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Sense and testimony

Speech and empathy on the margins of worlds

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Abstract

In this thesis I explore the nature of issues in communication through the lenses of social epistemology and phenomenology. What is of primary interest is the relation between speech and empathy and what limitations we face when we articulate our experiences across different lifeworlds.

I begin by exploring Miranda Fricker's concept of epistemic injustice and her discussion of its two primary forms: testimonial injustice and hermeneutical injustice. I argue that the latter is more important to grasp the scale and everydayness of epistemic injustice but I also argue that a focus on discourses and social imaginaries in the literature has made us overlook the importance of embodied and affective dimensions of our everyday interactions.

I then explore how looking to empathy as a sort of communicative panacea has its limitations. I do this through the phenomenological literature exploring Husserlian, Steinian and Merleau-Pontian approaches to empathy. With Merleau-Ponty I show the important way speech and empathy can intertwine and suggest that this can be seen clearly in how we empathically tag along with someone's narrative.

A pivotal concern in this thesis is the way that, when dealing with the articulation of the experiences of those who are marginalized, who have to give an account of and make sense of their experiences, we tend to focus on the intellectualized practice of giving a statement, of testifying and ultimately giving evidence, rather than attending to the everyday phenomenon of telling someone something and being believed. I call this tendency *the testimonification of telling*. In this intellectualized atmosphere, the upset or agitated speaker, and thus the speaker who has suffered a wrong but may have a hard time conveying it, is viewed as a flawed or suspect speaker.

When we fail in this manner, we must look for ways to break out of the mould of indistinction. One thing that can facilitate such self-critical struggle – and I take the working groups that defined the term sexual harassment in the 1970s, and the #MeToo and BLM movements as exemplary in this regard – are the processes of intersubjective validation that make possible the creation of homeworlds that have a generative density and are able to lay claim on their own sense of normality.

Ágrip

Í þessari doktorsritgerð tekst ég á við eðli samskiptavandamála með verkfærum félagsþekkingarfræði og fyrirbærafræði. Það sem ég beini sérstaklega sjónum að eru tengsl frásagnar og samkenndar og því hvaða takmörkunum við erum háð þegar við reynum að koma orðum að reynslu okkar þvert á lífheima.

Ritgerðin hefst á því að greina hugmyndir Miranda Fricker um þekkingarlegt óréttlæti (e. epistemic injustice) og umræðu hennar um tvær megintegundir þess: vitnisburðarranglæti og túlkunarranglæti. Ég færi rök fyrir því að síðarnefnda hugtakið sé mikilvægara þegar ætlunin er að gera grein fyrir umfangi og hversdagsleika þekkingarlegs óréttlætis, en bendi einnig á að sú áhersla sem við sjáum í fræðunum á orðræðugreiningu og félagslega ímyndun hefur orðið til þess að okkur hefur yfirsést það stóra hlutverk sem líkamleiki okkar og hrif hafa á hversdagsleg samskipti okkar.

Ég beini síðan sjónum að þeim takmörkunum sem samkennd er háð í samskiptum okkar með því að líta til hinnar fyrirbærafræðilegu hefðar og sæki í rann Husserls, Stein og Merleau-Ponty og nýti greiningar þeirra á samkennd. Með Merleau-Ponty til liðsinnis sýni ég fram á hvernig frásögnin og samkenndin fléttast saman á mikilvægan hátt, sérstaklega þegar við flæðum með viðmælanda okkar í samkennd inn í frásögnina.

Lykilatriði sem ég greini í ritgerðinni er það hvernig þau sem jaðarsett eru í samfélaginu lenda ítrekað í því, þegar þau reyna að tjá reynslu sína eða gera tilraunir til þess að skilja hana, að þessum tilraunum þeirra er tekið sem vitnisburði fremur en frásögn. Við meðhöndlum orð þeirra nánast eins og þau séu í skýrslutöku: við tökum orðum þeirra sem yfirlýsingum eða sönnunargögnum, frekar en tjáningu manneskju á reynslu sinni. Þetta er ólíkt því sem við eigum að venjast í hversdagslegum samskiptum okkar, þar sem við iðulega segjum frá og okkur er trúað. Ég kalla þessa orðræðuhneigð *vitnisburðarvæðingu frásagnarinnar*. Þegar við vitnisburðarvæðum, þá birtast þau sem eru í uppnámi þegar þau segja frá, og þá oft þau sem orðið hafa fyrir misrétti, sem vanhæf eða grunsamleg í frásögn sinni.

Samskiptavandi sem sprettur af óréttmætri vitnisburðarvæðingu krefst þess af okkur að við þurfum að brjótast undan venjubundinni hlustun. Ein leið til þess að gera það er að veita athygli þeirri baráttu – sem ég tel að vinnuhóparnir sem skilgreindu hugtakið kynferðislega áreitni á 8. áratugnum, #MeToo og BLM hreyfingarnar vera góð dæmi um – þar sem ferli gagnkvæmrar viðurkenningar gerir mögulega sköpun nýrra lífheima sem búa yfir afli og aðstöðu til að marka sér nýja tegund af eðlileika.

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1. Introduction

> In a way, people like her, those who wield a pen, can be dangerous. At once a suspicion of fakery springs to mind – that such a Person is not him or herself, but an eye that's constantly watching, and whatever it sees it changes into sentences; in the process it strips reality of its most essential quality – its inexpressibility.
>
> (Tokarczuk 2018, 74)

There exist experiences that characteristically belong to or congeal on to certain social groups and not to others. That certain social groups have characteristic experiences shouldn't come as a surprise to anyone. What is theoretically interesting is that sometimes when the people who have these experiences seek to express them publicly, they seem to fade out: once the words have been spoken the experiences seem no peter out and lose their effect. They are dismissed, ignored, not heard, explained away or violently opposed. This is of course no news either; discussions of this problematic have obviously been undertaken by many scholars, from W.E.B. De Bois (1986) to Frantz Fanon (2008), from Gayatri Spivak (2013) to Nancy Hartstock (1998).

This dissertation starts out from an interest in harassment and its articulation, in how it is that we come to articulate our painful experiences, and by and through that articulating, strive to make sense of those experiences in a hostile environment. And the experiences that we make sense of are not just our own personal experiences, but shared experiences as well. More specifically, these experiences are not just shared experiences but also collective ones. One of the things that are important about movements like #MeToo is that they are not creating a frame around articulating shared experiences in a strict sense (as, for example, in cases where two women who are working together are both harassed at the same time by their employer), but around various and separate experiences that are collective in the broader sense that certain kinds of experiences congeal on to certain kinds of bodies in certain kinds of situations (as, for example, in cases where two women working in different departments of a company are harassed by the same employer at different times, or where two women working in similar fields are harassed by different employers in different companies, but in importantly similar ways).

More specifically, what I set out to analyse in this thesis is how we frame the articulation itself. A pivotal concern will be the way that, when dealing with the articulation of the experiences of those who are marginalized, who have to give an account of and make sense of their experiences, we tend to focus on the intellectualized practice of giving a statement, of testifying and ultimately giving evidence, rather than attending to the everyday phenomenon of telling someone something and being believed. I call this tendency *the testimonification of telling*. In this intellectualized atmosphere, the upset or agitated speaker, and thus the speaker who has suffered a wrong but may have a hard time conveying it, is viewed as a flawed or suspect speaker.

A central descriptive concept of the thesis will be the idea of telling – understood in the simple and straightforward sense of verbally expressing some occurrence or series of occurrences to a listener. One of the most important aspects of narratives as they appear in acts of telling, especially narratives of violence and oppression, is that while listening with an empathetic ear, one tunes in not only to facts, but also to embodied and affective states, to emotions and atmospheres, to a sense of historical relations. Grasping someone's telling involves an attunement to their narrative and often to their actual presence with us in the telling that seems to extend far beyond simply attending to the words of our interlocutor.

One of the texts that first induced me to properly pay attention to the problem of not being heard and not being able to express injustices suffered is Simone Weil's essay "Human Personality". In the essay she evokes Sophocles' *Antigone* to make a point about the relation between rights and justice (she doesn't think too highly of rights).

Antigone's brothers have waged a war against each other, vying for dominance over Thebes and have both lost their lives. Creon, the king that ascends to the throne and Antigone's uncle, marks one brother a traitor and the other not and, on pain of death, forbids that the former be buried. Antigone opposes this edict, symbolically buries her brother and is consequently sentenced to death. On Hegel's classical reading what is at stake here is the dialectic between individual and state, between divine law and human law (Hegel 1977: §437, §470).

But Weil asks us to shift our attention. Creon sentences Antigone for breaking the law. But it would be a mistake to see this simply as the dialectic between individual and state, of seeing Creon as the sovereign, exercising his power. For the power here, as Foucault or Arendt would point out, is not the power of the sovereign to exercise his personal will on his subject. No, the power here is more elusive, more fluid. It is the power of society itself.

Creon represents here not cruel tyrants that show no leniency, but the inattentiveness or disregard of societies that fail to hear the "silent cry" of those who suffer injustices (Weil 2005: 72). Weil remarks:

> It is extraordinary that Antigone's unwritten law should have been confused with the idea of natural right. In Creon's eyes there was absolutely nothing that was natural in Antigone's behaviour. He thought she was mad.
>
> And we should be the last people to disagree with him; we who at this moment are thinking, talking and behaving exactly as he did. (Weil 2005: 82)

The nuance here is important. Weil invites us to see Creon not as someone who is simply disagreeing with another legitimate set of rights or claims (Antigone's natural right), but as someone who perceives and responds to her claims as completely illegitimate, as mad. Creon and the choir demand that Antigone be punished for her sins against the state. They demand the state's justice, but they do not represent the voice of an impersonal state. They represent 'the people', ultimately all of us,[1] and indicate how we are wont to perceive and treat those who make claims against our sense of how things should be.

At another point in the essay Weil exclaims that there is nothing so frightful as seeing "some poor wretch in the police court stammering before a magistrate who keeps up an elegant flow of witticisms" (Weil 2005: 73).

The 'wretch' – in whom we might recognise Antigone as well – is targeted and marginalised, not only because of what they have done, who they are or what we may perceive as their economic, social and class standing, but also hermeneutically and personally, in at least two ways: first, they lack the epistemic and discursive resources to make sense of and express what they experience, and second, they don't belong to the dominant groups that can validate and legitimate the descriptions of their own experiences to society more broadly and in public.

When we hear stories like these, we are tempted to empathize with the 'poor wretch' or Antigone and to condemn the magistrate or Creon. But what Weil points out is that while it

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[1] This is a qualified 'all', for obviously some people hear some of these calls and respond to them, and some belong to groups that are more likely to be making the calls than to being in a position to respond to them.

is important for us to empathize and listen to the marginalised, we may find that while we are willing to condemn insensitive legal and juridical-moral agents, we should also be able to see ourselves in them. For we will find that events that mirror these stories frequently happen in real life and that we might often not perceive or receive them like we do the narratives above. Acts of civil disobedience are often treated with disdain and aggression, and listening to a homeless person pleading their case might be met with impatience, distrust and even disgust, rather than patience, care, and empathy.

Stories can be clear-cut and it is often clearly implied whom we should root for and whom to condemn. Usually, we know all the important variables of the story, and often those that are left out are left out for a reason. Stories like these don't demand much from us personally, other than to pass judgement from afar, while real-life encounters are messy and complicated, and typically involve conflicting interests that impact actual lives.

How are we – and this voice speaks from the position of a white cis hetero male in a Nordic welfare society, arguably one of the most privileged groups of people in the history of the world – how are we to notice in our daily lives when we are being and acting like Creon, and how do we avoid that impersonal and insensitive attitude from above?

When we return with this question in mind to the discussion of the #MeToo movement and the harms and sufferings undergone by people in our communities, we need to address how we've managed to ignore, overlook, and structure our society and institutions in ways that devalue the experiences of, not 1% or 10% of the community, as might be the case with some minorities, but half of it, as is the case with women. If we comprehensively fail here as a community and a society, then how can we hope to recognize and respect those who belong to smaller minorities, who live through things that are still further from the everyday experiences of many or most of us?

I will address this problem by analysing the structures of normal everyday talk and by asking what happens to us when we enter such a mode of discourse. Our interest is so deeply invested in disruptions and failures of communication that we often neglect to think what it would mean for us *not* to fail in these situations. This is the intuition I'm working with in the thesis: I argue that our focus on how communication fails misses out on what we might learn about these failures by analysing how we normally speak and interact. I suggest that in our everyday communicative interactions we impart on our interlocutor our sense of the world and I show how this sense of the world plays into our encounter with the other and how that sense can become inflected in our interaction. I argue that by exploring this sense and

how it appears as normal can help us become more perceptive of the margins of that normality and tell us where and how our sense of normality can become oppressive. Thus, what will be explored is how it is that we become affected, how we change as perceivers and listeners and come to see and sense differently through interaction with others.

Chapter overview

I start chapter 2 by introducing Miranda Fricker's approach to the problems of injustice, set out in her *Epistemic Injustice* (2007). The first part of the chapter introduces her concepts of testimonial and hermeneutic injustice, concepts that have become widely used tools and frames of reference when dealing with the various kinds of epistemic injustices that people can suffer. Briefly put, *testimonial* injustice involves the audience disbelieving the speaker due to an ill-founded prejudice towards the speaker that causes them to reduce the credence they attribute to the testimony. The concept of *hermeneutic* injustice, on the other hand, sheds light on the kinds of injustices people can suffer when they lack the hermeneutic resources to make sense of their social experiences. The idea here is that some of our collective experiences can be obscure to us because the dominant discourse is framed around the experiences of members of other kinds of collectives. The core example Fricker uses for this kind of marginalization is the phenomenon of sexual harassment. She shows how the coining of the term in the 1960s facilitated both understanding for those who suffered and offered a hermeneutic tool to make sense of the experience in society more broadly.

In this thesis, I am more interested in and focused on this latter kind of injustice, but I will also argue, following José Medina, that testimonial and hermeneutic injustice are importantly intertwined. I explore the many layers of hermeneutic injustice and marginalisation, grounding my discussion in recent critiques of Fricker as well as in her responses to her critics. What I want to highlight is that those things which are framed as hermeneutic resources are often quite vague and their relation to our lived experiences is often insufficiently spelled out, and the same goes for their relation to the articulation of the experience and the manners in which we share them.

In the latter part of chapter 2, I introduce a set of thematic points that will serve as a leitmotif for the arguments in the chapters that follow. First, I address the overarching metaphors that dominate the literature, i.e., the metaphors of discourses and imaginaries. These metaphors, I argue, affect how we conceptualize the relation between first person experience and epistemic resources. The way in which they do this explains, at least in part,

why the philosophical problems of embodiment and affectivity are to a large extent bypassed in the literature. Second, I address how Fricker approaches the roles of empathy and/or sympathy in the formation of credibility judgments. The role of empathy is only briefly addressed in Fricker's oeuvre, but as we shall see there is much that can be further explored in this regard. And third, I also study the manners in which Fricker recognizes and distinguishes between different expressive and affective styles in cases of hermeneutic injustice. I will argue that it isn't always specific beliefs or the lack of specific hermeneutic resources that prevents understanding, but rather that misunderstanding often occurs due to a failure to recognize someone's style of being, a theme to which I return in chapter 5.

In chapter 3 I explore the concept of empathy, which is often evoked as a solution to issues of failures of understanding. First, I briefly summarize some prevalent philosophical approaches to the idea of empathy, primarily introducing the conceptualizations found in the so-called 'theory theory of mind' and in simulation theory. I then give an account of the historical importance of discussions of empathy and intersubjectivity in the phenomenological tradition, focusing on the contributions of Husserl, Stein, Scheler and Merleau-Ponty. Following Husserl and Stein, I argue that empathy is a *sui generis* form of intentionality and, I emphasise, it captures the immediacy of our perceptions of others. A constant and recurring theme within the phenomenological approach is the claim that the subjective life of others isn't hidden from us, or is not as hidden as one often presumes, in line with modern mentalistic conceptualizations of human existence. The other does not appear to me as an outward behaviour from which I can infer inwardness, but always, and from the very start, as a living unity of the outside and the inside, the physical and the mental, the material and the meaningful. The other appears to me as a second locus of a 'here', of an 'I-think', 'I-feel' and 'I-can'. And what is important also, as is emphasised particularly by Scheler and Merleau-Ponty, is that specific subjective states of the other appear to me in this unified manner too: I don't see your clenched fist and infer that you are angry, but rather, I see your anger in your clenched fist.

In the second part of the chapter, I develop this further and highlight the dynamicity of our experience of the subjective life of others. As I perceive you as a second subjectivity, when I attend, say, to your sorrow, though it can certainly appear to me as a state within you, it is never simply an object, contained as it were in your psyche. It is rather something that is itself directed outwards, to the world. Empathetically engaging with your sorrow is a peculiar intentional activity, it is being acquainted with the world through your sorrow. The sorrow

inhabits the world, it is of the world, and it appears to me as a part of our shared environment. What is also important is that your sorrow does not just appear to me as *a* sorrow. Rather, it unfolds, extends temporally, it appears to me over time but is concurrently very specific; it is bound to you, it is *this* sorrow, at this time, and directed at this specific object of intention.

I then move to consider the interplay between this kind of empathetically following someone's gaze and narrative speech. Although we find extensive analysis of language in the phenomenological literature, and arguably an even more extensive analysis of empathy and intersubjectivity, these analyses rarely coincide. One reason for this, I argue in the chapter, is the intuition that although speech and empathy often run parallel with each other, they are somehow fundamentally different and can be divorced and explored separately. Husserl for example suggests that we go "beyond empathy" when we address each other (Husserl 1973c: 472) and Stein argues that speaking belongs to the apophantic realm of judgments, propositions, and meanings, while empathy belongs to the immediate contact with the objective realm.

What I set out to do is to show how these two phenomena are intertwined in narrative telling, and how viewing them as parallel processes does not do justice to our experience of the other as an expressive unity that we share the world with.

In chapter 4 I pick up from where chapter 3 left off by focusing on the speech aspect of the living encounter with the other. Language in its different registers, from the everyday to the scientific, has traditionally been a central theme of philosophical research, phenomenology being no exception. I start the chapter by briefly sketching two dominant conceptions of language and speech that I think overshadow and mislead the way we think about telling and narration. On the one hand, I discuss understanding speech in terms of communication, where I evoke the epistemological framework introduced in chapter 2. Telling is here primarily understood in terms of the act of testimony. On the other hand, there is a popular approach, central in Heidegger-inspired circles of continental philosophy, of thinking of everyday speech in derogatory terms, of thinking of it in relation to the critique of idle talk, chit-chat, or gossip. Here everyday speech tends to be framed as a form of inauthenticity. Whereas the epistemic approach tends to neglect the affective, emotive and bodily aspects of speech and conversation as redundant, the continental approach judges them as inauthentic.

On the basis of this contrast, I move to a deeper exploration of alternative phenomenological approaches to language. I draw attention to the fact that the

developments here, especially in the first half of the 20th century, importantly paralleled discussions in analytic philosophy of language as well as in dominant theoretical-linguistic approaches. The common focus was on ideal meanings, logical and syntactic structures and the truth conditions of sentences. This approach enables and entails explorations of many intersubjective functions of language, from the construction of scientific theories to the transmission of meanings across cultures, but the main focus here is on the establishments of collective subjects and forms of sociality, normality, history and tradition. The living interaction between concrete speaking subjects is not at the centre of these investigations.

What I'm looking for and claim is missing in much of contemporary phenomenology, is an analysis of the communicative encounter itself, where the paradigm is the example of being told something in a face-to-face everyday encounter. What I have in mind here are our most usual everyday interactions, the kind that happens around the dinner table with the family or at lunch at work.

I ground my discussion in Richard Moran's illuminating analysis of the concept of telling, as a way to find a paradigmatic example of the type of speech that pays attention to and is able to articulate the living dynamic relation between speakers and hearers. I argue that what characterizes telling typically involves an interaction that is non-conflictual, implying the assumption of truthfulness as well as the anticipation of being believed. Thus, in telling we often share information but still the core of the interaction is not in the sharing of the information but in the co-constitution of our shared world.

I argue that by reframing the narrative around telling we expand the discussion beyond the focus on the information-theoretical and epistemic functions of our verbal interactions to include affective dimensions and styles of being and expression as well. I suggest that a part of what telling involves is imparting on the other the manner of experiencing, the 'how' of experiences, thus also imparting a feel or sense of how the world is given in general.

I expound and elaborate on this idea by exploring how we are narratively and empathetically pulled along in narrative telling, drawing from the discussion of the dynamic life of the other as presented in chapter 3. I suggest that one element of what counts for epistemic injustice is importantly not just about failing to grasp or believe certain occasional claims or statements, but about failing to 'live through', to co-animate, the continuity of the experience of the other as a remembered experience.

I end chapter 4 by returning to Stein's discussion of the relation between speech and empathy invoked at the end of chapter 3. I suggest that in contradistinction to Stein and

others, we should view speech, as it appears in telling, as a unified expression of the whole person that cannot be divorced from those specific and occasional parts of expressive life that empathy is supposed to target.

It is a commonplace to point out that in our everyday exchange of words what is expressed is more than the mere words that we produce. In chapter 5 I explore what that entails and what kind of impact it has on how we frame our successes and failures at understanding others.

I begin by addressing Merleau-Ponty's critique of the project of a universal language and his notion of algorithmic language where he suggests that by overemphasising the structural elements of language, we push out lived expression, and with it, our subjectivity itself. He suggests that we should focus on language in its living expression and view algorithmic language as a derivative and secondary formation, as a special case of language that draws its power from a more fundamental expressive world-relation (Merleau-Ponty 1973: 128). His critique of algorithmic language primarily focuses on scientific discourse, but he also relates it to our everyday interactions through an analysis of the transcribing of conversation and suggests that however well a conversation is recorded, it will always give the "impression of indigence" (Merleau-Ponty: 1973 65).

My search for what it is that goes missing in the transcript leads to a sketch of a typology of this negative space, of the things that go unsaid in our interactions but are still conveyed. I suggest that, with some simplification, we can classify the various kinds of unsaid into two categories: those that are still expressed or implied in some way (like irony) and those that are tacitly assumed (like the various kinds of social and material contexts we are situated in).

I then draw out and explore two elements that connect my discussion of speech and expression to the main line of my argument and my discussion of hermeneutic injustice. First, I draw on Scheler's discussion of the relation between experience and articulation, where he wonders how language can be, at the same time, the site that allows us to have a clear perception of our experiences (it is by articulating them that we are able to wrest them from the inarticulacy of our inner life) and also the network that intrudes with "order and articulation between what we see and what we experience" (Scheler 1954: 253). The second element I explore in more detail is what Merleau-Ponty calls the "inflection of language" and its interplay with his understanding of both sense and style. This then becomes the focus of the latter part of chapter 5 which I connect more broadly to the foregoing discussion.

Style is something we typically relate to artistic or more broadly creative endeavours, and often implies premeditation. But with Merleau-Ponty I explore a more general application of the term that captures the interplay between styles of being and sense of the world.

I come to the conclusion that in the co-mingling of the speaker's inflection and the hearer's listening in empathic engagement, the listener not only receives knowledge about what the speaker is thinking, but also a certain sense of the world, a sense crucial to the speaker. The impression given by the speaker is not an attempt to impress on the listener simply what the speaker thinks, but rather an invitation to partake of and respond to how the world actually is or recently was. If I listen to someone and simply take their words as expressive of 'their world' and not of our collective world, or if I listen to their statements simply as beliefs to which I can measure my own beliefs, then I fail to take them seriously as a person who is always also a co-constitutor of the world.

On this note I end the chapter, concurrently revisiting the epistemic approach and the associated privileging of knowledge over having a sense of the world, highlighting how a more embodied and affective view of sense, style and inflection informs the processes that characterize in our everyday interactions.

In chapter 6 I expand further on the discussion of sense and the world. I highlight that in many of the movements that speak on behalf of the subjugated and claim that their voices are being silenced, such as the #MeToo and Black Lives Matter (BLM) movements, these do not only deal with ways of speaking but also explicitly evoke the realities of people (in this case, women and African Americans, respectively) that are different from the reality normally propagated.

I begin the chapter by exploring Beauvoir's notion of a common universe, one she frames around her discussion of the married woman in the *Second Sex*. Here we encounter the notion of the feminine enclave, a safe haven for communication where women can create a kind of a counter-universe to that of men. I suggest that Beauvoir's sense of a common universe captures a more mundane and everyday form of what we see in the explicitly created safe spaces, such as the working groups that created the term sexual harassment.

I then go on to link this discussion to Husserlian discussion of the lifeworld and the homeworld/alienworld problematic and how my world is always encountered as my homeworld, a world that is typical, normal, and familiar.

What should strike us immediately is that there are different kinds of normalities, and this should bring us to different senses of the world. Beauvoir's example should highlight the fact

that I do not simply see the world that you see, but that the world can be given to us with different horizons of sense. I explore how our sense of normality revolves not only around certain more or less specific norms or traditions, but around our perception and sense of the world more generally. And, with Maren Wehrle, I emphasise the affective dimension involved here, how things *feel* normal or abnormal, strange or familiar.

Following Sara Heinämaa, I then draw out how the other can appear to us as normal or abnormal in various ways. I highlight two of these ways: On the one hand, there is what is called *capacity normality*, that is normality in terms of shared capacities; on the other hand, I will also speak of *membership normality*, that is the phenomenon in which some others are perceived as with-subjects in our community, while others are not, such as foreigners or members of different religious communities. The latter type of normality may depend on the former but need not do so. Young children, for example, are habitually perceived as belonging to the community but not being full members of it because they lack certain central capacities (e.g., capacities of self-sustenance, communication or deliberation). Refugees, on the other hand, are often marginalized despite the fact that they may be fully capable of operating in the society.

In the last part of the chapter, I tie the foregoing discussion with the discussions in previous chapters. As there is an important relation of intertwinement between speech and empathy, testimony and telling, we can explore more concretely how normativity in perception applies in our interaction with others.

I argue that in discursive confrontations we often shift between the logic of one normality to the other. We sometimes treat the other as a member of a fully-fledged alien world, with its own rational cultural practices, but at other times we treat them as abnormal on the basis of some capacity, as somehow deficient. This, I argue, is one way we face the limits of empathy, and I highlight that even if I manage to empathise with you, even if I recognize your pain as pain, and perhaps as a certain kind of pain, that will not do if I at the same time fail to appropriately acknowledge the way that pain is woven into the texture of your sense of the world and how that sense can be in a concordant relation with my own.

When we fail in this manner, we must look for ways to break out of the mould of indistinction. One thing that can facilitate such self-critical struggle – and I take the working groups that defined the term sexual harassment, and the #MeToo and BLM movements as exemplary in this regard – are the processes of intersubjective validation that make possible

the creation of homeworlds that have a generative density and are able to lay claim on their own sense of normality.

2. Epistemology of testimony

> The philosopher John Langshaw Austin, commenting on the connection between language and conceptions of reality, said the following: "Our common stock of words embodies all the distinction men have found worth drawing, and the connections they have found worth marking, in the lifetimes of many generations."
>
> Our
> common stock of words
> men have found
> distinction is not worth drawing
> connection is not worth marking
>
> Revealing as this is, it still dissembles. It is not that the connections and distinctions are not worth drawing and marking, it is that men do not want to draw and mark them, or do not dare to.
>
> (Frye 1983: 160-1)

To the uninitiated, the epistemology of testimony may sound like a branch of legal philosophy. We testify in court after all; in colloquial language, we rarely speak of testimony outside of that context. But the testimony we are speaking of here is a much broader concept. In the most general terms, the epistemology of testimony deals with how and to what extent we gain knowledge through the expressive acts of others.

The epistemology of testimony can be said to be a subfield of social epistemology, which is, *contra* traditional epistemology, less concerned with what knowledge is, how it is that we come to know things and when we are justified in claiming knowledge, and more concerned with how it is that knowledge is other-directed in its articulation.[2] Traditionally, epistemology has focused on how we come to acquire knowledge through sense perception, memory and

[2] As Jennifer Lackey points out, the emphasis in the epistemology of testimony has been on how it is that we become justified in believing the statements of others and the knowledge that we garner from that, and less on defining what specifically testimony is. Subsequently the definitions in the literature on testimony have been relatively vague, but usually assume testimony as a communicative act that is intended to convey information (Lackey 2006: 2). I will come back to the nature of testimony in chapters four and five.

reason, but has only recently shifted its focus on the rather ubiquitous field that is the knowledge that we gain from others through their say-so.[3]

Exploring epistemology through the lens of multiple subjects ultimately leads to questions of dominance and submission, i.e. to questions of power dynamics. When there are conflicts of interpretations and understandings, we know that the final say is not always that of reason alone, but often it is those that dominate that determine what is said to have happened and how.

In her *Epistemic Injustice*, Miranda Fricker addresses precisely this. She throws a spotlight on that cross section where issues of power and knowledge meet questions of morality. She suggests that we can define forms of injustice that can be inflicted on us and that have a distinctive epistemic character. She defines two types of what she calls *epistemic injustice*, on the one hand *testimonial injustice* "in which someone is wronged in their capacity as a giver of knowledge", and on the other hand *hermeneutical injustice* "in which someone is wronged in their capacity as a subject of social understanding" (Fricker 2007: 7).

The notion of epistemic injustice is intended to capture a distinct form of injustice that targets us primarily as knowers, as epistemic agents. In testimonial injustice, I suffer an injustice because my statements do not receive the appropriate uptake owing to non-epistemic criteria. This happens for example when my statements are believed to a lesser extent than they would be if they were made by a person of another gender, sexual orientation or race. In hermeneutical injustice, however, I suffer an injustice when there is a dissonance between a significant part of my social experiences and the way I can or cannot make these experiences explicit in a way that fits with the wider collective social understanding. The suggestion here is that some kinds of experiences or groups of experiences can be marginalized to the extent that they do not fit within the dominant framework of how we discuss and understand each other's experiences. As an example of this, Fricker points to the formation of the concept of sexual harassment in the 1960s. As we will see, the claim is that prior to the introduction of this crucial concept, women lacked the heuristic tools to make sense of a significant part of their social experience in a way that could be communicated in society at large. Furthermore, to some extent, the lack of these resources made the experiences of sexual harassment opaque to those that were victims of it.

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[3] That is not to say that the issue wasn't raised. Classical examples are David Hume' *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748/1777) and Thomas Reid's discussion in *An Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principle of Common Sense* (1970/1764).

For Fricker, there is a common thread that runs through both kinds of injustice in this regard and coalesces in a wider epistemic harm. This not only affects us as individuals but also us as a society inasmuch as it involves "prejudicial exclusion from participation in the spread of knowledge" (Fricker 2007: 162).

What Fricker is concerned with are primarily three things. First, she is making *an epistemic point*. She's concerned with giving a framework for how it is that we become justified in believing the words of others. She's concerned with when it is justifiable to say that I know what others have told me and how it is that some people appear to me as trustworthy while others do not. She will ultimately suggest a perceptual model in this regard, according to which we literally *see* people as trustworthy or not (Fricker 2007: 70-1; 77). Second, she's making *an empirical point*. She makes the case that we fail to properly engage with the words of others regularly and systematically. Specifically, she analyses the role prejudices play in this regard as well as how dominant discourses can limit the ways we can understand others. And thirdly, she makes a *moral point*. Fricker argues that the way these systematic failures manifest themselves creates a specific kind of moral harm, namely a harm that is both moral and epistemic. She then goes on to analyse what form these harms take, suggesting both direct and derivative ways in which they affect us, one of the most pernicious being that they can ultimately negatively impact our identity and sense of self (Fricker 2007: 55, 168). Within this moral-epistemological framework she then suggests ways in which we might counter these harms, e.g., by becoming virtuous listeners.

The failure that is expressed in both kinds of injustices, hermeneutic and testimonial, has to do with two interlinked phenomena: identity prejudice and hermeneutical marginalization. The former is more strongly tied to testimonial injustice while the latter is more closely related to hermeneutical injustice. As Fricker points out, this distinction is mostly analytical, as in most actual cases some mixture of the two would seem to be in play.

Epistemic injustice

Testimonial injustice

In our everyday encounters with others, we frequently gauge the trustworthiness of our interlocutors. We rarely, if ever, simply take a person at her word; rather, in encountering her, she already appears in ways on the basis of which we might consider her more or less trustworthy, and then perhaps with regard to some issues and not to others. It might be her dress or her demeanour, there might be something in our current situation that might

increase the likelihood of her being untruthful, or we might have some prior knowledge about her beliefs or way of being in the world. If we overheard her talking about how she doesn't trust 'experts' and that she considers universities to be bastions of leftist brainwashing, we might be justified in holding certain reservations concerning her views on climate change. Reducing the amount of credibility we give someone is a very common, and often well justified, heuristic device for us to reduce the amount of epistemic labour we must perform to acquire reasonable results. Sometimes, however, we fail at this. We attribute too little or too much credibility to someone based on spurious reasons.

The central case Fricker uses to illustrate this kind of failure is the trial of Tom Robinson in Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Fricker 2007: 23-29). In the novel Tom, a black man, is put on trial for raping a white girl, Mayella Ewell, where in fact it was she who kissed him. The story is set in Jim Crow Alabama in the mid-1930s, and at the risk of spoiling a 70-year-old novel, things do not end well for Tom. As one might expect, the jury and judge are blinded by their racist beliefs in their treatment of Tom. And one of the many ways Tom suffers an injustice within this system, according to Fricker, is by being disbelieved and discounted as a reliable knower. Fricker uses this example to illustrate that the injustice Tom suffers is partly epistemological. When Tom testifies to the white jury his credibility suffers a deficit, his testimony's credence is lowered, due to the fact that he is part of a social group, i.e. black people, that is held up to the standards of a prejudicial stereotype by the hearer. That is to say, the hearer (the jury) has an identity prejudice towards the speaker (Tom).

Prejudices and stereotypes

Stereotypes are frequently connected to prejudicial behaviour (as in racist, sexist or homophobic stereotypes), but generally speaking, stereotypes aren't inherently negative or bad. In fact, as Fricker argues, they are an important heuristic for navigating our social environment.

Stereotypes on Fricker's account are "widely held associations between a given social group and one or more attributes" (Fricker 2007: 30). This definition of stereotype is intentionally rather broad, as she wants it to include three factors. First, this definition is neutral as regards whether the stereotype is reliable or not. Second, it's open to the possibility of stereotypes that are not merely bound to the beliefs of those that hold them, but may also be construed more broadly, by e.g. including affective dimensions. And third, it is neutral as regards whether stereotypes have a negative or positive valence.

Thus, Fricker's analysis uses a neutral conception of stereotyping and identifies stereotyping as an important heuristic we use in our general epistemological endeavours. We assess the credibility of the statements given to us by a doctor in accordance with a stereotype of doctors, the credibility of politicians with a stereotype of the politician, etc. (Fricker 2007: 32). Stereotyping is therefore on Fricker's account an important tool and is often completely justified (Fricker 2007: 40). On this account negative stereotyping isn't of itself ethically or epistemologically culpable behaviour. A negative stereotype of, say, white supremacists, might be an acceptable instance of stereotyping, especially when evaluating their claims about people of colour.

Furthermore, on this account there is nothing unusual about having a stereotype that is reliable, generally built on affective relations rather than justified beliefs and that has a positive valence. Thus, think of someone who doesn't know anything about the way doctors are educated or why the health care system works as successfully as it does. She simply knows that people generally speak well of doctors and the healthcare system, and this has caused her to have a general positive feeling of trust towards doctors as regards matters of health. She would therefore be more likely to believe her doctor on the nature and proper treatment for the melanoma she's just been diagnosed with, than she would, say, her non-medically trained grandfather, though she knows he means well. Here she has a positive stereotype that has an affective basis rather than being based on beliefs – and, it should be added, one that is pretty reliable.

Thus, what is problematic about stereotypes is not *that* we use them, because that's something we arguably must do, but rather *how* we use them. What is problematic is that we sometimes use (negatively) *prejudiced* stereotypes.

Prejudices in general are on Fricker's account a subset of judgments. They are, in particular, judgments that are to some extent resistant to counter-evidence, not least because we have some kind of affective investment in them (Fricker 2007: 35). Many of our prejudicial beliefs we hold on to because they make us feel comfortable, important, different or valuable, or because they make us feel better than others. They might also be linked more generally to liking or disliking, approval and disapproval. And as with stereotypes they can both hold a positive and negative valence. The example Fricker uses to illustrate prejudice in this respect is a panel of a science journal referees that have a prejudicial preference for some scientific methods over others. Here the prejudice can go both ways. It can be both in the form of a negative valence of a paper that uses a method they prejudicially disapprove of, or

it might be in the form of a positive valence, when a paper is submitted that uses the 'correct' scientific methods (Fricker 2007: 35). As this example shows, we need not connect prejudice to stereotypes.[4]

What is particularly pernicious and important for Fricker's notion of testimonial injustice is the presence of what she calls *negative identity-prejudicial stereotypes*. A negative identity-prejudicial stereotype is a

> widely held disparaging association between a social group and one or more attributes, where this association embodies a generalization that displays some (typically, epistemically culpable) resistance to counter-evidence owing to an ethically bad affective investment. (Fricker 2007: 35)

To sum up: The central case of testimonial injustice on Fricker's account is an identity-prejudiced testimonial deficit where "[t]he speaker sustains such a testimonial injustice if and only if she receives a credibility deficit owing to identity prejudice in the hearer" (Fricker 2007: 28).

Hermeneutical injustice

The second core form of epistemic injustice takes the form not of testimony that is understood but not believed, but in the lack of collective hermeneutic resources, so that some experiences are not fully understandable, either by the speaker, their listener, or both. The injustice that occurs because of this Fricker calls hermeneutical injustice.

Now, merely not being understood can hardly be called an injustice. The phenomena that Fricker has in mind is the relation between dominant ways of talking about things or making sense of things – the hegemonic discourse – and its relation to our experiences. That is to say, what is at stake here is the way that there may be a dissonance between the way that I've experienced something, especially something within the social sphere, and the way that it is 'acceptable' to interpret that same experience.

What Fricker suggests is something classically framed in feminist standpoint theory, a claim that experiences can be occluded, hidden from view or difficult to understand because of networks of power relations. She quotes Nancy Hartsock where the latter claims that:

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[4] We might, however, question to how large an extent a disapproval of a certain method might ultimately rely on a stereotype.

> The dominated live in a world structured by others for their purposes – purposes that at the very least are not our own and that are in various degrees inimical to our development and even existence. (Hartsock 1998: 241)

Fricker then adds that this structuring of the world can be understood in at least three different ways. It can be read materially, in terms of how institutions and practices favour the powerful; ontologically, where it is claimed that the powerful literally affect how the social world is constituted; or epistemologically, attending to how the powerful have an opportunity to affect collective social understanding. Of these three aspects, Fricker only wants to concern herself with the last one (Fricker 2007: 147).

If we concern ourselves, for now, as Fricker does, only with the epistemic aspect we can see how the dominant position of certain groups will give them privileged access to those positions or practices that have a higher impact on social understanding. These could be positions of power generally within a community, such as the position of vicar, lawyer or politician, or it might be access to venues of power, such as media outlets or academia. These positions and venues, and the practices that go along with them, constitute a wide array of ways in which collective social meanings are created, distributed and reproduced. The lack of ability to establish collective social meanings is what Fricker calls *hermeneutical marginalisation*, which takes place "when there is unequal hermeneutical participation with respect to some significant area(s) of social experience" (Fricker 2007: 153). A separate but important point is that by affecting the collective understanding of how to interpret or understand the world or our experiences, the dominant way of thinking or interpreting makes it harder for those dominated to understand their own experiences. The argument is that when the frame of reference for social experiences is dominated by a specific group, say, men, then the discourse and hermeneutic resources coalesce around explaining their experiences. Experiences that do not fall under this rubric then stand at a disadvantage in the ways they can be framed, especially if they are in some sense systematically different from those of the predominant group, say, the experiences of women in a system where men are prevalent.[5]

What is intriguing here is that in this explanation language itself becomes not a reserve that can be drawn upon to say whatever one likes, but a frame or index of what is sayable.

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[5] For an in-depth and important discussion of this phenomenon from a post-colonial perspective, see Gayatri Spivak's (2013) discussion in "Can the subaltern speak?"

Some experiences on this account will then not be properly sayable, owing to limited hermeneutical resources. And this paves the way for what Fricker calls hermeneutical injustice, which is "the injustice of having some significant area of one's social experience obscured from collective understanding owing to persistent and wide-ranging hermeneutical marginalization"[6] (Fricker 2007: 154).

As a clear example of this kind of marginalisation and the injustice it inflicts, Fricker discusses the phenomenon of sexual harassment. Fricker points out that prior to the 1960s and the coining of the term, women suffered from a huge lack in their vocabulary, a lack that affected their ability to describe a significant part of their social experience and to express a grave injustice done to them. To illustrate this, she recounts Susan Brownmiller's narrative, in her *In Our Time: Memoir of a Revolution* (1990), of the creation of the term. Brownmiller tells us of how former university employee Carmita Wood had had to quit her job on account of unwanted advances of a professor in the department.

> As Wood told the story, the eminent man would jiggle his crotch when he stood near her desk and looked at his mail, or he'd deliberately brush against her breasts while reaching for some papers. One night as the lab workers were leaving their annual Christmas party, he cornered her in the elevator and planted some unwanted kisses on her mouth. After the Christmas party incident, Carmita Wood went out of her way to use the stairs in the lab building in order to avoid a repeat encounter, but the stress of the furtive molestations and her efforts to keep the scientist at a distance while maintaining cordial relations with his wife, whom she liked, brought on a host of physical symptoms. Wood developed chronic back and neck pains. Her right thumb tingled and grew numb. She requested a transfer to another department, and when it didn't come through, she quit. She walked out the door and went to Florida for some rest and recuperation. Upon her return she applied for unemployment insurance. When the claims investigator asked why she had left her job after eight years, Wood was at a loss to describe the hateful episodes. She was ashamed and

[6] Fricker also makes a very clear distinction between systematic and incidental cases of hermeneutical injustice. Her more general definition, which captures hermeneutical injustice *per se*, is "the injustice of having some significant area of one's social experience obscured from collective understanding owing to hermeneutical marginalization" (Fricker 2007: 158). I follow Fricker in assuming that the addition of "persistent and wide-ranging" allows us to capture the particular kind of marginalisation those dominated or underrepresented have to undergo.

> embarrassed. Under prodding – the blank on the form needed to be filled in – she answered that her reasons had been personal. Her claim for unemployment benefits was denied. (Fricker 2007: Brownmiller 1990: 280-281)[7]

As more women recounted similar stories, they became more keenly aware of this as a distinct social experience of women as a group and they consequently felt a need to name it:

> The 'this' they were going to break the silence about had no name. […] We were referring to it as "sexual intimidation," "sexual coercion," "sexual exploitation on the job". None of those names seemed quite right. We wanted something that embraced a whole range of subtle and unsubtle persistent behaviors. Somebody came up with "harassment". Sexual harassment! Instantly we agreed. That's what it was. (Brownmiller 1990: 281)

Prior to the invention of the term, the claim goes, women could not properly complain about the behaviour of their male co-workers, as sexual harassment was brushed over by less onerous terms, like flirting and complementing. For the women experiencing sexual harassment at that time, it was a reality without words, often traumatic but also often viewed as an annoyance or even a necessity, rather than something that could be address properly or criticized. Not least, precisely, because it wasn't something you *could* talk about. In trying to express these experiences, women, like Wood, were often at a loss. There seemed to be no way for those suffering this reality to frame it in a way that did not undermine them as subjects, their claims were disbelieved, discounted and ignored by others and sometimes even by themselves, and in the worst cases, taken as hysteria or paranoia. And because they had limited opportunities to express these experiences, to communicate them, that is, to share them in the full meaning of that word, they had no way of confirming the veracity of those experiences in a way that extended beyond their trust in themselves and their own strength of will.

And from the listener's perspective, it's not just that the words aren't heard or understood, it might also be, as Fricker points out, that in framing these experiences and drawing the conclusions that are being drawn from them, the speaker not only appears to be saying something untrue, but they can also seem to their interlocutor to be something less than rational (Fricker 2007: 160-161).

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[7] See also Lisa Lazard (2020) for an account of the development of the concept in a historical context.

The relation between hermeneutical and testimonial injustice

Fricker is dealing with one phenomenon, that of failing to engage with the experiential reality of another person, in two different ways. One is when there is prejudice towards the speaker, where the frame of speaking, the language used, should under normal circumstances be enough to express what is being expressed. This is the case in testimonial injustice, where Tom can legitimately explain what has occurred, but the statements aren't believed because he's seen as less than credible in his statements because he's black. The other case is where the hermeneutical resources for being able to give a proper account of the experiences are missing, such as when Carmita Wood could not properly explain to the unemployment office what it was that had caused her to quit her job.

As was mentioned earlier, Fricker highlights that these two types of injustice rarely exist independently of each other, claiming that most often when we see one, we should expect the other to be present to some degree as well. José Medina go so far as to claim that testimonial injustice cannot be removed from hermeneutic injustice (Medina 2011: 27). In the case of Tom Robinson, he suffers testimonial injustice precisely "in virtue of belonging to a social group – black men – who cannot talk about certain things – such as feeling pity for a white person or being the object of sexual desire of a white woman – without his intelligibility being called into question" – i.e. because he is hermeneutically marginalized (Medina 2011: 27). Thus, the connection between hermeneutical injustice and testimonial injustice is shown to be constitutive: without the former the latter cannot take place.

Use, misuse, and disuse of resources

Coming back to the nature of hermeneutic injustice, we see that it involves two layers. On the one hand we can speak of the injustice that is created when the collective hermeneutic resources coalesce around explaining the experiences of the dominant groups in society, which results in lacunae in those same resources when it comes to explaining the experiences of the marginalized.[8] On the other hand, there is the injustice of being occluded from sites of hermeneutic power, i.e., sites that would allow the marginalized to voice and frame their own experiences.

One common critique directed at Fricker and this formulation of hermeneutic injustice consists in pointing out how this oversells the point of failure of the marginalized to make

[8] Here goes unanswered a question posed by Komarine Romdenh-Romluc about a normative aspect of these resource, i.e. which resources *should* be included (Romdenh-Romluc 2016).

sense of their own experience and at the same time fails to articulate how the marginalized often have epistemic resources of their own (e.g. Mason 2011; Pohlhaus 2012; Medina 2012; Dotson 2012). People in marginalized groups typically have developed their own way of seeing and articulating the social environment in a manner that often is unavailable to those that belong to dominant societal groups. In fact, this is precisely what undergirds the notion of standpoint in standpoint theory, i.e., a specific kind of epistemic privilege that the dominated in a society possess on account of having to know both how the world works for them and how it works for those that dominate them.[9]

In a later paper, Fricker addresses some of her commentators and acknowledges that the undue focus she put on extreme cases of hermeneutic marginalisation shifted the attention from more common examples of hermeneutic injustice. One thing she does is define what she calls *midway examples*, where members of "hermeneutically self-reliant groups are vulnerable to hermeneutical injustices whose form does not involve any confused experiences whatsoever, but only frustratingly failed attempts to communicate them to members of an out-group" (Fricker 2016: 167).

This critique illuminates various ways in which hermeneutical injustice can manifest, even when we are concerned with a single concept such as sexual harassment.[10] Let's map out three forms that are especially applicable to sexual harassment. What Fricker initially highlights we might call *the eureka moment*: that moment when we finally manage to frame an experience in a way that seems true to it. We might think of this on an individual level, in how Wood makes sense of her own personal experience, or collectively, in how women generally came to make sense of a wide variety of experiences under the rubric of sexual harassment.

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[9] This is of course one of the core points of Hegel's famous master-slave dialectic: the slave, through his labour, comes to know both himself and his master in a way that is occluded from the master (Hegel 1977: §§178-196).

[10] There are various other kinds of epistemic harms that have been outlined in the literature, such has epistemic oppression, epistemic smothering, epistemic truncating, epistemic exploitation, and various forms of silencing (see e.g. Fricker 1999; Unnsteinsson 2019; Mason 2011; Hornsby and Langton 1998; Dotson 2011, 2012; Berenstain 2016). For the sake of brevity I will limit the discussion to exploring the implications concerning the collective element of the coining of the term 'sexual harassment'.

I'd like to point out that there is a complicated relation here between the collective and the individual. Rebecca Mason criticizes Fricker for painting a picture of Carmita Wood as someone mystified by her experiences:[11]

> Although Wood may not have gleaned the broad significance of her experience – for instance, that it was a widespread and unfortunately common occurrence in many women's lives – her actions following her denied unemployment insurance claim [i.e. seeking out the woman's group, making complaints etc.] betray Fricker's description of her as someone who failed to understand. (Mason 2011: 297)

But Fricker isn't saying that Wood didn't experience a violation or hurt. Her failure to understand consisted in not connecting her sense of violation and injustice to the "broader significance" of her experience, realizing that it was a token of something widespread and common. Fricker's claim is that the collective hermeneutic resources surrounding Wood's experience hindered the latter in giving a proper account of her experience *as a shared phenomenon*, both to herself and to others. And it is here that the eureka moment is so important, with its connecting of the dots (which implies that the dots where there to connect with!) and its remapping of the social field with new hermeneutical resources.

And although literally lacking resources to make sense of one's experience may not be the most common form of hermeneutic injustice, we shouldn't overlook the importance of such moments of clarity and how they illustrate the importance of intersubjective corroboration. We can also name more recent examples of seeing a prevalent behaviour that becomes clarified through naming, such as gaslighting, mansplaining and toxic masculinity. In all of these instances it is not the individual behaviours or experiences that matter, but the interconnection of a number of them within a social dynamic.

A second manifestation of hermeneutic injustice is the one Fricker highlights in response to her critics, *the midway example*. Again, sexual harassment provides a good example. In the 70s and 80s the concept had become a mainstay within feminist discourse but was still viewed with suspicion in society more broadly. A woman experiencing sexual harassment could therefore frame the harassment as such, make sense of her experience and get support from

[11] She also points out that Wood was Black, adding historical and racialized layers to the harassment that Fricker fails to address. Berenstain (2016) has also commented on this.

the in-group of feminist activists, but still confront considerable hermeneutic challenges when trying to communicate her experience to most out-groups.[12]

The third form, which has received less attention within the epistemic literature, we might call *appropriation or disarmament*. As Lisa Lazard has argued, when neoliberal thought gained traction in Western countries in the 80s and 90s, the prevalence of lean-in feminism and post-feminist thought became more apparent and acknowledged in society (Lazard 2020). There are two things that happen here in relation to sexual harassment. On the one hand sexual harassment, a phenomenon that can be found in almost any setting, was increasingly viewed as something that happens primarily in the workplace. And on the other hand, the highly individualistic thinking that characterizes neoliberal thought pushed harassment from being a collective towards being a personal issue, demanding of women that they overcome their issues by staying strong, confronting their harassers and claiming their space within patriarchal and heteronormative culture, while at the same time downplaying the ubiquity and the social structure of harassment as related to the general misogynistic sexual entitlement of women and of women's bodies.

Unlike the case with the midway example, here we find a more general acceptance of the term. It had become in many respects a part of the hegemonic lexicon, even though the experiences it was meant to express were still obscure to many (men). The term lived a zombified life, with a cartoonish social imaginary tagging along with it, of the odd and random predatory pervert, rather than as the regular occurrence of many women's lives.[13] It

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[12] Keeping the resources within the in-group might also serve a certain purpose. This is the case for example with harassment within certain fields, e.g. academia. Recent discussions within academic philosophy have highlighted the prevalence of harassment that non-male academics suffer within the field, primarily women who are victims of harassment from the hands of more established philosophers. Even though the presence of harassment has been quite prevalent, this would not necessarily reach the male population of philosophical academia, or the general discourse, while it circulates quite well within the considerably smaller population of female and queer academic philosophers. One key reason for this is an attempt to mitigate the reach of the harassers, while also trying to avoid retribution, either from the harasser specifically or from academic society more generally. Keeping yourself under the radar, while still performing acts of resistance, is a well-known and important tactic of the vulnerable in society (see Scott 1990). It might be noted that within American academia, peer harassment is in fact more common than harassment from superiors, though harassment from superiors is perceived as more serious (Huerta, Cortina, Pang, Torges, and Magley 2006; Pétursdóttir and Rúdólfsdóttir 2021).

[13] There's a resemblance here with the discussion about rapists, where the image of the masked and crazed rapist hiding in the bushes allows men in general to distance themselves from them. There are 'good guys' and then there are 'rapists'. The same can be said here, there's the pervy and creepy 'sexual harasser' and then there are the 'nice guys'. But it is often the 'nice guys' that do the harassing and the harassing often looks to them as normal behaviour (Katz 2006: 148).

became institutionalized, used in the framework of working life, especially the office setting, and related to the experiences of white middle-class women, while the ubiquity of harassment in the life of women, especially in the life of women of colour, was overlooked.

The prominence and extensiveness of the #MeToo movement speaks volumes in regard to how much this concept, regardless of its pervasiveness, did not capture the widespread and ubiquitous sexual harassment women undergo, often on a daily basis.

This historical narrative of the reception of the concept 'sexual harassment' illustrates various ways hermeneutic injustices can play out and how we would go about to ameliorate them. In *the eureka moment* we emphasize the importance of naming and articulating an experience, in *the midway example* we emphasise the distribution of epistemic resources and in *the appropriation or disarmament example* we emphasise the appropriate usage of terms.

Lack of words

The emphasis on epistemic resources, where we think of them in terms of concepts, words, articulations, stereotypes (Fricker 2007: 30), social imagination (Fricker 2007: 38) or ideas (Fricker 2007: 103; Pohlhaus 2012: 719), although all are important, each of these seems to downplay how we sometimes manage without words. It isn't that unusual for us to lack words and concepts. And often it isn't that hard at all for us to understand someone even when they struggle to find words. When we are bereft with grief and at a loss for words, a knowing hug can tell all that our words were looking for, it can exemplify 'getting it' in such a way that oversteps the need of for explicitly saying.

And if we look at the Carmita Wood example again we might notice that the importance of naming the experience is actually secondary. The eureka moment happens when the women manage to connect disparate experiences as all related to a theme, and in recognizing these connected experiences as something they collectively share in, even though their individual experiences of harassment can be wildly different. And they do this before they name the experience. They ask at the event "what should we call *it*" (my emphasis), the "it" being a demarcated sense of embodied experiences that needs a fitting articulation. What seems to be primary is the intersubjective corroboration among the women in the group and the empathetic and lived relation between them. The recognition, the living-with each other, is a precondition for the naming of the experience as a collective experience and the creation of the concept. We often lack specific resources or words but can sometimes clearly articulate our experiences, and this is what Wood successfully did.

Finding a convenient and transparent term for the concept and the experience is something that results from the successful sharing of the experience, and, arguably, something done more for political purposes than for making it easier to communicate within the in-group.

Thematic points

In this subchapter I will introduce a couple of thematic points that will serve as a leitmotif for the arguments in the following chapters. There I will show the importance of accounting for embodied and affective relationality when we are dealing with issues of epistemic injustice. And what I will argue is that within the literature in social epistemology concerning itself with this problematic, and that includes Fricker, there is a latent understanding of embodied and affective relationality as a conveyor of sense. There are three elements I want to address in the following. First, there are the overarching metaphors that dominate the literature: the metaphors of discourses and imaginaries. These metaphors, I argue, affect how we conceptualize the relation between first person experience and epistemic resources, and count for at least part of the reason why discussions concerning embodiment and affectivity are only present to a very limited extent in the literature. Second, I will address Fricker's discussion of the need for empathy and/or sympathy when we make credibility judgements and how she relates this to Edward Craig's distinction between being an informant and being a source of information. The role of empathy is only briefly explored in Fricker's oeuvre, but as we shall see, there is much that can be further explored in this regard. And thirdly, I will explore how Fricker recognizes different expressive and affective styles in cases of hermeneutical injustice. I will argue that it isn't always specific beliefs or the lack of specific hermeneutic resources that prevent understanding, but rather that sometimes this happens because of a failure to recognize someone's style of being and the other's emotional style.

Imaginaries and discourses

Evoking imaginaries to explain what it is that distorts our perspective of the other is prevalent in a variety of literature. Thus, Fricker evokes social imaginaries, as social imagination, acknowledging its origin in Jacques Lacan and Cornelius Castoriadis. However, she explicitly wants to avoid any connection with those thinkers and offers instead only a cursory

definition, mostly to capture the workings of prejudices.[14] Medina takes issue with Fricker's avoidance and elaborates on social imaginaries through Castoriadis and William James, suggesting that social imaginaries refer to "shared modes of representing and relating, which are prior to and independent of particular beliefs and affects" (Medina 2013: 269). The idea here is that imaginaries are not necessarily consciously conceived figures of the imagination, they are something that "permeates the cognitive and affective dimensions of our experience, without being reducible to a mere list of specific cognitive commitments and affective reactions" (Medina 2013: 269). We have, then, collective modes of representing and relating that are not necessarily evident to us but nonetheless affect the way we sense our social environment. These imaginaries also seem to function on a level that relates to us on a deeper, perhaps more embodied level than that of judgements or beliefs, as illustrated by Medina's claim that "we may consciously (and even, to an important degree, sincerely) disavow all our sexist beliefs and emotions, and our thought, affectivity, and action may nonetheless still remain mediated by a sexist social imagination" (Medina 2013: 269). He then adds that social imagination is "inscribed in our habitual ways of thinking, acting, and feeling" (Medina 2013: 269). From Castoriadis he also takes the notion of *radical imagination*, which Castoriadis contrasts to mechanistic imagination. While the latter simply "reproduces, imitates, or combines according to rules" (Castoriadis 1997 319-320; Medina 2013: 270), radical imagination is a site of creation and invention. But what is interesting as well is that the notion of radical imagination places an emphasis not only on generating images in a visual sense, but "in a general sense", which includes the creation of "significations and institutions" (Castoriadis 1997 322; Medina 2013: 270). Imagination in this sense is not simply bound to the kind of pictorial representations we sometimes associate with stereotypes (doctors are male, NBA players are tall), but is linked further to a more general symbolic domain. However, on Castoriadis' account we shouldn't assume that imaginaries

[14] In a footnote she claims that as "social imaginary" is hard to divorce from its psychoanalytic roots she will rely on the "less heavily theoretical notion of the social imagination" which is "a more straightforward option". What social imagination consists of, how it differs from social imaginary and why it is a more straightforward option, is however left to the reader to figure out (Fricker 2007: 38).

are in this way simply cognitions or ideals, but rather they are both sensory and bodily kinds of imagination (Castoriadis 1997: 322; Medina 2013: 270).[15]

Imagination is something we typically relate to individual subjects or to personal experience. But what we are discussing here is something like a collective imagination or collective conceptualisations. Questions on the nature of collective imagination extend beyond the scope of this thesis, but it might be useful to bear in mind the kind of collectivity Castoriadis seeks to formulate:

> Our "personal" experience is our personal home—and this home would not be a home, but a solitary cave, if it was not in a village or a town. For, it is the collectivity that teaches us how to build homes and how to live in them. We cannot live without a home but neither can we remain hermetically enclosed in "our" home. (Castoriadis 1997: 325; quoted in Medina 2013: 270)

Another important discussion on social imaginaries can be found in the works of Charles Taylor. He contrasts his definition of the social imaginary to that of theoretical thinking or intellectual schemes and aims instead at grasping the "ways people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations" (Taylor 2004: 23). This is something carried forward, not in theoretical frameworks, but in "images, stories, and legends", and he describes it as something that is a "largely unstructured and inarticulate understanding of our whole situation". He compares it to "the background" often evoked in the social sciences and psychology, though it is supposed to reach deeper (Taylor 2004: 25; 28). How it reaches deeper is not entirely clear.

Another useful comparison can be found in the works of Moira Gatens. In her *Imaginary bodies* (1996) she draws a parallel between her usage of imaginaries and Bourdieu's *habitus*.

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[15] Another way to formulate imaginaries can be traced through Lacan to Althusser, who uses the concept to frame his notion of ideology. Here imaginaries are taken to be fundamentally distortive, as they occlude our vision of our real conditions of existence. Chrys Ingraham evokes imaginaries as a Lacanian term through Althusser's definition of ideology. There ideology is defined as "the imaginary relationship of individual to their real conditions of existence" (Althusser 1971: 51, quoted in Ingraham 2010: 357). On this account the imaginary is considered to be something that "masks the historical and material conditions of life" (Ingraham 2010: 357). However, as David Couzens Hoy points out, if ideology is taken to be fundamentally distortive, and if there is no non-distortive way of looking at things, we are at an impasse and the conceptual gain of the concept of ideology seems to be lost (Hoy 1994: 7; quoted in Gatens 1996: x).

Habitus is "the embodied history, *internalized as a second nature* and so forgotten as history – [it] is the active presence of the whole past of which it is the product. As such, it is what gives practices their relative autonomy with respect to external determinations of the immediate present […]. The *habitus* is a *spontaneity without consciousness or will* […]" (Bourdieu 1992: cf. Gatens 1996: xi, her italics). If we contrast this with Taylor's approach, we can see how he places the imaginary in a more cognitive register, conceiving it as certainly often unthematized, but still understood in terms of images, stories and legends. Gatens shifts this focus towards the body itself, seeing the imaginaries as embodied. They are an internalized, inherited history. The way I am embodied, the way that I navigate my environment, especially when I do not bring this mode of navigation to explicit awareness, is what Gatens wants to capture in her treatment of imaginaries. This layered and historical embodiment might also serve to give an explanation for how the social imaginary reaches deeper than "the background", as Taylor suggests it does above. Imaginaries are manifest in our habits, in the way we live through, rather than think through, our existence.

What we have in all of these cases is contrast being made between everyday knowledge that we implicitly have gathered and our more theoretical outlook. This connection is encapsulated in Michelle Le Doeff's claim that

> imagery and knowledge form, dialectically, a common system. Between these two terms there is a play of feedbacks which maintains the particular regime of the discursive formation. Philosophical texts offer images through which subjectivity can be structured and given a marking which is that of the corporate body. (Le Dœuff 2003: 19; quoted in Gatens 1996: ix)

We have previously discussed the role of hegemonic discourses in how we understand ourselves and our situation, or are precluded from doing so. If we follow thinkers like Butler and Foucault and claim that discourses aren't simply linguistic significations that hold cognitive or ideal meaning for us, but are rather understood as something that is "inscribed on bodies", it seems that the distinction between, on the one hand, imaginaries as framed by Castoriadis, Medina, Taylor and Gaidens, and discourses on the other hand is rather vague (cf. Foucault 1984: 83; Butler 1990: 8; 1989). I'd even go so far as to say that what we have is a formulation of imaginaries that sometimes seems to differ from notions of discourses or (as Foucault would put it) *epistemes* mostly in terms of the metaphor they use, the latter referring us to language or narratives, while the former evokes images or representations.

That there are imaginaries and discourses at work in our social relations is in my opinion beyond doubt. Both of these approaches have proven to be immensely fruitful, not least in how they capture our sense of stereotypes and prejudices, or how they serve as descriptions of the particular ways we are socialized by institutionalized narratives. Asked to imagine a generic doctor or a philosophy professor we are more likely to bring to mind a greying white (heterosexual) man than a young black woman. And asked to conjure up the image of the 'welfare queen', we are faced not only with racist and sexist images and imageries, but also a narrative of a particular kind of dependency.[16] What I want to undertake in the following is not an attempt to supplant imaginaries or discourses, but rather to add further metaphors to the mix.

The metaphors of discourse and imaginaries tend towards intellectualisation, our sense of the world is bound to ways we articulate it, or to the ways we imagine it. What I would like to do is to draw our attention to the ambiguous conception of sense, to the ambiguity of the way that we sense ourselves in the world. Here I'm not pushing us towards unreason; there is reason in the body, in bodily feelings. We must probe it, explore it, learn from it. Nor am I advocating unyielding faith in our feelings; rather, I am simply pointing out that discourses and imaginaries emerge from a unity of sense that is our experience of the world. Discourses aim to capture a way that we are situated in the world, both in the way that we are constrained in our speech and how others constrain us with theirs. Imaginaries aim at pointing out what is visible, what we can see and what we can imagine – or ideate. In discussing the constraints that the social imaginary puts on the jury in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Medina writes: "The interrogation stumbles upon something that falls outside the social imaginary: a Negro feeling sorry for a white girl. What lacks all credibility is not simply Tom Robinson as a knower and informer in general, but the idea of black pity for white subjects in Jim Crow Alabama" (Medina 2011: 25). The idea, the stereotype, the image of what a black man is and what a black man can do constrains our thinking. "The resistance to know," Medina adds, "comes from the social imaginary (or limitations therein)" (Medina 2011: 25). To iterate, I do not intend to supplant the concepts of discourse and imaginaries; they both do a beautiful job of explaining many facets of living in the social world. I'd rather want to underscore that they are both bound to an embodied living – something I don't think these approaches are

[16] See Nancy Fraser and Linda Gordon's "The Genealogy of Dependence" (1994) for an enlightening analysis of dependency.

inimical to, but is typically sidestepped by them. I want to address how the lived reality in these situations is characterized also by embodied habits, a sense of the world, and a sense of normality, harmony and concordance.

In discussions focusing on discourse as well as those focusing on imaginaries, there is, at least nominally, both an acknowledgement of embodiment, mostly in relation to the effect discourses or imaginaries have on bodies and the structure of subjectivity, and of lived realities. I will argue that shifting the focus towards lived realities will prove to be important. Seeing discourses and imaginaries through the lens of lived reality will help us understand how hermeneutical injustices are propagated and nurtured in any environment. They are expressions of the lived realities of people, of their normal habituated, bodily and affective ways of being with others, not simply of the narrative of the society or some social imaginary. We could apply to social imaginaries and discourses what Merleau-Ponty says of history: we cannot reduce it either to the action of individuals, or to the action of a meta-structure that affects us, but should see it as the intermingling of both factors (Merleau-Ponty 1964: 20). And it is by attending to the lived experiences of subjects that we approach the individual aspect of the appearance of the structures. What will emerge is that by addressing the phenomenology of our experience of the world, we can deepen our understanding of what goes wrong in our interactions across worlds.

Informants and empathy

When I fail to believe you it is easy to say that I merely don't believe the claim that you've made, i.e. I take your utterance that *p* to be untrue. But there is also a sense in which I don't believe *you*. On this, Fricker quotes Hobbes favourably where he suggests that it is indeed not the statements that we believe but the person: in testimony, we're "sizing up the person" and not simply their words (Fricker 2007: 70). Fricker strikes a similar note when discussing the notion of credibility in a later paper. There she suggests that we should be more open to take 'credibility' in its everyday sense and that such "a colloquial construal is supported by the fact that the object of any credibility judgement includes not only *what is said* but also *the speaker*" (Fricker 2016: 162).

It is on this note that we find one of the ways that Fricker seeks ways to battle epistemic injustice, i.e. by practicing what she calls *virtuous listening*. This she does by arguing that credibility judgments are perceptual in nature and she draws a parallel between a neo-Aristotelian notion of moral perception and credibility judgements. She then suggests that a

suitably critical response to a speaker's statement is based on a well-trained testimonial sensibility. The claim here is that in our everyday encounters with others we do not *infer* that people are trustworthy or sincere, but, rather, we literally 'see' each other in that way; and that by training our sensibility to the nuances of situations we become better at this perceiving, and this allows us to act more virtuously (Fricker 2007: 72).

One may then ask what it is that I perceive when I'm perceiving trustworthiness or sincerity. Coming back to the reference to Hobbes above, it seems clear that this perceptibility of the trustworthiness of the other is not simply some abstract perception of credibility, but rather hinges on our ability to "size up the person". This interpretation is further corroborated with Fricker's reliance on Edward Craig's distinction between treating someone as an informant and treating someone as a source of information. Craig claims that "while objects can only be sources of information, people can be either informants (as when someone tells one something one wants to know) or sources of information (as when the fact that one's guest arrives bedraggled and shaking her umbrella may allow one to infer that it has been raining)" (Craig 1990: 36; cf. Fricker 2007: 132). One of the harms of testimonial injustice is the kind of epistemic objectification involved, where the other is treated as a source of information and is thereby precluded from participation in the co-operative act of knowledge practice. They are not a participant in the discussion but are rather demoted from the status of informant to that of a state of affairs, no more a participant than "a felled tree whose age one might glean from the number of rings" (Fricker 2007: 133). This element, the distinction between informant and source of information, is for Fricker "the key to understanding not only the positive ethical attitude shared by participants in the practice but also something about the wrong done to someone who is prejudicially excluded from that practice" (Fricker 2007: 132).

Fricker maps this distinction onto Kant's claim that we should never treat an other simply as a means but always also as an end in itself. That is, when I engage with you, even if I am only trying to elicit specific information from you, I must also recognize you, at least minimally, as a person as well. To how large an extent I focus on and recognize the other's personhood comes in degrees, and it is not always morally reprehensible to only minimally recognize the other. If I stop a stranger at the train station to inquire about the time, I'm mostly treating her as a source of information, as a means. What I seek, the information about the current time of day, I could just as well have acquired by tilting my head and sneakily checking her watch. But in politely asking I make a gesture of recognition of her

personhood and autonomy. I treat her as someone from whom I can solicit information and as someone who is trustworthy in giving it. Another example, where the focus is not on communication, perhaps illustrates this better. When I engage with the person behind the cash register at the supermarket, the recognizing of their personhood is always minimally present. I can perform this ritual of monetary exchange by treating the other *almost* as a machine (i.e. by not making eye contact or replying to greetings). But it would still be completely unacceptable if I'd just reach around the cash register and mess with what they are doing if they were having trouble with something.

In addition, for the informant to do their job competently they have to have some "sympathetic grasp of the other inquirer's predicament", as Craig puts it (Craig 1990: 36; cf. Fricker 2007: 132). Craig depicts this more broadly and notes that the inquirer-informant relationship requires situations where "human beings treat each other as subjects with a common purpose, rather than as objects from which services, in this case true belief, can be extracted" (Craig 1990: 36).

Craig's notion of sympathy does not simply imply a recognition of the other's goals. Sympathy for Craig involves three things: first, the recognition of intention. Second, a more general recognition of humanity, that we are all human and that we all have desires and wants and ideas about right and wrong that we on the whole share in, despite our differences. And thirdly a feeling towards or for the other, i.e. that which underscores our willingness to comply to their requests. The sympathetic grasp of the other's predicament implies that I treat the other not only as someone who might have their own personal goals, but also that I recognize that these goals are in some sense connected to mine, as the goals of a human being that is like me and is living a life that is bound to common or collective ways of valuing.

Another affective dimension to the experience of testimony is suggested by Fricker when she evokes the importance of empathy to our credibility judgements. For Fricker empathy is important as it helps us recognize relevant emotional states in the speaker when we are making credibility judgments. She gives an example of a teacher trying to gauge the truthfulness of something a student is saying but fails to recognize that the student is afraid of her. Here the failure to recognize the fear serves as an interpretative hindrance for the teacher who ascribes credibility incorrectly: she for example misinterprets an aversion of eye contact as implying lying rather than fearful sincerity. Empathy for Fricker involves the recognition of particular emotions (such as fear in the student) while also being a cognitive-affective ability. Empathy evokes an emotional response on the part of the empathiser: I see

some affective state in you that should evoke in me an appropriate response (suspicion, trust etc.).

The nature of the common purposes, the nature of the sympathetic relation or the nature of empathy are not developed further by Fricker. Rather, as is fitting for her analysis, she focuses on where these fail, and especially on the nature of the objectification of the other when they are treated as sources of information rather than as informants, i.e. where the informant is "demoted from subject to object" (Fricker 2007: 132).

Crucially, what we see in both Fricker's empathy and Craig's sympathy is that they are placed in a certain externality to the communication itself. There is the communication, which is made sense of and understood, and then there is the ability to read certain affective or intentional states in the other that may or may not affect how we interpret said communication.

What we will see in the next chapter is that a careful analysis shows that we have to pay attention to the specific ways in which testimony and empathy interrelate. That will also involve taking apart different phenomena that are conflated in the aforementioned discussion, phenomena such as empathy, sympathy, and feeling-for or feeling-with someone.

What I simply want to draw attention to here is that in Fricker's work there is a latent appreciation of these affective dimensions as can be seen in her discussion of the relation between hermeneutic and testimonial injustice, where affective and emotional styles come into play.

Sense and style

One example Fricker uses to clarify the notion of testimonial injustice is that of the interaction between Marge Sherwood and Herbert Greenleaf found in Anthony Minghella's screenplay for the film *The Talented Mr. Ripley* (Minghella 2000).[17] In the story Greenleaf travels to Venice in search of his son, Dickie, who has disappeared. There he meets up with Dickie's fiancé, Marge, as the latter two had been traveling together.

In the story there is a pattern of interactions where Marge is discredited and disbelieved based primarily on beliefs that Greenleaf holds about how women think, act and reason; and how and what young men are likely to communicate to their fiancés. Her status as someone

[17] Fricker chooses the screenplay over Patricia Highsmith's novel because in the screenplay the portrayal of Marge's character and her interaction with Greenleaf better serves as an example of what she wants to discuss (Fricker 2007: 88).

who might have deeply relevant knowledge about her husband-to-be and his character is frequently undermined, while at the same time Tom Ripley, Dickie's friend, is treated as someone with privileged access to that kind of information. On one occasion Greenleaf asks Marge if he may speak to Ripley in private: "I'd like to talk to Tom alone – perhaps this afternoon? Would you mind? Marge, what a man may say to his sweetheart and what he'll admit to another fellow –" (Minghella 2000: 120-121; cf. Fricker 2007: 87).

From the outset, Marge is suspicious of Ripley and of his claims that Dickie has in all likelihood committed suicide. Her intuition that something is off about Ripley and that his words shouldn't be taken at face value is off-handedly dismissed by Greenleaf as "women's intuition": "Marge, there's female intuition, and then there are facts" (Minghella 2000: 130; Fricker 2007: 9). It then turns out that Marge was right, Ripley had murdered Dickie and was trying to cover his tracks.

Fricker initially introduces this example to illustrate a key aspect of testimonial injustice. Greenleaf fails to ascribe the appropriate credibility to Marge on account of a negative identity prejudice. He believes her words to a lesser degree because he is under the sway of his prejudices against women. But later on, Fricker returns to this example to show a particular kind of interrelation between hermeneutical injustice and testimonial injustice.

When discussing the nature of 'the virtuous hearer' in the context of hermeneutical injustice, Fricker suggests that "virtuous Herbert Greenleaf would have been able to perceive Marge as someone whose emotional and intuitive style fell into a hermeneutical gap, and he would have heard her in a way that at least made room for the possibility that she had a point" (Fricker 2007: 172). But given that in practical contexts we might be limited in our ability or opportunity to "'listen' through to the meaning immanent in what the speaker is saying" it might turn out be "virtue enough" for him to "have sensed the alienness to him as a man of her intuitive style as a woman, and reserved his judgement" (Fricker 2007: 172).

What I would like to draw attention to here is that what falls into the hermeneutical gap isn't specific expressions, epistemic resources or a set of beliefs, but an intuitive and emotional style. The Greenleaf example is supposed to capture a testimonial injustice, but in the end it's Marge's style of comportment and way of being in the world that eludes Greenleaf (Fricker 2007: 172). Hermeneutical injustice is shown to relate not only to specific articulations, or ways of conceptualisation, but also to intuitive and emotional styles.[18]

[18] We will return to the theme of styles in chapter 5.

The problem is that Greenleaf *does* recognize the alienness of her intuitive style as a woman, but fails to reserve his judgement. He has ready-made explanations for why this doesn't matter, or why the style can be safely ignored. To be virtuous he needs to recognize that Marge is speaking from a style that he does not consider worthy of attention *and* that he is wrong in doing so.

Ultimately the injustice Marge suffers is hermeneutical, but this hermeneutical injustice is not simply about her inability to articulate her experiences in a succinct and accurate manner or to conceptualize clearly what is at stake, but touches on something we might call the hermeneutics of lived experience, our ability to understand the experiences of others with or without specific epistemic resources.

Think again of the examples of women expressing their experiences of sexual harassment. It is not only the truth value of their statements that they want to be taken up and understood. It's not just the words that they are trying to communicate, but the experiences themselves. When we describe experiences like that, we want our listeners to understand the experiences, the feelings, the emotions, the sense of injustice and indignation, etc. Not just the "what" happened, but also the "how" of it.

The epistemic approach and the pooling of knowledge

There is one more metaphor that I'd like to throw into the mix here, and it's a metaphor that I'd say dominates Fricker's discussion of epistemic injustice. This is the metaphor of the pooling of knowledge:

> The primary harm of (the central case of) testimonial injustice concerns exclusion from the pooling of knowledge owing to identity prejudice on the part of the hearer; the primary harm of (the central case of) hermeneutical injustice concerns exclusion from the pooling of knowledge owing to structural identity prejudice in the collective hermeneutical resource. (Fricker 2007: 162)

This metaphor, and I think this applies to whether we think in terms of discourse or imaginaries, suggests a collection of some sort, a library of concepts, that we need to have to make sense of certain things, and that we should all be allowed to contribute to. This metaphor draws us into what I would suggest is an overly epistemic or discursive focus on the issues that the concept of epistemic injustice, testimonial injustice and hermeneutic injustice pinpoint. The pool of knowledge – in the singular – also pushes towards a danger that Medina warns us about, that of being drawn towards what he calls, with Arendt, a

"definite view of the world" (Medina 2013: 21; cf. Arendt 1970: 8). Medina and Arendt claim that an attempt to attain such a view is a vain and dangerous enterprise because it fosters a tendency to cling to a single perspective and makes us less open to alternative viewpoints (Medina 2013: 21). What we need, Medina suggests, is a deep social contextualism when we are dealing with issues of social epistemology. When we are guided by an attempt to reach such a definitive view of the world, we are likely to attempt to seek "what really happened". This might not sound so bad, but when dealing with conflicting narratives, such as is often the case with things like #MeToo stories, we have a tendency to shoehorn the experiences of our interlocutor into the dominant discourse, and consequently we might perpetrate epistemic injustice. This kind of shoehorning, I will argue, is something that will characterize what I will later call the *testimonification of telling*.

As we have seen, there are affective and embodied elements that in many respects struggle to find their place within a dialogue of "pooling of knowledge" or "epistemic resources", where our conceptions of knowledge and the epistemic are geared towards the articulated, conceptual and propositional. The approaches found in the social epistemology literature typically privilege the latter kind of knowledge and are often silent on elements that might be vague, embodied or affectively laden. What I will show is that exploring our lived interactions through the lens of empathy, habit, style, embodiment and affect demonstrates how rich our sense of the world and our sense of others really is and that if we wish to grasp how we fail to understand others, such as is manifest in phenomena like the #MeToo movement, we have to factor in these elements too.

As I have already discussed, we can detect this richer sense of the world and of others to some extent in the literature, for example in the discussion of the intuitive style of Marge Sherwood or in the incorporation of empathy in the discussion of treating our interlocutors as informants rather than as sources of information.

I want to call this privileging of the articulated, conceptual and propositional *the epistemological approach* to the problem of understanding others. As will become clearer in the following chapters, by this I do not mean an approach that focuses on knowledge, but an approach that privileges the propositional, the clarity of concepts and of articulations, while more ambiguous concepts like sense, style, lived experience, empathy and sympathy reside on the margins and are seen as derivative or less important. Making this distinction and analysing an ambiguous concept like sense seems to me to be a fruitful avenue for exploration.

3. Empathy

> We love and hate, will and act,
> are happy and sad and look like it.
> (Edith Stein 1989: 88)

Before we address the phenomenology of speech and communication I wish to make a somewhat lengthy detour into the field of other-engagement that phenomenology is most recognised for, that is to say, to look into the question of empathy. While the ensuing chapters will focus on the question "what happens when we speak?", this chapter will address the question "what happens when we empathize?". The premise for the current chapter will be that these questions are fundamentally interlinked.

Within the phenomenological tradition empathy has played an important and multifarious role, one of the most fundamental of which, especially for Husserl, has been its transcendental role in the intersubjective constitution of reality.[19] I will, however, not be exploring this aspect in this chapter, but will focus on the more specific kind of experience of the other that empathy is supposed to capture. Empathy plays an important role in the intersubjective constitution of reality, but there are also further elements of it that would be helpful to clarify for analysing the way that we engage with other people in communication. In our world experience, in our sense of the lifeworld we do not only acquire *knowledge* from others about the world, we also encounter the world with others. This can take the form of perceptually engaging with it together, but also in the way we share our affective experiences. People are angry, frustrated, depressed, happy, joyful or excited. Our world experience is fundamentally characterized by kinds of valuing that expand far beyond the merely epistemological. We not only encounter what people think about the world but also how they feel about it. This aspect of self-other relations will become important later as I'll be drawing out those elements of communication that relate to how we share with each other not only information but also emotive, affective aspects of our lived experience and of our sense of the world.

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[19] Empathy is sometimes conflated with the phenomenological approach to intersubjectivity more generally; see Zahavi's paper "Beyond Empathy: Phenomenological Approaches to Intersubjectivity" (2001) for an overview of the various ways of framing intersubjectivity within phenomenology. Some of these ways give empathy only a limited, derivate role. This does not affect the argument and discussion in the following.

What are we concerned with when discussing empathy? Our engagement with other people takes many forms and, depending on your definition of empathy, not all of them may qualify as empathy. Think of the differences between the intimate conversation between lovers, a professional meeting with several colleagues, buying a loaf of bread from someone in a shop, lecturing to a group of students or negotiating one's way past others on a busy street (Ratcliffe 2007: 4-5). Do all of these require empathy? Many might be inclined to say that for the conversation between lovers to be intimate it would require them to empathize with each other, but it is not hard to see how we might treat the shopkeeper as someone performing a pre-ordained social practice and not as a full person or how the lecturer might lecture as if to an empty room. For one thing, as Zahavi points out with Heidegger, the act of thematizing the mental life of others, of actually wondering in what kind of mental state the other is, is the exception rather than the rule (Zahavi 2001: 155). Matthew Ratcliffe also illustrates how we often interact with the world in what could be called "an intersubjective manner" without resorting to any form of what we typically call empathy (Ratcliffe 2007: chapter 1). In the following I will first introduce some prevalent frameworks for understanding empathy before introducing the so-called direct perception model of empathy and its phenomenological underpinnings. In conclusion I will look at how the phenomenological tradition has in many ways overlooked how speech and empathy are interlinked.

An overview of a few prevalent frameworks

For the last few decades there has been a lively dialogue, especially within the fields of psychology and cognitive science, on self-other relations (Davies 1995). I do not wish to get into the intricacies of the current debate on the problem of other minds and the competing theories on the nature of empathy, but a cursory mention of the main theories cannot be avoided. For the last few decades there were arguably two dominant theories in the debate on the nature of social cognition. On the one hand there is the theory simply (or intriguingly) called 'the theory theory of mind' (Baron-Cohen 1995) that argues that we come to know what others think or feel by utilizing folk-psychological theories about people's beliefs and desires. I recognize a behaviour in someone and surmise that when people typically behave in a particular way (smile, flail their hands around, and scream) they must be elated. This surmising can take the form of explicit induction on behalf of the subject (as when we literally

theorise about someone's behaviour), or, what is more typical, in the form of some kind of sub-personal processes.

The second dominant theory is the so-called simulation theory (Gordon 1995). Proponents of simulation theory argue that when we empathise with someone this takes the form of a simulation, where I in my empathising go through a process of 'as-if' it was me that was going through whatever it is that you are going through. While I'm looking at you, you stub your toe on the leg of the table. I flinch in empathetic pain as I simulate in me the pain I would have felt had it been me that stubbed my toe much as you did. As with the theory-theory of mind, this can be taken as being more or less explicit. I can literally 'put myself in someone else's shoes' as we often say, trying to imaginatively live through what the other is experiencing, or it can take the form of a sub-personal process. This latter form, it is argued, found empirical support in the discovery of mirror-neurons by Di Pellegrino and colleagues in the 1990s (Di Pellegrino et al. 1992; Rizzolatti et al. 1996), which gave rise to the hypothesis that these neurons perform the role of simulating what the other person is experiencing (Gallese 2001).[20]

A third model has been gaining prominence in the last few decades that draws its inspiration from the phenomenological tradition. This model is often called 'the direct perception model'. In my approach to empathy, this model, or rather, its phenomenological roots, is the theoretical framework that I will utilize. There are three main reasons for this choice. Firstly, and perhaps most obviously, this dissertation is an exercise in phenomenology. It therefore goes without saying that deploying this model in my analysis requires far less theoretical legwork than other models would have called for. Secondly, without being able to argue for this specifically, I take this model to be a more accurate representation of what it is that happens when we engage with other minded beings. And thirdly, I take this approach to have certain affinities with Fricker's neo-Aristotelian notion of literally seeing someone as trustworthy or not, and that it is therefore more amenable to complement my discussion of epistemic injustice.

[20] There have also been some hybrid theories that combine elements of both theories (e.g., Goldman 2006). In the last few years, a development towards theories that appreciate the second person perspective, the so-called I-Thou relation, have been gaining prominence (see Meindl, León and Zahavi 2020).

Empathy and direct perception

The direct perception model of empathy has been proposed and developed by phenomenologists and phenomenologically inspired thinkers for the last couple of decades (e.g. Gallagher 2008; Zahavi 2011). The model draws on the rich work of Husserl, Stein, Scheler, Merleau-Ponty and Levinas among others, and, accordingly, on the pivotal role that the experience of the other, of otherness, of the sharing and experiencing of the emotional lives of others and the nature and fundamental importance of intersubjectivity have played in the phenomenological literature. The crux of this account is arguing that the two dominant theories both make the same mistake, they assume that mental states are hidden internal states that we deduce by observing non-mental outer behaviour. A constant theme within this framework and the phenomenological approach more generally is to argue that the subjective life of others isn't as hidden as the two dominant theories seem to presume. I see your anger *in* your clenched fist, your sadness *in* your tears, your excitement *in* your squeal, your affection *in* your warm embrace. I do not deduce them from your behaviour but perceive them in them.

In the phenomenological literature the discussion about our experience of the subjective life of others has centred around the concept of empathy. The concept of empathy however does not only suffer from disagreement as to its mechanisms, of by what way it is that we come to know others, but also from a lack of conceptual clarity where it is often confused or conflated or made out to be conceptually indistinct from some of its conceptual relatives, like sympathy, pity, fellow-feeling, emotional sharing or emotional contagion.

The confusion stems not least from the fact that there are many elements to the encounter with the other that need to be reckoned with. In encountering the other there is first the primordial encounter, the other simply encountered as other, a second locus of a 'here', of an 'I-think', 'I-feel', 'I-can'. There is the moment of reciprocity, where I also appear as another to the other. There is the apprehension of the other being minded about something, of feeling something without being acquainted specifically with what. There is the recognition of specific kinds of mental or affective states, of recognising happiness, grief or anger, or the state of being lost in thought. Then there is the element of recognising someone's emotion, say grief, and feeling-for that person. Or we might recognize that emotion and also feel it, feeling-with the other. And this might take the form of a kind of sharing of emotion, where we attend to each other's emotions and are aware that we are sharing them, or it might take the form of an emotional contagion, where the emotion is felt

by me as my own, without me recognizing, at least immediately, that it originates from you. The question of empathy in the phenomenological discussion has focused on placing empathy within this network of concepts and finding its constitutive elements.

Is empathy the recognition of mindedness? The recognition of emotionality? Or the recognition of specific emotions or perhaps of the intentionality of emotions? Some of this or all of this? Does empathy, for example, require isomorphism? That is, is it necessary for me to have an affective experience akin to anger to be said to be empathising with your anger?[21] Does empathy only aim at affective states? Or does it apply to a broader spectrum of the subjective life of others?

The term 'empathy' entered English vernacular as a translation of the German *Einfühlung*, an analytical term introduced by Theodor Lipps at the turn of the 20th century. Originally the term *Einfühlung*, which can literally be translated as 'feeling-in', was intended to grasp the way we aesthetically experience artworks (Lipps 1900). Lipps however expanded this term to account for what he considered a specific kind of experiencing of the other that he contrasted with perception and introspection (Lipps 1907; cf. Zahavi 2010). Empathy for him was to account for the way that we experience the mindedness of other people, how we 'feel into them'. This term was then later translated as empathy by Titchener (1909: 21). Husserl takes up the concept of *Einfühlung* and makes it his own, redefines it, analyses it and elaborates on it and this is what later phenomenologists would come to develop. One of the problems with the concept of empathy as a technical concept is that it has taken on a life of its own in vernacular English, where it is often indistinguishable from sympathy, fellow-feeling or emotional contagion. Consequently some philosophers have chosen to translate it differently, as for instance Anthony Steinbock has done, opting for the term intropathy to both capture the *Ein-* of *Einfühlung* and avoid the problematic connotations of its vernacular counterpart (Steinbock 1995: 64).

Scheler, for his part, refused to use the term *Einfühlung* because of its relation to Lipps' projective theory of empathy, and used the terms *Nachfühlen* (reproduction of feeling), *Nachleben* (reproduction of lived experience), *Nacherleben* (visualizing of lived experience), or *Fremdwahrnehmung* (perception of other minds) seemingly interchangeably to describe what we aim at with the concept of empathy, that is, an understanding of the minded life of the other (Zahavi 2014: 114). And in his later writings Husserl preferred the term *Fremderfahrung*

[21] See Zahavi and Overgaard (2013) for an excellent discussion on this point.

over *Einfühlung* (Zahavi 2014: 114). Following both Stein and Zahavi, I will however persist in using empathy as a technical term for capturing the particular way we experience the subjectivity of others.[22]

But what is empathy then, if we look to the phenomenological tradition? For Husserl and Stein, it is best characterised as a *sui generis* form of intentionality. It is a form of being directed towards the other that has similarities with other forms of intentional directedness, such as object perception and imagining, yet cannot be reduced to them (Stein 1989: 11; Husserl 1973e: 111, 124; cf. Szanto and Moran 2016). In particular, Husserl and Stein want to oppose the thesis that what we are doing in empathetic engagement is either a kind of inferring or a kind of projection of our own states of mind into the other, and suggest rather that what is happening is simply a kind of perceiving.

There are various ways that this is illustrated in the literature, where the focus is on drawing forth how direct our perception of the other is in our everyday lives. Consider for example this passage from Merleau-Ponty:

> The moment the man wakes up in the sun and reaches for his hat, between the sun which burns me and makes my eyes squint and the gesture which from a distance over there brings relief to my fatigue, between this sweating forehead and the protective gesture which it calls forth on my part, a bond is tied without my needing to decide anything. If I am forever incapable of effectively living the experience of the scorching the other suffers, the bite of the world as I feel it upon my body is an injury for anyone exposed to it as I am – and especially for this body which begins to defend itself against it. It is this bite which starts to stir the sleeper previously motionless who now begins to adjust to his gestures as their reason for being.
>
> As long as it adheres to my body like the tunic of Nessus, the world exists not only for me but for everyone in it who makes gestures toward it. There is a universality of feeling – and it is upon this that our identification rests, the generalization of my body, the perception of the other. (Merleau-Ponty 1973: 137)

[22] This discussion of the history of the relation between *Einfühlung* and empathy is indebted to Zahavi's discussion in *Self and Other* (Zahavi 2014, esp. chapter 10).

Here Merleau-Ponty quite morbidly describes perception as pain, suffering and injury. The world bites, but it is through the universality of the bite and the gesture we make towards it that we have a universality of feeling, of sharing the world and of seeing others *as others*. And this bond "is tied without me having to decide anything". I do not decide, I do not infer or project myself into the other. In looking at the man reaching for his hat, I perceive in the other, I *live* the experience of the other as I recognize the sensation of the sun burning his skin as like the way that the sun burns mine. This recognition, which is not the seeing of an outward behaviour and inferring an inwardness, is a perception of a living unity. I simply see it in the other as he reaches for his hat. And we might follow Scheler in exclaiming that

> If anyone tells me that this is not 'perception', for it cannot be so, in view of the fact that a perception is simply a 'complex of physical sensations', and that there is certainly no sensation of another person's mind nor any stimulus from such a source, I would bid him to turn aside from such questionable theories and address himself to the phenomenological facts. (Scheler 1954: 260)

But if empathy is indeed a kind of direct perception, then what is the relation between empathy and emotional sharing? Here I should be clear that empathy, as a kind of perceiving, is not necessarily a kind of sharing. In fact, empathy should rather be seen as the precondition for there to be any kind of sharing. For us to share an emotion (and here sharing is distinguished from emotional contagion) it is necessary that the other be in our field of experiencing and that at least one of us recognize the emotional state in the other to begin with. But it is perhaps more accurate to say that there is an ambiguity to what we mean by sharing here. For me to recognize an emotion in you, there must be a form of sharing. But sharing here does not mean that I have to feel what you feel. Think for example of a torturer. It is often said that someone who enjoys torturing others lacks empathy, but on the phenomenological conception of empathy that is at stake here this would miss the point. The efficient torturer is precisely the person who can empathetically see the pain inflicted; they recognize the pain and how to inflict it, though they do not feel it with their victims (Scheler 1954: 14). We must be mindful therefore about what we mean when we speak of sharing, as it is clear that in some sense of the word the emotion has been shared with the torturer, albeit unwillingly.

It can also be noted, with Zahavi and Rochat, that empathy does not only aim at affective states, but refers to our general ability to access the life of the mind of others in their expressions, expressive behaviour and meaningful actions.

> We can see the other's elation or doubt, surprise or attentiveness in his or her face, we can hear the other's trepidation, impatience or bewilderment in her voice, feel the other's enthusiasm in his handshake, grasp his mood in his posture, and see her determination and persistence in her actions. Thus, we certainly also express or manifest our mental states by acting on them. My fear or concern is not merely revealed to others in my facial expressions, but also in my running away from what terrifies me or in my attempts to console somebody who is grieving. (Zahavi and Rochat 2015: 544-545)[23]

One final note in this cursory definition of empathy. Claiming that empathy is a *sui generis* form of intentionality is not to say that we cannot fail in our perceptions of others. It might turn out that the anger I thought I perceived in your clenched fist was just you struggling with some intestinal gas and your laughter could be the result of nervousness rather than joy. We might also have a propensity to relate to experiences that are like our own, to recognize better in others what we have ourselves felt and have a tendency to take shortcuts when trying to understand the experiences of the other by superimposing our experiences onto theirs. That empathy can fail in this manner is not an argument against empathy. For, as Stein points out, it is precisely through further empathy that we recognize these mistakes as mistakes, and it is through empathy that we find the corrective to them (Stein 1989: 87).

[23] See also Thomas Fuchs' "The Phenomenology of Affectivity" (2013) where he emphasises, among other things, the action tendency in emotion. He argues for example that fear is not only a sensation within me but also bound to certain bodily tendencies, such as the urge to cower or flee.

The dynamicity of the subjective life of others

> The other slips into my perception from behind. He's neither in me, in the world or between the things. Not even in his body. He is only in my field. On my side of things.
>
> (Merleau-Ponty 1973: 136-137)

The object of empathy

When we intend the subjective life of the other, what is it that we are attending to? What kind of object is the object of empathy? Empathy is not simply the same as perceiving physical objects. Already we find in Stein a discussion of the disanalogy between the two (Stein 2008: 6-7). When I look at an object only one side of it will be present to me at any time. Yet the backside or the underside that are not present to immediate sensation are given to me as co-presented in the horizonality of my everyday perceptual engagement. These anticipations of co-presented other sides of objects relate to our engagement with the environment in the mode of 'if-this-then-that'. If I move here, if I lift this up, if I turn my head in this way, then I will see the backside or the underside of the object in question.

Moving from such perceptual experiences to empathetic relations, a clear disanalogy emerges between the two. When I see the manifestation of your anger in your clenched fist, there is a very important sense in which I cannot manoeuvre in the same way around your anger as I might around an object. I can't see, so to say, the backside of the anger.[24] And what would that even mean? Would that mean somehow experiencing your anger like you experience your anger? If that were the case then Husserl would claim that the distinction between you and me would dissipate, yet it is precisely this distinction that makes empathy possible. Without this distinction we are not engaging with the minded life of the other, but with variations of our own minded life (Husserl 1973e: 109).

This necessary asymmetry of viewpoints has another aspect to it. When I see someone feel something there is a directness to what I'm perceiving. Schutz points out in this regard

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[24] We might consider also how this analogy does hold for other kinds of experiences. Think for example of the experience of colours. We can't manoeuvre 'behind' the colour in any way to see it better, from behind, so to say. However, one might suggest that even though I can't go behind the colour, the experience of the colour can be fulfilled by looking at it more closely, since there is no sense of a 'behind' that would fulfil that perception better; whereas with the case of empathy there is always a sense of something being occluded from my perception and necessarily given in co-presence. Thanks to Søren Overgaard for this point.

that although I do not have the privileged perspective you have of your own stream of consciousness, I do have one privilege in regard to you that you do not have to yourself. Namely, I can see your stream in action. When I attend to you and your intentional directedness towards your surroundings, I'm attending to your intending something while you intend it, an act which you can perform only in retrospection (Schutz 1967: 102).

Yet even though the object of empathy isn't given in the same way that a physical object is given in perception (as it is not given to me originally, as Stein would say), it still, in Stein's words, "resemble[s] perception in so far as its object, say, the empathized pain or distress, is given directly, unmediated, and non-inferentially as present here and now" (Stein 2008: 5).

But what is seen? I look at you and I see sorrow in your eyes and I attend to your sorrow. I can clearly focus on this emotional state within you. I look at you and I see *the* sorrow. I can note it down and I can tell someone else that you were sad last time I saw you. When we consider the object of empathy in this manner, we need to be mindful of the risk of objectifying the emotions in the other, of making of them a (folk-)theoretical or (natural) scientific object. When I attend to your emotion as it appears in you and it becomes in my perception 'a grief' or 'a happiness', we are moved towards typifying the emotion in the other and this risks divorcing it from lived experience. And this is not always bad. Typifying the experience for example is what makes it possible for me to communicate it successfully to a third party without having to go into specific details. I can see the emotion, I can feel pity for you or sympathize without engaging with you as a particular person, having these particular experiences. In these situations I might turn our relationship from an I-Thou relation to an I-it relation as Buber would put it (Buber 1970; 2002). But if we want to stay with the lived experience we should notice first that the sorrow I see, though it can certainly appear to me as a state within you, is never simply an object, contained as it were in your psyche. It is rather something that is itself directed outwards, to the world. Empathically engaging with your sorrow is a peculiar intentional activity, it is being acquainted with the world *through* your sorrow. It is by "following your gaze" that I live through your experience and recognize it for what it is. As Husserl points out, this is one of the ways we might distinguish empathy from pity or sympathy, as the primary object of the latter two would rather be the emotional state itself (Zahavi 2014: 139; Husserl 1973b: 189–90). The emotion inhabits the world, it is of the world. And by "following your gaze" the emotion appears to me as part of our shared environment. Merleau-Ponty has probably put this better than anyone:

> Imagine that I am in the presence of someone who, for one reason or another, is extremely annoyed with me. My interlocutor gets angry and I notice that he is expressing his anger by speaking aggressively, by gesticulating and shouting. But where is this anger? People will say that it is in the mind of my interlocutor. What this means is not entirely clear. For I could not imagine the malice and cruelty which I discern in my opponent's looks separated from his gestures, speech and body. None of this takes place in some otherworldly realm, in some shrine located beyond the body of the angry man. *It really is here, in this room and in this part of the room, that the anger breaks forth. It is in the space between him and me that it unfolds*. I would accept that the sense in which the place of my opponent's anger is on his face is not the same as that in which, in a moment, tears may come streaming from his eyes or a grimace may harden on his mouth. Yet anger inhabits him and it blossoms on the surface of his pale or purple cheeks, his blood-shot eyes and wheezing voice (Merleau-Ponty 2004: 83–4; my italics; cf. also Zahavi 2014: 183).

The anger is in the room, it is between me and him, not simply in the mind of our interlocutor. We feel the anger in the room as it fills it. Grasping someone's state of mind, thoughts, emotions or desires requires relating to their worldly character. Seeing someone as an intending self, I don't see them as an intentional being as such. I see them as someone intentionally directed towards something specific and "following your gaze" in this manner is what my act of empathy involves.

Another aspect of emotions is that their perception, much like the perception of objects, can't be pinpointed as a single temporal event, I don't see just *a* distress. It extends temporally, it appears to me over time but is concurrently very specific, it is bound to my friend, it is his distress, at this time and directed at this specific object of intention. The other's emotions are dynamic structures that are constantly changing as time passes; anger fades, irritation persists, affection increases, but by interacting over time, their essences, in their dynamicity, become clearer to me. In this way, attending to the minded life of the other is more like attending to a musical composition as it progresses than it is like perceiving a cup or a table.

A similar point – though focused on the person as a whole rather than on the emotions themselves – is illustrated by Joona Taipale (2015). Taipale shows how the focus on the minded life of the other in terms of distinct states of emotion, or as time slices, fails to

capture the particular kind of temporal dimension that the dynamicity of the other's lived experiences involves. He draws on Husserl's analysis of temporality in the latter's lectures on time-consciousness, focusing on the experience of a melody and illustrates a parallel between the experience of the minded life of the other and that of a melody. Of special interest here is how Taipale shows that our focus on spatial analogies is wholly insufficient when it comes to accounting for the way we experience other people. When describing the horizontality of experience, as we've done above, we all too easily fall into accounting for it in the visual spectrum, describing how we co-present the backside of the object when we see its front side. Taipale shows that what we need to pay special attention to is the temporal dimension of this experience. When I look at the front side of an object, I co-present the backside of it with its front side. For me to have an experience of the front side, as a front side, I must have an experience of its non-presented backside that is therefore given to me as currently non-present but in principle presentable. If I move around the object, I anticipate that these other sides will present themselves to me, while the side currently present will become occluded from my vision, yet still present as co-presented with the newly presented side. Here temporality shows itself in a twofold manner. On the one hand the other sides of the object appear to me as possibly present in terms of my own movements, if I move from here to there then *in time* these other sides will become present to me. On the other hand, an atemporal aspect is at play as well. The other side that is *in principle* also presentable to me, is given to me as already there. The other side of the object doesn't *come to be* by my moving to the other side. This other side was always already there, given as co-present. In seeing the frontside, the backside is also given to me atemporally. And it is crucially at this point that the analogy between object perception and the perception of a person ceases to fit. For as we can see in the case of the melody, there is no 'other side' to the melody that I can manoeuvre to get to, except by waiting, and there is no 'backside' that is concurrently present with the 'frontside' of the melody. I'm bound to listen to the melody in its temporal order. And the same applies to our experience of others (Taipale 2015: 470).[25]

[25] It is for this reason that Taipale argues that we should avoid speaking of mental "states" or "slices" when analysing the minded life of others, as this pushes us towards models of thinking that overlook this dynamic character of experiencing the other. We'd do better to talk about something like "unities of becoming" (Taipale 2015: 477).

Experiencing the object of empathy

But if we embrace the world-directness of empathy as well as its temporal dynamicity, how does the encounter with the object of empathy unfold? We have thus far emphasised the perceptual aspect of experiencing empathy. Consider this example from Dan Zahavi:

> 1) You enter your friend's home, discover that he has torn up all the letters from his ex-wife, and infer that he is anguished and distressed about his recent divorce.
>
> 2) You are together with your friend, when he suddenly breaks down and tells you about his divorce. You see his anguish and distress in his pained countenance (Zahavi 2017: 37, numbering in original).

Here the goal is to draw clearly a distinction between inferentially getting to know someone's state of mind and empathetically doing so through direct perception. We *see* his anguish in his pained countenance, rather than infer it, like we do when we see the torn letters.

Here, like so often when we discuss empathy, the focus is on the visual aspect of perception. We see the anguish. But what of the auditory aspect? In the latter example he is after all telling us about his anguish. It is perhaps not controversial to say that we can also hear pain or anguish in the voice of the other. Were I blind or were I simply speaking to my friend over the telephone, I would perceive his state of mind in the trembling of his voice, in his intonation and hesitations. But consider also a different way the encounter with the aforementioned friend could have unfolded:

> 3) You meet your friend at a café and, with a straight face, he tells you of his divorce and of his anguish.

It might be suggested that here we have an example where empathy plays at most a limited role, it is your friend's testimony that is of importance, his words and utterances. Rather than *seeing* his state of mind in his behaviour we come to *know* of his feelings through statements. But does this not paint a picture of empathetic engagement that is rather melodramatic? We hardly need to clench fists or wave hands for our emotions to be perceptible. As Husserl points out in the *Krisis*, kinaesthetic standing still is also a mode of the 'I-do' or the 'I-move' (Husserl 1970: 106). We might in the same manner say that the expressionless telling is still an expression. Do we see in the friend an uncharacteristic stoicism? The marks of trauma?

Is he perhaps hiding something? The engagement in this kind of intersubjective exchange is always an empathetic engagement. But here we are again dealing with the visual.

If we stay with the auditory, we must engage with the question: What is the relation between the words spoken and perception in empathy? In our everyday life there is no apparent rift between perceiving your mental states through your facial expressions or your gestures and engaging with you linguistically. In most face-to-face encounters we do both in tandem. If I see that you are sad and I attempt to learn more about this sadness, I would rarely do that without the use of language. We can separate these two phenomena analytically, but does that mean that this is a useful or accurate distinction?

The way that the phenomenological tradition has mostly focused on the appearance of the other 'in the flesh' is through empathy, specifically as a mode of perception, with little attention being paid to the role speech plays in our empathetic interactions. An example of this from more recent phenomenological literature would be Taipale's discussion, as seen above, in so far as it engages with the temporal unfolding of the experience of another's subjective life, without addressing the fact that in this unfolding, our typical way of engaging with someone is through speech.[26]

Rather than say that there is a definite separation of speech and empathy in phenomenology I might want to suggest that there is a tendency towards such a separation, stronger in some authors than others, and this is perhaps one of the reasons for the lack of explicit discussion of language in the empathy literature. In the literature we can easily find a deep fascination with language itself, the nature of predication and meaning in language, historical analysis on the nature of narrative, as well as interest in community, reciprocity, and empathy. Yet interest in language as speech, as communication, an analysis of the interchange itself is often either glossed over, absolutely missing, or scattered in fragmentary comments.

One of the reasons language plays such a limited role in the discussion of empathy is the intuition that something fundamentally different is happening when the minded life of the other is mediated through language rather than being seen directly in their (facial or bodily) expressions. Husserl will for example claim that something that goes "beyond empathy"

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[26] I want to emphasise that I'm not saying that authors in the phenomenological tradition do not engage with language or speech (Husserl and Reinach both do, see Mulligan (1987) Smith (1990) and Salice (2018)). I only wish to highlight that when discussing language and speech there is rarely a discussion of their interrelation with empathy, and vice versa.

happens as soon as we address the other (Husserl 1973c: 472; cf. Zahavi 2014). And Stein will claim that "should someone say to me that he is sad, I understand the meaning of the words. The sadness I now know of is not an 'alive one' before me as a perceptual givenness. It is probably as little like the sadness comprehended in the symbol [e.g. the tears pouring out of their eyes] as the table of which I hear spoken is like the other side of the table which I see" (Stein 1989: 81). Here she claims that speaking and empathising belong to distinct spheres, the apophantic realm of judgments, propositions and meanings, and the realm of immediate intuitive contact with the objective realm respectively. We can see sadness in someone's eyes, see their tears, how they tremble, hear them whimper and cry. They can describe their pain to us in this state, sobbingly express their hurt. But they could also describe this pain at a later time, when it has mostly subsided or perhaps disappeared, and they could do this dispassionately. Or they could write to us, describing their sadness. Or perhaps someone else can tell us about their pain and sadness. These are various ways of engaging with someone's sadness, though it seems clear that we are intentionally directed at the same object. And language seems to allow us to be intentionally directed at this object without it being present, we can be acquainted with the sadness without empathetically perceiving it. Other prominent phenomenologists will however emphasise how speech and empathy are interlinked, most notably Merleau-Ponty who would go on to say that "[t]here is, in particular, one cultural object that will play an essential role in the perception of others: language" (Merleau-Ponty 2012: 370).

Claims like these might give us pause to think that even though the fact that language makes going "beyond empathy" possible, by for example giving us the ability to relate to someone's minded life without that person being present, that does not legitimize claims that all kinds of linguistic interaction push us beyond empathy or that in understanding someone's speech there can be no empathic perception. It's almost like we think we speak only in a calculated manner, that expressing our emotions or thoughts through speech is more akin to imitating a smile than it is to involuntary smiling out of enjoyment.

To elaborate on this, consider here Zahavi's discussion of Stein:

> In the course of her investigation, Stein distinguishes different levels of accomplishment (*Vollzugsstufen*) (Stein 2008: 19). At first, I might be confronted with the doubt or elation in the other's face, and I might have a vague and relatively empty comprehension of the other's experience. But if I then try to understand it better, if I try to explicate its character, I will no longer face the

> other's experiential state as an object. Rather, its intentionality will pull me along, and I will turn towards its intentional object. It is only after I have successfully accomplished this clarification that I will again face the other's experience as an object, but this time with an increased comprehension. To exemplify, consider a situation in which you come across a crying child. Empathy will allow you to discern the child's distress even before you know why the child is upset. But if your empathy goes deeper, it will seek to understand what it is that has upset the child. Finally, having grasped the object of the emotion, you will again turn towards the child, but this time with a better (and more fulfilled) understanding of her distress. Even when I follow the intentional pull of the child's distress and turn towards, say, the absent mother, the distress is given to me in a quite peculiar manner. It is not felt as my own distress, nor as a remembered distress, let alone simply as an imagined distress. No, it is throughout given to me as the other's distress, as a distress lived through by the other (Stein 2008: 10). This is precisely what is peculiar and distinct about empathy, and this is why Stein continues to label empathy a *sui generis* kind of experience (Stein 2008: 10). (Zahavi 2014: 137)

The *empathy* "goes deep" by attending to the distress and grasping the intentional object of the emotion. This is not a case of the collection of data ("she wants her mother") that informs my knowledge of her state of distress. It is the empathy itself at work. I arrive at a better and fulfilled understanding by following the intentional pull of the child's distress, expressed perhaps in its bodily movements, reaching out, or trying to follow the path of the absent mother. But then let's imagine that the child shows its distress by crying out "mommy!". Is this cry not a redirection of our empathic gaze? And how should we understand this redirection? Is this propositional, or just meaningful? Does it add knowledge from a "different sphere" than the one that gives us "mere" knowledge of the directedness of the child's distress? Or is the cry perhaps a quasi-gestural kind of expression, more akin to a nod than it is of denoting speech? Or does it perhaps here become clear that the expression is part of an expressive whole, that the linguistic part is animated by the child's whole being and its world-directedness?

If empathy and communication are considered to belong to different levels or spheres of experiencing, then in our everyday interactions where we come to learn about the state of the other's mind in a multisensory mixture of seeing and listening, there would be two parallel

things happening at the same time: an act of listening to speech and interpreting it, and an act of empathetic perception of your state of mind. This notion of parallelism is echoed in the idea that empathy, rather than being a constitutive part of communication, is something that can facilitate it. It follows, then, that we should develop empathy (which is then often understood in terms of assuming someone else's perspective) so we can communicate better.[27] But in our everyday experiencing there seems to be only one unified engagement with the other. Your being, your experience, feeling, animates the words and expressions you put forward here and now in a way that cannot be repeated and it is this that I see or hear in your words. Husserl offers an analogy here that I find useful. When discussing the unity of body and spirit Husserl compares it with the perception of a book: "The book with its paper pages, its cover, etc. is a thing. To this book there does not append a second thing, the sense; but instead the latter, in 'animating,' penetrates the physical whole in a certain way" (Husserl 1989: 249). This applies as well to the spoken word. When I speak to the other, I do not hear words, intonations, hesitations, note body posture and then proceed to interpret these to uncover the meaning contained in them, hidden away. The meaning contained in them is not a second thing, appended to the first. Rather when I'm speaking to the other I "live in the sense, comprehending it" (Husserl 1989: 248). To paraphrase Husserl's analogy with the book: The speech *appears*, but we *live* in the performance of the sense (Husserl 1989: 256).[28] The linguistic expression is a part of this expressive whole and is bound to it in such a way that when we separate words from lived expression we frame our sense of the being of the other insufficiently. It creates a gap; different spheres, where there is only one expressive being.

We can then claim that it is not only looks and gestures that pull our empathetic gaze along, but linguistic units – words, sentences and texts – as well. To conclude this chapter, I wish to illustrate a relation between speech and empathy that will be fleshed out in greater detail later on. I wish to highlight an element of the preceding discussion that I think serves as a point of entry into the discussion of the intermingling of speech and empathy. This is the notion of *being pulled along*, variants of which can be found in Husserl, Stein and Merleau-

[27] See for example Johnson (2019). If this sounds familiar, we have already discussed a similar point in chapter 2 from the perspective of Fricker and epistemic injustices. There is a very comparable parallelism happening there, where the teacher can understand the student better if she recognizes their emotional state *in addition* to the words expressed.

[28] For a deeper analysis of this comparison see Heinämaa (2011, 2013, 2018) and the discussion in Jardine (2017, 2022).

Ponty. We saw earlier how we were pulled in by the intentional directedness of the child, we were directed to what it was seeing. In Merleau-Ponty's analysis of intercorporeality he speaks of a "bodily resuming" (*reprendre*) of the other's intentionality (Maclaren 2002: 190). Similarly, Husserl will claim that in empathetically seeing your sorrow, I "go along" with your experiences (Husserl 2003: 617; 1973c, 427, 513; quoted in Zahavi 2014: 139). Kym Maclaren expands on Merleau-Ponty's example of watching a player in a football match:

> Wholly immersed in the action on the field, the spectator does not just *watch* the game, but follows it in a bodily way, anticipating and completing the moves of the athletes through the jerks, dodges and half-kick motions of his own body. He is, of course, not really the *agent* of the action; he is not actually *present* there, in the middle of the field where the action is being played out. But neither is he straightforwardly present here, on the sidelines, as someone apart from the game, observing and taking mental note of the plays made. (Maclaren 2002: 190)

The bodily comportment of the other pulls me along, I live with him *over there*. Or as Merleau-Ponty puts it: "This conduct which I am able only to see, I live somehow from a distance. I make it mine; I recover [*reprendre*] it or comprehend it" (Merleau-Ponty 1964: 118).

Returning to the theme of communication, consider an example from Scheler (1954: 12-13). I come into a room to meet with friends of mine. They are grieving parents that have recently lost a child. On entering the room, I can perceive their grief as an emotion they are living through right now. I see it in their posture before they notice my presence, how they sit hunched close together. As with the example from Merleau-Ponty above, their grief is not only within them, but it fills the room, it is in them but also between us. And then, when they notice me, I see it in their red bloodshot eyes and the tentative smile they direct at me. Here again we encounter the ambiguous and complex phenomenon of sharing.

As we've already discussed, there are various ways in which I might be said to share the emotion with them. In the first instance I might simply be struck with sorrow myself as I enter the room, affected by the sorrowful atmosphere. Here the emotion is imparted on me passively through my encounter with them, both in an intentional and pre-intentional or unconscious expressiveness of their being. I might not even recognize at that point that I'm filled with grief and that that grief originates in them, it is their grief spilled over into me. Then, in looking at them, I might share the emotion with them in a different way. I might recognize it in them and feel sadness at their sadness. That is to say, I might sympathise or

pity them. And then I can of course share, in the fullest of sense, in the emotion with them. I can direct myself at the child in the grief of its parents and weep with them.

But what happens when we then articulate the emotion linguistically? When I'm speaking with the parents in their grief, it is hardly the case that my empathetic capacity suddenly becomes inactive and something else takes its place. I'm still aware of the other in their mindedness and in their feeling. We might even entertain the notion, playing on Merleau-Ponty's claim that language offers a way to perceive the other, that speaking is a form of 'looking better' at someone's emotions (Siewert 2015).

In relating to their lived experience in the process of their telling, the parents might fill me in on particulars, particulars that might deepen my emotional response. They might tell me how kind their son was, or about his laughter, about his prospects and his quirks. Or they might tell me how his death came about. All of these reactions would give me a clearer grasp, not only of him, but of their grief, of what it is that goes through their minds and bodies as they grieve. And this grasp is not simply a product of my imagination or an element of fantasy. It is intentionally directed at this boy, his life, these parents and their grief. It has its objective character, though it might be unfulfilled or inaccurate in some ways.

But this reveals another aspect of the grief, one that I've touched on earlier. The grief of these parents is not a single thing but a dynamic structure at play, changing in its aspects here and now, but also in the manner that it's not happening only now. It extends its tendrils into both past and future, colouring and illuminating specific occurrences in the past, specific events, specific images of laughter or crying, and relations to events, situations and feelings, and also illuminating all the anticipated possibilities of future events that now are precluded. It evokes past habitual being-together-in-the-world that now has been forever ruptured. In speaking I may come to realize that in merely seeing their grief I had empty anticipations about what such past and future relations might be, but by speaking to them I come to fill in some of these anticipations. Seeing an emotion is therefore never simply seeing an object here and now, but seeing a relation at work, with more or less fulfilled anticipations of perception. In speaking the world is framed anew, I see their grief not simply here, but as a manifestation of their current world relation, their past relation and future relation to the world. The world appears to me *with* them, I'm pulled along with their experience and sense it with them.

And language here plays its important role as that cultural object that lets us deepen this experience.

4. Speech and experience

In the previous chapter we dealt with the relation between empathy and speech and concluded that the distinction between the two, in the living encounter with the other, wasn't as clear-cut as one might at first think. In the foregoing we focused on the part of empathy in this relational duo; let us now look at the nature of speech. Just as speech has often been excluded from the analysis of empathy within phenomenology, so also – I'm going to argue – living interaction between the speakers has often been excluded from the treatment of language.

Talking, conversing, speaking is one of the most common everyday things for most of us. Many of us start the day with just that, speaking to our family members. Even if we wake up alone in our apartment, we might still be inclined to turn on the radio or podcast and listen in on others conversing. Of course, language in its different registers, from the everyday to the scientific, has traditionally been a central theme of philosophical research, phenomenology being no exception in that regard. But there is a particular kind of mundaneness in language that has received comparatively little philosophical interest. In this chapter I will focus on the phenomenon of *telling* as the special kind of speaking that, I will argue, best captures this mundaneness found in our conversational behaviour.

Before elaborating on the phenomenon of telling, I would like to outline the theoretical backdrop to which my focus on the phenomenon of telling should be contrasted. This theoretical backdrop is framed around two conceptions of speaking that I think overshadow the phenomenon of telling. These I wish to mention as I consider them both paradigmatic and, I think, very intuitive and familiar. On the one hand there is understanding speech in terms of communication, and here I will evoke the more analytical epistemological framework introduced in the chapter on social epistemology. Telling on this account is primarily understood in terms of the act of testimony.[29] On the other hand there is a popular approach, central in certain circles of continental philosophy, of thinking of speech in more derogatory terms, of thinking of it in relation to notions of chit-chat or gossip, and by extension of inauthentic being, to speak in Heideggerian terms. Let us start by looking at the epistemological approach to speaking.

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[29] A focus on testimony is certainly not limited to the analytic framework (cf. Ahmed and Stacey 2001), though it is highly characteristic of it.

Speech as testimony

We quite obviously use language for many different purposes. We can use language, words and speech to articulate, think, tell, argue, demonstrate, order, marry, cry out, warn, indicate, remember, express, create and so on and so forth. This intricate heterogeneity of the ways in which we use language is concealed to us in the way language appears to us as only *one thing*, perhaps as one structure. If we were, like Wittgenstein, to compare linguistic expressions to a collection of handles, we might notice that while each handle can have its purpose and usage, they still "all [look] more or less alike." And we might claim with him that this "stands to reason, since they are all supposed to be handled" (Wittgenstein 1953: §12). While we speak of them in a unified way, linguistic expressions are used to perform various kinds of acts for various ends and are used for many different purposes and ultimately, their similarity might turn out to be only superficial. This is Wittgenstein's famous argument in *Philosophical Investigations*.

Bar this, we should be able to limit our focus on language in such a way as to be able to claim at least some truths about the way we speak to each other. What we find in social epistemology, and in the epistemology of testimony in particular, is an attempt to limit the frame of discussion in this manner. In particular, in social epistemology we find a focus on accounting for the way that we are able to transfer knowledge from one individual to another. A classical and oft quoted discussion of this theme can be found in Hume's treatment of miracles in *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* where he states that

> we may observe, that there is no species of reasoning more common, more useful, and even necessary to human life, than that which is derived from the testimony of men, and the reports of eye-witnesses and spectators. (Hume 1748/1777: E 10.5, SBN 111-112)[30]

This invites us to think of an image of discussion and dialogue where we impart knowledge to others or where knowledge is imparted on to us. It might even be claimed in this regard that the vast majority of our thoughts, or more specifically, our knowledge, comes to us in some way or other through the mediations of others. It is here that the motivation for a focus on something like testimony lies. Speech appears as a communicative act that is meant

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[30] Hume is often seen as the father of the so-called evidence view, or the inferentialist approach, which is contrasted with a tradition of non-inferentialist approaches linked back to Thomas Reid's *An Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principle of Common Sense* (1765); see also (Fricker 2007: 61-62).

to convey information. Others tell me something, I receive what they have told me as information and I believe their statements to varying degrees and come to be, or not to be, justified in believing that what they have informed me of is the case.

Speaking is then understood in terms of intentions to communicate, in the transmission of facts by means of propositional language. It is through this kind of mediation that I primarily come to gather knowledge about the world. We pool knowledge together and through this kind of pooling we come to have a sense of the world. Having a sense of how the world is, is seen here primarily in the epistemological register, it is about knowing facts about the world.

The imagery evoked in this model might be described as computational.[31] It seems that just as we have a tendency to look at perception in the form of stimulus-and-response or input-and-output mechanisms, so the testimonial framework tends toward seeing the other and other-relations in terms of input-output mechanisms. Undoubtedly a focus on the computational aspects of communication is a helpful methodological tool in epistemology, but it hardly does justice to our everyday interactions. And as both a simplification and metaphor it runs the risk of obscuring our view of the phenomenon in question.

Speech as idle talk

We could consider another widely discussed and influential treatment of speech, such as Heidegger's treatment of everyday talk in his *Being and Time* (Heidegger 1962). This model of thinking about speech clearly avoids the information-theoretical and computational metaphors and deals with the idea of conversing in a general manner. But the emphasis in Heidegger's model is that conversing isn't just conversing and that most of the time we practice not authentic thinking-together in speech, but rather various forms of less than desirable kinds of interactions. Chit-chat, small talk and gossip come to mind as these everyday occurrences that we ourselves tend not to think that highly of. It is the kind of talk that we find ourselves in in the presence of other people where we do not feel the urge to

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[31] A popular model for formulating the nature of communication was the so-called code-model, sometimes called the Shannon-Weaver (1949) communication model. For a time, it dominated the discussion, especially in communication theory and biology. The core of the model was the suggestion that communication consisted of the transmittance of data from one agent via some means, such as speech, and the decoding of that data by the receiver. More recent theories, like the Grice-influenced relevance theory of Sperber and Wilson, has in later years been more influential (see Sperber and Wilson 1995, and for a critical analysis and the development of theories of communication see Noveck 2018, esp. chapter 2; Scott-Philips 2014, esp. chapter 1).

fill the air with deep ruminations about the nature of being or questions of living justly, but rather focus on discussions about the weather, the local sports club or the most recent gossip about our neighbours or co-workers. In this kind of talk, language itself and the interaction it involves has become habitualized, we speak in phrases and formalized sentences, our interactions rather than being honest and direct become degenerate and empty. Heidegger called this kind of speaking 'idle talk' (*Gerede*) (Heidegger 1962: §35). Even political discussions can be idle talk in this way, discussion that superficially may look profound, deep or engaged can lack any genuine attempt at a new and better understanding and are rather characterised by mere platitudes and trivialities. In idle talk Dasein is "cut off from its primary and primordially genuine relationships-of-Being towards the world, towards Dasein-with, and towards its very Being-in" (Heidegger 1962: 170/214). In idle talk we form inauthentic relationships, with ourselves, with the world and with each other. By not engaging authentically in these primordial relationships we reproduce our inauthentic ways of relating and contribute to their normative dominance in our everyday life.

For Merleau-Ponty, this kind of language limits the way we can interact with others, it cuts us off from them. He writes:

> The simple use of this language, like the institutionalized conduct of which I am the agent and witness, yields another only in general, […] a species-individual, so to speak, and finally a notion rather than a presence. (Merleau-Ponty 1973: 140)[32]

The way institutionalized language frames our interaction with others creates an environment where the other appears to me not in her individuality but as a species-individual, or as a "notion rather than a presence", as Merleau-Ponty so poignantly puts it. Thus, in such circumstances we speak and think by fixed and ready-made categories and types rather than engaging with the person in front of us in her full being.

When we do find attempts to try and frame this kind of language in positive terms (because it also has positive aspects), such framing often takes the form of an emphasis on something like its importance for social cohesion, where the permanence, stability or

[32] The reader should bear in mind that Merleau-Ponty employs the word 'institution' here in relation to the Husserlian notion of *Stiftung*. In its everyday sense, institution refers to physical and social organizations; in this technical philosophical sense it refers to the establishment of sense and/or meaning (see Meacham 2013 for an insightful discussion of *Stiftung* in relation to Merleau-Ponty and Husserl).

harmony of the interaction itself, and not the content, takes precedence. We talk to each other in these situations for the most part not to impart knowledge or to create new meanings, but to form or strengthen social bonds. The content is in many respects immaterial. We might as well not even be talking. We might just as well engage in some joint action or simply a form of affective behaviour, think here for example of the practice of grooming that our relatives the great apes perform.

Other positive aspects of idle talk have not been completely ignored by earlier phenomenologists. Heidegger draws our attention to some of them, though calling his position generally positive might be too generous. In a typically Heideggerian move, he argues that it is only through this kind of inauthentic language that we can come to have authentic language. "Far from amounting to a 'non-Being' of Dasein, this uprooting [which is characteristic of idle talk] is rather Dasein's most everyday and most stubborn 'Reality'" (Heidegger 1962: 170/214). Although he retains here some of his critical attitude and disregard for idle talk, he at the same time acknowledges its importance in our everyday being. This uprooted language, uprooted because it does not address itself directly to Being but floats above it, is the language that we must 'go through' in order to acquire a more authentic relationship to Being.

Looking further on to phenomenologists of sociality like Berger and Luckmann, we find a more affirmatory note being struck:

> The most important vehicle of reality-maintenance is conversation. One may view the individual's everyday life in terms of the working away of a conversational apparatus that ongoingly maintains, modifies and reconstructs his subjective reality. (Berger and Luckmann 1966: 172)

Here we find the idea that everyday conversation plays an important role in reality-maintenance. In our everyday interaction, we are constantly in the act of maintaining, modifying and reconstructing the world around us. What Berger and Luckmann have in mind here is something very basic and very mundane – the fact that we have a whole horde of anticipations about how we communicate and what that tells us about the world we live in and share. The simple exchange

– Well, it's time for me to get to the station.

– Fine darling, have a good day at the office.

implies a complicated background world in very few words (Berger and Luckmann 1966: 172). It implies a world in which these simple propositions make sense, a world of work and stations, a world where a station is where you find trains, of commuting, of a world where we typically do not communicate with your partner while at work, etc. As Berger and Luckmann claim, one of the main ways we maintain our reality is by talking about it in unsurprising senses and established terms.

Phenomenological approaches to language

Thinking of the phenomenological tradition more generally it might be claimed that the phenomenon of living speech has been placed in a somewhat sidestepped position. We are frequently confronted with analyses of our relations with others in the phenomenological literature: Husserl's and Stein's treatment of empathy (Husserl 1973e; Stein 1989), our responsibility towards the other in Beauvoir's *Ethics of Ambiguity* (1948), Sartre's discussion of shame (1956), being face-to-face with the other in Levinas (1969) or even being in dialogue, as in Buber (1970), to name just a few examples. In all of these analyses, the role of spoken language and interchange, even if it is not completely missing, is very much downplayed. And there is not always a clear motivation for this choice of focus. Even in Buber's analysis, which might on the surface seem to be explicitly concerned with linguistic exchange, dialogue is rethought and reconceptualized in terms of an intersubjective encounter, in terms of recognition. The role of language itself is secondary to the extent that speaking is quite unnecessary for such dialogues (Buber 2002: 3-4). And while this focus does capture something quite important in our communal life, I feel we have lost something essential about our interactions if we fail to account for the way language operates in them.

However, that does not come down to saying that language itself isn't a topic of discussion in phenomenological philosophy. If we look for example at Husserl's early work, we find a deep engagement with problems of language and the nature of language. In the *Logical Investigations*, we find a far-reaching distinction between two functions of language, indication and expression, as well as original analyses of the nature of meaning and predication. Despite these crucial phenomena, relatively little emphasis is placed on the role that language and predication play in our everyday interaction with each other. The main focus is on scientific discourse and the functions of language in the sciences. Thus Sokolowski, for example, points out that in Husserl's quite extensive engagement with language, his primary focus is on predication which is a structure crucial for thinking, reasoning and the sciences. Here he

argues that while Husserl's description of categorical articulation is "correct as far as it goes" it fails to take "into account the fact that our spoken words, as well as the thoughtful articulation associated with them, occur first and foremost between interlocutors" (Sokolowski 2008: 58). What is interesting here is that although the intersubjective aspect of language is pivotal for Husserl in terms of engaging with society, normality, history and tradition, the role of speaking to others and engaging with them linguistically receives limited attention (Sokolowski 2008: 58-63).[33]

One influential way to read Husserl is influenced by Derrida's interpretation in *Voice and Phenomenon* (2010). This reading suggests that Husserl's analysis of language problematically moves the focus from communication to the internal monologue, the soliloquy, which merely serves reflection and thought and not intersubjective exchange. Derrida's idea here is that Husserl tries to deal with communication by reducing communicative speech to monologue and actual speech to phantasised speech (with oneself).[34] In Derrida's critique of Husserl, the voice becomes an ideal form of thought; it is in inner dialogue that sound and ideality, thought and its manifestation come together. Although it is highly questionable whether Husserl's method pushes him towards solipsism, as Derrida suggests, as language, even in solitary monologue, is ultimately about the world and also entails a reference to possible interlocutors, it is clear that the picture that Husserl paints in his early work seems to downplay the importance of the self-other relation in communicative speech.

In Husserl's phenomenology, the intersubjective character of language is analysed in the case of face-to-face communication but also in respect to narrativity, historicity and tradition, that is to say, in more temporally extended relations. Language thus appears as a mediator, most often in the form of a text (newspaper article, lecture etc.), as the means by which we retain the past and transmit it through time; it is the mediator between us and our contemporaries as well as our predecessors and our successors. It is thus concurrently a form of sedimentation, of culture, meaning and knowledge. This function of language is also

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[33] As is often the case with Husserl, things aren't as straightforward as might be implied by the history of reception of some of his ideas. On this note Steinbock points out that in the intersubjectivity volumes we find in Husserl a struggle between the distinction between empathy and speech (Steinbock 1995: 209). – For the sake of completeness, it should be mentioned that Husserl does deal with communication in some of his manuscripts. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to enter into the details of these more recently published manuscripts (see Husserl 1952, 1971, 1973a, 1973b, 1973c).

[34] See Mohanty (1976: xix-xxi; 15-16) for an argument for the reason for this methodological move and a commentary on Derrida's interpretation.

discussed in Husserl's "The Origin of Geometry" (Husserl 1970) where the main question concerns the materialization of the ideal objects of geometry and the sciences more generally. Language in this function, treated as writing and text, however, seems to be at risk of losing its connection with lived expression.

Looking more broadly, we find in phenomenology extensive discussions of intersubjectivity and communication which revolve around the themes of communal subjects (e.g. the "We"), personal relations, the homeworld-alienworld problematic, and the I-thou relation. Curiously, when the talk turns to communication, contemporary phenomenological discussions often become uncharacteristically third-personal. They focus not on the lived interaction, on how we take up speech in our living acts and our lives or how we express ourselves and address others, but on how subjects partake in communication in general and how being in the communicative relationship is constitutive of communities.

As a case in point, consider Steinbock's treatment of language and communication in his *Home and Beyond* (1995). Steinbock emphasises the context of communication and community as they relate to the constitution of normality and abnormality, of home and alien, but only to a limited degree explores what communication and linguistic interaction actually amount to. He studies how the constitution of the 'normal' world occurs through the telling of history but does not demonstrate how we do this: how we encounter each other in interactive situations and affect and motivate one another by communication. The focus of his analysis seems to shift rather quickly to narratives, stories and history more generally, rather than remaining with the telling itself (Steinbock 1995: 208-219).

Even when we look at a political phenomenologist like Arendt, who emphasises plurality – arguing that it is "men and not Man that inhabit the Earth" (Arendt 1998: 7) – and upholds the essential importance of speech and action for political life, there is not much analysis of how speech concretely functions in its living expression. In her treatment of speech, the main focus is on disclosure: in speaking we reveal ourselves in the space of appearances, it is through speaking that something like a genuine self can appear.[35]

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[35] "Speechless action would no longer be action because there would no longer be an actor, and the actor, the doer of deeds, is possible only if he is at the same time the speaker of words. […] In acting and speaking, men show who they are, reveal actively their unique personal identities and thus make their appearance in the human world […]. This disclosure of 'who' in contradistinction to 'what' somebody is […] is implicit in everything somebody says and does" (Arendt 1998: 179, cf. Loidolt 2017: 198).

As far as specific topics in the treatment of language go, phenomenological approaches in the first half of the 20th century paralleled discussions in analytic philosophy of language as well as dominant theoretical-linguistic approaches, where the focus was on ideal meanings, logical and syntactic structures, and truth conditions.[36]

Now, this approach is well justifiable and also crucial to logic, theory of science and general linguistics, since it provides a framework in which we can analyse language and its central declarative functions in a systematic way. Moreover, this approach is methodologically useful since it creates experimental situations that are repeatable, often across cultures, allowing us to explore linguistic systems across cultural, national and ethnic limits. However, not exploring language "in the wild" as N. J. Enfield puts it (2017: 7-18), can also makes us overlook many aspects of language that are crucial, even fundamental to communication.[37] Phenomenologists, I will argue, have much like early 20th century linguists failed to address language "in the wild", being too focused on its ideal aspect.

What I am looking for, and what I claim is missing in contemporary phenomenology of intersubjectivity, is an analysis of the communicative encounter itself. Moreover, and this will become important in what will follow, we need to pay attention especially to those specific moments of interaction in which we share experiences in speech. Here the face-to-face encounter is the paradigm, so I will be putting aside for now the written word and expressions through other mediums, such as by way of various forms of technological mediation of communication. This phenomenon, the act of sharing experiences in speech, may arguably be one of the most fundamental forms of interaction between human beings, but it is curiously underexplored in phenomenology. My aim is to undo this neglect.

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[36] See for example Eckert (2019) for an insightful discussion of this trend. One cannot but be reminded of Chomskian approaches to language where language is seen as descriptive, as an instrument of thought, placing an emphasis on analysis that should be concerned with ideal interactions: "Linguistic theory is concerned primarily with an ideal speaker-listener, in a completely homogeneous speech-community, who know its language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention and interest, and errors (random characteristic) in applying his knowledge of the language in actual performance" (Chomsky 1965: 3; see also Enfield 2017: 11; 114-116).

[37] This approach to the ideal speaker-listener relation can furthermore be seen in Habermas' theory of communication (Habermas 1984; 1987). See also Iris Marion Young's "Asymmetrical reciprocity: On Moral Respect, Wonder, and Enlarged Thought" (1997) and Seyla Benhabib's *Situating the Self* (1991) for critical appraisals.

Telling

But what can we take as the paradigmatic mode and model of speech in the concrete encounter with the other person? Above, I have already identified two typical ways of framing living speech: testimony and idle talk. But for the purpose of identifying a paradigmatic example of the type of speech that pays attention and is able to articulate the living dynamic relation between speakers and hearers, I will follow Richard Moran's discussion of telling towards a definition of the term largely inspired by his work. Moran's concept of telling navigates between the two other concepts introduced above, the concept of the always-inclined-to-be-denigrated idle talk and the notion of testimony which is too abstract (and too informed by the declarative functions of language) to serve my philosophical purposes. Telling, as I understand it, entails aspects from both idle talk and testimony but has its own character and is not any kind of synthesis of the two other modes of speaking.

What I have in mind are our most usual everyday interactions, the kind of telling that happens around the dinner table with your family or at lunch at work; where your daughter tells you about her day at school or your spouse tells you about something they read in the newspaper, or when you call your parents and discuss what has been going on lately. This way of speaking is not bound to any specific topics or facts and it can also concern merely imaginative happenings. What is at issue are all kinds of things that can follow the phrases "let me tell you something", "tell me about your day", "do you know what?" or even "you'll never believe!". In other words, what I'm after is the type of interaction where I tell you about something and you listen, or you tell me about something in turn and I listen. What is important in this phenomenon? In line with our discussion of testimony above, Moran suggests that this kind of telling, where we tell one another about things and events and are mostly taken at our word, can be seen as the fundamental way in which we come to have or fix beliefs about the world.[38] He describes telling as a verbal act "in which the speaker presents herself as an informant with respect to the truth being told, and in the case when the interlocutor is indeed informed by the speaker, and comes to know this truth, the interlocutor's knowledge comes by way of believing the speaker" (Moran 2018: 19).

[38] In the following I will not focus on the telling of stories that both parties know to be untrue or fictitious, though the relation between true and untrue tellings will be touched upon.

Again, this very usual mode of speaking may call to mind, on the one hand, chit-chat, idle talk or gossip which all have a negative tone, and on the other hand, direct ways of declaring something to someone. I would like to claim, however, that there is something particular in telling that captures a distinct element of conversing, of speaking together, of living together in language, which is not captured as clearly by taking one's departure point from declarations, assertions or statements, or assuming that the crucial element of communication is the transmission of information.[39]

It is worth noting that Moran's motivations for focusing on telling are different from mine. What he is trying to achieve is to refocus the discussion on the nature of testimony by drawing insights from theories of the nature of speech acts developed in analytical philosophy of language. The discussion of how it is that we come to gain knowledge from other people's utterances has, to his mind, been too much focused on strict epistemological questions, and concurrently on the 'consumer perspective', thereby neglecting the task of addressing the way in which both speakers and hearers take part in acts of telling (Moran 2018: chapter 4.2). What is for Moran of the utmost importance is accounting for how the act of telling something itself is a reason for us to believe what the speaker is uttering. That it is to say, in telling, we 'stake' ourselves in whatever it is that we are speaking about (Moran 2019: 788). The speaker (typically) commits herself to the truth of what she is saying and, Moran argues, it is in the very act of telling that this commitment is made (Moran 2018: 139). In case telling turns out to be untrue or partial, the audience is entitled to the sense of being lied to, betrayed or misled. Telling is in this sense importantly a social practice, it is something we 'do together'.

However, it's not simply a 'doing together' in the sense of joint or collective action. Rather, Moran points out, both engaging in telling and engaging with the telling of something involves a moment of recognition, where we recognize the other as a being that can perform acts similar to mine.[40]

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[39] As I comment on below, I'm aware that the word 'telling' is not without its problematic connotations for what I want to do with it, but it'll have to do for the time being.

[40] This should also remind us of Edward Craig's distinction, discussed in chapter 2, between informant and source of information which implies that the telling shouldn't be treated simply as evidence since that misses the importance of the intentions of the speaker and, by implication, the true meaning of her telling. Moran puts emphasis on the relationship and suggests that the focus on testimony has been placed so heavily on the content, and on believing the statement, that we overlook how it is that we are in fact believing the speaker, and not just the statement (Moran 2018: 36).

Another motivation for Moran is that in accounts that focus too much on the similarities and continuities between speech and other forms of communication, there is a tendency to lose sight of what is particular about the act of telling someone directly what is on one's mind (Moran 2018: chapter 6). As I pointed out in the previous chapter, I think this is something that phenomenology has on occasion fallen prey to and is something that I will be mindful of in the following.

To schematize the difference between Moran's approach and the approaches that he is criticizing, one can say that traditional epistemologically inclined approaches to testimony have focused on belief formation, whereas the focus of Moran's discussion is on intention (as a psychological factor). My approach differs from both in centring the discussion in intentional experience as a crucial factor of communication in its own right.

Why telling?

It might perhaps be suggested that taking such a nebulous phenomenon as telling as the model for speech is suspect, and that one should rather focus on the statement, on predication or utterances. As I have mentioned, when we think of language in terms of speech or in terms of conversing, this often implies conceiving of language in terms of communication. Perhaps when we think of speech more concretely, we might want to privilege something like the transmission of facts via propositional sentences, highlighting a very instrumental approach to language and language use. This kind of articulation of communication might also privilege forms of interaction that we relate to this kind of speaking, like persuading, arguing or demonstrating. But for me the move towards the concept of telling is about shifting our attention, it is an attempt to break away from the typical ways of thinking about speech and communication. By shifting our attention only slightly, by attending to something like telling, we might notice how we start privileging some other aspects of our everyday interactions.

Telling has a concreteness to it, like communication in general and unlike declarative utterances. Telling is not a single person's game; I cannot readily be said to tell unless there is someone to whom I am telling something. Telling, therefore, is fundamentally dialectical; it is possible in diverse relations of recognition and modified to accommodate the needs of the participants and/or their anticipated views as well as the situation and context of the exchange (even though it may often fail at this modification).

Of course, we can think of examples where this is not the case, such as when telling is less about communication and more about commanding and perhaps also domination. Think of the parent 'telling' the child that "this is just how it is" or the male supervisor 'telling' the female employee that *what she experienced* was not *really* harassment but just flirting. Here telling is more like a command or order (to consent) than a communicative act of sharing, though admittedly orders always also communicate something.

Some characteristics

Tellings are common everyday occurrences. Think for example of small talk: We, you and I, are standing outside, in the courtyard, and you look up into the sky and say "the weather is nice" and I look up and say "yeah". I take this to be a paradigmatic case of telling. However, we can make a distinction here between telling and testimony, at least as far as the more common definitions of testimony go. As Jennifer Lackey points out, in situations such as the one described above, it should be clear to you that I know the fact, and have information, that you are conveying: since we are both standing outside and can directly observe the weather conditions, I know that the weather is nice, and you know that I know this (Lackey 2006: 2-3). So, you are not informing me about anything unknown or unnoticed (except perhaps that you think that the weather is nice, but it's not clear that this is necessarily the intention of your speaking either). If the act of testimony is an act of attempting to communicate knowledge or information then it is not clear that, when you say "the weather is nice" to someone that you know knows this fact, you perform an act of testimony or intend to testify something.

One might perhaps be inclined here to say that this argument could hold for telling as well. As far as Miranda Fricker's treatment of telling goes, she suggests that "it is distinctive of telling that conveying knowledge is its most basic and immediate point" (Fricker 2007: 60).[41] In telling me that the weather is nice, you have in fact not told me anything, for you knew that I knew that the weather was nice before you said it. As far as the import of what you said, you might as well have been talking to yourself. But think of another example. My wife comes home from work and I tell her: "I replaced the busted lightbulb above the back door this morning". Now, this is clearly both telling and testimony. I've imparted some information on her that she did not have. But I also know that this information is in some

[41] Elizabeth Fricker also claim that the domain of testimony is "tellings in general" (Fricker 1995: 396-397).

sense redundant. She will hardly do anything with it now, she would also have found out that I did just this when she next has to go out the back when it's dark and, furthermore, that lightbulb has been busted for a while, we've long since gotten used to it and whether I changed it today, tomorrow or next week wasn't all that important. Yes, I had an opportunity to announce my behaviour and for her to acknowledge that, but in a similar way as in the weather example, what was important was not the information contained in the expression, but that I was expressing myself to her about it and about our shared world. Another example that illustrates the nuances could be the following: I get a call from my daughter's school and am told that she has fallen on her face and that her front teeth might be broken. I go and pick her up but on arriving I find out that apart from some swelling there is nothing wrong. I drive her home and when I get there I tell my wife through a message that this is what happened. My wife would have found this out on coming home, there was no urgency. But here it seems that the telling was more important than in the case of the fixed lightbulb. There is a sense of relevancy at play, such that, if I had not told her and she'd come home to our daughters swollen face, she might legitimately be angry with me for not having given her the heads up. The world we share is a world of shared relevancies and projects and this is what is at play in telling. And this I think is importantly encapsulated by the concept of telling. Thus, although tellings usually contain new information, I argue that this is not their core, nor is it necessary. Sometimes we tell platitudes, as we are wont to do when we discuss politics with those we know mostly agree with us. There we seek confirmation for something we anticipate agreement of, rather than seeking to inform.

Another characteristic of telling is the typical anticipation of truthfulness. I anticipate that your tellings are generally truthful, or that at least that you are attempting to be truthful. The general anticipation that most of the time we are not encountering tall-tales or lies, though we of course believe people to varying degrees depending on our shared histories or their position and status in the social hierarchy. In our everyday lives we have at least a general and loose relationship of belief towards the accounts we are given and the stories that we are told, even though we might be aware of some slight exaggerations here and there for narrative effect.

And on the flip side of this: When we are speaking, when we give our accounts or tell our tales, we have an anticipation of belief on the part of our interlocutors. We anticipate that

they will believe, for the most part, what we are telling them, even in cases where we may ourselves be aware of our own exaggerations.[42]

What I also want to claim is that tellings, because of the anticipation of belief and truthfulness, are typically non-conflictual. If the dialogue is going smoothly, we move from one telling to the other without much risk of conflict, and it is precisely by switching from telling to arguing, debating or demonstrating, that the interaction becomes conflictual.[43]

What is particular about telling is the very basic interaction that is at play, an interaction that is mostly non-conflictual, where we anticipate truthfulness and we anticipate being believed, where we often do share information, but the core of the interaction is not in the sharing of information but in the more basic co-constitution of a shared world. This is the level of experience in which we seek minute assurances that the world that I perceive is also the world that you perceive. So, it is not about demonstrating, arguing, debating or proving, and not necessarily about getting someone to believe something, but more fundamentally about placing ourselves in the world with others, about bonding and sharing in a world that belongs to 'us'.

A worry can be levelled that our focus on acts of telling may lead us to study, not dialogical exchanges, but juxtaposed or serial monologues.[44] It is possible to claim that telling cannot be identified as a phenomenon of concrete interaction, since it also can entail situations in which one person says something and then another one picks up a strand of that to tell something different.

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[42] It is also worth noting that this is not always the case in situations characterised by asymmetry. An illustrative example of this can be seen in Unnsteinsson (2019). Think of a young woman that is certain that she will never want children. When asked when she'll have children at a family gathering, she announces this fact, while receiving the typical responses – "you wait and see" and "all women ultimately want children". This woman doesn't want children and expresses this desire, yet is not believed. Having been in similar situations before, she however was aware of this lack of belief beforehand, she anticipated it, yet tried nonetheless.

[43] That might be the reason why, when telling has deteriorated into an argument, we often retort "I'm (just) telling you that…", as if we want to claim that our intention was only about telling some innocent thing.

[44] I thank Dan Zahavi for bringing up this point. This criticism pulls on an intuition drawn from the code-model of communication. If one can speak of something like a 'classical view' of communication, one finds there that the participants in the conversation work independently of each other, there is an interchange of one speaking and the other listening, somehow as if they were chess players. One can find a quite prominent trend of opposition to this way of formulating communication in a variety of academic traditions: literature theory (Bakhtin 1986), relational dialectics (Baxter 1992), communication theory (Craig 1999), psycholinguistics (Traxler 2012), sociolinguistics (Enfield 2017) and sociology (Goffman 1981).

But this, I think, is not a fair description of what is happening in acts of telling. When I tell you a story, where you take up a strand of that and continue with it in your own direction, making your own connections to what was said, this is clearly for me a kind of dialogue. When we converse in everyday life, we rarely focus on an individual's expression as if we were philosophically analyzing its content, but rather move on, back and forth, in constant digressions that sometimes will bring us back to earlier stories. Telling, which doesn't necessarily involve telling lengthy stories[45] but might simply be telling you about something I, for example, saw on the news, is a very basic part of normal conversations. Or, to quote Merleau-Ponty's description of dialogue:

> In the experience of dialogue, a common ground is constituted between me and another; my thought and his form a single fabric, my words and those of my interlocutor are called forth by the state of the discussion and are inserted into a shared operation of which neither of us is the creator. Here there is a being-shared-by-two, and the other person is no longer for me a simple behavior in my transcendental field, nor for that matter am I a simple behavior in his. We are, for each other, collaborators in perfect reciprocity: our perspectives slip into each other, we coexist through a single world. (Merleau-Ponty 2012: 370)[46]

The other's perspective slips into mine as we both muse on each other's tellings, and as we interact a single fabric of telling is formed, a sense of the world, a sense of being together. And as Merleau-Ponty elaborates, it is only afterwards that we reintegrate the dialogue into our own individuated being:

> Only *après coup* – when I have withdrawn from the dialogue and I am remembering it – can I reintegrate it into my life, turn it into an episode of my private history, and only then does the other person return to his absence or, to the extent that he remains present, is the other person sensed as a threat to me. (Merleau-Ponty 2012: 371)

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[45] But even if it does, Enfield has convincingly shown that listeners are not passive receptors. Narrations are collaborative efforts (Enfield 2017: 12). Goffman also makes a similar point (Goffman 1981: 130). The notion of 'uptake' in Austinian philosophy of language also draws this forth, as has been emphasised by various authors (cf. Hornsby and Langton 1998; Stawarska 2017).

[46] Clearly, Merleau-Ponty here has a very harmonic discussion in mind, perhaps between likeminded people. Asymmetrical relationships can hardly be claimed to be performed in "perfect reciprocity".

The other removed from our collective situation stops being a presence for me, a living other, and slowly becomes more of a "behaviour in my transcendental field". The other becomes a type, an object of analysis that I can measure and compare and judge from afar. The dialogue however supplies us with the presence of the other that is still retained in its absence. I still recall the other as that other that I existed together with in this flow of being together.

It is perhaps because of this move from lived dialogue to a remembered one where we turn it into an episode of our private histories that our focus shifts, we start seeing dialogue as a speaking and listening separately, and the speaking as a form of testifying and listening as a receiving of testimony.

Another element of telling brings us near the notion of gossip. Gossip is quintessentially about telling, telling about others in our society, for whom we have, at least, minimally some relation of caring, in the broadest sense of the term. It is understood as something that

> designates informal talk, often damaging to those that are its object. It is mostly talk that draws its satisfaction from an irresponsible disparaging of others; it is circulation of information not intended for the public ear but capable of ruining people's reputations, and it is unequivocally 'women's talk'. (Fedirici 2018: 41)[47]

Gossip often has the image of being untruthful, and we sometimes think that this is what makes it morally reprehensible. It also has the image of nosiness, of knowing things that you shouldn't know. And there is certainly much morally reprehensible and harmful gossip. But there is also a kind of gossip that is fundamental to the health of a society, what Kristie Dotson calls good-ass gossip: "the kind of gossip that changes your understanding of your community members in a good way. A speculative 'why-story' that fills-in the 'what-stories' to generate affective threads beyond the facts" (Dotson 2017). This kind of gossip moves us from the coldness of critique to the appreciation of where people are coming from.

But gossip also plays on our affects, desire and disgust, for example, and on our moral indignation and humour. Does telling more broadly also involve the same or similar aspects? One might be inclined the conceive the affective dimension as an additional or supplementary dimension of telling, something that adds flavour but does not strictly

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[47] Federici points out that our modern derogatory sense of gossip is the result of patriarchal defamation of women's solidarity in medieval Europe. The word 'gossip' used to signify intimate friendship, the noun rather than the verb referring mostly to groups of closely involved women (Fedirici 2018: Chapter 5).

speaking belong to experiences or acts of telling.[48] If we emphasize these dimensions, then are we playing with something we might call our *sense* of the world rather than our *knowledge* of it? We will return to this point below. Would incorporating the affective dimension and giving it an essential place in our conception of telling make our approach to language veering towards the illogical? I will argue that this is not the case.

After the United Nation's Climate Action Summit on 23 September 2019, where Greta Thunberg, the young climate activist, held a damning and emotional speech aimed at the ruling classes, an article appeared in the *New Yorker* that argued that Thunberg was in fact "the anti-Trump":

> She is young and he is old. She is honest and he is a habitual liar. She relies on science and he relies on nothing but his gut. Her focus is on the forecastable future, and he lives in an imaginary past. Greta Thunberg is the anti-Trump.
>
> Thunberg thinks and speaks logically [...]. Some of Thunberg's sentences are simple and predictable: "We will make them hear us." Others are poetic: "[Our future] was stolen from us every time the adults said that the sky is the limit and that you only live once." All of her sentences have verbs and nouns, beginnings and endings, and describe something we recognize as true.
>
> Trump speaks by creating piles of words that become more distant from facts the longer he speaks. He free-associates, escalates, repeats, distorts, lapses into the unintelligible, and lashes out. He builds feeling but never an argument. Logic is his enemy. The purpose of Trump's speech is to obscure, to muddy the waters. (Gessen 2019)

I think there is a truth to this. The demagogue has a relation to the emotions of the public that might be called pathological. But notice that this description upholds a familiar, one might call classical, distinction between reason and emotion, even though this might not be the intention of the author. Relying on our emotions, our gut, gives us a Trump, whereas thinking logically and, it might seem, at a distance from our emotions gives us a Thunberg.

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[48] If we imagine the importance of tellings as consisting simply in imparting information, one might consider whether Frege's claims that logic should exclude features such as concessions (expressed by a word like 'however') should apply to the import of one's tellings as well. Then things like affects would simply belong "to the coloring (*Färbung*), the scent (*Duft*), the illumination (*Beleuchtung*), or the mood (*Stimmung*) of a statement, because it affects only a subjective reaction and has no impact on the truth value or logical consistency" (Sokolowski 2008, 71; cf. Frege 1984).

Notice also that Thunberg's speech was fervently emotional. "How dare you!", she shouted, more than once, with tears in her eyes. Do we frame emotional and affective expressions as exterior to the epistemic and/or logical contents of communication, perhaps conceiving them as mere lapses? Or do we acknowledge that anger and indignation can participate in crucial ways in reasoning and thinking, and that expressing anger and upset may be a rational response to a terrible or threatening situation and that emotional expressions in general can genuinely lend support to fact-based argument? Is it possible to argue that engaging with the speaker's anger and indignation is not always and/or not necessarily a matter of having our own judgement clouded, but may be a way for us to understand the speaker better, and possibly, the only way for us to understand her argument properly?

This distinction between reason and emotion also plays on another familiar distinction, the one divorcing argumentation from rhetoric. This implies, then, that anyone willing to address the audience using poetic or lively language to argue their point, rather than acting in a rational and descriptive manner, is manipulative rather than truthful (cf. Love 2006). Certainly, we might agree that being poetic and using lively and forceful language can serve nefarious and dishonest ends, but still it can surely also be used in the utmost sincerity and honesty. And we would do well to remember that also the 'rational', 'logical' and 'contemplative' voice is a rhetorical tool in its own right, it is its own style, learned and often honed for specific ends.

So, one thing that needs to be done is to capture the affective dimensions of telling without boiling it down to something akin to a failure in rational or logical use of language. This is the task of the next subchapter.

I argued above that when scholars like Moran and Fricker emphasise the communicative element of telling, they focus on the epistemic function of telling as the transmittance of knowledge or effecting a belief in the other. But if the transmittance of knowledge is not the key to understand telling or its most crucial feature, then what is? Above I have argued that telling is fundamentally about sharing, but if the shared factor is not simply information, then what is it? One way to understand information is to focus solely on the propositional content of my expressions, but this would strike us immediately as insufficient. This is because it is quite clear that I impart on you much more in my expressions than is found in the words.[49]

[49] We will further discuss that which goes unsaid in the next chapter.

There are all kinds of context-sensitive relevancies suggested in the words, they might hint at earlier discussions or at elements of shared knowledge, and I am also imparting on you my views and perhaps some social or personal norms to which I happen to subscribe, seen not only in what I tell you but also in what I choose to speak about.[50]

But I would like to add even more to that. And here I would like to return to more nebulous descriptions, hard to pin down because the subject matter is vague. I would like to talk about sharing the world, sharing experiences, not only in their descriptive content, but, at least partially, imparting on the other the *manner of experiencing*, the 'how' of experiences, thus also imparting a feel or sense of *how the world is given* in general.

Here we can hark back to Berger and Luckmann and their concept of reality maintenance. What we have in these interactions are more or less conscious reconstitutions of the world that are incremental and in the interaction itself, constant, minute assurances that this is how the world is, assurances that the world I perceive, in its fullness, is also the world you perceive. This extends beyond simple propositional language or knowledge of relations that hold in relevance to what is being said. And what one might also expect are constant modifications of the worlds so constituted in the interaction, through the appearance of something new, through approval or disapproval, through recoiling or accepting, though without necessarily entering into conflict.

We will return to these themes in the next chapter. But first let us explore one aspect of telling that is fundamental to our understanding of the relation between speech and empathy and for the general argument of this thesis.

Telling injustice

In the concept of telling sketched in this chapter many of the elements that we have discussed in earlier chapters come together: it is in telling (or rather in some form of impediment to telling) that hermeneutical injustice takes place, in telling we share experiences and in telling, I claim, we see the intermingling of empathy and speech.

Before we move on, I wish to make a distinction between two kinds of telling. Think of the difference between me telling you a random fact that I read on the internet and me telling you about my day. Both of these forms of speech relate to my experience. The former relates to the situation in which I read a fact on the screen of my phone, the latter relates to my

[50] Here I'm not going into the nature of communicative intent, of conscious and unconscious intent.

whole experience of the day. But there also seems to be something different at play here. One crucial element in the former case seems to be the mediation of a fact that doesn't require 'experience' in the same way as in the latter case. Think about the possibility of how I could, in the former case, preface the telling of the fact with some description: "I sat in my office and picked up my phone, scrolled through my twitter feed and saw this fact…" Here you tag along differently with my telling than if I'd simply said "Hey, turns out, sloths don't fart". The latter case might even appear as if the fact appeared out of 'thin air'. I can impart the intelligibility of this statement to you without you having any sense of my experiences other than those of believing this statement. If I tell you about my day and you attentively listen, there is a different way in which you are 'pulled along' with my experiences, how you relate to my experience of the day.

The type of telling that is central in this study, that is, the one that is crucial to the speech acts which the concept of hermeneutical injustice aims at capturing, is of this latter kind. These are the tellings of experiences that can be called 'episodic' in the same sense in which we speak of episodic memory, which is unsurprising given the intimate relation between memory and telling.

To explore this, let us look at an example introduced by Joona Taipale. Taipale claims that for Husserl written and spoken expression "have their meaning only as possible communications (*mögliche Mitteilungen*)" (Taipale 2014 105; cf. Husserl 1954: 369). To express one's thoughts and perceptions is to clothe them in ideal meanings. However, the simple clothing of language does not suffice: for me to "understand accordingly" (*nachverstehen*), I must "quasi-perform" (*quasi-vollziehen*) the original act of meaning or intending in the mode of "as-if" (Husserl 1973a: 456). This can be compared to the Gricean insight that words alone will not do to get at the meaning of an expression, the intended meaning of the speaker must play its role as well, though here with an important caveat. For it is not simply the intended meaning, but the subjective experience of the other that I'm engaging with. As was mentioned above in my treatment of Moran's argument, we very importantly attend to the words of others as others who are like me. What is happening in this quasi-performance is

what Taipale refers to as a reawakening of the content of that which is expressed in the gestures and sentences (Taipale 2014: 104-105).[51]

But as Taipale points out, the content of this reawakening cannot be wholly the same in you as it is in me, as that would mean that we are having the same experience. The conclusion he draws is that it is not really the content that is being shared (though that is what is reawakened) but the ideal meaning of the content, "of which the content serves as an appearance" (Taipale 2014: 106).

To illustrate this Taipale invites us to imagine that someone has told us that they "saw a dog chasing its tail". Let's say that you told me this, and that this happened yesterday. Now in quasi-performing this perception of a dog chasing its own tail, if I'm not fed more information, the dog that will come to my mind will in all likelihood be very different from the one that you perceived, and so will its movement and the background of its chasing its tail. Despite this, the meaning of the sentence has been transmitted from you to me. It is by these means that, through language, "we can share, for instance, the ideal meaning of the factual event of 'a dog chasing its tail,' even if we were not present when this happened" (Taipale 2014: 106).

But what I'm attending to is not the purportedly factual proposition "a dog chased its tail yesterday". Rather what I attend to is your experience of a dog chasing its tail yesterday and that you are imparting this on me now. In your telling me of this lived experience I "live through" it with you. It is through this "living through" your reminiscence of the experience of seeing the dog that the "content" is reawakened in me. What we need to be careful about here is that the ideal meaning of the factual event, whatever that means, isn't simply conflated with the propositional content of an utterance. Think for example of what would happen if another friend would approach me and tell me that they also saw that particular dog, chasing its tail. The experience I would have would not be of a modification of an ideal meaning of a factual event; what rather happens is that I relive the experience through my new interlocutor, reawakening the experience of the dog, now with horizonal awareness of the

[51] One may wonder whether reawakening is too strong a word here, as it seems to imply a pre-existence of the content in the interlocutor. Since my argument does not hinge on this issue, I will leave it aside. It might also be noted that Taipale's rendering of Husserl can probably be contested in certain respects. With regard to the phenomena themselves, however, I find his analysis deeply illuminating and useful.

"other perception", the earlier perception, as part of the current one.[52] My experience of your experience of the dog chasing its own tail aims at *that* dog imaginatively, though it does so with a lot of indeterminacy, just as your recollection does, only more fully. It is that dog, and not simply an imagined dog, that is the object of my intention.

The indeterminacy of my quasi-performed perception of the dog has a relation to what fulfils this anticipation that is very open to being amended. It is not simply that I do not imagine anything, I might even have something specific in mind. If we later are walking together and come across this dog, you can point to it and say "that's the dog I saw chasing its tail". This might cause me to realize that the dog I had in mind, even if I was not entirely aware that I did have a particular kind of dog in mind, is different than the actual dog in question. I had an anticipation of size and shape and movement, perhaps even without realizing it. But this unfulfilled anticipation was always an anticipation with the expectation of not being correctly fulfilled. On seeing the dog, I'm not surprised that my anticipations were incorrect, and I quite naturally amend my experience of your experience. No matter the size, shape and style of movement that I had anticipated, it is still *this* dog that fulfils my anticipation of being the dog that you saw yesterday.[53]

What we have here are a couple of things: the anticipation of the worldly validity of what you've said and the nature of these anticipations, the connection between your telling and your own remembering, and finally your remembering and the sharing of the experience with me.

Of these the relation between your remembering and your telling is the one we've addressed the least. When you remember something, you are directed towards a past primordial experience.[54] That is, the act of remembering is itself a primordial experience that has as its content a non-primordial, yet formerly primordial (i.e. past), experience. This distinguishes it from imagining, which does not direct itself to a past experience in this manner. In remembering we are re-animating a past experience, we at least partially live through it again. Even when I'm aware that my memory might be faulty, even when we admit

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[52] To say nothing about the affective aspect of the experience (were they happy, surprised, shocked, to see a dog chasing its tail yesterday?).

[53] See Staiti (2010: esp. 136-138) for a similar discussion but focused on doxic validity and concordant experiences.

[54] I take up here a distinction from Stein between primordial and non-primordial experiences. The former refers to experiences that are present to my senses here and now (such as my present experience of the mountains I see through my window), while non-primordial experiences (such as memory, expectation or imagination) are not present in such a way (Stein 1989: 7-8).

that some parts of the remembrance are not accurate, that I might be imaginatively adding things into it, it would not accurately describe remembering to simply call it a form of imagination. My remembrance, however inaccurate, still originates from a past primordial experience, and it is still directed at how things really were.

As we shall see later when we discuss Merleau-Ponty's notion of style, the manner in which you tell about events and things, your way of narrating, is an articulation of your style of perceiving the world. But it is also a reconstruction of your style of remembering, and by extension of your way of being in the world. It exemplifies what you yourself emphasise in your rememberings, and what you take to be important to impart is also presumed to be what you take to be important to be remembered.

What I would like to demonstrate is that when we tell, we can see the intermingling of speech and empathy. As you tell me your story, I'm not simply experiencing a narrative, but rather *how* you experienced the world, or more correctly, as we stand towards each other in the mode of anticipated truthfulness, how the world *was*. In this intermingling of speech and empathy we co-animate the others reminiscing of their experience.

Let's look at a new, more dramatic example. Say you come to me one day in an obvious state of shock. You then tell me in detail how you were on your way to pick up a friend in your car, but as you were early you parked in a nearby cul-de-sac. While you sat there a man came running towards you and tried to force his way into the car. You were reminded of the fact that there had been reported muggings in the area which involved precisely this kind of situation. The man tried to trick you into letting him in and hung on to the car as you tried to drive away. While you tell me this in your distress I vicariously re-live that experience with you, I might gasp or feel that familiar sinking feeling in my stomach as you animate your memory within me. Saying that I simply create an image of the event is not an accurate description of this encountering of the experience. As with your own remembrance, my intentions are directed at that particular moment in that car and that particular person trying to break into it. We can even imagine particular experiences that are shared. Say that while the man tried to break in, you, in your shock, focused on an emblem on his jacket, thinking you'd memorize it to be able to identify the man later. But on trying to recall the emblem it just got more blurred in your memory. Even this sensation is imparted on me in a way that cannot be simply relegated to the realm of my imagination or fantasy.

You speak of yourself, being there, and on hearing this I do not simply project myself into your shoes, I do not simply see through your eyes, but rather I'm there, beside you, as

Merleau-Ponty would say (Merleau-Ponty 1973: 134). A familiar phenomenon in the act of recollection is to remember oneself from the outside, often in memory we 'see' it as if through the eyes of an onlooker.[55] So perhaps I am, just as you are in your recollecting, placing myself outside of your own perspective. In your own recollection of the attempted break-in you might yourself be placing yourself outside your own perspective on the event, seeing the man running at the car as if from the outside, perhaps even seeing yourself in the car as you make sure that it is locked.

Your experiences, as world-relations, appear to me here in the intermingling of speech and empathy. The distressful telling is constituted as *an expressive unity*. It does not seem to do justice to the sharedness of the interaction to say that it is constituted of an understanding of an ideal meaning on to which there is then added empathetic perception of your current distress. I see your distress, but I also see a continuity in it. I see it as a distress-now and as a distress-then as I live through your re-telling of the remembered event. The anticipation of the truthfulness of your telling and your anticipation of my belief in it bring us together in the sharing of the world, *this is how the world just was*. And it is not simply the world-for-you, but the world-for-us, where I belong to the horizon of the telling as one that was at home while the attempted break-in happened.

But what then of untruthful tellings? When we are talking to someone, when someone is telling us something and we realize at some point that "ah, this is a person that tells tall tales", there occurs a shift in our relationship both with the person herself and the story being told. But the telling does not simply change from communicated experience to fable. Rather there occurs a modification in the way that the communication and the perceived world-relation of the teller are seen. The experience now has the tint of inaccuracy, which is different from the indeterminacy of the dog example above. There are some things that we assume to have been the case while others are seen as most likely an exaggeration or addition, though always with a sense of indeterminacy. We perhaps take the event to have occurred in roughly the same manner, though we might not believe that sentences were phrased so articulately, that the retorts were so precise or that the timings of events were so perfect.

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[55] Freud (1899) commented on this phenomenon. See Bergouignan, Nyberg and Ehrsson (2022) for a recent discussion.

When the experience of a telling shifts from communicated experience to the telling of a fictive narrative there occurs a suspension, as I no longer relate the story from subject to experience to world, but enclose it in its own sphere, in the realm of fantasy.

Much as with remembrance itself, the key difference between the fictive story and the true one, whether it is something I'm recollecting myself or something I'm getting through a retelling, does not have to do with what kind of representation happens within me, but with how the stories are directed at the world. That a story thought to be true turns out to be a lie doesn't change that, just as would be the case of a memory that turns out to be false.

We can now see that an element of hermeneutical injustice can be captured quite clearly here, where telling occurs on the anticipation of belief, but is relegated either to being only loosely related to reality or, worse, relegated to the realm of fantasy. The listener fails to 'live through' the remembered experience *as a* remembered experience and fails to co-animate the experience with the other.

But if someone is talking to me, telling me about her experiences, am I then not simply gaining knowledge of her experiences? To revisit Stein's analysis of empathy discussed in chapter 3, she makes a clear distinction between having knowledge of someone's emotions or mental states and empathising with them. This originates in her emphasis on understanding empathy as a form of perception. She claims that

> Knowledge reaches its objects but does not 'have' it. It stands before its object but does not see it. Knowledge is blind, empty, and restless, always pointing back to some kind of experienced, seen act. And the experience back to which knowledge of foreign experience [experience of the other, *Fremderfahrung*] points is called empathy. (Stein 1989: 19)

Knowledge points back to some kind of experience. And if we look at Stein's critique of the theory of imitation we see this distinction at play as well, as the difference between an experience being 'given' to me and simply having knowledge of it (Stein 1989: 23). One of the arguments advanced by Stein is that the act of imitation fails to 'give' me the experience of the other as foreign, for we are simply inferring its foreignness by projecting our own experiences into the other without a clear motivation for doing so. Stein argues that it must have been given to us in some other way for us to be motivated to project our own experiences into the other. In the case of imitation, Stein claims, "we would only have gotten a knowledge of, not a 'givenness' of, the foreign experience, as in empathy" (Stein 1989: 23).

This distinction then feeds into her attitude towards language and the relation between speaking and empathy, relegating them to different spheres, where language resides in the realm of knowledge rather than in perception.[56]

What I want to suggest here, in line with the discussion above and in contradistinction to Stein and others, is that speech should be seen as a part of the unified expressive whole of the person and cannot be divorced from those parts of expression that empathy is supposed to pick up on. Being told is a form of perceiving the other, not just of acquiring knowledge. Speech allows for seeing that extends beyond the temporal now. Although language can be used to perform things that cannot be qualified as empathy, that does not legitimize claiming that being told is not a form of perception of someone as an expressive unity.

The difference between speech and empathy presupposes a differentiation in expressivity between speaking and embodied expression. Embodied expression is taken to be expressive of emotions whereas speaking is thought of in terms of the model of the written word, as deliberate and rational. Speaking, relegated to the realm of knowledge, makes embodied voices "assume [a] generalized form as public text" (Love 2006: 13). Here the contrast is really between writing and embodied expression. But we should see now, in our current times of ubiquitous and often instant written exchange, that the distinction emphasised shouldn't have been between text and gesture, or between writing and speaking, but between lived expressivity and recorded expression.

To elaborate further how telling facilitates this kind of complex sharing of the world I will in the following chapter look to Merleau-Ponty and his treatment of language.

[56] See also the discussion of Stein and empathy in chapter 3.

5. The inflection of language and the sense of the world

In the late 1940s Merleau-Ponty got acquainted with Saussurian linguistics and this acquaintance would go on to have a lasting impact on his philosophy. In contradistinction to a more traditional way of treating phenomenology and structuralist linguistics in opposition, emphasising on the one hand the subjective and lived aspects of experience, and on the other hand the impersonal systems and structures that define us from without, Merleau-Ponty found in Saussure a phenomenological streak (Stawarska 2015: 181). Merleau-Ponty took up and developed some of Saussure's distinctions, in particular that of *la langue* and *la parole*, separating structure or institutionalized language from language as speech, language in its living expression. This distinction is an attempt to capture a familiar duality of language. That is, on the one hand language is something structured, something anonymous, in the way that anyone can speak it. There is a meaning to the sentence "the sky is blue" that persists no matter who it is that expresses it. This is, Merleau-Ponty claims, the language the scientist or the observer typically focuses on, language as past, the language of the dictionary or the lexicon; a diachronic structure that relates the recent past to the one further away. Contrast this to the fluidity of living expression, where speaking is responsive to the situation, where I articulate my thought in concert with others, where speaking becomes not just an articulation of thoughts or descriptions, but expressive of my style of being in language and being in the world. Here language is synchronic, it is here and now, between us, in our interactions. What I say now can in some sense never be said again; never articulated again in this style, in this situation, with these feelings, with these interlocutors. It is a particularity in a very deep sense, a particularity that Saussure saw as lying beyond the scope of linguistic research (Saussure 1959: 19-20).[57] This is a synchronic happening of language where language is not simply an intersubjective structure, but an embodied engagement with the world. I speak with my body, I reach out to the world with my words just as I reach out into the world with my hands to grasp for objects.[58]

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[57] This implies a typical structuralist way to read Saussure, see for example Bakhtin (1986). See Stawarska (2015: chapter 3) for a historical treatment and an alternative reading of Saussure.

[58] I won't pretend that distinctions here are easy: A further, third, distinction is found in Saussure where *la langue* and *la parole* are distinguished form *le langage*. *Le langage* is meant to capture the general capacity for language, one that is bound to its manifestations in the language acts of language users. *La langue* is in this regard the manifestation of particular instances of concordant forms of *le langage* by a collectivity of individuals (Stawarska 2015: 88). Merleau-Ponty then further complicates things

For Merleau-Ponty, however, this particularity must be addressed, precisely because of the obvious dialectical relationship between language as a system and spoken language, that is speech, between the synchronic and the diachronic. Language-as-structure is the basis from which language-as-speech can appear. Speaking can only appear as the modification of a language already codified, structured and shared. The synchronic exists only as a slice of the diachronic, which makes it possible. The living fluidity of speech is possible only because it is expressed from out of formalized and institutionalized anonymous language. Yet we must resist the typical tendency to give precedence to the diachronic, because it can no less exist without the synchronic. The diachronic structure exists only in so far as it is sedimented instances of previous synchronicities.

The emphasis on the structural aspect is not at all surprising. How else are we to account for the fact that "Everyone speaks his [*sic*] own language, and yet we understand one another through the medium of language" as Ernst Cassirer (2015: 484) asked in his famed debate with Heidegger? For Cassirer it is in the objectivity of what he called the "symbolic Form" that the "inconceivable is achieved", i.e. the miracle that is language and communication. But as linguist Penelope Eckert puts it,

> The focus on structure in linguistics has led to modularity, and to a series of dichotomies that have long allowed linguists to make language sit sufficiently still so as to allow them to study its structure: synchrony vs. diachrony, langue vs. parole, cognitive vs. social, denotive vs. connotative. But language does not sit still. Social indexicality permeates the linguistic system because language exists to articulate social practice, and social practice is change. This is not to say that we should not separate out elements of language for study, but in the end we should hope to reunite these elements in a broader theory of social practice. (Eckert 2019: 769)

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when he suggests that in addition to language as a structure (*la langue*, the language of the dictionary), there is language as institutionalized (language as 'one' speaks it, sedimented speech, *le langage parlé*) and language in expressive speech (language as freely and authentically spoken, e.g. in 'genuine' conversation, "which sweeps me on from the signs toward meaning", *le langage parlant* (Merleau-Ponty 1973: 10). In the following I will keep to the simple distinction between *la langue* and *la parole*, using language and speech for them respectively, while emphasising that I speak of language-as-structure when I feel this is needed and retain speech as an ambiguous term, as this ambiguity will be developed in what follows.

Merleau-Ponty bids us be wary of this emphasis as well. What he has in mind is a tendency to move from the focus on the structurality of language to the idea of logical grammar, to positivistic notions of language and experience, and to the idea of what he calls "algorithmic" language, the idea that we could somehow formulate a language that expresses the world in its totality, accurately and without ambiguity, or a language that could act as a self-contained and complete system of expression. This focus on the diachronic, on language as a structure, he says, leaves us only traces of subjectivities (Merleau-Ponty 1973: 25) and by over-emphasising the structural element of language we push out lived expression and, with it, subjectivity itself. This treatment of language ultimately leads us to understand it as if it were a table of statements, a collection of propositions, while Merleau-Ponty contends that it would more aptly be described as a "swarm of gestures" (Merleau-Ponty 1973: 115). The algorithmic approach is seriously problematic and he is quite adamant in his opposition:

> The algorithm, the project of a universal language, is a revolt against language in its existing state and a refusal to depend upon the confusions of everyday language. The algorithm is an attempt to construct language according to the standard of truth, to redefine it to match the divine mind, and to return to the very origin of the history of speech or, rather, to tear speech out of history. (Merleau-Ponty 1973: 5)

What Merleau-Ponty invites us to do is to see the algorithmic language as derivative and secondary, as a special case of language that draws its power from a more fundamental world-relation (Merleau-Ponty 1973: 128). And he invites us to attend to language in its living expression and to see what is at play when we communicate with each other.

One of the ways he offers us to attend to our living expression is by addressing the fact that in exchanging words with one another the words themselves do not suffice to account for how it is that we get our meaning across; in speaking, what is expressed is more than the mere words that we say. As Merleau-Ponty puts it: "People speak to me and I understand. When I have the feeling of dealing only with words, it is because expression has failed" (Merleau-Ponty 1973: 117). And are we not familiar with this? When someone speaks to us and we have to attend specifically to the words, when we start breaking sentences down into particulars, analysing meanings of separate words, this is where we encounter a failure of communication, of 'not getting it', rather than an accurate or thorough analysis.

In the last chapter we focused on the positive aspect of speaking, on the telling itself. But in this chapter, we will pay closer heed to those things that go unsaid, the negative semantic space that ultimately makes *what* we say be what we *mean* to say.

The transcript

To illustrate the insufficiency of what is literally said, Merleau-Ponty points us towards the relation between the transcript of a conversation and the conversation itself:

> It is said that the exact recording of a conversation which had seemed brilliant later gives the impression of indigence. […] The conversation reproduced exactly is no longer what it was while we were living it. It lacks the presence of those who were speaking, the whole surplus of meaning yielded by the gestures and faces that especially give the impression of something happening, of a discovery and continuous innovation. (Merleau-Ponty 1973: 65)

Speech appears here as a totality that captures us in a more thorough way than simply by our relating to the words that are being expressed. The transcript, Merleau-Ponty says, doesn't summon our whole being, but touches us only lightly by ear (Merleau-Ponty 1973: 55). The conversation reproduced exactly is something different from what it was when we were living it. Something has been lost. But what? Merleau-Ponty claims that what is lacking is the "presence of those who were speaking, the whole surplus of meaning yielded by the gestures and the faces" (Merleau-Ponty 1973: 65). There is, however, an ambiguity as to whether he is pointing at two phenomena that are lacking, i.e. the presence of the interlocutors on the one hand and the surplus meaning yielded by the gestures and the faces on the other, or whether the presences are constituted by this surplus meaning. One way of reading the quote is to suggest that the relation between presence and the gestures and faces is such that the presence consists of the surplus of meaning yielded by the gestures and faces, the latter being what supplies us with the presence of the other. Another way to read this is to claim that these are two separate phenomena that are lacking in the transcript, i.e. the presence on the one hand and the surplus of meaning found in the gestures and faces on the other hand. I would favour this latter reading, suggesting that we can have a sense of the presence of the other without the presence of gestures and faces. We could think of the blind that rarely encounter the latter directly but rely more on other cues such as context and tone of voice,

but we could also think of this in a very minimal manner, as the following example may serve to elucidate.

Nowadays we have transcripts of conversations on a scale unimaginable only a few decades ago, due to the presence of instant messaging services. With instant messaging apps we are constantly in written communication. What I would contend is that the role of the presence of the other, as a separate phenomenon, is even more pronounced in these situations than it is in face-to-face encounters. If you go now and look at a conversation you've had over an instant messaging service, you might be surprised to find that a conversation that seemed to take a long time, that perhaps seemed engaged and intense, will now appear as nothing more than a few back-and-forths. There seems to be something different at play when we are engaging with another person over messaging apps that is not only bound to the words themselves but to the presence of the other. And that presence can appear to us through this kind of minimal way, it can manifest in the way that our interlocutors can appear as 'active' or 'online' when they are using the apps, through various ways that the act of writing is announced (such as when we can see "writing" or dots moving about when they are writing) or simply in the trust that they still are there in the flow of the interaction. What I claim is that the presence of the other, in real time, lends a meaning, or perhaps a feeling, to the conversation that simply cannot be captured in text. The transcript can no more capture a conversation than a photograph can capture a smile, but it is not simply the written format that makes this so, it is also the lack of presence of the other.

A typology of the unsaid

But what, more specifically, is it that is left out of the transcript? What goes unsaid? In response to that question, let us develop a typology of the unsaid. This typology is by no means meant to be exhaustive, though it will attempt to grasp some of the main ways in which we might say that things go unsaid.

The negative space of speech can take on many forms. One intuitive way we might be tempted to frame the things that go unsaid is by referring to our reliance on both context and various forms of implying in our everyday interactions. There are things that are not said because the context somehow supplies it, or there is something implied and somehow imparted by the speaker beyond the mere words that are being used. Let's try to parse out this dichotomy in the light of some examples.

The first way that we might point to unsaids is by articulating those things that may not be expressly said but are still expressed in a more or less explicit manner:

1. *Bodily implication*. Here we have posture and gesture that in multifarious ways inform our interlocutor of our attitude and the intended meaning of our words. In addition, we might mention quasi-linguistic gestures like nodding. It might be noted that there is a clear continuity between speech and gesture, sometimes to the point of their being interchangeable. Pointing or nodding are obvious examples: whether I nod to affirm what you have just said, or whether I say "yes", is most often immaterial to the meaning of the act performed. It is even the case that sometimes nodding is more effective, say, when you are at a bar where there is loud music playing. Furthermore, sign language makes this interchangeability even more salient, where word and gesture might appear in the same movement. For Merleau-Ponty, this continuity between speech and gesture is so fundamental that at some points he even suggest that speaking itself is only a form of gesture, claiming that I speak with my whole body, that speaking is a form of world relation.[59]
2. *Direct verbal implication*. Here we have phrasing, how we choose to articulate, or not articulate, things. In most speech there is some kind of implication,[60] though the examples that immediately come to mind are those where the implication is more or less pronounced – examples such as jokes and innuendos, irony or passive aggressiveness; instances where we might say one thing and mean another or the various kinds of situations where we avoid being explicit. Consider the familiar story about the student that goes to his professor and asks her for a recommendation. The professor says "yes", but when the recommendation arrives it turns out to consist in the mere assertion "He has a lovely handwriting." Here the unsaid is expressed by means of that which is said. The degrees to which the implied meaning is obvious can of course vary greatly. An ironic comment might for example not be meant to be understood by the interlocutor, but rather by some other audience, or meant only to entertain the speaker herself.

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[59] As Rudolph Bernet points out, this sentiment can also be found in Husserl who suggests that, ultimately, verbal expression is "an extension of the expressive power of the body" (Bernet 2020: 240).

[60] It might also be argued that any utterance involves implication, that words *never* contain enough (see Noveck 2018: 8).

a. *Illocutionary force*. Tied to this we might also speak of the illocutionary force of an utterance (Austin 1962). When I shout "The house is on fire!", there is an implied force to the utterance that is not found in the words taken alone. The utterance might be a warning, we might be in the house and need to evacuate, it might be a description of matters of fact, or it might be an order to act, say if I were an absent-minded fireman being chastised by my superior.

3. *Indirect verbal implication*. Some of this we can also communicate through intonation. We might for example express an ironic, doubtful or enthusiastic tone in our voice, both in the way that we respond to others or the way in which we express our own thoughts. The exclamation "That's great!" can mean a number of things depending on the tone of expression.

And then we might consider various kinds of context:

4. *Physical shared context*. There's the unsaid that is unsaid because it is not necessary to say, such as the tacit awareness of our shared physical context, the environment we are situated in. I need not mention the chairs around the table when I invite you to sit down, as I take the chairs to be present to you in the same way that they are to me and that they appear to you as objects for sitting on. The environment is given to us collectively and we rarely express this fact but rather take it for granted.
5. *Shared linguistic context*. A similarly tacit context is the linguistically shared context, the fact that we are speaking the same language, or, if we're not speaking our mother tongue, that one of us is struggling with it, or the assumed familiarity with idioms and turns of phrase. We might also think of the awareness, or lack of it, of specific dialects. Here we can have in mind for example the prejudiced treatment of African-American English as a lesser, or incorrect, form of English (Rickford and King 2016).
6. *Shared social context*. These can be of various sorts, and much like with shared physical context there is a sense of taken-for-grantedness about most social contexts. We assume their familiarity and givenness to our interlocutors:
    a. We might be utilizing common knowledge about how to interpret someone's words. If I say "Can you lend me a hand tomorrow?" I might be requesting your help tomorrow, or I might be asking if that help is available in case I need it. Or we might be doll makers, and I might literally be asking if you have hands available, lying in your drawer, that I can borrow (Harris, Fogal, and Moss 2018: 3).

b. With 'common' knowledge we might also simply be referring to the shared knowledge between you and your interlocutor. If I meet a co-worker and ask her "Did you finish yesterday?", referring to a project I knew she was trying to finish on the previous day, and she replies "yes", we have had a meaningful exchange. But here my utterance and her response make limited sense without our shared context.

c. Then there are the unsaids of political dog-whistling. This kind of unsaid has received considerable attention in the last few years (see Saul 2018). It consists in using specific words or symbols that by themselves seem innocuous but are intended to signify group affiliation or as acknowledgement of certain beliefs or belief systems. A recent distressing example of this is the usage of the OK symbol (pressing together index finger and thumb to make a circle and raising the other three) to signify support of white power sentiments – a practice widespread among Trump supporters and some of his inner circle members early on in the presidency. Seen from the right angle the three raised fingers make a W and the thumb and index finger make the circle of the P. With methods of this kind, politically problematic messages can be shared publicly, where it is recognized by in-group members, while always retaining plausible deniability.

7. *Contextual constraints*. The context can also normatively constrain what can and cannot be said; we often have things that are left unsaid because social protocol does not allow it to be expressed.

   a. One might think of the context of the funeral, where we might not say things that we normally say, where some expressions are categorically unwelcome, such as ones where we'd be badmouthing the deceased.

   b. There's the co-dependant quietude when a prejudiced family member lets out, say, a racist remark at a family gathering. Here the underlying assumption might be that we should not offend old uncle Alan, as he won't change anyway, or that we shouldn't ruin this cosy family reunion with talk of politics.

   c. There's the unsaid that is known to some, but won't be allowed in public. Think of sexual harassment and violence performed by the powerful, situations where voicing the unsaid wouldn't be heard or would be silenced,

or cases where it is never voiced because it is anticipated that it will be silenced anyway.

Then we can have cases where context and implication are closely intertwined, and where one might start to wonder whether this dichotomy will suffice. Think of examples where the unsaid seems to be in excess of the situation:

8. There's the unsaid which is still communicated. You say "I love you" to your lover, and then pause while you keep looking them in the eye. The pause can here communicate the love, perhaps more so than the expression of the words.
9. There's the unsaids of emotional trauma, suppressed emotion or desire. What is at stake here are things that may fill the room, hover around a situation but either cannot be spoken, or are there subconsciously, so that people are strictly speaking unaware of their presence though they might weigh heavily on the communication. Think of the communication between parents who have recently lost their child, or the persistent mutual affection between Will and Dorothea throughout George Eliot's *Middlemarch*.
10. The unsaids of sexual tension. Two people might catch each other's eye and immediately sense mutual attraction. Here it might even be the case that the articulation of the tension would be sure to dissipate it.
11. Fricker's hermeneutical marginalisation might offer another kind of unsaid. What is at stake here are phenomena which are sensed, felt or known, yet have not been articulated or are perhaps inexpressible given the current hermeneutic resources. This is particularly found in situations where the things experienced cannot be articulated within the dominant framework of thinking and are therefore discarded or their existence ignored or pushed to the boundary, even by the experiencer herself. Recent examples might be poorly understood or acknowledged medical complications, such as chronic fatigue syndrome or vaginal pain.

And opposed to the unsaid as excess, we might encounter it as a lack:

12. There's the unsaid of that which is not said in a situation where it is normally said, such as when there is a history between speaker and hearer and something that is usually said is left unsaid. An example of this could be an obverse of point number 8, the "I love you" that used to be said, but no longer is.
13. There is the unsaid of not communicating at all. But the non-response is not a uniform category either:

a. We can think of intentionally not 'seeing' a message on Facebook or of not 'seeing' a person you'd rather not chat with right now as you walk past them or encounter them in a public space such as in a convenience store.
b. A similar unsaid is the unsaid of the refusal to respond. On this note Waldenfels points out with Paul Watzlawick, echoing Levinas, that a response to the call of the other is a practical necessity: "This inevitability means that I cannot not respond to the Other's call once it reaches me; just as, according to Paul Watzlawick, I cannot not communicate because not-responding would be but a sort of responding" (Waldenfels 2011: 39). To continue with the Facebook example, this impossibility of not-responding could be seen in light of the act of 'seeing' a message and not responding, so that both parties know that the message has been received but not responded to.
c. One could think of open defiance as yet another kind of refusal to respond, such as when a prisoner of war that is under questioning replies only with their name, rank, and serial number.[61]

14. And finally, we might mention the colloquial way of speaking of things that have gone unsaid, such as when we refer to those things that we feel should have been said but weren't before it was too late, such as the things we wish we had said to a loved one before they passed away.

All of this is then further complicated if we distinguish between that which is communicated and what the speaker intends to communicate, between things that are communicated and communication proper. The distinction this is supposed to capture is quite simple. Typically, we speak of communication in a way that implies communicative intent. If someone walks up to me and says "I'm the king of the world", he has communicated something to me. By the mere fact that he said this *to me* I can surmise that he meant to convey this information. However, if I see him from afar and realize that he thinks he is alone and hear him mutter under his breath "I'm the king of the world!", there is a sense in which his utterance is not

[61] Waldenfels also points to another kind of refusal to respond which he finds in Melville's Bartleby. Here he speaks of an abyss in discourse that cannot simply be captured by factual dissent. It is an evasive formula that "pushes onto the margins of silence" (Waldenfels 2011: 39). Bartleby's "I would prefer not to" pushes against the boundaries of a simple refusal to respond, as his non-response seems to be of a different kind than other obvious refusals.

communication. I did learn from his verbal pronouncement that he indeed thinks he is the king of the world, but he did not communicate this *to me*. I simply overheard something that was meant only for him to hear. For something to count as communication, on this account, it must be the speaker's intention for it to be communicated (the intended recipient might be a particular person or it might be more general, such as in an official pronouncement or a public letter). Yet we often speak of things that are communicated without communicative intent. Think of unconscious behaviour, such as flinching, that might communicate disgust, or how annoyance can be heard in the tone of the speaker's voice. And there are also many other things expressed or readable from my speaking that are perhaps neither expression nor communication, though we might often say that they are communicated or expressed *in my speech*, such as the fact that you can tell that I'm Icelandic from my accent. Although we could concoct situations where this is the case, we would hardly say that I mean to communicate to you that I am Icelandic simply by speaking English the way that is natural to me. That this is communicated to you does not make it communication in a proper sense.

More than words

With a little simplification we might say there are generally two kinds of unsaid: those that are still expressed or implied in some way (like irony) and those that are tacitly assumed (like the various kinds of contexts discussed). In the following I would like to show how Scheler and Merleau-Ponty offer us two other elements of speech that further enrich our perspective on what it is that goes unsaid in conversation. Scheler's discussion touches on an example we have already mentioned, the unsaid appearing in point number 11, the unsaid of hermeneutical marginalisation. There the dominant discourse constrained our expressions by limiting our hermeneutical resources: we couldn't say something because it didn't fit the general epistemic framework. One aspect of this, illustrated by the example of sexual harassment, is the problem of marking out an experience. Marking out an experience can in this regard become politically loaded, such as when experiences haven't been fleshed out or articulated on account of their typically belonging to marginalised people. When this happens we sometimes fail to see their depth and certainly face limitations when we try and communicate them.

The problem of marking out can also be framed in a more general manner. In his *Nature of Sympathy* Scheler suggests that the relation between experience and its expression must first take form in a creative singling out:

> […] by creating new forms of expression the poets soar above the prevailing network of ideas in which our *experience is confined*, as it were, by ordinary language. […] An emotion, for example, which everyone can now perceive in himself, must once have been wrested by some 'poet' from the fearful inarticulacy of our inner life for this *clear perception of it to be possible*. (Scheler 1954: 252-253, my italics)

The prevailing network of ideas confines our thinking. Normal ways of speaking shape our anticipations of what is happening, language "intrudes its network of order and articulation between what we see and what we experience" (Scheler 1954: 253). This intrusion thereby occludes the expression of some experiences. By marking out we contain something, make sense of it. The containment is not wholly arbitrary as there is a unity already in the embodied sense of experience, a unity that makes 'connecting the dots' possible and intelligible. The case of sexual harassment exemplifies this quite clearly, where the framing of the term in the 1960s resulted in countless testimonials of women who finally felt they were able to fully express an important part of their everyday experience. An articulation, a naming of an experience created the possibility of recognition of something that was always there, always felt, albeit bound to "the fearful inarticulacy" of the inner life of those that experienced it but found no ways to express it in ways that felt satisfactory.[62]

Yet at the same time we make of the experience an enclosure, perhaps even in an exclusionary or violent way, where some things are let in and others not. Think of the diverse experiences, thoughts, rationalisations, situations, and bodily sensation we collect under the heading 'fear'. Think of the toddler trying to fall asleep in its room for the first time; or the flailing arm of the person with a phobia for wasps; or the sudden shock and reflexes as you jump from a car that has almost hit you; or the creepy unsettling feeling while watching a psychological thriller; or the anxiety you feel when you're told that you have a possibly fatal disease; or that sinking feeling in your stomach as the roller-coaster storms down its highest slope. Are all of these fear? Are they variations on the same theme, or do they describe different phenomena? Are these vague distinctions uniform across languages? When is something fear rather than anxiety? Everyday distinctions like these might also be played out

[62] As was discussed in chapter 2, an important caveat to this is that minorities are by no means always in a situation of hermeneutic ignorance to their own experience and often find ways to articulate their experience within their own communities, though this articulation is not recognized. See also Scott (1990).

in relation to clinical definitions, as per Foucauldian genealogy, such as when we try to draw distinctions between 'reasonable' fear and clinical anxiety, between 'normal' sadness and depression, or between 'wanting to stay fit' and body dysmorphia.

While this totalizing tendency of language is always a risk, it is at the same time through language, through articulation, that *clear perception* of our experiences becomes possible. It is through the work of the 'poet' – someone creative or sensitive to our inner lives – that we become capable of seeing beyond the confines of 'normal' language, of wresting our experiences from the inarticulacy of our inner life. And at some point, everything must have been said for the first time. Scheler's choice of alluding to the poet illustrates how the process is creative, a parsing out, connecting dots and making sense of elaborate experiences. Putting words on experiences is not an act of labelling thoughts and emotions that are *prima facie* discrete. Though we might wish to say that every sense is always already articulated, that perception is never wholly pre-conceptual, one must also say that any meaning, any conceptualisation is already embodied, lived and felt, and by that fact it is always in excess of itself. And here there is an opportunity for playing around with the ambiguity of sense. We might want to distinguish between something that makes sense and something that has sense. All experiences have sense, they are felt and if attended to hold meaning for the experiencer, but not every experience makes sense. While it is true that we are bound to try and make sense of our experiences, it is experience itself that ultimately has the sense.

Appreciating this is important, because it is not that unusual for us to have experiences that are in some ways hard to put into words, experiences that elude conventional language, such as when we lack the words to describe a certain feeling or atmosphere. Yet even when we struggle, we can usually indicate these experiences nonetheless, by for example using metaphorical language or by trying to approach them from different angles. What is problematic about things like hermeneutic injustice is something else, something about the systematic exclusion from sense making.

If we look further at Scheler's view of language and explore it not only in terms of particular instances of someone's 'inner life', but in terms of the being of that person herself, we notice a deep ambivalence towards language. For while articulation offers respite from the fearful inarticulacy of having emotions that do not make sense, language is a deceptive ally. For Scheler language offers an appearance, yet also an occlusion. Language can help make manifest and clarify, yet, for Scheler, when it comes to the soul of the person or their personality, this becomes hidden at the moment of articulation. The assumption here, contra

what is familiar from Hannah Arendt for example, is that by speaking we inevitably fall into using categories and types, ways of speaking that do not do justice to our uniqueness. "When the soul speaks, it is no longer the soul speaking" (Scheler 1954: 102). While Arendt suggests that it is only in the presence of others and in speaking and acting in their presence that we can truly say that someone's person comes to light, Scheler suggests that a person's authentic soul is occluded from vision by the inevitable typifications and conceptualisations that come with articulation (Arendt 1998: 179, cf. Loidolt 2017: 198). Arendt is well aware of the dangers of inauthentic language, but in her mind it is in speaking authentically that we can appear in our uniqueness as human persons. Speaking and acting, and the relation between what we say and what we do, makes up a nexus of meanings from which a person's self may be said to emerge. The sense of a unitary soul that Scheler alludes to, that resides behind the words, before the words, has, especially in these post-Foucauldian times, very problematic connotations. We often think that it is in our inner life, whether articulated or not, that our true self resides. But it is also familiar that our selves are constrained by the understandings and definitions of others, and not simply because they typify us and we do not. I might think of myself as having a joyful and playful character, but when I express this belief, I might find that my friends and family consistently describe me not as playful but as serious. I can only with a certain level of self-deception claim that they are wrong and that I am right. My appearance to them puts constraints on who I am. In the same manner we might note the importance between the often-observed disjuncture between acting and speaking. I might, for example, think that I'm a deeply selfish person and regularly express this belief, yet consistently act generously.

Both with Arendt and Scheler the emphasis is on the 'what' that is said, rather than its 'how'. It is through the 'what' that we say that the unique 'who' can appear in Arendt's understanding, and the 'what' occludes vision of the 'who' in Scheler. What is important is the contents of the expressions and their meaning, that which is articulated, conceptualized, framed. But as we have already addressed, there is much that goes unsaid that is still bound to our expressions. And Merleau-Ponty offers us a tool to engage further with not only what is said, but the importance of *how* it is said.

The inflection of language

The other example comes from Merleau-Ponty, drawn from his discussion of literary works. And what I want to explore here is what Merleau-Ponty calls the *inflection of language*.

> The flow of words from which a book is made is bound together by an almost imperceptible inflection of ordinary usage, the consistency of a certain eccentricity. On entering a room, one can see that something has been changed, without being able to say what. On opening a book and beginning to read, *I find that all the words have changed*, without being able to say into what. As an innovation of usage, defined by a *certain and consistent deviation* which we are unable to explain at first, the meaning of a book is lingual. (Merleau-Ponty 1973: 132, my italics, modified translation)[63]

The description here is of something I'd wager is familiar, the certain eccentricity we find in literature, of the way the author articulates, or frames, what she is speaking about. And what Merleau-Ponty is suggesting here is that in this change of articulation we find not only that the words are being used differently, but that they have in fact all changed, that there has occurred a shift in language.

Encountering such a shift might sometimes cause us to recoil, there is something off with the text and we avoid it, or it bores us, and we perhaps reluctantly read it to find that it doesn't resonate with us. But sometimes a text will resonate, we follow the author into her eccentricity, the way we sometimes find that books change the way that we think. We become influenced by their way of articulating and might even acquire their language in some sense. And then, Merleau-Ponty adds:

> Once I have acquired this language, I can easily delude myself into believing that I could have understood it by myself, because it has transformed me and made me capable of understanding it. (Merleau-Ponty 1973: 13)

We read a text and sometimes think that we could have thought the thoughts it expressed ourselves, forgetting how it has transformed us, making the perception that now seems so obvious into a possibility. We flatter ourselves, Merleau-Ponty says, thinking the understanding emerged from our own thoughts and only grudgingly concede to the author his part – "like those who repay old debts by borrowing from their creditor" (Merleau-Ponty 1973: 13).

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[63] In the published translation the phrase "On opening a book and beginning to read" is phrased simply as "On picking up a book". The phrase "on picking up a book" doesn't quite capture Merleau-Ponty's phrase "en entrant dans un livre", literally "on entering a book". Thanks to Björn Þorsteinsson for pointing this out.

It is easy to picture this kind of inflection, this kind of "coherent deformation" as Merleau-Ponty will also call it, in elaborate, thought-out, literary texts. Given Merleau-Ponty's preference for using painters and acclaimed authors as examples, one might think that these modulations are the creative expressions, the shifts and meanings made by creative persons that move us forward somehow. While it is correct that Merleau-Ponty, like many others, has a tendency to idealize creative, authentic language, over and above more "banal" forms of speaking that "excite in us only secondary thoughts" (Merleau-Ponty 1945: 224)[64], he isn't simply developing a theory of literature. This kind of inflection is also at work in our more everyday lives, not least when we are speaking to each other.

In speaking we must always deal with the "sorrow of language" involved in the fact that when attempting to say something, we inevitably fail to say everything (Merleau-Ponty 1973: 145). The author facing the blank pages struggles because she wants to fill it with everything that's on her mind, but the act of writing limits her in her expression. She must choose what to say and what not to. In many respects this choosing is done for her by language itself, habituated ways of speaking, of emphasis, of engaging with particular themes in particular ways. In this way each word is always a "half-alien word" as Bakhtin would say, as it will be "charged and overcharged by others' intentions" (Bakhtin 1979: 185; quoted in Waldenfels 2011: 56). But, as we have mentioned, for the author, here is also the site of creativity, where she can inflect language in her own peculiar way. In writing-as-speaking the author's text might be perceived by us as something familiar, something we have seen before or it may seem out of joint, peculiar or awkward. But if the novelty is performed with skill, if it relates to our reality in a meaningful way, her inflection of language may become our own.[65]

But what is the inflection and what is its object? In trying to pinpoint this Andrew Inkpin suggests that the "coherent deformation" brought up by Merleau-Ponty consists of "small modulations" of speech, involving a deformation of established language, and that these small modulations are characterized by what Merleau-Ponty calls style (Inkpin 2016: 175). Yet it cannot simply be an inflection of language or the simple modification of the meaning of words, for as we have already seen Merleau-Ponty is acutely aware of the depth of meaning

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[64] Translation following (Inkpin 2016: 269). The English translations of Merleau-Ponty's text have "second-order thoughts" (Merleau-Ponty 2002: 213; 2012: 189) whereas the French original has "pensées seconds" (Merleau-Ponty 1945: 224).

[65] And again, if and when we become habituated to this way of thinking we tend to forget (or rather, we're unable to see) the transformative character of the originary revelation, which, as Fricker points out, is often the case with discussions of phenomena like sexual harassment (Fricker 2007: 148).

of those things that go unsaid. The inflection is something that appears in the interaction between interlocutors. We have here not simply an effect on language as a structure, but on our world-relations, our styles of being. Style is not simply an expressive way of communicating, rather it is the animation of that communication. It is the livingness of it, the relatedness of it to the being of the one that expresses. There is no communication without style of being. We should not see style as a modification of some kind of ideal language, but rather as the animation of our expressivity. Word and style co-constitute each other; one cannot exist without the other.

Style is a concept that seems on the surface quite intuitive but turns out on further inspection to be rather elusive. Merleau-Ponty's usage of the term is however not only an elaboration on an intuitive sense of what style can mean, but is also informed by Husserl's treatment of the concept, particularly in *Ideas II*.[66] Delving into this relationship would take us too far afield for our current purposes, but as style is a crucial theme for Merleau-Ponty, one that reverberates through his entire oeuvre, and one that is important for understanding the relationship between language, inflection and what I will come to call our sense of the world, I wish to flesh out some of its main characteristics and points of ambiguity.

Style and inflection seem to be two sides to the same coin. Or one might perhaps say that the inflection is the manifestation of somebody's style. This is something quite intuitive in terms of artistic endeavours, like painting or writing, but what if we try to generalize it? What is style in everyday life? One way we might picture this is in the way that we say people have style, say in how they dress or design their homes. In this sense style suggests meditation, planning, and even some panache. A sibling concept to style, that of character, illustrates this perhaps more clearly. When we claim: "He has character", 'character' has normative connotations, implying that that person is somehow better, or at the very least more distinct, than other people. Yet having 'character' does not mean that other people don't have it, only that, in comparison, other people's character is bland or generic. We should consider style in a same way. Any expressive act is necessarily performed with a certain style. Panache is not necessary. There is a kind of recognizability to every expressive act; it is performed in a certain way by a certain body in a certain situation.

[66] See Meacham (2013) for an insightful discussion of this point. See also Heinämaa (2018).

Style, individuality, and expression

At its core, the trouble with the definition of style hangs on the relation between the general and the particular. We often think of style as the epitome of individuality, of uniqueness. Yet, inherent in style is a kind of generality, it is a "*consistent* deviation" or a "*coherent* deformation" as we have seen Merleau-Ponty calling it. An artwork that exhibits a certain style "observes the system of equivalences according to which each one of its elements, like a hundred pointers on a hundred dials, marks the same deviation" (Merleau-Ponty 1973: 70). There seems to be an unspecified goal towards which each style is pulled, like the needle of a compass.

A style's coherency can be observed as both internal and external. On the one hand we have internal consistency insofar as it exhibits a consistency as regards the individual that is manifesting that style. It has a flavour that identifies that style as something that belongs uniquely to that individual. Think how we might hear a musical score we have never heard before, yet immediately recognize as a piece by Mozart. We might not be quite sure why we are so sure that it is by him, and we are aware that we might be wrong, yet we still grasp his style immediately. There is a certain "system of equivalences" that make it appear as a work by Mozart, or at the very least, as a work inhabiting Mozart's style. There is however not a clear sense of rules being followed, there is no set of Mozart-style rules that we are aware of, so that we know that if these particular rules are followed then we end up with a work that is Mozart-like. Even in cases where artists have explicit stylistic rules, such as Lars von Trier's stylistic constraints, Wes Anderson's geometric approach to filmmaking, or Sol DeWitt's wall murals, it is not clear that following these constraints would suffice to create artworks in the style of these artists.[67]

In fact, it would seem that if the rule-governing of someone's expressions or behaviour were to become too explicit or too rigid, we might perhaps be more inclined to say that they

[67] Clearly we can mimic style, but that seems to be a more embodied and involved practice than simply following certain rules. Merleau-Ponty comments on the imitation of style, saying of Vermeer that „[i]f this same Vermeer, when very old, had painted a picture from bits and pieces without any coherence, it would not have been a 'real Vermeer'. By contrast, if a counterfeiter succeeded in capturing not only the writing but even the style of the great Vermeers, he would no longer be quite a counterfeiter. He would be one of those painters who worked in the studio of the classical painters and painted for them. Indeed, such counterfeiting is impossible. To be able to repeat the style of Vermeer after centuries of other painting and once the meaning of the problem of painting itself has changed, the counterfeiter would have to be a painter himself—in which case he would not do 'fake Vermeers.' He would be making, between two original paintings, a study 'after Vermeer' or a 'tribute to Vermeer' in which he would invest himself" (Merleau-Ponty 1973: 70-71).

abide by a system of rules rather than to say that they are exhibiting a certain style. While there is certainly something systematic about the way styles appear, they are at the same time something that cannot simply lend itself to a rule. As Darian Meacham points out with reference to Husserl, were my style simply an appearance of a certain consistency that could be framed in terms of rules and were I to conform to the rules in such a way that I'd be completely predictable to someone that knew me well, I'd be more akin to an automaton than an actual person (Meacham 2013: 18). Style implies regularity in some sense, but it is more in line with a predisposition or a tendency, even a habit, than a rule. Thus, style is something that is characterized by recognizability, I can consistently recognize your style, without it being predictable (though I might predict your behaviour successfully in some situations).[68]

As we have seen, because style is made manifest in the actions and words of individuals, we have a tendency to see style as the individual's way of expressing themselves. But this overlooks the external, intersubjective coherence of style. We frequently use style to describe something that characterizes groups such as the general style of an artistic movement. Cubism in this way is a style manifested differently between Picasso and Braque or nu-metal as differently manifested by Korn and Slipknot. To those specialised in these different movements and schools, the particulars of each manifestation may seem obviously and importantly different: there seems be something different to what Picasso is trying to achieve compared to what Braque is trying to achieve. To the novice they might stylistically look more or less the same. Increased familiarity with a style trains us in seeing the particularity with each individual manifestation of it, allowing us to pick out a Picasso in between works of Braque. Yet the particular instances aren't simply the manifestation of a style which is ready-made, waiting to be articulated. Each individual manifestation of a style is guided by the notion of the style as a whole, yet the whole of the style is only a notion insofar as it is made so by the appearance of its manifestations. The unity is both guided and created by each work of art.

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[68] Emphasising style as uniqueness has some drawbacks. Manfred Frank for example treats style as a radical singularity. Style for Frank means "individual style, and only in *statu nascendi*. Once style has become an identifiable mannerism, its rules can then certainly be specified" (Frank 1999: 151; quoted in Inkpin 2018: 475). And for, Frank, having specifiable rules means it is style no more. In an effort to save style from being defined by rules or schemas, we are left with a concept that certainly grasps the novelty we often identify with style, but fails to appreciate its recognizability as something belonging more generally to a theme of behaviour or to a more general or collective kind of style.

The recognizability of the internal coherence thus hangs on its relation to external coherence, it is recognizable precisely because it is interconnected with the style of my community, of my friends and family, my inspirations or those whose style I wish to rebel against. Style implies generality, a reference to a common structure, as stylistic specifics rarely belong only to one person but are shared in and between groups. For without generality we do not have style at all, just random noises and movements. Style in this way has to do not only with the idiosyncrasy of individuals but also of collective idiosyncrasies. Individually we have more or less idiosyncratic styles, though they are again modulations of more general styles of being. A perhaps very straightforward example of this is the styles of gender. Gender, as style, is performed, incorporated, lived, by each individual in their own way. But each manifestation of gender has general characteristics that make it recognizable across bodies and across different manifestations (cf. Heinämaa 2003, 2018). Even when talking of the more creative, artistic endeavours, style is never simply about the individual artists, but also about collective styles, movements that mark out stylistic trends.

Style, tool, equipment

Linked to the understanding of style as an intersubjective achievement is the idea of thinking of style as something we use, a tool to perform our expressions in a more or less dramatic way. This plays into a common metaphor for language and communication that suggests we think of them primarily as tools. Typically, evolutionary treatment of language seeks to find reasons for the emergence of language and communication in terms of its practical application. In this vein Michael Tomasello suggests that we should look to pointing and gestures in primates as examples of precursors to language instead of simple vocalizations (Tomasello 2007, 2008). But we could also look to Wittgenstein whose metaphor of handles, discussed above, evokes language as something to be used (Wittgenstein 1953: §12), Austin explains how we do things with words (Austin 1962) and Heidegger draws out language's world-disclosive character in relation to his analysis of presence-at-hand and readiness-to-hand (Heidegger 1962). Merleau-Ponty uses this metaphor as well:

> I reach back for the word as my hand reaches towards the part of my body which is being pricked; the word has a certain location in my linguistic world, and is part of my equipment. (Merleau-Ponty 2002: 210)

Equipment here evokes Heideggerian terminology, suggesting words as tools for practical engagement with our environment. But we would be remiss if we took language and style

simply as tools. As Sara Heinämaa points out, there is in Merleau-Ponty a subtle attentiveness to how the tool metaphor can become totalizing. When discussing the phenomenology of the body, for example, Heinämaa points out with Merleau-Ponty that

> bodies are not like tools; on the contrary, tools and other material things are able to expand the expressive powers of bodies. […] A house is not a mere means of sheltering or resting but an expression of a way of living. The blind man uses his stick for orienting in space. But the stick is not merely for this end; like his face and his body, it too expresses his affections and moods. (Heinämaa 2003: 63; cf. Merleau-Ponty 1945: 166-172, 178)

While it may sometimes be appropriate to privilege the tool-like character of bodies, homes and the blind man's stick, we should also appreciate that this is a limited perspective and in no way something that grasps the essence of these phenomena. In the same manner language can be used as a tool and often serves as a tool, but we must avoid understanding it as nothing but. Merleau-Ponty quotes psychiatrist Kurt Goldstein in this regard where he claims that

> As soon as man uses language to establish a living relation with himself or with his fellows, language is no longer an instrument, *no longer a means; it is a manifestation, a revelation of intimate being and of the psychic link which unites us to the world and our fellow men*. (Goldstein 1933: 496; Merleau-Ponty 2002: 228, Merleau-Ponty's italics)

And further:

> What I communicate with primarily is not 'representations' or thought, but a speaking subject, with a certain style of being and with the 'world' at which he directs his aim. (Merleau-Ponty 2002: 213)[69]

There is in communication a "revelation of being" and a relation with a "certain style of being" and a certain kind of "world". Here we must appreciate the depth of the notion of expressive unity.

Insofar as we are expressive unities, our style of speaking does not simply express a person or a personality but a way of being in the world and, by extension, a world of being-in. A

[69] We might also say what Sophie Loidolt says with Arendt, that "speech is expressive not of content but of the being that can refer to something as content" (Loidolt 2017: 196; Arendt 1998: 208).

more naturalized perspective may simply find testimony in the voice, words that express knowledge or opinion about this or that, and in addition to that an expressive style that suggests a persona, a more or less conscious attempt of the speaker to try and give an impression of who they are. A phenomenologically informed approach to us as expressive unities sees speech and style as interlinked wholes that cannot easily be taken apart.

In the co-mingling of the speaker's inflection and the hearer's listening in empathetic engagement, the listener not only receives knowledge about what the speaker is thinking, but also a sense of the world. To reiterate, insofar as our style implies a world of being-in it also implies sociality, an intersubjective way of being. The impression given is not an attempt to impress on the listener simply what the speaker thinks, but how the world actually is. If I listen to someone and simply take their words as expressive of 'their world' and not of our collective world, then I'm not taking them seriously. Of course, there might be reasons for me to do that (I might e.g. think they are lying). But if I think they are speaking earnestly and I listen to them, yet am at the same time not attempting to make their sense of the world harmonious with mine, I'm disqualifying the relevance of their expressions as they refer to the common world, much like people frequently do when listening to young children.

Here we see a connection between style and normality. Style becomes normality when it has been appropriated by a collective, when its system of equivalences has become deeply entrenched. Typically, in our everyday lives we tend to focus on and interact with people that share a style of being similar to our own. We tend therefore not to notice the particularity of our style of being in the world. Feeling that we speak 'normally' or without stylistic flourishes indicates not a lack of style, but an "unmarked, hegemonic, status" (Eckert 2019:752). When we feel something is 'normal', both in speaking and acting, this implies the hegemonic status of our way of being, at least within this specific domain. The naturalizing scientific attitude has precisely this kind of hegemonic dominance in terms of style of expression when it comes down to explaining how the world *really* is; its purported value neutrality of seeing things 'simply as…', 'just as…'. Love is *just* chemical reactions in the brain. Consciousness is *just* an epiphenomenon of a process of biological entities. Group affiliation is *just* a social construction. The purported valuelessness (let's not forget that it has its own values) spirits values, affective senses and embodied relations away, disqualifying their deepening meaning as they do not fit the general naturalized scheme.

Each subject can have their individual style, but this style is bound to be a variation of a more general common style. In the interplay of different inflections here is an attempted

move towards concordance. When we constantly interact with the same people we become more familiar with their inflections, and with their sense of the world, and in successful interactions we start to take up ways of articulation, be inflected ourselves, even if it is only in our current interaction with that person. Interaction with people that do not share this kind of style of being with us becomes exhausting and tiresome. We avoid it or find ways to mitigate confrontation, for example by not speaking about certain themes (politics and religion are simple examples of things people avoid talking about).

Style, sense, and knowledge of the world

If you were asked about your sense of the world, your sense of how the world really is, I'd wager it would not take long before you were framing that sense in terms of knowledge; your preferred way to articulate your sense of the world would come down to knowing things about the world. Knowledge, particularly the kind of knowledge that is echoed in Merleau-Ponty's complaints about algorithmic language, has a privileged position when it comes to framing how we think about the world and how we navigate it. In the remainder of this chapter I wish to explore briefly how our sense of the world is overshadowed by our notion of knowledge of the world, and how this is a metaphorical language that we might consider revising in favour of a more felt and embodied approach.

In *The Prose of the World* Merleau-Ponty exclaims:

> The living relation between speaking subjects is masked because one always adopts, as the model of speech, the statement or the indicative. One does so because one believes that, apart from statements, there remain only stammering and foolishness. Thus one overlooks how the tacit, un-formulated, and nonthematized enters into science, contributing to the determination of science's meaning, and as such provide tomorrow's science with its field of investigation. One overlooks the whole of literary expression, where we must precisely mark out what may be called 'oversignification' and distinguish it from non-sense. (Merleau-Ponty 1973: 144)

When it comes to making sense of the world as a whole, there is a propensity to move that dialogue into the epistemological register. When we talk of having a grasp of the world or a sense of the world, we often frame this in terms of the knowledge that we have of the world. World constitution, the sense or knowledge of the world, is assumed to be arrived at through

more epistemological, assertoric ways. We think of our sense of the world in terms of knowledge, in terms of propositions and statements. We might be reminded of classical discussions, like the one by Hume, already quoted, where he states that

> we may observe, that there is no species of reasoning more common, more useful, and even necessary to human life, than that which is derived from the testimony of men, and the reports of eye-witnesses and spectators (Hume 1748/1777: E 10.5, SBN 111-2).

Here we have a familiar claim: each of us knows very little of the world by first-hand experience, we have a limited perspective and are bound to our situation, our place and time, while most of the knowledge we have acquired of the wider world we have arrived at through the testimony of others. We might relate this kind of knowledge to narrative and traditions, to an explicit search for knowledge, but typically we would frame this kind of 'knowing of the world', having a sense of the world, in propositional language.

In the epistemology literature we, understandably, find a focus on the sense of the world as knowledge of the world. I know something about the world in the way that I have acquired information about the world. In the literature on the phenomenology of sociality this often comes down to something called 'stock of knowledge', a term coined by Schutz. The world in this way of framing risks becoming, to paraphrase a quote from Merleau-Ponty mentioned earlier, a table of statements, a list of thoughts, assertions, indicatives. The 'sense of the world' becomes 'the meaning of the world', rather than implying a 'feel' or 'feeling', meaning being understood in terms of articulation, conceptualisation and knowledge. Thus, we end up leaving out the ambiguity of 'sense', when this ambiguity might in fact be capturing something quite important.

Looking for example at Berger and Luckmann's *The Social Construction of Reality* we find an attempt to create a framework for understanding the sociology of knowledge:

> […] the sociology of knowledge must first of all concern itself with what people 'know' as 'reality' in their everyday, non- or pre-theoretical lives. In other words, common-sense 'knowledge' rather than 'ideas' must be the central focus for the sociology of knowledge. It is precisely this 'knowledge' that constitutes the fabric of meanings without which no society could exist (Berger and Luckmann 1966: 27).

The concern is with what people "'know' as 'reality' in their everyday, non- or pre-theoretical lives", as distinguished from something like ideas. But knowledge here lives in scare-quotes, and the reason for that is not that Berger and Luckmann do not offer some sort of definition of knowledge, only that they will not make do with a definition that is too 'intellectualistic', that is to say, a definition of 'knowledge' that focuses primarily on something like intellectual history. "Theoretical thought, 'ideas', *Weltanschauungen*", they say, "are not *that* important in society" (Berger and Luckmann 1966: 26, italics in original). The typical focus on the intellectualistic is only a part of the sum total of what passes as knowledge in any given society. It is only a limited part of the population that deals in these, while everyone in the society partakes in 'knowledge', understood in broader terms, in one way or another (Berger and Luckmann 1966: 27). But what these broader terms are is never clearly articulated. It has something to do with "what people 'know' as 'reality' in their everyday, non- or pre-theoretical lives", so knowledge here seems to indicate familiarity with something like the lifeworld and perhaps some typical ways to articulate it. Knowledge here seems to be something vague, perhaps inaccurate in some way. Perhaps the meaning of 'knowledge' in scare quotes hides away in what Berger and Luckmann consider the key question of sociological theory: "How is it that subjective meanings *become* objective facticities?" This link between the objective and subjective meaning definitely plays a role where they frequently, if not conflate, then closely link "knowledge of everyday life" to what they call its foundations, "the objectivations of subjective processes (and meanings) by which the intersubjective common-sense world is constructed" (Berger and Luckmann 1966: 34). For these objectivations of subjective processes to be what the authors call "truly social" they have to be objectivated in a sign system:

> Intersubjective sedimentation can be called truly social only when it has been objectivated in a sign system of one kind or another, that is, when the possibility of reiterated objectification of the shared experiences arises. (Berger and Luckmann 1966: 85)

What Berger and Luckmann primarily have in mind here is the objectivation of subjective meanings in language, in the possibility of sharing experiences through the medium of language. Language is crucial because it allows us to objectify meanings, to communicate about things that expand on the here and now, explore things that are not here, were here in the past, about things to come or about wholly imaginary things.

Berger and Luckmann's account of knowledge is grounded in Schutz' conception of the 'stock of knowledge', found primarily in his *The Phenomenology of the Social World*. Curiously, in Schutz, 'stock of knowledge' is a translation of *Erfahrungsvorrat* and at one point even a translation of *Erfahrung* (Schutz 1967: 80). Now *Erfahrung* is typically translated as 'experience', which is how it is otherwise translated in the book. The choice of knowledge over experience in the translation of *Erfahrungsvorrat* is never elucidated and a problematic relation between experience and knowledge is not elaborated on. The phrase 'stock of knowledge' is then appropriated by Berger and Luckmann into their *Social Construction of Reality*, without indicating its origins in *Erfahrung*.

Experience, much like *Erfahrung*, is a problematic concept in that it has multiple connotations. The main line of division surrounds the way that on the one hand both experience and *Erfahrung* capture the phenomenon of 'going through something', of having experiences in the way that we may speak of having impressions, often specifically sense impressions;[70] and on the other hand how there is a normative claim of something counting as experience, such as when we say "that sure was an experience", when we refer to a certain kind of experience as something that we have learned from in a way that it counts up towards what would make one 'experienced'. Someone who is experienced is in some sense someone who is knowledgeable about a certain field, but we are also referring to the way people have gone through 'experiences' that have then sedimented in that person's being so as to make that person better equipped to deal with new situations. Experienced doesn't simply mean 'knowledgeable' but refers to a certain sense of know-how and a certain kind of habituated responses that make engaging with new situations more sensible or economic.

Yet, even in Schutz, when experience passes from experienced to typified experience, to objectivated experience within a sign system, we move from lived experience to articulatable knowledge. And as linguistic communication is understood as the primary way in which we come to learn of the world, how the social world is constituted, something seems to be lost from the picture. I would claim that a part of what we lose is the above-described sense of inflection, or sense of style, the affective dimension of being in the world and sharing it with others. My sense of the world is a feeling for the world, it is an affective engagement. When I speak to the other, I encounter in the other not only a place of seeing, a physical 'there' but

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[70] For a recent discussion of the difference between *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung*, see Carr (2014: 19-23). For insightful feminist critique of the concept of experience, see Oksala (2016), Scott (1991), Heyes (2020).

also a way of seeing the world. When I believe or disbelieve the other, I'm not weighing her statements up against my own beliefs, to a web of beliefs, but to a felt sense of the world, a sedimented affective engagement with the world.

For when we do address the affective element of our relation to this sense of the world, we often frame it in terms of having emotional stakes in conceptual frameworks. That I have, with my 'stock of knowledge', created a representation, a view, or an image of the world and because this image is mine, I've got some emotional stakes in maintaining it. But I'd argue that this narrative is too simplistic. The world-view, the image, emerges from affective and embodied engagements with the world, the world appears affectively laden, for example in the manner that it appears as normal and harmonious. And it is only from this emergent world that something like the concept of world can emerge. The affective dimension is therefore not an emotional component added onto a conceptual scheme, but a core component of that conceptual scheme, one that makes it possible in the first place.

In our interaction with each other, our sense of the world operates in this embodied/affective register and even though we might come to articulate this register, this does not need to happen, and arguably most of the time it does not happen. Think for example of the feeling in your body you get as you sense the atmosphere in a room cool down when you have said something offensive. Even though this feeling plays an important role in your sense of the situation and your sense of the transgression that was made, it wouldn't be that unusual to analyse that situation by placing this affective dimension on the margins, focusing instead on the words said, how your interlocutors interpreted these words and perhaps on the socio-historical meaning of the words, e.g. if you said something racist or sexist. We can and sometimes do formulate these affective dimensions of our interactions, yet what remains is that even if we could articulate them in a sufficiently accurate way, this does not mean that such an articulation plays a typical role in our everyday interactions and the way that we come to have a sense for a situation.

Even though we might fantasize about having an articulated framework about what is happening in our interactions (though I doubt that this is possible), the operative framework, the way things progress in our everyday interactions, happens through these embodied/affective registers. If we want to make sense of the world that appears to us in these interactions, we'd do well to understand this operative framework.

The question must then be to develop a model of the sense of the world based on this more intricate relationship between sense and language, rather than explore the way in which

we collect propositional knowledge about the world and use this as our paradigm. Only then can we entertain hopes of articulating an interaction between subjectivity, intersubjectivity and the world that doesn't fall into, as Merleau-Ponty worried, "convert[ing] the certainty of the world into a certainty of the thought about the world", and, importantly, "does not replace the world itself with the signification 'world'" (Merleau-Ponty 2012: lxxvii).

6. Marginalized realities

In the preceding we've addressed speech, telling and empathy and the sharing of experiences in general. We dealt with the style of world experience and the style of being in the world as well as the inflection of language found in our everyday expressions. The previous chapter concluded with an analysis of the notion of the sense of the world that I contrasted with the notion of a stock of knowledge. As I have addressed in previous chapters the sense of the world in question is not called by that name in the epistemological literature but is rather referred to as our knowledge or knowledges. Fricker for example speaks of the pool of knowledge when defining hermeneutic injustice and our access to or possibility of contributing to that pool (Fricker 2007), and the evocation of knowledge is also particularly salient in the standpoint theory literature. Just to take an extended example, Patricia Hill Collins, with reference to Berger and Luckmann, speaks of two levels of knowledge,

> the commonplace, taken-for-granted knowledge shared by African American women growing from our everyday thoughts and actions [which] constitutes a first and most fundamental level of knowledge. These ideas that Black women share with one another on an informal, daily basis about topics such as how to style our hair, characteristics of 'good' Black men, strategies for dealing with white folks and skills of how to 'get over' provide the foundations for this taken-for-granted knowledge. (Collins 2010: 349)

This, then, is contrasted with the second level of knowledge, the more intellectual, technical, and theoretically informed knowledge of Black feminist thought (Collins 2010: 349).

As we have seen, hermeneutical injustice is framed in relation to the notions of dominant discourses. But if we think of recent activist movements that speak on behalf of the subjugated and claim that their voices are being silenced, such as the #MeToo and Black Lives Matter (BLM) movements, these do not only deal with discourses, but evoke realities of people (women and African Americans, respectively) that are different from the one normally propagated. The claim of living in a different world or reality echoes themes seen in the feminist and critical race theory literature from decades past (cf. Collins 2010, Hartstock 1998, Lugones 1987). What are we to make of the notion of world and realities in these discussions? And do discourses or knowledges capture experiential reality?

What I will do in this chapter is tackle the problem of other worlds from the perspective of Husserl's notion of the lifeworld. I will introduce the homeworld-alienworld problematic

as well as the importance of normativity and normality in our sense of the world. I will then explore how these affect our sense of what is happening in the conflict of realities and our capacity for empathy.

Beauvoir, safe spaces, and marginalized realities

Famously, in the *Second Sex* Beauvoir elaborates a philosophical framework for and a genealogy of the subjection of women. It is however often glossed over that large parts of the book are dedicated to a careful phenomenological analysis of the lived experiences of women under such subjection. In a chapter on the married woman she fleshes out an account of the way the married woman phenomenologically experiences her situation and reaches into Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* to develop that account. One element of that situation is the description of feminine friendships, the friendship the married woman has with her peers:

> The feminine friendships she is able to keep or make are precious for a woman; they are very different from relations men have; men relate to each other as individuals through their ideas, their own personal projects; women, confined within the generality of their destiny as women, are united by a kind of immanent complicity. *And what they seek first of all from each other is the affirmation of their common universe*. They do not discuss opinions: they exchange confidences and recipes; they join *together to create a kind of counter-universe whose values outweigh male values*. (Beauvoir 2015: 599, my italics)

In the spring of 2020 I taught a class in the Gender studies department at the University of Iceland. The students were all women and I presented them with this quote from Beauvoir, asking them how they related to it. I myself can hardly claim authority on how Beauvoir's claims relate to the realities of modern Icelandic women, but it seemed to me to resonate quite clearly with the vast majority of my students. Beauvoir here captures in the more casual setting what I took to be exemplary of the reconstitution of reality we found in the working groups that invented the term sexual harassment, discussed in chapter 2. In Beauvoir's example we find a case of a more mundane, perhaps more frequent version of a phenomenon which the more institutionalized working groups build on.[71]

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[71] It is a conscious choice to focus on 'women's experience', and to contrast it with the experience of men. For one thing, this distinction has a clear place in everyday parlance, more than, say,

What is foremost in Beauvoir's analysis is the affirmation of the common universe.[72] The women seek each other out for the purpose of confirming their reality that in other respects is not allowed into the open, it is subsumed, hidden in their everyday life. Yet this is not wholly innocent play:

> […] when they meet, they find the strength to shake off their chains; they negate male sexual domination by confiding their frigidity to each other and cynically deriding the appetites or the clumsiness of their males; they also contest with irony the moral and intellectual superiority of their husbands and men in general. (Beauvoir 2015: 599)

They know that the male code is not their code and they find in each other the strength to counter it. And what is valuable here is a sense of truthfulness or honesty in these relationships. "When confronting man, woman is always on stage" (Beauvoir 2015: 599). It was precisely this point that the students in my classroom latched onto, the claim that the social dynamic changes with males in the room, that there is a lingering tension, even if the men are good-willed or well-meaning feminists. Only rarely are individual men allowed into the enclave, the safe space of honesty, where the women feel like they can genuinely be themselves. One student said, evoking a familiar trope, that at that point the men allowed in have simply become "honorary girlfriends".

The mere presence of the style-of-being of the man can also create a tension that is often not perceived as such. Recently I had problems with the internet connection at my house. I called up my service provider which said they would send a guy over to look into it. As I was busy when he was expected to arrive, my wife went home to receive him. When he arrived

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heterosexual realities as contrasted with homosexual ones, or even the sense in which the political leftist lives in a different world than those on the right. Choosing the men/women dichotomy to work with clearly has its drawbacks, especially if considered in relation to the discussion of experience in feminist literature or the problematisation of 'women's experience' as a unitary phenomenon or a useful category (cf. Scott 1991; Butler 1990), and the essentializing tendencies of discourses that focus on the duality man/woman, rather than on how the category of gender has opened and multiplied in the wake of queer theory in the last decades. However, as the examples that serve as the focal point of the discussion of hermeneutical injustice are based on the purported experience of women, in contradistinction to that of men, such as that of the #MeToo movement and sexual harassment in general, I will take this as my starting point here. It is in fact hard to imagine how we can make sense of these discussions without at the same time referring to something like the collective experiences of certain groups within a society.

[72] It is worth emphasising that this is *a* world, not *the* world of women. Beauvoir's analysis touches on various kinds of manifestation of the female experience.

the 'guy' turned out to be a woman. This unexpected turn of events caused a significant shift in the perception of the situation, as my wife suddenly felt a sense of security she hadn't realized she had lacked, she felt an absence of a threat, albeit a subtle, even a small one, yet still present when the situation was about letting an unknown man into our house while she was home alone.

This enclave, according to Beauvoir's account, often remains a hidden space, however. She quotes Colette who talks of "Brief confidences, the amusements of two women shut away from the world, hours that were now like those in a sewing room, now like the idle ones of convalescence" (Colette 1984; quoted in Beauvoir 2015: 600). This female enclave creates security to express and affirm, to elaborate on a sense of the world, but it is not necessarily presented as something that could be deployed, as one might say the working groups did when they were developing the term sexual harassment. It is therefore distinct from explicitly manufactured 'safe spaces'. In Beauvoir's treatment, the reality of the feminine enclave is directed inwards, it is a safe haven in a world that despite its felt contradictions and resistance to the lived experience of women is still assumed to be the normal world. The hegemonic reality, ever-present and 'out there', is taken to be in opposition to the reality of women, yet the feminine enclave assumes, in this situation, its own kind of authority. There is a peculiar duality in this sense of the world. The dominant world is acknowledged as dominant and sometimes even given precedence, but at the same time the feminine enclave is given its own sense of internal authority, in the way that it is perceived as more truthful and is often assumed as a world that is for women and could not be graspable by men anyway.

What we have here in Beauvoir's description are some sketches of how the sense of multiple worlds can appear in very mundane situations, how their conflict can appear, and how their multiplicity can be sensed. Maria Lugones speaks in this regard of "world-travelling", the ability, and necessity, of the subjected to traverse the spaces of both the dominant and the dominated.[73]

[73] Another interesting aspect of this found in Lugones is the claim that insofar as "the person" is defined in terms of her relationality, if it is indeed an interactive phenomenon, then we literally change personalities across world-traveling. She in fact suggests that this change is what world-traveling is about: "The shift from being one person to being a different person is what I call 'travel"' (Lugones 1987: 11).

Lifeworlds, homeworlds, alienworlds

Speaking of 'worlds' might in this situation seem contrived. It could be argued that it would be better to speak of something like world-views or interpretations of the world. But the meaning of 'world' here should be thought of in relation to Husserl's lifeworld analysis. The concept of the lifeworld is meant to grasp the world we live in in our everyday practical lives, the world that is 'always there', always present to our sense and to which all our senses converge. A detailed exposition of the concept reaches far beyond the scope of this dissertation, so we will let it suffice to explore some specific aspects of it. What I have in mind in particular is Husserl's analysis of the lifeworld in terms of his treatment of normality and abnormality and its relation to the home and alien.

In mapping out the world of our everyday life, we find that the world appears to us through our individual perception; the world is first and foremost given to me through my senses. Yet we also find that the world is not given to us alone, but to our interlocutors and fellow beings as well – the world of our senses belongs not only to us, but to them too:

> Each of us has his own experiential representations, but with the normal certainty that everyone present experiences the same things and in the possible course of his experiences can come to know the same things through similar properties. This applies, then, to the everyday common world in which the whole of our normal practical life runs its course. (Husserl 1970: 343-344)

Or as Merleau-Ponty succinctly puts it:

> Certainly I do not live their life [i.e. the life of others]; they are definitively absent from me and I from them. But that distance becomes a strange proximity as soon as one comes back home to the perceptible world, since the perceptible is precisely that which can haunt more than one body without budging from its place. No one will see that table which now meets my eye; only I can do that. And yet I know that at the same moment it presses upon every glance in exactly the same way. For I see these other glances too. (Merleau-Ponty 1964: 15)

This common world that is given to us as always present to us, but also present to others, is given to us with a sense of normality. The life of everyday people "is related to a sphere of normal things which become known to them in common through a set of normal types of

experience" (Husserl 1970: 344). The world appears to us, even down to our everyday perceptions, as normal.

But what should strike us immediately is that there are different kinds of normalities, and this should bring us to the different senses of the world. Beauvoir's example should show that I do not simply see the world that you see, but that the world can be given to us with different horizons of sense. And furthermore, normality, as Steinbock points out, is a liminal concept (Steinbock 2017: esp. chapter 1). It implies something which is not normal. My experiences of normal and concordant perceptions hint at experiences that are not normal. In my perception of life as normal I concurrently have a sense of that which exceeds the boundaries of that which I sense as normal, i.e. of abnormality.

The abnormality under discussion is not intended to have moral significance, but only to signify the anomality of that which is alien to me:[74]

> By normal and abnormal, Husserl does not mean medicinal or psychological normality; rather, he evokes a normality and abnormality on a constitutional level, namely, the sense constitution of the lived-body, objects, worlds, traditions etc., as concordant, optimal, typical and familiar. (Steinbock 1994: 208)

And when normality is considered on the level of the lifeworld, we find that my lifeworld, as that which is given to me as normal, concordant and familiar, is in fact constituted as my homeworld (*Heimwelt*). Over against this homeworld I have a distinct sense of other homeworlds, or alienworlds (*Fremdenwelten*). The home always stands in a privileged position: ontogenetically it is given to the subject as an internally coherent world, as *the* world. It is only in the encounter with the alien other that I come to recognize the home as home:

> […] a homeworld is privileged because it develops with a coherence internal to it. A homeworld is normal because qua typically familiar in the generative density of a tradition, it is that through which our experiences coalesce as our own and in such a way that our world structures our experience itself. (Steinbock 1995: 184)

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[74] I follow Steinbock and Heinämaa here in distinguishing between a non-normative notion of anomality on the one hand, referring to things like the anomalous experience of having a bright light shone into your eyes, and abnormality on the other hand, which is more normatively loaded (Steinbock 1995: 132-133; 2017: 82; Heinämaa 2014: 132-135).

It is in coming to recognize that the home is what is normal *to me* that I recognize that the home is something that can seem alien to others, and vice versa. In coming to recognize the alien as alien, the home is retroactively understood as always having been home. In this way the home and alien stand in a relation of co-constitution.[75]

The word 'alien' in English tends to evoke a sense of something radically different, as if the sense of 'extra-terrestrial' had latched on to it. "This is alien to me" evokes a sense of something that is profoundly different from the way I normally do, sense or think things. *Fremd* in German doesn't have quite the same connotations. It simply evokes that which is beyond the scope of the familiar. This is good to have in mind when one addresses the relation between the home and the alien in Husserl. One of the problematic ways both Husserl and many of his interpreters have dealt with the home and the alien is through the lens of cultural difference, often under the assumption of radical difference. In this way Husserl will talk of the different lifeworlds of the Bantu, Congolese people or Chinese peasants, but not of the lifeworlds of Italians or Austrians. This is done, I would argue, for pedagogical purposes, to clarify the meaning and appearance of the alien in our everyday life. But the structure of the appearance of the alien doesn't simply depend on the encounter with an alien culture. As Schutz points out, "strangeness and familiarity are not limited to the social field but are general categories of our interpretation of the world" (Schutz 1944: 507), a theme we will explore in the next section, where we'll discuss normativity in perception.

When speaking of the normal ways we do things we generally are referring to typical or familiar ways of doing things. We refer to established ways, and as such we are referring to a conservation of that which is, and even suggesting how things should be. That is, the normal and typical have a temporal horizon not only oriented to the past but also towards the future. On this note, it is worth mentioning that recognizing home as home, appropriating it as such, does not necessitate that we do so in a critical light:

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[75] I'm moving here quite quickly through three levels of what Heinämaa also calls "senses of the world" in Husserl: "(a) the world as the totality of things, […] (b) the world as the horizon of a temporally continuous and developing community, and finally […] (c) the world as the horizon of all such communal horizons" (Heinämaa 2013: 100; 2014: 142) Roughly, (a) relates to a individuated perceptions of reality, (b) to our experience of the world as coherent and concordant within an intersubjective community and (c) to the world as the "common ground and infinite field" that appears in the interaction and mutual recognition of different historical peoples, cultures and societies. Home *as home* is the world as it appears in this last formulation of generative becoming.

> Even though appropriation can be simultaneously disappropriation as selective and exclusive, appropriation is not necessarily a *critical* appropriation of a home; even though active repeating is distinct from mere repetition on Husserl's account, repeating a home may become the stagnation of a home life; it may signal the inertia and degeneracy of its *generative force*. (Steinbock 1995: 199)

Steinbock suggests here with Husserl that the appropriation and repetition of what is normal, even if that is an active, conscious act of appropriating the home as home, does not necessarily bring us to a critical stance. What is needed is what Husserl calls *renewal*, through which we constantly regenerate society, and is the key to the struggle towards a better humanity. This, Steinbock claims with Husserl, is the ethical demand of our sense of being in a home (Steinbock 1995: 199-208).

Now, before we continue, I would like to make a few further notes on the alienness of the alien and the familiarity of the home. In the encounter with that which is sensed as very different, it is the case that no matter how alien something appears, it must be said with Husserl that "all this alienness and incomprehensibility, however extreme, has a kernel of familiarity. Without this kernel it might not be experienced at all, not even as alien" (Husserl 1973c: 432). The alienworld is perceived as an alienworld precisely because it is sensed as a different home, the home of the other. The other is not simply sensed by me as a purely perceiving subject, but as a personal subject "who, just like me, experiences feelings and values and acts according to some more or less explicit ideals and goals concerning his personal life" (Staiti 2010: 139).

And on the obverse side of this, we might also say, with Waldenfels, that "nobody belongs fully to [their] culture" (Waldenfels 2011: 77). In the act of recognising home as home, we establish a distance between ourselves and the home we belong to. It is on the grounds of this distance that a critical appraisal of the home as compared to the alien is possible. And it might be further mentioned that the home is familiar, but not, as Lugones points out, necessarily a place where we are at ease (Lugones 1987: 12). It is not necessarily a place of safety but only of a certain level of predictability, recognizability and belonging. A home can be the site of violence and aggression, yet the place we always return to in its familiarity. And finally, home and alien are not exhausted when described in terms of social imaginaries, discourses or the background, as they are intricately interwoven matrixes of embodied sense, instituted, sedimented and felt. They are the horizon of sensibility in our confrontation with our other, whether they are of the home or beyond.

Variations of normality

While it may seem so at first glance, a home does not signify something that is homogeneous and stable; rather it is something that is in a constant state of generative becoming (Steinbock 1995: 229). The home can also be constituted in various layers. We have a sense of home as that which belongs to the family, but also a sense of our home community, hometown, home country, and ultimately, Husserl claims, a sense of home humanity. As liminal structures of the relation between home and alien, these do not enclose each other "like Russian matryoshka dolls", but rather "criss-cross, intersect, and intertwine in various respects" (Steinbock 1995: 185).[76]

The normality of the normal community is constituted by 'normal members' of the community. What is meant here is that the members of the community are seen to varying degrees a co-constitutors of the home. A normal community can be a specific world, tied to what Husserl called vocational attitudes, say the world of physicists or sociologists. Here normal members, co-constitutors, would be a limited and often a clearly delimited group of people. Importantly for our discussion, we can claim with Husserl that within the home there are those who belong among 'us' yet are still not sensed as full co-constitutors of the home (Heinämaa 2013: 88-89). When we are considering the issue of anomalous co-constitutors, we should think of this in respect to "the 'full' or 'genuine' sense of the world, and this full sense, [Husserl] says, is the world as the correlate of rational cultural practices" (Heinämaa 2013: 89: cf. Husserl 1954: 191; 1970: 187). Heinämaa outlines three different types of anomality, of which only two need concern us for the time being. First is capacity abnormality. Anomalous members in this sense are for example the child, the animal, the blind, or the mentally disabled. They partake in the constitution of the home, i.e. they are seen to belong to 'us' and not to an alien normality, but do so to different and varying degrees. In regard to sense-perception, the child might be seen as capacity normal, i.e. they are sensed

[76] Sophie Loidolt offers, with Arendt, a perspective on what is happening when we simply look at homeworlds as ready-made cultural words that we take part in. We objectify the homeworld but fail to see how we are at the same time overlooking the act, the actualisation of collective reality with others. "This also implies that the common world is the primary community-endowing dimension for plurality, and not a common culture, a common history, a common family, or even a common goal or a common *telos*. Arendt would not deny that a human world is always constituted in a dynamic of 'homeworld' (*Heimwelt*) and 'alienworld' (*Fremdwelt*) (cf. Husserl 1973c: 214ff., 428ff.). But what holds people together as distinctively self-expressing beings are not positive characteristics of a homeworld or a certain cultural group, but becoming a self *with* others in the process of struggle with others, by taking active positions, reflecting upon these positions, and acting according to them" (Loidolt 2018: 100).

as having the requisite abilities to co-constitute the visible surroundings, yet in terms of 'higher' spiritual capacities such as valuing, willing, thinking and reasoning they might be sensed as incomplete in important respects. In contrast, a blind person is someone that we experience as fully normal in terms of their 'higher' spiritual capacities, while they are sensed as anomalous perceives in their role in the co-constitution of our visible surroundings (Heinämaa 2013: 89).

And, second, we can speak of membership normality. A normal community for Husserl is one where each human being "experiences every other as a with-subject of the same world of experience" (Husserl 1973c: 230) Our with-subjects are those that belong to the 'us' of our community, and those that we perceive as normal, and in this regard as our equals, according to their capacities. Examples of such societies according to Husserl are the "so-called primitive cultures as well as the high cultures of China, Europe, and India. Also the communities of scientists, artists, and religious believers […] in so far as their members share the same world of realities and practicalities" (Heinämaa 2013: 92, cf. 90; cf. Husserl 1954: 112-113, 1970: 110-111).[77]

Even minimal disruption in this sense of membership normality can be quite striking. In 2015 a picture surfaced that was widely shared on social media. It was a simple picture that merely displayed a dress. To me this dress was quite obviously blue and black. But the text that followed gave rise to suspicions. It asked the onlooker: "What colour is this dress?" And the options: "Is it blue and black or is it gold and white?" Gold and white? In my mind there was no possible way of seeing gold and white in that picture. But when my wife addressed me on the issue, she claimed to see the dress as white and gold. And this struck me as incredible, to the point that my genuine first reaction was not that "she experiences it in this way, I experience it in that way" but rather the thought that she must be pulling my leg, that she must be seeing what I'm seeing but jokingly saying she's not. There appeared a little break in my perceptual faith, was I to believe my wife who claimed something earnestly, or believe my own eyes? Aren't we exactly supposed to believe our own eyes? What was interesting was the strength of the emotions that followed, of disbelief and of uncertainty. And this was, quite clearly, widely felt as the discussion of the dress made it to the evening news where the

[77] I highlight here the focus on underperformance or perceived lack of capacities, as that will become important later on. Husserl also argues that we have cases of abnormal members of communities who are so in respect to being 'over-normal', i.e. being exceptional for example in perceptual abilities or understanding (Husserl 1973c: 230-231; Heinämaa 2013: 92).

status of its 'objective colour' became the cause of some rather heated arguments. The strength of the emotional response (which seemed to be anger a lot of the time) only goes to show the fundamental importance of the intersubjective validation of our experiences, even of things that shouldn't really matter (a picture of a dress on the internet), for our sense of what is real and what is not.

Pre-empting my claims in the next two sections, we should see here one of the ways that hermeneutical injustice operates within this framework. In situations of hermeneutical injustice, statements are often met in such a way that they are disregarded as abnormal as regards capacity. In addition to being refused status as an informant, as persons that contribute to the pooling of knowledge within a society, i.e. as epistemic agents, these subjects are refused their positions as co-constitutors – or, to use Husserl's term, as with-subjects – of the world.

Normativity, perception and the limits of empathy

The normality of home does not simply refer to cultural norms, to the way we normally do things, or to our history and tradition, as might be suggested by an emphasis on typicality and familiarity; rather, the term also refers to the structure of our experiencing itself. Normal perceiving is on the Husserlian model characterized by two layers of normality: normality as concordant and normality as optimal.

In a noteworthy passage from his *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis*, Husserl illustrates the everydayness of how an object that has entered our visual field seems to call on us:

> […] there is still more to see here, turn me so you can see all my sides, let your gaze run through me, draw closer to me, open me up, divide me up; keep on looking me over again and again, turning me to see all sides. You will get to see me like this, all that I am, all my surface qualities, all my inner sensible qualities, etc. (Husserl 1966: §1, p. 5)

The object always appears to me within an anticipatory schema that suggest an if-this-then-that. Another way of putting this is saying with Siewert that the appearing object, according to my practical or theoretical interests, urges me to "get a better look", that is, until my anticipations are sufficiently fulfilled (Siewert 2015: 28). Then I've looked well enough.

As Doyon puts it with Husserl:

> seeing things optimally amounts to seeing them "in the sense of the defining interest," and a "consciousness of the attained goal" is one where "the interest is satisfied". (Doyon 2018: 172; cf. Husserl 1973d: §36, 128)

Normativity in perception, then, appears on the Husserlian account both in the form of concordance, where my experience is characterized by flowing coherently, and as optimal, where it serves as the intentional aim of my perception.

Consider for example looking at a can of Coke in poor lighting conditions. When I look at the redness of the can in the dark, I have a sense of how the red would appear in optimal lighting conditions. The 'thing-in-itself' that is the intended object of perception functions as an indicator for the abnormality of sub-optimal perception, it guides my intention towards the optimal. In this situation, the red I see serves me both as a *telos* and as an actual appearing colour. If it did not, there would be no similarity between the appearing colour and colour seen in optimal conditions, that is, the colour itself (Steinbock 1995: 140).

Thus, the anticipatory schema has a teleological structure that directs us towards the optimal way in which we can see the red can of coke and suggests to us what is 'enough' to acquire a sense of a fulfilling appearance of the can.

In our everyday practical lives this optimality is given as relative; more precisely, as Maren Wehrle writes, it is

> relative with respect to the subject's current actions, interests or habitual style of experience, relative optima on an intersubjective level are also based on common interest and goals of action on the one side and on a culturally shaped style of experiencing on the other. (Wehrle 2018: 59)

Wehrle then goes on to ask: What is the optimal perception of a house? Is it the sense of home it resonates for the person that has lived there her whole life? Is it the general feel of the house the buyer gets after walking around it? Is it the engineer's measure of its structural load or the chemist's measure of its chemical make-up? If we are motivated by theoretical interests, Doyon points out that we are guided by an idea of the ideal or perfect givenness of an object of intention that stands as the ultimate norm towards which perception is oriented yet can never attain. It is, ultimately, an ideal set of appearances. Yet in our practical daily lives this is not what we strive for. We rarely have the opportunity, time or even willingness to engage in this kind of theoretical outlook. Most of the time our expectations are rather

low and our intentions easily fulfilled. "With some luck, it can even 'appear at best' 'at first glance'" (Doyon 2018: 176; cf. Husserl 1966: §4).

But the sufficient look that fulfils our anticipations isn't wholly innocent. We also have to deal with the "culturally shaped style of experiencing" that Wehrle mentions.

> Intersubjective horizons of normality contain specific cultural norms that in turn generate specific expectations in perception. In contrast to individual experience, intersubjective normality has to rely on the evidence that all perspectives refer to the same, that is the objective world. That is why, even though everyday perception may be guided by relative cultural optima or norms, *they are not recognized as relative, but mask themselves as ideal optima*. (Wehrle 2015:135, my italics)

This is something that needs to be emphasised. In perceiving the object I anticipate, literally, what I am going to see. I anticipate that the underside of the book will be of a similar nature as the front side, that the front of this building is the front of an actual building and not only a façade. And these anticipations are sedimented habituations of perception and can be guided, as Wehrle says, by relative cultural optima. But, importantly, these relative optima are often not given to us as relative at all. They appear to us as ideal, stable or even necessary. They appear as the optima of home, of normality.

And further, this appearance is given to us not as an intellectual achievement or as a set of beliefs we adhere to, though it might also include that, but rather

> we *feel* if our experience is concordant or discordant, and whether our experience is optimal or deficient in regard to our actions. Norms are so deeply inscribed as habits in our bodily experience, that something new, unexpected or non-familiar actually *feels* strange and abnormal to us. (Wehrle 2015: 137, my italics)

The same can be said of normality, of our sense of concordance and discordance, as Medina says about imaginaries: they permeate the "cognitive and affective dimensions of our experience, without being reducible to a mere list of specific cognitive commitments and affective reactions" (Medina 2013: 269). Our style of perceiving and our sense of the world has inscribed in us a sense, in precisely the ambiguous sense of the word, of our norms of perception that are lived and experienced. You cannot enumerate normality. You only have a feel for it, a sense of it. Of course we can claim certain facts about what we feel is normal and what is not, but this task can never be completed. The concreteness of our sense of

normality breaks down under intellectualising scrutiny. If we are pressed to try to catalogue our sense of normality we end up with something that sounds vague, random, socially constructed and by implication unimportant and arbitrary, whereas in our everyday life it is given to us in the concreteness of our embodied and habitual ways of navigating the world.

Normativity and the other

Seeing, as was argued in the previous chapters, that there is an important intermingling that takes place between speech and empathy, testimony and telling, we can also explore more concretely how normativity in perception applies in our interaction with others. Just as our anticipations are sometimes not fulfilled in perception (the person I reach out for turns out be a mannequin, the house I thought was there turned out be a façade), so are my perceptions of the other guided by anticipations that can fail to be fulfilled. Think for example of the weight we place on first impressions and how we sometimes get a good sense of someone's personality through them; but also how we regularly make mistakes in regard to a person's character by judging prematurely, say, how someone like Mr. Darcy might come off as haughty and arrogant, when in reality he was awkwardly attempting to show care and respect.

But the other isn't a simple object I can turn around to look at further, they do not yield to our explorations like a house or a book, but are rather beings in constant becoming. The other might call onto us to look better, both literally and figuratively. Or they might push us away, request that we look no further or intentionally resist or deceive us in our explorations.

If we turn our attention to communication, we find that normal communication can be considered as the kind of communication that is optimal (in the Husserlian sense) for any given situation. It happens where transmittance of information, knowledge, feeling, is of the appropriate character such that the communication achieves its intended purpose. And, further, our sense of what is optimal guides what is seen as enough to acquire an appropriate understanding of the other.

And – getting back to issues of telling – one way we might consider our belief in someone's narrative justified is when it acquires the sense 'real' in concordance with my normal experiencing of the world and the possibility of my having a concordant or harmonious relation with the experiencing of the other. If a statement is too discordant from my normal experiencing, if it is an expression of experiences that are too far removed from my own, it acquires the sense 'abnormal' and, in the process, becomes so to speak *unreal*. That is, I do not take it to be an accurate expression of our shared reality.

This entails that even if I manage to empathise with you, even if I recognize your pain as pain, and perhaps as a certain kind of pain, that will not do if I at the same time fail to acknowledge the way in which that pain is woven into the texture of your sense of the world and how that sense can be in a concordant relation with my own.

In chapter 3 we discussed the nature of empathy. One way of understanding empathy that is mentioned there is formulating it around the notion of imaginative projection. Empathy is in this regard framed around our ability to 'put ourselves in the other's shoes'. In Iris Marion Young's critical analysis of what she sees as one of standpoint theory's biggest shortcomings, we find one of the ways in which this version of empathy crops up.

> The injunction to take the other person's standpoint is supposed to aid communication. It may in fact impede it, however. If you think you already know how the other people feel and judge because you have imaginatively represented their perspective to yourself, then you may not listen to their expression of their perspective very openly. (Young 1997: 350)

Understanding another person's situation, on this framing of standpoint theory, is aided by "taking" their standpoint and by that we must "imaginatively represent their perspective". There are two major issues with this approach to empathy. One is the concern that if I understand others through projection, I am constrained in my empathy by the things that I have already felt. If I recognize anger, sorrow, gladness in you only because I can relate them to the anger, sorrow, gladness I feel in me, how am I capable of experiencing something new and unexpected through you?

The other issue is voiced more explicitly by Young: If I think I know how you feel or think or experience, because I've imaginatively projected myself into your shoes, then I lack the impetus to listen to you carefully, as I take myself to already to have understood what is important about your perspective. By understanding empathy in terms of sameness and reversibility of perspectives we occlude differences and fail to see how the other might bring something to the table that we ourselves could not have.

Young makes a distinction between "trying to put ourselves in the other's place", which we should avoid, and "taking the other's perspective into account", which we should strive towards. What I take her to be emphasising here is engaging with the claims of the other rather than their lived experiences, focusing on the epistemic part of the equation: we come to know things about each other's situations through statements and claims and through this

knowledge we understand "across difference, even when [we] do not identify with each other" (Young 1997: 360). She rightly points out that the experiences within any given situation will be deeply connected to personal and collective histories, which we can to some degree share, but which are always inexhaustible. Because of this inexhaustibility, any attempt to project by someone that doesn't share these experiences will inevitably fail, and sometimes in a morally suspect manner.

There is in Young's approach, however, a conflation of two phenomena that we might want to distinguish. There is a difference between intentionally and imaginatively projecting myself into someone else's shoes, especially if that is the result of an explicit demand that I 'put me in their shoes', and for me to empathetically live along with their telling, as they express an experience they've had. When I live along with them in an empathetic engagement, I'm not actively 'putting myself in their shoes', but rather tagging along with their experiences. As Husserl writes:

> I not only empathize with his thinking, his feeling, his action, but I must also *follow* him in them, his motives becoming my quasi-motives, ones which, however, *motivate with insight* in the mode of intuitively fulfilling empathy. I co-share in his temptations, I co-participate in his fallacies; in the "co-" there lies an inner co-living of motivating factors, ones which carry their necessity with them. (Husserl 1952: 275)

The difference here is perhaps subtle, but whereas treating your standpoint as a place I can "put myself into" tends to objectify a subject position, and may facilitate situations where we project in the morally suspect manner mentioned above, the empathetic tagging along approaches the other as a "spring or source of originary activity" (Heinämaa 2019: 97; cf. Husserl 1973a: 457), a subject with their own motives, desires and acts of will, and sees them not only for what they are, but also how they can possibly become, i.e. they are recognized as subjects-in-process.

What I argue is that the limitation we face with both of these phenomena hasn't to do with the limits of our imagination (or perhaps in the case of projection, in our overenthusiastic imagination), but with the interplay between appearance, expectation and fulfilment. It is certainly the case that sometimes our tendency to project can prove to be a hurdle in our communications, but what lies at the core of that tendency are our normative expectations, our sense of when we have had a 'good enough' look. Having had comparable

experiences can both hinder us and help us in understanding others. It can both offer a connection where we can better realize the intricacy of a situation as well as being used to, perhaps culpably, assume we know. One of the core insights of standpoint theory is that those who share our standpoint will 'get it' in a way that those without it might not. If a woman with experiences of sexual harassment tells of a case where she experienced sexual harassment to another woman who has also had experiences of sexual harassment, there is an important sense in which we assume that the listener will simply 'get it' in a way that a man who has had no such experience will not. What is important here is not simply the knowing of certain facts about sexual harassment, but the shared sense of the world, the recognition of these experiences as lived and actual, and it is this that facilitate better understanding.

If we assume in the man a failure of 'getting it' and assume that he is a decent human being willing to understand, we might notice that his failure might not appear to him as a failure at all: his normal-as-optimal way of perceiving the other suggests to him that he has indeed looked closely enough, understood and empathised appropriately and taken account of everything relevant. So, this is not just a matter of not believing certain statements, but a certain kind of closing off, or more appropriately, an inability to disclose certain experiences in empathetic relations. One reason for this is that descriptions he receives might be in too much of a discord with his own homeworld normality. He might for example not be 'getting it' because he assumes the experience to be one-off, rather than the appearance of something typical. This way he might modify the experience to concord with his sense of normality. The disruption, i.e., the case of sexual harassment, is subsumed as normal-as-exception, much like we would treat the perceptual disruption of a bright light shone into our eyes. Or he could assume that the acts of harassment are not as offensive as the woman makes them out to be, in which case he discards the claims as correct descriptions of their common reality, and he makes them 'unreal'. Even hearing separate statements from different women would in this situation not necessarily convince him, it might just strengthen his view that this description of feminine experiences is collectively abnormal. The perceived abnormality of the women in this situation has been, at least for this male hearer, engulfed in masculine normality and as such is 'completely understood', at least insofar as it is supposed to have a meaningful relation to objective reality. That is, from his perspective, there is no excess, the experiences of the woman have been appropriately included.

The point here is the following: being more empathetic, or becoming virtuous listeners, as Fricker would have us do, often seems to presuppose that which is supposed to be heard, and in some regards seems to overlook the invisibility of many kinds of marginalisations by the perpetrators. So, while we all would like to think that we could, and can, adjust, or perhaps even have adjusted, our pre-judgements of marginalized groups, we at the same time tend to overlook how our failure to do precisely that appears to us, the perpetrators, not as failures of listening, but as business as usual.

Coming back to the notion of feminine enclaves, we can see that within the patriarchal order the reality of a 'woman's world' is often readily acknowledged. When issues arise that are seen as revolving around things deemed as being within the purview of the feminine enclave, the sexist man can step back and view the enclave as an alien homeworld, it is its own home community. But in cases of confrontation there occurs a shift, the logic of the confrontation is not played out as the confrontation between two conflicting homeworlds, but according to the logic of capacity abnormality. Women's reality is not recognized as a fully-fledged world of 'rational cultural practices', but rather deemed in some way deficient.[78] This can be seen in regard to explicit knowledges, such as found in the Western medical establishment's systematic disregard of the handed-down knowledges of midwives as regards pregnancy and childbirth (Gaskin 2003). Or it can be aimed at individual experiences in particular, such as in the case of sexual harassment. What is important here is that the individual women aren't simply distrusted, but rather the sense of the 'feminine' world as a whole is disregarded.

Empathetic tagging along is crucial for our understanding of others in communication. What I have done in the above is map out some of empathy's limitations. We can of course practice better listening, try to become 'virtuous listeners' as Fricker calls for, but when it comes to our normative and habitual ways of interaction and understanding we face serious limitations. Even when we are earnestly trying to be open and respectful our tendency to concordance will push us towards trying to make claims sensible. And the claims of the

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[78] It would be tempting here to speak of infantilisation, but there are different ways of disregarding something as capacity anomalous. Someone who has schizophrenia, for example, is differently anomalous than a child; we could also speak how an elderly person, bound to nostalgic thinking, might be perceived as anomalous member of the community, or the young adult, who may be naïve but not necessarily child-like. Many of the claims that feminists make in the current political climate are not met with arguments to the effect that they are naïve, but rather with claims that their way of thinking is the result of a mentality fostered in 'liberal universities', where the feminist claims are treated as something akin to conspiracy theories or cult behaviour.

marginalized are always pushing against what the dominant sense of the world deems sensible. We must also look at other ways we can break out of the mould. One thing that is needed – and which I take the working groups that defined the terms sexual harassment, the #MeToo and BLM movements to exemplify – are the processes of intersubjective validation that make possible the creation of homeworlds that have a generative density and can lay claim on their own sense of normality.

7. Conclusions

> One need only have once heard a diehard representative of a ruling clique say: 'That is of no consequence', or note at what times the bourgeois talk of exaggeration, hysteria, folly, to know that the appeal to reason invariably occurs most promptly in apologies for unreason.
>
> (Adorno 1974: 72)

In this thesis I have explored the intricate relationship between the process of telling and the experience of empathic engagement, and asked how it is that tagging along with someone's experience is a normal and everyday occurrence and that affecting and being affected by others is something regular and recognizable in our everyday being in the world with others. But also, how this can be, and often is, disrupted.

I've mapped how the focus on testimony, and on the propositional and assertive in our interactions masks the multifaceted embodied and affective relations that we have with each other in the constant ebb and flow of our sense of the world and that is something which facilitates what I've called the *testimonification of telling*.

In testimonification we pathologize speaking. We take as our model of communication situations where the interaction has already been compromised. We take something that normally flows naturally and put it in the framework of the court. It is a way to interrupt the process of engaging with the other's experience.

At least partly, the problem here has to do with how we tag along with the experiences as told, how we empathise. We move from the I-you to the I-it relation at the moment of distrust, or the moment of the sense of ill-fittingness, where telling becomes testimony and the other becomes an informant rather than a person.

I followed up this discussion by an analysis of how the speaker's sense of the world manifests in their inflection of language and came to the following conclusion: in the co-mingling of the speaker's inflection and the hearer's listening in empathic engagement, the listener not only receives knowledge about what the speaker is thinking, but also partakes in the constitution of a sense of the world. One of the things that the inflection manages is shifting our sense of the world, where we come to see other possibilities of perception, of being in the world, of sensing. This is what Medina emphasises when talking about seeking epistemic friction (Medina 2013), where our recognition of other ways of seeing and perhaps

remembering former experiences of coming to see things differently informs our will to explore more possibilities, and hopefully to seek out other ways of sensing the world.

And in the last chapter, I discussed how the sense of the world is given within a lifeworld that is our home, the homeworld, which is also given to me as normal, concordant and familiar and how this structure of normality impacts our ability to understand and empathise.

* * *

In the first pages of Robert Musil's *The Man without Qualities* we are witness to a traffic accident. A man unexpectedly steps out onto the street and is hit by a passing lorry. A crowd gathers, and an ambulance is called while the man lies motionless on the street. We follow a couple to the crowd, the woman is unsettled, but is relieved when the man suddenly states that "The brakes on these heavy trucks take too long to come to a full stop" (Musil 2015: 25). She is relieved because the ghastly incident has been reduced to a technical problem, one she doesn't understand, or care to understand, and is of no direct concern of hers. The man then grounds the event even further by reciting statistics about traffic injuries and deaths. By the time the ambulance arrives and "men in uniform" attend to the injured person, the crowd starts to disperse "as if justified in feeling that they had just witnessed something entirely lawful and orderly" (Musil 2015: 25-26).

Bernard Waldenfels uses this example to draw attention to the manner in which the alien intrudes into our normal lives, how the uncontrollable and unexpected breaks the ranks of the orderly, but also to demonstrate how this interruption is just as immediately reined in. The ghastly horror of the accident is interpreted, framed and made into an abnormality within normality, a statistical deviation that belongs within the bounds of the normal, and ultimately is viewed as a part of a statistical normality (Waldenfels 2011: 25).

We can see how something similar plays out in terms of harassment and discussion of the #MeToo movement, where the prevalence of sexual harassment becomes a statistic, where it is removed from its impact on lived realities and made into something orderly, a technical problem. Here we can end up with "experiences without the one who has them" (Musil 2015: 308).

In the last chapter I touched on some of the ways in which this ordering comes about and proceeds through our tendency towards concordance as we strive to preserve our sense of normality. But I did not address the normative and intersubjective dimension of this

phenomenon more broadly. I will attend to that at a later date; for the time being, however, let me offer some indications for further developments research.

Think of how those onlookers would go on about their day and tell others about their experience, and how those others would attend to, interpret and receive their tellings. They would tell others about the car crash, and their interlocutors would recognize the car crash as an anomalous event, maybe becoming aware of how harrowing it was, but they would also take part in the rationalising by reconceptualization and reordering. But the truthfulness of the event, the fact that it was something that occurred, that somebody may have died, that a lorry driver hit someone, this is something they (typically) would not question.

But what if it wasn't a car crash that they were telling their interlocutors about, but sexual harassment? This shift gives rise to the following question: Why is it that some narratives, even if they tell us of something abnormal and potentially horrifying (such as a traffic accident) are something we take at face value, while others are contested, interrogated, poked and doubted (such as accounts of sexual harassment)?

There are layers upon layers to unpick here. We could look for many reasons for this: there could be personal and psychological defences, for example our simple but deep dislike of being wrong or finding out that we are guilty of practicing or sustaining some form of injustice and being made aware that that is what we are doing. There could be reasons having to do with personal or group identity and preserving those, there could be socio-historical power dynamics and prejudices, or concerns about intentional personal, political, or social control.[79] Or it might simply be ignorance, either wilful or not.[80]

Suggesting solutions is all too tempting, but regrettably there are no panaceas. We might start by addressing the fact the issue resides on the boundary between the structural and the individual, or as Medina puts it "[t]he problem is both social and personal" (Medina 2013: 80). We might explore solutions that focus on the individual end of the spectrum. Fricker, for example, discusses Louise Anthony's idea of a kind of epistemic affirmative action, where in situations in which there is a societal tendency to be prejudiced we should try and correct our credibility allocation – albeit, Fricker suggests, not by defaulting on believing people in marginalised situations, but by being sensitive to context (Anthony 1995; Fricker 2007: 170-

[79] See Kate Manne's *Down Girl: The Logic of Misogyny* (2018) for an impressive discussion of how this can play out in terms of misogyny and sexism.
[80] For important discussions on wilful ignorance, especially in terms of white ignorance, see Mills (2017); Pohlhaus (2012); Sullivan and Tuana (2007).

171). Prejudices can also be countered on a literal personal level, as in the example given by the African American activist and researcher Daryl Daves in his seeking out of Ku Klux Klan members to converse with them and convince them to leave the KKK (Brown 2017). But prejudices can also be countered by concrete material and structural changes such as by using gender quotas for workplaces and public offices or, as is famous, by desegregating social infrastructures and resources such as buses or schools where groups of people have been segregated on the basis of gender, race and age. In all these cases I think the success of egalitarian, just and beneficial changes comes down to a common theme between the structural and the personal: such changes challenge our habitual sense of the world and move forward to modify it. But we also know that ultimately our goals aren't simply to change personal attitudes but also collective ones, and that collective attitudes are constituted and operate at the margins between the structural, normative, habitual, and the individual and personal.

Another set of phenomena that would be worth exploring more deeply is the role played by affects. One important affective dimension that Fricker addresses revolves around trust. She shows us that in addressing the other we don't simply judge that the other is trustworthy, we also have a feeling of trust that we'd do well to pay heed to. "When it comes to epistemic trust, as with purely moral trust, it can be good advice to listen to one's emotions, for a virtuous hearer's emotional responses to different speakers in different contexts are trained and honed by experience. The feeling of trust in the virtuous hearer is a sophisticated emotional radar for detecting trustworthiness in speakers" (Fricker 2007: 80).[81] This feeling plays into our sense of the world and the perceived sense of the world of the other. We empathetically perceive sincerity, as Fricker suggests, but believing the speaker and trusting them doesn't hinge only on that. We also must engage with the world they perceive and engage with that; we must live with them in the world.

Another thing that should be pointed out is that the marginalised realities that I've discussed are realities that I absolutely and unapologetically think we should strive to recognize. So, the picture that I have painted looks something like this: There are marginalised realities we fail to recognise. We should seek to learn of these realities, and as

[81] See also Anette Baier's groundbreaking paper on trust (Baier 1986) as well as Jones (1996) for a discussion of trust as an affective attitude.

we do this, we should also acknowledge possible wrongdoing on our part as well as the need to strive to learn about and recognise these realities.

But of course, the issue is a bit more complicated than that, because, as I have discussed, what we often struggle with is that the realities are recognized as realities, but are dismissed, precisely as abnormal, marginal or deficient realities. If I were to recognise the reality as legitimate and urgent and realise that I'm being overly sensitive to being pointed out that I am being petty or have acted or am acting wrongly or in a controlling manner, yet do not try to correct for this, the problem doesn't seem to be epistemic or even interestingly philosophical anymore. I'm just being cruel.

But what is even more problematic, and this connects with the broader discussion in society concerning echo chambers and epistemic bubbles,[82] is that we may find that some marginalised realities that are striving for recognition are of such a nature that we may want to collectively not recognise them. Say the realities of white supremacist communities.

This is a point that Komarine Romdehn-Romluc (2016) has illustrated convincingly. While each of us may have a clear sense of which worlds we should pay attention to, and which to ignore, it may be that others strongly disagree on which these acceptable worlds are. Is that just because those others are simply ignorant, cruel or intolerant? Or may it be that our presumptions about the obviousness of the harms and injustices that we are trying to rectify actually hinders us from exploring which harms and injustices are urgent and why, and in turn communicating that they are urgent?

And conversely, might not having a clear rubric to adjudicate between those worlds that we personally seek to accept and those that we will not accept mean that we might be susceptible to accepting the struggle for recognition of some whom we shouldn't? One might then ask: this empathetic tagging along I've been talking about, doesn't it involve its own dangers and pitfalls? Does it not make us gullible, pull us down rabbit holes? Or does it make us liable to believe or give space to people whom we perhaps shouldn't give space to? And I'd respond that maybe it does involve dangers. And that sometimes we might be pulled down into holes. I think we are all familiar with how even the most reasonable people can be pulled into believing the oddest of things. But I'd also say: Empathetically tagging along is also the only way we can truly live with others in community, and it also happens to be the

[82] See Ngyuen (2020) for an insightful analysis of this distinction.

only way that we can recognise those marginalised realities that most definitely need to be given this space.

I don't think there are any simple solutions here, but one line that I think would be fruitful to explore is by returning to Simone Weil, discussed in the introduction to this thesis. This would involve interrogating the discourse of rights and looking for the grounds on which the claims are being made:

> If you say to someone who has ears to hear: 'What you are doing to me is not just', you may touch and awaken at its source the spirit of attention and love. But it is not the same with words like 'I have the right …' or 'you have no right to …'. They evoke a latent war and awaken the spirit of contention. To place the notion of rights at the centre of social conflicts is to inhibit any possible impulse of charity on both sides.
>
> Relying almost exclusively on this notion, it becomes impossible to keep one's eyes on the real problem. If someone tries to browbeat a farmer to sell his eggs at a moderate price, the farmer can say: 'I have the right to keep my eggs if I don't get a good enough price.' But if a young girl is being forced into a brothel she will not talk about her rights. In such a situation the word would sound ludicrously inadequate.
>
> Thus it is that the social drama, which corresponds to the latter situation, is falsely assimilated, by the use of the word 'rights', to the former one. (Weil 2005: 83)[83]

I would never think of denigrating the importance of the rights discourse as we saw it progress – especially in the latter part of the 20th century – for people of colour, for women, for the LBGTQ+ communities. And I don't think Weil would do that either. What she is pointing out here is that when we place the notion of rights at the centre of social debate, we risk distancing ourselves from what are the fundamental grounds for rights claims; the sense of injustice perpetrated against the violated groups and their subsequent claim for justice, for recognition and for a more just society. And we create room for others to co-opt the discourse to suit their own ends. Just to take Romdehn-Romluc's example, think of the UK's

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[83] This point was echoed by Zygmunt Bauman who saw the modern focus on rights as the result of the deregulation and privatisation of those tasks and responsibilities we have as a society to each other. "This fateful departure has been reflected in the relocation of ethical/political discourse from the frame of the 'just society' to that of 'human rights'" (Bauman 2000: 29).

pro-hunting lobby, which argues that "fox-hunting is part of the countryside way of life, which constitutes a minority culture that the city-dwelling government and its supporters had not experienced and did not understand" (Romdehn-Romluc 2016: 600). Compare the demands and claims of this group to hunt foxes to a gay man in the 1980s demanding adequate health care in the middle of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Approaching both problems via the discourse of rights rather than that of justice, and viewing these as same or similar kinds of demands (albeit not both as serious), seems, to repeat what Weil said, ludicrously inadequate. Doing that would turn the demands of the gay man into a "shrill nagging of claims and counter-claims" rather than being seen for what it is: "a cry of protest from the depth of the heart" (Weil 2005: 84).

And, in closing, I'd like to come back to the nature of the change we experience when we are affected by the inflection, style and sense of the world of others. This is something I think is important when we measure the successes and failures of movements like #MeToo. Because shifting our sense of the world – precisely in the way it appears to us as an often vague feeling of how things are and how things should be – is one of the things that we should highlight as the important successes of #MeToo. One thing that struck me during the height of #MeToo's presence in the public discourse, is seeing all kinds of people wondering about and interrogating their own behaviour. Is it OK to hug this person, or touch them? Should I give them space? Am I allowed to say this, or is it disrespectful to joke in this manner? These kinds of simple, seemingly small events signal to me the kind of shift in our sense of normality that I think is fundamentally important. And, recalling Merleau-Ponty's point about the inflection of language, often this kind of shifting of our sense might not appear as very much, because it usually goes on unnoticed.

I think for example that we haven't properly grasped the monumental change in our sense of the world that has occurred over the last 50 years in terms of how we have, collectively, acclimated to women being in positions of power in society.[84] Not for all of us of course, but there is much less space in society for the questioning the ability of women or the reasonableness of the presence of women in, say, the parliament or the university rectorate, than was the case just a few decades ago. The shift is often slow and incremental; when glass ceilings are broken, we often see women navigating fields that are typically male-dominated

[84] This is of course not uniform across societies. I have in mind here, first and foremost, the trend in the Nordic states.

by picking up characteristically masculine styles of being. This can come about in many ways, such as in styles of dress, arguing, attitude towards their interlocutors, and even to the extent that they deepen their voice (Karp 2007; Halldórsdóttir 2023). But the sense is constantly shifting and expanding, and as time progresses we see women in power display more varied forms of feminine existence, and of human existence. I'd for example claim that Katrín Jakobsdóttir, the current prime minister of Iceland, and Sanna Marin, former prime minister of Finland, exemplify kinds of politicians that can express forms of femininity that would have been almost unimaginable only two or three decades ago.

* * *

One of the things that resulted from #MeToo was the actual prosecution and imprisonment of men who had violated women and gotten away with it for years or even decades. And this is important. But what I contend is the most important success of #MeToo is not the sentences concerning any particular agents or the belief in particular narratives (and let's face it, most of the narratives that grabbed the public's eye revolved around famous people and people otherwise relatively privileged), but rather it is in the general shift in people's sense of how the world is and is supposed to be and the questioning of what is and what is not normal.

And I think we'll find that understanding the collective testimony found in #MeToo and appropriately responding to the narratives of harassment we may hear in our everyday lives is more like adjusting to the presence of women in parliament than it is like believing testimony in the courtroom. What movements like #MeToo require of us is a different way of living together, not merely a different way of theorising our lives or of knowing certain things. Of course, these things affect each other, but we often tend to overemphasise the theorizing and devalue or overlook the lived dimension, including concrete actions and interactions. The point being that it was never merely about being a rational actor weighing and measuring the amount of credibility you should give the statements of your interlocutors: the whole time, it was also about practically and evaluatively navigating intricate lives and interactions with the lived realities of others.

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