# Teaching and Telling

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## Introduction

Recent work on testimony has raised questions about the extent to which testimony is a distinctively second-personal phenomenon and the possible epistemic significance of its second-personal aspects. However, testimony, in the sense primarily investigated in recent epistemology, is far from the only way in which we acquire knowledge from others. My goal is to distinguish knowledge acquired from testimony—learning from being told—from knowledge acquired from teaching—learning from being taught, and to investigate the similarities and differences between the two with respective to the interpersonal dimensions of their structures.

## 1. Testimony and the second person

In an important essay, Richard Moran introduces testimony's philosophical significance as follows:

> In part it is the enormity of [our epistemic] dependence [on what other people tell us] that makes for the interest in the subject of testimony, combined with the apparent clash between the kind of epistemic relations involved here and the classic empiricist picture of genuine knowledge basing itself either on direct experience of the facts or on working out conclusions for oneself. (Moran 2005, 1)

In order to bring into view the supposedly distinctive epistemic relations involved in testimony, it helps to begin with a broad-brushed overview of a major debate in the epistemology of testimony, one that concerns  the character of the warrant or justification that a subject may have in believing another's testimony.

On one side of the debate are those who hold that the subject's acquisition of testimonial belief is to be understood inferentially: she infers (at least tacitly) that *p* from her knowledge that her interlocutor asserted that *p*, and her belief that this testimony is likely to be reliable. This *reductionist* position seeks to explain testimonial knowledge in terms of more fundamental epistemic powers and resources, such as perception and inference, and thus to show that the epistemic relations involved in testimony are only apparently distinctive. Such an account, it might be thought, maps neatly onto cases with a common enough kind of structure: an expert informs you that *p*, something that is perhaps surprising or counterintuitive, or runs contrary to common opinion, or which you reasonably think is not something most people would know; and you justifiably accept her testimony—and in the good case acquire knowledge that *p*—only because you have good reason to think that she is an expert and thus likely to be reliable on the question whether *p*.

On the other side of the debate are those who hold that there is a general though defeasible warrant to believe what others say, such that, in favourable conditions, a subject will be justified in believing that *p* simply on the basis of her interlocutor's assertion that *p*. In the good case, where she acquires knowledge that *p*, her knowledge will be non-inferential. No belief that this particular piece of testimony is reliable is required for the subject to acquire knowledge from the testimony; it is an "innocent-unless-impugned position on testimonial transmission of knowledge" (Audi

2011, 513). This *anti-reductionist* view characterizes testimony as a source of knowledge or justification in its own right, on a par with—and thus not to be reduced to—perception, memory, and inference. The "home" case here takes more the following shape: a stranger, perhaps in response to your request, provides you with a piece of mundane information (the location of the cathedral in the unfamiliar city you find yourself in, for instance) and you justifiably accept her testimony—and in the good case acquire knowledge (knowledge where the cathedral is)—despite lacking positive reasons to think that this stranger is both knowledgeable and sincere.[1]

Reductionists and anti-reductionists disagree about whether testimony suffices to warrant testimonial belief, or whether it requires supplementation by reasons to believe that the testimony in question is reliable. But they would appear to agree that when we believe what other people tell us we do so because we treat their assertions as *evidence* for what they assert. And according to Moran, this is already to have lost one's grip on the phenomenon of testimony, which has at its core "the basic *relationship* between people when one person tells a second person something and the second person believes him. This is the primary everyday occurrence, and it is the basic way knowledge gets around" (2005, 2).

Whereas the reductionist and the anti-reductionist both seem to conceive of the transmission of knowledge through testimony as occurring through a sequence of monadic acts—X asserts that *p*, thereby putting it out into the public domain, and then Y picks it up—Moran advocates instead a second-personal, bipolar, characterization of the phenomenon, where it matters that X *tells Y* that *p*, and that Y *believes X*. He claims that "the special relations of telling someone, being told, and accepting or refusing another's word are the home of the network of beliefs we acquire through human testimony … [and] provide a kind of reason for belief that is categorically different from that provided by evidence" (2005, 4)—regardless of whether or not the evidence is such that there is a default warrant to treat it as providing sufficient grounds for belief.

Moran's basic thought is that when you tell someone, say, what you had for breakfast, you do not merely provide them with an insight into your beliefs about what you had for breakfast; you also give them your *assurance* that what you had for breakfast was, say, sausages. In so doing, you take on a certain kind of responsibility for your audience's belief that you had sausages for breakfast. As Ben McMyler, who thinks of testimony along similar lines to Moran, points out, "a speaker can choose to do something less than testifying"—such as saying 'I *believe* that *p*' or 'I *think* that *p*'—"precisely in order to avoid assuming…the responsibilities involved in coming out and telling the audience that *p*, in saying '*p*' or 'I *know* that *p*'" (2011, 68–69). Of course, the assurance the speaker offers in telling her audience that *p*, or that she knows that *p*, may not be acknowledged—taken up—as such by her audience: they may treat her utterance merely as evidence for one thing or another, among other things the question whether *p*. But even if the audience were able to come to know that *p* on the basis, in part, of such evidence, their knowledge would not be testimonial, according to McMyler. Testimonial knowledge depends both on the speaker's providing the audience with her assurance that *p and* on the audience's reliance on that assurance: in Anscombe's phrase, "believing *x* that *p* involves relying on *x* for it that *p*" (1979, 145). Believing a person isn't just believing what she says—an audience cannot rely on the speaker for it that *p* if they already believe that *p*—nor

[1]This is a crude summary. For more nuanced discussion, see e.g. Fricker (1995); Audi (2011 §3).

is it simply believing what she says because she said it—the audience does not rely on the *person* of the speaker if they take her utterance merely as evidence for the truth of its content.[2]

Telling, then, "aims at being believed" (Moran 2005, 26): it is a kind of speech act that is directed at another person or persons with the intention that they acknowledge the assurance thereby offered by believing the speaker, rather than merely believing what she says. "It is an insult and may be an injury not to be believed," Anscombe says (1979, 150)—but at the very least the telling fails by its own lights.[3]

This might be doubted: consider the view that a telling succeeds by its own lights just in case it is understood—the speaker's intelligible assertion that *p* is recognized by the audience as an assertion that *p*. Being believed would be a bonus, so to speak, a result over and above the telling's being successful *qua* telling. (This is compatible with its being a result that a speaker typically aims at.) Does the fact that there is sometimes occasion to say "I told you so"—when I told you that *p* but you didn't believe me—amount to evidence for this less demanding view? No: saying "I told you so" may just be a way of saying "I did my bit but you didn't do yours"—you didn't do your part of an act that takes two.[4] Indeed, that the act takes two is indicated by the fact that we also find occasion to say "I tried to tell you"—where my failure lay not in my being tongue-tied but in your not taking up what I said. It is because a successful telling includes this kind of uptake—includes being believed—that I can have failed to tell you something in virtue of your refusal to believe me.[5]

Telling is an act for two in a different way from that in which carrying a sofa is an act for two. If I were stronger and had longer arms I might carry a sofa by myself. But no such augmentation would facilitate self-telling. (The sense in which one may tell oneself things is clearly not the one at issue, for even though I may be able to tell myself things, I cannot believe myself, and the kind of telling we are interested in is that which aims at being believed.) Telling is an act for two not by being a plural act, but by being a bipolar act.

It is worth distinguishing between the *generic* second-personal features that testimony exhibits and any *specifically epistemic* second-personal character it might have. A perfect case of testimony will be a bipolar act: addressed from one to the other as 'I'm telling you', recognized and acknowledged by the other as a telling—'You're telling me'—and taken up—'I believe you'. The abstract structure is the same in the case of promising. For a promise to have been made, the promiser must address the one she promises and the latter must recognize and accept the promise. It is perhaps even clearer in the case of promising that this is not a sequence of two monadic acts—first

[2]See McMyler (2011, chap. 2) for discussion of a symptom: when, but only when, the audience believes *the speaker*, they acquire an entitlement to defer challenges and a distinctive right of complaint.

[3]Of course, a speaker may, in telling someone something, have additional aims—aims that might be achieved regardless of whether she is believed.

[4]If telling is an act for two, then a case in which I do my bit but you don't do your bit comes closer to success (is less defective) than a case in which I try but fail to do my bit and so you cannot do your bit.

[5]The less demanding view might be cast as claiming that being believed is but a *perlocutionary* effect of telling (one characteristically aimed at, perhaps). But see Hornsby (1994) for an illuminating discussion of the idea that "performances of illocutionary acts in the absence of reciprocity are in some way defective" (198).

I do one thing, then you do another—but rather a unitary bipolar act.[6] (Here we display no ambivalence: the promise was not made if it was not accepted, regardless of the recognition of the attempt.) The idea of a bipolar transaction, constituted by address and recognition—I–you, you–me—is common to telling and promising.

The idea that there is a distinctively *epistemic* second-personal aspect of testimony is the idea that the epistemic credentials of the belief acquired on the basis of testimony, on the one hand, and the forms of assurance, responsibility, and dependence that constitute the bipolar nexus, on the other hand, are interdependent. There are, broadly speaking, three options here. One might take the epistemic credentials of an audience's belief to be wholly determined by the second-personal relations of assurance, responsibility, and dependence. Or one might take the credentials to be merely conditioned by those relations. Both of these options take the idea of *believing someone* to have genuinely epistemological significance. Alternatively, however, one might oppose Moran and McMyler and take the sceptical view that, though these second-personal phenomena ought perhaps to play a role in an account of the "practice" or "ethics" of testimony, strictly speaking they leave untouched the *epistemology* of testimony, which remains concerned with a subject's believing (not a person but simply) that *p*.

It is not my purpose to evaluate these options or take a stand with respect to them. Bracketing them, I propose rather to pursue the topic in a different direction, by bringing out what is perhaps a limitation of, or at least a lacuna in, the kind of second-personal account of testimony put forward by Moran and McMyler.

## 2. The scope of second-personal testimony

We may proceed by turning to the other idea that figures, in the quotation from Moran with which I began, as a source of philosophical interest in testimony—namely the idea that our epistemic dependence on testimony is enormous. There is nothing unusual about this claim: adverting to the "testimony-soaked nature of all our knowledge" (Fricker 1995, 394) is an opening gambit common in the literature. For instance, Anscombe claims that "[t]he greater part of our knowledge of reality rests upon belief that we repose in things we have been taught or told" (1979, 143); and McMyler tells us that "[m]ost of what we know about history, science, and current events is acquired from the spoken and written word, from being told things by people we trust and treat as authorities on these matters" (2011, 3).

But one might wonder just how much of our undoubtedly massive epistemic dependence on others consists in the specific kind of bipolar nexus of epistemic responsibility that second-personal accounts of testimony are actually accounts of. Indeed, though Moran and McMyler each appeal to the prevalence of testimonial knowledge in their opening remarks, they are well aware that much of what we know from others does not fall within the scope of their accounts, and that many of our attempts to transmit knowledge to others do not consist in efforts to be believed. Moran says that:

> Not everything done in speech, not even everything done with sentences in the declarative mood, involves the specific relations of telling and being believed. Assertions are also made in the context of argument and demonstration, for instance, where there is no assumption within the discourse that the speaker is to be believed on his say-so. (Moran 2005, 8)

[6]Cf. Kant's problem of the contract, on which see Korsgaard (2009, 189–191).

And McMyler too makes much of the difference between the knowledge an audience gains from a speaker's arguing and the knowledge it gains from a speaker's telling:

> The kind of justification appropriate to knowledge based on a speaker's arguing involves *appeal to the cogency of the argument*. The kind of justification appropriate to knowledge based on a speaker's telling involves *the citing of an authority*. (McMyler 2011, 57–58)

An argument somebody makes with the intention of convincing you of its conclusion may be one that relies only on premises that you already believe, but it need not. I can tell you that *p*, and that if *p* then *q*, with a view to convincing you that *q*. My goal is that you believe me that *p*, and believe me that if *p* then *q*, but that you believe that *q* because *p* and if *p* then *q*—not because I told you. My goal is not for you to believe *me* that *q*, and so in that sense, even though I finish my argument by *asserting* that *q* I am not *telling* you that *q*. You are to take my word for the premises, but to reach your own conclusion from them. Something has gone wrong if you simply believe *me* that *q*.

In order to elucidate the distinctive kind of second-personal epistemic dependence that they think lies at the heart of a proper philosophical understanding of testimony and its significance, Moran and McMyler rely as much on the contrast between taking someone's word for something and being convinced by them as they rely on the contrast between believing on the basis of testimony and believing on the basis of ordinary evidence such as footprints, bloody daggers, and so on. We depend epistemically on others in various ways, they say, but our distinctively second-personal epistemic dependence consists in the more restricted case: telling and being told, believing someone and being believed. In what follows, I want to examine this claim. After all, as Anscombe says, "[t]he greater part of our knowledge of reality rests upon belief that we repose in things we have been *taught or* told" (1979, 143, my emphasis). And one might wonder whether there is anything distinctively second-personal about *teaching*, once it is distinguished from telling.

## 3. Teaching and learning

Education might be thought to have various dimensions corresponding to various aims: the transmission of knowledge and understanding, the development of cognitive skills, the development of the individual as a free and independent thinker and member of society, initiation into a common heritage and tradition, and so on. My focus is on its epistemic dimension: on how forms of knowledge and understanding are transmitted from teachers to learners (more precisely, on one aspect of this dimension—see the last paragraph of this section).[7] The kind of teaching I will aim to characterize is not found only in the classroom, and much of what takes place in classrooms will not exemplify it, or will not exemplify it very well, or will not even aspire to exemplify it. In distinguishing teaching from telling I do not purport to thereby offer an exhaustive characterization of the ways in which we come to know from one another. For one thing, we learn much from others despite the fact that they do not intend to teach us what we are learning from them, and indeed they may be altogether unaware that we are learning from them. (Much upbringing is like this, and upbringing is the locus of much moral education.) Nevertheless, I hope that the

[7] In focusing on this dimension, I am not claiming it can be completely disentangled from other dimensions. On the variety of aims of education, and questions of their compatibility and separability, see Peters (1973); Robertson (2009).

conception of teaching to be elucidated here is recognizable as one important, if idealized, form that the transmission of knowledge takes.

Instances of this conception of teaching and learning seem to exhibit the same generic markers of the second-person as telling and promising—they are addressed by the teacher to the learner, recognized by the learner and, when they succeed by their own lights, there is uptake: learning. It would appear that teaching, like telling and promising, has a bipolar transactional structure. It does not consist of a sequence of monadic acts: the teacher's act of teaching, followed by the student's act of learning. Rather, in the good case, *X is teaching Y* and *Y is learning from X* describe the same reality, as a famous comparison of John Dewey's brings out:

> Teaching may be compared to selling commodities. We should ridicule a merchant who said that he has sold a great many goods although no one had bought any. But perhaps there are teachers who think that they have done a good day's teaching irrespective of what students have learned. There is the same equation between teaching and learning that there is between selling and buying. (Dewey 1910, 35–36)

The question, however, is whether teaching in this sense exhibits any more specific second-personal relation, like that of believing someone in the case of testimony. Does the learner believe the teacher? Or is there another form of second-personal epistemic dependence that appears in this nexus? Or is teaching merely generically second-personal, but not epistemically second-personal?

In what follows, I will continue to bracket the question whether the apparently epistemic second-personal relation of believing someone, or any analogue to it that might appear in the case of teaching and learning, "really" contributes to the epistemology, "properly construed", of learning from others. The reason for this is that my primary aim is to arrive at an adequate description of teaching and learning as a second-personal phenomenon (of, it will emerge, a quite distinctive kind). I take this description to be prior to any attempt to descry in it a kind of "second-personal reason for belief". Like Moran, whose concern with getting told and being believed "is not so much with the conditions for knowledge as with the nature of the two sides of the relationship" (2005, 2), my interest in teaching and learning is concerned with the shape or structure or form of the relationship that holds between teacher and learner; I leave it to others to ask whether aspects of this relationship—which surely has a claim on ordinary consciousness to be credited as one of epistemic dependence—should be downgraded to forms of merely informational, causal, or instrumental dependence, in case the topic of "genuinely" epistemic dependence is reserved for that which pertains to the justificatory status of the learning subject's cognitive state. Working, for the sake of the discussion, with a capacious conception of epistemic dependence (on which other purposes might dictate the imposition of stricter constraints), I want to ask: how (if at all) does the learner's knowledge or understanding depend epistemically on the teacher? In the next section, I will discuss three ways of distinguishing teaching from telling with a view to answering this question.

## 4. Three conceptions of teaching

I

Despite the fact that we seem to find the generic second-personal features of address, recognition, and uptake, one might doubt that there is anything epistemically second-personal about teaching and learning. For instance, as Anscombe notes, "[i]n teaching philosophy we do not hope that our pupils will *believe us*, but rather, that they will

*come to see* that what we say is true—if it is" (1979, 145). Obviously Anscombe is not thinking of a philosophy professor telling her students that, say, Plato was Aristotle's teacher, but rather of teaching them—getting them to see—that, say, the argument from illusion is only apparently compelling, or that consequentialism is antithetical to morality. These are the kinds of things that students *could* come to believe because they believed the teacher when she said these things, taking her to be authoritative over the subject matter and perhaps swayed by her charisma; but if so, the teaching should be judged to have failed.

In a recent paper, David Bakhurst argues that we should distinguish between teaching and testifying; and he endorses Anscombe's distinction, which he seeks to explicate as follows:

> When a teacher presents some subject-matter to her students, there is a sense in which she speaks, not in her own voice, but for the subject-matter itself. … She presents to her students, not *her* knowledge as such, but common knowledge in which she invites her students to share. She thus speaks in her own voice only in asides and her role is that of facilitator or conduit. She is to initiate her students into some part of the conversation of mankind, … and she does not portray her own voice as part of that conversation. A teacher must aspire to a certain intellectual transparency so that the students 'look through her' to the shared subject of their inquiries. … Of course, a student may form beliefs by taking her teacher's word for it, and in that case the knowledge the student acquires is testimonial in kind, but here the student is accepting what she is told rather than learning what she is taught. Teaching can begin with such acceptance, but it cannot end there. (Bakhurst 2013, 198–199)

Bakhurst agrees with Moran and McMyler that the concept of testimony (when restricted to tellings) should be understood in terms of believing someone. Teaching is different because the teacher does not aim to be believed personally—the teacher aspires to transparency to the material, acting only to facilitate the students seeing for themselves and coming to their own conclusions. Of course, in order to teach, teachers will need to engage in some telling. But this would appear to be the same sort of thing as happens when a politician presents to the electorate an argument for the claim that, say, the government's policies are not working, on the basis of premises that he is at the same time informing them of. In both cases, there will be a distinction between what the students or electorate believe on the basis of the teacher's or politician's authority and what they believe on the basis of their own evaluation of the considerations with which they have been presented. Thus it would appear that on Bakhurst's picture, students do not depend epistemically on their teachers for what they are strictly speaking *taught*, but only for what they are *told* in the course of being taught.

But this cannot be right. One of the ways in which Moran contrasts his conception of testimony with an "evidential" (i.e. non-second-personal) conception of it is in terms of the speaker's perspective on what he's up to, and what he presents himself to his interlocutor as being up to: on the evidential view, Moran says, it is "as if the meaning of his utterance were 'Now I have spoken; make of it what you will'", whereas on his view it is rather "'Take it from me'" (2005, 26). Anscombe and Bakhurst are surely correct to think that the teacher neither conceives of herself nor presents herself to her students as saying 'Take it from me'. But to picture her as saying 'Now I have spoken, make of it what you will' seems equally inept. After all, even teaching philosophy is not simply a matter of assigning some readings, putting some considerations up on the blackboard, and letting the students make of it what they will. At the very least, the teacher is *actively engaged with* the students, *helping* them

come to see it for themselves.[8] Teaching, in this dimension of it at least, goes beyond the activity of a mere conduit, and perhaps beyond mere facilitation, too.[9]

There may, however, be an alternative interpretation of Bakhurst's remarks on teaching. So far I have assumed that when Bakhurst suggests that the teacher's role is that "of a facilitator or conduit" he means that what the teacher is facilitating is the students' coming to see things for themselves (he is in the midst of explicating Anscombe's remark about teaching philosophy), and thus that what she is a conduit for is, more or less, the truth. The alternative interpretation puts more weight on the claim that the teacher "speaks…for the subject-matter itself": what is facilitated is an engagement between the students and the subject-matter—physics, say, or history. On this reading, the teacher is analogous to an *interpreter*. An interpreter aspires to transparently convey the message he is interpreting, such that his audience as it were looks through him to the author of the message as the author of the testimony. There is no question of the audience's believing the *interpreter* that *p*—if they believe anyone it is the author of the message. So perhaps Bakhurst's suggestion is that a teacher aspires to transparently convey "what is known" or "what History knows" about the causes of the First World War, such that her students as it were look through her to "what is known" or History.

But the analogy breaks down: whereas it is no part of being an interpreter that one endorses the claims one is interpreting, it is part of the ordinary conception of teaching that teachers know, and thus endorse, what they teach.[10] Thus neither interpretation of Bakhurst's conception of the function of the teacher—either as a facilitator/conduit for the students' engagement with the facts, or as an interpreter for the subject-matter—seems to get things right.

## II

Bakhurst takes his inspiration not just from Anscombe but also from a suggestive claim made by Sebastian Rödl: "It defines teaching that the teacher does not speak as a particular subject, but as the science" (forthcoming). Whereas Bakhurst's teacher speaks *for* the subject-matter, Rödl's speaks *as* it. Exploring Rödl's claim will provide us with an entry point to a more satisfactory conception of the kind of epistemic transaction that teaching and learning consists in (§4.III).

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[8]A corresponding active responsiveness and engagement on the part of the learner is characteristically required for teaching and learning to be at its best; this goes beyond the relatively passive—though not mindless—comprehension of what is said that typically suffices, in propitious epistemic circumstances, for coming to know what one has been told.

[9]It will be tempting to some, of course, to construe this active engagement as having merely causal but not epistemic significance. There is a danger here of restricting our conception of what forms epistemic dependence might bear to those exemplified by testimony. If knowledge can be *transmitted* through teaching, then we may well have to enrich our conception of epistemic dependence. (Cf. the discussion at the end of §3 above.)

[10]On this conception of the role of the interpreter, see Anscombe (1979, 147); and for helpful discussion, see Wanderer (2013 §III). The much-discussed example of a creationist biology teacher who teaches her students evolutionary theory, something she herself believes to be false, is relevant here; but, as Wanderer (2013, 209) points out, even if the students acquire knowledge about evolution, this is obviously not an ordinary case of learning from teaching.

Rödl's goal, in the paper in which this claim occurs, is to show that "the concept of [empirical] judgment contains the concept of knowledge from testimony" (forthcoming). He means that a proper understanding of judgment and knowledge already brings with it an understanding of testimony. This contrasts with the more widespread view—or assumption—that we can understand what knowledge is in the individual case, and then subsequently raise the question whether it's possible to acquire knowledge from testimony, and if so how. Rödl's strategy is to show that "it is the nature of [empirical] judgment to expand its subject from one to another" (msp. 4). A subject conceives of her judgments as binding for every subject. This is in contrast to mere opinions, preferences, and feelings. Perhaps I do think, as it happens, that you should agree with my opinion on the relative merits of The Police and The Smiths, share my preferences with respect to the lager/bitter question, and feel warm (as I do) now that the heating is on. But it is not internal to my having opinions, preferences, and feelings that I should demand such agreement, as it is in the case of judgment: it is internal to my judging that *p* that I hold that, when it comes to the question whether *p*, you should side with me. After all, to judge that *p* is to judge that *p* is true; and one—including you—ought to judge only what is true.

Rödl argues that because empirical judgment depends on experience, which must be some subject's, the concept of empirical judgment contains the idea of a judgment that calls for the agreement of every subject but is not yet actually shared (contrast the knowledge of the law of non-contradiction, which is actually shared by all judgers). Thus though it is in the nature of knowledge to bind every subject, empirical knowledge does not always already bind every subject. But it is presumably no accident if something realizes its nature. And so it is no accident if empirical knowledge comes to be shared—if X's knowledge that *p* expands in its subject, so to speak, so that Y and Z know that *p* as well. However, empirical knowledge's coming to be shared *would* be an accident if its coming to be shared were explained by something accidental to it, and thus testimony must not be accidental to empirical knowledge—or as Rödl puts it, "the concept of [empirical] judgment contains the concept of knowledge from testimony" (forthcoming). We may think of the transmission of knowledge by testimony, on this view, as knowledge's self-conscious subjective expansion.

The concept of testimony that Rödl finds contained in that of empirical knowledge is broad: it encompasses both teaching and telling. Rödl thinks that a principled distinction can be drawn between these two modes of testimony (in this broad sense)—or "two forms of the subjective expansion of empirical judgment" (forthcoming)—because the contents that are proper to each differ in form. An empirical judgment the object of which is particular—*Joe fell over*, *the sun is shining*—depends on a particular subject's having perceived a particular object, and such judgments come to be shared through testimony (in the narrow sense): one particular subject's *telling* another particular subject something. By contrast, the content of an act of teaching is, Rödl says, an empirical judgment the object of which is general—*tigers have stripes*, *summer nights are long in Norway*; such a judgment "depends on things' having been perceived, not on anyone in particular's having perceived anything in particular" (msp. 7). Rödl claims, provocatively, that the *subject* of such a judgment must be general too—it is a science. So to say that the teacher in teaching speaks as the science is not to say that the teacher acts as either a conduit or an interpreter for the science; it is rather to say that the teacher is, as it were, the concrete embodiment of the proper bearer of knowledge—physics, or history. In Rödl's view, then, there is a transaction between two subjects in teaching as well as in telling. But in the case of teaching, the teaching subject is general.

Teaching someone something, he says, “is a transaction in which a particular subject comes to share in a general subject: she is initiated, we say, into the science” (msp. 7).

Much can be learnt from Rödl’s way of thinking about the relationship between knowledge and testimony, and from his way of drawing a distinction between teaching and telling. However, I think that his conception of teaching omits two important features.

First, someone is not initiated into the science of zoology—she does not become a zoologist—merely by learning that tigers have stripes. Whatever we make of Rödl’s claim that the subject of a general empirical judgment is a science, a science is obviously not merely the general subject of a general empirical judgment; it would have to be the general subject of a *system* of general empirical judgments. Initiation into the science—teaching, as Rödl defines it—must be initiation into the system or some part of it.

A system of judgments is certainly more than a heap of beliefs that share a similar subject-matter. Such a heap could perhaps be said to constitute a system in a minimal sense, insofar as the judgments did not contradict each other. But lack of disagreement is the weakest form of agreement. A genuine system of judgments *sustains itself*—not merely negatively, through the absence of disagreement, but positively, through mutual support and explanation. The cognitive grasp of a such a system or structure is often what *understanding* is taken to be by those who distinguish it from knowledge.[11] Whereas (propositional) knowledge is standardly taken to be of discrete propositions, understanding is said to be holistic, to require “seeing” the connections between the elements of the system or structure; though understanding thus involves knowledge of propositions, it is often said to require more than propositional knowledge; and whereas one is said either to know that *p* or not, understanding is said to come in degrees. Moreover, it is often claimed that education aims at preserving or even producing understanding, as well as at transmitting knowledge.[12]

This might suggest that to initiate someone into the science of zoology, a zoology teacher must furnish the student with a whole host of general zoological judgments that stand in relations of mutual support and explanation—that the teacher must furnish the student not merely with knowledge, but with understanding. But though this is perhaps necessary, it cannot be sufficient; the second omission in Rödl’s conception of teaching is brought out by a remark of Ryle’s: “it is and ought to be one main business of a teacher precisely to get his pupils to advance beyond their instructions and to discover new things for themselves, that is, to get them to think things out for themselves” (1967, 466). Ryle does not have in mind merely the idea we have encountered before, namely that students may draw their own conclusions from information to which their attention is drawn; rather, he is thinking that the teacher aspires for her students to, for instance, form hypotheses of their own, devise and conduct experiments, gather evidence, and think about what it shows. An example Ryle gives of teaching success is when “a brilliant undergraduate makes a good philosophical move that no one else has ever taught him, and maybe no one else has ever made” (465). When a student goes on to make a new discovery, it is not that

[11]See e.g. Grimm (2010); Roberts and Wood (2007, chap. 2).

[12]See e.g. Robertson (2009, 19).

knowledge of some proposition has expanded *subjectively*, for the discovery is new; rather, the system of knowledge, the science, has expanded *objectively*.

## III

Rödl articulates his conception of testimony by reflecting on the distance between two features of empirical judgment: that, as judgment, it demands universal subjective agreement, and that, as empirical, it doesn't have it. It is in the nature of knowledge to be shareable, to be such as to expand subjectively; and it is from this point that Rödl unfolds his conceptions of teaching and telling. But it is not merely in the nature of knowledge to be shareable. It is in its nature to grow—in object as well as subject. And this point, which receives no attention in Rödl's account, is important for our understanding of teaching. It is, however, easy to see why the point might be overlooked: after all, though knowledge may sometimes grow directly through teaching, it is not in the nature of teaching that this happens; knowledge grows non-accidentally rather through *inquiry*. But teaching does not merely transmit knowledge and understanding, producing knowers and "understanders"—it produces inquirers. And this is not a mere happy by-product of the subjective expansion of systematic knowledge: it is therefore an indirect but nevertheless non-accidental result of teaching that knowledge grows. Teaching is thus that through which knowledge expands subjectively *so as* to expand objectively.

There is consequently a difference in the character of the "subjective generality" of the knowledge that gets around via teaching and telling, respectively. In successful cases of telling and teaching, the knowledge told and taught expands in its subject—more subjects come to "participate" in "what is known". The knowing collective that results from the spread of knowledge via *tellings* is in a certain sense *homogeneous* and *static*: I heard from Jane that yesterday the weather was fine in Madrid; I tell you; now we all know. Though you and I acquired our knowledge of this proposition from different people (me second-hand from an eye-witness, you third-hand from me), our knowledge is the same. We may each go on to do different things with it, but such differences would depend on features of us external to our possession of knowledge that yesterday the weather was fine in Madrid: for instance, you know that it had been fine in Madrid the previous six days and so you can conclude that it has been fine for a week; I am able to impress someone with my cosmopolitan sophistication; and so on. It is accidental to telling as such if an informant's audience advances beyond what they have been told and discovers new things for themselves (though it may be no accident with respect to the the informant's further intentions in telling his audience that *p*).

In the case of *teaching*, however, the spread of knowledge produces a different kind of knowing collective: an *active community*. Successful teaching results in the learner's initiation into a science, art, craft, or other kind of practice, the members of which are such as to become independent active principles in its maintenance and development, be it theoretical physics, the violin, cricket, or pottery.[13] (They may of course remain only potentially active principles. But knowing that yesterday the weather was fine in Madrid contains no inner impetus to acquire further knowledge about the weather, Madrid, or yesterday.) The initiates are all members of the community, but they have different standings from one another; each member's knowledge may differ in certain respects from the next's. If we are both told, and thereby come to know, that *p*, our knowledge is the same, but even if we both learned

[13]Cf. Peters (1973).

to play the piano from the same teacher, or took the same philosophy class, it is plausible to think that the knowledge and understanding we thereby acquired would not be homogeneous in the relevant sense: you're better at left-hand trills, I'm better at improvisation; you really understand the significance of Thrasymachus's challenge, whereas I have acquired a better grip of the function argument. It may be useful to think here of apprenticeship: the apprentice is initiated into a tradition, but the ultimate *telos* of apprenticeship is the journeyman's becoming a master craftsman in his own right, with his own signature style. Individuality is an achievement. Perhaps it is in part because successful teaching consists in producing new members in the relevant community of knowledge, new active principles for the preservation, growth, and evolution of the knowledge, that good teaching has a motivational or inspirational dimension, a dimension that is no part of ordinary telling.

On this view, teaching is thought of as the initiation of the student into a science, art, craft, or practice.[14] I take it to be a virtue of this approach that it does not discriminate between these. For it is natural to think that teaching has a wider range of objects than telling. In the case of telling, we have

(i) X told Y that *p* — Y learned that *p* from X.

In the case of teaching, we have

(ii) X taught Y how to ϕ — Y learned how to ϕ from X
  – e.g., Jane taught John how to play the piano
(iii) X taught Y to ϕ — Y learned to ϕ from X
  – e.g., Anna taught her daughter to stand up for herself
(iv) X taught Y not to ϕ — Y learned not to ϕ from X
  – e.g., she taught her not to retaliate
(v) X taught Y (about) O — Y learned (about) O from X
  – e.g., Mr. Barrable taught John (about) History, or about the French Revolution.

Of course, one can tell someone *to do* or *not to do* something; but here it is clear that such telling aims not at being believed, nor at the transmission of knowledge more generally, but at being obeyed. And one may also tell someone how to do something. But when this is more than a specification of the manner in which to do something the addressee already knows how to do, it would appear to articulate knowledge that has a "recipe"-like form: knowledge that one can (e.g.) ϕ by first ψ-ing, then χ-ing while ξ-ing, and so on. On the one hand, this is straightforwardly propositional knowledge, and thus an instance of (i). On the other hand, such knowledge how presupposes, on pain of regress, knowledge how that takes a different form: skills, which are not told but taught.[15]

The case of teaching and being taught (about) a subject matter is complicated. For insofar as the initiation of the learner into the subject matter involves more than the transmission of a heap of judgments pertaining to the subject matter, the learner will

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[14]As I have emphasized, this account of the nature of the teacher–learner relationship is not as such an account of what makes the learner's resultant state one of genuine knowledge or understanding. In particular, I am not making the anti-realist claim that being initiated into an epistemic community constitutes acquiring knowledge or understanding.

[15] For further discussion, see Small (forthcoming).

need to acquire various abilities and dispositions—she must learn *how to do* various things and *to do* and *not to do* various things. For instance, it is part of teaching history to teach students how to deal with historical evidence in various ways, to teach them what sort of evidence is required to support what sort of claim, to teach them not to draw overly general conclusions from insufficient evidence, and so on. Some of these abilities and dispositions may be shared across disciplines, others may be subject-specific specifications of general abilities and dispositions, and others may be particular to the field at hand. But these abilities and dispositions—know-hows and know-tos/know-not-tos—are essential to the learner's becoming an incipient active member of the community of knowledge of the subject matter. It is because teaching involves not merely the transmission of judgments but of abilities and dispositions that it is possible for the learner to advance beyond that region of the system of judgments to which he has been exposed by his teacher, either by finding his own way about the system or by extending the system itself. And insofar as acquiring such knowing how and knowing to is part of learning about the subject-matter—importantly, even when what is being taught is a science, not only an art or craft—the learning must therefore be described from the other direction as teaching, not telling: what is learned goes beyond propositional knowledge, to which telling (in the sense at issue in thinking about testimony) is restricted.

The two features of teaching that I have emphasized in going beyond Rödl's account are the generality of what is taught (not just general judgments, but a system or structure of understanding) and the role that teaching plays in creating the conditions for new inquiry. These two features can be seen to be related as follows. If the science, art, craft, or other kind of practice into which the learner is initiated through teaching is seen as something that itself has a history, and which can be expected to develop and evolve in the future, then, if it is to be no accident that the knowledge persists through time in this manner, it must provide not only for its own *replication* in a new generation of knowers, but also for its own *development* in a new generation of epistemic practitioners.

Rödl's thought was that the concept of testimony is revealed to be immanent in that of empirical knowledge by a proper reflection on the nature and conditions of the latter. By contrast, focusing on the usual questions that attend discussions of whether I know (say) that I have hands, or that Smith owns a Ford, can make it seem as if one might arrive at an intelligible conception of knowledge independently of raising the question whether and how it is possible to acquire knowledge, thus conceived, on the basis of others' testimony. The approach I intend here can be brought out by means of similar contrasts. One might think that an account of what it is for S to *know* that *p* can be in place before raising, as an independent issue, the question what it takes for S to *understand* the systematic body of knowledge in which *p* figures.[16] Or one might seek to put in place the idea of a *body* of understanding (of the body that is understood), or of an *individual thinker's* understanding such a body, and then ask what needs to be added to arrive at the idea of a *community* of understanding (a community's understanding of a body of understanding). And one might think that an account of understanding, or of its acquisition by learners through teaching, could be independent of accounts of the abilities and dispositions (and of their acquisition)

[16] Even those contemporary philosophers who think that understanding cannot be reduced to knowledge tend not to think that knowledge is itself to be understood by reference to understanding. In this they differ from a tradition that runs from the ancients to (at least) the early modern rationalists: see Burnyeat (2012); Carriero (2013).

required for its growth.[17] By contrast, I have pictured these as elements of an organic whole: if we begin with the idea that knowledge aspires, as it were, to a kind of systematic unity that inheres in a community of inquiring knowers, a conception of teaching as initiating new members into this community, endowing them with the wherewithal to participate in it, is revealed to be immanent in the concept of knowledge.[18]

## 5. Teaching and the second-person

Let us return to the question of whether there is anything second-personal about teaching, and if so, what. It turns out that the issue is more complex than we might have thought at first; the interpersonal relation between the teacher and the learner we have elucidated is complicated and distinctive, for two reasons.

First, there is a complication in how the terms of the relation are characterized. In the case of telling, the relation holds between two subjects. Either or both of these subjects might be plural: A and B may tell C and D what they did on their holidays. The teacher does not speak as an individual subject, but nor is the generality that characterizes the teacher's pole of the teaching–learning relation—such that the teacher in a sense goes proxy for the whole science, art, or practice, for "what is known"—mere plurality. Though the actuality of the epistemic community for which the teacher speaks resides in the individuals and concrete interpersonal relations it comprises, it is not merely on behalf of those individuals that the teacher speaks, but on behalf of the science, art, or craft of which they are, as it were, the present custodians. Nevertheless, whereas the teller, in telling, is responsible both to the one she tells for telling the truth and to the facts on which her act depends for its being a transmission of knowledge, the teacher, in teaching, is responsible not only to the learner and to the relevant portion of reality in this manner—she is responsible also to the other members of the community in that she represents *her* teaching as *their* teaching. Thus the "me" in Moran's gloss on the formal character of telling, "Take it from me", would quite clearly be out of place in a corresponding gloss on the formal character of teaching; but the "me" could not be replaced with an "it", with something third-personal ("Take it from history"). Teaching is not simply a relation that holds between the learner and "what is known", because the teacher is not transparent to the latter; she figures as a particular source of motivation, inspiration, and guidance concerning what is interesting and important. More appropriate than "me" or "it" would be "us". But the message of teaching, insofar as it aims at the initiation of the learner into the system, is not "Take it from us", but rather something like: "Join us".

Secondly, precisely insofar as the "message" of teaching is not "*Take it* from us" but rather "*Join* us", there is something infelicitous in thinking of the interpersonal "relation" between teacher and learner as a *relation* at all. A bipolar relation joins two subjects together in such as a way as to hold them apart as distinct and opposed to one

[17]For instance, it might be held that "educators should be concerned not only to transmit expert knowledge with understanding but also to develop to some extent the cognitive skills required to produce and evaluate such knowledge" (Robertson 2009, 20). By contrast, it might be held that understanding is not as such merely contemplative ("seeing" connections) but is in some sense practical and thus as such involves the abilities and dispositions required to make new connections (see Elgin 1999, 123; Roberts and Wood 2007, 47).

[18]Thus the abilities and dispositions that I have insisted belong to this wherewithal are in no sense opposed to, but rather may be said to partake in, the nature of judgment (perhaps better, the nature of the concept).

another: I–you, you–me. (Telling, promising, contract, tort.) By contrast, initiation joins the initiate with the whole into which she is being initiated through a *process* that begins by holding them apart—you are not one of us yet—and comes to a successful conclusion when they are brought together—you have become one of us. It is important to the picture I have sketched that the whole into which the learner is initiated is a community constituted by individuals who stand in relations to one another (she is not absorbed into a single "general subject"); thus initiation, though not itself a second-personal relation, is a process by which a second-personal relation is first constituted and then superseded. How to characterize the interpersonal relations that result from initiation—that hold between the members of the community—is a question that deserves further thought. It seems evident, however, that neither the idea of a second-personal relation (as it has thus far been developed in recent literature) nor that of a third-personal relation is appropriate.

This is related to issues of authority and autonomy, which have been important in recent discussions of the second person.[19] When I follow your command, I act on your say-so, but when I follow your advice, I act on my own evaluation of the reasons you gave; when I believe you that *p*, I believe on your say-so (I take it from you), but when I believe what you've been arguing for, I believe on the basis of my own evaluation of the considerations you've presented. Now, whether or not one thinks that an audience's justification in believing that *p* can be constituted by the relations of authority and responsibility that hold between speaker and audience, it may seem still less plausible to think that understanding—insofar as it involves "grasping" or "seeing" connections between things *for oneself*—can be acquired on the basis of authority. Indeed, one might think that if there is a role for authority in teaching, it is in the acquisition of propositional knowledge that that the learner then understands for herself; thus, reliance on authority would be a ladder ultimately to be kicked away when genuine understanding is achieved. There is something right about this point, but it requires careful handling. For one thing, a community may have knowledge or understanding of what no individual member of the community can have within his ken. And for another, it would surely be a mistake to allow an individualistic conception of epistemic autonomy to reassert control of our thinking at this juncture: what is needed is rather the idea of an *epistemically autonomous community* the authority relations within which are mutual.[20]

## Conclusion

Philosophical discussions of testimony typically make much of the idea that an overwhelming amount of our knowledge is testimonial. And some recent accounts of testimony have made much of its being a second-personal phenomenon—not merely in that it involves generic markers of the second-person such as address and recognition, but in that it contains a distinctively second-personal form of epistemic dependence, that of believing someone. But the claim about the extent of our epistemic dependence on testimony requires moderation when it is sung in this second-personal key, for there are many ways in which we learn from others that do

[19]See Darwall (2006); McMyler (2011 ch.5).

[20]On the idea that a community's knowledge or understanding might outrun that of any of its members, see Polanyi (1962); Hardwig (1985); Elgin (1999, 113ff). On the authority relations within an epistemic community, see Polanyi (1962); Zagzebski (2012, chap. 7).

not exemplify the bipolar normative relationship elucidated by Moran and McMyler—not least, learning by being taught.

Teaching and learning seem to exhibit the same generic markers of the second-person as telling and being told and the making of promises. But the conceptual resources articulated by second-personal accounts of testimony, like Moran's and McMyler's, are not adequate to capture the distinctive features of teaching and learning. To force teaching into the mould of telling would be to get the authority relations wrong, and to force it into the mould of the production and consumption of evidence would also be a mistake (not least because how to consume different kinds of evidence may be something that is taught).

However, it would not quite be right to say simply that teaching and learning is a distinctive kind of second-personal phenomenon. Indeed, we have seen that, strictly speaking, teaching and learning, though robustly interpersonal, turns out not to be purely second-personal. This is not to say that it is third-personal, that the teacher merely facilitates the student's learning (her self-learning, it would be tempting to say) by providing her with information, opportunities, and advice. If teaching and learning is thought of as a relation (or better, process) of *initiation*, we need to bring in the idea of an epistemic community, with its own internal relations of mutual authority, in which the idea of second-personal epistemic dependence is not discarded, but superseded.[21]

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[21] Thanks to audiences at the Universities of Leipzig and Warwick, and to Naomi Eilan, Paul Faulkner, Adrian Haddock, Ben McMyler, and Justin Shaddock for comments on a draft. This work was partly suppported by the Research Council of Norway through its Centres of Excellence funding scheme, project number 179566/V20.

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