

Testimonial Worth

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0. Introduction

When we normatively assess actions we hold them to certain standards. When performing moral assessments, we judge whether actions are right or wrong. If an action is part of a practice, such as that of playing tennis, we judge whether the action conforms to the rules which govern that practice. This is also true of our assessments of assertions, or acts of testimony. We judge such acts in terms of truth or falsity, and in terms of conformity to the norm of assertion.

However, our normative assessments go beyond mere judgements of norm conformity. We also assess actions in relation to the agents who perform them. For example, our moral assessments go beyond judgements of right and wrong. We also assess the agent's credit or responsibility for doing the right or wrong thing. These judgements come in different forms. Gary Watson (1996) draws our attention to a particularly important distinction; that between responsibility as attributability, and responsibility as accountability. The former is a type of aretaic assessment. When we judge an agent to be responsible in this sense we take their action to be a manifestation of their character: roughly, their web of motivations, values, and commitments. Judgements of accountability go further, concerning what the agent owes to their moral community, and the reactive attitudes their actions warrant.

Watson's distinction can be extended beyond moral appraisal to normative appraisal more generally. In particular, his distinction applies to our assessments of testifiers, and acts of testimony. It is commonly observed that, when testifying, speakers take responsibility for what they assert. They make themselves accountable for having spoken the truth. And they open themselves up to negative reactive attitudes if they state falsehoods.¹ However, there is also an aretaic dimension to our assessments of assertions. We can judge assertions in terms of the character the testifier displays by making their assertion.

In this paper I will argue that such aretaic assessments are central to our practice of appraising acts of testimony. I will argue that aretaic assessment is central both to our negative appraisals; the judgement that an agent has lied, and to our positive appraisals; our acceptance of testimony. To put this aim another way: I will introduce the notion of 'testimonial worth', which is a reflection of the quality of character a speaker displays in asserting. And I will illustrate the interest and power of the notion by showing that it helps us solve recalcitrant problems in two separate areas: the analysis of lying, and the nature of testimony.

§1 contains a more general discussion of aretaic assessment, and introduces the notion of testimonial worth. In §2 I argue that an agent lies only if they display poor testimonial worth. And in §3 I argue that taking a speaker at their word, as opposed to treating them as a mere

¹ Some epistemologists have made a great deal of this fact. In particular, assurance theorists of testimony emphasize the second personal quality of testimonial responsibility (see, for example Ross (1986), Hinchman (2005, 2014), Moran (2005)).

indicator of the truth, involves taking their truthfulness to be a manifestation of their character as a testifier.

1. Moral and Testimonial Worth

1.1. Moral Worth

Sometimes we do wrong without bearing any responsibility for our having done so. Imagine that we are standing in a crowded train carriage, and the train jolts. I step forward to regain my balance and, without realizing it, I step on your foot.² In doing so I have infringed on your person, and done you wrong. However, this wrongdoing does not reflect negatively on me as an agent. If, on the other hand, I intentionally stepped on your foot, perhaps with the aim of causing you discomfort, this would reflect poorly on me. There is an important sense in which I am, in the latter case but not the former, responsible for wronging you. In the latter case, but not the former, my action of stepping on your foot reflects poorly on me as a moral agent. My wronging you is a manifestation of my moral character.

Likewise, an agent can do the right thing without this reflecting positively on them. Take, for instance, Kant's shopkeeper (cf. Kant 1785 [1998], 4: 397-398): A shopkeeper who gives the correct change does the right thing. However, if they do so only because this is good for business then they do not display positive moral worth. Their giving the correct change, despite this being the right thing to do, does not reflect positively on them as a moral agent. By contrast a shopkeeper who gives the correct change because they know that it is the right thing to do displays positive moral worth. Their doing the right thing manifests their moral character.

I will call such aretaic assessments, both positive and negative, judgements of moral worth. I will not say much about the conditions which must be satisfied for an agent to display positive or negative moral worth, as my aim here is simply to draw an analogy between judgements of moral worth, and our appraisals of testimony. However, the notion of moral worth I am employing does require clarification along several dimensions.³

Firstly, it is important to clarify what I mean by "moral character". I take moral character to be, roughly, the agent's nexus of values, desires, principles, and commitments. That is, it is a function of the states of the agent which underlie and explain their free choices, and actions. I take it that a

² Importantly, my act of stepping forward is intentional and under my control (otherwise it is not clear that *I* would have wronged you in any sense). I simply do not conceive of the action, as I perform it, as an act of stepping on your foot.

³ The notion I am employing is slightly different to the notion of 'moral worth' discussed recently by, for example, Arpaly (2002), Markovits (2010), Sliwa (2016), and Way (2017). For these theorists, positive moral worth is a feature of morally good actions. As I conceive of it, an agent can display positive moral worth even when doing the wrong thing (for example, if an agent does the wrong thing despite acting for the right reasons). Nonetheless, the notions of moral worth employed here and in this literature are, at the very least, close relatives. An agent displays positive moral worth, in my sense, when the moral character underlying their action is such that an agent's doing the right thing *could* be a manifestation of this character. The existing literature on moral worth can be seen as a debate regarding when the rightness of an action *does* manifest the agent's moral character. The notion I am employing is closer to that employed by Greco (1995, 2006), and Hartman (2017).

wrongful act can either manifest, or fail to manifest the agent's moral character. For example, if an agent explicitly disregards a concern for the good, and this fact partially explains why they perform some wrongful act, then their wrongful act will manifest their moral character. Likewise, if an agent is committed to doing the right thing, knows the right thing to do, and does the right thing as a result, then their doing the right thing manifests their moral character. I take an agent to display negative moral worth when the moral character underlying their action is such that it could be manifested by the performance of a wrongdoing (in which case they would be responsible in the aretaic sense for said wrongdoing). And I take an agent to display positive moral worth if the moral character underlying their action could be manifested by their doing the right thing.

Importantly, an agent may display poor moral worth without directly bringing about any harm (or otherwise directly violating any moral law). What matters is that the character underlying their action is such that it *could* (at least in relevantly similar cases) be manifested by such wrongdoing.⁴ This is brought out by cases of moral luck (as observed by Greco (1995, 2006) and Hartman (2017)). Suppose Sam has consumed too much alcohol, and has decided to take his new car for a spin. He speeds through a residential neighbourhood and, as he screeches around a corner, he hits a small child. Sam has done wrong, and his wrongdoing manifests his moral character. Compare Sam to Bam: Bam is in exactly Sam's position, he has also drunk far too much, and is speeding around a residential neighbourhood. Luckily for Bam the children playing nearby don't end up running into the road. So he makes it home safely. We would generally respond differently to Sam and Bam. The sanctions their actions give rise to differ. And, on one level, this makes sense. Sam has done something that Bam has not: he has killed a child. This wrongdoing is on his moral record, and it is not on Bam's.⁵

However, there is an element of discomfort in treating Sam and Bam differently. After all, it is merely a matter of luck that Sam, and not Bam, killed a child. And it seems mistaken to hold that an agent should be subject to sanctions merely through bad luck. I do not wish to take a stand on whether or not there is a genuine problem here. I do think it is clear, however, that moral worth provides a dimension along which we can assess each agent symmetrically. Each agent, displays the same moral worth in each case. The same network of values, motivations, desires, and principles underlies their actions. Bam is lucky not to hit a child. However, the moral character he displays is such that the killing of a child *could* manifest this moral character. It is precisely because of this that his act displays poor moral worth (in the sense intended here).

Finally, it is important to note that the moral worth an agent displays in performing a particular action needn't be a reflection of their overall moral character, where this is conceived of as somewhat stable over time. Rather, when assessing an action in terms of moral worth we are assessing it in light of the agent's moral character in the situation in question: the values,

⁴ It is at this point where my notion of moral worth departs, in the way noted in footnote three, from the standard notion.

⁵ There is a clear sense in which Bam has done wrong. He has behaved recklessly, and put children at risk. However, his behaviour constitutes a wrong in a less direct sense. It is wrong precisely because it could easily have resulted in the death of a child, and child killing is wrong.

principles, and commitments which are operative in the context of action. Consider, for example, an SS officer who momentarily comes to his moral senses and, at great risk to himself, attempts to rescue a Jewish family. We might judge that, regardless of the outcome of his attempt, the officer displays great moral worth. Nonetheless, if such behaviour genuinely constitutes a departure from the norm, his overall moral character (thought of as a reflection of his stable moral character over time) may be very poor indeed.

Normal human beings have a mess of motivations, values, and commitments. Certain features of an agent's character may lay dormant most of the time, only being brought out in certain situations. Even morally praiseworthy individuals may have a darker side to their character, which only reveals itself on occasion. When that side of their character is brought out, and leads them to act immorally, they will display poor moral worth, as their immoral action will manifest a negative aspect of their character which usually lays dormant. Yet, they will still be praiseworthy overall if the positive side of their character (for example, their commitment to moral duty) is normally dominant. For a particular trait to be dominant during a duration of time it is not required for it to be dominant during all sub intervals of that duration. In light of this, we can assess the moral character an agent displays over arbitrary periods of time. We may judge an agent to display positive moral worth over the duration t_1 - t_{100} , take them to display poor moral worth over a sub-interval of that duration (say, t_{10} - t_{20}), and display exemplary moral worth over a sub-sub-interval (say, t_{15} - t_{16}). I will refer to the character an agent's actions exemplify in a particular situation as the agent's "situational character".

1.2. Testimonial Worth

Just as our moral successes and failures can manifest our worth as moral agents, our successes and failures in other realms can manifest our worth along other dimensions of assessment. Watson gives the following example:

My halfhearted effort on the tennis court would not support a negative evaluation of my proficiencies at that sport. Nevertheless, it might bear negatively on me as a tennis player. One can be "good at" playing tennis without being overall a good tennis player. A good tennis player, overall, possesses not only a high level of skill but, among other things, a commitment to the game, a responsibility to its distinctive demands. (In this way, 'good tennis player' functions rather like 'good human being').

Watson, 1996, 244.

Just as an agent's wrongful actions can manifest their poor moral character, an agent's failings at tennis may manifest their poor character as a tennis player. That is, their loss of the tennis match may result from their laziness and lack of commitment to the game. Likewise, a testifier's failure to speak the truth may manifest their poor character as a testifier. When we assess a speaker's testimonial worth we do not merely assess the truth or falsity of their assertion. Rather, we assess their situational character as a testifier, as exemplified by their assertion. An agent's testimonial character will be a function of, for example, their commitment to truthfulness, their responsiveness to the norms governing communication, their responsibility as a belief former,

and potentially innumerable other commitments, values, and principles capable of influencing their reliability as testifiers.⁶ An agent displays poor testimonial worth when the situational testimonial character underlying their assertion is such that the falsity of an utterance could manifest this character. This is simply to say that there are cases in which exactly the same testimonial character is displayed in which they speak falsely, and their doing so is a manifestation of their character. This is what it means for an assertion to display poor testimonial worth.⁷

In getting clear on this, it will be useful to return to the analogy with Sam and Bam. Although Bam did not hit a child, and thus did not violate the moral norm forbidding the killing of innocent children, he did display poor moral worth, since the character underlying his action was such that it could have been manifested in the killing of an innocent child (a major violation of the moral norms). Arguably, asserting falsehoods does not always involve the violation of *moral* norms. However, it does always involve the violation of *communicative* norms. Just as Bam luckily failed to violate the norm against killing innocent children, despite the character he displayed at the time, a speaker may luckily fail to violate the norm against asserting falsehoods, despite the character they display when asserting.

For example, consider Samantha and Bamantha, the bullshitting sisters of Sam and Bam. Samantha wants her neighbour to believe that her brother, Sam, has never been in a car accident. She has no reason to believe this, and she doesn't particularly care if it is true. She just wants her neighbour to believe it. So she tells her neighbour 'Sam has never been in a car accident'. As it turns out, this is false. Sam has been in a car accident. He hit a child whilst drink driving. Thus, Samantha has violated the communicative norm against asserting falsehoods. Moreover, her doing so was a manifestation of the character underlying her utterance; in this case, her disregard for the truth. Now consider Bamantha. Bamantha, wants to convince her neighbour that her brother, Bam, has never been in a car accident. She has no reason to believe this, and she doesn't particularly care if it is true. She just wants her neighbour to believe it. So she asserts 'Bam has never been in a car accident'. As it happens, this is true. Bam has never been in a car accident. Thus, Bamantha, unlike Samantha, has not violated the communicative norm against asserting falsehoods.⁸ However, just as there is pressure to treat Sam and Bam equally as moral agents, there is pressure to treat Samantha and Bamantha equally as testifiers. Despite the fact that Samantha spoke falsely, and Bamantha spoke the truth, the character their communicative actions displayed was parallel. They each displayed the same testimonial worth.

It is important to note that an agent might display exemplary testimonial worth despite asserting something false. For example, they may have extremely good reason believe what they assert, and

⁶ Different agents may exhibit exemplary testimonial character whilst differing with respect to such factors. An excess of, for example, evidence responsiveness may make up for a lack of commitment to the truth (Jennifer Lackey's creationist teacher, discussed in §2.2 and §3, would be an example of such an agent (see Lackey 2007)).

⁷ It is important to note that the relevant counterpart assertions needn't have the same content as the actual assertion. If content identity was necessary then it would be impossible to lie by asserting a necessary truth, as there are no situations where one asserts falsely by asserting such a proposition.

⁸ Which is not to say that she has violated no communicative norms. Just as Bam no doubt violates norms against carelessness, Bamantha no doubt violates parallel norms (perhaps the knowledge norm of assertion, if there is such a norm).

they may be disposed not to assert without such reasons. Still, it may turn out that, by an unforeseeable stroke of bad luck, they end up being mistaken. Likewise, an agent might display poor testimonial worth despite speaking the truth. More generally, not all factors which affect a speaker's reliability will affect their testimonial character. An unlucky speaker who consistently forms false beliefs despite being a responsible belief former will, even if sincere, be a highly unreliable testifier. Still, it would be wrong to say that such an agent displays poor *character* as a testifier. They are unreliable despite their character, not because of it. Likewise, we could imagine an agent who consistently offers reliable testimony despite their intention to do the opposite, as they reliably form false beliefs. Such an agent, despite being reliable, would be displaying poor testimonial character. Their reliability is an accident. They are reliable despite displaying poor testimonial character.

This is entirely consistent with the fact that luck plays an important role in the development and constitution of character. One's having developed exemplary character as a testifier might be the result of external circumstances largely beyond one's control. One might, thus, be lucky to have exemplary character as a testifier. If one is then rendered unreliable as a testifier by, through no fault of one's own, acquiring a great deal of misleading evidence, this will not automatically alter one's character as a testifier. As long as one's commitments, values, and dispositions remain in line with those developed before the string of bad luck, one's character will remain invariant.⁹

This concludes my outline of the notion of testimonial worth. In the following sections I will argue that judgements of testimonial worth play a central role in the judgement that a speaker has lied, and in our acceptance of testimony.

2. Lies and Testimonial Worth.

2.1 Shifty Judgements

To label an assertion a lie is to use one of the most damning assessments of speech that we have at our disposal. Such judgements play a central role in our practice of appraising testifiers and acts of testimony. In this section I argue that, in order to lie, an agent must display poor testimonial worth.

The standard philosophical definition of lying holds that the following conditions are necessary and sufficient for one to have lied:

1. One asserts some proposition *p*.
2. One believes that *p* is false.

⁹ This can be seen clearly via an analogy with skill. Consider a skilled archer. It is likely that luck will have played a large role in the acquisition of their status. For example, they might only have reached this status as a result of being blessed with a good work ethic, having had a competent teacher, having had access to an archery range, and even having hit many lucky shots from which they were able to learn things. Now imagine that this archer is subject to a long run of bad luck. Whenever they take a shot a freak gust of wind blows their arrow off target. Such an archer ceases to be reliable at hitting the target. However, they don't thereby cease to be a skilled archer. I see character as analogous to skill in this sense.

3. One intends to deceive one's audience by asserting p.

Each condition is controversial when considered as necessary for lying.¹⁰ However, it is standardly assumed that these conditions are at least jointly sufficient for an agent to have lied.¹¹ If this is all that is required in order for one to have lied, then a case in which a speaker clearly satisfies these criteria should yield a clear and uncontroversial judgement that the speaker has lied (assuming, of course, that to judge an agent to have lied is simply to judge that conditions sufficient for them to have lied have been satisfied). However, there are cases which satisfy these criteria in which it is not clear that the speaker has lied. Consider the following:

PARTY: Max is talking with an acquaintance, Sally, about where they will be in the evening. Sally is going to an art exhibit and a fancy restaurant. Max was planning to stay at home and read a book. However, he does not want to tell Sally this, as she may think less of him. Aware that Tom, a mutual acquaintance, is holding a party that night, Max says "I will be at Tom's party". At the time of his assertion he does not intend to actually attend the party, he merely wishes to deceive Sally into believing he will be at the party. Moreover, he is aware of this.

At this point, according to the standard view, it is settled that Max has lied. He asserted a proposition; that he will be at the party. He believes this proposition is false. And he asserted it with the intent to deceive. This is not a counterintuitive result. From these details alone it seems quite natural to say that Max has lied. However, the situation may evolve in different ways, and attention to Max's subsequent behaviour can put pressure on us to revise our initial verdict. Let us consider some ways in which the scenario may evolve:

SIMPLE LIE: After telling Sally that he will be at the party Max goes home and settles in for a night of reading. He reads through the night, never attending the party.

In this case it is clear that Max has lied, just as the standard view predicts. However, the case could evolve differently:

CHANGE OF MIND: In general Max is a highly trustworthy and morally upstanding person. Deception is out of character for him. Thus, upon telling Sally that he will be at the party he feels terrible. He likes and respects Sally, and is disturbed by the idea of misleading her. Moreover, having said that he would be at the party he now feels a commitment to be there. That is, having committed himself to the claim that he will be at the party he now feels an obligation to make this claim true. Thus, upon asserting that he

¹⁰ There is disagreement as to the relevant notion of assertion (Carson (2006), Fallis (2009), Saul (2012), and Stokke (2013, 2016)). Some theorists deny that the speaker must disbelieve the proposition they assert (Marsili (2014), Krauss (2017), and Pepp (2018)). And many theorists now reject the third condition due to the existence of bald faced lies; lies where it is common knowledge that what the speaker says is false (Carson (2006), Sorensen (2007), Fallis (2009, 2013), Saul (2012), and Stokke (2013)). Bald faced lies will be discussed in §2.2

¹¹ There are exceptions to this generalization. Some theorists hold that lies must be false (Carson (2006, 2009, 2010), Turri and Turri (2015)), or even known to be false (Benton (2018)). But these theorists are in the minority. I will discuss this position shortly. For arguments that lies needn't be false see Mannison (1969), Saul (2012), and Wiegmann, Samland, and Waldmann (2016).

will be at the party he immediately changes his mind and resolves to attend the party after all. He follows through on this intention, and attends the party.

CHANGE OF MIND can evoke conflicting verdicts.¹² On the one hand, if we focus our attention on Max as he produces his assertion, and think about what he is doing at that very moment, he seems to be lying. On the other hand, if we view the case retrospectively, assessing Max's assertion in the context of his broader pattern of behaviour, then it is far from clear that he has lied. Indeed, it is easy to feel the opposite: that, in the end, he has not lied. After all, it might be thought, it is in large part due to his commitment to honesty and truthfulness (despite his temporary blip) that what he asserted ended up being true. If someone asserts a truth, and their having done so is explained by their deep commitment to truthfulness, it can naturally seem a stretch to claim that they lied; to apply our most damning assessment of truthfulness to their utterance.¹³ Yet, if the standard view is correct then judgements about this case should be clear. After all, it is clear that the conditions set out by the standard view are satisfied.

To be clear, there is an obvious sense in which Max is momentarily dishonest and misleading. He had a deceptive intention, and he misleads Sally by falsely communicating an intention which he lacked. However, this is not sufficient to make his utterance a lie. He did not *assert* that he intended to attend the party, this information is conveyed pragmatically. Of course, the distinction between asserted and pragmatically conveyed content is hard to pin down. It might be worried that on the relevant notion of assertion we should hold that Max really did assert that he planned or intended to attend the party. But this would be a mistake. Consider the following modification of PARTY:

NO-INTENTION: Max is talking with an acquaintance, Sally, about where they will be in the evening. Max is aware that Tom, a mutual acquaintance, is holding a party. He has no desire or intention to attend, indeed he would rather avoid doing so. However, he also has very good evidence that he will be forced to attend against his will. As a result, he

¹² Interlocutors have reported a range of intuitions from the strong judgement that Max has lied, to the judgement that he clearly does not lie, with many (myself included) being able to feel a pull in both directions. This variability in intuitions is unlikely to be due to any lack of sophistication (such as the equation of 'lying' with 'stating falsely', or a confusion between judgements regarding whether or not Max has lied and judgements of his general moral character), as these were not lay intuitions, they were the intuitions of trained philosophers of language, ethicists, epistemologists, and linguists (primarily colleagues and those present at conferences at which earlier versions of this paper were presented). This variability in intuitions is, I believe, data to be explained. There should not be such variability if the standard view captures all there is to lying. The approach I develop here is not committed to the claim that Max does lie, nor to the claim that he does not. It explains why, if he does lie, some might reach the opposite judgement. And vice versa if he does not lie. It is worth noting that, among interlocutors who have written on the topic of lying, there was a tendency to judge that Max has lied in all cases. This may simply be due to the fact that Max's having lied is entailed by the majority of views of lying in the literature (including those endorsed by these interlocutors). However, I think an alternative (and more charitable) explanation is available. I will return to this point in footnote eighteen.

¹³ This is not, I hasten to emphasize, to claim that Max did *not* lie. My aim here is simply to indicate the sort of mindset which may be conducive to the intuition that Max did not lie.

believes that he will be at Tom's party in the evening. He asserts "I will be at Tom's party".

In asserting without qualification that he will be at Tom's party he communicates that he has an intention to attend. He thus communicates something false. However, he does not lie. All he actually asserted was that he would be at the party, not that he intended or planned to attend. The situation may be different if he was explicitly asked 'what are your plans for tonight?', or if this was clearly the question under discussion (see Stokke 2016). However, this is not built into the case. It is, thus, important not to let this misleading pragmatically conveyed information distort one's judgment about the case. In CHANGE OF MIND the content of Max's assertion was true, and he went out of his way to make sure of that.¹⁴

So, CHANGE OF MIND is problematic for the standard view. But there is an obvious fall-back: As noted in footnote eleven, some theorists hold that lies must be false, or even known to be false. Yet Max's assertion was true. This may explain the hesitancy of some to claim that Max has lied in CHANGE OF MIND. However, it leaves open the question of why others have the opposite intuition.¹⁵ Moreover, CHANGE OF MIND can be modified in such a way that Max's assertion ends up being false. Yet this alteration does not make it any clearer a case of lying:

ACCIDENT: In general Max is a highly trustworthy and morally upstanding person. Deception is out of character for him. Thus, upon telling Sally that he will be at the party Max feels terrible. He likes and respects her, and is disturbed by the idea of misleading her. Moreover, having said that he would be at the party he now feels a commitment to be there. That is, having committed himself to the claim that he will be at the party he now feels an obligation to make this claim true. Thus, upon asserting that he will be at the party he immediately changes his mind and resolves to attend the party after all. He gets ready, sets off to the party, and is hit by a car as he approaches his destination. He dies on the scene and never makes it through the door.

¹⁴ As one referee suggested, it could simply be that people's intuitions about CHANGE OF MIND are confused. For example, perhaps Max's change of mind leads some to question whether he really believed that he would not attend the party in the first place. Since it is explicitly stated that Max's plans, when he makes his statement, conflict with his statement, this particular explanation does not strike me as promising. I would hope for a more charitable explanation of the relevant intuitions. But the point remains that, in general, there may be a number of viable explanations for the conflicting intuitions CHANGE OF MIND seems liable to generate. Some of these explanations may be consistent with the standard view. Thus, it is worth emphasizing that even if the testimonial worth account can provide a compelling account of these conflicting verdicts (as I will argue it can), this fact by itself does not provide particularly strong support for the view that lying involves displaying poor testimonial worth (a claim I will argue for in what follows). Thankfully my case for the claim that lying involves displaying poor testimonial worth does not depend on these considerations alone. In §2.2 I argue that the testimonial worth account is also able to provide a straightforward explanation of the problem raised by selfless assertions and bald faced lies. It is the ability of the testimonial worth account to provide a unified account of these separate problems which, I think, speaks strongly in its favor.

¹⁵ This assumes that part of the data we must capture when theorising about lying is the pattern of intuitive judgements people have about whether or not somebody has lied (this is not to say that a theory must capture all such judgements, but if it conflicts with large swathes of such judgements I take this to be a cost). However, as one referee points out, it may be that we should simply expect such widespread disagreement and not consider it a cost if a theory is unable to capture it.

Once again, Max did everything within his power to ensure that his assertion ended up being true. His unexpected demise no more makes him a liar than it would make him a promise breaker had he promised to attend the party. Since ACCIDENT is identical to CHANGE OF MIND in all relevant respects, except that Max's assertion ends up being false in ACCIDENT, it is unlikely that the intuition that Max did not lie in CHANGE OF MIND is simply driven by the intuition that lies must be false.

Of course, the falsity of Max's utterance in ACCIDENT is merely accidental. It could perhaps be maintained that, in order to have lied, the speaker must be responsible for the falsity of their assertion (that is, that the speaker be responsible for having asserted a falsehood). This would capture the intuition that Max has not lied in either CHANGE OF MIND or ACCIDENT. However, this condition is too strong:¹⁶

ASSASSIN: After telling Sally that he will be at the party Max goes home and settles in for a night reading. He would have read through the night if it were not for an assassin who enters his living room and shoots him in the head. As a result, he neither reads through the night nor goes to the party.

Max clearly lies in ASSASSIN. Yet the falsity of his assertion is not his own doing. Thus, one's having lied does not require that one's stating a falsehood was one's own doing (even if it does require that one state a falsehood). So, the intuition that Max has not lied in ACCIDENT and CHANGE OF MIND cannot be explained by this more sophisticated version of the falsity view either.

Thus, the hesitancy to claim that Max has lied in CHANGE OF MIND is not due to the falsity of his assertion. In order to explain the variable intuitions this case can evoke, I claim, we should recognize that judging a speaker to have lied involves judging them to have displayed poor testimonial worth. In SIMPLE LIE Max stated a falsehood, and this was his own doing. Likewise, in ASSASSIN, although it was not his own doing that his statement turned out to be false, the nexus of motivations, values, and commitments underlying his assertion was the same as in SIMPLE LIE. Thus, his character was such that the falsity of his utterance could, in relevantly similar circumstances (i.e. in SIMPLE LIE), be a manifestation of this character. Moreover, his character remains stable throughout each case.

In CHANGE OF MIND and ACCIDENT, when we view the cases retrospectively, and consider Max's total pattern of motivations and behaviour, it is easy to feel that he has not lied. This is easily explained. It is true that Max had a deceptive intention, believing his statement to be false. However, he also feels a strong commitment to truthfulness, and a duty not to mislead. In the end, it is these features of his character which win the day. It is these features that eventually affect his having spoken the truth in CHANGE OF MIND. Given the situational testimonial character exemplified over this duration it required an unlikely stroke of bad luck in ACCIDENT

¹⁶ Similarly, the claim that the speaker must know that what they assert is false ends up being too strong. We can generate analogues of SIMPLE LIE where the speaker's belief is unsafe (for example, due to a failed plan to kidnap the speaker and bring them to the party), or defeated (due to consistent past failures to follow through on deceptive intentions (see footnote 22 for further discussion of such a case)).

for his assertion to turn out false. His speaking falsely here was, in no way, a manifestation of his character as a testifier. Thus, it is natural that, in judging the case retrospectively, we would feel pressure to deny that Max has lied.

However, the situation changes if we focus on a shorter sub-duration of the case. Consider the time slice at which Max produces his assertion: at this precise moment his commitment to truthfulness is not dominant in his character. He is, over this short duration, being deceptive. Indeed, for the brief duration in question he is displaying similar testimonial character to that displayed in SIMPLE LIE. The situational testimonial character displayed over this short duration is such that it could, in relevantly similar cases, be manifested by his speaking falsely. This explains why, by focusing on the precise moment of assertion, it is so easy to judge that Max has lied. His behaviour over this short duration displays poor testimonial worth.

If there is any fact of the matter about whether or not Max lied in CHANGE OF MIND, then either the judgement that he has lied, or the judgement that he has not lied, is false.¹⁷ The hypothesis that lies display poor testimonial worth allows us to capture the range of judgements CHANGE OF MIND elicits without committing either way. It can, for those who hold that Max does lie, be seen as providing an error theory for the judgement that he does not, and vice versa for those who hold that he has not lied. Moreover, it clearly captures the judgements of those who find themselves pulled in both directions.¹⁸ Still, there may be other ways to capture these variable judgements. So, I do not wish to place too much weight on this argument alone. In §2.2

¹⁷ The correctness of either approach will likely come down to whether or not the relevant time span for lying assessments is the moment of assertion, or the entire duration of time relevant to the truthfulness of the utterance. Of course, it may be that there is no fact of the matter here, or that the concept of lying is context sensitive along this dimension.

¹⁸ In footnote twelve I noted that most interlocutors who are already invested in the literature on lying reported the intuition that Max lied in all cases. I believe that the preceding remarks can also help us explain why this would be the case. It is natural to see the extant literature on lying not as a debate regarding the conditions under which an agent has *lied*, but rather a debate regarding the conditions under which one count as *lying*. It is clear that, for certain types of action *F*, it can be true that one is *F*ing at t^1 , and yet false, at some later time t^2 , that one successfully *F*d. Suppose John sets off across the road at t^1 with the intention of reaching the other side. It is correct to say of John, at t^1 , that he is/was crossing the road. However, if he gets hit by a car and never makes it across then it will be false to claim that he crossed the road. This will not falsify the claim that he was crossing the road. It will be natural to state that he got hit by a car whilst crossing the road.

Similarly, the claim that Max did not lie in CHANGE OF MIND is consistent with the claim that he was *lying* whilst producing his assertion. We can accept that Max was lying whilst holding that it is open whether, in the end, he did actually lie. That is, we can think of his change of mind analogously to John's being hit by a car. The distinction between one's lying and one's having lied will only ever become relevant in cases like CHANGE OF MIND where A) the truth or falsity of the relevant assertion is unsettled at the time of assertion, and B) it is within the power of the testifier to determine the truth or falsity of their assertion after it has been produced. In all other cases one's engaging in the practice of lying will entail that one has lied. Thus, it is unsurprising that this distinction has been overlooked. I believe the tendency of those invested in the literature on lying to view the cases in this way likely explains the predominant verdict that Max lied in all cases. This is not, of course, to say that this verdict is mistaken. I remain neutral on this issue. But it explains this pattern of judgements in a charitable way, consistently with the open hypothesis that Max did not lie in CHANGE OF MIND.

I argue that the testimonial worth hypothesis also provides a straightforward solution to the puzzle raised by bald faced lies and selfless assertions. This significantly strengthens the case for the hypothesis that lies display poor testimonial worth, as it indicates that the hypothesis can explain multiple recalcitrant problems in a simple and unified way.

2.2 The Analysis of Lying

In §2.1 I argued that, by holding that judgements about whether somebody has lied involve judgements of testimonial worth, we are able to account for the variability in intuitions about CHANGE OF MIND. This suggests that the conditions set out by the standard view are not sufficient for an agent of have lied. For an agent to have lied they must, in addition, display poor testimonial worth. In light of this it may be tempting to simply add a testimonial worth condition onto the standard definition of lying. However, caution is called for: as noted in footnote ten, the intention to deceive condition is controversial. Many theorists dispense of this condition, holding that a lie is simply an assertion of a proposition the speaker believes to be false. Proposing a complete analysis of lying requires taking a stand on this issue. Consideration of the reasons for and against the deception condition on lying provides further support for the hypothesis that lies display poor testimonial worth.

The main reason for rejecting the intention to deceive condition is the existence of lies which are not intended to deceive (or ‘bald faced lies’). Consider the following example (cf. Fallis, 2009, p 34.):

MOBSTER: The police have inadmissible evidence that Tony, a mob boss, killed their witness. As they interview him they show him the evidence, proving to him, and everyone else in the room, that they know he did it. Still, Tony might tell them “You have got the wrong guy, I didn’t do it”, as he knows their evidence is inadmissible.

It seems clear that Tony has lied. Yet it seems equally clear that he does not intend to deceive his audience. He knows nobody is going to be persuaded. Indeed, he knows that his utterance will not even decrease anybody’s credence that he is the murderer. In light of such cases it seems clear that intent to deceive cannot be necessary for lying.¹⁹

Unfortunately, as Lackey (2013) points out, we do not acquire an adequate account of lying simply by removing the intention to deceive condition from the standard definition. Doing so forces us to misclassify certain intuitively acceptable assertions as lies. She provides the following example, taken from her (2007):

CREATIONIST TEACHER: Stella is a devoutly Christian fourth-grade teacher, and her religious beliefs are grounded in a personal relationship with God that she takes herself to

¹⁹ Keiser (2016) holds that, despite all appearances, Tony has not lied, as he has not really asserted. He has, according to Keiser, not provided a reason to believe that he did not commit the crime. It is, for Keiser, impossible to assert something one does not believe without intending to deceive. I will put this contention to one side as, to me, Tony’s utterance seems as clear a case of an assertion (and a lie) as any. Keiser argues that alternative conceptions of assertion incorrectly count cases of metaphor as lies. However, as Stokke (2017) shows, this is not the case.

have had since she was a very young child. This relationship grounds her belief in the truth of creationism and, accordingly, a belief in the falsity of evolutionary theory. Despite this, Stella fully recognizes that there is an overwhelming amount of scientific evidence against both of these beliefs. Indeed, she readily admits that she is not basing her own commitment to creationism on evidence at all but, rather, on the personal faith that she has in an all-powerful Creator. Because of this, Stella thinks that her religious beliefs are irrelevant to her duties as a teacher; accordingly, she regards her obligation as a teacher to include presenting material that is best supported by the available evidence, which clearly includes the truth of evolutionary theory. As a result, while presenting her biology lesson today, Stella asserts to her students, ‘Modern day Homo sapiens evolved from Homo erectus’, though she herself does not believe this proposition.

Lackey, 2013, 243.

It seems clear that Stella has not lied to her class.²⁰ Yet she has asserted something she believes to be false. Thus, merely asserting something one believes to be false is not sufficient for lying. This generates a puzzle: we seemingly need a deception condition to avoid claiming that Stella lied. Yet, we cannot endorse a deception condition if we are to count Tony as having lied.²¹

The testimonial worth condition provides us with a way to resolve this puzzle. Lackey is correct that asserting something one believes to be false is not sufficient for one’s having lied. However, this does not necessitate a deceptiveness condition. The difference between CREATIONIST TEACHER and MOBSTER resides in the differing testimonial worth displayed by Stella and Tony. It is clear that Tony displays poor testimonial worth. His assertion is false, and his having asserted a falsehood manifests his disregard for the truth. That is, the truth does not, for Tony, factor into whether or not he should make his statement. He asserts that he didn’t commit the crime whilst fully believing that this is false. His speaking falsely is, thus, his own doing. Stella, on the other hand, does not display poor testimonial worth. It is true that she fails to believe what she asserts. Thus she, like Tony, also displays disregard for the truth. However, unlike Tony, this disregard for the truth is compensated for by another operative character trait. That is, she is committed to teaching her students whatever is best supported by the scientific evidence. As a

²⁰ This judgment is not entirely uncontroversial, but it is close. Fallis (2014), although he acknowledges that he shares the intuition that Stella did not lie, questions the reliability of intuitions about CREATIONIST TEACHER. Nonetheless, he does, in the end, seek to accommodate the intuition that Stella did not lie. As Lackey (2013) notes, the case can be constructed in such a way as to elicit the judgement that Stella has lied. If Stella simply teaches evolution because it is on the syllabus, whilst actively concealing the fact that she believes it to be false then it is easy to feel that she has lied. This is captured both by Lackey’s deceptionist account of lying, and the non-deceptionist account presented here: If she is only evidence responsive because she is instructed to be evidence responsive by the schoolboard then it is incidental to her character as a testifier. It also seems plausible that in all versions of the case Stella is, in some sense, insincere regardless of her underlying motivations. But this is beside the point with respect to whether or not she has lied.

²¹ Lackey’s own solution to this puzzle is to propose that lies must be deceptive in a broader sense, whereby one counts as deceptive if one has intentionally concealed information or evidence. I am not convinced that this approach is able to predict that Tony has lied, as he is not really concealing anything with his utterance. Nor is he withholding evidence, as any confession which he could potentially give does not yet exist to be withheld. For a more extensive response along these lines see Fallis (2014).

result, were her assertion to have been false this would not have *manifested* her lack of commitment to the truth, or poor character. As long as she maintains her evidence sensitivity, her disregard for the truth could not, in any normal way, cause or explain her having spoken falsely. For her to have spoken falsely the evidence for the truth of evolutionary theory must have been highly misleading. So, unlike Tony, her testimonial character taken as a whole (i.e. the web of commitments and values underlying her assertion, including both her disregard for the truth and her commitment to evidence sensitivity) could not be manifested in her speaking falsely. Were she to have spoken falsely this would have been a matter of bad luck, not her own doing. Thus, unlike Tony, her assertion does not display poor testimonial worth.²²

By embracing the testimonial worth condition on lying we can reject the deception condition. This suggests the following simple analysis of lying: One lies iff one displays poor testimonial worth by asserting something one believes to be false.^{23,24} This analysis, which places testimonial worth at the centre of our practice of negatively appraising acts of assertion, explains multiple recalcitrant problems in a simple and unified way. The testimonial worth condition would be falsified by a case with either of the following features:

A) An agent displays poor testimonial worth by stating something they believe to be false, but does not lie.

B) An agent lies by stating something they believe to be false, but does not display poor testimonial worth.

An (A) case would have the following features:

1. The speaker asserts something they believe to be false.
2. In doing so, they display some character trait which could be manifested in their speaking falsely (such as disregard for the truth),
3. They display no compensating character trait which would, in normal circumstances, result in them speaking the truth (such as sensitivity to evidence).

²² Mine is not the only response to this puzzle. Fallis (2014) notes that the non-deception theorist could simply add a requirement that a liar cannot believe that the evidence supports the truth of their assertion. I worry that this view is open to counter example. We could, for example, construct a version of SIMPLE LIE in which Max has been in the same situation many times in the past, and has always had a change of heart. In this situation, despite his current intention not to go to the party, he may have overwhelming evidence that, if he says he will go, then he will go. And he may be aware of this. Nonetheless, when he says that he will be at the party, fully intending to avoid going (and, this time, following through on his intention) he clearly lies.

²³ The proposed view can easily be modified with the disbelief requirement replaced by an expected epistemic damage condition along the lines of Krauss (2017), or a higher credence in falsity than truth requirement along the lines of Marsili (2014).

²⁴ Lackey also objects that rejecting the deception condition on lies removes our ability to explain the prima facie wrongness of lying. I am not convinced that there is a general moral prohibition against lying. However, the testimonial worth account does allow us to account for the related fact that judging somebody to have lied involves assessing them negatively as an agent. This may go some way toward explaining why many find it intuitive that lying is prima facie wrong.

4. The agent intuitively does not lie.

In a case where only (1), (2), and (4) were satisfied, but not (3), the testimonial worth account predicts that the agent will not have lied. This is because, although the speaker displays some character trait which would, *ceteris paribus*, result in their speaking falsely, they also display a compensating trait of character which, even in combination with the aforementioned negative trait would, under normal conditions, result in them speaking the truth. Thus, the total web of motivations and commitments underlying their assertion could not be manifested in their speaking falsely. CREATIONIST TEACHER fits this structure.

A (B) case would have the following features:

1. A speaker asserts something they believe to be false.
2. The agent intuitively does lie.
3. Given the character the agent displays when asserting it is a mere coincidence that they end up speaking falsely.

(3) will be satisfied only if the speaker fails to display any traits of character which could be manifested in their speaking falsely, or displays such traits in combination with some compensating traits which are not themselves overridden. I am doubtful that any such cases can be given, but only time will tell. This concludes my discussion of lying. In the next section I will argue that judgements of testimonial worth also play a central role in our acceptance of testimony.

3. Testimony and Testimonial Worth.

The acceptance of testimony normally involves the taking of a speaker at their word. It involves trust in the speaker: a recognition of the speaker's agency, and the fact that they are responsible for the truthfulness of their assertion. This seems to distinguish testimony from other sources of knowledge. When we form beliefs by accepting the deliverances of instruments, for example, we treat them as mere truth gauges. When we take a speaker at their word we do not simply treat them as a truth gauge. We accept their testimony as a deliverance of their free agency.

To get clear on this, it will be helpful to consider a pair of cases. Consider the following versions of Jennifer Lackey's consistent liar case (cf. Lackey (2008), pp 53-54):

LIAR: As a teenager Bertha suffered a brain lesion which causes her to constantly lie about whether or not she has seen a particular animal. She undergoes surgery to treat the injury. However, it is found that the lesion cannot be removed. So, instead of removing it the surgeon modifies the lesion, and creates a second, so that her lies become incredibly consistent, and pattern exactly with a newly introduced perceptual unreliability. The result is that whenever Bertha intends to lie about seeing an animal she ends up stating a truth.

LIAR 1: The surgeon lies to Bertha's parents and tells them that he has removed the lesion. When Bertha makes statements about animals her parents accept her testimony by taking her at her word, the same way they would any other informant.

LIAR 2: The surgeon informs Bertha's parents about the procedure. Now, whenever Bertha says she has seen a particular animal, her parents come to believe that she has seen the animal. However, they do not, in so doing, take her at her word. They do not believe *her*. Rather, they simply take her to be a reliable indicator of the facts.

Some theorists have made much of this distinction. For example, assurance theorists have taken such considerations to require the introduction of distinctive epistemic resources not found in accounts of knowledge from other sources (such as perception). Assurance theorists emphasize that, in testifying, speakers make themselves responsible for the truth of their assertions. In particular, speakers make themselves *accountable* for the truth of their assertions. They open themselves to sanction if what they say turns out to be false. Accepting a speaker's testimony, for the assurance theorist, involves accepting the speaker's offer to be accountable for the truth of one's belief. The reason one gains is thus not evidential. It is second personal.²⁵

Assurance theories can be placed within a wider category of theories which combine an emphasis on the role of trust in testimonial belief formation, with the view that trust involves engagement from within the participant stance (that is, the view that, if one trusts, and one's trust is betrayed, then one is prepared to, and within one's rights to bear certain negative reactive attitudes toward the violator of one's trust).²⁶ Such views are attractive since it seems clear that taking a speaker at their word, as opposed to treating them as a mere truth gauge, involves accepting their testimony on trust. Moreover, there are compelling reasons to hold that trust, often at least, involves such second personal relationships. This seems to be what separates trust from mere reliance. If we trust somebody, we do feel resentment when that trust is violated, and we typically expect our trust to constitute a reason for the trusted to be trustworthy.

Assurance theories face a number of problems. One of these problems generalizes to all views which combine an emphasis on trust with a second personal approach to trust.²⁷ This line of critique has been pressed by Owens (2006), who questions whether the acceptance of testimony, even when we take the speaker at their word, always involves a recognition of their accountability for the truth of their assertion. If Owens's challenge is successful, this leaves us with a problem: how are we to account for the distinctive attitude we take toward speakers when we accept their testimony as a deliverance of their free agency?

Owens asks us to consider how we might treat a diary which was intended by the author to be kept private. The author of such a diary cannot be seen as having any audience directed intentions. They do not make themselves accountable for the content of their diary. The diary is,

²⁵ See Ross (1986), Hinchman (2005, 2014), and Moran (2005) for statements of the assurance view.

²⁶ Prominent examples of such views of trust include Holton (1994) Hieronymi (2008), Hawley (2014), Darwall (2017), and Marušić (2017).

²⁷ See Darwall (2006), Lackey (2008), Schmitt (2010), Leonard (2016), and Shieber (2016) for alternative criticisms of assurance views.

after all private. They should not face sanction if the claims therein turn out to be false. However, it still seems that we can take the diarist at their word. We can accept their testimony in the same way we would accept anybody else's testimony, without treating them as a mere truth gauge. A similar point applies to eavesdroppers. If one overhears A telling B that p then, even though one is not the intended target of A's telling, one can nonetheless take A at his word. However, one would not, in such a situation, be within one's rights to hold A accountable for the truth of one's belief. Only B gains this right. So, it is a mistake to claim that taking a speaker at their word involves accepting their offer to be accountable for the truth of one's belief. That is, taking a speaker at their word does not always involve the attitude of trust, where this is thought of as a distinctly second personal attitude.²⁸²⁹

However, if taking a speaker at their word does not involve such second personal trust, then it is not clear in what sense it involves the recognition of the speaker's responsibility for the truth of their assertion. It is not clear in what sense it involves the treatment of testimony as a deliverance of the speaker's free agency, or what separates the acceptance of testimony from that of the deliverances of instruments. Owens has his own response to this problem. He argues that sincere testimony involves the intentional expression of belief. When we accept testimony by taking a speaker at their word we take them to be intentionally expressing their belief. Such intentional expressions of belief, Owens maintains, reflect the rationality of the belief expressed, as do beliefs formed on the basis of such testimony. This serves to distinguish testimonial from instrumental knowledge. Testimony involves a reliance on the rationality of the speaker.

Unfortunately, Owens's account also fails to cover the full range of cases.³⁰ To see this, let us turn our attention back to CREATIONIST TEACHER. Stella does not believe in evolution. Thus, she is not expressing a belief when she asserts that Homo sapiens evolved from Homo erectus. Yet, her audience can still come to know, by accepting her testimony, that Homo sapiens

²⁸ Of course, there are different notions of trust in common use. I believe there is also a sense of "trusting a speaker" which involves judging the speaker to be being truthful and, in so doing, displaying positive testimonial worth.

²⁹ McMyler (2013) responds to Owens, holding that eavesdroppers do not simply take speakers at their word. He motivates this verdict by pointing out that eavesdroppers do not accept an offer of assurance, and are not in a position to defer responsibility for their belief to the speaker. It is not clear why this objection would have any force for anyone who does not antecedently accept the assurance theorist's view of what it is to take a speaker at their word. After all, it certainly *seems* as if one can, whilst eavesdropping, take a speaker at their word. That is, one's attitude toward the speaker can be far closer to that of Bertha's parents in LIAR 1 than LIAR 2. Indeed, it is not even clear that there is a clean distinction between eavesdropper and non-eavesdropper cases. We could construct a series ranging from cases in which it is clear that A is eavesdropping, to cases in which A is clearly addressed (cases where, for example, their presence becomes increasingly obvious to the speaker). Denial that eavesdropper cases ever involve the taking of a speaker at their word would require us to maintain that, at some point in this series, there is a cutoff point at which the agent's method of belief formation radically shifts. This is implausible. Thus, McMyler's challenge is not persuasive. This is not to say that there are no cases in which, in taking a speaker's word for it, we accept an offer of assurance. It may even be correct that such cases involve a distinctive species of warrant. It is merely to say that taking a speaker at their word, as opposed to treating them as a mere indicator of the truth, does not require accepting such an offer of assurance.

³⁰ This is not the only problem Owens faces. He advocates a transmission view of testimony, and such views are problematic in several ways (see Lackey (1999), MacFarlane (2005), Barnett (2015), Fraser (2016), Peet (2016), Leonard (2018), and Peet and Pitcovski (2018)).

evolved from *Homo erectus*. Now, as presented, CREATIONIST TEACHER can plausibly be taken as a case of knowledge from falsehood. That is, in at least some versions of the case Stella's students will take her to be expressing a belief, and this will form part of the basis for their testimonial belief. However, the case can be reconstructed without this feature.

Suppose that Stella's students are aware of her dedication to their education. They have seen her tirelessly researching the topics she teaches. They have had challenging and engaging discussions with her in which she has illuminatingly explained subjects they were struggling to understand. And they have overheard other teachers praise her unwavering commitment to education. However, they also know that she is deeply religious, and that she belongs to a church which preaches creationism. The students may have no idea whether or not Stella actually believes in evolution. However, they have faith in her as a dedicated educator and a rational appraiser of evidence (if not a reliable and rational believer). They know that they are in safe hands. So, when Stella asserts "Homo sapiens evolved from *Homo erectus*" they simply take her at her word. They do not, in doing so, assume that she is expressing a belief. Thus, Owens's account also fails to capture what it is to take a speaker at their word.³¹

What, then, is involved in taking a speaker at their word? It doesn't seem to require that the audience enter into any second personal relationship with the speaker, and it doesn't seem to require a judgement that the speaker is intentionally expressing a belief. Yet it does seem to involve a recognition of the speaker's responsibility for the truth of what they assert. I propose that, in taking a speaker at their word, we take them to be displaying positive testimonial worth. That is, we take them to be asserting the truth, and we take their truthfulness to be a manifestation of their character as a testifier.³² This captures the insight that, in taking a speaker at their word, we accept their testimony as a deliverance of their free agency; something they are responsible for. However, it captures this not in terms of responsibility as accountability, but rather responsibility as attributability. It also captures the appeal of Owens's view: if one is a responsible belief former then, in intentionally expressing one's beliefs, one displays positive testimonial worth. However, it also enables us to capture cases such as modified CREATIONIST TEACHER. Finally, it is clear on this view what separates the attitude of Bertha's parents in LIAR 1 and LIAR 2. In LIAR 1, but not LIAR 2, not only do they take her utterances to be truthful, but they take the truthfulness to be a manifestation of her character as a testifier. In LIAR 2 they know that, although her utterances are truthful, this truthfulness is not attributable to Bertha.

³¹ It could be maintained that the students do not take Stella at her word. Perhaps they treat her as a mere truth gauge. However, it is not clear why we should think this. The experience of believing Stella may, for the students, be no different to that of believing anybody else. The attitude of the students toward Stella's testimony seems far closer to that of Bertha's parents in LIAR 1 than LIAR 2.

³² To be clear, I am not suggesting that displaying positive testimonial worth entails truth telling, or even that judging somebody to be displaying positive testimonial worth entails judging that they are telling the truth. After all, as I noted earlier, one can display positive testimonial worth whilst speaking falsely. Rather, the idea is that taking somebody to be telling the truth is not sufficient for taking them at their word. In order to take somebody at their word we must, in addition, take their truthfulness to be a manifestation of their character as a testifier. That is, we must take their truthfulness to be non-accidental given their character.

4. Conclusion

Our normative appraisals go beyond mere judgements of norm conformity. Our judgements of moral responsibility, both interpersonal and aretaic, are central to our interactions with others. Our assessments of agents as testifiers likewise shape our interactions with them. Thus, it is unsurprising that such assessments, like our moral assessments, come in interpersonal and aretaic forms. A great deal of emphasis has been placed on the interpersonal dimension of our assessments of testimony. I have argued here, however, that aretaic assessment is central to our appraisals of testimony. Our most damning normative assessment of speech, the judgement that an agent has lied, is an aretaic assessment. And, in taking a speaker at their word, we judge not only that their utterance is true, but that its truthfulness is a manifestation of the speaker's character as a testifier.

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