurrected bodily.⁹³⁹ As shown, Siebert argues that Thomas's usage of the broad sense of faith qualifies as reductionist since the grounding of human testimony reduces to other sources. "Strong opinion" accrues from testimonial knowledge as a result of inductive or "probable" inference based on "signs" or "probable" (non-demonstrative) syllogisms. As shown in text 5.3.1.3, Thomas's thought echoes that of Saadya Gaon and al-Ghazālī in

⁹³⁹ SCG IV.29; "Now it is impossible for a valid witness of the truth to be afforded by things that happen not in reality, but only in appearance. Consequently, if Christ's body was only imaginary—if he did not really eat and drink, if he was not really seen and handled, but only in imagination—it follows that the apostles' witnessing of Christ was unfitting."

Non potest autem efficax sumi testimonium veritatis per ea quae non in rei existentia, sed solum in apparentia sunt gesta. Si igitur corpus Christi fuit phantasticum, et non vere manducavit et bibit, neque vere visus est et palpatus, sed phantastice tantum, invenitur non esse idoneum testimonium apostolorum de Christo. Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles, Books III-IV*, 12:411.

aligning with contemporary inferential reasoning in giving more credence to an assertion proclaimed by more people:

1. If more people say that p , then probably p
2. More people say that p
3. Therefore, probably p

As Siebert notes, strong opinion results when "other things being equal, we should give more weight to p when more witnesses say p than not, because 'it is probable that the saying of many contains the truth more than the saying of one.'"⁹⁴⁰

It is also conceivable to understand virtue in a reductive way by inferring from the virtuous nature of a speaker to the probability that they speak truly. Elizabeth Fricker offers a local-reductionism where listeners' assess a speaker's trustworthiness in terms of sincerity and competence which amounts to an assessment, "or a prediction from", the speaker's psychology.⁹⁴¹ As has been pointed out, this conception of testimony arguably prohibits learning from written texts or chains of transmission in which the psychologies of the original or intermediate witnesses cannot be assessed.⁹⁴² Nevertheless, Lamont notes this is a point of tension in Thomas's theory since he attempts to balance the position that faith is rational, voluntary, and requires grace and thus asks:

...if the formal object of faith, the reason for believing, is God's speaking, why does faith involve a will to salvation...? Our intellect can tell us that God cannot speak falsely, and knowledge of this fact is sufficient to bring us to believe what God says without in any way willing to reach him. Moreover, it is quite possible for us to see that there is a contradiction implied in God's speaking falsely, and hence that it is impossible that this could happen. Since this is so, why should faith differ from knowledge? And why should it necessarily be voluntary?⁹⁴³

⁹⁴⁰ Siebert, "Aquinas on Testimonial Justification." 568.

⁹⁴¹ Fricker, "Against Gullibility," 148–49.

⁹⁴² Lamont, *Divine Faith*, 140.

⁹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 67.

This tension seems to line up with the notion of "demon faith" since demons believe on account of a rational inference from these sorts of facts. Hawthorne refers to "demon faith" as posteriori abductive knowledge since knowledge from testimony comes not from trusting the speaker but "impressive empirical evidence that provides compelling signs that God is speaking through the church."⁹⁴⁴ This harkens back to Lamont's clarification that one assents because they believe God when God says *p* vs. believing *p* because God said *p*. Of course, it is possible for listeners to assent to the material object of faith for reasons other than the formal object, namely God and his moving the will to assent, which is how Thomas explains how heretics can believe some but not all of *sacra doctrina*.⁹⁴⁵ Thus it is imperative for the listener to recognize who the speaker is (and their *dignitas*), that it is God who is speaking. The possession of the confirmatory speaker virtue is obtained through the employment of the listener's virtues. Thus, even authors who were unknowing instruments in the production of scripture do not assent to faith propositions as result of faith. The tension may also fall under the interpersonal aspect of *credere deo* in which one believes God on account of their relationship with him and not on account of what they know about him which has been shown also applies to human testimony.

5.4.3 Thomas's Virtue-Theoretic of Testimony

It should not be surprising that testimony is understood in terms of virtues, given Thomas holds that knowledge results from the proper functioning of intellectual and theological

⁹⁴⁴ Hawthorne, "Aquinas on Faith and Knowledge," 125–26.

⁹⁴⁵ ST II-II.5.3.ad1; "A heretic does not hold the other articles of faith, about which he does not err, in the same way as one of the faithful does, namely by adhering simply to the Divine Truth, because in order to do so, a man needs the help of the habit of faith; but he holds the things that are of faith, by his own will and judgment."

ergo dicendum quod alios articulos fidei, de quibus haereticus non errat, non tenet eo modo sicut tenet eos fidelis, scilicet simpliciter inhaerendo primae veritati, ad quod indiget homo adiuvari per habitum fidei, sed tenet ea quae sunt fidei propria voluntate et iudicio. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae. Secunda Secundae, 1-91*, 17:63.

virtues. As Andrea Robiglio has argued, in pre-modern thought truth and "nobilitas" are linked in a way that contemporary philosophical debates struggle to accommodate as seen with central notions such as "reputation, trust, value, dignity, character, prestige, recognition, honor, together with their opposites, such as distrust, unworthiness, dishonor, lack of rights, etc."⁹⁴⁶ He thus raises the crucial question, "Is the witness reliable because he/she testifies to the truth or is the truth certified because a reliable witness says it?"⁹⁴⁷ While one earns a reputation for reliably testifying, Thomas's realism and conception of truth in the Logos permits the latter. In fact, as was well discussed in the Middle ages, this is the only means to obtain knowledge beyond deductive reason and empirical evidence. As Robiglio points out, even Thomas's teacher Albert affirmed one of the ancient meanings of the word "probable" as referring to rational agents (not states of affairs), such that the *vir probabilis* is the trustworthy expert since they were capable of providing a successful proof (dialectical argument) for their statements.⁹⁴⁸

As a result, all contemporary testimonial assessments to date note the role of virtue and thus often assign IVT to Thomas. Even though trust-based theories of testimony were popularized after Lamont published *Divine Faith* (2004), he recognized that Thomas did not hold an anti-reductionist theory, but an "intellectual virtue view," saying "On the intellectual virtue view, knowledge from testimony does not stop short of the world: "what makes belief in someone's testimony reasonable, is the actual honesty and knowledge of the person being believed; there is no need or room for a presumptive right to be inserted between believer and person believed in order to warrant trust on such occasions."⁹⁴⁹

⁹⁴⁶ My translation. Robiglio, "Testes nobilitatis : una riflessione sul nesso tra verità e nobiltà," 203.

⁹⁴⁷ Ibid., 204.

⁹⁴⁸ Cf. Albert the Great, *Topics* VIII, I, 1, 2. Ibid., 210–11.

⁹⁴⁹ Lamont, *Divine Faith*, 144, 116.

Intellectual virtues are what permit listeners to assent to *p* by believing the speaker (believing the formal object of faith permits assent to the material object of faith) and not merely assent to *p* because they *believe* that the speaker said it (inferring the truth of the material object from qualities of the formal object of faith). The true difference between divine and human testimony appears to be which virtue is responsible for knowledge from testimony. For divine faith, the answer is clearly the theological virtue *fides* since "divine faith always attains the object of the intellect, which is truth, its act is always good, and hence it can be a virtue."⁹⁵⁰ The same cannot be said for belief in human testimony. Given human speakers often lie or err, *fides* cannot be the operative virtue (in the listener) since it often fails to obtain the truth. Narrow faith must be a special act of the will. This act of the will is what differentiates faith from science (which is forced by evidence) and opinion (which does not have firm assent). This difference is what makes faith a meritorious act.⁹⁵¹ Third, the typical motivation for faith is that a speaker is truthful (or possesses truthfulness as a virtue). Since society requires a minimum level of truth for epistemic divisions of labor, knowledge can be gained from faith in speakers.

Siebert argues Aquinas's view of testimony is unique, first in being "pluralist" by holding to both a reductionist and an assurance view, and second in how his assurance view is different from contemporary accounts. Aquinas does not neatly fit in IVT since his focus is not on the speaker's role or means by which a speaker take responsibility for their claims. Aquinas's focus is on the speaker's authority, established by their moral and intellectual virtues, which acts as a form of pre-verification or preemptive reason to assent to their propositions making the listener "more sensitive to the speaker's knowledge" and "less

⁹⁵⁰ Ibid., 65.

⁹⁵¹ Siebert, "Aquinas on Testimonial Justification." 574.

sensitive to [their] own evidence."⁹⁵² This introduces a virtue account of testimonial trustworthiness, in which speakers fulfill the responsibility to speak the truth out of a virtuous motivation. While Thomas gives a clear account of what qualifies a virtue as either moral or intellectual by their aim, the possession of intellectual virtues entails the possession of moral virtues. This is superior to contemporary approaches which define a trustworthy speaker just as sincere and competent for several reasons: first, since non-virtuous speakers can be sincere and competent, but not worthy of a listener's faith; second, truthfulness is a more fundamental reason for faith in a speaker since "having faith in a speaker does not require taking the speaker to be an authority, but it does require taking the speaker to be truthful, even when the speaker is an epistemic authority."⁹⁵³ Siebert is thus in agreement with Lamont that the formal object of faith is the reason one assents to a proposition (the material object of faith), which in this case is due to *fides* in the person of the speaker.

Trust thus plays a primary role in Thomas account of testimony. This is clearest with divine testimony since God is the most trustworthy speaker. Yet, there is no presumptive right to trust. Emphasis is primarily placed on employing one's own intellectual virtues to confirm that the speaker is truly God. This trustworthiness applies to human speakers as well, but requires additional work given the great potential of inaccuracy and dishonesty. Human and divine trustworthiness come together in divine testimony through the production of *sacra doctrina* and human testimony through the swearing of oaths, in which trust is confirmed through *dignitas*. Thus, once these relationships of trust have been verified through a speaker's *dignitas*, knowledge is allowed

⁹⁵² Ibid. 580.

⁹⁵³ Ibid. 581

to transmit more freely. As such, Christ wished for his followers to dispense with the need for swearing since their identity in Him mark them as truthful.⁹⁵⁴

In contemporary terms, Thomas is more reductionist than anti-reductionist, but his openness to knowledge sources beyond natural means via divine testimony and his emphasis on trust disrupts his placement in the contemporary framework. As I have shown, Thomas's overall theory of testimony employs virtue to obtain knowledge, primarily in determining the truthfulness of the speaker and this is true for both divine and human speakers even though the process of transmission is different. Listeners must confirm the *dignitas* of the speaker to determine they are truthful both in terms of their intellectual accuracy and their moral honesty. Using the framework developed in Chapter 2 from John Greco's rethinking, we can see that Thomas maintains that testimonial knowledge is reductionistic insofar as it necessarily comes through another species of knowledge like perception, rational inference, and even the divine Logos itself marking him a source-reductionist. Thomas also maintains that all testimonial knowledge is ultimately transmitted, as required by divine participation, thus it is distinct phenomenon and not back-to-back cases of generation.⁹⁵⁵ This makes him a transmission anti-reductionist. These two positions permit trust, the meritorious act of the will in assenting to what a speaker says by believing the speaker because of who they are.

⁹⁵⁴ Matthew 5:36-37, "And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more than this comes from evil." (RSV)

⁹⁵⁵ *ST* II-II.171.6, "prophecy is a kind of knowledge impressed under the form of teaching on the prophet's intellect, by Divine revelation (*impressa ex revelatione divina*). Now the truth of knowledge is the same in disciple and teacher since the knowledge of the disciple is a likeness (*similitudo*) of the knowledge of the teacher, even as in natural things the form of the thing generated is a likeness of the form of the generator." Aquinas, *Summa theologiae. Secunda secundae*, 92-189, 18:619-20.

CHAPTER 6: TOWARD A TRANSHISTORICAL CONCEPT OF TESTIMONY

6.1 Introduction

As discussed in chapter 2, the epistemological concept of testimony is broadly understood as learning via the utterances of other people and two primary approaches to testimony have developed since the rise of social epistemology in the 1970's, testimony as evidence and as assurance: Coady laid the groundwork for an evidential framework in *Testimony* (1992) where he identified the theories "reductionism" and "anti-reductionism" in which testimony constitutes *evidence* of what speakers say;⁹⁵⁶ Hinchman (2005) and Moran (2006) introduced the Interpersonal View of Testimony (IVT) in which testimonial acts offer *assurance* for what speakers say.⁹⁵⁷ Despite some earlier social epistemological works arguing that Ancient or Medieval philosophers like Augustine were reductionists or anti-reductionists,⁹⁵⁸ the emerging consensus is that pre-Modern thinkers do not neatly populate either the evidential or assurance framework of testimony.⁹⁵⁹ Yet, an epistemological conception, especially one as important and pervasive as testimony, should

⁹⁵⁶ Coady, *Testimony*.

⁹⁵⁷ Cf. Hinchman, "Telling as Inviting to Trust"; Moran, "Getting Told and Being Believed," 2006.

⁹⁵⁸ Cf. Chapter 2. Peter King and Nathan Ballantyne claim Augustine embraced anti-reductionism, while Matthew Siebert argues for reductionism. Cf. King and Ballantyne, "Augustine on Testimony"; Siebert, "Augustine's Development on Testimonial Knowledge." For Aquinas, Siebert seems to recognize the problem presenting him as holding a "pluralist view," cf. "Siebert, "Aquinas on Testimonial Justification." An analogous divide between reductionism and anti-reductionism has been pointed to between two Classical Indian schools of philosophy, namely Vedic thought (within the Mīmāṃsā tradition) which parallels contemporary antireductionism stating claims which could not be proven false by sensation (i.e. knowledge from the Veda) and then later Dīnāga thought (c. 5th century) which parallels contemporary reductionism in that all knowledge (even the authority of the Buddha) comes from either sensation or inference. Neither, however, treated knowledge as evidence or gave it a justificatory role. Cf. Matilal and Chakrabarti, *Knowing from Words*; Anthony Kennedy Warder, *A Course in Indian Philosophy* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishing, 1998), 165–83.

⁹⁵⁹ Cross does not state this explicitly but avoids the terms. Pelletier does not rule out IVT's "invitation" to believe, but likewise does not employ the language of reductionism and anti-reductionism. Cf. Cross, "Testimony, Error, and Reasonable Belief in Medieval Religious Epistemology"; Pelletier, "William Ockham on Testimonial Knowledge."

not be incongruent with entire traditions of historical thought. For if theories of testimony (and testimonial frameworks) cannot be applied across history (transhistorical) without distorting thinkers' accounts, then the prevailing theories need to be redressed.⁹⁶⁰ More specifically, if the prevailing theories treat testimony as evidence or assurance when historical thinkers did not employ these epistemological concepts, then the theories need to be expanded or made more inclusive.⁹⁶¹ The broad epistemological concept of testimony and its framework should not be beholden to one historical period, but transhistorical. The problem, to be clear, centers on *what* testimony is and its epistemic role, not *how* it occurred which was clearly understood differently as knowledge theories progressed. In this chapter, I argue for such a transhistorical concept of testimony and propose a "rethought" testimonial framework before testing them with a virtue-theoretic approach to testimony.

I consider two levels of "testimony": testimony as *a telling* or verbal instance of coming to know either via generation or transmission, and testimony as the epistemological process or activity which yields knowledge or beliefs via *tellings*.⁹⁶² I show that the current conceptions of testimony are unable to give an accurate account of testimonial theories prior to the rise of evidentialism without distorting the phenomena.⁹⁶³ Ancient and

⁹⁶⁰ The same could be said for any epistemological knowledge source, e.g., if perception was understood specifically in terms of light reflection, then it would disrupt historic accounts in which light was thought of as a medium, even though both understood perception to provide direct knowledge via the senses.

⁹⁶¹ The alternative is to consign earlier thinkers to incoherence.

⁹⁶² Or the activity which gives rise to or allows one to acquire knowledge or beliefs through *tellings*. John Lamont coins a *telling* which implies the existence "of comprehension, belief, and knowledge of what is told in the person being told." Lamont, *Divine Faith*, 146.

⁹⁶³ Anthony Robert Booth recasts the entirety of philosophy in the lands of Islam in evidentialist terms in his book *Analytic Islamic Philosophy* (2017), openly equivocating "Rationalist" with "Evidentialist" so that to use reason *is* to consider the evidence. He even ascribes justified true beliefs to Mu'tazilism giving evidence a justificatory role for beliefs ("A subject S's belief that p is justified iff S has sufficient evidence that p"). This creates interesting challenges since Booth labels the Ash'arites as "Anti-Evidentialists" despite basing their beliefs on the "evidence" of divine testimony since it does not qualify as "independent evidence" insofar as it is exceptional (only available through revelation) and neither "rational" nor "epistemic" (since it is based on the will or decrees of God). However, this distorting anachronistic reading can be forgiven if one grants the intended purpose of the book is not historical accuracy but, according to the publisher's website,

Medieval testimonial accounts cannot be evidential given that the epistemic role of evidence only emerged in the 13th to 14th century with Duns Scotus and William Ockham, and the justificatory role in the 18th C.. While many historic accounts *do* rely on a notion of trust like the assurance approach, many do not and still maintain a strong emphasis on rejecting the presumption that speakers are either knowledgeable or trustworthy.⁹⁶⁴ I argue that the contemporary discussions of testimony would be served by a testimonial concept and framework that is not understood primarily in terms of evidence or evidentialism, but that remains theory neutral to as great an extent as possible.

In the first section of this chapter, I offer a "transhistorical" notion of testimony, i.e., one that does not presuppose a single concept of "evidence." To do so, I trace the historical development of the concepts "evidence" and "evidentness" to show that philosophers prior to the 18th century appreciated a richer variety of evidentiary distinctions than is typical of contemporary epistemologists. I show that, in contrast to a justificatory sense of "evidence" common amongst post-Enlightenment philosophers, earlier thinkers such as Scotus and Ockham conceived of "evidence" more broadly to include the evidentness of a cognitive object or a cognition grasping that object, i.e., a thing's *being evident* or an evident cognition.⁹⁶⁵ I argue these distinctions clarify when testimony that *p* does and does not qualify as evidence. In the second section, I propose a neutral framework

"represents a novel and creative attempt to rejuvenate Islamic philosophy for a modern audience...using the language and conceptual apparatus of contemporary Anglo-American 'analytic' philosophy" by adopting a "'rational reconstructive' approach to the history of philosophy." Anthony Robert Booth, *Analytic Islamic Philosophy*, Palgrave Philosophy Today (London, United Kingdom: Palgrave MacMillan, 2017), 1, 9, 16; Palgrave MacMillan, "Analytic Islamic Philosophy," 2017, <https://www.palgrave.com/gp/book/9781137541567>.

⁹⁶⁴ This presumption of knowledge trustworthiness often results in IVT being considered as a form of anti-reductionism by those who maintain an evidentialist approach. E.g. Lamont lays out an intellectual virtue approach drawing on McDowell in 2004 prior to the rise of Assurance, but Mats Wahlberg labels McDowell's testimonial view anti-reductionist. Wahlberg, *Revelation as Testimony*, 109, 132.

⁹⁶⁵ Pasnau, *After Certainty*, 32–33.

(introduced in chapter 2) using John Greco's "rethinking" of testimonial categories. I conclude in the 3rd section by drawing on the broader notion of evidence given in the first section to test the transhistorical testimonial framework from the second section with a virtue-theoretic framework. To do so, I argue that reasonable reliance on the testimony of others is best understood through the notion of epistemic *trust* as the inverse correlation of the intellectual aspect of the virtue of autonomy where listeners should strive to achieve a virtuous mean of intellectual autonomy between the vices of being too trusting (i.e., not autonomous enough) and not trusting enough (i.e., too autonomous).

6.2 Testimony as evident vs. evidence

The so-called "social turn" comprised by the rise of social epistemology in the late 20th century is often seen as following an anti-evidentialist turn in general epistemology away from the idea that *all* knowledge must accord with an "epistemic imperative" in the form of beliefs supported by evidence. Instead of focusing on evaluating whether *individuals* (isolated from their social environment) maintain justified beliefs through doxastic rules governing knowledge generation and transmission, social epistemology aims to give an account of knowledge reflecting the complex reality of social relationships and institutions.

Despite this move away from the post-Renaissance Western world dominated by an "individualistic ideology," the discussion of testimony in philosophy remains largely rooted in evidentialism. As Linda Zagzebski observes:

This view [of testimony as individualistic] no doubt emerged in the early modern period because of the rise of a view of autonomy that stresses individual rather than corporate responsibility, together with the view that individual responsibility is a matter of properly handling one's own evidence. What is taken to be debatable is only the nature of the relevant evidence, a debate that assumes the evidence model of testimony...⁹⁶⁶

⁹⁶⁶ Zagzebski, *Epistemic Authority*, 65.

The persistence of the evidence model of testimony is largely due to Coady's influential work *Testimony* (1992), in which he relies heavily on David Hume and Thomas Reid.⁹⁶⁷ Coady defines testimony as "a kind of evidence," though he admits that viewing testimony as evidence is not "wholly unproblematic."⁹⁶⁸

Coady's reductionist and anti-reductionist frameworks are inherently evidentialist. As he says, "[Hume's] theory constitutes a reduction of testimony *as a form of evidence* or support to the status of a species... of inductive inference."⁹⁶⁹ By contrast, on the Reidean anti-reductionist view, testimony *is* evidence just as a sense perception is evidence. On this latter view, there are two ways of understanding how testimony qualifies as evidence without itself requiring further verification: a rule of inference, or a rule of presumption. Under a rule of inference, a speaker says that *p* and the listener infers *p*. Under the rule of presumption, one ought to accept all testimony unless there is additional evidence that the speaker is ignorant, insincere, or in some other way deficient. This view of testimony as *presumed* truth or trust is shared by the IVT. As such, approaches to testimony as assurance are often labeled "anti-reductionist" even though they do not necessarily treat testimony as evidence. Both reductionist and anti-reductionist theories however understand testimony as an *utterance* which in some way acts as *evidence* for a belief.

⁹⁶⁷ Coady, *Testimony*, 13.

⁹⁶⁸ By problematic he means that testimony qualifies as evidence even though "this commits us to a concept of evidence such that *e* can be evidence for *h* even where *h* is, as it happens, false." Ibid., 44.

⁹⁶⁹ Ibid., 79, italics added. Cf. Hume's own words, regarding the "species of reasoning" derived from testimony: "... it will be sufficient to observe that our assurance in any argument of this kind is derived from no other principle than our observation of the veracity of human testimony, and of the usual conformity of facts to the reports of witnesses." Hume, "An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding," 111. This can be understood as a *global* reduction of testimony, such that induction from previous cases of testimony turning out to be true reveals that testimony is generally reliable, or as a *local* reduction, in which induction must be limited to the context of *this telling* to reveal if the testimony is reliable. Cf. Chapter 2.

This view of testimony has limitations. Note here an ambiguity in the concept "testimony." If testimony is to be treated as grounds for a belief, then it would be more accurate to say that *a* testimony is grounds for a belief. However, since "a testimony" is grammatically awkward in English, I opt for the phrase *a telling* to refer to the particular event where a speaker tells a listener that *p*, or, per Lamont, "the act of conveying knowledge to someone through providing him with one's testimony."⁹⁷⁰ More than simply a listener being told that *p* by a speaker, *a telling* implies something is learned by the listener thus requiring their comprehension, belief, and knowledge of *p* when the speaker says that *p*.⁹⁷¹ On the testimony-as-evidence view, it is difficult to make sense of *a telling*. This is because, as Zagzebski has observed, evidence is fundamentally third-personal. Third-personal reasons, which she calls "theoretical," are commonly available to any rational agent who can recognize, aggregate, and share them.⁹⁷² On the other hand, first-personal reasons, which she calls "deliberative," are only available to an individual and cannot be shared or aggregated with theoretical reasons.⁹⁷³ On the testimony-as-evidence view, the fact that *a telling* occurred is what provides one with evidence, whether or not one experienced the *telling* oneself. Experiences, like the experience of hearing an

⁹⁷⁰ Lamont, *Divine Faith*, 146.

⁹⁷¹ If the listener already knows *p* when a speaker tells the listener *p*, then the speaker does not bring the listener to know that *p*, but the speaker makes his knowledge that *p* available to the listener "just in case" the *telling* would bring the listener to know that *p* if they did not already know *p*. Ibid.

⁹⁷² "What I mean by *theoretical reasons* for believing *p* are facts that are logically or probabilistically connected to the truth of *p*. They are facts (or true propositions) about states of the world or experiences that, taken together, give a cumulative case for or against the fact that *p* (or the truth of *p*). They are not intrinsically connected to believing. We call them reasons because a reasonable person who comes to believe them and grasps their logical relations to *p* will see them as reasons for *p*. They can be shared with others—laid out on the table, so they are third personal. They are the reasons to which we refer in communicating with others. They are relevant from anyone's point of view. The connections between theoretical reasons and what they are reasons for are among the facts of the universe. Theoretical reasons aggregate and can be used in calculations of probability. What we call evidence is most naturally put in the category of those theoretical reasons we can identify." Zagzebski, *Epistemic Authority*, 63–64.

⁹⁷³ Ibid., 64–65.

utterance, are first-personal. One may of course have first-personal (deliberative) reasons to believe something, but such reasons do not automatically translate to third-personal (theoretical) reasons for others—i.e., they do not automatically become evidence for others.

Thus, testimony-as-evidence seems to be limited to the fact that *a telling* occurred, or that someone had the experience of *a telling*, but the experience itself would not qualify as evidence (for those who did not personally undergo it) to form certain beliefs.⁹⁷⁴ On the plausible assumption that first-personal experiences provide reasons to believe, the testimony-as-evidence view oversimplifies the sense in which *tellings* do so. As Zagzebski says:

The evidence model of testimony is the only model that makes sense if all epistemic reasons are third personal. In that way of looking at reasons, testimony is a process by which third-person reasons are passed around. They are either passed around directly—we acquire them as we see the world around us, or they are passed around indirectly by inductive inference. There is no other alternative.⁹⁷⁵

A telling as evidence or grounds for a belief thus emerges as an entirely different kind of epistemic ground than what is typically denoted by the term "evidence." The use of this term both outside and inside philosophy is notoriously slippery. Thomas Kelly notes that non-philosophical usage—from courtrooms to scientists to historians—covers a host of ideas typically revolving around physical objects themselves or their arrangement.⁹⁷⁶ As Patrick Rysiew points out, the situation in philosophy is no better and may in fact be worse:

More troubling is the fact that there's not much agreement *within* philosophy as to what evidence is: it has been variously said to consist in one's "sense-data" (certain empiricists), "observation statements" (positivists), what one knows (Williamson 2000b), the "information a

⁹⁷⁴ Ibid., 65.

⁹⁷⁵ Ibid., 129.

⁹⁷⁶ Thomas Kelly, "Evidence," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Winter 2016 (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2016), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/evidence/>.

person has to go on" (Feldman 2003: 45) or whatever indicates to us that the proposition is true (Conee 2011), one's non-factive, phenomenal states (certain epistemic internalists), whatever states or processes, etc., lead in some suitably reliable way, to a belief (e.g., Greco 1999, 2002).⁹⁷⁷

In short, contemporary philosophers want the concept of evidence to do more than it is suited for. Kelly helpfully identifies four distinct roles for evidence: (1) evidence as that which justifies belief; (2) evidence as that which rational thinkers respect;⁹⁷⁸ (3) evidence as a guide (sign, symptom, mark) to truth; and (4) evidence as neutral, intersubjective arbiter.⁹⁷⁹ In analyzing Kelly's list, Rysiew asks "whether a single kind of thing is suited to play the various roles evidence has been thought to play; and whether we're likely to arrive at a unified theory (a single concept) of evidence."⁹⁸⁰ Rysiew is optimistic about the second given historical considerations we will address momentarily. However, to the first, Rysiew is skeptical evidence understood as a single kind can function in all the various roles assigned to it.

Rysiew is not alone here. William Alston sees the terms "evidence" and "reasons" as "too squishy" to capture key differences in justification such that he introduces the distinction between doxastic and nondoxastic grounds for beliefs. Nodoxastic grounds are primarily if not exclusively phenomena.⁹⁸¹ This fits the common understanding of "evidence" as a publicly available object or neutral guide to truth. Nodoxastic grounds are inherently non-propositional. They are raw epistemic input ready for sensory or rational

⁹⁷⁷ Patrick Rysiew, "Making It Evident: Evidence and Evidentness, Justification, and Belief," in *Evidentialism and Its Discontents*, ed. Trent Dougherty (Oxford University Press, 2011), 208.

⁹⁷⁸ "Evidence" is an entirely private phenomenal conception where a subject's evidence consists of "all and only those propositions that the subject knows" including subjective and non-factive mental states based on their experiences, cf. Timothy Williamson, *Knowledge and Its Limits* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

⁹⁷⁹ "Evidence" is what is publicly available to know prior to any theory.

⁹⁸⁰ Rysiew, "Making It Evident: Evidence and Evidentness, Justification, and Belief," 211.

⁹⁸¹ Personal experience fits here, but unlike other evidence is non-communicable.

consumption or processing. Doxastic grounds, on the other hand, are themselves beliefs, such that a belief is grounded by another belief.⁹⁸² Since a belief is a propositional attitude about *p*, doxastic grounds are propositional by definition. They are preprocessed epistemic inputs having already been prepared as the output of another mind. So, when "testimony" is considered as "evidence" in the third-personal sense described above, what is meant is *a telling* in which a belief obtained from another person's utterance serves as the doxastic grounds for one's own belief that *p*.⁹⁸³

We seem to intuitively or subconsciously understand this distinction insofar as in ordinary language we reserve the term "evidence" for sensory objects or facts that a subject knows to obtain while we reserve the term "reasons" for what Alston calls "propositionally structured entities" (whether they be facts or well-supported beliefs).⁹⁸⁴ Thomas Kelly also recognizes this distinction in grammatical function stating that the difference between *evidence* and *a reason* is that the former is a mass term while the latter is a count noun.⁹⁸⁵ Kelly appears to have in mind Jeffrey Pelletier's work in which mass terms denote *stuff* while count nouns denote *objects*. Language, Pelletier argues, reveals ontological presuppositions by our use of mass terms vs. count nouns. As count nouns, "reasons to believe" are "entities that are distinct from each other and thus one can distinguish and count them," while as a mass term, "evidence" is "stuff that is undifferentiated with respect

⁹⁸² William P. Alston, *Beyond "Justification": Dimensions of Epistemic Evaluation* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 82–83.

⁹⁸³ There is a curious parallel with the historic division of immediate and acquired knowledge.

⁹⁸⁴ Alston, *Beyond "Justification,"* 83–84.

⁹⁸⁵ "Inasmuch as evidence is the sort of thing which confers justification, the concept of evidence is closely related to other fundamental normative concepts such as the concept of *a reason*. Indeed, it is natural to think that 'reason to believe' and 'evidence' are more or less synonymous, being distinguished chiefly by the fact that the former functions grammatically as a count noun while the latter functions as a mass term." See Kelly, "Evidence." Section 1. In a footnote, Kelly notes that "evidence" may have "something of an empirical connotation that 'reason to believe' lacks."

to the term being used to describe it."⁹⁸⁶ Applying this thought to epistemic grounds parallels the conclusions of philosophers such as Zagzebski that evidence can *aggregate*, or be added to existing evidence, while reasons do not aggregate but rather replace one another.⁹⁸⁷ This division has led to questions about whether a unified evidential account can be maintained.

Returning to Rysiew, he is optimistic that a unified theory of evidence which is reliant on Thomas Reid (d. 1796) can overcome the challenges that evidentialism faces. He says:

Whether or not these problems are insuperable, there is another way of thinking of evidence that preserves its essential connection with truth. Here, instead of beginning with the abstract noun ('evidence'), we take *evidentness* as the root notion and treat the nominative 'evidence' in derivative terms, as *that which makes* something evident (manifest, etc.).⁹⁸⁸

Rysiew limits himself solely to Reid's account, but this approach echoes the thought of John Duns Scotus (d. 1308), William of Ockham (d.1347), and John Buridan (d. 1358), who collectively introduced the notion of evidence and its dependence on evidentness.

⁹⁸⁶ Francis Jeffrey Pelletier, *Mass Terms: Some Philosophical Problems* (Boston: D. Reidel Publishing, 1979), 162. He continues: "Mass terms are therefore unlike count terms in that they are *divisive* in their reference: they permit something that the mass term is true of to be arbitrarily subdivided and the term to be true of these parts as well. Taking the water in the glass to be something that *is water* is true of, it can be divided into parts and *is water* will be true of both parts. And again, mass terms, unlike count terms, are also *cumulative* in their reference: putting the water contained in two glasses into a bowl yields something of which *is water* is true. But the same is not the case with a count term like *dog*. Chopping up a dog does not yield more things of which *is a dog* is true, nor do two dogs make a thing of which *is a dog* is true."

⁹⁸⁷ Zagzebski, *Epistemic Authority*, 63–65.

⁹⁸⁸ Rysiew then addresses the alternative approaches: "Just as light makes manifest visible objects, evidence is the voucher for all truth ([Thomas Reid, *Essays on the Intellectual Powers*] *IP* VI 5, *W* 448a). As against the argumentational view (but like the reliabilist view) there is no restricting evidence to sentence-like entities (perceptual experience, say, can vouch for the existence of some object). And as against the reliabilist view, it is not the *bare fact* of reliability that defines evidence. The connection with truth, again, is secured via the notion of evidentness: for something to be evident is for it to be manifestly true; that's why, when I say, 'It's obvious [evident, manifest] that *p*', or '*X* makes it manifest [evident, obvious] that *p*', I am thereby committing myself as to *p*. And, on the assumption of the general reliability of our faculties (see below), those things which we 'comprehend...clearly and without prejudice' (*IP* VII 3, *W* 482b) and judge it to be evident (hence, true) generally will *be* such." Rysiew, "Making It Evident: Evidence and Evidentness, Justification, and Belief," 214.

Scotus writes that the stronger form of knowledge (*scientia*) arose from the evidence of a scientific object.⁹⁸⁹ Ockham used evidence as the factor that distinguished knowledge from belief, insofar as knowledge is defined as assent to a true proposition with evidence or evidentness.⁹⁹⁰ John Buridan and his contemporaries varied the notion of evidence to allow for different levels of knowledge, whether absolute, natural, or moral.⁹⁹¹ As Robert Pasnau points out in his account of the history of epistemology, for these thinkers there are three distinguishable notions of evidentness that are entwined:

- A. The evidentness of a cognitive object; that is, *a thing's being evident*.
- B. The evidentness of a cognition that grasps such an object; that is, *an evident cognition*.
- C. That which makes something be evident; that is, *the evidence*.⁹⁹²

Modern and contemporary epistemology predominately only speak of notion C, and thus misinterpret historic thinkers who predominately mean notion A and B.⁹⁹³ Notion C traces back through notion B and then notion A to metaphysical foundations. For medieval philosophers, the bridge from the metaphysical to the cognitive was typically considered to be the powers or "virtues" of human nature. Knowledge was the fruit of a causal process, or the proper use of intellectual and moral virtues.⁹⁹⁴ However, shortly after Thomas

⁹⁸⁹ Scotus, Lect. III, d. 23, q. un., n. 19 (Vatican, XXI, 103)

⁹⁹⁰ Lagerlund, *Knowledge in Medieval Philosophy*, 2:5.

⁹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 2:7.

⁹⁹² Pasnau, *After Certainty*, 32–33. The same applies to the Greek notion of "sign" (*sēmeion*): "If so, if 'sign' covers any kind of ground, evidence, or reason for believing something, including demonstrative evidence, we might expect that a rough, general first sketch of the notion as it functions in every day discourse could take the following simple form: For X to be a sign or evidence of Y requires (i) that X should be evident or manifest to us in some appropriate way, (ii) that it should be evidence of something else in that Y can be inferred from it. The task of the technical analysis would then be to explain the relationship between X and Y which sustains and justifies the inferring of the second from the first." Myles Burnyeat, "The Origins of Non-Deductive Inference," in *Explorations in Ancient and Modern Philosophy*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 113.

⁹⁹³ Pasnau, *After Certainty*, 33.

⁹⁹⁴ It is possible to conceive of the virtues as playing a justificatory role, e.g., when speaker S says *p*, my knowledge that S possesses certain virtues "justifies" my believing *p*. Following a *Dinnāga* style testimony-as-inference where *S* says *p*, *S* should be believed, therefore *p* should be believed, the virtues could be considered as evidence to support "S should be believed." However, knowledge that *S* possess X virtues seems to reduce to "S should be believed because S is trustworthy." If it does not reduce to trust, knowledge

Aquinas, the strong metaphysical underpinning of knowledge was largely replaced with explaining cognition and how knowledge is acquired.⁹⁹⁵ Despite the two historical types of evidentness seemingly having been lost from all but language and the subconscious, epistemological problems appear to be driving contemporary epistemologists such as Rysiew back to these older notions of evidentness. Analyses like Alston's distinction between nondoxastic and doxastic grounds and Zagzebski's distinction between theoretical and deliberative reasons, reveal an epistemic ground for belief other than the typical evidentialist notion of publicly available facts.

The historic sense of "evidence" (notion C) is thus congruent with Alston's nondoxastic grounds and Zagzebski's theoretical reasons, as publicly available facts or objects everyone can experience to make something evident or to justify beliefs. The historic sense of "evidentness" (notion A/B) likewise is congruent with Alston's doxastic grounds and Zagzebski's deliberative reasons. Borrowing an example from Kelly, we may say that when I have a headache, the experience of cranial pain might qualify as evidence (notion C) since it makes evident to me that I have a headache, but since I cannot share my experience of cranial pain publicly, it cannot be evidence (notion C) for anyone else. Following the historic tripartite conception of evidentness, a headache is evident (notion A) to me since my experiencing of the cognitive object cranial pain is evident to me. This gives rise to the evidentness (notion B) of my cognition "I have a headache" through my grasping of the cognitive object cranial pain in propositional form. Both these usages of

of *S*'s virtues seems insufficient to support "*S* should be believed" without the interpersonal component. Regardless, this is not how premodern minds understood the epistemic role of the virtues.

⁹⁹⁵ Lagerlund, *Knowledge in Medieval Philosophy*, 2:4.

evidentness are first-personal. Only that which makes my headache evident to someone else qualifies as evidence (notion C) in the modern sense.

Two likely channels emerge as to what makes my headache evident to you in this notion C sense: (1) observable signs correlated with headaches by induction (such as my applying pressure to my forehead while wincing or your learning that I exhibit lifestyle factors which often trigger headaches such as stress, poor sleep, or excessive alcohol consumption); and (2) my *telling* you that I have a headache. For (2), what qualifies as evidence is the utterance "I have a headache," or perhaps the fact that the situation took place in which I performed the utterance "I have a headache." But *a telling* as evidence in this form is too weak to perform the role of an epistemic ground for the belief that someone else has a headache, since it is susceptible to all sorts of error, such as insincerity, ignorance, random inaccuracy, etc.

The reason the utterance does not rise to the level of evidence is due to its doxastic or propositional nature, which includes the notion of there being *a reason to believe* that *p*. But mere utterances do not automatically provide such reason. A computer programmed to produce the sounds "I have a headache" does not give one any reason to believe that anyone in fact has a headache.⁹⁹⁶ *A telling*, in the normal case, is not merely raw unprocessed facts. My *telling* that I have a headache is produced by my evident cognition (notion B) built upon the evidentness (notion A) of the cranial pain. Thus, my *telling* you that I have a headache does not qualify as evidence (notion C) for you (or me) merely by virtue of being a third-personal utterance. Rather, my *telling* gives rise to the evident cognition in you that "I have a headache," and so your belief is based on the grounds of my belief, in a way in

⁹⁹⁶ I am grateful to Robert Whitaker for this example from our joint article in preparation "Epistemic Trust, Testimonial Evidence, and Autonomy".

which the justification of your belief depends on our relationship, and not merely on the existence of my utterance. Thus, my *telling* is a first-personal doxastic ground or reason (i.e., a "deliberative reason") for you to adopt my belief that I have a headache, but not a third-personal nondoxastic ground or "evidence" (i.e., a "theoretical reason").

This brings us to a clearer picture of what testimony is and is not. What is most clear is that testimony is *a telling* which can serve as an epistemic ground. It is arguably *a reason* to believe, but not necessarily evidence. This expands the concept of "testimony" to include more than notion C evidence. Testimonial theories that restrict *a telling* to merely Notion C evidence will be limited in what knowledge can be transmitted, namely the evidence that *a telling* occurred. A listener must infer from the evidence of my saying "I have a headache" that I indeed do have a headache. This can be perfectly acceptable for reductionist accounts which understand all testimony via other knowledge sources. Theories that allow "evidence" to be expanded to include notion A and notion B notions of evidentness, however, will further allow the content of telling. The exact conception of evidence will thus depend on a given evidentialist theory and how they navigate the challenges outlined above.⁹⁹⁷ Treating testimony as *a reason* to believe thus admittedly creates additional work for the traditional reductionism and anti-reductionism understandings of testimony which treat all testimony as evidence. In fact, Zagzebski points out that a model of testimony which can be reduced to a "process of passing around theoretical reasons" can prevent or delay investigation into the nature of the self and "makes

⁹⁹⁷ My aim is to provide a neutral concept of testimony that can encompass evidence without itself *being* evidence. If the conception was not broad enough to include evidence, then it would run afoul of the original claim that a theory of testimony that cannot be applied across history without distorting a thinker's accounts requires revision or replacement. However, even during the historical periods in which evidentialism is the prevailing theory, *reasons to believe* were also available. So even a much stronger reading in which reasons replace as opposed to encompass evidence would technically avoid being self-defeating, but it would entail that thinkers maintained the belief of evidentialism erroneously.

invisible the epistemic bonds between individuals and the foundations of epistemic communities."⁹⁹⁸ The difference is that *a telling*, as a non-evidential reason to believe, is interpersonal. What allows *a telling* to serve as an epistemic ground has frequently turned to trust-based IVT theories like Moran's "Assurance theory" which deny the evidentialist framework. As such, if you tell me your belief, then my acceptance of your belief is based on my trusting you.⁹⁹⁹ It involves a relationship (however simple or brief) between the speaker and the listener.¹⁰⁰⁰

Since *a reason* to believe does not aggregate like evidence but can replace former reasons, a speaker's testimony can preemptively replace a listener's reasons to believe. So, when it does, testimony is authoritative. Thus, for testimony to be authoritative to a person or community, it must be an interpersonal reason, which is problematic for notion C evidence. Zagzebski's answer is that for testimony to be authoritative, it must provide a deliberative reason, which depends on an interpersonal relationship, and is therefore non-evidential in the contemporary sense.¹⁰⁰¹ However, trust in this sense is a basic form of evidentness. As Zagzebski says:

Although the notion of evidence is multiply ambiguous, I have said that I think it is most naturally put in the category of third-person reasons. ... we need trust that what we take to be indicative of truth is in fact indicative of truth, and so the evidence for *p* we think we can identify is never as basic as trust in the self, and... it is not as basic as trust in others as a reason for believing *p*. What we call evidence is not only derivative from trust in the self, it is also derivative from trust in others upon whom I rely in identifying the evidence. It follows that trust is a first-person, deliberative reason for belief that is more basic than anything I take to be third-person reasons.

Since no one has figured out how to combine the first-person and third-person perspectives into a single viewpoint, deliberative and

⁹⁹⁸ Zagzebski, *Epistemic Authority*, 131.

⁹⁹⁹ Cf. Moran, "Getting Told and Being Believed," 2006.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Zagzebski calls defines this relationship as an "implicit contract". The breaking of this contract is the source of the feeling betrayed. Zagzebski, *Epistemic Authority*, 122.

¹⁰⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 131–32.

theoretical reasons do not aggregate. There is no system of adding together both kinds of reasons for believing *p* to give a summary verdict on the reasonableness of believing *p*. Third-person evidence for *p* does not exhaust all of the reasons for believing *p*, and in fact, does not even include the most basic kind of reason for believing *p*.¹⁰⁰²

Per Zagzebski, such authoritative testimony is justified just like the authority of belief:¹⁰⁰³

Justification Thesis 1 for the Authority of Testimony (JAT 1) - The authority of a person's testimony for me is justified by my conscientious judgment that I am more likely to satisfy my desire to get true beliefs and avoid false beliefs if I believe what the authority tells me than if I try to figure out what to believe myself.¹⁰⁰⁴

Hence, listeners should accept authoritative testimony granted their goal is knowledge and their epistemic position is inferior to that of the expert in this situation. In this regard, testimony from an epistemic authority is akin to a command from a practical authority, where adopting a belief preemptively is parallel to obeying a command to believe.

Testimony as *a reason* to believe, especially as an authoritative reason to believe, shifts the epistemic burden from "what the speaker says" to "whom the speaker is"

¹⁰⁰² Ibid., 66.

¹⁰⁰³ It has been pointed out that just my knowing that an authority has belief *p* gives me *a reason* to believe *p* even if the authority does not tell me directly. Thus, how one comes to know that an authority has a belief ties into the concept of testimony. Beliefs are disseminated either by behavior or through a reported assertion or a direct telling. The distinction alters where the subject places their trust. For example, if I see a *mezuzah* on your doorpost, then your behavior indicates that you hold certain beliefs about the *Shema*. Likewise, even if I overhear you verbally asserting your beliefs to another person, then my trust is placed not in you (i.e., the knowledge is not testimonial) but something else such as my own powers. This distinction allows us to see how the fact that knowing an authority maintains a belief is *prima facie* reason for another to also believe preemptively. Trust in the authority is a deliberative reason and hence cannot not aggregate with other theoretical reasons but replaces previous reasons. This distinction also reveals that while it is evident that an authority holds a belief, that evidentness is not evidence (in fact cannot be evidence) to others (since the reason behind my belief is deliberative, not theoretical). To maintain that another's belief is *ipso facto* evidence then one must assume that all reasons are theoretical. In sum, the fact that an authority holds a belief qualifies as *a reason*, but not evidence, to also believe. As will be explored in section 3, this illustrates how my virtue of intellectual autonomy underlies more than strictly testimonial knowledge.

¹⁰⁰⁴ As with the justification for Authority of Belief, Zagzebski offers a second thesis from autonomy: "**Justification Thesis 2 for the Authority of Testimony (JAT 2)** - The authority of another person's testimony for me is justified by my conscientious judgment that if I believe what the authority tells me, the result will survive my conscientious self-reflection better than if I try to figure out what to believe myself." Zagzebski, *Epistemic Authority*, 133.

including the knowledge and character the speaker possesses and their relationship to the listener.¹⁰⁰⁵ The aim is to understand testimony – *a telling* – as *a reason* to believe and not necessarily as evidence in order to provide a neutral account along the lines of: to know that *p* is to form one's belief that *p* on the basis of *a reason* for *p* that one is aware of. In this respect, *a reason* can still be accounted for as evidence when understood in the historic sense of evidentness while testimony as *a reason* also allows for other historical accounts of knowledge. Insofar as testimony as *a telling* can be accepted as *a reason* or the fact that a telling occurred is a "kind of evidence" to justify or ground a belief, then understanding testimony as *a telling* is step toward a neutral concept which can be applied transhistorically.

6.3 Towards a transhistorical testimonial framework

In this section I propose a neutral testimonial framework that does not presume testimony is a form of evidence and does not presume a role for justification either for or by testimony. I am not unconvinced that the terms "reductionism" and "anti-reductionism" can be used free from evidential preconceptions and thus have outlived their usefulness. Nevertheless, the conceptual positioning afforded by the terms helps frame two pertinent questions regarding testimony: 1) is testimony an autonomous generative source of knowledge or can testimonial knowledge be reduced to a non-testimonial species of knowledge?; 2) Is testimony a unique phenomenon of knowledge transmission or can knowledge transmission be reduced to knowledge generation? Following John Greco's reductionist

¹⁰⁰⁵ Cf. Goldman, "Experts: Which Ones Should You Trust?"

and anti-reductionist responses to both questions, I construct a framework I believe flexible enough to be congruent with the prevailing theories throughout history.¹⁰⁰⁶

A reductionist and anti-reductionist response for each question yields four positions. Regarding the first question of testimony's status as a source of knowledge, Source Reductionism (SR) maintains that testimony is not a generative species of knowledge since testimonial knowledge "reduces" to a non-subspecies of knowledge. In contrast, Source Anti-reductionism (SA) maintains that testimony is an autonomous generative source of knowledge, or at least "that testimonial knowledge cannot be understood entirely in terms of non-testimonial generative sources."¹⁰⁰⁷ Regarding the second question of how listeners come to know *p* via the *tellings* of a speaker, Transmission Reductionism (TR) maintains that transmission reduces to back-to-back instances of knowledge generation. Knowledge that *p* is generated in the speaker who's *telling* then generates that *p* in the listener via induction from my existing knowledge (about the topic, the speaker, etc.). Transmission Anti-reductionism (TA) maintains that transmission does not reduce to knowledge generation but is a distinct epistemic phenomenon. I interpret this framework to analyze testimony as follows:

¹⁰⁰⁶ Greco, "The Role of Trust in Testimonial Knowledge."

¹⁰⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 95.

Chart 6.3.0.1

	Source: 1 - Can testimonial knowledge be reduced to a non-testimonial species of knowledge?	Transmission: 2 - Can knowledge transmission be reduced to knowledge generation?
Reductionism:	"Source Reductionism" (SR) Yes: Testimony is NOT a generative species of knowledge since it "reduces" to a non-subspecies of knowledge	"Transmission Reductionism" (TR) Yes: Transmission "reduces" to back-to-back instances knowledge generation
Anti-Reductionism:	"Source Anti-reductionism" (SA) No: Testimony IS a generative species of knowledge in its own right	"Transmission Anti-reductionism" (TA) No: Transmission does not reduce to knowledge generation but is a distinct phenomenon. ¹⁰⁰⁸

Since responses to the source question must be paired with those to the transmission question, four theories emerge from the possible combinations: Theory 1 (SR & TR); Theory 2 (SA & TR); Theory 3 (SA & TA); and Theory 4 (SR & TA). Trust, Greco argues, can fit into any positions including an anti-reductionist response.¹⁰⁰⁹ Theory 1 (SR & TR) depicts the weakest form of testimony, a subspecies of knowledge which is generated in the listener on the basis of speaker testimony due to induction or a familiar epistemological process following its generation in the speaker by a traditional knowledge source. This amounts to traditional reductionism which post-Enlightenment epistemology most readily fits since the individual agency of the knower takes precedent.¹⁰¹⁰ Theory 2 (SA & TR) provides the strongest form of testimony. Testimony is not only an autonomous source of knowledge, but each *telling* would qualify as a new instance of knowledge generation. Theory 3 (SA & TA) depicts testimony as a generative source of knowledge which can

¹⁰⁰⁸ "Transmitted knowledge is true belief attributable to the competent joint agency of a speaker and hearer acting together." Ibid., 93.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Ibid., 99.

¹⁰¹⁰ "Generated knowledge is true belief attributable to the competent agency of the knower." Ibid., 93. This is also congruent with what Zagzebski calls "*epistemic egoism*."

then be transmitted given the specifics of a given case. In Theory 4 (SR & TA), testimony is not a generative source of knowledge and must rely on traditional sources for knowledge acquisition but provides a unique form of knowledge transmission (in this regard testimony parallels memory).¹⁰¹¹

I have found that the framework is flexible enough to remain neutral on how knowledge is generated and transmitted for the primary epistemological approaches whether evidentialism, reliabilism, or virtue epistemology.¹⁰¹² In fact, theories may draw on multiple approaches. While generation and transmission are irreducible to (cannot be understood in terms of) each other, the processes relevant to generation or transmission within any of the four theories need not be the same. To use Greco's terms, a "unified" theory draws on a "common genus" for coming to know in both generation and transmission whereas a "non-unified" theory does not, instead drawing from different normative theories.¹⁰¹³ The framework also makes no demands on the scope or context for understanding testimony as a source of knowledge in relation to testimonial transmission. Testimonial transmission is often visualized as knowledge being passed through a chain of speakers and listeners. Testimony as a generative source of knowledge sees the first link in

¹⁰¹¹ Ibid., 98–99.

¹⁰¹² This confirms Greco's original claim: "This general framework for understanding the knowledge generation/knowledge transmission distinction is consistent with various normative epistemologies, including evidentialism, reliabilism, and virtue epistemology. On any of these views, we can make a distinction between activities relevant to information acquisition and activities relevant to information distribution, and we can endorse the idea that the two are governed by different norms or standards, answering to their respective purposes. And we can use those resources to understand the distinction between knowledge generation and knowledge transmission. Different normative epistemologies will fill in the details differently, but the general framework is neutral regarding these details." Ibid., 103.

¹⁰¹³ Greco explains: "non-unified accounts make the further claim that there is no deeper theoretical unity between these two ways. For example, one might give an evidentialist account of knowledge generation, in terms of true belief grounded in adequate evidence, and then a trust account of knowledge transmission, in terms of true belief grounded in morally proper trust of a speaker. On such a view, there would be two ways of "coming to know," but these would not be species of a theoretically interesting genus." Greco offers Hinchman's trust theory 2005 as an example of a non-unified account. Ibid., 99–100.

a chain as *a telling* and not a non-testimonial source. However, it is common to refer to a speaker as a source of knowledge for any given listener, making testimony the last link in the chain. Hence, the meaning of "source" is context dependent in the same way "new" in "I bought a new car" can mean "newly built" or a "new to me." On the individual level, distinctions between generation and transmission disappear with the listener coming to know something (typically without understanding the chain).¹⁰¹⁴ Scholars like Greco narrow the scope to a given community where knowledge generation refers to the acquisition of knowledge into a community from an external source (the first link for the community) and transmission is passing/distributing knowledge within the community.¹⁰¹⁵ However, in a wider context the chain of transmission continues outside the community where the first link likely ends in another source. The widest possible context entails metaphysical considerations on the nature of knowledge. However, since the framework does not presume a given scope it can account for anti-transmission examples (e.g., the creationist teacher) and provide a neutral and thereby transhistorical framework for the epistemology of testimony.

What I have shown thus far is that testimony is bigger than evidence and that treating testimony as evidence is not only anachronistic to Ancient and Medieval thinkers who maintained testimonial theories, but also insufficient without relying on the more specific historic notions of evidentness vs. evidence. I argued that testimony is *a telling* or verbal instance of coming to know by either generation or transmission. Then I proposed a

¹⁰¹⁴ Greco, "What Is Transmission*?," 490–91.

¹⁰¹⁵ "So, what is transmission*? I begin by noting that, on the level of individual knowers, it is hard to draw a meaningful distinction between knowledge transmission and knowledge generation. In both cases, the hearer comes to know something that she did not know before. And testimony is often called a source of knowledge, along with perception, reasoning, etc. But if we 'go social,' the distinction becomes superficially apparent, or so I will argue." Ibid. Also Cf. Greco, "The Role of Trust in Testimonial Knowledge," 100–103.

flexible framework for analyzing testimony in various normative epistemological approaches while remaining flexible enough to account for a wide variety of concepts and historical perspectives using John Greco's distinction between forms of source and transmission reductionism vs. anti-reductionism. This should provide both a concept of testimony and a framework for the epistemology of testimony that is transhistorical. However, providing a neutral framework has an unintentional consequence. Just as objectively presenting all ethical normative theories as equally valid ultimately endorses a form of moral relativism, so too does a transhistorical framework lend itself to social constructivism. Thus, in the final section, I will both test the flexibility of the proposed transhistorical theory of testimony and offer my take on the most promising path forward for understanding testimony.

6.4 Accounting for a virtue-theoretic testimonial theory

To test the explanatory power and flexibility of the proposed transhistorical concept of testimony and framework, I will analyze a virtue-theoretic approach built on the virtue of autonomy instead of trust directly. The traditional approaches principally operate under what Roger Pouivet calls "epistemic methodism" assuming that a thinker's testimonial theory is static and thereby captured by one theory within the framework, e.g., Hume is Theory 1 (SR & TR), and always Theory 1.¹⁰¹⁶ Even Greco introduced the rethought categories to argue we universally adopt what I have labeled Theory 4 (SR&TA). I argue that the framework allows shifts between theories to account for the complexities of virtue and social environments in accord with Pouivet calls "epistemic particularism."¹⁰¹⁷ Thus,

¹⁰¹⁶ Pouivet, *Épistémologie des croyances religieuses*, 83.

¹⁰¹⁷ Ibid.

the framework is flexible enough to account for when testimonial uptake achieves the virtuous mean or falls into the vices of insufficiency and excess.

6.4.1 Trust and the Virtue of Intellectual Autonomy

Since Ancient and Medieval thinkers largely conducted philosophy within either the Platonic or Aristotelian system building tradition of the day, their theories of testimony cannot wholly be divorced from their metaphysical considerations. To posit a virtue theoretic framework assumes some "human nature" (at least broadly construed to answer the "what is it" question) which determines our *telos* and excellences. The acquisition of wisdom has historically been seen as our highest end, which testimony would directly serve. Historically, virtue is multivalent with the most basic distinction between moral and intellectual virtues, but virtues are also seen as perfections of human faculties, dispositions of the will (or dispositions to correct dysfunction), and skills.¹⁰¹⁸ However, while virtue accounts are comfortable with testimony being a speech act of *telling* in which trust serves as *a reason* to believe, they do not follow the typical IVT position that listeners have an "epistemic entitlement to believe what the speaker says."¹⁰¹⁹

In virtue epistemology (VE), knowledge is often understood in terms of intellectual virtue either as the result of an act or causal process. Definitions of knowledge in accordance with virtue are controversial, but assuming some working definition is possible it will be akin to Zagzebski's attempt in *Virtues of the Mind* where "knowledge is a state of cognitive contact with reality arising out of acts of intellectual virtue," or to better accord

¹⁰¹⁸ Robert Campbell Roberts and W. Jay Wood, *Intellectual Virtues: An Essay in Regulative Epistemology* (Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press, 2007), 59–60.

¹⁰¹⁹ Wright, *Knowledge Transmission*, 89.

with contemporary understandings, "Knowledge is a state of (true) belief arising out of acts of intellectual virtue" where:

"an act of intellectual virtue A [1] is an act that arises from the motivational component of A, [2] is something a person with virtue A would (probably) do in the circumstances, [3] is successful in achieving the end of the A motivation, and [4] is such that the agent acquires a true belief (cognitive contact with reality) through these features of the act"¹⁰²⁰

John Lamont, claiming to hold a "broadly Thomist" view, likewise maintains that knowledge is the product of an intellectual virtue, but without involving motivation as in Zagzebski's definition.¹⁰²¹ This is because, according to Lamont, intellectual virtues are not acquired excellence but capacities "whose function is to arrive at true beliefs, and whose operation consists in the production of true beliefs" and do so independently of any activity involving emotion, deliberation, choice, or an activity of the will.¹⁰²²

While the exact definition of knowledge in VE is flexible, the key question remains the same: testimonial knowledge is a state of belief arising out of which intellectual act? The recent literature focuses on trust (rightly) either relating it to an unspecified virtue (with a few exceptions) or as a kind of virtue itself.¹⁰²³ While virtue reliabilists advocate for trust as an intellectual virtue, virtue responsibilists are less convinced. Zagzebski appears optimistic (as her definition attests), but Robert Roberts & Jay Woods (2007),

¹⁰²⁰ Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind*, 270. Jason Baehr criticizes Zagzebski's definition as still failing to escape Gettier cases and not necessary for knowledge, going so far as to conclude "the concept of intellectual virtue cannot anchor a plausible analysis of knowledge." Jason Baehr, *The Inquiring Mind: On Intellectual Virtues and Virtue Epistemology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 34–45.

¹⁰²¹ Lamont's view is "broadly Thomist" in holding that knowledge is the result of the operation of intellectual virtues "which are capacities to attain truth", but without endorsing the intellectual virtues such as *intellectus* and *scientia* that Aquinas thinks humans actually possess. Lamont, *Divine Faith*, 116.

¹⁰²² *Ibid.*, 115–16.

¹⁰²³ Working prior to the introduction of IVT and building on the anti-reductionism of Coady and Chakrabarti, Lamont argues that trust is related to the intellectual virtue of *learning*. *Ibid.*, 143–45. Reibsamens is moving toward the position that the disposition to trust is a distinctively social intellectual virtue. Cf. Jonathan B. Reibsamens, "Social Epistemic Dependence: Trust, Testimony, and Social Intellectual Virtue" (Ph.D., United States -- Missouri, Saint Louis University, 2015).

Jason Baehr (2011), and Paul Faulkner (2014) express varying levels of hesitancy or caution.¹⁰²⁴ The reason for this stems from one's perspective of VE's relationship to the project of "traditional epistemology." Reliabilists understand intellectual virtues in terms of "cognitive abilities" or "reliable faculties," that is, dispositions which "need not involve a motivational component, nor must they be acquired or habituated over time."¹⁰²⁵ Responsibilists are more faithful to virtue conceptions linked to character frequently citing that intellectual and moral virtues are not distinct categories of virtues and it is "unhelpful to try to draw a strict line between the intellectual and the moral virtues" according to Roberts and Wood.¹⁰²⁶ Hence, while intellectual virtues may be reliable for low-grade or easy knowledge, it is argued they "cannot capture important elements of high-grade or laborious knowledge."¹⁰²⁷ Instead of assuming we possess specific virtues tailored to epistemic needs, every virtue can be an intellectual, moral, or civic virtue (e.g. intellectual courage, moral courage, and civic courage) with the difference emerging in the relation between the virtue and the domain's goods, which regarding testimony are intellectual goods.¹⁰²⁸ Baehr identifies the spectrum of responsibilist positions in *The Inquiring Mind* ranging from "Strong Conservative VE" to "Strong Autonomous VE" (with two weak varieties of each position in-between) where the former sees the concept of intellectual virtue as "useful for addressing one or more problems in traditional epistemology" (e.g. Linda Zagzebski) while the latter is "the basis of an approach to epistemology that is independent of traditional epistemology" (e.g. Jonathan Kvanvig).¹⁰²⁹ If virtue reliabilism

¹⁰²⁴ Roberts and Wood, *Intellectual Virtues*; Baehr, *The Inquiring Mind*; Faulkner, "A Virtue Theory of Testimony."

¹⁰²⁵ Greco and Reibsam, "Reliabilist Virtue Epistemology," 727.

¹⁰²⁶ Roberts and Wood, *Intellectual Virtues*, 60.

¹⁰²⁷ Wright, "Virtue Responsibilism," 752.

¹⁰²⁸ Roberts and Wood, *Intellectual Virtues*, 59–60.

¹⁰²⁹ Baehr, *The Inquiring Mind*, 14–15.

were also depicted on Baehr's spectrum, it would be an even stronger form of Conservative VE (see Chart 6.4.1.1) given its aim to align with traditional epistemology. True to virtue-theoretic form, Baehr rejects both "strong" conceptions while the "Weak" variations of Conservative and Autonomous VE (arguably forming a mean) are presented as promising. In short, responsibilists maintain intellectual virtues cannot be disconnected from the whole to solve contemporary epistemological problems since their strength is tied to their metaphysical underpinnings.

Chart 6.4.1.1

Spectrum of Virtue Epistemology positions related to traditional epistemology				
Virtue Reliabilism	John Baehr's four varieties of character-based virtue epistemology (i.e., Responsibilism) ¹⁰³⁰			
	<i>Strong Conservative</i>	<i>Weak Conservative</i>	<i>Weak Autonomous</i>	<i>Strong Autonomous</i>
The concept of virtue as cognitive abilities or reliable faculties fits the traditional epistemological task of providing an account of knowledge in terms of necessary, sufficient, and informative conditions ¹⁰³¹	"the concept of intellectual virtue merits a central and fundamental role within traditional epistemology"	"the concept of intellectual virtue merits a secondary or background role within traditional epistemology"	"an independent focus on intellectual character and virtues complements traditional epistemology"	"an independent focus on intellectual character and virtues should replace traditional epistemology"

Instead of arguing directly for a trust based intellectual virtue, I propose that the intellectual aspect for the historic virtue of autonomy is most responsible for testimonial knowledge. This is not to say testimonial knowledge arises solely from intellectual

¹⁰³⁰ Ibid., 9–15.

¹⁰³¹ Greco and Reibsam, "Reliabilist Virtue Epistemology," 727.

autonomy. Presumably, testimonial knowledge results from the synergy of a collection of virtues (e.g., love of knowledge, intellectual firmness, courage and caution, humility, generosity, and practical wisdom). I am claiming that intellectual autonomy is the primary or driving force behind testimonial knowledge. This is because I argue that intellectual autonomy and trust are inversely related in one's interactions with authority (both practical and theoretical). My depiction of the virtue of autonomy envisions a sliding scale in which one acts more autonomously or less autonomously from situation to situation and is thus quite different from common notions envisioning autonomy to be either one does or does not act autonomously. I argue that the ideal all-or-nothing autonomy is impossible if not incoherent since learning is dependent on others. "Human knowledge is to some extent a collective enterprise," according to Lamont, for dependence on others is not just limited to "observing signs of competence" before trusting a speaker, but:

these signs are usually determined by socially established conventions. The creation of such signs is the work of a society, not of an individual. This means that much of our learning depends on the actions of a society as a whole, not just on the trustworthiness of the individuals whom we believe. Such dependence lessens our autonomy even more radically than our dependence on the word of individuals, whom we can to some extent evaluate.¹⁰³²

Our social context reveals that for humans to be autonomous at all, autonomy cannot be an absolute either/or, but must admit of the gradations—measured in trust—that I propose.

Autonomy, rooted in the human will, is clearly a virtue suited to many goods and thus does not fall prey to responsiblist critiques of being purely an intellectual virtue like trust. Autonomy is deeply linked to an agent's character and when applied to cognitive goods imparts a self-knowledge of both themselves and what they know such that Roberts

¹⁰³² Lamont, *Divine Faith*, 145.

and Wood describe "autonomy vis-à-vis knowledge" gained from others as "a kind of wisdom about knowledge, a large-perspectival self-understanding with respect to the fields of learning" or "a practical wisdom such that the agent knows what she knows and knows the limits thereof."¹⁰³³ What the reductionism vs. anti-reductionism debate correctly identifies is that when agents receive *a telling* they can either trust the speaker by assenting or not trust the speaker by investigating the matter themselves. The more one relies on their own intellectual autonomy, the less they trust others and their *tellings*. Inversely, the more one trusts others, the less they rely on their own intellectual autonomy. This line of thinking also captures the moral dimension to trusting a speaker as an Aristotelian virtue mean between two vices: excessive intellectual autonomy results in not trusting enough (being overly suspicious of others) whereas insufficient intellectual autonomy results in trusting too much or too readily making agents susceptible to lies and manipulation (blind faith). Both undercut the end of knowledge acquisition. Invoking the phrase of Jesus, "be wise as serpents and innocent as doves" (Matthew 10:16), Roberts and Wood articulate what I take to be as a virtuous mean where "intellectual autonomy is a wise disposition of balance between hetero-regulation and auto-regulation in intellectual practice" and "intellectual autonomy is the virtue of proper self-regulation, but always with regard to other-regulation or the possibility thereof." As Robert and Woods aptly point out, "autonomy is, after all, a *social* virtue."¹⁰³⁴ It should be readily apparent that testimony as *a telling* which provides *a reason* to believe fits this paradigm easily since the notions of evidence and justification are absent. The question then is if the proposed framework can give an adequate account

¹⁰³³ Roberts and Wood, *Intellectual Virtues*, 264.

¹⁰³⁴ *Ibid.*, 137, 257, 259.

of this intellectual autonomy approach for virtuous and vicious trust in other's *tellings*. I believe it can.

6.4.2 Insufficient Autonomy, Excessive Trust

The framework's provision of multiple theories allows a virtue-theory of testimony to find room for both virtuous and vicious accounts of assenting to *a telling*. Starting with the first question regarding source—whether testimonial knowledge is an autonomous generative source of knowledge or if it reduces to a non-testimonial species of knowledge—we have two issues to contend with: faculty and scope.

Given that human virtues can be understood as an acquired base of excellent functioning or "mature completions" of natural human faculties, testimonial knowledge could arise from an innate human faculty—an innate basis of our power to acquire, refine, and transmit intellectual goods—like "testimonial credulity."¹⁰³⁵ The debate over whether testimony is a "source" of knowledge can be seen as a proxy battle for whether testimony qualifies as a human intellectual faculty. If we have a faculty of testimonial credulity, such a faculty would invoke a type of SA since it should yield knowledge akin to other faculties such as the senses. Thomas Reid enshrined the idea that something akin to testimonial credulity is a faculty or disposition to believe what others tell us. Lamont may ascribe to such a faculty in maintaining that intellectual virtues are capacities which are not acquired.¹⁰³⁶ Many historical accounts that promote trust, which I identified under rational

¹⁰³⁵ Typical faculties are senses, memory, introspection, inference, and induction, and sometimes include language, construal, coherence, the desire for understanding, and *sensus divinitatis*. Ibid., 86. Faculties differ from virtue or skill which are acquired by relying on the faculties or "perfecting" them. Ibid., 59.

¹⁰³⁶ Lamont, *Divine Faith*, 115–16.

fideism outlined in chapter 1, presume something like an underlying faculty relevant to testimonial uptake fitting SA reflected in Theory 2 (SA & TR) Theory 3 (SA & TA).

Whether we have such a faculty is controversial, but within a virtue theoretic the employment of such a faculty cannot fulfill anti-reductionist demands since it requires development. Assuming the faculty exists, Roberts and Woods point out that "unless a person has acquired these refined aptitudes and concerns, the bare faculty of testimonial credulity is not a very reliable source of warranted beliefs" or "to express the point in Aristotelian terms, testimonial credulity is a disposition that admits of, and demands, perfecting."¹⁰³⁷ Even in ideal conditions, a testimonial faculty would be insufficient "for the most interesting and important kinds of knowledge" such that reductionists will simply maintain that the human faculty is a "faulty tendency, which must be strongly controlled if we are to do our epistemic best, by an insistence on seeing the evidence for ourselves."¹⁰³⁸ The result is that even those who maintain the existence of such a faculty for testimonial credibility claim it is properly functioning only when it is "fitted with a sophisticated filtering device consisting of various epistemic skills and virtues."¹⁰³⁹ This thought appears even in Alvin Plantinga's epistemological account of warrant which grants an entitlement to trust without an additional reason:

I believe you when you tell me about your summer vacation, but not when you tout on television the marvelous virtues of the deodorant you have been hired to sell. We learn not to form beliefs about a domestic quarrel until we have heard from both parties; we learn to mistrust pronouncements of campaigning politicians, lawyers arguing a case, and people with a strong financial interest in our believing what they tell us.¹⁰⁴⁰

¹⁰³⁷ Roberts and Wood, *Intellectual Virtues*, 106.

¹⁰³⁸ *Ibid.*, 86.

¹⁰³⁹ *Ibid.*, 97, 105.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Alvin Plantinga, *Warrant and the Proper Function* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 79.

Since virtues require habituation, then trustworthy testimonial knowledge is dependent on a *habitus* acquired from practice. Catherine Elgin refers to this as "attunement" which is an acquired trait (or set or traits) by an agent.¹⁰⁴¹ Since the functioning of our testimonial faculty would need to be broadened and integrated into the character of a person, the testimonial faculty becomes less important than the virtue developed to obtain the intellectual goods of testimony. Developing this faculty would arguably occur through verification by other sources of knowledge (e.g., perception, intuition, etc.) and the testimony of others in a practice that mirrors induction where my experience with *tellings* from different speaker types reveal that trusting such speakers yields "a true belief." The result is a SA faculty for testimony that requires reductionist-like honing. Relying on the faculty alone, or an undeveloped faculty, would thus be epistemically vicious.

The second issue pertaining to source is scope since "source" is represented in two ways: 1) the point at which a person came to know that *p*, and 2) the origination of that *p*. Regarding the first, generation implies how knowledge entered a chain of transmission, namely the source. Greco defines generation within the context of a community such that the source of knowledge is acquisition of knowledge from outside the community.¹⁰⁴² However, in a wider context this does not solve the issue since the chain of transmission by which persons "pass" information merely continues outside the community where it conceivably must end in another source. This implies testimony is like memory as a source of knowledge for an individual, but memory merely preserves knowledge generated by

¹⁰⁴¹ Catherine Z Elgin, "Take It from Me: The Epistemological Status of Testimony," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 65, no. 2 (2002): 291–308.

¹⁰⁴² Cf. Greco, "What Is Transmission*?," 490–91.

another non-memorial source. Similarly, testimony must either terminate in a non-testimonial source or else be circular. SA thus only applies on an individual or communal level but collapses in the widest scope to Source Reductionism.

At this point an interesting challenge is created by divine testimony since it runs past human epistemological limits. It would seem the knowledge only obtainable via divine testimony would *ipso facto* qualify as SA (at least from the perspective of human listeners). This is captured by the *duo modo*, or duplex source, approach to knowledge that I propose open-rationalists maintain in chapter 1 where God's testimony is the only source of *p* in that God knows *p* and transmits it to others via *tellings*. At first glance it seems possible to conceive of God's *tellings* as generating knowledge, especially if God is literally taken as creating speech acts. This would-be source anti-reductionism seems to be a matter of perspective which disappears when God Himself (i.e., His essence) *is* the true source of knowledge which He then transmits. So, given the widest possible context of all knowable knowledge and historic conceptions of God's essence, the distinction once again collapses into SR. Exactly how this works will differ within a given philosophical and/or theological system such as emanation, participation, causation, etc. However, if true knowledge is a divine attribute, then God Himself is the true source and his *telling* merely transmits aspects of God's nature to listeners.

Since true knowledge traces back to one source, generation at the level of *episteme* or *scientia* "knowledge" disappears, but not at the level of *endoxa* or *opinio*. Given medieval metaphysics, SA can explain how an idea was generated within a discipline. Take for example the position of Latin Averroism, which Averroes never taught or believed. Latin philosophers nevertheless acquired the doctrine from the writings of Averroes via a

misunderstanding.¹⁰⁴³ In this sense, the source of Latin Averroism is from testimony. It was generated on account of Averroes's testimony through his works. Of course, this implies the belief is based on falsehood and *ipso facto* not *scientia* level knowledge thereby preventing anyone from "knowing" Latin Averroism in the hard sense. Accurate verification by the listener would prevent the belief from generating. Lesser examples of what Greco calls "garbage" would also be generated and transmitted in this way.¹⁰⁴⁴ Yet, the explanatory power of SA seems limited to micro-contexts in which listeners do not or cannot verify a speaker with epistemic grounds for *p* in the chain of transmission.

Within our proposed framework, source-anti-reductionism whether conceived of as an individual faculty or limitations on transmission scope reflects an act with insufficient intellectual autonomy. The agent is too trusting either due an undeveloped faculty or a lack of understanding regarding the speaker. Theory 2 (SA & TR) and Theory 3 (SA & TA) thereby capture various situations of un-virtuously obtained testimony.

6.4.3 Excessive Autonomy, Insufficient Trust

Since a virtuous act of intellectual autonomy holds some form of source-reductionism, Theory 1 (SR & TR) and Theory 4 (SR & TA) remain viable. This leads us to the 2nd question regarding transmission—whether knowledge transmission is reducible to knowledge generation. Since knowledge is the result of a causal process in VE, *tellings* are thought of as providing only the belief or *opinio* of others which merely point one in the right direction to obtain *scientia* on their own. Testimony might serve only as a steppingstone toward obtaining the ideal of *certitudo* via certain methods such as

¹⁰⁴³ Cf. Chapter 5 footnote 774.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Greco, "Transmitting Faith (And Garbage)."

demonstration. The idealized form of this approach of strictly filtering knowledge in hopes of obtaining the ideal of certain knowledge is best epitomized by the myth of Ibn Tufayl's goal of obtaining certain knowledge and skepticism regarding the beliefs of others. As proposed in chapter 1, this aligns best with the strong-rationalist approach since knowledge is strictly governed by an epistemic method and limited by human nature. Yet it is hard to see how the inherent skepticism and lack of trust in others does not ultimately undercut the end goal of obtaining knowledge. As such, turning the quest for knowledge into primarily an independent project is routinely condemned as we saw in chapter 1. Roberts and Wood share similar sentiments regarding this approach to testimonial knowledge:

These epistemologists are suspicious of testimony because it seems to compromise the principle that each person should be responsible for his own cognitions and because testimony may seem to be a generally low-grade kind of evidence. But, given natural human limitations, and the way things go according to the human cognitive design plan, the early modern tendency to prescribe a general suspicion of tradition and testimony could be read as an endorsement of epistemic arrogance and fastidiousness—an insistence on the right and duty always to "see for oneself". A character that made us generally suspicious of testimony or overly insistent on having in our own possession all the evidence supporting each of our beliefs, would be a paralyzing intellectual paranoia, a hyper-individualism that would be both unrealistic and, to the extent that it actually got instantiated as a personality trait, detrimental to our cognitive functioning.¹⁰⁴⁵

Such overreliance on personal sources for knowledge either leaves no room for trust or actively dissuades its use. Such a strict, solitary, and overreliance on one's own intellectual autonomy leads to the vice of excess as demonstrated by a lack of trust. This approach to knowledge is captured by Theory 1 (SR & TR) with its lack of a role for trust. Testimony reduces to back-to-back cases of knowledge generation from non-testimonial types of knowledge which are individual, like perception. This especially fits contemporary

¹⁰⁴⁵ Roberts and Wood, *Intellectual Virtues*, 107.

reductionism which likewise struggles with skepticism and complaints of making knowledge "too hard" to obtain due to a lack of reliance on others.

A further reason to see Theory 1 (SR & TR) as falling into the vice of excessive intellectual autonomy is testimonial knowledge obtained by such intellectual acts cannot be meritorious. Since knowledge is causal, facts or proofs compel belief. In the medieval mind, such as Thomas's, the intellect can be moved by one of two factors, by an intelligible or by the will.¹⁰⁴⁶ In over emphasizing one's intellectual autonomy, an agent ironically reduces the role of their own will in what they know. Testimonial knowledge reduces solely to the product of intelligibles produced by their other non-testimonial faculties. Thus, in cases where cognitive objects or intelligibles are insufficient to move the intellect or only partially determine it, then the agent either should doubt or is characterized by an uncertain attitude which cannot remove doubt. Either way, the intellect is undetermined, and knowledge is neither generated nor transmitted. In cases where the agent either grasps the cognitive object immediately (when the intellectual intuition grasps the meaning and truth that *p* right way) or mediately (when the knowledge of terms and their composition with first principles through demonstration determines knowledge) the intellect is determined and knowledge is obtained, but it is not meritorious since there is no room for the will. One cannot receive credit for merely accepting knowledge when the intellect is compelled. Only when determination of the intellect results from the will, because the cognitive objects are insufficient to compel assent resulting in an epistemic impasse can the act be considered meritorious, which Christophe Grellard describes in detail:

¹⁰⁴⁶ Cf. *ST* II-II.2.9

This is an exceptional situation where the knowledge of terms and principles is not enough to produce assent, so that the will then compensates for this cognitive insufficiency by forcing the intellect to assent. Here, assent is really a choice since the intellect is not constrained by anything external, but exclusively by a faculty of the soul. Nevertheless, the assent is not irrational, since it is based on a motive – the consideration of the good or the suitable, for example the testimony of a man worthy of faith [trust].¹⁰⁴⁷

Theory 1 (SR & TR) is not open to determining the intellect in this manner since no role for the will remains after reducing all knowledge to the effect of either natural causes or a syllogism. What remains is Theory 4 (SR & TA), which I argue accommodates the virtuous mean.

6.4.4 The Virtuous Mean of Trust and Intellectual Autonomy

As illustrated, VE is content with demonstrative knowledge and other traditional sources of knowledge such that it embraces SR, but it still remains open to testimonial knowledge via transmission. Again, while IVT accounts of testimony invoke trust like Richard Moran's "Assurance theory", VE theories reject an automatic entitlement to trust. To presume a speaker is trustworthy, or that one is entitled to trust, was deemed epistemically vicious since it treated testimony as a form of SA. Instead, knowing when to be autonomous or when to trust as an intellectual virtue emerges either as a *habitus* acquired from practice or as the perfection of an underlying faculty. So, the question arises, when should someone trust another?

As shown above, to trust another is not to rely on one's own autonomy. However, to accept the reasoning of an authority under the right circumstances "is no compromise of your autonomy, but rather is an expression of it" per Roberts and Wood assuming you

¹⁰⁴⁷ My translation. Grellard, *De la certitude volontaire débats nominalistes sur la foi à la fin du Moyen Âge*, 40.

understand the type of authority the speaker has and how that type of authority is limited in its domain and competence.¹⁰⁴⁸ As illustrated in chapter 1, we can recognize permutations from at least four types of authority, the complexity of which calls for careful training to determine when *a telling* is within bounds and thus the speaker worthy of trust. The simplest examples frequently cite accepting the epistemic authority of an eyewitness insofar as their testimony remains within the limits of what they could know or have experienced and accepting the practical authority of a police officer insofar as their commands remain within the limits of the law. This means intellectual autonomy is virtuous when the agent's trust is not blind. It also means a child's trust in a parent is not blind when their experience of received goods demonstrates, at the very least, the authority of their parents. This is determined by the agent's relation to the speaker, the world, and thus situation.¹⁰⁴⁹

Developing the habit to know whom and when to virtuously trust others for knowledge, that is in a manner achieving the virtuous mean, requires understanding each particular situation one is in. Many factors determine how autonomous or how much trust is morally and epistemically demanded to accept *a telling*. Paul Faulkner argues interpersonal relationships have an enormous impact and introduce an ethical aspect. However, it is also possible to trust a speaker in one context, but not another as we saw with Plantinga above. Thus, situations will likely be altered by the agent's knowledge of the topic in view. Since "no one is equally autonomous across all fields of knowledge,"

¹⁰⁴⁸ Roberts and Wood, *Intellectual Virtues*, 271.

¹⁰⁴⁹ This presumes the listener is actively listening and accurately understands a speaker's transmission. Teachers often invoke models which grossly oversimplify or accent a relevant feature which would constitute a falsehood should a student take the model as a literal representation of reality (e.g., elementary models of the solar system). These types of failures are to be accounted for either as falling into vice or the epistemic equivalent of moral luck.

Roberts and Woods account for a virtue's "circumstance indexicality" or adaptation to types of circumstances.¹⁰⁵⁰ This alters the mean of intellectual autonomy for an agent in certain arenas and on certain topics, especially those in which they have studied, reflected, and become an intellectual authority. That is, we would expect an agent to exhibit greater autonomy and be less trusting in their area of expertise, but not in an unrelated field. We readily recognize circumstance indexicality when topics depart from philosophy and enter neuroscience or automotive repair. Nevertheless, given "circumstance independence", we would expect one with a developed sense of intellectual autonomy to be more discerning and adaptable to a wider range of circumstances. Roberts and Wood refer to such individuals as "exemplars of extraordinary virtue at least in part because they are somewhat independent of the narrower, more typical range of circumstances for which the virtue fits most of the people who exhibit it."¹⁰⁵¹ Again we affirm circumstance independence when we expect more of graduate students than undergraduate students at the same talk even when neither have relevant area-specific knowledge.

So, when Paul Faulkner, drawing on Miranda Fricker's work on epistemic injustice, argues that listeners indeed *presume* that a speaker is trustworthy *only if* given a

¹⁰⁵⁰ Roberts and Woods account for this through the first of two contrary properties all virtues typically have, circumstance indexicality which explains a "virtues' adaptation to circumstance types - person's autonomy fits him to behave well in situations of actual or potential regulation by others as knowledge-imparters, critics, models, sanctioners, and authorities, where these hetero-regulators fall within a certain normal range and belong to recognizable subspecies." This also applies if there is an underlying faculty of testimonial credibility such that "circumstance indexicality is a property that faculties share with virtues as we understand them. Faculties are adapted to a special range of circumstances, beyond which even the healthiest faculty cannot be expected to function as it should." Roberts and Wood, *Intellectual Virtues*, 273–75.

¹⁰⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 274. This echoes Roberts and Wood differentiation between skill and virtue: "In Chapter 3 we distinguished intellectual skills from intellectual virtues, in part, by saying that skills are more context-specific intellectual excellences, while virtues are more generic. On that reading, the scientist's superiority as a recipient of testimony is an intellectual skill, while a more general disposition to be cautious in receiving testimony, but also to trust others and not to arrogate to oneself undue entitlement to doubt expert and other testimony, would be virtuous. Both skills and virtues are crucial to the proper functioning of the testimonial credulity faculty, for the adult acquisition of important kinds of knowledge." *Ibid.*, 108.

relationship with ethical demands, he is making a similar claim. The presumption of trust is thus only virtuous within the bounds of the authority for the given relationship and in understanding the point, i.e. *telos*, of a conversation.¹⁰⁵² His approach provides two limits, the practical domain which all testimony occurs in and the *telos* of the conversation since "there are a multitude of potential explanations of any given bit of testimony, where each explanation starts from the interest the speaker has in the conversation."¹⁰⁵³ Even though "an audience's basic reason for entering into a testimonial exchange is to find things out," a speaker's reason may not align with the audience's.¹⁰⁵⁴ As Faulkner says,

... from the multitude of potential explanations of any given bit of testimony, there is no reason to single out 'satisfying the audience's epistemic interest' as the default explanation. And this is to say that a presumption of trustworthiness cannot be established as the epistemic default, because testimony does not have the proper function of servicing an audience's epistemic interests.¹⁰⁵⁵

It follows from this that:

...what an audience needs, in every case, in order to epistemically rationalize testimonial uptake is some judgement that this explanation applies, that the speaker's purpose in communicating is indeed informative, and that the speaker is thereby trustworthy. More generally, what is thereby needed is some particular reason for thinking that a given bit of testimony is true.¹⁰⁵⁶

Faulkner's answer to when is it reasonable to believe that a speaker intends to be informative is that "trust, morally understood, is central to the epistemology of testimony in that it can be our 'reason' for testimonial uptake."¹⁰⁵⁷ Linda Zagzebski's account of authoritative testimony fits here nicely as well. A listener's reason for accepting

¹⁰⁵² Faulkner, "A Virtue Theory of Testimony," 194–95, 202–7. Cf. Miranda Fricker, "Group Testimony? The Making of A Collective Good Informant," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* LXXXIV, no. 2 (2012): 249–76.

¹⁰⁵³ *Ibid.*, 202.

¹⁰⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 203.

¹⁰⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 204.

authoritative testimony must be a deliberative reason, and therefore *a reason* as opposed to evidence.¹⁰⁵⁸ Thus, the effect of authoritative testimony mirrors that of authoritative belief:

Justification Thesis 1 for the Authority of Testimony (JAT 1) - The authority of a person's testimony for me is justified by my conscientious judgment that I am more likely to satisfy my desire to get true beliefs and avoid false beliefs if I believe what the authority tells me than if I try to figure out what to believe myself.¹⁰⁵⁹

You should accept authoritative testimony granted your goal is knowledge and, in this situation, your epistemic position is inferior to that of the expert. In this regard, testimony from an epistemic authority is akin to a command from a practical authority, where adopting a belief preemptively is parallel to obeying a command to believe. However, while accepting the authority of another can be reconciled without violating one's own autonomy, the question remains of whether deferring to an authority is truly an act of autonomy since such an act seems to be non-autonomous by definition.

"How can adherence to a *hetero*-regulator be *autonomy*?" is how Roberts and Wood phrase the same question raised by Zagzebski concerning not only when it is virtuous to allow an authority's reasoning to preemptively replace one's own, but also how such an act can still be called autonomous. It could be said that if one autonomously chooses to serve another, then in a way they are following of reasons they themselves did not produce is still autonomous. However, such an act is indirect and seems to mask a lack of understanding pertaining to an authority's limitations. Instead, as we saw in Chapter 1

¹⁰⁵⁸ Zag 131-132

¹⁰⁵⁹ As with the justification for Authority of Belief, Zagzebski offers a second thesis from autonomy: "**Justification Thesis 2 for the Authority of Testimony (JAT 2)** - The authority of another person's testimony for me is justified by my conscientious judgment that if I believe what the authority tells me, the result will survive my conscientious self-reflection better than if I try to figure out what to believe myself." Zag 133

on communal epistemic authority, adherence to the reasons of another can truly said to be autonomous when a community and its authorities are appropriated by the agent, that is made a part of the self. For an act of accepting the reason of another can still be autonomous as when Zagzebski states that "I" becomes "we" which follows Roberts and Wood claim that: "the hetero-regulator must be assimilated or appropriated to some extent by the epistemic agent; it must become part of the *autos* (self) of the agent."¹⁰⁶⁰ They identify three modes or features of how such an appropriation can occur: first by *understanding* in terms of the communal authority such that an agent is more autonomous the more they know why a communal authority is authoritative "or about how the teachings work and are good"; second, by habitually or spontaneously using the thought of the authority such that its thought becomes the agent's thought without having to be recalled; and third, by willfully incorporating or affiliating with the authority, such that "to think autonomously in terms of a hetero-regulator is to love in terms of the hetero-regulator, to care, to be concerned, to be emotionally involved in those terms; it is to be intrinsically motivated to think in those terms."¹⁰⁶¹ Colloquially the three stages might be summarized as being able to 1) talk the talk, 2) walk the walk, and 3) willfully owning both.¹⁰⁶² In short, as social creatures, we become who we trust. This also emphasizes why thinkers like al-Ghazālī gave greater weight to testimony from members of his trusted community, other Muslims. Thus, we can easily conceive a situation in which two students in a religion course, one a faithful Christian and the other faithful Muslim, will have different epistemic experiences

¹⁰⁶⁰ Zagzebski, *Epistemic Authority*, 155; Roberts and Wood, *Intellectual Virtues*, 278.

¹⁰⁶¹ Roberts and Wood, *Intellectual Virtues*, 278–79.

¹⁰⁶² I wish to stress importance of the individual's autonomy in assimilating or appropriating the hetero-regulator. If the individual does not autonomously choose this line of thought, then the situation quickly devolves into imperialism or colonialism.

based on whether the teacher is a member of their community. If the teacher is openly Catholic (e.g., wears a priestly collar or a cross), then the level of intellectual autonomy and trust required to virtuously accept *a telling* such as "human purpose is found in seeing God" will differ for the students (the reverse would be true if the teacher were openly Muslim). Insofar as the Christian student recognizes the teacher as sharing in their community, accepting the *telling* would be virtuous based on the trust established by their understanding of the teacher and their relationship to a shared "we." For the Muslim student, however, accepting the same *telling* outright would amount to a blind trust in the authority of the teacher and be vicious without the established trust relationship of a shared community. Of course, an act of intellectual autonomy to trust an authority is only as virtuous and likely to obtain truth as the authority in question is virtuous or knowledgeable. As many proverbs will attest, our community itself does not define the good and the true.¹⁰⁶³ For the intellectual aspect of a virtue cannot be wholly divorced from the non-cognitive and moral aspects which are determined by a non-social metaphysical reality.

The final result is that the virtuous mean for the act of one's intellectual autonomy giving rise to testimonial knowledge is best accommodated by Theory 4 (SR & TA). Testimony as *a telling* serves as *a reason* to believe via a unique transmission phenomenon requiring trust dependent on a virtue-theoretic framework to account for its epistemic and non-epistemic properties but is not an autonomous source of knowledge. This also fits John

¹⁰⁶³ Cf. Psalm 1:1-2, "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night."; 1 Corinthians 15:33, "Do not be deceived: 'Bad company ruins good morals.'" (RSV); Surat 'Al Furqaan 25:27-29 "And (Be mindful of) the Day the wrongdoer will bite his hands saying, 'Would that I had taken a path along with the Messenger (*Salallahu Aleyhi Wasallam*)! Woe to me! Would that I had not taken so-and-so for my friend! Indeed, he led me astray from the advice (the Qur'an) after it had come to me.' And Satan is man's betrayer." Yusuf-Ali, *The Holy Qur'an*, 241.

McDowell's concept of "knowledge as standing in the space of reasons." Both John Lamont and Mats Wahlberg's account of divine testimony adopt McDowell's "anti-reductionist" view of testimonial knowledge, which is unique since McDowell holds that listeners cannot automatically trust *a telling*. Instead, listeners must be "doxastically responsible", the virtuous mean of intellectual autonomy, with *any* source of knowledge, including testimony:¹⁰⁶⁴

Acquiring knowledge by testimony is not a mindless reception of something which has nothing to do with rationality; it yields a standing in the space of reasons. We can protect that idea by insisting that the knowledge is available to be picked up only by someone whose taking the speaker's word for it is not doxastically irresponsible. This works in much the same way as the parallel insistence in the case of retained knowledge and perception. A person sufficiently responsible to count as having achieved epistemic standing from someone else's words needs to be aware of how knowledge can be had by others, and rationally responsive to considerations whose relevance that awareness embodies. That requires his forming beliefs on the say-so of others to be rationally shaped by an understanding of, among other things, the risks one subjects oneself to in accepting what people say.¹⁰⁶⁵

This anti-reductionism view fits with TA, not SA since doxastic responsibility is a necessary condition for acquiring knowledge from testimony. There is no entitlement to trust or to testimonial knowledge. A mindless acceptance of *a telling* (even if true) would not qualify as testimonial knowledge—the vice of insufficiency—since it occurs outside the space of reasons as doxastically irresponsible. Instead, McDowell's analysis requires "favors from the world" (and thus not an overly autonomous interiorized self typically found in Theory 1, SR&TR, approaches) and thus how the listener is related to the world

¹⁰⁶⁴ Cf. Lamont, *Divine Faith*, 144–45; Wahlberg, *Revelation as Testimony*, 132–40.

¹⁰⁶⁵ I am citing from John McDowell, "Knowledge by Hearsay," in *Meaning, Knowledge, and Reality* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1998), 434–35., but earlier readers such as Lamont, would have read the earlier versions, cf. McDowell, "Knowledge by Hearsay," 1994, 210–11.

which deeply connects human knowledge to the world and reality (thus avoiding social constructivism). The result according to Mats Wahlberg is:

Even if we act responsibly when believing what somebody tells us, this does not mean that our belief is justified. Doxastic responsibility and justification (rational entitlement) are, according to McDowell's conception, two different things. Whether one's testimonial belief that *p* is justified depends on whether the testimony that the belief is based on actually makes knowledge that *p* available, that is, on whether one's informant knows that *p* and expresses this knowledge in words. One's reason/justification for believing that *p* is, in the beneficial case when one's informant is reliable, that one has learned from so-and-so that *p*. This testimonial reason is excellent, since it constitutes a factive standing in the space of reasons, like seeing that *p* or remembering that *p*. Having this kind of justification entails that *p* is true.¹⁰⁶⁶

How finely tuned *a reason* needs to be in order to qualify as a virtuous belief will vary between given testimonial accounts. Lamont sets a higher bar for *a reason* to believe testimony (presumably following the Medieval approach) since *credere deo* (to believe God) requires the listener to recognize the identity of the speaker. Wahlberg sets a lower bar arguing that it is not doxastically irresponsible to believe divine testimony through human spokespersons (assuming the necessary character for human speakers) and later recognizing that God was the speaker.¹⁰⁶⁷ However, Wahlberg admits that this does not qualify as *credere deo* until the listener learns God is the true speaker.¹⁰⁶⁸

The inclusion of TA in Theory 4 (SR & TA) leaves this virtue theory open to Jennifer Lackey's counterexamples of knowledge generation which have been shown to break weak and moderate transmission theories which require that either the speaker or someone in the testimonial chain know that *p*. However, Stephen Wright has proposed

¹⁰⁶⁶ Wahlberg, *Revelation as Testimony*, 140–41.

¹⁰⁶⁷ This echoes Cross's distinction between Thomas and Ockham. Cf. Cross, "Testimony, Error, and Reasonable Belief in Medieval Religious Epistemology."

¹⁰⁶⁸ Wahlberg, *Revelation as Testimony*, 225–26.

(rightly I believe) a strong form of transmission which avoids these objections even when the speaker does not believe and thereby does not know that p (only if someone has epistemic grounds for p) by transmitting epistemic grounds as opposed to knowledge.¹⁰⁶⁹

My aim has not been to enter into the transmission debate, but to test the flexibility of the proposed framework. The VE account of testimony presented for the virtue of intellectual autonomy does so by showing how the vice of insufficiency is reflected in Theory 2 (SA & TR) and Theory 3 (SA & TA), the vice of excess in Theory 1 (SR & TR), and the virtuous mean in Theory 4 (SR & TA).

6.5 Conclusion

The testimonial theories of Saadya Gaon, al-Ghazālī, and Thomas Aquinas reveal that the contemporary definition of testimony and the corresponding frameworks are not transhistorical since testimony is presumed to be evidence that is or requires justification. I argued that an epistemological concept that is incongruent with entire traditions of historical thought reveals an incomplete theory that needs to be redressed. I thus argued that testimony is better defined as *a telling* which serves not as evidence but as a reason to believe. This redefinition makes contemporary evidential approaches more difficult, since testimony must be understood as the fact that *a telling* occurred, but does not exclude them. In fact, the proposed expansion of the concept of testimony will benefit contemporary positions given justificatory evidence's inability to assess the complexities of the human knowledge experience which encompasses both a) publicly available "epistemic" facts, experiences, and/or propositions that logically (or probably) connect reality to truth, and b)

¹⁰⁶⁹ "A speaker's testimony that p can make epistemic grounds for p available to transmit to a listener only if someone has epistemic grounds for p ." Thus Wright's strong case for transmission avoids Lackey's Creationist teacher example. Wright, *Knowledge Transmission*, 4, 14.

private "non-epistemic" experiences, intuitions, emotions, self-trust, and/or trust in others that connect a personal subject to truth. I then proposed a rethinking of the traditional reductionist and antireductionist frameworks using John Greco's distinction between source and transmission. To test the explanatory power (and thus congruency with historical positions) of my proposed definition and framework, I offered a virtue-theoretic approach to testimony based on the intellectual aspect of the virtue of autonomy in an inverse relationship to the concept of trust. The model is capable of accounting for the unvirtuous (deficient or excessive) use of one's intellectual autonomy revealing a virtuous mean of trusting verified authorities determined by the situation.

Given that a lack of a common concept of testimony can only further segregate historical and contemporary scholars, it is my hope that a transhistorical approach will open new avenues for testimonial study and provide a bridge between the two groups. For applying social epistemology's concepts to history allows us to read the medieval tradition in a new light. Likewise, contemporary philosophers can connect theories to their ideological predecessors and provide relevant examples and historical arguments and potentially learn from pre-Renaissance thinkers who were particularly good at not only identifying their communal epistemic authorities, but also maintaining rigorous methods to assess those authorities in order to hold them accountable for the truth value of their claims.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

7.1 Afterward: Project Summary and case study

The answer to the original question of what authority should you trust, or, more specifically, *whom* or *what* should you trust, emerges as sources which both are more likely to have the truth (than yourself) and are steadfast in communicating that truth. This is hardly radical. In fact, this is how most of our knowledge has proceeded for centuries; it comes from trusting a speaker in the form of testimony—whether scholars reading experts, students listening to teachers, children obeying their parents, or pedestrians inquiring of strangers—so that the knowledge transmitted is rarely personally verified. This is the unremarkable reality that we rely on experts who pass knowledge from one generation to the next. However, since knowledge is communal and relies on trust, how do these impact Truth and knowledge?

The preceding analysis of the testimonial theories of Saadya Gaon of Judaism (882-942AD), al-Ghazālī of Islam (1058-1111AD), and Thomas Aquinas of Christianity (1225-1274AD) has confirmed that trust is essential to knowledge. The Medieval world predominantly asks two questions regarding testimony: 1) Is the speaker a responsible knower of *p* (do we know that they are in a position to know and not err)?; and 2) Is the speaker a responsible reporter of *p* (do we know they are not lying and that their cognitive faculties are not impaired)? The ideal answers are: there is no way for the speaker to be wrong about *p*; and it is impossible for the speaker to either lie or report inaccurately. The ideal speaker is unsurprisingly God. The complexities of individual medieval accounts arise from navigating the multiplicity of non-ideal answers presented by non-divine speakers. Since trust is inherently social, however, the particulars of *whom*, *what*, and even

how we trust has an outsized impact on whether what we believe, rightly or wrongly, counts as true. Recognition of this fact indicates that epistemology, even social epistemology, needs to occur in dialogue with other branches of philosophy and science. In this conclusion, I will reflect on what this project has accomplished and then treat it as a case study to address the dark side of trust's role in knowledge for a post-2020 world alongside the opportunities this presents. I will conclude by arguing that issues in contemporary epistemology parallel those of G.E.M. Anscombe's modern moral philosophy and that moving forward we should seriously heed her call to first establish a philosophy of psychology, namely a philosophy of human nature.

7.1.1 Project Summary

The first chapter reiterated the importance of testimonial knowledge and the social nature of knowledge after the so-called "social turn" in the late 20th century which called the individualistic rule-based epistemic approaches of modernism into question. Recognizing the social nature of knowledge introduces the bootstrapping problem of knowledge where a novice's reliance on, or trust in, epistemic authorities is inescapably, or necessarily, blind. I analyzed the notion of authority to reveal a difference between practical authority (which demands obedience) and epistemic authority (which demands assent/belief) to demarcate their respective (albeit not mutually exclusive) arenas. I then presented three historical cognitive approaches to escape the bootstrapping problem. First, closed-rationalism that relies on individualistic self-trust in limiting personal knowledge to what one can personally verify in accordance with a rational epistemic rule. Second, rational-fideism that blindly trusts claims until contradictory facts surface. Third, open-rationalism which relies on virtuous-trust to remain receptive to knowledge from any virtuous epistemic authority.

I maintained that Saadya Gaon, al-Ghazālī, and Thomas Aquinas, largely due to their faith commitments to revelation as divine speech, fall in this last category.

In chapter two, I gave a brief history of social epistemology's ascendancy since the 1960s with a focus on testimony proper. I summarized the two major contemporary debates on testimony. Regarding the first on whether testimony is a proper source of knowledge, I discussed the primary transmission and generation views of testimony in which testimony either maintains a special epistemological role separate from generating knowledge or can serve as a means of producing knowledge in listeners. These positions were shown to largely line up with three positions of the second: testimonial justification. Reductionism (including global vs. local reductionism) maintains that testimony itself cannot provide justification since it reduces to other sources (e.g., perception or induction); anti-reductionism maintains that testimony does justify since it is a justified form of social evidence; and the Interpersonal View of Testimony (or Assurance View) offers a non-evidentialist approach to testimony based on the assurance of, or invitation to trust by, the speaker. Since testimonial knowledge long preceded the rise of social epistemology, I then summarized accounts of medieval testimonial theories (capped at 2019) related to Saadya, al-Ghazālī, Thomas, and their predominant intellectual interlocutors. Given the importance of the IVT and its reliance on a virtue-theoretic framework, I also briefly discussed virtue epistemology's contributions to testimony and introduce the key ideas of virtue reliabilism vs. virtue responsibilism. I concluded this chapter by highlighting the inadequacies of the current testimonial frameworks and draw on John Greco's call to "rethink" the categories of testimony by offering a new schema combining reductionist and anti-reductionist

positions on testimony as source or transmission to produce four conceivable permutations with which to better assess the historical positions of Medieval thinkers.

In chapter three, I gave the first account of Saadya Gaon's theory of testimony which details the process of both divine and human testimony, the seamless transition from divine to human testimony, and the virtue-based account underlying each. After an overview of the structures of practical and epistemic authority prevalent in the Jewish community and Saadya's position as a Gaon, I reviewed Saadya's epistemology through four roots of knowledge divided into the Mu'tazilite division between necessary and acquired knowledge. I then explicated Saadya's account of human testimony which requires trusting speakers as epistemic and moral exemplars, namely those who are knowledgeable and speak truthfully. Since God, the All-Wise (Al-Ḥakīm), is the perfect possessor of wisdom and goodness, Saadya's testimonial theory readily applies save for God's incorporeal and simple nature.¹⁰⁷⁰ I thus reviewed Saadya's account of the "second air" and "Light of Glory" as the metaphysical medium by which God transmits and verifies his word to prophets. In the final analysis, I argue that Saadya invokes what is now considered anti-reductionist as well as reductionist concepts of testimony which are resolved in recognizing that seeking verification, say via a miracle, attests not to the accuracy of the given proposition, but to the identity and thus trustworthiness of the speaker. Thus, Saadya's theory of testimony is the same for both human and divine testimony which are best accounted for through a virtue-theoretic framework.

¹⁰⁷⁰ (الحكيم) One of the names of God in Islam.

In chapter four, I provided the first testimonial assessment for al-Ghazālī and showed that his theory of testimony remains the same for both divine and human speakers given its link to virtue and particularly the notion of trustworthiness. I outlined the overlapping nature of political and epistemic authority in Islam and the resulting hierarchies of knowledge for saints, scholars, and the masses. I show that al-Ghazālī draws on Islamic jurisprudence, the *Mutakallimūn*, and Avicenna in likewise following the Mu'tazilite division of necessary and acquired knowledge. Knowledge is inherently tied to personal virtue as shown through the polishing of one's heart or inner mirror which reflects reality. I show that al-Ghazālī adopts the *āḥād* (unitary) and *mutawātir* (recurring) reports of Islamic jurisprudence based on the trustworthiness of speakers. However, he redefines the normal categories by classifying knowledge from *tawātur* as "primary", i.e., both necessary and reflective, thereby providing certain knowledge given its reliance on a hidden syllogism. I then explained his theory of divine testimony via inspiration and prophecy in which divine knowledge shines into a listener's heart through a personal experience through intermediaries like the Preserved Tablet. Al-Ghazālī, I argue, accounts for the disparity between the cognitive states achieved by unreliable human testimony and certain divine testimony through trusting reliable speakers as made evident by their character. I thereby claim al-Ghazālī's maintained one theory of testimony for both human and divine testimony which is best accounted for via virtue theory.

In chapter five, I reevaluate Thomas's theory of testimony arguing that Thomas held to a virtue theoretic account of testimony vs. an evidentialist account which applies to his approach to both human and divine testimony. After providing an overview of Thomas's conception of authority and epistemology, I argue that testimony is linked to the concept

of *fides* both as trust and as infused faith. Thomas distinguishes between *fides* in a broad and narrow sense which is applicable to both human and divine speakers as believing based on an inference from signs or believing the speaker. While Thomas similarly invokes inductive knowledge from testimonial claims, I show that the character or *dignitas* of the speaker always plays a role in the verification of testimony as seen with the swearing of oaths. I explain Thomas's account of divine testimony for both scripture and personal faith as linked to instrumental causality in which God as the principal agent moves the will of humans to receive and transmit knowledge. Since believing God (*credere deo*) requires recognizing who the speaker is, I show that the speaker's identify and character performs the primary epistemic work. I conclude that Thomas has one unified theory of testimony for both human and divine testimony that is based on the employment of a listener's virtues to verify the speaker's possession of virtues and thus testimony is best accounted for under a virtue theoretic framework.

In chapter six, I argued that applying the contemporary framework of testimony from social epistemology to pre-enlightenment thinkers will create an anachronistic distortion of their testimonial theories. This is due to the current understanding of testimony as a kind of evidence which is incompatible with the historical differentiation between evident, evidentness, and evidence. Thus, I propose a transhistorical theory of testimony. First, I recast "a testimony" as *a telling* that provides *a reason* to believe without constituting evidence following William Alston's nondoxastic vs. doxastic grounds and Linda Zagzebski's deliberative and theoretical reasons. Second, I redefined the testimonial framework along John Greco's "rethinking" which combines the positions of reductionism and anti-reductionism with the notions of testimony as generative source vs. transmission.

I then test the proposed framework with a virtue-theoretic testimonial theory that would fit historical accounts by basing testimony not on trust *per se*, but the intellectual virtue of autonomy. I argue the proposed framework permits enough flexibility without losing explanatory power to even account for insufficient autonomy (blind-trust), excessive autonomy (self-trust), and the mean of virtuous trust.

7.1.2 This Project as Case Study

I did not set out to challenge or reframe contemporary theories of testimony. I originally only wanted to see whether Thomas Aquinas modified or updated his theory of testimony given his reliance on thinkers in the lands of Islam (requiring the not-yet-categorized testimonial theories of Jewish and Islamic minded thinkers). How this project evolved from that seminal idea is itself a case study on how communal epistemic authority both promotes and colors knowledge acquisition and transmission. For before the project even began, I identified myself as a member of both a broad community (academic) and particular subcommunities (philosophy, history of, Abrahamic, etc.) with expected standards on knowledge distribution and acceptance. I identified a subsection of experts recognized as knowledgeable in testimony (the literature of social epistemology) and, having been trained by the community and its system/framework to do so, trusted those epistemic authorities. I thus believed that testimonial theories of justification (i.e., reductionism, anti-reductionism, and assurance) were definitive. At this point, I experienced the subconscious motivation to "take a side", to look at the facts from the perspective of my tribe, or to defend one of my affiliated subcommunities. I learned from the experts that David Hume, largely inspired by his infamous treatise against miracles, fathered contemporary reductionism. Since Hume, and his argument(s) against miracles, creates cognitive dissonance for my

Abrahamic identity, I humbly confess my shame in then suggesting that since Abrahamic thinkers like Saadya, al-Ghazālī, and Thomas defend miracles that they must be anti-reductionists and if I catalogued their theories, I might discover lost arguments or evidence to tip the scale against reductionism in the contemporary debate. Obviously, this is a poor research method, and, thanks to wise advisors, I repented. Once I turned from trying to mine Medieval literature to solve a contemporary problem to letting the Medieval authors speak for their own theories of testimony, I discovered that my chosen thinkers were not anti-reductionists. In fact, I have shown all three maintained "source reductionism" as a part of their testimonial theory. I found my preconceived notions did not fit the "facts." Furthermore, I found not only did they not fit my assessment, neither did they fit Hume's assessment. None of them fit into the three predefined categories of testimony laid out by my community's epistemic experts. This led me to reassess and finally discover the importance of trust and its more nebulous epistemic qualities which led to a deeper inquiry into authority, its types, and its role in knowledge production and transmission.

As I pause to reflect, it is concerning to think what this project would have become if I had insisted on not updating my beliefs by blindly trusting the experts. What if I had worked to fit these findings to support my affiliations supporting my perceived self-identity? Or worse, what if, as a product of my communal training, I was unable to see these findings for what they were? I would have distorted the Truth and passed it on as knowledge. It should be obvious that my direct experience of my own trust in experts and the hidden bent to further or protect my existing identity-forming communities is not unique. Most of our knowledge relies on our communal ties such that they shape how we

perceive the world. If trust is inherently social and much of knowledge relies on trust, what are we to make of Truth?

7.2 Facing New Times

Shadows loom behind any approach to knowledge which relies on trusting communal authorities. In our "Post-Truth" world of science denial, "alternative facts", and fake news, the systems in which knowledge transmission is limited, disrupted, or hijacked have borne fruit in everyday life and can no longer be ignored.¹⁰⁷¹ The persisting dilemma stems from the bootstrapping problem introduced in chapter 1 in which we learn what an epistemic authority is from a communally accepted epistemic authority. Thus, analogous to the challenge of moral conventionalism in ethics, if epistemic authority is inescapably circular, then the objectivity of knowledge is called into question. In this way, knowledge acquisition is analogous to Immanuel Kant's approach to the noumenal; just as the Kantian individual has no access to things-in-themselves save through the shaping effect of the mind's transcendentals, people have no access to knowledge except through the cognitive division of labor made possible via communal epistemic authorities which inevitably has a shaping effect.¹⁰⁷² Social epistemology has allowed us to appreciate that acquiring knowledge occurs within a community and more specifically, a community we identify with—our tribe.

The concepts of epistemic and practical authority outlined in chapter 1 exist within overlapping and inhering spheres of influence and expertise. Our community, or tribe, can

¹⁰⁷¹ Katherine Furman argues that science must be understood more broadly than just an epistemic enterprise and thus include communities' trust in science. Cf. Katherine Furman, "Emotions and Distrust in Science," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 28, no. 5 (October 19, 2020): 713–30.

¹⁰⁷² Personal experience is the best chance for an exception; however, this will be limited insofar as our experiences are still colored by the invocation of concepts acquired from communal epistemic authorities.

be said to know p when one of its epistemic authorities generates or acquires p and the community (virtuously or viciously) trusts that expert. Philip Kitcher gives a clear model on how generations transmit and receive knowledge in *The Advancement of Science* (2004).¹⁰⁷³ He analyzes transmission through a framework which introduces the key notion of a community's "consensus practice" and how that consensus is composed by showing 1) what knowledge a community holds, 2) who provides that knowledge, 3) why people assent to it, and 4) how 1-3 are inexorably interrelated.¹⁰⁷⁴

The *consensus practice* of a community at a given time is thus represented by (i) the *core consensus*, the elements of individual practice common to the individual practices of all members of the community, (ii) the *acknowledgments of authority* (themselves parts of individual practice) shared by all members of the community (including, perhaps, criteria for granting deferred authority); (iii) an organization of the community into subcommunities, resulting from (ii), with particular subcommunities recognized as responsible for and authoritative over particular types of issues, (iv) a *virtual consensus*, generated from (i) by the incorporation of parts of the consensus practice of subcommunities in accordance with the relations delineated in (ii) and (iii).¹⁰⁷⁵

Using this framework, the history of epistemology (in an idealized sense) can be understood as a periodized example of Developmentalism. The history of knowledge is divisible into periods each beginning with a community of people consisting of "veterans" and "apprentices" in which the apprentices will become the veterans of the subsequent period through time spent under previous veterans' tutelage, peer discussions, and personal studies, all of which modifies their knowledge. At the beginning of each period, subcommunities of veterans and apprentices exist that other members of the total community will perceive as authoritative on certain topics and thus readily embrace their

¹⁰⁷³ Kitcher, *The Advancement of Science*.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Kitcher specifically has a scientific community in view, but *a fortiori* the model is applicable to all communities.

¹⁰⁷⁵ Kitcher, 88.

knowledge claims. The intersection of all the idiosyncratic views from the authoritative subcommunities (including much of which was bequeathed to them) creates the "consensus practice" or "what all members of a community share." The notion of "virtual consensus" emerges from this core consensus to represent what the community believes by deferring authority to subcommunities of experts on specific questions. This certainly does not imply uniformity or total agreement within the community (even within subcommunities), but a consensus will derive from a complex web based on individual credibility resulting from initial pedigree in light of studies under certain veterans, personal contributions, and the handling of consensus views endorsed by the community as the period progresses and repeats itself with new apprentices.¹⁰⁷⁶ In short, the consensus practice of a given community looks at the summation of shared particular views within self-vetting knowledge subcommunities that the rest of the community trusts as epistemic authorities. As complex and as accurate as this account is, it depicts an ideal and an ideal within one community, and specifically a knowledge-oriented community (the scientific community). Reality is more complex with not only competing communities, but communities whose *telos* is not knowledge, and members inhabit multiple communities simultaneously with varying degrees of personal identification (a notion we will return to shortly).

Humans are social creatures who are biologically wired to trust our community or tribe for survival, but the size and complexity of contemporary communities frequently exceed what we are wired for. In fact, in many ways we "live and die through our

¹⁰⁷⁶ Stephen John affirms that this is exactly what to expect from scientific communities as shown in contemporary climate science. John argues this is a given, which warrants his consequentialist argument reminiscent of Plato's "noble lie" that that reality of consensus should be obscured from non-experts who will misunderstand or misrepresent the diversity within a scientific consensus. John, "Epistemic Trust and the Ethics of Science Communication."

allegiance" since, as Ezra Klein points out in *Why We're Polarized* (2020), that this used to literally be the case:

Human beings evolved to exist in groups. To be part of a group, and to see that group thrive, meant survival. To be exiled from a group, or to see your group crushed by its enemies, could mean death. Is it really so strange that we evolved to feel the life-and-death stakes of group belonging and status?¹⁰⁷⁷

Klein goes on to say we still see the physical manifestations of this today in the emergent science of loneliness.¹⁰⁷⁸ Malcom Gladwell came to similar conclusions in *Talking to Strangers* (2019) where he analyzes recent social failures that allowed for tragedies like Penn State's 2011 and the US Olympic gymnastics team's 2016 sexual abuse scandals and racial bias in police violence to reveal three epistemological assumptions built for smaller tight-knit communities but fail us in today's world.¹⁰⁷⁹ Our conundrum, per Malcolm Gladwell, is:

We have no choice but to talk to strangers, especially in our modern borderless world. We aren't living in villages anymore. Police officers have to stop people they don't know. Intelligence officers have to deal with deception and uncertainty. Young people want to go to parties explicitly to meet strangers: that's part of the thrill of romantic discovery. Yet at this most necessary of tasks we are inept. We think we can transform the stranger, without cost or sacrifice, into the familiar and the known, and we can't.¹⁰⁸⁰

These assessments fit Sebastian Junger's assessment in *Tribe* (2016) that while our modern world lessens our dependence on tribe for physical needs, it has made tribe more elusive

¹⁰⁷⁷ Ezra Klein, *Why We're Polarized* (New York: Avid Reader Press, 2020), 58.

¹⁰⁷⁸ "We tend to dismiss the agony of social isolation or stigma as merely psychological. It isn't. To feel abandoned by community, to fear the opprobrium of others, triggers a physical assault on the body." Ibid.

¹⁰⁷⁹ The three assumptions are: people speak truthfully unless proven otherwise; people's facial expressions transparently reveal their inner thoughts and emotions; and individual behavior is driven by internal as opposed to external factors. However, evidence shows that we are notoriously bad at detecting lies; people's facial expressions are not transparent (especially not cross-culturally), and behaviors are frequently "coupled" to external factors such as time, place, and who else is present.

¹⁰⁸⁰ Malcolm Gladwell, *Talking to Strangers: What We Should Know about the People We Don't Know*, 2019, 342.

and harder to be a part of. We fear losing it. We will do anything to keep it. Worse, hardship or conflict foster the sense of tribal loyalty and belonging people crave, sometimes providing an answer to the eternal quest for meaning.¹⁰⁸¹ In sum, people can face real repercussions if they put truth before tribe, and real benefits in bending truth at the altar of tribe.

The result is that perception of Truth depends on tribe for its acquisition and distribution while simultaneously our tribe depends on Truth not only to thrive, but literally to survive. The relationship between tribe and Truth is thus of paramount importance, especially since history reveals not only how the tribe's role in Truth has been overlooked, but also, whether knowingly or unknowingly, how tribe has been elevated above Truth. Given our recent recognition (i.e. since the 1960s & 70s) and the contemporary exacerbation of this fact, I will look at three distortions to the relationship between tribe and Truth: first, tribe chooses truth, the reality of human nature in which identity related biases aim to promote or defend our tribe; second, tribe controls truth, the fact that political authority will manipulate and distort epistemic authority for its own advantage; and third, tribe constructs truth, which explains that all knowledge is a social construction such that there is no objective truth and all is subjective.

7.2.1 Tribe chooses Truth

While we have dubbed our current era the "information age," the reality is we have deceived ourselves into believing that we value Truth over tribe. This self-deception likely results from the way we acquire most of our knowledge, namely through our tribe. This tracks the pressing Socratic question that frames Michael Lynch's *Know-it-all-society*

¹⁰⁸¹ Sebastian Junger, *Tribe: On Homecoming and Belonging* (London: Fourth Estate, 2016).

(2019), "how ought we to believe?" which reveals that "how we go about believing has a direct effect on what we believe."¹⁰⁸² Everyone is part of a tribe and tribes shape our knowledge, such that, as Linda Zagzebski illustrates in *Epistemic Authority* (2016), community becomes "like an extended self."¹⁰⁸³ The result is we are epistemically predisposed to trust information within the tribe by default (or at least engage in less vetting) and be skeptical of information from without.¹⁰⁸⁴ The result: we are socially/evolutionarily programmed away from open-mindedness. This is the basis for so-called bubbles and "echo chambers" of information.¹⁰⁸⁵ In choosing information an source(s), the tribe effectively chooses (and then reinforces) what is considered truth.

The ready access to facts in our "information age" has actually made our task of identifying true knowledge tougher: media outlets now sort themselves by political ideology (discussed in the next section) and a quick internet search not only falsely inflates our knowledge (even on yet to be searched for subjects), but also "gives us just the information we want."¹⁰⁸⁶ To state the conclusion in advance, "the internet", according to Lynch, "becomes one big reinforcement mechanism, obtaining for each one of us the information that we are already biased to believe, and encouraging us to regard those in other bubbles as misinformed miscreants."¹⁰⁸⁷ Worse, social media, a platform that

¹⁰⁸² Michael P Lynch, *Know-It-All Society: Truth and Arrogance in Political Culture*, 2019, 3.

¹⁰⁸³ Zagzebski, *Epistemic Authority*, 153.

¹⁰⁸⁴ Greco, "What Is Transmission*?"; Greco, "Transmitting Faith (And Garbage)."

¹⁰⁸⁵ Emily Sullivan and her coauthors constructed a mathematical model for representing epistemic vulnerability in social networks that lead to structural distortions in the ability to learn from filter bubbles, echo chambers and group polarization. Emily Sullivan et al., "Vulnerability in Social Epistemic Networks," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 28, no. 5 (October 19, 2020): 731–53.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Matthew Fisher's study in experimental psychology shows that people report knowing more than they do simply by performing an internet search. Cf. "Fisher M, Goddu MK, and Keil FC, "Searching for Explanations: How the Internet Inflates Estimates of Internal Knowledge.," *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General* 144, no. 3 (2015): 674–87; Lynch, *Know-It-All Society*, 28–29.

¹⁰⁸⁷ Lynch, *Know-It-All Society*, 30.

customizes user experience using algorithms to track and "to predict what sort of information you – and crucially, those similar to you – will find interesting, what posts you will like, and what links you will click",¹⁰⁸⁸ has become a major source of news with Pew Research Center reporting in 2019 that 55% of U.S. adults get their news from social media either "often" or "sometimes" (up 8% from 2018) with "often" comprising 28% (up from 20% in 2018).¹⁰⁸⁹ In his aptly titled chapter "The Outrage Factory," Lynch asserts that people are confused about what they are really doing with their social media posts ("shares"); while "shares typically *seem* to us like assertions and/or endorsements of assertions," research reveals that 60% of people who share articles have not read them.¹⁰⁹⁰ In reality, people share content that riles them, and their fellow tribe members, up. Whether knowingly or unknowingly, people conflate the illocutionary force of their locutions:

Put together, these points—what we are doing with our shares and what we are not doing—make it difficult to believe that the *primary function* of our communicative acts of sharing is really either assertion or endorsement, even though that's what we typically think we are doing... We think we are sharing news stories in order to transfer knowledge, but much of the time we aren't really trying to do that at all—whatever we may consciously think. If we were, we would presumably have read the piece that we're sharing. But most of us don't.¹⁰⁹¹

What social media posts and shares really appear to be doing is building communal trust through emotional bonding. Thus, the reason people share them is "because expressions of tribal emotional attitudes like outrage are rewarded by the amount of shares and likes they

¹⁰⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 29.

¹⁰⁸⁹ In 2020, Facebook introduced a news section to its feeds which will only cause these numbers to increase. Peter Suci, "More Americans Are Getting Their News From Social Media," *Forbes*, October 11, 2019, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/petersuciu/2019/10/11/more-americans-are-getting-their-news-from-social-media/>; Elisa Shearer, "Social Media Outpaces Print Newspapers in the U.S. as a News Source," *Pew Research Center* (blog), December 10, 2018, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/12/10/social-media-outpaces-print-newspapers-in-the-u-s-as-a-news-source/>.

¹⁰⁹⁰ Lynch, *Know-It-All Society*, 41.

¹⁰⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 42–43.

elicit."¹⁰⁹² People thus form beliefs (and the tribe reinforces its beliefs) through the building of trust in sharing attitudes. The more you learn to trust your tribe, the more you believe that the tribe is right and opposing tribes are wrong. In this way, Lynch likens social media to a "boot camp for our convictions":

It bolsters a confidence, increases trust in our cohort, and makes us loathe the enemy. But in doing so, it also makes us more vulnerable to manipulation and feeds our hardwired penchant for being know-it-alls. We think we are playing by the rules of rationality—appealing to evidence and data. But in fact, the rules we are playing by are those that govern our self-expressions and social interactions—the rules of the playground, the dating game, and the office watercooler. These rules have more to do with generating and receiving emotional reactions, solidifying tribal membership, and enlarging social status than with what is warranted by the evidence and what isn't.¹⁰⁹³

In another way, the sharing of tribal attitudes serves as a means of telling other members that this is what the tribe believes and if you are one of us, then you will believe the same.

Tribes, despite this negative appraisal, provide a significant epistemic good in permitting a cognitive division of labor. Reality and how we should live in it is complex, too complex for any individual to understand and successfully navigate. Ideally, we become (or remain) members of tribes that share our values and our goals. This enables us to trust communal epistemic experts to explain and direct in us a way keeping with those shared values and goals (assuming something akin to Zagzebski's thesis that given appropriate time and resources we would arrive at the same conclusions for ourselves).¹⁰⁹⁴

This trust goes astray for two important reasons: first, the *telos* of many tribes is not Truth, but survival and thus power. Klein sums this up in regard to politics: "parties, though based

¹⁰⁹² Ibid., 44–46.

¹⁰⁹³ Lynch then gives the example of Facebook whose stated goal is "emotional connection." This became explicit when the platform expanded its structured interaction system beyond "like" to a range of emoticons ("frowny face, happy face, surprised face, and of course, angry outrage face"), which ostensibly "have a deep impact on how you think about the pieces being shared." Ibid., 47.

¹⁰⁹⁴ Zagzebski, *Epistemic Authority*.

on a set of principles, aren't disinterested teachers in search of truth. They are organized groups looking to increase their power. Or, as the psychologists would put it, their reasoning may be motivated by something other than accuracy."¹⁰⁹⁵ Second, sociologically and psychologically, tribes make up large parts of our "identities," such that accommodating facts that conflict with tribal convictions is not just a matter of changing one's mind, it is a matter of going against one's tribe, to change one's identity.¹⁰⁹⁶ An old sociological test is to ask someone to complete the phrase "I am..." as many times as they can in a minute (typical answers include: their name; social roles, e.g. a father, a teacher, etc.; and groups, e.g. a Christian, a Democrat, etc.); the answers that emerge from the participant's narrative memory the easiest and fastest represent the identities most ingressive or salient to their sense of self. These identities are proven to have an impact on when and how new information is received. If a new fact does not conflict with one's salient identities, then it is readily assented to; however, the same fact will meet with resistance if one perceives it as threatening to a core identity. Understandably, it is much more difficult, and socially costly to change your identities than it is your mind; the personal cost of putting truth before tribe is zero, but the social cost is massive. When speaking the Truth results in ostracization, Klein notes that "the most important psychological imperative most of us have in a given day is protecting our idea of who we are and our relationships with the people we trust and love."¹⁰⁹⁷ Lynch introduces the corresponding concept of "moral entanglement":

¹⁰⁹⁵ Klein, *Why We're Polarized*, 82.

¹⁰⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 88.

¹⁰⁹⁷ *Ibid.* Similarly, the senior Trump official behind the anonymous New York Times article pointed out in their follow up book *A Warning*: "After I published the op-ed in the Times, Trump responded with a one word tweet: "TREASON?" Those seven letters say it all. To the president, criticism is treasonous." In short, to speak the Truth is to be out, and criminally if Trump had his way, of the tribe. Cf. Anonymous, "Opinion | I Am Part of the Resistance Inside the Trump Administration," *The New York Times*, September 5, 2018,

Moral entanglement happens when one becomes committed to a belief in a matter of fact because its truth—rightly or wrongly—is regarded as evidentially related to a moral commitment, in the following sense: its falsity would undermine the perceived evidence for that moral commitment. When that happens, a seemingly straightforward claim about physical events has become shot through with moral values. Thus, the empirical belief takes on moral salience from the explicit moral values around it, and any attack on it is treated as an attack on those values.¹⁰⁹⁸

It seems clear to me that accepting facts contrary to the tribe's commitments falls under moral entanglement (perhaps disloyalty). Tribal members will also maintain absurd beliefs to avoid cognitive dissonance in order to preserve a conviction several degrees removed from the purported fact in question. For example, many Abrahamic faith communities reject scientific claims about the rising temperature of the Earth conceivably because trusting the scientific community would entail cognitive dissonance regarding other claims which "contradict" religious convictions about evolution; underlying this conviction is a commitment to a young Earth, under which in turn underlies a particular biblical hermeneutic around which they have structured their entire life. In short, it is easier to reject the Truth when it pulls on a thread that threatens to unravel the fabric of their entire belief structure.

For this reason, facts that conflict with or undermine the tribe's beliefs are often interpreted as attacks on one's identity. Worse, identities have sorted (at least since the 1950s) to create reinforcing "mega-identities," meaning an attack on one identity is an attack on all of a recipient's perceived identities. Per Klein, this is clearly seen in politics:

Today, the parties are sharply split across racial, religious, geographic, cultural, and psychological lines. There are many, many powerful identities lurking in that list, and they are fusing together, stacking atop one another, so a conflict or threat that activates one activates all. And since these mega-

sec. Opinion, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/05/opinion/trump-white-house-anonymous-resistance.html>; Anonymous, *A Warning* (New York, NY: Twelve, 2019), 14.

¹⁰⁹⁸ Lynch, *Know-It-All Society*, 69.

identities stretch across so many aspects of our society, they are constantly being activated, and that means they are constantly being reinforced.¹⁰⁹⁹

The result is people engage in what Yale Law professor Dan Kahan calls "identity-protective cognition" in which "it's natural for individuals subconsciously to resist evidence that challenges factual beliefs supportive of their values, particularly when those beliefs are widely held within groups with which they identify."¹¹⁰⁰ In defining identity-protective cognition, Kahan cites multiple sources showing how group membership effects how people process information in nearly all categories:

Individuals tend to adopt the beliefs common to members of salient "in-groups." They also resist revision of those beliefs in the face of contrary factual information, particularly when that information originates from "out-group" sources, who are likely to be perceived as less knowledgeable and less trustworthy than "in-group" ones.¹¹⁰¹

Studies confirm that tribalism short-circuits our intelligence such that "being better at math made partisans *less likely* to solve the problem correctly when solving the problem correctly meant betraying their political instincts." Why? It seems clear, per Klein, that "people weren't reasoning to get the right answer; they were reasoning to get the answer that they wanted to be right."¹¹⁰² As we will see later, this reveals that more information,

¹⁰⁹⁹ Klein, *Why We're Polarized*, 119–20.

¹¹⁰⁰ Dan M. Kahan and Donald Braman, "The Self-Defensive Cognition of Self-Defense," *Faculty Scholarship Series*, January 1, 2008, 4.

¹¹⁰¹ Dan M. Kahan et al., "Culture and Identity-Protective Cognition: Explaining the White-Male Effect in Risk Perception," *Journal of Empirical Legal Studies* 4, no. 3 (November 2007): 469–70. Cf. Roy F Baumeister and Mark R Leary, "The Need to Belong: Desire for Interpersonal Attachments as a Fundamental Human Motivation.," *Psychological Bulletin* 117, no. 3 (1995): 497–529; Diane M. Mackie and Sarah Quellar, "The Impact of Group Membership on Persuasion: Revisiting 'Who Says What to Whom With What Effect?,'" in *Attitudes, Behavior, and Social Context: The Role of Norms and Group Membership*, ed. Deborah J Terry and Michael A Hogg, 2016, 135–55; Russell D Clark and Anne Maass, "The Role of Social Categorization and Perceived Source Credibility in Minority Influence," *European Journal of Social Psychology* 18, no. 5 (1988): 381–94; Diane M. Mackie, M. Cecilia Gastardo-Conaco, and John J Skelly, "Knowledge of the Advocated Position and the Processing of In-Group and Out-Group Persuasive Messages," *Pers Soc Psychol Bull Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 18, no. 2 (1992): 145–51.

¹¹⁰² Studies show that when partisan politics was introduced to a mathematical puzzle "how good subjects were at math stopped predicting how well they did on the test. Now it was ideology that drove the answers.

training, etc. is fruitless since we are deluding ourselves and where our *telos* truly lies.¹¹⁰³

The result is what Dave Roberts calls "tribal epistemology" or when "information is evaluated based not on conformity to common standards of evidence or correspondence to a common understanding of the world, but on whether it supports the tribe's values and goals and is vouchsafed by tribal leaders."¹¹⁰⁴ As a result, even the definition of an expert is distorted on politicized issues to "a credentialed person who agrees with me."¹¹⁰⁵ Of course this leads to bizarre conclusions when the same source reports on both tribal and non-tribally important topics.¹¹⁰⁶

We clearly see again; the epistemic reality here mirrors the ethical with Hume's expressivism in that assertions reduce to the "yay" or "boo" expressions of "emotional" and "tribal attitudes." The default human condition it would seem, is not that of rational animal, but a rationalizing emotional one in keeping with Jonathan Haidt's infamous article "The

Liberals were extremely good at solving the problem when doing so proved that gun-control legislation reduced crime. But when presented with the version of the problem that suggested gun control had failed, their math skills stopped mattering. They tended to get the problem wrong no matter how good they were at math. Conservatives exhibited the same pattern—just in reverse..." Klein, *Why We're Polarized*, 85.

¹¹⁰³ "More information can help us find the right answers. But if our search is motivated by aims other than accuracy, more information can mislead us—or, more precisely, help us mislead ourselves. There's a difference between searching for the best evidence and searching for the best evidence that proves us right. And in the age of the internet, such evidence, and such experts, are never very far away." Ibid.

¹¹⁰⁴ David Roberts, "Donald Trump and the Rise of Tribal Epistemology," Vox, March 22, 2017, <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2017/3/22/14762030/donald-trump-tribal-epistemology>.

¹¹⁰⁵ "Kahan is quick to note that, most of the time, people are perfectly capable of being convinced by the best evidence. There's a lot of disagreement about climate change and gun control, for instance, but almost none over whether antibiotics work, or whether the H1N1 flu is a problem, or whether heavy drinking impairs people's ability to drive. Rather, our reasoning becomes rationalizing when we're dealing with questions where the answers could threaten our group—or at least our social standing in our group. And in those cases, Kahan says, we're being perfectly rational when we fool ourselves." Klein, *Why We're Polarized*, 85–86. Klein's pre-COVID comments on H1N1 show just how quickly tribal identity can entangle subject matters.

¹¹⁰⁶ This is seen when the public tends to immediately trust an epistemic authority when its claims do not infringe on politicized topics (e.g., Americans trust NASA to accurately report details, such as the temperature, of planets discovered lightyears away), yet immediately distrust the same epistemic authority as partisan or conspiratorial when its claims are incompatible with their political affiliation (e.g., Americans distrust NASA to accurately report on the temperature of this planet). The natural demand for, but lack of, consistency has led to a bifurcation of the public mind citing unfounded bias or conspiracy theories to assuage their cognitive dissonance when epistemic authorities do not affirm what is politically expedient.

Emotional Dog and its Rational Tail."¹¹⁰⁷ If we follow our emotional and psychological biases, then we will ask "how do I feel about this?", "does this help or hurt the tribe?", and then find reasons that back our tribe's convictions. Psychological studies have shown that emotions distort our cognitive processes in: reception, e.g., confirmation bias (the tendency to interpret new evidence as confirmation of one's existing beliefs or theories); recall, e.g., selective memory (being more likely to remember facts that reflect on positively and vis versa); and intellectual arrogance, e.g., fear of error and desire for esteem.¹¹⁰⁸

In sum, this overemphasis on the tribe describes what I have termed "blind-trust" in chapters 1 and 6 which permits selective knowledge sourcing, identity-protectiveness, and moral entanglements. This first dark side of trust leads to the second, for allowing the tribe to essentially choose the truth that best serves it opens the door to manipulation. As Lynch states, "The more we come to think that tribal convictions are all that should matter, the more we arrogantly dismiss evidence for victory and truth for power, the weaker our grip on democracy becomes, no matter who is in power."¹¹⁰⁹ Adrian Bardon likewise claims in a preview of his 2020 book *The Truth about Denial*:

Under the right conditions, universal human traits like in-group favoritism, existential anxiety and a desire for stability and control combine into a toxic, system-justifying identity politics. When group interests, creeds, or dogmas are threatened by unwelcome factual information, biased thinking becomes

¹¹⁰⁷ Jonathan Haidt, "The Emotional Dog and Its Rational Tail: A Social Intuitionist Approach to Moral Judgment.," *Psychological Review* 108, no. 4 (2001): 814–34.

¹¹⁰⁸ "...one of the defining features of intellectual arrogance: an unwillingness to regard your own worldview as capable of improvement from the evidence and the experience of others. But it also suggests a second important characteristic of the intellectually arrogant: they put ego before truth—but tell themselves they are doing the opposite. The intellectually arrogant are convinced their views are superior because of their better command of the facts. But in reality, their sense of superiority reflects their own hyperconcern for their self-esteem. Their posture is defensive; fear of error and desire for esteem push them to emphasize their authority, and thus to insist on their being right, whether they are or not. That defensive posture not only can keep them from seeing the evidence; it makes them believe their own hype." Lynch, *Know-It-All Society*, 23. Cf. Richard H. Thaler and Cass R. Sunstein, *Nudge: Improving Decisions About Health, Wealth, and Happiness* (New York & London: Yale University Press, 2008).

¹¹⁰⁹ Lynch, *Know-It-All Society*, 4.

denial. And unfortunately, these facts about human nature can be manipulated for political ends.¹¹¹⁰

The core argument of Klein's book is that everyone engaged in American politics (which extrapolates to any country) is engaged in identity politics: "What we are often fighting over in American politics is group identity and status-fights that express themselves in debates over policy and power but cannot be truly reconciled to either."¹¹¹¹ Policy and ideology, he explains, drive voters less than the strength of their partisan identity which has become a "means of self-expression and group identity."¹¹¹² In our increasingly socially alienated societies, this identity is less about who or what we are for than who we are against, otherwise known as negative partisanship. The result, according to Klein, is "How we feel matters much more than what we think, and in elections, the feelings that matter most are often our feelings about the other side," which current politicians have employed as an explicit political strategy of polarization.¹¹¹³ The results of recent elections should not be surprising for "we are so locked into our political identities that there is virtually no candidate, no information, no condition, that can force us to change our minds. We will justify almost anything or anyone so long as it helps our side, and the result is politics devoid of guardrails, standards, persuasion, or accountability."¹¹¹⁴ This is devastating to the development of the virtues. More immediately relevant, it also lays the groundwork for bad actors to acquire positions of power at a time when increasing numbers of citizens

¹¹¹⁰ Adrian Bardon, "Humans Are Hardwired to Dismiss Facts That Don't Fit Their Worldview," *The Conversation*, accessed March 27, 2020, <http://theconversation.com/humans-are-hardwired-to-dismiss-facts-that-dont-fit-their-worldview-127168>.

¹¹¹¹ Klein, *Why We're Polarized*, 14.

¹¹¹² *Ibid.*, 62–63.

¹¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 62.

¹¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 8.

report democracy is unessential (and even a "bad way to run this country") and increasingly support authoritarian alternatives.¹¹¹⁵

7.2.2 Tribe corrupts Truth

Now that technology aids epistemic biases through Google searches and social media algorithms to rationalize and reinforce our most emotional responses, the age-old truth that "information has always been, and will continued to be, a chief tool of empire and war" is being amplified. Lynch goes on to warn that "it is by the use, and misuse, of information that those who desire to manipulate hearts and minds have always acted."¹¹¹⁶ Identity-protective cognition and moral entanglement are most active, and therefore our reasoning is most vulnerable, when people feel their identities are threatened.¹¹¹⁷ As shown above, when tribal identities are activated (in terms of position, financials, or traditions) our epistemic skills slip making it more likely we will conflate the trust entailed by an epistemic authority and merited by a practical authority. If epistemic authority is understood as a kind of power, then this means it can be converted into practical and political authority, albeit by sacrificing epistemic integrity. Truth is thereby corrupted by tribe primarily in two ways: willful manipulation and/or implicit bias.

Practical authorities corrupt epistemic arenas through their "spin" on Truth and their campaigning to be perceived as geniuses (or at least as reputational authorities) with the intent (or pretense) of being an epistemic authority will lead to better governance; however, this political distortion of Truth becomes malignant when practical authorities use their power to manipulate epistemic authorities. This corruption occurs in altering the flow of

¹¹¹⁵ Roberto Stefan Foa and Yascha Mounk, "The Danger of Deconsolidation: The Democratic Disconnect," *Journal of Democracy* 27, no. 3 (July 6, 2016): 6–7, 11–14.

¹¹¹⁶ Lynch, *Know-It-All Society*, 31.

¹¹¹⁷ Klein, *Why We're Polarized*, 93.

information by pressuring scientific institutions and media outlets or, in abandoning all pretense, changing scientific findings or instituting an official state media.¹¹¹⁸ Both result in direct censorship of Truth. Not even democratic societies, where such direct control of knowledge transmission is supposedly impossible, are immune to direct censorship. Political authorities have historically corrupted epistemic authorities by activating the populace's identities, sometimes successfully silencing information sources entirely. This, for example, is what former American House Speaker Newt Gingrich successfully did in 1995 by shuttering the Office of Technology Assessments, "a blue-ribbon congressional agency that had been established for scientists to offer objective analysis on issues ranging from defense and space to climate and energy," which E.J. Dionne *et al.* describes as "part of Gingrich's broader (and largely successful) effort to centralize power in the Speaker's office", but "...also sent a message that ideological commitments would trump evidence."¹¹¹⁹ Common tools are fear and scapegoating, which require no explanation, but another effective means to corrupt the truth is by narrowing the scope of a tribe's accepted

¹¹¹⁸ The most extreme version occurs in authoritarian dictatorships where if the God-like supreme leader believes *p*, then *p* is true. The supreme leader's act of believing is causal. This is epistemically bizarre since Truth *ipso facto* changes as frequently as the leader changes their mind. Cf. Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1966), 382; Lynch, *Know-It-All Society*, 98–99.

¹¹¹⁹ The closure was controversial even with conservatives like Amo Houghton who said that in defunding the Office of Technology and Assessment (OTA) "we are cutting off one of the most important arms of Congress when we cut off unbiased knowledge about science and technology" and was seen as a political move because "some Republican lawmakers came to view [the OTA] as duplicative, wasteful, and biased against their party." Cf. Paulie Cannoli, "Nader Proposes Reviving Congressional Office of Technology Assessment," *Independent Political Report* (blog), June 10, 2010, <https://independentpoliticalreport.com/2010/06/nader-proposes-reviving-congressional-office-of-technology-assessment/>; David Malakoff, "House Democrats Move to Resurrect Congress's Science Advisory Office," *Science Magazine*, April 30, 2019, <https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2019/04/house-democrats-move-resurrect-congress-s-science-advisory-office>. This was the fruit from the tribal politics of Newt Gingrich "...who came to Congress in 1979 determined to nationalize congressional elections and convince voters that Washington was so dreadful and corrupt that anything would be an improvement over the status quo. When he recruited candidates, he offered them a language of partisan militancy. 'You're fighting a war,' Gingrich characteristically told a group of college Republicans in 1978. 'It is a war for power...Don't try to educate. That is not your job. What is the primary purpose of a political leader? To build a majority.'" E. J. Dionne, Norman J. Ornstein, and Thomas E. Mann, *One Nation after Trump: A Guide for the Perplexed, the Disillusioned, the Desperate, and the Not-yet Deported*, 2018, 75–76.

information sources. For even if all knowledge is limited and beholden to perspectivalism, a diversity of knowledge sources will provide more breadth, depth, and mitigate overall bias. Klein rightly recognizes that practical authorities such as political parties "exist within informational ecosystems" and "those ecosystems create the context in which voters make demands, in which politicians make strategic choices, in which presidential aspirants craft messages."¹¹²⁰ Wider informational ecosystems thus include both objective sources and partial/partisan sources such that listeners:

trust in sources that pull them left [or right] and sources that pull them toward the center, in sources oriented toward escalation and sources oriented toward moderation, in sources that root their identity in a political movement and sources that carefully tend a reputation for being antagonistic toward political movements.¹¹²¹

Inversely, a smaller cadre of accepted news sources means less breadth, depth, and increased bias. This decreased diversity of sources allows for practical authorities to focus their leverage and by extension their message to build an information ecosystem around partial/partisan sources in danger of being propagandistic.¹¹²² The result is indirect censorship, or when political authorities control which media people trust by deeming knowledge sources that affirm their agenda as genuine while castigating the remainder as illegitimate, partisan, or, more colloquially, "fake news."¹¹²³

¹¹²⁰ Klein, *Why We're Polarized*, 193.

¹¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹²² *Ibid.*, 194.

¹¹²³ In America, this trend emerges clearly in the 1960's with the Nixon administration "when Vice president Spiro Agnew attacked those who labored in the news business as 'nattering nabobs of negativism.' Nixon, pushed by his shrewd and sharp-edged aide Pat Buchanan, decided he would never win over the mainstream media—then the Big Three television networks (ABC, CBS, NBC) and the major newspapers. So he would demonize them and cast them not as fact-gatherers but as political enemies." Dionne, Ornstein, and Mann, *One Nation after Trump*, 47–48. Fast forward to conservative commentator Rush Limbaugh who went so far as to call traditional sources of truth — the media, the scientific community, academia, and the government — "the four corners of deceit" saying: "We live in two universes. One universe is a lie. One universe is an entire lie. Everything run, dominated, and controlled by the left here and around the world is a lie. The other universe is where we are, and that's where reality reigns supreme and we deal with it. And seldom do these two universes ever overlap." Klein, *Why We're Polarized*, 195, footnote 12. Cf. Rush Limbaugh, "David

When neither direct nor indirect censorship is possible, practical authorities can resort to disrupting epistemic authority. The first is to pollute transmission channels with misinformation or outright lies to create confusion, e.g., Federal agencies report that Russian-sponsored troll farms and for-profit conspiracy sites attempted to sway the US 2016 electoral cycle. Lynch notes that while few people are gullible or biased enough to believe such misinformation, many become unconvinced of what is true and thus withhold belief. In short, "political misinformation doesn't need to convince, just sow doubts."¹¹²⁴ The second, and far more destructive avenue, is to politically weaponize the postmodernism and post-truth culture by devaluing Truth altogether. Under this approach, Truth is not important or simply less important than another ideal, e.g., tolerance. In *On Bullshit* (2005), Harry Frankfurt turned "bullshit" into a technical term to capture this phenomenon; the bullshitter deceives but does not lie since "the truth-values of his statements are of no central interest to him...He does not care whether the things he says describe reality correctly. He just picks them out, or makes them up, to suit his purpose."¹¹²⁵ This approach is becoming more and more prevalent in politics. In 2008, US Senator John McCain corrected a voter who claimed President Barak Obama was a Muslim, but by 2011 House Speaker John Boehner refused to do likewise saying "it's not my job to tell the

Obey Wants to 'Pay For' Afghanistan? Nothing Is Paid For!," *The Rush Limbaugh Show* (Excellence in Broadcasting Network, November 24, 2009), https://web.archive.org/web/20110918143804/http://www.rushlimbaugh.com/home/daily/site_112409/content/01125114.guest.html.

¹¹²⁴ Lynch, *Know-It-All Society*, 33–34.

¹¹²⁵ "It is impossible for someone to lie unless he thinks he knows the truth. Producing bullshit requires no such conviction. A person who lies is thereby responding to the truth, and he is to that extent respectful of it. When an honest man speaks, he says only what he believes to be true; and for the liar, it is correspondingly indispensable that he considers his statements to be false. For the bullshitter, however, all these bets are off: he is neither on the side of the true nor on the side of the false. His eye is not on the facts at all, as the eyes of the honest man and of the liar are, except insofar as they may be pertinent to his interest in getting away with what he says." Harry G. Frankfurt, *On Bullshit*. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University, 2005), 55–56.

American people what to think," and then doubled-down when pressed further saying "The American people have the right to think what they want to think."¹¹²⁶ By 2016, "alternative facts" stemming from the size of Trump's inaugural address crowds became common parlance, but as NBC report Chuck Todd correctly pointed out: "Alternative facts are not facts. They're falsehoods."¹¹²⁷ In 2018, Rudi Giuliani claimed testimonials in Special Counsel Robert Mueller's investigation were merely "somebody's version of the truth, not the truth," only to defend himself by saying "Truth isn't Truth" and "[Facts] are in the eye of the beholder."¹¹²⁸ One American news anchor's closing tagline even baldly states, "Remember, even when I'm wrong, I'm right."¹¹²⁹ In short, it does not matter if a political authority is wrong if what counts is something other than Truth, i.e. practical power, wealth, geography, and tribal loyalty.¹¹³⁰ The common objection is "whataboutism" or the old *tu quoque* fallacy that everybody is equally guilty in putting their tribe before Truth. In the words of Lynch:

If we become convinced that those who answer differently are also approaching the question with minds made up, we may begin to feel that the whole enterprise is bankrupt. We may begin to listen to those who tell us that everyone is entitled to their alternative facts, that all news is fake news and social media simply weaponized information. We may begin to think, with Camus, that "dialogue and personal relations have been replaced by propaganda or polemic." In other words, the dogmatic arrogance we see in our political discourse may be due to our belief in our tribe's infallibility,

¹¹²⁶ Taken from John Boehner's 2011 appearance on *Meet the Press*. Cf. Dionne, Ornstein, and Mann, *One Nation after Trump*, 35.

¹¹²⁷ Aaron Blake, "Kellyanne Conway Says Donald Trump's Team Has 'alternative Facts.' Which Pretty Much Says It All," *The Washington Post*, January 22, 2017, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2017/01/22/kellyanne-conway-says-donald-trumps-team-has-alternate-facts-which-pretty-much-says-it-all/>.

¹¹²⁸ Rebecca Morin and David Cohen, "Giuliani: 'Truth Isn't Truth,'" *Politico*, August 19, 2018, <https://politi.co/2Bo8FIq>.

¹¹²⁹ The tagline seems at best interpreted as intellectual arrogance, and at worst that the Truth does not matter since he supports the political right, Cf. Graham Ledger in "The Daily Ledger" of *One America News Network* (OANN).

¹¹³⁰ Lynch, *Know-It-All Society*, 98.

or it may be due to the fact that we've simply punted on truth and embraced power as the measure of our success.¹¹³¹

Yet, as several political commentators have come to realize, putting tribe before Truth comes at a cost.¹¹³² "To abandon facts is to abandon freedom," insists Timothy Snyder in *On Tyranny*, for "if nothing is true, then no one can criticize power, because there is no basis upon which to do so...you submit to tyranny when you renounce the difference between what you want to hear and what is actually the case."¹¹³³ To abandon Truth is the epistemic equivalent of embracing "might makes right." This leads to another way Truth is perpetually corrupted and the entire epistemic enterprise is called into question.

The second way Truth is corrupted by tribe is through implicit bias, an insidious byproduct of communal epistemic authorities training and heralding the next generation of experts after their own tribal likeness (i.e., the communal understanding of what constitutes epistemic authority) through a process that, whether willfully or unintentionally, is inherently exclusionary of epistemic authorities from "the Other's" communities. If truth is a matter of core consensus, then applying political influence via practical authority can effectively change what "truth" is by influencing the core consensus through replacing the epistemic authorities. This is exacerbated when the blind-trust of citizens in selected practical authorities maintains the conflation of practical and epistemic authority long after

¹¹³¹ Ibid., 3.

¹¹³² According to conservative talk radio host Charlie Sykes: "as we learned this year, we had succeeded in persuading our audiences to ignore and discount *any* information from the mainstream media. Over time we'd succeeded in delegitimizing the media altogether—all the normal guideposts were down, the referees discredited. ... We destroyed our own immunity to fake news, while empowering the worst and most reckless voices on the right. This was not mere naivete. It was also a moral failure, one that now lies at the heart of the conservative movement even in its moment of apparent electoral triumph." Cf. Charles J. Sykes, "Opinion | Charlie Sykes on Where the Right Went Wrong," *The New York Times*, December 15, 2016, sec. Opinion, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/15/opinion/sunday/charlie-sykes-on-where-the-right-went-wrong.html>.

¹¹³³ Timothy Snyder, *On Tyranny: Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century* (London: The Bodley Head, 2017), 65–66.

any direct influence or manipulation. Literature abounds on colonial and decolonial thought, but we can illustrate this bias in identifying epistemic authorities using Kitcher's model when the consensus practice adopts and reinforces a definition or picture of who or what an epistemic authority looks like in a self-reinforcing process that disregards, deters, or denigrates the Other's epistemic authorities who do not conform to the community's accepted standard, method/rule, or epistemic imperative.¹¹³⁴ Historically, we can see that Modernity's concept of epistemic authority, built on the disembodied *ego cogito*, began when the veteran practices of scholasticism were rejected and European male apprentices such as Descartes shifted the community's virtual consensus by no longer deferring authority to the religious subcommunity and adopting the justificatory grounds of autonomous reason.¹¹³⁵ By making the *ego cogito* the new consensus practice to qualify individual practices as authoritative, the community limited knowledge specialization to those who espoused or reflected this *ego cogito*. Once these European male apprentices become veterans, they in turn expected acknowledgments of authority based on subcommunities subsequently created based on specialization in specific areas even when that specialization produced claims that distorted reality, e.g., Orientalism. The perceived

¹¹³⁴ A short list would include: Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 1968); Edward W Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978); Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988); Enrique D. Dussel, Javier Krauel, and Virginia C. Tuma, "Europe, Modernity, and Eurocentrism," *Nepantla: Views from South* 1, no. 3 (November 1, 2000): 465–78.

¹¹³⁵ Enrique Dussel argues the conception of the indubitable *ego cogito* as the true self or self-consciousness as foundational to identifying "The Other" and the *ego conquiro* of exploitable machines who did not adhere to the Modern rules of reason. This gave the colonizer the right, even duty, to "help" the ignorant Other even if that "help" had to be imposed (for their own good) similar to a parent and child: "This tautological argument—which is such because it sets out from *the superiority of its own culture* simply because it is its own—will be imposed throughout all of Modernity. The content of other cultures, for being different from one's own culture, is declared nonhuman, as when Aristotle declared Asians and Europeans to be barbarians, because the only 'humans' were 'those residents who lived in the [Hellenic] cities.'" Enrique D. Dussel, "Anti-Cartesian Meditations: On the Origin of the Philosophical Anti-Discourse of Modernity," *Journal for Cultural & Religious Theory* 13, no. 1 (Winter 2014): 22.

developmentalist superiority blinded the enlightened thinker to the fact that this core consensus effectively excluded the individual practices of non-European thinkers by limiting the acknowledgments of authority to only include the European *ego cogito* either as traditionally formulated by European men or as adopted by the Other (such as the colonized) thereby mistaking their virtual consensus for the global consensus by making the *ego cogito* normative. The result is a form of tribal arrogance which is intrinsically hierarchical and treats non-members, "the Other", like a child as history has shown in the gruesome effects of colonialism.

Practical authority exerting power outside of its appropriate domain is one of the key reasons for a disruption in epistemological trust, but it raises the question of whether we can escape the bootstrapping problem. If all our own reason is shaped by the tribe to promote the tribe's wellbeing, can we trust our own reason? As even Klein notes, "taking this literature too seriously can feel like staring into the abyss."¹¹³⁶ If all knowledge is necessarily perspectival, is there such thing as capital "T" Truth? Or is all knowledge, all truth, merely a social construct?

7.2.3 Tribe constructs Truth

The dark side of trust seems inevitably to lead, as we saw in Chapter 2, back to the fundamental divide which emerged in social epistemology over whether to break from or continue traditional epistemology's search for, and subsequent transmission of, Truth.¹¹³⁷

¹¹³⁶ "My whole career—and much of politics more generally—is based on the idea that gathering good information helps us understand hard policy issues and that putting the two together can change minds and lead to a better world. But once our political identities and interests push themselves in front of our cognition, that model of reasoning falls to pieces." Klein, *Why We're Polarized*, 93.

¹¹³⁷ The difference stems from whether this truth is understood as determined by "social truth" (local and cultural social factors), "metaphysical truth" (a necessary and universal metaphysical reality), and/or some relationship of the two. "Social truth" sees all knowledge as being the Medieval equivalent of mere *opinio* decided by the current consensus of a given culture's reputational epistemic authorities. In contrast, "metaphysical truth" exists outside of, or regardless of, any human consensus since it is "knowledge" in the

Standpoint epistemologists have stressed that our given perspectives lead us to insights others cannot have. Some have argued along the lines that since each perspective is a social construction and those perspectives determine what we accept as true, then truth is relative.¹¹³⁸ Since my social perspective is a product of the identities and tribes I inhabit, then truth is a social construction. According to Lynch, the argument's true seductive power comes from its appeal to our current prioritization of autonomy and egalitarianism (as we saw in chapter 1).¹¹³⁹ This parallels the constructivist route, following Thomas Kuhn and Richard Rorty who are metaphysical relativists asserting there are only social facts. Objective metaphysical truth either does not exist or cannot be known given human limitations. Pretending that a social fact is an objective metaphysical fact amounts to a lie since it claims a privileged access to Truth which nobody can have (not even theists via their scriptures). Thus, to impose or enforce personal truths on others through an appeal to objective metaphysical truth is not noble but proselytizing at best and coercion at worst. In fact, the history of philosophy and science reveal that communities have frequently maintained that the current social truth is metaphysical truth with devastating results.¹¹⁴⁰ Rorty's account is that all scientific knowledge is merely pragmatic; a given truth is

Ancient and Medieval sense of *episteme* or *scientia*, that is governed by an objective standard, namely necessary and universal "reality", which terms and concepts signify. The relationship between the two is what is contested and lies at the heart of seeing social epistemology either as constructivist or a continuation of traditional epistemology.

¹¹³⁸ Lynch, *Know-It-All Society*, 115.

¹¹³⁹ "For, the idea that what is true is determined by where I socially stand can seem like a great leveling device, suggesting that every standpoint is as good as any other from the point of view of knowledge. No one has the God's-eye point of view, so no one should be tempted to claim it. For this reason, perhaps more than any other, many progressives—for whom equality is a supreme value—have been tempted by an idea that seems to make all truths equal." *Ibid.*, 116–17.

¹¹⁴⁰ The early 17th century debate spurred by Galileo Galilei's telescope shows how a society can hold the consensus that the proposition "the earth is the center of the universe" is true, such that the social truth is "the earth is the center of the universe" despite the fact that this proposition does not reflect the metaphysical truth of heliocentrism. More harmful examples include females as defective males or the "natural" superiority of certain races.

believed because it "works" for an individual or community and this truth will cease, or will be amended, once a new experiment shows that this "truth" no longer works. Society can mutually agree (create a consensus) on one set of shared beliefs/values, but this consensus will be ever changing, possibly even contradictory through time and can lead to intolerance as practical power enforces its claim to truth.

How do we escape this circularity? Is there a way to move forward? Logically, we must deduce whether there are necessary and universal metaphysical truths upon which social truths are based or there are no necessary and universal metaphysical truths such that all knowledge is nothing more than social facts. The consensus among experts in philosophy, epistemology, and even social epistemology, is that constructivism is fallacious. For while our beliefs do depend on our perspective, it does not follow that truth is somehow relative to our perspectives.¹¹⁴¹ Certain concepts clearly are social as standpoint epistemology illustrates. For example: political laws are the product of a given social contract and thus what a given society deems acceptable; national borders, while they are frequently denoted by non-social objects such as rivers and walls, only exist in the minds of given peoples (thus explaining border disputes); and the well-documented concepts of race and gender which also incorporate biological and phenotypic traits, but vary by tribe, place, and time as to which traits are significant or are "essential."¹¹⁴² However, it is equally clear that there are concepts that are neither social nor constructed. The rules of logic like the syllogism, mathematical concepts like the triangle, and natural/scientific truths like gravity or the atomic weight of gold all point to an unchanging

¹¹⁴¹ Lynch, *Know-It-All Society*, 36, 117.

¹¹⁴² E.g., Simone de Beauvoir's famous declaration: *On ne naît pas femme: on le devient* ("One is not born, but rather becomes a woman"). Cf. Simone De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2012), 283.

metaphysical reality.¹¹⁴³ Even as I write this, COVID-19 and the Coronavirus pandemic is sweeping the world making it very hard to doubt the truth of where it is causing sickness and death completely independent of communal consensus or what practical authorities wish to be true for the benefit of their tribe.¹¹⁴⁴ Perhaps the two camps can find common ground in the late Renaissance thinker Giambattista Vico who famously said "that the true is what is made", such that social truths apply only to that which we as humans have brought into being, but objective metaphysical truth applies to everything else we have not made (since it was made by God or nature).¹¹⁴⁵ This allows for the only recourse to metaphysical truth which, while it can be obscured, cannot be changed and will ultimately assert itself. In regard to all this, it appears that Bertrand Russell was right:

¹¹⁴³ To clarify, claiming there is a truth, say, regarding the atomic weight of gold being 196.96657u is not to say there is a consensus among scientists which is in turn based on their consensus of the concept and term "atomic weight" and their further consensus of "Dalton units", but because there really is an unchanging metaphysical reality about atoms (regardless of the term used to signify those real entities), their weight, and their composition in this type of substance signified by the English locution "gold."

¹¹⁴⁴ It has been reported that political power was a key reason the United States' government failed to adequately prepare for the pandemic: the Trump administration fired the U.S. pandemic response team in 2018 to cut costs; and when the government became aware of the Coronavirus in January 2020 "current and former administration officials blame the president for creating a no-bad-news atmosphere that stifled attempts to combat the outbreak." Politico's Dan Diamond told NPR that: "...Secretary Azar [of US Health and Human Services] has not always given the president the worst-case scenario of what could happen. *My understanding is he did not push to do aggressive additional testing in recent weeks, and that's partly because more testing might have led to more cases being discovered of coronavirus outbreak, and the president had made clear - the lower the numbers on coronavirus, the better for the president, the better for his potential reelection this fall.*" Cf. Bethania Palma, "Did Trump Administration Fire the US Pandemic Response Team?," Snopes.com, February 26, 2020, <https://www.snopes.com/fact-check/trump-fire-pandemic-team/>; Dan Diamond, "Trump's Mismanagement Helped Fuel Coronavirus Crisis," Politico, March 7, 2020, <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/03/07/trump-coronavirus-management-style-123465>; Terry Gross, "White House Knew Coronavirus Would Be A 'Major Threat' — But Response Fell Short," *Fresh Air* (NPR, March 12, 2020), <https://www.npr.org/2020/03/12/814881355/white-house-knew-coronavirus-would-be-a-major-threat-but-response-fell-short>. Italics added.

¹¹⁴⁵ "One can thus infer that the ancient philosophers of Italy held the following beliefs about the true: that the true is what is made; that the first truth is therefore in God, because God is the first Maker; that the first truth is infinite, because God is the Maker of all things; and that it is complete, because it makes manifest to God since He contains them, the elements of things, extrinsic and intrinsic alike. Furthermore, to know is to arrange these elements. Thought is therefore proper to the human mind but understanding proper to the divine mind. For God surveys all the elements of things, extrinsic and intrinsic, because He both contains and arranges them, whereas the human mind, because it is finite and external to everything other than itself, collects only the outermost elements of things, rather than all of them. Consequently, while it can, indeed, think about things, it cannot understand them. It therefore participates in reason, but lacks mastery of it" Giambattista Vico, *Vico: Selected Writings*, trans. Leon Pompa (Cambridge: University Press, 1982), 51.

The concept of ‘truth’ as something dependent upon facts largely outside human control has always been one of the ways in which philosophy hitherto has inculcated the necessary element of humility. When this check upon pride is removed, a further step is taken on the road towards a certain kind of madness—the intoxication of power which invaded philosophy with Fichte, and to which modern men, whether philosophers or not, are prone. I am persuaded that this intoxication is the greatest danger of our time, and that any philosophy which, however unintentionally, contributes to it is increasing the danger of vast social disaster.¹¹⁴⁶

7.3 The post-2020 opportunity to reassess authority, transmission, and trust

7.3.1 There has been an awakening

This depiction of contemporary times is admittedly grim. We can respond effectively to Constructivism, but tribal epistemology and its penchant for political manipulation has no easy solution.¹¹⁴⁷ The problem stems from whole epistemic systems built on unvirtuous acts, or, in the words of Klein, "toxic systems compromise good individuals with ease. They do so not by demanding we betray our values but by enlisting our values such that we betray each other. What is rational and even moral for us to do individually becomes destructive when done collectively."¹¹⁴⁸ With the prevalence of internet knowing, social media, and the rise of political populism, the bright side is an awakening to the need for Truth and virtue.

There has been an increased number of calls for a return to Truth in non-academic publications. Not long ago there were only a few concerned voices, such as *New York Times* (NYT) literary critic Michiko Kakutani who warned in 1994, "throughout our culture, the

¹¹⁴⁶ Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy* (Psychology Press, 2004), 737.

¹¹⁴⁷ According to Aaron Hanlon, assistant professor of English at Colby College, "it's clear that the real enemy of truth is not postmodernism but propaganda, the active distortion of truth for political purposes. Trumpism practices this form of distortion on a daily basis. The postmodernist theorists we vilify did not cause this; they've actually given us a framework to understand precisely how falsehood can masquerade as truth." Aaron Hanlon, "Postmodernism Didn't Cause Trump. It Explains Him.," Washington Post, August 31, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/postmodernism-didnt-cause-trump-it-explains-him/2018/08/30/0939f7c4-9b12-11e8-843b-36e177f3081c_story.html.

¹¹⁴⁸ Klein, *Why We're Polarized*, 9.

old notions of 'truth' and 'knowledge' are in danger of being replaced by the new ones of 'opinion', 'perception', and 'credibility'",¹¹⁴⁹ but now there is a steady flow of articles and books with a similar message. Dionne *et al.* open *One Nation After Trump* (2018) claiming "crisis is an opportunity" and title an entire chapter "When the Truth Doesn't Matter."¹¹⁵⁰ National Public Radio's (NPR) *On Point* in February of 2020 brought over eight philosophers and scholars in for a four part special series, "In Search of Truth", dedicated to the topic.¹¹⁵¹ According to former White House speechwriter, *Atlantic* columnist, and media commentator David Frum in *Trumpocracy* (2018), one of the "gifts" of post-truth 21st century politics, which filled the "cavity excavated by the work of thousands of toiling academics and intellectuals" following Michel Foucault *et al.* in believing that "liberation would follow only once we accepted that 'truth' served merely as a euphemism for self-serving ideologies devised by holders of power", is the "recovery of the preciousness of truth."¹¹⁵² The result, which he calls the second gift of our time, is "a growing majority of Americans crave truth, seek truth, and vindicate truth. They cherish truth as something real in itself, *not* a construct of power, *not* a 'narrative' that varies according to the hyphens in one's personal identity."¹¹⁵³

¹¹⁴⁹ Michiko Kakutani, "Critic's Notebook; Opinion vs. Reality In an Age of Pundits," *The New York Times*, January 28, 1994, sec. Books, <https://www.nytimes.com/1994/01/28/books/critic-s-notebook-opinion-vs-reality-in-an-age-of-pundits.html>.

¹¹⁵⁰ Dionne, Ornstein, and Mann, *One Nation after Trump*.

¹¹⁵¹ Meghna Chakrabarti, "On Point Special Series: 'In Search Of Truth,'" *The Conversation* (NPR, February 20, 2020), <https://www.wbur.org/onpoint/2020/02/20/on-point-series-in-search-of-truth>.

¹¹⁵² Frum notes, lying is not possible if there is no Truth and Americans are "discovering" the importance of distinguishing between "the normal tools of the politician's trade—evasion, equivocation, the timely change of subject—and the inversion of reality that is routinely heard from Donald Trump." David Frum, *Trumpocracy: The Corruption of the American Republic*, American First edition (New York, NY: Harper, 2018), 222–23.

¹¹⁵³ "If revulsion against Trump's lies should at last discredit and overthrow that conspiracy [against the ideal of truth], what a fine second gift that would be." *Ibid.*, 224.

There has been a similar awakening and call for a return to moral character. The pull quote for the entire book *A Warning* (2019) is the 26th American president Theodore Roosevelt's take on character.¹¹⁵⁴ A similar pull quote from America's first president George Washington on character and virtue opens the second chapter entitled "The Character of a Man" which outlines the Cardinal Virtues and the four part rubric of Cicero's *De Officiis* to show, based on countless examples and episodes, the 45th American president exhibits none of them.¹¹⁵⁵ Dionne *et al.* also devote an entire chapter to "Bad Behavior", claiming that while we tend to overemphasize the "breaking of rules" it is the violating of previous norms that is more pressing for "many of the virtues we ask of our fellow human beings cannot in practice be legislated or, at best, can be codified only imperfectly and incompletely."¹¹⁵⁶ They also see this as a critical moment in history, one in which people are once again aware and need to act since:

We don't fully appreciate the power of norms until they are violated on a regular basis. And the breaking of norms often produces a cascading effect: as one person breaks with tradition and expectation, behavior previously considered inappropriate is normalized and taken up by others.¹¹⁵⁷

What Frum calls the "third gift" of this time is likewise focused on character: "a renewal of their disgust for those who join power to cruelty," and Americans have been reminded "of the old schoolyard lesson: the bully is a coward."¹¹⁵⁸

¹¹⁵⁴ Anonymous, *A Warning*. "Character, in the long run, is the decisive factor in the life of an individual and of nations alike — Theodore Roosevelt."

¹¹⁵⁵ "A good moral character is the first essential in a man..It is therefore highly important that you should endeavor not only to be learned but virtuous" — George Washington" Ibid., 53.

¹¹⁵⁶ Dionne, Ornstein, and Mann, *One Nation after Trump*, 69.

¹¹⁵⁷ Ibid. The storming of the US Capitol building on Jan. 6 2021 has been seen as confirmation that extremist views have been normalized, cf. Nathaniel Rakich, "Trump Helped Take Extremist Views From The Fringes Of Society To A Mob Attacking The Capitol," *FiveThirtyEight* (blog), January 8, 2021, <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/trump-helped-take-extremist-views-from-the-fringes-of-society-to-a-mob-attacking-the-capitol/>.

¹¹⁵⁸ Frum, *Trumpocracy*, 226–27.

7.3.2 "Modern Epistemic Philosophy"

Epistemology finds itself in the same precarious position as moral philosophy. The bootstrapping problem mirrors the ethical challenge of relativism. Tribal epistemology is driven by biases placing the emotional before the rational as in Hume's Expressivism. If social truths are all that is available, either because metaphysical Truth does not exist or is beyond reach, then we are left not with one chain of transmission descending from the past to contend with, but myriad, one for each community.¹¹⁵⁹ For as Nietzsche claims of morality, in the history of epistemology there are different and opposing epistemologies at work.¹¹⁶⁰ He concludes that epistemic authority ultimately collapses into the will and autonomy of practical authority. As such, Jonathan Sanford's words in *Before Virtue* (2015) about moral philosophy could just as easily describe epistemology:

on the one hand it is a discipline in disarray, with first principles, aims, and methodology all still very much in dispute; and on the other hand it is a discipline in which the stakes are especially high and about whose conclusions academics and nonacademics alike care very much, even if many people seem not to care particularly about the philosophical strategies employed to arrive at those conclusions.¹¹⁶¹

If Truth lacks on objective ground, we are perilously close to might (individually or communally) making epistemic right.

Yet insofar as epistemology shares the same problems as moral philosophy, it stands to reason that the same solutions should also be applicable. The driving question of Lynch's *Know-It-All Society* (2019) was modifying Socrates's "how we ought to live?" into

¹¹⁵⁹ Cf. "...there appears to be no golden thread weaving through the labyrinth of the history of moral [or epistemic] philosophy. The reason for this is that moral philosophy is not composed of just one maze; there are many, and each has its own parameters and motivating questions." Sanford, *Before Virtue*, 27–28.

¹¹⁶⁰ A further critique of Modernity.

¹¹⁶¹ Sanford, *Before Virtue*, 26.

"how we ought to believe?".¹¹⁶² We have seen this debate between whether there is or is not a moral ground (or at least an unknowable one) in moral philosophy. G. E. M. Anscombe recognized Nietzsche's critiques of modernity in "Modern Moral Philosophy."¹¹⁶³ As Anscombe saw it, modern moral philosophy combined the denial of objective moral facts and divine law to create a subjective sentimentalism. Values were thus nothing more than personal preferences while "ought," with nothing to ground it, was nothing more than a "mesmeric force," (e.g. "It is as if the notion 'criminal' were to remain when criminal law and criminal courts had been abolished and forgotten").¹¹⁶⁴ By replacing moral with epistemic we can see the parallels between a moral ought, what one "should do", and an epistemic ought, what one "should believe." In our modern epistemic philosophy, we have the "my truth" and "your truth" of perspectivalism with no ground to determine one over the other, but we maintain the imperative to hold them as the Truth. Alasdair MacIntyre in turn argues that the real alternative is "Nietzsche or Aristotle?," for if the Enlightenment project was built on the presupposition of rejecting Aristotle, then the Aristotelian project is worthy of reconsideration if the Enlightenment project fails.¹¹⁶⁵ As

¹¹⁶² Lynch, *Know-It-All Society*, 1.

¹¹⁶³ Anscombe, "Modern Moral Philosophy."

¹¹⁶⁴ We can even render the *modus ponens* interpretation of her article in epistemic terms with the same effect: "If religiously based ethics is false [if revelation based knowledge is false], then virtue ethics [epistemology] is the way moral philosophy [epistemology] ought to be developed..." Ibid., 8, 6.

¹¹⁶⁵ "Yet it is not of course just that Nietzsche's moral philosophy is false if Aristotle's is true and vice versa. In a much stronger sense Nietzsche's moral philosophy is matched specifically against Aristotle's by virtue of the historical role which each plays. For, as I argued earlier, it was because a moral tradition of which Aristotle's thought was the intellectual core was repudiated during the transitions of the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries that the Enlightenment project of discovering new rational secular foundations for morality had to be undertaken. And it was because that project failed, because the views advanced by its most intellectually powerful protagonists, and more especially by Kant, could not be sustained in the face of rational criticism that Nietzsche and all his existentialist and emotivist successors were able to mount their apparently successful critique of all previous morality. Hence the defensibility of the Nietzschean position turns in the end on the answer to the question: was it right in the first place to reject Aristotle? For if Aristotle's position in ethics and politics — or something very like it — could be sustained, the whole Nietzschean enterprise would be pointless. This is because the power of Nietzsche's position depends upon the truth of one central thesis: that all rational vindications of morality manifestly fail and that therefore belief in the tenets of morality needs to be explained in terms of a set of rationalizations which conceal the fundamentally

we have seen above, social epistemology has dealt a mighty blow to Enlightenment thinking.

Perhaps the parallel between moral and epistemic philosophy should not be surprising given Aristotle's emphasis on moral and intellectual virtues. Yet, even if we analogously apply the arguments of Anscombe and MacIntyre *et al.* against "modern moral philosophy" to "modern epistemic philosophy" we cannot maintain the ought of belief without a proper account of what exists and a corresponding set of intellectual virtues (e.g., "open-mindedness" and "love of truth"). Epistemic concepts, like their moral counterparts, Julia Driver points out rely on richer "thick" concepts which "outside of a certain metaphysical perspective—lack content."¹¹⁶⁶ The critiques leveled at Modernity and Constructivism indicate that the "thin" concepts of rational rules and autonomous methods cannot adequately account for our knowledge given its social dynamics. Instead of a philosophic method that delivers answers, we should heed Pierre Hadot's reminder to contemporary philosophers that for the Greeks philosophy looked very different than what today is meant by the term: that for Socrates and Plato the most basic and essential philosophic task was not logic or argumentation but "the Delphic injunction to 'know thyself'," a concern with the health of the mind. Philosophy originally had less to do with textual practices such as reading, writing, and oral dialogue, but was a way of life or "an art of living dedicated to the pursuit of wisdom (as the word '*philosophia*' implies), and

non-rational phenomena of the will." Alasdair C. MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 3rd ed. (Notre Dame, Ind: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 117.

¹¹⁶⁶ Julia Driver, "Gertrude Elizabeth Margaret Anscombe," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, Spring 2018 (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2018), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2018/entries/anscombe/>. For an example of "thick" epistemic concepts cf. Faulkner, "A Virtue Theory of Testimony."

thus to the practices that such a pursuit should entail."¹¹⁶⁷ By extension, if our goal truly is wisdom, we too must begin by knowing ourselves. We must know what we are and how we think. We must recognize our active role in acquiring knowledge, what community(ies) we have membership in, what methods their epistemic authorities employ to generate and transmit knowledge, and how they have shaped us. Thus, we should also study the mistakes our community has made in the past, and recognize that no tribe, even our own, is infallible. Thus, in order to proceed we must finally heed the first of Anscombe's theses, namely that it is unprofitable to continue doing moral philosophy, "until we are equipped with a sound philosophy of psychology."¹¹⁶⁸ Since it has been established that truth and knowledge have a complicated social relationship to facts, we can argue that it is likewise no longer profitable to do epistemic philosophy (epistemology) until we have an adequate philosophical anthropology, a philosophy of human nature.

I realize however, that not everyone will agree with the drastic step of ceasing to do epistemology while we develop a philosophy of psychology and its required metaphysical perspectives. For those individuals (or those who wish to work on both simultaneously), I believe there are practical steps we can implement while the theoretical catches up.

¹¹⁶⁷ Richard Shusterman, "Philosophy as a Way of Life: As Textual and More Than Textual Practice," in *Philosophy as a Way of Life: Ancients and Moderns: Essays in Honor of Pierre Hadot*, ed. Michael Chase, Stephen R.L. Clark, and Michael McGhee (Chichester, West Sussex, UK: Wiley Blackwell, 2013), 41–43.

¹¹⁶⁸ "The first is that it is not profitable for us at present to do moral philosophy; that should be laid aside at any rate until we have an adequate philosophy of psychology, in which we are conspicuously lacking." Also, "In present-day philosophy an explanation is required how an unjust man is a bad man, or an unjust action a bad one; to give such an explanation belongs to ethics; but it cannot even be begun until we are equipped with a sound philosophy of psychology. For the proof that an unjust man is a bad man would require a positive account of justice as a 'virtue.' This part of the subject-matter of ethics is, however, completely closed to us until we have an account of what *type of characteristic* a virtue is—a problem, not of ethics, but of conceptual analysis—and how it relates to the actions in which it is instanced: a matter which I think Aristotle did not succeed in really making clear. For this we certainly need an account at least of what a human action is at all, and how its description as 'doing such-and-such' is affected by its motive and by the intentions in it; and for this an account of such concepts is required." Anscombe, "Modern Moral Philosophy," 1, 4–5.

7.3.3. Practical Steps to proceed

A common theme across contemporary commentaries is "hope,"¹¹⁶⁹ but I fear little can be done in the way of grand sweeping solutions without Anscombe's called for philosophy of psychology since the problem is ingrained epistemic systems built on the trust of billions of individuals. Change must come at the individual level and only by changing the individuals will the systems change. Here I will thus confine myself to how we should proceed after recognizing these systems are built on trust.

While the solution is ultimately to promote individuals to be open to trusting the virtuous speaker, even those outside the tribe (open-rationalism), how openness is encouraged profoundly alters the outcome. Telling people who are "intellectually arrogant" to be "open" or to listen to countervailing voices is fruitless since "when we suffer from it, we think we having nothing to learn from anyone else—that our worldview can't improve from hearing what people with different perspectives have to say."¹¹⁷⁰ Thus, exposure to another tribe's echo-chamber only elicits rebuttal and further polarizes.¹¹⁷¹ Recognizing this explains why there is such widespread agreement that ignorance is not the underlying problem and thus more information, more knowledge is not the solution. It is "seductive" to think so, per Klein, since "It suggests our fellow countrymen aren't wrong so much as they're misguided, ignorant, or—most appealingly—deceived by scoundrels from the other party. It holds that our debates are tractable and that the answers to our toughest problems aren't very controversial at all."¹¹⁷² The solution is also simple: increase scientific

¹¹⁶⁹ Even after Robert Pasnau's "dismal verdict" that certain knowledge is an impossibility, nevertheless he proposes we settle for "believing hopefully." Cf. Pasnau, *After Certainty*, 117.

¹¹⁷⁰ Lynch, *Know-It-All Society*, 6.

¹¹⁷¹ Klein, *Why We're Polarized*, 135–36.

¹¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 84.

literacy and critical thinking skills through teaching. However, as we saw, this wrongly assumes that people's true *telos* is truth and not tribe (despite their claims to the contrary). As we saw earlier regarding identity-protective cognition and moral entanglement, according to Lynch "it can become practically rational to ignore evidence that might undermine [our convictions]. Convictions make it practically rational to be epistemically irrational."¹¹⁷³ As Klein, drawing on Kahan *et al.*'s research claims, people value winning an argument over actually being right:

Humans reason for purposes other than finding truth—purposes like increasing their standing in their community or ensuring they don't find themselves exiled by the leaders of their tribe. If this hypothesis proved true, then a smarter, better-educated citizenry wouldn't put an end to these disagreements. It would just mean the participants are better equipped to argue for their own side.¹¹⁷⁴

This is exactly what Bardon has found in *The Truth about Denial* (2020), "well-trained academic scientists [i.e., educated experts] are the most highly attuned to the issue of confirmation bias, but are also in possession of the most sophisticate means to convince themselves they are right," thus "...greater education and political sophistication give the true believer more ammunition—and more confidence—in justifying his or her position."¹¹⁷⁵

Since the system is built on trust, the first step is to not abandon trust and our truth-default mode. Since blind-trust leaves us vulnerable to gullibility, there is a strong push to abandon trust and embrace a reductionist approach within what I have termed closed-

¹¹⁷³ "When we allow some matter of fact to become a matter of conviction...our commitments on these matters take on certain kinds of authority over our life. That's part of what makes them convictions." Lynch, *Know-It-All Society*, 67.

¹¹⁷⁴ Klein, *Why We're Polarized*, 83.

¹¹⁷⁵ "Intelligence, specialized training, and responsiveness to evidence-based reasoning does not inoculate against self-deception." Adrian Bardon, *The Truth about Denial: Bias and Self-Deception in Science, Politics, and Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 38–39, 47.

rationalism. However, according to Timothy Levine in *Duped* (2019) this works contrary to the natural order of society.¹¹⁷⁶ Following Levine, Gladwell claims a balance between trust and security needs to be achieved; the consequence of not defaulting to trust parallels Saadya Gaon's assessment, the collapse of society. The problem is when people default to trust when they should not. To get people to "snap out" of default-trust requires a "trigger" as Gladwell points out from Levine's research, "we are not hopelessly gullible, we have doubts, lots of doubts... You believe someone not because you have no doubts about them. Belief is not the absence of doubt. You believe someone because you don't have enough doubts about them."¹¹⁷⁷ The takeaway is thus to embrace trust and work within it. Change comes by giving reasons to decrease someone's doubts in trustworthy sources and increasing someone's doubts about an untrustworthy source.

To leverage our trust-based system, two steps have been proven effective within the confines of positive collaborative interactions between opposing tribes which allow for "slow", as opposed "fast", thinking.¹¹⁷⁸ The first is to humanize, or in the spirit of Emmanuel Levinas to give a face to, the Other. It is easy to demonize and reject a faceless group especially in our age of internet anonymity. As Dylan Marron has shown in his podcast "Conversations with People Who Hate Me", people who leave hateful comments on his online content change their tone, often backtrack, and are amenable to fruitful

¹¹⁷⁶ Accepting truth-default theory despite fears of gullibility is "a great deal for us. What we get in exchange for being vulnerable to an occasional lie is efficient communication and social coordination. The benefits are huge and the costs are trivial in comparison. Sure, we get deceived once in a while. That is just the cost of doing business." Timothy R. Levine, *Duped: Truth-Default Theory and the Social Science of Lying and Deception* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2019), 188–89.

¹¹⁷⁷ Gladwell, *Talking to Strangers*, 76, 77–78.

¹¹⁷⁸ Klein, *Why We're Polarized*, 137; Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (London: Penguin, 2011). "Fast thinking" is Kahneman's term for our automatic or impulsive mental system resulting from our evolutionary or behavior history. "Slow thinking" represents exerting self-control and deliberately focusing one's attention on details. Cf. Erin E Devers and Jason D Runyan, "The Impact of Thinking Fast and Slow on the Evangelical Mind," *Christian Scholar's Review* 47, no. 4 (2018): 433–44.

conversations during a Skype call.¹¹⁷⁹ Each step in planned cross-talks should be aimed at avoiding and defusing kneejerk emotional responses. In moderating conversations between internet "trolls" and the people they have trolled, Marron stopped using the word "troll."¹¹⁸⁰ The second proven step is to appoint speakers who are tribal allies. Not surprisingly, Truths in danger of moral entanglement or triggering denial for a particular tribe are best received when they come from a member of the tribe. An outsider's tribal affiliation will always encounter far more closed minds than insider affiliation. Researchers found that a lecture presenting climate science information by Katharine Hayhoe, an Evangelical Climate Scientist, to a predominately Evangelical undergraduate audience "through the lens of an evangelical tradition" resulted in increased acceptance and awareness of climate concerns:

Acceptance that global warming is happening increased for 48% of participants, and that humans are causing it for 39%. Awareness of the expert scientific consensus increased among 27% of participants. 52% were more worried about climate change after watching the lecture, and 67% increased their responses about how much harm climate change will do. 55% of participants viewed addressing climate change a higher priority after attending Katharine Hayhoe's lecture. For most of the remaining participants, there was no change in responses to these questions.¹¹⁸¹

¹¹⁷⁹ Dylan Marron, "Conversations with People Who Hate Me," Dylan Marron, accessed April 7, 2020, <https://www.dylanmarron.com/podcast>.

¹¹⁸⁰ "I definitely used to use the word troll. I don't like it anymore, because ... that is starting the conversation at a deficit, you know what I mean? I want to make sure we are in as safe a place as possible — and I know that's a very zeitgeisty term right now. I also want to make a safe space for the person who wrote me or my guest something negative." "In 'Conversations With People Who Hate Me' An Activist Calls Up His Worst Critics," *All Things Considered* (NPR, May 4, 2018), <https://www.npr.org/2018/05/04/607409570/in-conversations-with-people-who-hate-me-an-activist-calls-up-his-worst-critics>.

¹¹⁸¹ Dana Nuccitelli, "Study: Katharine Hayhoe Is Successfully Convincing Doubtful Evangelicals about Climate Change | Dana Nuccitelli," *The Guardian*, August 28, 2017, sec. Environment, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/climate-consensus-97-per-cent/2017/aug/28/study-katharine-hayhoe-is-successfully-convincing-doubtful-evangelicals-about-climate-change>; John L. McCuin, Katharine Hayhoe, and Douglas Hayhoe, "Comparing the Effects of Traditional vs. Misconceptions-Based Instruction on Student Understanding of the Greenhouse Effect," *Journal of Geoscience Education* 62, no. 3 (September 2, 2014): 445–59.

For the half of the audience who reported no change, we can assume they will weaponize the lecture to defend prevailing tribal views by rationalizing their existing position, however, experience should also indicate that hearing facts from a peer (and one with greater credentials) should generate some level of cognitive dissonance that even stubborn listeners will be forced to process.

Our trust-based system also possesses serious challenges to such structured interactions. First, the logistics of finding and coordinating tribal experts and leaders who share the *telos* of Truth; second, *cura personalis* for those leaders. Where practical authorities stand to lose power when Truth is spoken, few will be amenable in allowing tribal experts speak to their constituents. In the above example, in addition to Hayhoe the evangelical university needed to possess leaders willing to host the event. Indirect censorship of Truth driven by communal epistemic authorities, however, is far less damaging than labeling them traitors and turncoats. This leads to the second challenge: speaking out against the tribe's stated position comes at a tremendous cost. As a result of her efforts to communicate climate change facts to Evangelicals, Hayhoe reports receiving attacks "nearly every day."¹¹⁸² Likewise, David Brooks, a conservative NYT columnist, told Klein in 2019 of the "social agony" caused by criticizing Trump:

'I had been part of the conservative movement my whole life,' he told me. 'The *Weekly Standard*. The *Wall Street Journal*, *National Review*, *Washington Times*. Suddenly, I wasn't the kind of conservative all the other conservatives were, and so my social circles drifted away.' Brooks was

¹¹⁸² She reports the attacks via email, Twitter, Facebook, and even handwritten letters "often by people with Bible verses in their social media profiles who accuse me of spreading Satan's lies, or sometimes by others who share my concerns about climate change but wonder why I bother talking to 'those people.'" Katharine Hayhoe, "Opinion | I'm a Climate Scientist Who Believes in God. Hear Me Out.," *The New York Times*, October 31, 2019, sec. Opinion, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/31/opinion/sunday/climate-change-evangelical-christian.html>.

living alone at the time, and the consequences, for his life, were painful. 'My weekends were just howling silences,' he says.¹¹⁸³

Unfortunately, caring for such "turncoats" is not as simple as ushering them into the other tribe, for the same kinds of biases and tribal prejudices persist there. Just because there is intellectual "repentance" on an issue does not mean "forgiveness" will follow. Thus, these "traitors" will never be fully accepted due to other tribal disagreements or since they are viewed as having "blood on their hands" from their past actions/inactions. As tribal creatures, social ostracization may be too high a price to pay for being "right" once again making it hard for Truth to overcome tribe. The solution is for our respective tribes to be willing and open to accepting the stranger into our midst.

These solutions reiterate how real change will only follow change at the individual level. This is, as Lynch has recognized, because "...at the end of the day, dealing with our attitudes toward truth and conviction won't be solved just by teaching people more facts when we don't agree on what counts as a 'fact'. The problem of how to deal with the spread of dogmatism and the politics of arrogance is not a technical problem; it is a human problem."¹¹⁸⁴ Hence, even if we do not heed Anscombe's call for a philosophy of psychology, we should recognize that social epistemology has revealed the importance of first understanding ourselves before we can understand anything else.

7.4 Final Thoughts

As I argued in chapter 1, the "social turn" allows us to identify three answers to what authority we should trust: a rational fideism that only "blind-trusts" the epistemic authorities of one's own like-minded (and often like-looking) community; a closed

¹¹⁸³ Klein, *Why We're Polarized*, 88.

¹¹⁸⁴ Lynch, *Know-It-All Society*, 4-5.

rationalism that "self-trusts" one's autonomous use of rational rules or methods; and an open rationalism that is open to "virtuous-trust" in trustworthy speakers outside oneself and their community. We saw blind-trust was unfruitful epistemically, but now as disastrous given its susceptibility to manipulation by practical authority. Self-trust likewise stifled the epistemic quest but is now revealed to be susceptible to implicit bias that can violently silence the Other and their outside perspective. Virtuous-trust, on the other hand, is more than merely the last option. The method obligates us to remain open outwards and upwards to the trustworthy speaker in accordance with the virtues which are arguably open to cultural elucidation (sometimes cited as a weakness of virtue theory). A crucial element of the escape requires us to strategically self-verify using our personal autonomy, not as the authority or standard that determines the space of reason but as a tool that identifies where we stand in the space of reasons,¹¹⁸⁵ to inspect epistemic authorities and what they claim in order to determine if they are trustworthy and accurately reporting on the objectively neutral standard. First, we can inspect the epistemic authorities "outside" our typical community in order to determine if the Other's epistemic authorities have a better understanding. Second, our first-person experience, though influenced by social truth, is not inherently social, granting us an unsocial glimpse of the reality before us. This allows us to break from the circularity of social knowledge.

I suggested in the first chapter that the way forward is to recapture concepts of authority and testimony before the shift to individual will and autonomy as the objective standard. I proposed following Anscombe and MacIntyre to escape from epistemic relativism with an objective (i.e., culturally neutral) standard beyond any/all communal

¹¹⁸⁵ Cf. McDowell, "Knowledge by Hearsay," 1998, 434–35. Cf. Robiglio, "A Thomistic Ring to Scotus's Hermeneutics? : The Doctor Communis, John Duns Scotus, and the Will," 72.

epistemic authority available to everyone, namely a return to metaphysics upon which Trust can be based. This is not a romanticizing of the past, or a yearning to make some period of privilege great again. Instead, it is the humble acknowledgement that if our intellectual journey has led to a dead end, then we should not stubbornly persist, but turn around in hopes of discovering where we made a wrong turn. However, even if we knew where we went astray, we simply cannot jump back to the past. That is, we cannot be who we used to be after traveling down this current path and back. The journey changes us. In fact, the "detour" may have been necessary to open us to the epistemic authority of the Other we once rejected.

I have been arguing here against rejecting metaphysical truth while recognizing the importance that our attempt to know it is inescapably social. Thus, instead of pushing back against the meta-epistemological shift to the ultimate authority of autonomy, I have acquiesced to its role in placing it at the center of my virtue account of testimony (chapter 6). This highlights my own given perspective shaped by a contemporary worldview steeped in the importance of autonomy, and/or that I trust that the intellectual authorities of the past five centuries who not only perceived its value, but also transmitted their expertise to me. Either way, I feel comfortable trusting their authority on autonomy since it lends credence to the fact that my first-person reasons to trust myself are more basic and thus logically prior to third person reasons (evidence) to trust anything else.¹¹⁸⁶

¹¹⁸⁶ Zagzebski, *Epistemic Authority*, 66.

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