ANTI-INDIVIDUALISM

In this book Sanford Goldberg argues that a proper account of the communication of knowledge through speech has anti-individualistic implications for both epistemology and the philosophy of mind and language. In Part 1 he offers a novel argument for anti-individualism about mind and language, the view that the contents of one’s thoughts and the meanings of one’s words depend for their individuation on one’s social and natural environment. In Part 2 he discusses the epistemic dimension of knowledge communication, arguing that the epistemic characteristics of communication-based beliefs depend on features of the cognitive and linguistic acts of the subject’s social peers. In acknowledging an ineliminable social dimension to mind, language, and the epistemic categories of knowledge, justification, and rationality, his book develops fundamental links between externalism in the philosophy of mind and language, on the one hand, and externalism in epistemology, on the other.

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Anti-Individualism

Mind and Language, Knowledge and Justification

SANFORD C. GOLDBERG
Northwestern University
To Gideon, Ethan, Nadia, and Judy –
no better family could there be
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Preface

The topic of this book is linguistic communication. More specifically, the topic is the nature of the sort of knowledge one acquires through accepting another speaker’s say-so. My attraction to this topic derives from the prospect it holds for enabling one to bring together the three philosophical subfields I work in: philosophy of language, philosophy of mind, and epistemology. My core thesis is that a proper account of the nature of ‘testimonial’ knowledge (as it is called) will have us endorse anti-individualistic theses about language and mind, knowledge and justification.

My approach to the topic of testimonial knowledge can be described as ‘inter(sub)disciplinary.’ An overarching aim of the book is to illustrate the benefits of taking such an approach. But there are risks associated as well. Above all, there is the risk of superficiality in each of the relevant (sub)disciplines. I expose myself to this risk in the hope of bringing a unity that I have felt missing in other discussions of testimonial knowledge and linguistic communication. It goes without saying that in pursuing such a wide-ranging discussion I have been particularly dependent on the help and feedback of many others. I count myself unusually fortunate in the indulgence shown to me by teachers, colleagues, and friends, as I talked about – OK, obsessed over – the nature of the testimonial exchange. This book has been shaped by many conversations, over many years, with more people than I can remember. They include Fred Adams, Ken Aizawa, Michael Antony, Dorit Bar-On, Katie Barret, Bob Barnard, Kelly Becker, Itzak Ben Baji, Yemima Ben Menachem, John Bickle, Akeel Bilgrami, John Bolander, Larry Bonjour, David Bradshaw, Tad Brennan, Berit Brogaard, Andy Brook, Jessica Brown, Tony Brueckner, Tyler Burge, Charles Chastain, Zhihua Cheng, Earl Conee, Kristie Dotson, Eli Dresner, Jay Drydyk, Gary Ebbs, Catherine Elgin, David Enoch, Paul Faulkner, Arthur Fine, Dan Frank, Lizzie Fricker, Richard Fumerton, Jon Garthoff, Chris Gauker, Mikkel Gerken, Amihud Gilead, Alvin Goldman, Peter Graham, John Greco, David Henderson, Gail Heyman, Dien Ho,
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Thanks belong as well to the journals Philosophy and Phenomenological Research and The Southern Journal of Philosophy, which granted me permission to reprint portions of papers that first appeared in them. Chapter 6 borrows from “Monitoring and the Epistemology of Testimony,” Philosophy and Phenomenological Research 72:3, 576–93 (co-authored with David Henderson); chapter 7 is a substantially revised version of a paper that first appeared as “The Social Diffusion of Warrant and Rationality,” The Southern Journal of Philosophy 44: 118–38 (Spindel supplement); and chapter 8 is an expanded version of “Testimonial knowledge in early childhood, revisited,” Philosophy and Phenomenological Research (forthcoming).

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