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Trust - Between the disposition to epistemic cooperation and evidence

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Abstract

In this paper, I defend a certain moderate version of Humean evidentialism against Redian non-evidentialist's position about trust and testimony. My proposal of cooperative viewpoint of trust is based on following theses: (i) any form of cooperative activity, including division of labor, requires that cooperators trust one another (ii) epistemic cooperation as a necessary condition for us to attain knowledge (because of the scope and complexity of the task, of the inequalities of capacities and background information, etc.) assumes the trust between cooperators. In contrast to Redian anti-reductionism or non-evidentialism, justified trust cannot be blind or uncritical but it has to rely on some evidence. However, the fact that we depend on other people for most of our knowledge can be a good reason to weaken the Humean evidentialism and epistemic self-reliance and to accept as epistemically responsible and rational the trusting partly based on epistemic forward looking reasons (gathering of information). Further, I try to defend the thesis that the crucial evidence the hearer can have is the evidence about trustworthiness of informants, i.e. their moral and epistemic character, not the evidence about the content of informant's report.

Keywords: trust; testimony; evidentialism; epistemic cooperation; trustworthiness.

Testimony is the source of an enormously large proportion of our most important beliefs. It is testimony and learning from others that makes possible most of our knowledge, acquisition of language, almost all intellectual achievement and culture. Majority of epistemologists of testimony have been mostly occupied by the question of justification of testimonial beliefs, or by the epistemic status of testimonial beliefs in comparison with the other sources or faculty of knowledge such as perception, inference or memory. However, the discussion about trust, that is, about the mechanism of acquisition or the formation process of testimonial belief is comparatively neglected in epistemological consideration about testimony. Such a process is *sui generis*

and in many aspects incomparable with other belief-formation processes as perception or memory because testimony and trust involve other people. Testimony is an individual but also a social phenomenon, and the analysis of trust to other people should play a crucial role in the justification of it. For that very reason I find inescapably important to consider the relation between trust and cooperation, especially epistemic cooperation. Finally, it has to be noticed that the nature of the phenomenon of trust implies a certain interdisciplinary approach; the discussion about the role of trust in knowledge reaches beyond epistemology into domain of ethics and social philosophy.

Precisely, I shall try to show that the nature of epistemic cooperation determines the requirements of justified trust. In this paper, I intend to argue for a soft, relatively easygoing version of humane evidentialism by appeal to the demands of cooperation. In my view, the importance of such demand is so high that it justifies trust in certain situations on the relatively slender evidential basis. I shall begin with a very brief summary of two opposite traditions about trust - the humane reductionism, and the Reidian anti-reductionism. I shall use here terms evidentialism and anti-evidentialism rather than much more popular "reductionism" and "anti-reductionisms" because I want to address the question of trust, not the question of the justification of testimonial beliefs primarily associated with the later terms. I prefer this term - evidentialism - also because it expresses both my distance from the humane "strong" reductionism and the acceptance of his requirement for evidence. The critical discussion of both positions, i.e. reductionism or and anti-reductionism, shall be the basis for my proposal of the idea of cooperative trust - a weakened version of humane reductionism. This proposal is grounded on the assumption that trust is closely connected with the cooperation as social phenomenon that crucially determines its nature.

In spite of prodigious lacking of systematic analysis of such an important epistemic issue as trust undoubtedly is, we should mention two traditional opposite standpoints about trust and testimony.

D. Hume (1) argues that all trust in testimony must be justifiably based on inductive inference from testimony-free evidence

"(...) 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. (...) It will be sufficient to observe that our assurance in any argument of this kind is derived from no other principle than our observation of the veracity of human testimony, and of usual conformity of facts to the reports of witness (...)"(2).

According to him, trust - meaning trust without appropriate evidence for it - is one of most common weakness of human nature. There is no natural tendency to credulity and veracity, and the people are sincere only when they are in fear of possible sanctions. Therefore, he holds that the norm of justified trust is

assessment of informant's report, that is, a reduction to cognizer's previous experience, to his perception and generalization from perception. He follows Machiavelli's and Hobbes's pessimistic viewpoint of human egoistic motivations and the general need of caution and basic distrust. People own interests are what mostly move them and because of that - trust can be justified only if it is based on evidence that supports a trust. Let us call this doctrine - according to which we should not believe anything without sufficient evidence - *evidentialism*. Evidentialism is a certain backward-looking approach to trust because it is assumed that trust should be primarily governed by backward-looking assessment of evidence.

On the other side, T. Reid and his recent followers hold that all justified trust in testimony not need any evidence or reduction on allegedly less problematic sources of beliefs(3). He assumed that there are certain faculties or dispositions to credulity and veracity and that there is design plan of wise Author behind these faculties.

The wise and beneficent Author of nature, who intended that we should be social creatures, and that we should receive the greatest and most important part of our knowledge by the information of others, hath, for these purposes implanted in our natures two principles that tally with each other. The first of these principles is, a propensity to speak truth (...) An original principle implanted in us by the Supreme Being, is a disposition to confide in the veracity of others, and to believe what they tell us(4).

More precisely, there is faculty, disposition or tendency to trust testimony even without inductive evidence for the reliability of testimony. Reid optimistically assumes that there is epistemic non-egoistic motivation and suggests that other people deserve fundamental, not merely derivative, trust in their epistemic authority. It is true that Reid admits that disappointing experience can limit or restrain our innate tendency to trust. However, he defends the trust without any evidence because

"(...) such distrust and incredulity would deprive us of the greatest benefits of society, and place us in the worse condition then that of savages"(5).

Consequently, there are two arguments that justify us to trust blindly, without any evidence: (i) an innate disposition for such a trust and its omnipresence as psychological phenomenon; (ii) the great benefits trust insure to us. Let us call this

position *non-evidentialism* because trusting the other people's report is unsupported by the any evidence about the reliability of testimony and is based on an innate disposition and benefits from it. This stance is a forward-looking approach to trust because it assumes that trust is primarily governed by forward-looking or instrumental value of trust such as acquisition of knowledge or functioning of reason.

These accounts of evidentialism and non-evidentialism are two extreme positions about trust: the first proposes the distrust and the second blind trust as a rational default position; the first assumes an extreme egoistic epistemic motivation of people, the second an extreme optimistic epistemic motivation; finally, the first is completely backward-oriented, while the second is completely forward-oriented. Of course, our brief accounts of Hume's and

Reid's positions are oversimplified. Their positions could be interpreted in a more detailed and convoluted fashion, but I hope not to have misrepresented their basic intuitions(6) . My present purpose is to isolate the acceptable thesis from objectionable and to offer a position of soft evidentialism what I shall call cooperative viewpoint of trust. However, contrary to humean backward-looking evidentialism I shall try to stress the importance of Reidian forward-looking justification that is closely tied to the usefulness of trust in cooperation.

Evidentialism

1. Remember that Hume's evidentialism is of a special kind. He allows us to trust other people if and only if we have non-testimonial evidence for particular testimony. In other words, we are justified in our trust only if we have evidence inferred, at the end, from our own perception. Two objections can be raised here: (i) the majority of potential trusters have too slim a base of personal observations to assess the testimony and trustworthiness of informants; (ii) most of our personal observations are theory-laden since perceptual knowledge commonly relies on a background conceptual schemes that is acquired in part from testimony (7). Consequently, it seems that humean reductive evidentialism has two serious problems: the first is that trust can not be grounded on required evidence because of the poverty of such evidential basis and the second is one of circularity. Therefore, trust in testimony may be justifiably based not on testimony-free evidence (if there is such), but simply on any relevant evidence. The evidential basis for trust obviously can not be as Hume wants it to be by requiring reduction on allegedly the least problematic or unquestionable source of beliefs - pure perception.

2. Hume holds that our evidential basis for a report that p is composed of the evidence about the report content p and of the evidence about informant. He treats the two as being on equal footing. I want to question this, and to point to the primacy of the later. The crucial point of trust is that we trust our informants because we do not possess a sufficient independent body of evidence for the truth of the report content. Our informant knows things we don't. If this is not a case, if we have all the required evidence for p, basing belief on testimony would be pointless and non-rational. The necessary condition of trust is that the hearer does not have sufficient independent reasons for p(8). We can not have on our disposal the sufficient evidence about the truth of the informant's statement. If hearer accepts some statement p on informant's say-so, those reasons (informant's reason for p) which are necessary to justify hearer's belief that p are reasons that hearer does not have. The reasons hearer can possess have to be different from reasons informant possesses. Of course, we are not completely ignorant and in most cases have some reasons for ascribing a prior probability to the given p. Such reasons themselves are in most cases insufficient evidence for p. Therefore, the crucial evidence the hearer can have is the evidence about informant himself, his reliability

or his moral and epistemic character. In some cases, for instance, in the case of Hume's miracles the prior probability for p - that miracle is happen - can be itself sufficient for distrust. However, in most everyday situations our prior probabilities for p are not decisive for trusting. The same statements, with the same prior probabilities we read in different newspaper, or hear from different persons can achieve completely different epistemic status. Also, the prior probabilities the most laymen can ascribe, for instance, to sophisticated scientific reports are insufficient to be decisive in their trusting. Consequently, we can assume that justified trust relies primarily on the evidence about informant's trustworthiness, that is his: (i) sincerity, (ii) competence (informant is in position to know what would be good reasons to believe p and to have the needed reasons) and (iii) rationality (informant actually has good reasons for believing p when he thinks he does)(9) . However, the evidential basis for such trust to informant's character is inescapable fragile. It is related to the limits of our capacity ever to achieve full knowledge about others and their motives. The condition of ignorance or uncertainty about other people testimony is central to the notion of trust. This is the second reason why the evidence can not be so hard as Hume hopes and believes they have to be.

3. Hume holds that trust is justified only if we have sufficient evidence for it in the following sense: our past experience sufficiently supports the trustworthiness of our informant. It seems to me that there are situations in which the reasons for trusting are not based only on evidence of human kind, that is, *past experience*, but on certain forward looking reasons having to do with usefulness of trust. In our cooperative interactions, other people are the source of an enormously large proportion of our most important beliefs. Learning from others makes possible intellectual achievement and culture. If we did not acquire a massive number of beliefs from others, our cognitive lives would be little different from the animals. Almost all representatives of Reidian tradition, but also Hume, explicitly appeal to these facts. The point is that if other people are so epistemically useful to us, it is pragmatically justified to weaken our requirements of sufficient evidence. But then, if I have insufficient evidence based on past experience for trusting, these pragmatically grounded reasons for trusting my informant could be decisive for my trust. Here is an elementary situation in which a person depends upon the cooperation of another: a tourist who asks for the way to a museum in a foreign country knows nothing about trustworthiness of person he meets on the street and also the prior probability he can ascribe to p or not- p are completely the same. He has some knowledge only about general human behavior in these situations, based on his past experience. Assuming especially Hume's pessimism, it seems that this can not be sufficient evidential basis for justified trust. Consequently, the tourist who follows the passerby's instruction would be irrational or unjustified in his trust. Contrary to Hume, it seems to me that tourists, whatever else we can think about them, are not irrational if they act so in this situation. One of reasons for trust to passerby is ascription of trustworthiness grounded in epistemic utility. He has to decide to accept passerby's information as true

or stay paralyzed in the street. The usefulness of information he need can be a good reason for ascribing the passerby sincerity and competence. In other words, in some situations we could weaken the requirements for sufficient evidence in humane sense - evidence based on past experience - for the sake of gathering needed information.

In conclusion, Hume's evidentialism should be weakened on at least three points: (i) the evidence we possess about testimony can not be a testimony-free personal observations; (ii) the decisive part of evidential bases we can possess is a fragile and inescapably uncertain evidence about informant's motives and his moral and epistemic character, but (iii) we can be epistemically sensible and justified in spite of fact that we have insufficient evidence for trust, i.e., we may partly base our trust on forward looking reasons. The fact that we depend on other people for most of our knowledge can be a good reason to weaken the humane epistemic self-reliance and to accept as epistemically responsible and rational the trusting partly based on epistemic forward looking reasons.

Non-evidentialism

1. T. Reid holds that justified trust does not need any evidence about informant's trustworthiness and his report. Namely, there is faculty, disposition or tendency to trust testimony (implanted in us by Supreme Being) even without inductive evidence for the reliability of testimony. According to him, such a disposition to believe blindly what other people say to us is unlimited in children, until they meet with the instances of deceit and falsehood. Reid writes that it nevertheless retains a very considerable degree of strength thorough life. Let us notice that here children should represent a living proof that there is something as innate disposition to trust without evidence. The existence of such an inner disposition, then, justifies the trust without evidence. Let me register a disagreement. We have to distinguish the trust from mere reliance(10). Children's alleged innate disposition to trust without evidence is not trust in its full sense but rather inescapable need to rely on the cooperation of others. A young child is totally dependent on his or her parents and other adults, totally incapable of looking after anything he cares about without parental help. The condition of trust is that it must be possible for one to refrain from trust(11). However, children are incapable for it. Let me mention in passing that A. Baier holds that such total dependence of infants does not, in itself, necessarily elicit trust but that it is some primitive or basic innate trust(12). She defines trust as reliance on someone's good will and mere reliance as dependable habits in which there is no idea about other's good will. However, also according to these definitions, a child is incapable for judgements about other people's good or ill will. It is not at all aware of its dependence relation, of another's good or ill will and especially not capable of understanding and trusting that another will not harm it although he could. The trust an adult gives to others in everyday life is a voluntary act, the result of free decision. If there is no choice, there is no trust but only reliance. Whatever notion -

reliance or primitive trust - we use to explain such a phenomenon, one is sure - children are not capable for rational trust. Children do not even trust blindly by disposition, they are not even gullible, they simply rely on others.

2. It seems to me that the alleged psychological phenomenon of uncritical or blind trust does not present a realistic epistemic practice even outside of infant's world. There is no disposition to trust without evidence. As I mention above, we can sometimes trust without full evidence about informant's trustworthiness based on our past experience, but not because of some inner dispositions but with good reasons. We are more cautious than Reid wants us to be. There are numerous everyday situations when we assess informant's trustworthiness or reliability, for instance, when we buy food at the market or buy a car, or rent an apartment. I do not trust blindly to my car mechanics, plumber, to people in video and HI-FI services. I am very suspicious to clerks in state offices and the efficacy of their bureaucratic procedures. The doubt is also a norm in the philosophy and in the whole scientific domain: "(...) where the questioning is as much at issue as belief we engage in complex reasoning about whether to accept what we hear or read(13)." Probably the most noticeable domains of caution and doubt, especially in turbulent social periods, are politics and media. In short, everyday epistemic practice does not support the assumption that blind trust is a psychological phenomenon (and that searching for evidence is not, or even that doubt and searching of evidence are unnatural). The Reid's principle of credulity is not appropriately based both on everyday and sophisticated epistemic practice (14)

3. At the end, Reid admits that disastrous experience can generate distrust but he proposes the reason why we nevertheless should trust blindly: "(...) distrust and incredulity would deprive us of the greatest benefits of society, and place us in the worse condition then that of savages". This is good reason for trust. Maybe the best. Trust is necessary condition for all cooperation, including epistemic cooperation. We can also accept Burge's similar line of argumentation according to which others are rational sources and rational sources are necessary for functioning of reason(15) . However, this is too general and abstract reason for everyday decisions about trust. When shopkeeper says to me his food is of highest quality, I do not believe him because trust is necessary condition of all over cooperation. I need evidence. Also, when my Prime minister says that we need only one year of patience, and after that our life would be better, I am not rationally allowed to believe him simply because the consequences of general distrust can be drastic and painful. When scientists inform me that I am getting old because of some irregularities in the protein's synthesis in my cells, I do not trust him because scientific community has no alternative to trust. I need some evidence. Reasonable trust has to rely on some evidence about trustworthiness of informant. I need some assurance that I shall not be deceit. Maybe it is noble, but it is dangerous and epistemically irresponsible trust blindly. No macro-motivations to trust by itself will do but it has to be combined with some micro-

motivations(16).

To summarize, Reid's non-evidentialism collapses on three points: (i) there is no disposition to trust without evidence. Neither young children nor full-fledged rational agents trust without evidence. Children's reliance upon others is not trust; (ii) real epistemic practice strongly suggests that adults don't trust blindly but search for reasons to give a trust; (iii) finally, the general forward-looking reason for trust is too general to motivate blindly trust in most particular cases. Still, his admonitions about the forward-looking usefulness of trust point, as I have already stressed many times, in the right direction.

Cooperative viewpoint of trust

Let me now briefly conclude with a very schematic positive account based on previous criticism. My proposal is intended to support a kind of "soft" or less demanding humane evidentialism. Less demanding because I stress that justified trust can be based on a less demanding evidential basis. Consequently, my proposal makes a certain step toward Reidian position, while still remains on the side of humane stance. It is not a compromise position but rather a weakened evidentialism of humane kind.

As I have already hinted, trust is closely connected with social cooperation. Any form of cooperative activity requires that cooperators trust one another. Epistemic cooperation is only a particular area of general social cooperation so that principle of general human cooperation should be applicable also to this specific area. No person is self-sufficient. No one is able by himself to look after everything he wants to have looked after including the gathering of information he needs. In most areas of everyday life, as Reid has correctly pointed out, those who do not trust cannot know. Moreover, modern knowers cannot be independent and self-reliant, even in their own fields of specialization. Trust to other knowers should be the central epistemological concept because the division of cognitive labor is inescapable feature of most modern knowledge acquisition. Trustworthiness of members of epistemic communities is the ultimate foundation for much of our knowledge(17). Moreover, a reflection about general feature of cooperation and social dependence can shed light upon epistemic trust and, precisely, upon the conditions of justified trust. Therefore, the central question we should answer is: what is cooperation or what are the features of cooperative relations that determine the nature of justified trust?

1. DISPOSITION TO TRUST. Real epistemic circumstances are characterized by different levels of maturity and expertise, by different opportunities for information gathering and absorbing, the people belong to the different educational rank and to different levels of cognitive maturity and training.

Besides, these are time limitations, usually very short period of the actuality and efficiency of information. The process of gathering and analyzing information often is too long, too complex, too time-consuming and too requiring to be accomplished by one person. Scientific research is increasingly done by teams because no one knows enough to be able to

perform them by itself. Specialization and teamwork are two inescapable features of much modern knowledge acquisition. Such a circumstances and cognitive division of labor require epistemic cooperation, and cooperation requires trust. There is no mysterious disposition to trust behind and above disposition to cooperate imposed by the real epistemic circumstances and generally pragmatically motivated. This offers an opportunity to separate the rational level of Reidian trust for its somewhat mystical paraphernalia. In other words, if there is some Reidian disposition or tendency to trust it is, in fact, the disposition or tendency to cooperate or tendency to optimal functioning in social circumstances. Probably, the paradigm of total caution and distrust, implicitly accepted by Hume, is too pessimistic and unreal. If we have not a certain disposition to cooperation, or if we are not prepared to bank on trust, than the alternatives in many cases will be drastic epistemic isolation.

2. **THE AWARENESS OF DEPENDANCE RELATION** Let us notice that cooperation and trust involve dependence relation, and that trustier as a dependant party need to be aware both of his position and risk he takes trusting another. Two agents cooperate when they engage in a joint venture for the outcome of which the actions of each is necessary, and where a necessary action by at least one of them is not under immediate control of other(18). In other words, a situation in which two agents cooperate necessarily involves at least one of them depending on other. When I trust another, I depend on his trustworthiness. The testifier is in position where he can, if they choose, to lay me and to injure what I care about. Trust is, then, reliance on other's competence and willingness to look after, rather than harm, things one care. Trusting has to involve the awareness of such dependable relation and, precisely, the awareness of one's confidence that the informant will not be untrustworthy although he could be untrustworthy. In other words, trusting involves the awareness of risk along with confidence that it is a good risk. That was the reason why we said, contrary to Reid, that young children do not trust, or at least that they cannot trust in sense in which adults trust.

3. **EVIDENCE ABOUT TRUSTWORTHINESS.** Cooperation requires trust in the sense that dependant parties need some degree of assurance that non-dependant party will not defect, that is, the evidence about report and primarily about informant's trustworthiness. We are with Hume when we state that there have to be some reasons why I ascribe to my informant competence and nonmaliciousness. Reasonable trust has to rely on some evidence about trustworthiness of informant. Precisely, it requires good grounds for such confidence in another's trustworthiness, or at least the absence of good grounds for expecting another's untrustworthiness. It is of fundamental importance for understanding of the phenomenon of trust that trust involves a particular expectation we have with regard to the likely behavior of others. Trust is matter of strategic choice, way of managing uncertainty in our dealing with others representing these situations as risks. We can do this only if we possess evidence about the trustworthiness of others. It could be noble but it is impossibly dreamy to trust people without regard to their trustworthiness. Blind trust is

dangerous and epistemically irresponsible, so, again contrary to Reid and other non-evidentialists, it is natural to think that our trust should be a matter of evidence in the sense that we should always connect it to good estimations of other trustworthiness(19).

4. THE EVIDENTIAL BASIS. Further question is addressed to the problem of what evidence make trusting rational or justified. Contrary to Hume, in most situations we cannot attain the "hardest" possible base of personal observations as the evidence for trusting. Moreover, the evidence that is at our disposal is constrained rather on evidence about the moral and epistemic character of informant than on the content of his report. When we say we trust someone, or that someone is trustworthy, we mean that the probability that he will be epistemically competent and morally reliable is high enough for us to believe him. The evidence we can possess cannot be conclusive, but always involve a certain risk. Moreover, the confidence that trusting is good risk may be a good reason in some situations or in some context to weaken the requirements for evidential basis. In this respect trusting is more like hoping. Trust is a tentative and fragile response to our limited capacity ever to achieve a full knowledge of other's trustworthiness(20).

NOTES

(1) Hume, D., *An Enquiry Concerning the Human Understanding*, Oxford, L.A. Selby-Bigge (ed.), Clarendon Press, 1972; Hume, D. *Of Miracles*, Open Court, La Salle, Illinois, Anthony, Flew, (ed.) 1987; Hume, D., (1739/1888), *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Oxford, L.A. Selby-Bigge, (ed.), Clarendon Press. [back](#)

(2) Hume, D., *An Enquiry Concerning the Human Understanding*, Oxford, L.A. Selby-Bigge (ed.), Clarendon Press, 1972, p.111. [back](#)

(3) Reid, T., *Inquiry and Essays*, R. E. Beanblossom i K. Lehrer (eds.), Hacket Publishing Company, Indianapolis, 1983; Burge, T., (1993), "Content Preservation", *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 102., No. 4, 457-488; Coady C.A.J., (1992), *Testimony: A Philosophical Study*, Oxford, Clarendon Press; Dummett, M., (1993), *The Seas of Language*, Oxford, Clarendon Press; Webb. M.O., (1992), "The Epistemology of Trust and the Politics of Suspicion", *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*, no. 73, 390-400; R.Foley, (1994), "Egoism in Epistemology" in F.F, Schmitt (ed.) *Socializing Epistemology: The Social Dimensions of Knowledge*, Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield; Plantinga, A., (1994), *Warrant and Proper Function*, Oxford, Oxford University Press. [back](#)

(4) Reid, T. *An Inquiry into Human Mind*, ed. Timothy Duggan, Chicago, III; University of Chicago Press, 1970, pp.238-241. [back](#)

(5) Reid, T. *An Inquiry into Human Mind*, ed. Timoty Duggan, Chicago, III; University of Chicago Press, 1970, pp.240-1. [back](#)

(6) For instance, let me document in more details the stance that reductionism or anti-evidentialism proposes blind trust, which shows a tendency to provoke the most objections. It seems to me that some of the following quotations undoubtedly support of blind trust as an epistemic norm. For instance, T. Burge wrote: "Apart from special information about the context or one's interlocutor, neutrality (as well as doubt) is, I think,

a rationally unnatural attitude toward an interlocutor's presentation of something as true. (...) one is rationally entitled to abstract from individual interest in receiving something presented as true by such source." (Burge, T., (1993), "Content Preservation", *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 102., br. 4, pp. 474-5.) M. Dummett also wrote: "(...) my understanding of his utterance and my acceptance of his assertion are one; I simply add what he has told to me to my stock of information." (...) "(...) the non-inferential character of our acceptance of what others tell us must be acknowledged as an epistemological principle." (Dummett, M., (1993) , *The Seas of Language*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, pp. 419, 422.) C.A.J. Coady holds: "(...) We may have 'no reason to doubt' another's communication even where there is no question of our being gullible; we may simply recognize that the standard warning signs of deceit, confusion, or mistake are not present (...)." (Coady, C.A.J., (1992) , *Testimony: A Philosophical Study*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, p. 47.)

Non-evidentialists could object that such an account is a tendentious interpretation in spite of a few quotations picked up from context, and that no serious and sensitive person could prescribe such a norm. When they write about justified immediate, non-inferential or uncritical acceptance, they could say, they think of reasonable trust. For instance, one of the most prominent non-evidentialist C.A.J. Coady writes also this: "(...) the rational person does not believe just any and every thing he is told.", (...) "You have, at the minimum ... (made) an assessment of the competence of speaker. More substantially, you will judge how reliable the communication is and endorse it appropriately." (...) "(...) the attitudes of critical appraisal and trust are not diametrically opposed (...)." (Coady, C.A.J., (1992) , *Testimony: A Philosophical Study*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, pp. 143, 220 and 47) Also, T. Burge admits that there are whole domains in which the doubt is a norm: "Social, political, or intellectual context often provides "stronger reasons" that counsel against immediately accepting what one is told." (...) "In areas like politics, where cooperation is not the rule and truth is of little consequences, or philosophy, where questioning is as much at issue as belief, we engage in complex reasoning about whether to accept what we hear or read. Reasonable doubt becomes a norm. But these situations are not paradigmatic. They are parasitic on more ordinary situations where acceptance is a norm." (Burge, T., (1993) , "Content Preservation", *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 102., no. 4, pp. 484, 468.)

The question whether uncritical, immediate and non-inferential acceptance involve searching for evidence or not, does it present a case of blind trust or not is far behind our present purposes. Also, the coherence and the consistence of such viewpoints are not our present issue. However, I only want to stress that if non-evidentialists accept that a doubt, caution, or assessment are (at least in some situations) a psychological phenomenon, a first impulse and a norm, I am afraid they make a dangerous step in direction of the rival position. [back](#)

(7) Let us borrow the example from E. Fricker (previously elaborated by Coady). If a person perceive that Russian soldiers are marching in a parade, her knowing that they are Russian may depend on the inference from her earlier reading of newspaper report. Moreover, she recognizes them to be soldiers only if she possesses that complex institutional concept that is itself probably indebted to reliance on the past testimony (Fricker. E. (1995), "Telling and Trusting: Reductionism and Anti-Reductionism in the Epistemology of Testimony", *Mind*, No. 104, 393-411, p. 402.) See also, Goldman, A.I., (1999), *Knowledge in a Social World*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 125-163, Coady C.A.J., (1992), *Testimony: A Philosophical Study*, Oxford, Clarendon Press; Fricker, E. (1994) "Against gullibility", in B.K.Matilal and A. Chakrabarti (eds.), *Knowing from Words*, Dordrecht, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 125-162. [back](#)

(8) Hardwig, J., (1991), "The Role of Trust in Knowledge", *Journal of Philosophy*, No. 88, 693-708. [back](#)

(9) Hardwig, J., (1991), "The Role of Trust in Knowledge", *Journal of Philosophy*, No.

88, 693-708. [back](#)

(10) Baier, C.C., (1994), *Moral Prejudices: Essays on Ethics*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press; Gambetta, D., (1988), "Can We Trust to Trust?", in D. Gambetta (ed.) *Trust: Making and Breaking Cooperative Relations*. Oxford, Blackwell, 213-237; Jones, K., (1996), "Trust as an Affective Attitude", *Ethics*, No. 107, 4-25; Luhman, N., (1988), "Familiarity, Confidence, Trust", in D. Gambetta (ed.) *Trust: Making and Breaking Cooperative Relations*. Oxford, Blackwell, 94-107. [back](#)

(11) Gambetta, D., (1988), "Can We Trust to Trust?", in D. Gambetta (ed.) *Trust: Making and Breaking Cooperative Relations*. Oxford, Blackwell, 213-237. [back](#)

(12) Baier, C.C., (1994), *Moral Prejudices: Essays on Ethics*, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, pp. 106-112. [back](#)

(13) Let us notice that it is quotation from Burge's article, the words of the prominent successor of Reidian position. Burge, T., (1993), "Content Preservation", *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 102., No. 4, 457-488, p.484. [back](#)

(14) Further, Reid's followers suggest that trust without evidence is not only the psychological phenomenon but also that it should be epistemic principle.(For instance, Dummett, M., (1993), *The Seas of Language*, Oxford, Clarendon Press.) Not only that we trust blindly, but we are justified when we trust without evidence. However, as I have mentioned above, it seems to me that people simply do not uncritically accept what they hear or read. Consequently, something is very strange with such a norm of sensible or rational trust - it is over-indulgent, it requires less then people really do, less then they want and can do.[back](#)

(15) Burge, T., (1993), "Content Preservation", *The Philosophical Review*, Vol. 102., No. 4, 457-488. [back](#)

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