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A Critique of Jennifer Lackey's Discussion
of Reductionism and Non-Reductionism

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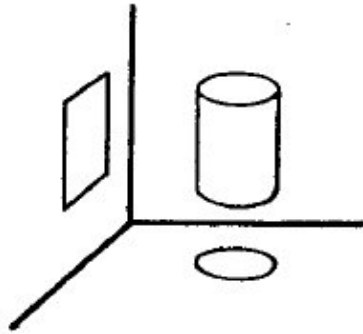
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REASON AND TRANSMISSION IN THE EPISTEMOLOGY OF TESTIMONY

A Critique of Jennifer Lackey's Discussion
of Reductionism and Non-Reductionism

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“There are two ways
to slide easily through life:
to believe everything
or to doubt everything;
both ways save us from thinking.”

— ALFRED KORZYBSKI

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ABBREVIATIONS

— in order of appearance

BVT	BELIEF VIEW OF TESTIMONY
SVT	STATEMENT VIEW OF TESTIMONY
TEP-N	NECESSITY THESIS OF THE TRANSMISSION OF EPISTEMIC PROPERTIES
TEP-S	SUFFICIENCY THESIS OF THE TRANSMISSION OF EPISTEMIC PROPERTIES
DVNT	DISJUNCTIVE VIEW OF THE NATURE OF TESTIMONY
GR	GLOBAL REDUCTIONISM
LR	LOCAL REDUCTIONISM
PR-N	NECESSITY THESIS OF POSITIVE REASONS
PR-S	SUFFICIENCY THESIS OF POSITIVE REASONS
NR	NON-REDUCTIONISM

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. THE EPISTEMOLOGY OF TESTIMONY

Much of what we know we know because someone told us so. In fact, a high proportion of our knowledge about the world, and indeed about ourselves, we know only from the testimony of other people. It would often be costly and in many cases even impossible to acquire knowledge about something without appealing to the spoken or written words of those around us.

This seems to be an obvious notion concerning historical knowledge, as for example that there were two World Wars in the twentieth century, or for geographical knowledge, such as that Tokyo is the capital city of Japan. It is not necessary for anybody to have witnessed the events that constituted the World Wars or to have travelled to Tokyo for them to know about these facts. But knowledge through testimony is of no less importance in our everyday lives, like when we want to find out about what a friend had for lunch, the identity of our parents and even the date of our own birthday. If testimony could not yield knowledge, our lives would certainly be radically impoverished, both intellectually and practically (cf. Audi 1998: 128-129).

The epistemology of testimony must therefore be concerned with the role testimony plays in the acquisition of belief and knowledge as we generally conceive it. Put differently, the task is to find a theory which matches our pre-philosophical intuitions of how we can obtain knowledge from others. In the philosophical debate, this enterprise has been virtually ignored up until very recently and testimony as a source of knowledge has not found much favour. As John Locke notoriously wrote in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*:

“For, I think, we may as rationally hope to see with other men's eyes as to know by other men's understandings. So much as we ourselves consider and comprehend of truth and reason, so much we possess of real and true knowledge. The floating of other men's opinions in our brains makes us not one jot the more knowing, though they happen to be true. What in them was science, is in us but opiniatrey.” (Locke 1894: Book I, ch. 4, sect. 23)

Such philosophical disdain of testimony, it has been argued,¹ was due in large part to an underlying presumption of epistemic individualism. Accordingly, knowledge was intimately associated with a quest for certainty in our beliefs and such certainty was believed to be accomplished through sources which are immediately available to the subject. Therefore, the traditional account spans three sources of knowledge – perception, memory, and inference² – while regarding testimony as a derivative form of seeking information. Consequently, actual knowledge would have to come from “onboard sources” (Craig 1990: 11) which confirm, for an individual knower, the truth of a proposition.

It is apparent, however, that under such a description, much of what we seem to know by our common-sense intuition would be lost. Imagine that someone tells me that Bob Dylan was just on the radio, that Spain won the last football World Cup, or that π is an irrational number. It seems intuitively right to say that I *know* these things even in case I have not heard the song myself, I cannot remember the event myself, or I have never performed the inference myself. If such knowledge is to count merely as a belief about the propositions in question the paradigm account of what it is to know something would have to be significantly revised (cf. e.g. Faulkner 1998: 303; Stevenson 1993: 429).

As a result, testimony appears to be an astoundingly rich source of knowledge. It is safe to say that this is the standard opinion in modern epistemology.³ Indeed it has been argued on many occasions that testimonial knowledge is precisely what makes our lives prolific and colourful. As Tyler Burge puts it:

“If we did not acquire a massive number of beliefs from others, our cognitive lives would be little different from the animals’.” (Burge 1993: 466)

¹ Cf. esp. Coady (1992).

² Additionally, introspection is often mentioned as a source of knowledge and inference may arguably be split up into inductive and deductive reasoning. Yet, this need not concern us here.

³ Much of the current endorsement of testimony as a rich source of knowledge can be traced back to the seminal works of Tony Coady (1992) and Steven Shapin (1994).

Yet, there remains a certain *prima facie* appeal to the idea that the answer to the question »How do you know this?« is more solid when it is »Because I saw it happen« as opposed to »Because someone told me so«. The main questions in the epistemology of testimony will thus be concerned with the circumstances under which it is epistemically legitimate to believe a proffered statement and with the reasons which may duly provide a justification to accept another person's word. My goal for this thesis is to tackle these questions and present my own views by grappling with Jennifer Lackey's outstanding and novel account in her (2008) *Learning from Words*.

1.2. TESTIMONIAL KNOWLEDGE AND ITS JUSTIFICATION

In order to provide an analysis of testimonial knowledge it is important to be as clear as possible about the scope of the subject matter of the investigation. Before dealing with the conditions under which testimony may lead to hearer-knowledge, I shall therefore make explicit how I will use each of the two parts of this term.

Knowledge, on the one side, has traditionally been understood as justified true belief. We may complement this definition and demand that the belief, in addition to its being true and justified, must not be Gettierized, that is the process which leads to the formation of the belief must not be fortuitous or accidental in a significant way.⁴ A certain controversy about this definition notwithstanding, I will presume throughout this text that knowledge is indeed a special kind of belief. In this respect, a person's justification will be the key feature which distinguishes a mere belief from knowledge. In turn, I shall try to avoid many of the complex problems related to the truth-condition of knowledge.

Testimony, on the other side, may appear easier to capture, but there is nonetheless significant disagreement among philosophers about how narrowly or widely it should be defined. As in the case of knowledge, I will try to keep the complexities to a minimum and focus on those aspects which are of direct relevance to my argumentation. The narrowest conception of testimony derives

⁴ Cf. Edmund Gettier (1963) for the original formulation of the problem that justified true belief may well fall short of amounting to knowledge.

from its formal application in the notion of courtroom testimony. In this sense, testimony may be understood as any statement that p proffered by a person who expresses, sincerely and competently, her belief that p on an unresolved question. Her testimony thus serves as evidence that p for an audience who seeks to be informed about the matter (Coady 1992: 25-53). This adequately captures the notion of “formal testimony” (ibid.) as it is applied in the legal context but it is certainly too restrictive for ordinary conversations. In contrast, it has been suggested that every utterance from a person who expresses a thought amounts to testimony (e.g. Audi 1997, 1998). This seems appropriate for an analysis which includes everyday situations, yet Peter Graham rightfully points out that this understanding needs to be qualified to exclude cases which are not meant to convey actual information:

“[I]t should be noted that mere statements are not testimony. Saying ‘It is a nice day’ is not usually taken as testimony about the weather (though it is when said by the weatherman). Repeating what you have already said over and over does not count as testimony either, unless you have forgotten each previous utterance. [...] Surely simply saying something out of the blue that others find useful is not testimony unless you intend it to be considered epistemically useful.” (Graham 1997: 231)

Thus, excluding such non-informational utterances,⁵ testimony can be understood, roughly, as every instance of a person who conveys the information that p by the intelligible expression of her thought that p through proffering the statement that p as her competent and sincere belief that p . Lackey does not fully agree with this definition of the realm of testimony and I will argue at a later stage that her own understanding of what constitutes an instance of testimony is responsible for one part of my disagreement with her account.

Having spelled out my understanding of the scope and limits of testimonial knowledge the crucial question for any epistemology of testimony then is: *how can it be the case that knowledge is acquired from the tellings of other people?* Knowledge can indeed be spread through language, but the nature of this process

⁵ On these grounds it should be clear that a sigh and a joke would not count as testimony, either. This precludes, inter alia, parts of the argumentation Paul Faulkner presents in his (2000).

has fostered a complex and controversial philosophical debate. Whenever a hearer⁶ comes to form a belief on the basis of a speaker's report, the question arises whether or not the hearer is entitled to her belief. Therefore, we need a theory to explain under what circumstances such an entitlement exists.

It is universally acknowledged that people, in light of their respective beliefs and desires, may have a myriad of different reasons to proffer a certain statement. Therefore, by simply accepting a report, without any concept concerning the nature and constitution of the report, a hearer is obviously subject to the inherent fallibility of the word of others. There is a widespread risk of both incompetence and mendacity which requires that we employ a discriminating theory to distinguish when (not) to accept testimony (Kusch and Lipton 2002).

The ultimate goal of any epistemology of testimony is thus to make explicit the conditions under which a hearer is justified to accept a speaker's assertion. Roughly speaking, the arena where this issue is disputed is divided into two camps: on the one hand, there are advocates of the idea that the general conception of humans as cooperative social beings comes with a general tendency towards sincerity and veracity when we speak. As a corollary, it would be the natural attitude to display trust in the word of others unless there are obvious reasons not to do so. On the other hand, the sheer volume of false testimony appears to be undeniable given the many motivations and opportunities for people to lie and deceive, or to speak about things they do not know. Under the impression that a significant degree of the testimony we receive is actually false, it can thus be argued that, in order for a hearer to be justified in accepting another person's report, positive complementary (non-testimonial) evidence is needed.

1.3. CREDULITY VERSUS SCEPTICISM

This issue of how a person can reasonably obtain a justified testimonial belief is precisely the realm of controversy in the debate which seems to be leading up to

⁶ I will use terms like »hearer« and »speaker« throughout this thesis although it should be clear that testimony comprises not only cases of spoken language but equally written and non-verbal expressions of a thought.

either credulity or scepticism. In the tradition of David Hume, »reductionists« have argued that it is reasonable to believe a proffered statement in view of the substantive body of inductive evidence that is provided by experience.⁷ In this sense, as responsible hearers, we have accumulated *a posteriori* reasons from which to infer testimony's truth-conduciveness. The acceptance of testimony is justified because our experience has established a correlation between what is reported and what is the case.

A paradigm scenario under this description would be a physics teacher telling her high-school student that, when a vehicle with a siren approaches, the received frequency is higher than the actually emitted frequency because the source is moving towards the observer. In this case, the student can be credited with a justified testimonial belief *because* her experience with the institution school, this teacher, scholars talking about their field, and people presenting information in a calm voice and so forth provide her with a rationale to believe what she is told. Yet, this view has been frowned upon for being too restrictive and for placing too heavy a burden onto the hearer. For reductionists, a hearer has to have independent evidence for believing in the veracity of testimony and this evidence has to be attained by relying solely on one's personal faculties. Essentially, this may undermine a large portion of our knowledge since our individual capacities are limited in many forms. The Humean view seems to describe hearers as overly sceptical.

In contrast to this, »non-reductionists« in the tradition of Thomas Reid have argued that the default-position when confronted with a piece of testimony is to believe the report even without further evidence for its veracity.⁸ Accordingly, we are justified to accept a statement as true not because there are independent reasons which indicate its truth-value but because we are *a priori* justified to do so. Unless there is empirical evidence which would render the acceptance of a report irrational, testimony is accepted as a source of knowledge in its own right.

⁷ Cf. most notably Adler (1994, 2002) and Fricker (1987, 1994, 1995) for current reductionist positions. The original account is from Hume's (2000) *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*.

⁸ Cf. most notably Burge (1993, 1997) and McDowell (1998) for modern descriptions of this understanding. The original formulation of non-reductionism is associated with Reid's (1983) *Essay on the Intellectual Powers of Man*.

A paradigm case under this description would be my friend telling me that she has a philosophy class this afternoon. Here, I can be credited with a justified testimonial belief *because* I have a default entitlement to trust a speaker if I can understand her statement. Accordingly, I do not need any additional non-testimonial evidence to back up my belief that my friend has a class today. I can be said to know this as long as there are no reasons which override my default entitlement. However, this understanding can be criticised as being too forgiving with regards to the hearer. As soon as a hearer seems to understand a report, it may be accepted as true. The recipient has no epistemic work to do over and above being sensitive to defeating empirical evidence. As a result, the speaker is encumbered with all the attention in an assessment of the testimonial scenario. The Reidian view seems to describe hearers as overly credulous.

1.4. TRANSMISSIVE AND GENERATIVE VIEWS OF TESTIMONIAL KNOWLEDGE

The question of how testimonial knowledge is justified is accompanied by the question of how testimonial knowledge compares to knowledge from perception, memory and inference. The orthodox view is that while perception and inference *generate* knowledge, memory and testimony, by their very nature, *preserve* knowledge (cf. Graham 2006).

There is an intuitive plausibility in the idea that memory is needed to preserve knowledge from the past so that it may be retained and retrieved in the present. Likewise, according to the standard theory, testimony is said to preserve knowledge by transferring the content of a certain proposition from one knower to another. The picture here is that of a “bucket brigade” (Lackey 2008: 1): each person in the chain can acquire knowledge from the »previous« person who must have the knowledge in question in order to be able to pass it along. Additionally, at least one person in the chain must have acquired the knowledge from another source, independent of the bucket brigade. By contrast, perception and inference are said to create knowledge beyond the things already known. Thus, perception and inference can generate new knowledge which can be fed into a chain like the one just described. An important corollary of this orthodoxy is that testimony can

only transmit knowledge and therefore a speaker always has to know that p in order for a hearer to get to know that p from her say-so.⁹

Alternatively, testimony has been conceptualised as a generative source of knowledge to emphasise the inherent social character of knowledge. The underlying thought is that testimony does not only preserve (transmit) knowledge but it also creates (generates) knowledge which has not previously existed. Proponents of this progressive view have presented their accounts from a variety of angles. John Hardwig (1985, 1991), to begin with, focuses on the critical roles communication and trust play in science. Michael Welbourne (1986, 1994), in a comparable fashion, maintains that the key characteristic of knowledge is that it is “commonable” (1986: 1). On his grounds, testimony serves to make knowledge the common possession of a group of people. As such, testimony is constitutive of a knowledge community. Martin Kusch (2002) proposes that testimony is generative of knowledge because knowledge must be conceived as a social status. Acts of communication may therefore generate a state of agreement between individuals in a community. This is especially apparent in the case of performative testimony, as, for example, when a marriage is pronounced.

Lackey also criticises the established view that testimony is only a means of transmission. Throughout her (2008), her stance on what testimony can and cannot do are the basis for her argumentation against the view that a hearer can only get to know that p via testimony from a speaker who knows that p . What is more, Lackey applies many of the subtle facets of the debate between »individualists« (testimony is transmissive) and »comunitarians« (testimony is generative) to the distinction between beliefs and statements. Similar to Graham (2000a, 2000b), who proposes to speak of »information« – rather than knowledge – that is »conveyed« – rather than transmitted –, Lackey advocates a theory according to which *statements* should be the centrepiece of any epistemological analysis.

⁹ Cf. e.g. Audi (1997, 1998), Dummet (1994), Plantinga (1994).

1.5. THE AIM AND STRUCTURE OF THIS DIPLOMA THESIS

As indicated before, the aim of this thesis is to present my views on how knowledge may be obtained through the testimony of others. Given its many complexities and technicalities, the topic has raised substantial disagreement in the recent philosophical literature, a high proportion of which is due to differences in the understanding of what constitutes a paradigm testimonial scenario. My goal is therefore to present, in an independent way, a structured interpretation and assessment of the current philosophical landscape on the issue. Lackey's (2008) will serve as my main point of reference for this enterprise.

In *Learning from Words*, Lackey offers a novel perspective on the epistemology of testimony by providing a compelling argumentation of progressive and provoking theses towards an independent theory. Like Paul Faulkner (2009: 484) writes: "*Learning from Words* is admirably clear and densely argued." For these reasons the text is well worth grappling with as it provides a rich basis for a thorough engagement with unresolved epistemological questions. I shall aim at providing a detailed and comprehensive critique of Lackey's argumentation with the objective of arguing against her key revisions of the notion of testimony.

Lackey's endeavour is twofold: firstly, her attempt is to reject the established view of testimony as a transmission of knowledge from a speaker to a hearer. Her goal is to rebuff the standard focus on beliefs in interlocution and instead focus on the statements from which, according to her position, hearers can come to know. Secondly, Lackey wants to promote a novel, collaborative approach to the epistemology of testimony, which she labels »dualism«. Distributing the epistemic work between the speaker and the hearer, dualism offers an in-between of reductionism and non-reductionism, which may help to solve the problems of each individual view.

The methodological approach Lackey chooses is a refutation by means of philosophical counterexamples. Throughout her text, Lackey employs no less than 31 counterexamples (plus five more in the annex) each of which is intended to make explicit a discrepancy in judgement between common intuition and a certain theory. In case that, one, there is a universal unequivocal intuition of how to

assess the scenario and, two, this assessment is clearly at odds with a certain theory, this theory can be given up as a result of its counterintuitive appraisal of the presented case. Throughout this thesis I shall try to show, case by case, that Lackey does not succeed to accomplish this desideratum on many occasions.

The structure of this thesis follows Lackey's presentation to a certain extent. Chapter Two deals with the transmission view of testimony. Lackey wants to refute the picture of an epistemic bucket brigade and describe testimony as a truly generative source of knowledge. Her main argument is that a speaker's beliefs (and thus her knowledge) concerning p are not relevant for the question of whether or not a hearer can obtain the knowledge that p from this speaker. Rather, the question is to be answered by looking at the statement proffered by the speaker. Accordingly, the problem of testimony would be best conceptualised as the transmission of a statement, without referring to it as the expression of a belief.

The position Lackey has as a target is that testimony involves a transmission of the content as well as a transmission of the epistemic credentials, so that if a speaker knows that p and tells a hearer that p the hearer would thereby come to know that p . As long as there is no deficiency in the interlocution, whenever a speaker believes that p with justification she transmits both p and her justification to a hearer via testimony. Lackey refutes this view by arguing that a speaker's justified belief is neither necessary nor sufficient for a hearer to obtain knowledge from her report. This idea is outlined in section 2.1.

In section 2.2, I endorse Lackey's proposal that reliable believers may fall short of being reliable testifiers. The upshot is that speaker-knowledge is indeed not sufficient for hearer-knowledge. In contrast, in section 2.3, I oppose her more controversial rejection of the view that speaker-knowledge is a *necessary* condition for hearer-knowledge. Her claim that it is well possible for a speaker to reliably testify that p without holding the belief that p appears to be misguided. Judging from the provided counterexamples, it does not seem plausible in any of the scenarios for a hearer to come to know that p on the basis of the unknowing speaker's testimony.

Lackey's rejection by means of counterexamples is not convincing enough to provide a basis from which to discard beliefs as epistemically irrelevant. While I agree with Lackey that a speaker's epistemic credentials are not simply transmitted to a hearer via testimony, her claim that a speaker's beliefs *do not matter epistemically* for the hearer contradicts the notion that the concept of a person is a key component of a substantive epistemology of testimony – a point which Lackey explicitly acknowledges. A person's intentional attitudes, and thus prominently a person's beliefs, have a role to play in speaker-hearer scenarios. Therefore, I argue in section 2.4 that Lackey oversimplifies the epistemology of testimony by sweeping the speaker's intentional attitudes under the carpet. Ultimately, one part of the hearer's contribution to a successful act of testimony must be to identify whether the report stems from a person, who intends to convey the message that *p* as true.

Chapter Three is about the nature of this very contribution. This is a question which can be summed up as the epistemological debate of reductionism versus non-reductionism. I begin by introducing Lackey's understanding and criticism of reductionism (sections 3.1.1 and 3.1.2) and then present my objections to her views in section 3.1.3. My main disagreement is with her proposed counterexample in which Lackey tries to show that a hearer may not be justified in accepting a report in spite of possessing adequate empirical reasons *for* accepting it.

In a similar manner, sections 3.2.1 and 3.2.2 illustrate Lackey's understanding and criticism of non-reductionism, before I argue against her position in section 3.2.3. Lackey attempts to present two examples of testimonial scenarios in which a hearer has no reasons whatsoever to assess a particular report. Consequently, so the idea, it would be irrational to accept the report for there are no indications of its truth-conduciveness at all. Yet, I disagree with Lackey and maintain that her counterexamples fail to provide more than an unpersuasive expression that her own intuition concerning the ascription of hearer-knowledge in these two cases is at variance with the established view.

Consequently, Lackey's attack on reductionism and non-reductionism is not convincing enough to provide a basis from which to discard beliefs as

epistemically irrelevant. Nevertheless, there are positive lessons which can be learned from Lackey's thorough engagement. It seems fair to say that both reductionist and non-reductionist accounts are able to respond to real challenges in the epistemology of testimony. Therefore, both sides of the debate could gain from an acknowledgement of the underlying premises on which the other account is built. To deny, completely, the rationality of the opposing view, may harm the defensibility of each position itself.

In this spirit I shall claim in Chapter Four that the dichotomous division into a reductionist and a non-reductionist camp is unable to yield substantial progress on the topic (section 4.1). Instead, it may be possible to benefit from the respective strengths of both accounts. On the one hand, we therefore have to arrive at an understanding of the reductionist view according to which the hearer's justification is not *completely reducible to* non-testimonial considerations. This is discussed in section 4.2.1. On the other hand, we also have to arrive at an understanding of the non-reductionist view which does not provide the hearer with an entitlement to a testimonial belief which is *entirely independent from* non-testimonial considerations. This is the topic of section 4.2.2.

In section 4.3, I shall then make the claim that reductionist and non-reductionist viewpoints are not fully incompatible. To advocate this point I shall attempt to show that evidence has an important role to play in both accounts: it endows the basic rationale of acquiring a justified testimonial belief. It seems that in spite of their fundamental differences, reductionists and non-reductionists do, in fact, agree on their intuitive judgements (of whether or not a hearer obtains testimonial knowledge) in the vast majority of scenarios. This is because in ordinary cases, a hearer invariably has at her disposal a substantial amount of evidential information and is thus completely overwhelmed by reasons. The case in which a hearer is actually no longer vested with reasons for and against accepting a report seems to be impossible to imagine. Although such a tabula-rasa state-of-affairs would be precisely what reductionists and non-reductionists would fail to agree upon it seems safe to say that such a state is unattainable.

The thesis closes with a brief upshot in section 4.4, where I sum up my main claims.

2. THE TRANSMISSION OF EPISTEMIC WARRANT

2.1. BELIEFS VERSUS STATEMENTS

In her (2008), Lackey makes a bold attempt to criticise the focus on beliefs in the analysis of testimonial cases. She takes the standard approach, which she labels the “belief view of testimony (BVT)” (2008: 37), to be too concerned with what a speaker *believes* and tries to substitute this view with a “statement view of testimony (SVT)” (ibid.: 72). According to the SVT, the problem of testimony is best conceptualised as the transmission of a statement, without referring to it as the expression of a belief. This shift would have the advantage that the concept of testimony could administer cases in which a hearer comes to know that *p* by the testimony of a speaker who asserts that *p* without knowing that *p*.

Within the standard framework, in any successful speaker-hearer scenario a speaker transmits her belief that *p* along with the epistemic properties of that belief to the hearer (cf. Owens 2006: 123; Plantinga 1993: 86). Thus, according to the BVT, there are two layers to testimony: a transmission of the content as well as a transmission of the epistemic warrant or justification. On such a view, testimony is itself not a generative source of knowledge but in essence a means of transportation of beliefs plus add-on from one person to another.

From such a perspective, the act of communication is described entirely in terms of a belief and its epistemic properties (the warrant or justification). Statements are the “vehicles [that] enable us to make public what would otherwise remain private” (Lackey 2008: 37). This implies that the epistemically significant bearer of a warrant or justification is the *belief*; the *statement* is merely used to get the message across without itself holding epistemic properties. Accordingly, then, if the speaker believes that *p* with justification she transfers both *p* and its justification in a successful act of communication. In turn, if the speaker does not know that *p* the hearer cannot come to know that *p* from her testimony.

Lackey refutes this standard conception. Her analysis of the transmission of epistemic properties (TEP) is divided into two parts: a necessity dimension (TEP-N) and a sufficiency dimension (TEP-S). According to the standard theory, a

hearer may only come to know that p on the basis of testimony if the speaker herself knows that p . Therefore, speaker-knowledge is necessary for hearer-knowledge (TEP-N). Moreover, a speaker brings a hearer to know that p whenever she speaks from knowledge and the hearer accepts her report that p . Thus, speaker-knowledge is also sufficient for hearer-knowledge (TEP-S). Lackey refutes both branches of this transmission view of testimony (cf. *ibid.*: 39-47). In the following section 2.2, I will argue in support of Lackey's rejection of the TEP-S thesis, leaving the discussion of the TEP-N thesis for section 2.3.

2.2. LACKEY'S REJECTION OF THE SUFFICIENCY CLAIM

Proponents of the TEP-S thesis hold that speaker-knowledge is sufficient for hearer-knowledge as long as the testimonial process is not distorted in a significant way. Defined in this way, however, there are at least two major problems with this view: firstly, it is definitely possible, and empirically often the case, that a speaker knows that p , that she tells an attentive listener that p , and yet, the hearer does not get to know that p right away. There is a plethora of possible reasons which keep the hearer from gaining knowledge, most of which have to do with an undefeated defeater¹⁰ on the hearer-side. Secondly, the idea that a belief – which is essentially a state-of-mind that is accessible only to the first person – is not only transferred to another individual but also »piggybacks« epistemic credentials lacks plausibility. Our notion of what a belief is makes a statement-oriented view look *prima facie* desirable.

Lackey addresses these shortcomings and rebuts the view that a hearer always comes to know from speaker-knowledge through testimony. Not only may the hearer have additional undefeated defeaters which the speaker does not possess; rather, the idea of a transmission of a belief plus epistemic properties appears to be in principle distorted. In order to rebut the TEP-S thesis Lackey uses

¹⁰ The notion of an undefeated defeater is an important concept in epistemology. In essence, a defeater is a reason which overrides a person's reason to believe that p . Since a defeater may itself be defeated (by a further reason which overrides the defeating reason), only *undefeated* defeaters are ultimately reasons which prevent a person from acquiring a belief that p . Cf. section 2.3.2 below (especially part c) for a discussion of the distinction between psychological and normative defeaters. Cf. also section 3.2.1 for the no-undefeated-defeater condition in non-reductionism.

three counterexamples: »Compulsively Trusting«, »A Lucky Choice«, and »Almost a Liar« (ibid.: 66, 68, 69).

a) »Compulsively Trusting«

Her central argument against the sufficiency claim is put forward in the first philosophical counterexample in which a hearer is unable to detect any indication of unreliable testimony due to his emotional standing towards the speaker. The hearer's incapability to distinguish between »good« and »bad« testimony in »Compulsively Trusting« thus prevents him from reacting to potential defeaters and renders him "*insensitive* in a way that is clearly incompatible with justification, warrant, and knowledge" (ibid.: 67). In Lackey's original words:

"Bill is a compulsively trusting person with respect to the testimony of his neighbour, Jill, in whom he has an obsessive romantic interest. Not only does he always trust Jill when he has very good reason to believe her, but he is incapable of distrusting her when he has very good reason to not believe her. [...] Bill is such that there is no amount of evidence that would convince him not to trust Jill. Yesterday, while taking his afternoon walk, Bill ran into Jill, and she told him that she had seen an orca whale while boating earlier that day. Bill, of course, readily accepted Jill's testimony. It turns out that Jill did in fact see an orca whale [and] that she is very reliable with respect to her epistemic practices [...]. [H]owever, even if he had massive amounts of [counter]evidence available to him [...], Bill would have just as readily accepted Jill's testimony." (Ibid.: 66)

I take it to be a plausible and intuitive argument against the TEP-S thesis that is put forward by Lackey here. The fact that the emotional standing of a hearer may undermine her ability to gain testimonial knowledge appears to be a non-controversial assumption. Not only can we imagine cases, like Lackey's, where a hearer has *romantic* feelings for the speaker (and thus naïvely believes almost anything she says), there is a multitude of feelings which would make a hearer too credulous in order for the testimonial exchange to function well enough so as to speak of knowledge.

Arguably, the hearer's emotions need not even necessarily be directed at the speaker for the testimony to fail. It would render a hearer just as epistemically insensitive if the hearer is emotionally loaded towards the person a certain

testimony is concerned with. For instance, a hearer who hates her neighbour for whatever reasons may be far too gullible concerning derogatory testimony about the neighbour for her to be regarded as a sensitive recipient of that piece of testimony. The point Lackey is trying to prove at this stage is “that while a speaker may be both a reliable believer and testifier, *a hearer may be so constituted as to prevent the epistemic properties of a speaker’s belief from being transmitted to her*” (ibid.). Therefore, cases where there is a distorting factor directly within the relationship between the speaker and the hearer are just one way of showing that there are numerous possibilities of how a hearer may fail to receive epistemic properties via testimony.

b) »A Lucky Choice«

The second case against the TEP-S thesis, »A Lucky Choice«, is a Gettier-type counterexample analogous to Henry’s fake-barn adventure (Goldman 1976). A person receives true information about the whereabouts of a building via testimony, yet knowledge cannot be attributed as the situation is altogether highly accidental and fortuitous. The key passage is this:

“Upon arriving in Chicago for the first time, Pierre asks the closest passerby that he sees, Zoe, for directions to the Sears Tower and she reports that it is six blocks east. While Zoe knows that this is the case, and Pierre has no reasons to doubt [her testimony], she is the only reliable speaker in this part of Chicago, completely surrounded by incompetents and liars.” (Lackey 2008: 68)

In essence, I agree with Lackey’s argumentation that a justified testimonial belief may be Gettierised and thus fall short of amounting to knowledge. It is imaginable that the acquisition of a (justified and true) testimonial belief is significantly fortuitous and this would arguably undermine hearer-knowledge even in case the speaker is both competent and sincere. It is this thought that Lackey wants to express in »A Lucky Choice«. In this respect, the example adds to the project set out by »Compulsively Trusting«.

However, it has to be mentioned that this counterexample is not as intuitively appealing as »Compulsively Trusting«. The recipient of the

accidentally true testimony receives a report “[u]pon arriving in Chicago”, presumably at a train station or a bus terminal. Moreover, the piece of information he seeks out concerns a world-famous building, the whereabouts of which are supposedly known to most of Chicago’s inhabitants. In this regard, it is questionable how the abnormal proportion of unreliable testifiers is explicable. Arguably, Pierre might have run into a group of intoxicated drug addicts and fortuitously picked out their caretaker; or he might be amid completely ignorant tourists and luckily asked their tourguide. Although possible, I doubt that such circumstances would remain completely unnoticed by Pierre. However, Pierre could not ignore the fact that he is among people with a very low likelihood of informing him correctly if he was aware of this. Such practice would be epistemically irrational and the example would make a different case.

I agree with Lackey that luck has a role to play in the assessment of whether or not a hearer comes to know from testimony. While her presentation of the case appears to be implausible to a certain extent, the general idea seems strong nonetheless. If I make a random choice in picking an informant and this informant happens to be the only reliable testifier among the group of potential informants, intuitively I do not come to know through my informant’s testimony. Imagine that I open the door to a compartment on a train to ask in which direction the restaurant car is. From the six strangers sitting in the compartment only one actually knows that I have to walk towards the front of the train and I randomly pick this person to give me directions. I hold that my knowledge about the restaurant car would be Gettierised in this case. Ultimately, neither Lackey’s example nor mine is free of problems but the general idea remains strong: speaker-knowledge does not *necessarily* result in hearer-knowledge.¹¹

¹¹ Even in case that »A Lucky Choice« would fail completely, Lackey’s rejection of the TEP-S thesis could naturally rest on a single successful counterexample. So although I do not disagree with her argumentation in »A Lucky Choice« (or »Almost a Liar«, for that matter), her rejection through »Compulsively Trusting« – if accepted – would be sufficient by itself. I state this point because I believe »A Lucky Choice« and »Almost a Liar« are more controversial than »Compulsively Trusting«.

c) »Almost a Liar«

The third example, »Almost a Liar«, adds to the first two by showing that a hearer may fail to gain knowledge if a speaker's testimony is counterfactually insensitive to the truth (cf. Dretske 1971; Nozick 1981: 172-178). If a speaker tells a hearer that p regardless of whether or not p is true this fact alone suffices to prevent knowledge from being acquired by the hearer. The essence of the example is this:

“Phil is [...] from an epistemic point of view quite healthy [...]. Yesterday, [he] ran into Jill just after Bill did and she also told him that she had seen an orca whale [...]. It turns out that Jill did in fact see an orca whale [and] that she is very reliable with respect to her epistemic practices [...]. However, in order to promote a whale watching business she is in the process of starting, she would have reported to Phil – in precisely the same manner – that she had seen an orca whale even if she hadn't.” (Lackey 2008: 69)

The general idea is that as soon as there are close possible worlds in which the proffered testimony is the same, yet the truth-value of the underlying subject-matter is not, then the hearer's corresponding belief-formation is not counterfactually sensitive. If a speaker asserts that p regardless of whether p is true, a hearer cannot obtain testimonial knowledge.

I am completely in line with Lackey on this third counterexample. It is beyond dispute that people often have a myriad of reasons not to speak the truth (be it because they are not able to or because they do not intend to). Building on this thought, we can imagine cases in which a speaker is prepared to assert that p without knowing that p (or knowing that $\neg p$) but by the time of the assertion she has actually come to know that p . The fact that the speaker was ready to assert that p under any circumstances would prevent the hearer from obtaining knowledge.

A similar case to »Almost a liar« would be a best man on his way to the wedding who lost track of where the wedding rings are which he is supposed to hand over in the church. Anxious about admitting his mistake, he might be prepared to claim »I have the rings in my pocket« even if he does not believe that. If, then, he found the rings in the pocket of his jacket just before actually being

asked about the rings, his assertion »I have the rings in my pocket« would not be counterfactually sensitive and the hearer could not be said to come to know on the basis of this statement.

As a result, I take also Lackey's third example against the TEP-S thesis to be convincing. In her discussion of all three counterexamples Lackey is able, or so I hold, to show that *reliable believers may nonetheless fail to provide reliable testimony*. It is therefore true that the epistemic properties held by a speaker are by no means sufficient to establish knowledge on the side of the hearer. Insofar, Lackey's counterexamples fulfil their purpose in laying bare unsupportable consequences that would follow from such a view. Faulkner (2009: 481) concurs:

“I have no disagreement with denying the sufficiency claim; like Lackey I think that there is an ‘audience condition’ on the acquisition of testimonial knowledge: the acceptance of testimony must be rationally supported by other things an audience believes. And I think this for the same reason as Lackey; like her I think that the acceptance of testimony ‘in the complete absence of positive reasons can be just as epistemically irrational’ as belief in the face of counter-evidence.”

Yet, the general conclusion Lackey derives from this appears to be too strong: “the *words* of speakers, not their beliefs, are what matter for an epistemology of testimony” (Lackey 2008: 71). Beliefs do matter – even though they are not *sufficient* for a hearer to successfully acquire knowledge through the testimony of others. Thus, Lackey's rejection of the TEP-S thesis can be regarded as the strong point of her overarching rejection of the BVT but this point alone does not undermine the belief view.

2.3. LACKEY'S REJECTION OF THE NECESSITY CLAIM

For the BVT to be refuted both components, that is the TEP-S thesis and the TEP-N thesis, must be proven false. While Lackey is successful in providing a plausible argumentation for the rejection of the TEP-S thesis (see the previous section 2.2) her arguments against the TEP-N thesis fall short of her goal to focus entirely on statements instead of beliefs.

Six counterexamples are presented by Lackey to disprove that speaker-knowledge is necessary in order for a hearer to acquire knowledge from testimony: »Creationist Teacher«, »Consistent Liar« (and the analogous »Doubting Thomas«), »Persistent Believer«, »Serious Student«, and »Dogmatic Believer« (ibid.: 48, 53, 58, 59, 61, 63).

The first type of cases, which are discussed in the following section 2.3.1, includes the first three counterexamples. They are construed with characters who do not believe a certain piece of information yet testify very reliably on the subject matter. The respective testifiers lack belief due to their religious convictions (»Creationist Teacher«), because they were hard-wired by the science-fiction version of a neuro-surgeon (»Consistent Liar«), or because they are overly self-conscious (»Doubting Thomas«). Nevertheless they proffer highly reliable testimony to an audience because of their moral convictions, because they merely mechanically report (true) things if they choose to speak, or because they are brilliant scientists. All three of these cases appear to rely on implausible ad-hoc solutions to their respective challenges within the testimonial process and therefore cannot provide a convincing argument against the TEP-N thesis.

In section 2.3.2 I will discuss the second type of cases, that is counterexamples four to six. In those cases, the speaker has an undefeated defeater which prevents her from having knowledge about a certain proposition. The speaker testifies nonetheless and the hearer appears to acquire knowledge through testimony from a person who lacks the knowledge in question. However, much like the first three counterexamples, also these three cases seem to fail to provide a profound refutation of the TEP-N thesis. Predominantly, this stems from the fact that all three counterexamples have at their core a truncated presentation of the speaker's belief. The speaker in each of these cases leaves out very crucial pieces of information about her current state of mind and about the nature of her belief. She does not mention that she has an undefeated defeater for her belief and it is only through this very omission of information that the hearer can obtain the testimonial belief in question. However, sweeping such information under the carpet cannot be the salient reason for a hearer to obtain knowledge. I will argue that in none of the cases testimonial knowledge is gained by the hearer.

2.3.1. The speaker lacks belief

a) »Creationist Teacher«

»Creationist Teacher« is at the very core of Lackey's account. It is the controversial centrepiece and with its acceptance or refutation the whole chain of argument concerning the transmission principle of epistemic properties succeeds or fails respectively. Lackey's overarching goal is to promote the importance of *statements* in the epistemology of testimony to a degree where the belief-centred TEP-N thesis can be given up entirely in favour of a statement-centred "Reliability of the Statement-Necessity thesis" (ibid.: 74). According to this view, the question whether or not testimonial knowledge can be attributed to a hearer is settled completely on the basis of a speaker's proffered *statement* – the speaker's belief is irrelevant, it has no role to play in deciding whether or not the testimony is reliable. What matters epistemically is merely the reliability of the truth-conduciveness of the process by which the statement was produced.¹²

To illustrate this point, Lackey designs a teacher who firmly believes in Young Earth creationism, yet testifies – *ex hypothesi* reliably – about the Darwinian evolutionary theory to her pupils. The example is worth quoting at full length:

"Stella is a devoutly Christian fourth-grade teacher, and her religious beliefs are grounded in a deep faith that she has had since she was a very young child. Part of this faith includes a belief in the truth of creationism and, accordingly, a belief in the falsity of evolutionary theory. Despite this, she fully recognizes that there is an overwhelming amount of scientific evidence against both of these beliefs. Indeed, she readily admits that she is not basing her own commitment to creationism on evidence at all but, rather, on the personal faith that she has in an all-powerful Creator. Because of this, Stella does not think that religion is something that she should impose on those around her, and this is especially true with respect to her fourth-grade students. Instead, she regards her duty as a teacher to involve presenting material that is best supported by the available evidence, which clearly includes the truth of evolutionary theory. As a result, after consulting reliable sources in the library and developing reliable lecture notes, Stella asserts to her students, 'Modern-day *Homo*

¹² I will come back to this point in section 3.1.3 where I present my objections to Lackey's critique of reductionism.

sapiens evolved from *Homo erectus*,’ while presenting her biology lesson today. Though Stella herself neither believes nor knows this proposition, she never shares her own personal faith-based views with her students, and so they form the corresponding true belief solely on the basis of her reliable testimony.” (Ibid.: 48)

Since the two viewpoints, creationism and evolutionary theory, are mutually exclusive, the teacher has to suppress one stance whenever she is concerned with the other: when it comes to her *belief*, she is dedicated to creationism; when it comes to her *testimony*, however, she restricts herself to talk only about evolutionary theory. As a result, the teacher is in a position to reliably testify about something which she does not know because she does not believe it.

It is true that there is an immediate appeal to the idea of shifting the requirement for reliability of testimony towards the statement itself. Lackey admits that Stella is in a “confused doxastic [state]” (ibid.: 118) and the problems of a speaker’s doxastic state could be avoided altogether if her *belief* did not play a role for the reliability of any testimony she proffers. However, I am convinced that this would be an ill-advised move. Its straightforward appearance notwithstanding, »Creationist Teacher« is actually quite a complex counterexample. In the light of this complexity, my claim is that there is no uncontroversial common intuition in favour of the correctness of Lackey’s verdict that the children come to know that *p* from Stella who does not believe that *p*. I argue that Lackey faces a dilemma in »Creationist Teacher« that prevents this conclusion from being accepted tout court: either, Stella does not actually believe that *p* (that creationism is true) or her testimony that *q* (that evolutionary theory is true) lacks reliability.

The first horn of the dilemma is addressed by asking if Stella fully believes that Young Earth creationism is the most reasonable theory to accept as true. Stella must believe that evolutionary theory is false; otherwise the counterexample has no momentum. Yet, Lackey states that Stella recognises evolutionary theory as being “best supported by the available evidence” (ibid.). To believe something, in an epistemically meaningful way, must be tantamount to accepting it as true given the totality of relevant considerations that speak for and against accepting it

as true. This epistemic endeavour is concerned with a process of reasoning; we may accept as true something that is most reasonable to believe, all things considered.

In Stella's case, however, her belief is not responsive to evidence which clearly speaks against her belief being reasonable. Consequently, the way Lackey presents the scenario, Stella does not believe the theory of creationism in a relevant sense of the word. If we continue to speak of a belief in (the truth of) creationism, it is very questionable how Stella may recognise superior evidence¹³ for q , yet discard this when it comes to her belief-formation that p . Responding to Lackey's earlier version of »Creationist Teacher« found in her (1999), Audi (2006: 30) calls this a "cognitive malfunction." I agree with his idea that "to fail to believe on evidence one takes to be good (to the degree required by the case) is a kind of malfunction" (ibid.). This would be a cognitive failure which prevents her students from obtaining knowledge from her.

Put differently, if Stella believes that q is more likely to be true than p *in view of all relevant considerations*, yet believes in the truth of p and in the falsity of q , I hold that such a cognitive malfunction is a feature of the case which undermines her audience to obtain knowledge from her statements. The way Lackey describes »Creationist Teacher«, Stella either does not believe (in an epistemologically relevant way) that creationism is true or she suffers from a state of doxastic confusion which generally undermines her pupils from acquiring knowledge from her reports. People may certainly believe something in spite of good evidence against the proposition at stake. However, this requires that the

¹³ I think that part of the confusion concerning »Creationist Teacher« arises due to a too narrow conception of what counts as evidence. It has been brought to my attention that it is certainly not a contradiction to acknowledge good evidence for p and yet believe that $\neg p$. Imagine that my father is accused of shoplifting. I may reasonably accept that there is better evidence for this accusation than against it (such as witnesses testifying against him or the stolen item being found at his home) and yet *believe* that he is innocent. However, there must be *reasonable considerations* which lead to my belief (such as that my father has always been a good person, that he has no interest in the stolen item or that he assured me that he has not committed the crime). My argument is that as long as Stella recognises that evolutionary theory is more reasonable to believe *all things considered*, then she must actually believe in evolutionary theory. Failing to do so is equivalent to a cognitive malfunction. This is the first horn of the dilemma. If, on the other hand, she arrives at the conclusion that creationism is the most reasonable theory, then it is problematic to understand why she forms the corresponding belief that it is most reasonable to *testify* against her conviction. This is what I will discuss as the second horn of the dilemma.

available evidence is regarded as inadequate or incomplete. As soon as the evidence is considered to be good enough for the issue at hand, refusing to form a belief in accordance with this evidence is a malfunction.

Still, for the sake of the argument we may assume that Stella fully and adequately believes in creationism. This entails that she thinks that the totality of information available makes creationism the more reasonable theory in comparison with evolutionary theory. Furthermore, she believes that creationism is more plausible than any third theory or the suspension of judgement. If that were the case, Stella reasonably believed in a *creatio ex nihilo*. On these grounds, the question arises how Stella can believe something and reasonably assert the opposite.¹⁴ This is the second horn of the dilemma.

In essence, for Stella to believe that *p* and to assert that *q* requires that there be two separate paradigms within her belief system: one that she believes to be true and another that she believes to be the most appropriate to present as true in a certain context. Stella believes *p* to be true but she acknowledges that one part of her premises which lead up to her conclusion that *p* are controversial (her faith in God). While the acceptance of *p* as true critically hinges on the acceptance of these premises, Stella does not want to impose her view concerning these considerations on those around her, albeit she regards them as true. Thus, she continues to place credence in these premises, yet she separates them from other considerations, which are not purely faith-based. As a result, Stella arrives at two paradigms: one, with her faith-based considerations accepted as true; and another, with her faith-based considerations suspended. Stella is in a position to toggle on and off one part of her world-view (her Christian belief) and consequently arrive at different conclusions in different paradigms.

Lackey proposes to have evidence in favour of such a case from a 2007 New York Times article (2008: 49 n. 24). However, even if we agree that such cases exist, it is very doubtful whether such a scenario is an example of *reliable*

¹⁴ Cf. Lackey's notion of the "Reasonable to Believe Norm of Assertion" (2008: 124-129) according to which a speaker "should assert that *p* only if it is reasonable for one to believe that *p*, and if one asserted that *p*, one would assert that *p* at least in part because it is reasonable for one to assert that *p*" (ibid.: 125). While this norm is not violated by Stella's assertion, it shows that Lackey recognises that a belief is held within the realm of reason.

testimony that may constitute knowledge for a hearer. Certainly, there is a major distortion in the way the testimony is produced which essentially results in a pathological form of communication between the teacher and the pupils. As Alvin Plantinga (1993: 82-83) and Arindam Chakrabarti (1994: 110) have argued, there is a fortuitous connection between the testimony of the speaker on the one hand and the belief-formation within the audience on the other which hinders the scenario from being reliable.

Lackey (2008: 77-79) responds to this kind of objection by claiming that her modifications from the 1999 version to the 2008 version resolve the addressed problems. While the 1999-teacher testifies about evolutionary theory because it is required to do so by the school, the 2008-teacher does so because she recognises and values the scientific evidence in support of the Darwinian theory. However, this adaptation does not resolve the issues at hand: what Lackey offers is merely a shift in the underlying reason for the teacher to act upon from a factor which is in the teacher's environment (her school) to a factor that lies within her cognitive system (her evaluation). Yet, this does not increase the reliability of the proffered testimony – it might even be argued that such a shift *decreases* the reliability if the teacher's psychological goings-on are regarded as less stable than the school's policy on what is to be taught.

It seems fair to say that it is possible to believe one thing and assert another. Whenever a teacher acknowledges her school's requirement to teach something she does not personally believe in, the discord in her cognitive system need not be very complex: she merely asserts that *q* because it is required to do so. This is Lackey's original case from her (1999). If, on the other hand, Stella may teach whatever she deems to be the most reasonable theory available, and she arrives at this theory through her own research, then there has to be a proactive decision to switch between paradigms. In this sense, one would have to imagine two (or more) different paradigms between which a person can actively choose and pick. Indeed, this is the wording of Lackey's cited example of a palaeontologist who claims: "I am separating the different paradigms" (2008: 49 n. 24). As a consequence, a speaker's decision to move from one paradigm (the one she

believes in) to another (the one she does not believe in) introduces a distortion which undermines the reliability of her testimony.

In other words, there is a set of premises (concerning the belief in the creative powers of a Christian God) which can be considered true or false. Depending on whether one considers these premises (as true) or discards them (as false), the conclusion of what one believes to be true (evolutionary theory or creationism) will change. Naturally, Stella does not mention to her audience that her statement critically hinges on considerations of whether or not one accepts a set of background premises. Rather, she quietly makes a decision that the paradigm which she considers appropriate for herself is not appropriate for her students. In her private paradigm, the Christian premises are accepted as true and the best supported conclusion is that p is true (and q is false). In the testimonial paradigm, the premises are discarded as false and the best supported conclusion is that q is true (and p is false). This strikes me as a pathological form of testimony from which an audience cannot acquire knowledge.

In order to make this point clearer, we can imagine that Stella takes a sabbatical to teach at a Jainist school for a semester instead. She might recognise that the accepted belief among Jainists is that the universe is eternal and has always existed. Of course, this is in stark contrast to her belief that a Christian God created the universe out of nothing. Stella would now have to make a decision which paradigm is the most appropriate to choose from when she speaks about the origins of life. If we assume that she is now not only aware of the Darwinian scientific paradigm and the Christian paradigm but also of the Jainist paradigm, the complexity of her decision-making process has increased. It appears to be an unsupportable view that Stella may still simply choose a paradigm which she regards as the most appropriate for her audience and testify accordingly.

If a speaker deliberately picks one of a multitude of paradigms according to her audience then the testimonial scenario is severely deviant from an exemplar case. As such, »Creationist Teacher« can certainly not function as the spearhead of a new theory of testimony. The least we can say is that a case in which a speaker holds two or more contradictory paradigms in her cognitive system and chooses to adapt her statements according to her audience is a highly complex and

controversial scenario. I maintain that there are no clear intuitions about such a case and Lackey fails to show that an audience confronted with such a speaker comes to know from her statements regardless of the speaker's beliefs. To come to know that p from a speaker's statement that p requires that there be a reliable connection between p and the speaker's testimony that p . This condition is violated in »Creationist Teacher«. The example fails to rebut the TEP-N thesis.

b) »Consistent Liar«

The second case adds to the project set out by »Creationist Teacher«. A girl suffers from a brain lesion which has the (far-fetched) consequence that, for any sighting of an animal $\{a_1, a_2, \dots a_n\}$, whenever she sees an animal a_s , she believes it to be a token of animal a_{s+1} . A neurosurgeon recognises this pathology and, believing this to be the best available option, creates a second lesion which lets the girl lie consistently about her beliefs. As Lackey puts it:

“Unfortunately, Dr. Jones discovered during the surgery that he couldn't repair the lesion – instead, he decided to modify her current lesion and create another one so that her pattern of lying would be extremely consistent and would combine in a very precise way with a pattern of consistent perceptual unreliability.” (Ibid.: 54)

Thus, in every instance when the girl believes she saw a_{s+1} she now lies and testifies that she saw a_s . This applies to the whole range of animals the girl possibly sees, $\{a_1, a_2, \dots a_n\}$. Concerning her belief, the type of animal is shifted to the »next« species (a_{s+1}); concerning her testimony, the type of animal is shifted back to the »previous« species (a_{s+1-1}). As a result, and in accordance with »Creationist Teacher«, the imaginary girl now *reliably testifies* about something she herself does not believe and thus not know.¹⁵

An immediate objection to this case must arise by noting that there is no ordered list of animals $\{a_1, a_2, \dots a_n\}$ in the world within which the girl's belief and testimony can respectively shift to and fro. It is not clear why, as a result of the performed brain surgery, the girl would: see a_s , believe a_{s+1} and report a_s rather

¹⁵ I owe this form of presenting the case to some degree to Faulkner (2009: 482).

than: see a_s , believe a_{s+I} and report a_{s+x} . Lackey acknowledges this fact when she says that, instead of the actual lie, the girl “could tell an *unrelated* lie” (ibid.: 55, emphasis added). However, Lackey does not give any indication as to why the unrelated lie is any less likely to be uttered by the girl other than her inclination to lie in the aforementioned pattern due to the brain surgery. The girl simply fulfils Nozick’s sensitivity condition (Nozick 1981) and Sosa’s safety condition (Sosa 1996, 1999, 2002) *ex hypothesi*. In spite of the striking absurdity of the scenario on which this case rests, these issues shall be neglected for the moment as I believe there to be a far more fundamental problem with this counterexample.

Lackey’s overarching project is to understand the nature of human testimony and to comprehend what epistemological role testimony plays in our reality. Put differently, Lackey tries to make explicit what conditions need to be fulfilled in order for a hearer to acquire knowledge through the testimony of a speaker. In order to evaluate the ascription of hearer-knowledge, Lackey then needs *to respect the relevant societal and cognitive mechanisms* which are at work when we try to understand the nature of testimony.

Let me elaborate on what I mean by »the relevant societal and cognitive mechanisms«. Lackey acknowledges that a basic concept of human psychology is at the core of any speaker-hearer scenario. A testifier, in the true sense, is a person with intentional attitudes:

“[T]estimonial beliefs are acquired from *persons*. Persons, unlike other sources of belief, have all sorts of different intentions, desires, goals, motives, and so on.” (Lackey 2008: 189)

Bearing in mind the significant modification of the girl’s brain in Lackey’s example, it is therefore up for debate whether the hearer’s belief, that there is an animal a_s present, qualifies as a testimonial belief after all. The way the example goes, the speaker does not believe whatever statement she proffers and her saying so, although not consciously deceitful, is a case of leading others astray. The connection between the speaker’s intentional attitudes on the one hand and her

statements on the other is pathological to a degree where her personhood has become doubtful.¹⁶

Although Lackey (ibid.: 55-56) argues that »Consistent Liar« is not a case of inferential knowledge, there is nothing in the case that suggests this verdict. According to Faulkner (2011: 74), Lackey can appreciate knowledge we acquire from Bertha's reports as *testimonial* "only because she draws no distinction between such knowledge and inductive knowledge acquired from testimony." Edward Craig (1990: 35-44) introduces a useful distinction for this matter: testifying that *p* without holding the belief that *p* – *and without having any intention to convey the information that p* –, the girl falls short of being a "good informant" about her animal sightings and she can merely be used as a "source of information." Craig's concept of an informant is roughly that of a person with an intention, a capacity to empathise with an enquirer and a propensity to cooperate with other people. Conversely, mere sources of information are "states of affairs [...] which have evidential value: information can be gleaned from them" (ibid.: 35) "[but] they have none of the psychology of the prototypical informant" (ibid.: 38).

For Craig, the concept of testimonial knowledge is strongly tied to the idea of a good informant; beliefs acquired from sources of information, on the contrary, are not prototypical instances of testimony. At this stage, the consistently lying girl fits Craig's description of a source of information like a glove: she has no intention of conveying a belief she holds, but rather there is merely a consistent pattern in her utterances which enables a hearer to extract information from her statements.

Although probably not purposely, Lackey's wording in her description of the case is consistent with Craig's account: "[I]t is clear that [the girl's] *statements*, unlike her *beliefs*, are an excellent epistemic *source of information* about wild animals" (2008: 55, final emphasis added). The consequences of these considerations for Craig are that the route to a reliable belief through a source of information is by far not as straightforward as via a good informant. Put

¹⁶ I will reraise this issue in section 3.1.3 when I attempt a general refutation of Lackey's critique of reductionism.

differently, a hearer is not entitled to testimonial knowledge from a mere source of information without additional background knowledge and supplementary (inferential) epistemic work.

For Lackey, there are two possible strategies to respond to this objection: either, to insist that the girl, in spite of the profound modifications of her brain, is still a person in the full sense with beliefs and desires relevant for her statements; or, to work with a definition of testimony which directly and explicitly subsumes cases in which a speaker does not (necessarily) intend to convey the information that her statement reasonably contains. I take both of these strategies to fail.

Concerning the first option, in order for the girl to be a person – and not, say, a mechanical instrument which has been hard-wired to function in only one, exactly foreseeable way – her intentional attitudes must be able to manifest themselves in the form of choices. In other words, the girl's beliefs and desires must be given the chance to combine in a variety of ways which she can choose from and according to which she can *act*. Only when her intentional attitudes play a role in determining the course of her actions can we speak of a person in the full-blooded sense. However, the ascription of a certain leeway concerning beliefs and desires upon which the girl acts *in combination with her absolute incompetence and insincerity* must have a detrimental effect on the reliability of the truth-conduciveness of her statements.

It is true that Lackey, being committed to her SVT, emphasises that a speaker's competence and sincerity are not necessary conditions for a successful testimonial scenario. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that she holds that these two features – competence as a believer and sincerity as a testifier – are precisely the “two aspects that are often involved in rendering a speaker a reliable testifier” (ibid.: 189). Lackey does not provide an argument in favour of why neither the fact that the girl has no true beliefs nor the fact that she never says what she believes to be true affect the reliability of her testimony in a negative way. Presumably, the reliability of her statements has to suffer if the two salient conditions of Lackey's example are fulfilled: she exclusively forms false beliefs and she lies about her false beliefs without exception.

Concerning the second option, Lackey could accept that the girl in her example does not act according to her intentional attitudes when she proffers her testimony while still being a person overall. Since Lackey admits that the notion of testimony is tied to the notion of a person, the consistently lying girl still has to have beliefs and desires in general – for only, Lackey might say, they play no role in this singled-out case of testimony.

It is not clear, however, how Lackey would formulate an attempt to revise our concept of testimony by means of a philosophical counterexample when the very example she presents has to be regarded as an exception to the general rule. Claiming that the girl is a person with intentional attitudes in general – but that these intentional attitudes have no role to play in her reports about animal sightings – would make the whole endeavour of the counterexample contradictory.

Lackey does, in fact, introduce a definition of testimony under which a speaker, qua person, does not have to intend in any way to convey the very information she is actually conveying. Under the description of her “disjunctive view of the nature of testimony (DVNT)” (ibid.: 35-36) it suffices that *either* the speaker “reasonably intends to convey the information that p” *or* the act of communication “is or should be reasonably taken as conveying the information that p.” Such a move would allow for precisely the kind of breathing-space Lackey needs: to let assertions count as testimony even in case that the speaker is not a person in the sense that her intentional attitudes are relevant in any way for her utterance.

Yet, I regard this move to be too drastic. To broaden the scope of testimony by claiming that it is not necessary that a speaker “reasonably intends to convey the information that p” is tantamount to saying that testimony may stem from any source, not just from a person. As a consequence, Lackey has to reintroduce this as an extra condition – that testimony has to stem from a person – while maintaining that the personhood need not have any relation to the utterance in question. On Lackey’s terms, it suffices that the hearer *supposes* that a certain statement comes from a person even if the personhood of that person is not causally responsible for the proffered report. There is a sense in which this broad

definition of testimony is controversial as it makes it impossible to distinguish between a person who intends to tell the temperature outside and a thermometer with an audio output. I take the speaker condition of the DVNT as a necessary condition on testimony and thus reject the idea that »Consistent Liar« presents a purely (or even predominantly) testimonial scenario.¹⁷

c) »Doubting Thomas«

»Doubting Thomas« is merely a variation of the second case. Therefore, the same objections apply *mutatis mutandis*. At the core of the example is a brilliant scientist Thomas, who is crippled by severe self-doubt. As a result, he fails to believe his own findings, *p*, yet his audience is able to get to know that *p* via his testimony:

“After uncovering evidence that [*p*], his doubts prevent him from coming to believe in the truth of this evidence. Nevertheless, his intellectual integrity leads him to feel an obligation to present his true and reliably acquired research to his colleagues, most of whom readily accept his testimony [...]” (Ibid.: 58 n. 39)

Naturally, as the example is not built around a modified human brain, the first objection from »Consistent Liar« (against Lackey’s treatment of actual societal and cognitive mechanisms) is to be dropped. Similarly, the initial concern that animals are not found in a list has no application here. Instead, however, there are analogous problems with how the situation is described: the presentation of new scientific findings which are to be added to the existing body of knowledge cannot be regarded as a straightforward, one-dimensional testimonial procedure where a speaker tells a hearer that *p* and the hearer gets to know that *p* by this process

¹⁷ To be precise, Lackey (2008: 56 n. 35) insists that the girl in »Consistent Liar« fulfils not only the hearer condition of the DVNT but also the speaker condition: “[U]nlike non-testimonial sources of information – such as thermometers and odometers – [the girl] reasonably intends to convey information in virtue of the communicable content of her assertion, even if she does not intend to express the particular content that she does.” Such an understanding of the speaker condition, however, results in an insupportably wide notion of testimony. Under such a description, every instance of a slip of a tongue, every misunderstood acataphasy or misconceived blabber which is (for whatever reason) reliably true would arguably lead to testimonial hearer-knowledge – I take this to be an undesirable outcome.

simpliciter. The code of conduct would require a scientific debate as well as independent corroboration or rejection of the theses. As Johnathan Adler puts it:

“[I]n any institutional setting, such as science, where information is acquired purposefully, application of testimony is to be expected, so that the dependence upon trust is soon swamped by success or failure in its use.” (Adler 1994: 267)

Thus, hearer-knowledge on such grounds could never be purely testimonial. If, then, after a certain level of scrutiny and review, the researcher would still not believe his own (corroborated) results and disregard what is now commonly regarded as positive evidence, it seems that this would again be a case of a »cognitive malfunction« à la Audi.

2.3.2. The speaker has an undefeated defeater

The first three cases are about a speaker who testifies that p without believing that p due to an impossible ambiguity of her mental states (»Creationist Teacher«), surreal brain lesions (»Consistent Liar«) or inadequate scientific belief-formation processes (»Doubting Thomas«). All three of these examples are improper alterations of the reality Lackey is trying to understand. In contrast, the examples four, five and six deal with a scenario where a speaker has an undefeated defeater about a proposition (accordingly, the speaker does not know the proposition in question) which is not transferred to the hearer (so the hearer may have testimonial knowledge about the proposition). The result would be hearer-knowledge without preceding speaker-knowledge.

In order to reject Lackey's refutation of the TEP-N thesis it is necessary that no counterexample is accepted as cast-iron proof against the belief view. In principle, it would suffice for her account if there were a single indisputable counterexample. Yet, I will argue that also the following three cases fall short of providing a compelling argument against the TEP-N thesis.

a) »Persistent Believer«

In the fourth example, »Persistent Believer«, a speaker testifies about her visual perception, and in so doing ignores the medical advice she received that her

perceptions are impaired after having undergone surgery. Lackey argues that knowledge, although missing on the side of the speaker, is nevertheless acquired by the hearer for he does not know anything about the surgery and any potential consequences for the speaker's reliability. The argument is thus built on the idea that the speaker has a psychological defeater which is not transferred to the hearer. In Lackey's formulation:

"Millicent in fact possesses her normal visual powers, but she has cogent reasons to believe that these powers are temporarily deranged. She is the subject of a neurosurgeon's experiments, and the surgeon falsely tells her that some implants are causing malfunction in her visual cortex. While she is persuaded that her present visual appearances are an entirely unreliable guide to reality, she continues to place credence in her visual appearances. She ignores her well-supported belief in the incapacitation of her visual faculty; [the beliefs she forms] are all, in fact, true and they are formed by the usual, quite reliable perceptual processes. [...] On the basis of her visual experience, she forms the corresponding true belief that [*p*], and then later reports this fact to her friend Bradley without communicating the neurosurgeon's testimony to him." (Lackey 2008: 59)

Construed in this way, however, the example downplays a crucial point: while testifying, the speaker leaves out very relevant pieces of information about her current state of mind. She was well aware of the fact that her vision is likely to be significantly impaired at the time – she *believes* her vision to be impaired –, yet omits this piece of information in her testimony. The speaker has a defeater which she decides not to mention alongside the content of the statement she proffers. This is deceitful and an epistemically reprehensible practice. Had the speaker been open about her situation and disclosed that she had been told (and that she believes) that she is currently unreliable when it comes to her visual perceptions this alone would have been enough to establish a defeater for the hearer. The hearer, then, would not be said to know, either.

Lackey refuses to believe that defeaters are transferred to the hearer in testimonial scenarios. I concur with this view. Defeaters, much like a warrant, cannot hitchhike their way from person to person. Instead, there is an epistemic burden on the hearer to be sensitive to indicators of falsity when being told

something.¹⁸ The defeater for the hearer would have to be established anew, by and through the hearer herself.

Consequently, in »Persistent Believer«, the question is not whether or not the speaker's defeater is transferred to the hearer – it seems non-controversial that it is *not* – but rather whether Millicent's deceitful report may reasonably constitute testimonial knowledge. Millicent is dishonest when she presents her true belief that *p* as knowledge that *p* when in fact she knew that she had a defeater for the belief in question. As I understand it, Millicent could have just as well based her belief that *p* on wishful thinking; she is convinced that the process which led to her belief that *p* was epistemically inadequate. Under such circumstances it is doubtful if Bradley can really come to know from her report. The relationship between what Millicent believes to be the case and what Millicent reports to be the case is entirely arbitrary. My intuition is that, for this reason, her reports fail to be reliably true. As a result, knowledge cannot be ascribed to the hearer.

To counter Lackey's example, imagine a case in which I stand at the patio window with my eyes closed (for the sake of the argument my eyes have been closed ever since I was standing at the window). On the face of it, I am looking outside when my friend asks me whether his dog is outside in the garden. Standing behind me, my friend is unable to see that I have my eyes closed and so takes me to be a good testifier on the subject. I could open my eyes and actually look outside, or I could tell my friend that I do not know because I have my eyes closed. However, since I am already annoyed by the repeated questions about the whereabouts of the dog, I decide to simply say: »Yes it is.« In fact, the dog is outside and my friend believes me that the dog is outside. What is more, my friend has good reasons to believe me when I say his dog is outside as I am usually very caring and thoughtful about my friend's concerns. In fact, it was the very first time that I lost my temper about the dog and deceitfully gave an answer for which I had no grounds.

In the described situation, certainly *I* did not know that the dog was outside. I had no grounds for such a belief since I knew my eyes were closed but I decided

¹⁸ I take it that this minimum requirement is one which reductionists, non-reductionists, and dualists (like Lackey) could agree with.

not to mention this to my friend. By this very omission I consciously deceive my friend by presenting something as knowledge when actually I do not know the proposition in question. For this reason, I argue that neither my friend in the counterexample nor the hearer in Lackey's case can gain knowledge through testimony as long as crucial parts of information are deceitfully omitted by the speaker.

To speak with Nozick, there is a (relevant) close possible world in which the speaker's defeater is mentioned and this alone would install a defeater for the hearer. It seems unreasonable to ascribe knowledge to the hearer with the epistemic basis for so doing being precisely the omission of epistemically relevant information. Had I honestly mentioned that my eyes were closed my friend would not have come to form a justified belief that the dog is outside. Likewise, had the girl mentioned her belief that she is presumably unreliable the hearer would not have justifiedly believed her testimony.

b) »Serious Student«

The main character of »Serious Student« has sceptical doubts. He does not know where the next Starbucks is simply due to the fact that he, qua sceptic, does not believe to hold any knowledge at all. His scepticism notwithstanding, the speaker testifies about the location of the next Starbucks without mentioning that he holds not to know this:

“[...] Bartholomew finds himself in the grips of skeptical worries that are so strong that he can scarcely be said to know anything at all. [...] Audrey [...] asks him where the nearest Starbucks is, and he reports that it is around the corner – which he believes from having seen it there himself – but does not report his skeptical worries to her.” (Ibid.: 61)

Lackey's aim, once again, is to create a scenario where a hearer gets to know that *p* via the testimony of a speaker who is ignorant concerning *p*. Her strategy in »Serious Student« is to situate the speaker and the hearer in different contexts so that the standards of knowledge attribution vary for the two people involved:

“[A] testifier in one context may be able to impart knowledge [...] that she cannot properly attribute to herself to a hearer in another context because,

relative to such contexts, they are held to different epistemic standards.”
(Ibid.: 62)

Following Lackey, the difference in the philosopher’s verdict between the hearer and the speaker stems from the idea that they find themselves in distinct epistemic contexts. The speaker, being a sceptic, may believe that *p* and also report that *p*, but he cannot himself know that *p*. The hearer, being an ordinary person without sceptical worries, may come to know that *p* on the basis of the speaker’s say-so.

However, this presentation of the scenario is flawed for Lackey’s assessment suffers from a misunderstanding of contextualism. The alleged divergence in the verdict of the knowledge attribution between Bartholomew and Audrey can only arise from an illegitimate manipulation of the contextual standards. Ultimately, *either both or neither of them know that p*, depending on whether the judgement is made according to the sceptical or the ordinary standard. It is illegitimate to blend the two perspectives.

The basic idea of contextualism is that the attribution of knowledge to a person will depend on minimum standards of what it is to know something. This will vary depending on features of the context of an interlocution (cf. DeRose 1992, 1995). Accordingly, some conversational contexts require higher standards of knowledge than others. A person may know that *p* in one context and yet, if the conversational environment changes, fail to know that *p* in another. The context, here, is a function of various features which determine the frame of reference for the requirements of knowledge.

A famous example to illustrate this idea is Dretske’s zoo (1970: 1015-1016): looking at what appear to be zebras, a man would normally claim to know that he is looking at zebras. However, if he were told that the zoo might have painted mules to look like zebras in order to fool its visitors, his knowledge is called into question. Therefore, whether or not the man knows that he is looking at zebras depends on how high the standard for such knowledge is set. This is a question of relevant alternatives: as long as the man is only asked to tell zebras from other well-known animals at the zoo, he can legitimately claim to know that he is looking at zebras. Then, as soon as somebody challenges him by asking if he

could distinguish between a mule which is cleverly painted to look like a zebra and an actual zebra, his most appropriate response may be to admit that he does not know that he is looking at actual zebras. In the second case, the difference is that the conversational context has been manipulated by raising the threshold for knowledge to a higher standard.

At this point, it is important to note that, by default, not every alternative is a *relevant* alternative (ibid.: 1022). Had the man asserted, say, to his child that he knew that the animals in front of them are zebras, in ordinary conditions, his behaviour would certainly not be epistemically blameworthy. It is only after the features of the scenario are manipulated that his claim to knowledge would be intuitively false. As soon as the possibility of mules disguised as zebras is a feature of the scenario, it must be regarded as a relevant alternative for that interlocution. This alternative is irrelevant until it is introduced; it can be *made* a relevant alternative if some feature of the scenario changes and raises the standard for knowledge.

This is where Lackey goes astray in »Serious Student«. The way the example is presented, there is (and can be) no feature of the conversational context which reasonably calls for a higher standard of what it is to know something. On the contrary: there are features of the interlocution between Bartholomew and Audrey which indicate that the only reasonable standard to apply is the ordinary standard (according to which Bartholomew *knows* where the nearest Starbucks is).

Bartholomew's sceptical worries are indeed capable of raising the standard of what can count as knowledge. Yet, nothing in the interlocution points to such a manipulation of the context. Bartholomew does not mention his sceptical worries to Audrey and he seems to have forgotten about them even for himself during the conversation. Without hesitating, he readily sends Audrey into the direction of where he believes the Starbucks to be. This is an indication for the fact that his sceptical worries do not play any role in the context of the interlocution.

Indeed, Bartholomew is most probably aware of the fact that already the question asked by Audrey is meaningful only in a non-sceptical context. As a consequence, all contextual indicators suggest that the standard for knowledge is

not as high as philosophical scepticism would require and Bartholomew must acknowledge that according to such standards he knows where the nearest Starbucks is. His failure to acknowledge that would be epistemically unreasonable and would most likely result in a bizarre dialogue between Audrey and him.¹⁹

The fact that maybe later – after Bartholomew arrived at home and looked through the notes from his philosophy class – he realises that he cannot rule out that he is a brain in a vat and therefore does not know anything does not change the context of the conversation he had earlier. If anything, a new assessment of the case under new circumstances will lead to a different verdict; but these two assessments cannot be blended into one. The epistemic context and with it the standard for knowledge are *a function of contextual indicators*. There must be features of a scenario which set this standard. An analysis of knowledge attribution must therefore respond to such contextual indicators and arrive at a conclusion about the adequate standard for knowledge. If, and only if, there are features of a scenario which indicate that philosophical scepticism is a relevant view for the situation which is to be assessed, the standard for the entire interlocution may be manipulated.

As such, Audrey might have phrased her question differently, like: »Given what we learned today, do you *really* know where the nearest Starbucks is?« Likewise, Bartholomew might have had his sceptical worries in mind during the conversation and he might have responded by saying: »I remember having the visual sensation of a Starbucks around the corner. But given that I might be continuously deceived by a daemon, there may not actually *be* a Starbucks there.« Both of these formulations would have introduced philosophical scepticism as a relevant alternative for the attribution of knowledge to Bartholomew and Audrey. Without such changes, however, it seems clear that Audrey is not looking for certainty on the ontological status of the Starbucks in light of sceptical considerations; she is (merely) looking for (the sensation of drinking) a coffee

¹⁹ Imagine, for instance, that Bartholomew answers: »I do not know where the next Starbucks is. I do not know anything because I cannot rule out the possibility that I am a brain in a vat.« The most appropriate response from Audrey would then be to say: »I do not care about the possibility of being a brain in a vat. I want to drink a coffee. For my purposes it completely suffices to find the nearest Starbucks according to an ordinary non-sceptical context.«

which clearly sets the standard low enough for Bartholomew to speak from knowledge.

In this respect, the ordinary context is the only *reasonable* context for the matter in question and as long as the sceptical alternative is not made a feature of the case it cannot alter this context. The sceptical alternative is no relevant alternative in »Serious Student«. Making it a relevant alternative at a later, unrelated, stage is not apt to manipulate the context of the interlocution.

Without any feature of the conversation between Bartholomew and Audrey relating to the possibility of being a brain in a vat, the standards of philosophical scepticism are not reasonable for the situation at stake (cf. DeRose 2009: 141-142).²⁰ There is no meaningful way in which Audrey could seek to be informed about the location of the nearest Starbucks according to the standards of philosophical scepticism. Arguably, the sceptical context may be introduced, but even then it cannot be regarded as a reasonable alternative if we presume that Audrey ultimately just wants to have (the sensation of drinking) a coffee. Bartholomew simply has to recognise that *the nature of the question asked by Audrey only makes sense in non-sceptical terms*. There is no meaningful way to even look for that information in the light of scepticism. The way »Serious Student« is presented, the sceptical context is irrelevant and Bartholomew speaks from knowledge when he tells Audrey about the Starbucks. It is for this reason that making the speaker a sceptic is not a viable pursuit to affect the TEP-N thesis.

c) »Dogmatic Believer«

The last counterexample against the TEP-N thesis, »Dogmatic Believer«, is analogous to »Persistent Believer« and effectively I take them to be the same. Lackey argues that the former contains a *psychological* defeater while the latter contains a *normative* defeater for the speaker. In »Persistent Believer«, as quoted above, the speaker “is persuaded that her present visual appearances are an

²⁰ DeRose does not fully endorse the view that one context is to be regarded as more reasonable than another. In general, I concur with his argument that such a view has the undesirable consequence that the sceptic and the ordinary context are in contradiction (that is: if one is true the other must be false). However, the examples DeRose mentions are in principle very different from »Serious Student«. The nature of the question asked by Audrey in »Serious Student« as well as the way the conversation between Bartholomew and Audrey goes lead me to think that the argument of reasonability is indeed an appropriate response to the challenge posed by Lackey.

entirely unreliable guide to reality [yet] she continues to place credence in her visual appearances” (ibid.: 59). In »Dogmatic Believer« the speaker “is told [...] that her vision is extremely unreliable [yet] she refuses to accept this diagnosis” (ibid.: 62). I fail to see why one case results in a psychological, the other in a normative defeater.

The key difference between normative and psychological defeaters lies in just how they constitute epistemic irrationality within a person’s belief-system. While both kinds of defeaters prevent knowledge concerning a certain proposition *p*, psychological defeaters do so “by virtue of being *had* by [a subject], regardless of their truth-value or epistemic status” whereas normative defeaters do so “by virtue of being doubts or beliefs that [a subject] *should have* (whether or not [she] does have them) given the presence of certain available evidence” (ibid.: 45). The upshot of this idea is that if a person has a psychological defeater or ought to have a normative defeater with regards to *p* (that is itself undefeated) this suffices to preclude this person from knowing that *p*.

However, as Lackey’s argumentation is such that neither normative nor psychological defeaters are transferred via testimony it is, in any case, the same arguments that are to be put forward against her view. The non-transmissibility of a defeater is not the operative point of the argument; rather, »Dogmatic Believer« fails for the same reason as »Persistent Believer«: because Lackey provides an inadequate presentation of how a hearer can get to know on the basis of testimony.

The upshot is that also the three examples in which the speaker has an undefeated defeater, »Persistent Believer«, »Serious Student« and »Dogmatic Believer«, are not apt to refute the TEP-N thesis. This is true for one of the two following reasons: either, the speaker’s testimony is to be regarded as the genuine basis of the hearer’s belief – then, however, the reason for which the speaker lacks knowledge is a fortiori a reason not to ascribe hearer-knowledge. The omission of the information about the speaker’s defeater is not compatible with the hearer obtaining knowledge. Or, the philosopher’s verdict is that the hearer does have

knowledge about the proposition in question – then, however, this knowledge can never be truly testimonial in nature.

In this sense, whenever the hearer wants to acquire knowledge from an ignorant speaker quite a profound contribution on the hearer-side is necessary to establish knowledge in a reliable way. It is then merely *corroboration*, that is to say additional evidence, that a hearer can extract from such reports and the speaker depreciates from being a »good informant« to being a mere »source of information«. This is then the (quite different) story of a hearer who is well-informed about a speaker's defeater and, at the same time, possesses a defeater-defeater in order to acquire the knowledge in question. Here, however, one would not be prone to speak of knowledge as being acquired purely (or even predominantly) on the basis of the proffered testimony.²¹

2.4. TRANSMISSIBILITY AND THE BELIEF VIEW

Throughout the previous two sections, I discussed Lackey's philosophical counterexamples which she introduces to reject the views that speaker-knowledge is sufficient to establish hearer-knowledge (section 2.1) and that it is necessary to establish hearer-knowledge (section 2.2). Her three examples to reject the

²¹ Lackey (2008: 63 n. 45) addresses this problem herself when she suggests that the speaker in »Serious Student« could be frank about his defeater. Similar to my view, Lackey acknowledges that a variation of the case where a hearer is in possession of a defeater-defeater "relies too heavily on the hearer's background information and, thus, compromises the purely testimonial nature of the knowledge in question" (ibid.). Although I appreciate this conclusion, I believe Lackey is going astray in her analysis of this point.

Concerning the two analogous cases »Persistent Believer« and »Dogmatic Believer« there are two options for the evaluation of (testimonial) hearer-knowledge: in the original presentation of the case (in which the speaker obscures the fact that she has a knowledge-defeating belief) the hearer does not get to know, either. The speaker's defeater is a fortiori a defeater for the hearer. If the scenario is altered in that the speaker is open about her defeater this would prevent the hearer from knowing, too. If, ex hypothesi, the hearer knows anyway, this knowledge would not be testimonial in nature. Lackey provides this chain of argument for the »Serious Student« case. On my view, however, these options are available only for »Persistent Believer« and »Dogmatic Believer«.

The scenario in »Serious Student« is a different one: whether or not the speaker is open about his sceptical doubts is not the critical feature of the case. His sceptical doubts, shared or not, do not defeat the practical knowledge about the location of the next Starbucks – neither for the speaker nor for the hearer. Consequently, if the speaker is said not to know where the next Starbucks is *in a relevant kind of way*, the defeater has to be anything but his sceptical tenor (cf. my argumentation above). Such a reinterpretation leads us back to the first two cases. Within the framework of Lackey's argument, however, the speaker *does* know, and therefore the epistemic status of the speaker does not pose a problem for the evaluation of hearer-knowledge.

sufficiency claim make a strong case against the idea that a hearer always gets to know that p from the testimony of a speaker as long as the speaker knows that p . On the contrary, her six examples concerning the necessity claim fall short of providing a basis from which to rebut the view that speaker-knowledge matters for a successful testimonial exchange.

The corollary of the discussion of these nine cases is that the rejection of the TEP-N thesis is Lackey's weak point in her argumentation against the transmission principle. Her claim that it is possible for a speaker to reliably testify that p without holding the belief that p appears to be distorted. Judging from the provided counterexamples, it does not seem plausible in any of the scenarios for a hearer to come to know that p on the basis of the unknowing speaker's testimony. I maintain that there are no clear, unequivocal intuitions which speak in favour of Lackey's verdicts concerning her counterexamples.

Since Lackey chooses to reject the belief view on the basis of philosophical counterexamples her analysis would have to provide an airtight proof of the shortcomings of the common BVT. Throughout this Chapter, however, I have attempted to show that this is not the case. Instead, Lackey merely manages to provide compelling arguments against the TEP-S thesis. Her examples against the TEP-N thesis raise critical questions about their respective interpretations and as such are not strong enough to function as a basis from which to unhinge the belief view. As Faulkner writes:

“The problem is that in arguing against an established view – and it is important to the originality of Lackey's position that the belief view *is* the established view – one inherits a burden of proof, so any argument by counterexample must involve a case that is *entirely plausible and not open to reinterpretation*. Lackey's cases [...] do not come near satisfying this desideratum.” (Faulkner 2009: 481)

Essentially, there are two facets to Lackey's project: the first point is her discussion of the impossibility of a transmission of epistemic warrant from a speaker to a hearer; the second point, which derives from the first point, is her attempt to shift the focus from beliefs to statements in the epistemological debate.

Lackey's idea is this: if it doesn't matter whether or not the speaker knows that p – because her justificatory basis for p is not transferable to the hearer in any kind of way – then a second step to disregard the intentional state the speaker is in appears to be the obvious next move. Yet, those two aspects are not as closely intertwined as Lackey would like them to be. There is a critical gap between those two facets; *the SVT does not follow from the non-transmissibility of epistemic justification*.

It is a relevant distinction for any theory of testimony if, on the one hand, a person reports that p because she believes that p and she wants to provide a basis for the hearer to also come to believe that p or, on the other hand, if she reports that p in spite of believing that $\neg p$, or without holding the belief that p , or without having the intention to report that p , or without having the intention to report that p as true.

In summary, I acknowledge that epistemic credentials are not transferable from a speaker to a hearer via testimony. I also acknowledge that speaker-knowledge that p is not sufficient for testimonial hearer-knowledge that p . However, I hold that the BVT is not unhinged by Lackey's discussion of the transmissibility of epistemic credentials as she fails to show that speaker-knowledge is also not a necessary condition for testimonial hearer-knowledge.

To claim that beliefs on the speaker-side *do not matter epistemically for the hearer* is equivalent to claiming that the speaker's beliefs have no influence on the nature and quality of the proffered testimony. A person's intentional attitudes, and thus a person's *beliefs*, have a role to play in speaker-hearer scenarios. I find it undeniable that there are epistemologically relevant connections between what a person believes and what a person reports – Lackey tries to downplay this connection by her counterexamples in which actual psychological and sociological mechanisms remain unappreciated.

As a result, Lackey oversimplifies the epistemology of testimony by sweeping the speaker's intentional attitudes under the carpet. To argue, in a convincing fashion, that epistemic credentials do not piggyback off of the content of a proffered statement does not entail that these credential are negligible. Rather,

the corollary must be that, in any testimonial exchange, the hearer cannot delegate the full epistemic workload to the speaker.

Even in a case in which the speaker has a profound justificatory basis for her belief that p the hearer cannot tap this basis or make it her own simply by acknowledging the content of the proffered testimony. Grosso modo, the hearer has to contribute and identify whether the testimony stems from a person, who intends to convey the message that p as true. The nature of this contribution is at the heart of the epistemological debate of reductionism versus non-reductionism. While reductionists claim that a hearer needs to have independent positive reasons to justifiedly believe the words of others non-reductionists hold that the absence of negative reasons to disbelieve a proffered statement suffices to obtain a justified testimonial belief. Chapter Three deals with this debate.

3. REDUCTIONISM VERSUS NON-REDUCTIONISM

In Chapter Two, I tried to defend the view that testimony is best regarded as the expression of a belief, which is the standard view in the modern epistemology of testimony. Lackey (esp. 1999, 2008) provides an elaborate attempt to substitute this BVT with a statement-oriented perspective on testimony; as a result, in unorthodox cases – in which a hearer acquires a true belief from the testimony of a more or less defect believer – knowledge would be attributed to the hearer on Lackey's grounds since it is *the statement itself* which carries the epistemic properties. However, throughout the previous Chapter, her arguments to install the SVT were shown to fail on a case-by-case basis as all of her philosophical counterexamples appear to be flawed in a significant way.

At this stage, with the transmissibility of epistemic warrant rejected yet with the BVT intact, the scope of the investigation can be broadened to attend to what is the core of the present debate in the epistemology of testimony: “the problem of showing how it can be the case that a hearer on a particular occasion has *the epistemic right to believe what she is told* – to believe a particular speaker's assertion” (Fricker 1994: 128, emphasis added). Traditionally, two strands have been available in the philosophical literature to address this problem: *reductionism* and *non-reductionism*.²²

The distinction between reductionist and non-reductionist accounts in the epistemology of testimony essentially hinges on two questions: first, are the epistemic properties of testimonial knowledge *reducible* to the epistemic properties of one or more of the allegedly more basic sources of knowledge – perception, memory and inference – and second, and relatedly, are *independent positive reasons* necessary for a hearer to acquire knowledge from a speaker's testimony? Reductionists answer affirmatively to both questions while non-

²² Arguably, the dichotomy between reductionism and non-reductionism exists in a number of applications within and beyond philosophy. What interests us here, however, is a distinction entirely confined to the epistemology of testimony. Coady was the first to apply this comparison to the epistemology of testimony in his (1973). Although Coady coins the label »anti-reductionism«, I will stick to »non-reductionism« and take these two expressions to be synonymous.

reductionists deny each of the two claims. Consequently, reductionists put a greater responsibility on the hearer who has to continuously monitor a testimonial exchange for positive reasons to support a speaker's testimony whereas non-reductionists shift the attention towards the speaker who is faced with a hearer who is credulous by default.

Lackey's view of the discussion is that these two dominant views of the epistemic status of testimonial beliefs are equally misguided and that "insofar as we wish to make genuine progress in the epistemology of testimony, we need to move beyond the debate between reductionism and non-reductionism" (Lackey 2008: 194). I entirely concur with this verdict. A dichotomous divide between the two strands is not able to yield the essence of the notion of testimony.

I am convinced that there has to be a critique of reductionist positions as they are currently found in the philosophical literature. Lackey's discussion, however, has inherent problems and thus falls short of its goal to rebuff reductionism. Likewise, there has to be a critique of the currently available non-reductionist positions in epistemology. Analogously, however, Lackey does not provide a solid basis from which to reject non-reductionism. In other words, while I agree with Lackey's agenda to point out the limitations in both reductionism and non-reductionism, I disagree with her concrete chains of argumentation against these two views.

The following sections 3.1 and 3.2 will deal with what I regard as the shortcomings of Lackey's discussion of reductionism and non-reductionism respectively. I will begin by introducing Lackey's understanding and criticism of reductionism (sections 3.1.1 and 3.1.2) to then present my objections to her views (section 3.1.3). Accordingly, sections 3.2.1 and 3.2.2 illustrate Lackey's understanding and criticism of non-reductionism, before I will argue against her presentation in section 3.2.3.

3.1. REDUCTIONISM

3.1.1. Lackey's understanding of reductionism

Lackey acknowledges that there is a common distinction between two forms of reductionism: global reductionism (GR) and local reductionism (LR). GR relates back to passages of David Hume's (2000) *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, and especially to his §§ 88 and 89 of section X, »Of Miracles«. Conveying the argument that (testimonial) belief in the truth of Christian Scripture must be regarded as far less evident than (perceptual) belief in the truth of objects we observe with our senses, Hume notoriously writes:

“The reason why we place any credit in witnesses and historians, is not derived from any connexion, which we perceive à priori, between testimony and reality, but because we are accustomed to find a conformity between them.” (Ibid.: § 89)

On this view, we believe a speaker because we have become accustomed to a special *accord* between testimonial reports and what we believe (independently of those reports) to be true. As Coady maintains, such a view can be understood as a process by which the epistemic properties of testimonial knowledge invariably boil down to the epistemic properties of inference and ultimately to our direct perceptual observations:

“[Hume's] theory constitutes a reduction of testimony as a form of evidence or support to the status of a species (one might almost say, a mutation) of inductive inference. And, again, insofar as inductive inference is reduced by Hume to a species of observation and consequences attendant upon observations then in a like fashion testimony meets the same fate.” (Coady 1973: 149)

The upshot of these considerations is that testimonial knowledge is always dependent upon other sources of epistemic justification and that any such source which justifies testimonial knowledge is regarded as epistemically more fundamental. Since, ipso facto, a testimonial source cannot provide ultimate

justifying reasons for a belief, testimonial justification inevitably reduces to justification from perception, memory and inference.

The Humean view thus suggest a highly individualistic conception of knowledge as any agent would have to be in a position to justify her beliefs by reference to her own direct (non-testimonial) experience. Such a notion has been heavily criticised as, with strong evident limits about the reach of any person's direct experiential observations, GR runs the risk of rendering the category of testimonial knowledge very narrow, or even resulting in testimonial scepticism.²³ In the tradition of Tony Coady (esp. 1992) and Alvin Goldman (esp. 2002) it is therefore widely accepted that "such sweeping *global* reductionism has gone out of fashion" (Gelfert 2009: 172).

Lackey, in line with this view, does not think that a general reliability of testimony (as a unitary category) can be established as a justificatory basis for hearer-knowledge (Lackey 2008: 146-148). With GR out of the picture she thus focuses her rejection of reductionism on LR. Her main target is Elizabeth Fricker (esp. 1994, 1995). Fricker rebuts the idea that all-encompassing a posteriori knowledge serves to establish a general reliability of testimony. Instead, on her grounds, *testimony reduces locally* in that each and every instance of testimony requires its own corroborating positive reasons to be justified.

Lackey does not explicitly give a summary of the full account she sets out to criticise. However, from her presentation of how the weaknesses of reductionism are to be overcome it can be understood that the following definition of LR is what Lackey has in mind:

LR: A hearer is epistemically entitled to believe a speaker's testimony
 that *p* iff

²³ Cf. Coady (1992: 82) when he writes: "[M]any of us have never seen a baby born, nor have most of us examined the circulation of the blood nor the actual geography of the world nor any fair sample of the laws of the land, nor have we made the observations that lie behind our knowledge that the lights in the sky are heavenly bodies immensely distant nor a vast number of other observations that [global reductionism] would seem to require." In a similar spirit, Faulkner (1998: 303) refuses to adopt testimonial scepticism: "[...] I do not merely believe that there is a major ocean current flowing from the Gulf of Mexico to North-West Europe but I know that there is. Likewise, I do not merely believe that there have been two World Wars this century, but I know that this is so."

- (1) the hearer comes to believe that p on the basis of the content of the speaker's testimony;
- (2) there are no indications of insincerity of the speaker and the hearer is counterfactually sensitive to such indications;
- (3) *either* the hearer is in a developmental phase of her epistemic understanding, *or*²⁴ the proffered testimony is about a mundane subject-matter, *or* the hearer has a posteriori, non-testimonial, positive reasons to believe that the speaker is competent with regards to the particular testimony at stake; and
- (4) the hearer has acquired these reasons as a combination of, on the one hand, relevant non-testimonial background information about the speaker and the occasion and, on the other hand, a critical psychological interpretation which, in the form of a minimal theory of the speaker, is apt to explain why the testimony has been proffered.

Under this description, it is noteworthy that the hearer's responsibility is qualified on two aspects: concerning *sincerity*, it suffices for any hearer to be counterfactually sensitive to indicators of its absence; concerning *competence*, there are two significant exceptions: firstly, toddlers and young children are excused from the LR arena as they are in their "*developmental phase*" (Fricker 1995: 401-406) where they are still learning the very concepts needed to engage in critical epistemic scrutiny. Secondly, there are *mundane subject matters* which are trivial enough so that a default-acceptance is rational.²⁵ Like in the case of sincerity, the speaker must nonetheless be counterfactually sensitive to any indication of a lack of competence even in the case of mundane testimony.

²⁴ Although logically there is no reason for these conditions to be mutually exclusive, for the coherence of LR it will factually be the case that the »or« is twice read as an exclusive disjunction.

²⁵ I borrow the term »mundane subject matters« from Weiner (2003: 262) who subsumes under this umbrella term "things that are readily available to speakers' senses and memory, as well as things (such as one's date of birth) that almost everyone is told by someone who saw or remembered it." Fricker (1995: 405) illustrates her intention herself by enumerating "subject matters for which common sense psychological knowledge licences one to expect the speaker to be competent about [...]: such as her name, where she lives, what she had for breakfast, what is in clear view in front of her, and so forth."

Confining LR to mature recipients and non-mundane topics, the domain now excludes cases in which a default-acceptance view appears preferable. For every other scenario, the local reductionist argues that when a speaker asserts that *p*, it is possible (and actually feasible) for a hearer to obtain independent empirical evidence necessary and sufficient to warrant her in taking the speaker to be trustworthy (or not) with respect to the concrete assertion that *p*. In Christopher Insole's words:

“When considering the possibility of local reduction, there is no problem over and above that of *establishing on a given occasion that the speaker is sincere and competent.*” (Insole 2000: 48, emphasis added)

Relevant background knowledge about the speaker and the occasion in combination with knowledge acquired directly through the scrutiny of the testimonial scenario then provide the hearer with an understanding of the trustworthiness of the speaker (concerning the testimony at stake). Put differently, the hearer must “engage in a piece of a psychological interpretation of her informant” (Fricker 1995: 404) in order to arrive at a common-sense “explanatory mini-theory” (ibid.: 405) of why the speaker makes a certain assertion.

Accordingly, it is the responsibility of the mature hearer to put together enough of a model of the speaker and the occasion in order to construct an evaluation of the competence and sincerity she is faced with. Such an explanatory model is the local reductionist's necessary condition to establish testimonial hearer-knowledge. A key passage of LR concerning such speaker-interpretation can be found in Fricker's (1994) and is worth quoting at length:

“In recognising an utterance by a speaker as a speech act of serious assertion, with a certain content, a hearer is ipso facto engaging in a minimal piece of *interpretation* of the speaker – ascribing to her an intentional action of a certain kind, and hence at the very least supposing the existence of some configuration of beliefs and desires which explain that action. The theme of my account is: the epistemically responsible hearer will do a bit more of the same. She will assess the speaker for sincerity and competence, by engaging in at least a little more interpretation of her.” (Fricker 1994: 148)

In view of what has been said, Lackey has as a target the following structure of premises and conclusions of the local reductionist's argument:

- (P0) Testimony is a significant and rich source of knowledge.
- (P1) To trust a speaker with regards to her testimony either requires complementary empirical reasons to do so or a special presumptive epistemic right concerning testimony.
- (P2) There is no unconditional special presumptive epistemic right concerning testimony.
- (P3a) *For toddlers and young children* who are in the developmental phase of their epistemic understanding there is a special presumptive epistemic right which justifies a default-acceptance concerning testimony.
- (P3b) *For mundane subject-matters* there is a special presumptive epistemic right which justifies a default-acceptance concerning testimony.
- (C1) There is a need for complementary empirical reasons to justifiedly accept a speaker's testimony²⁶ *unless* the hearer is in a developmental phase of her epistemic life or the subject-matter is a mundane topic.

And further:

- (P4) Empirical reasons are sufficient to justify the acceptance of a speaker's testimony²⁷ as long as these reasons are evidence about the speaker's sincerity and competence regarding the particular item of testimony *and* relevant background information about the speaker and occasion.

²⁶ This is what Fricker calls the PR-N thesis: positive reasons are *necessary* to justify hearer-knowledge.

²⁷ This is what Fricker calls the PR-S thesis: positive reasons are *sufficient* to justify hearer-knowledge. In combination with the PR-N thesis, then, LR strongly relies on the idea that a posteriori reasons are both necessary and sufficient to justify a testimonial belief (PR-N&S).

- (P5a) As mature hearers, we are in a position to directly evaluate a speaker's sincerity and competence regarding the particular item of testimony in order to gain a corroborating (or defeating) belief about the trustworthiness of the report in question.
- (P5b) As mature hearers, we are in a position to deploy relevant background knowledge about the speaker and occasion in order to gain a corroborating (or defeating) belief about the trustworthiness of the report in question.
- (C2) As mature hearers, we are in a position to acquire complementary empirical reasons which are sufficient to justify the acceptance of a particular item of testimony.

3.1.2. Lackey's critique of reductionism

Lackey criticises LR like she criticised the transmission of epistemic warrant, by way of a philosophical counterexample.²⁸ »Nested Speaker« is directed at Fricker's PR-S thesis (see P4 above) that a hearer's adequate a posteriori reasons

²⁸ Lackey provides a second, sideline attack to Fricker's account by arguing that the local reductionist's exceptions to the PR-N&S thesis (people in their developmental phase – P3a; mundane subject-matters – P3b) are false. I concur with Lackey's verdict.

This, however, only affects an aspect of LR which is an exception to its core principle: by claiming that a posteriori reasons are *not* necessary under some circumstances the local reductionist succumbs to a non-reductionist tenet for this part of the project. Such exceptions are only fruitful as long as the non-reductionist does not encounter difficulties on the very turf where the reductionist seeks to smuggle in non-reductionism. As Lackey succeeds to show, this is not the case.

Concerning toddlers and young children in their epistemic developmental phase, Lackey argues that the non-reductionist is in an even worse position to coherently show how it can be the case that toddlers and young children have testimonial knowledge (Lackey 2008: 207-211). Concerning mundane subject-matters, Lackey's counterexample »Alien-2« (ibid.: 184-185) shows that LR is better off avoiding an exception for such cases altogether. Lackey provides a reformulation of LR so that hearers get to know from trivial hearsay not *in spite of the absence* of positive reasons, but rather "because we have a multitude of reasons for believing that reports about the mundane are appropriately truth-conducive" (ibid.: 185). Thus, in the case of mundane testimony, Lackey manages to strengthen Fricker's account by referring back to its own principles and in the case of toddlers and young children Lackey helps Fricker to avoid a misleading distinction into mature and developmental phases.

As a consequence, although Lackey succeeds in showing that non-reductionism is not in a privileged position over reductionism concerning these two aspects, the inclusion – and rejection – of such exceptions is of no import to the project of this Chapter. Ultimately, the reductionist position as such is not harmed by the critique of these exceptions and »Nested Speaker« remains the only attack on (the core of) LR.

are sufficient to justify the acceptance of a speaker's testimony. Lackey thus rejects LR as a contender for the epistemology of testimony.

In the example, Fred, the protagonist, is told that p by Pauline who is a friend of Fred's friend Helen. Helen vouches for Pauline's trustworthiness, thereby vesting Fred with positive reasons to accept Pauline's testimony:

"Fred has known Helen for five years and, during this time, he has acquired excellent epistemic reasons for believing her to be a highly reliable source of information on a wide range of topics. For instance, each time she has made a personal or professional recommendation to Fred, her assessment has proven to be accurate [...]. Yesterday, Helen told Fred that Pauline, a close friend of hers, is a highly trustworthy person, especially when it comes to information regarding wild birds. Because of this, Fred unhesitatingly believed Pauline earlier today when she told him that albatrosses, not condors (as is widely believed), have the largest wingspan among wild birds. It turns out that while Helen is an epistemically excellent source of information, she was incorrect on this particular occasion: Pauline is, in fact, a highly incompetent and insincere speaker, especially on the topic of wild birds. Moreover, though Pauline is correct in her report about albatrosses, she came to hold this belief merely based on wishful thinking [...]." (Lackey 2008: 149)

The case is such that reductionists would presumably reach the conclusion that Fred acquires a justified belief from accepting Pauline's testimony while Lackey rejects this verdict. Fred has good reasons to place credence in Pauline's word since Helen told him he can trust Pauline. Lackey, however, maintains that there is a defect in the truth-conduciveness of Pauline's testimony for it was not brought about by a reliable process. The fortuitousness of the truth of Pauline's testimony that p thus prevents Fred from acquiring a justified testimonial belief.

Lackey uses the example of »Nested Speaker« to demonstrate that a hearer can fall short of being justified in accepting a speaker's testimony regardless of how good her reasons in favour of accepting the testimony may be. The argument is carried by the idea that the reliability of the process by which the statement in question was produced may be undermined by a factor which has nothing to do with the hearer's positive reasons. In Lackey's words, "the possession of positive

reasons on behalf of a speaker's report, even objectively excellent ones, *does not necessarily put one in contact with testimony that is reliable*" (ibid.: 150).

For this reason, »Nested Speaker« shows that appropriate positive reasons are necessary for testimonial justification but not sufficient. There can be, on Lackey's grounds, an asymmetry between the justificatory status of a testimonial belief and the positive reasons which reductionists say it must be reduced to. Since reductionists claim that positive reasons are not only necessary but also sufficient, LR does not allow for such an asymmetry. As a result, the PR-N&S thesis, and LR, are false.

3.1.3. Objections to Lackey's critique

Lackey's argument is built on the idea that a hearer can have excellent reasons for accepting a report yet fall short of being justified to accept it. Therefore, according to Lackey, positive reasons are necessary but not sufficient to establish a justified testimonial belief.

I disagree with this argumentation against LR. My claim is that »Nested Speaker« is not apt to refute LR because the counterexample does not make a case which necessarily leads up to the unanimous verdict that Fred is not justified in holding his true belief in spite of having good reasons. There are two alternative ways to challenge this conclusion: one way is to argue that, against Lackey's claim, Fred is *not* in possession of adequate positive reasons to be justified in believing Pauline. The alternative way is to acknowledge that Fred has indeed good reasons to accept Pauline's testimony and at the same time argue that he *is* justified in his testimonial belief. Both strategies would undermine Lackey's argumentation that a hearer's positive reasons and her justification may diverge. While my intuition is with the second route, I believe that both of these responses are promising in that they both show that Lackey's example is not fully convincing. It does not become clear that cases like »Nested Speaker« show that there is an asymmetry between a testimonial belief being justified and the reasons which provide the justification.

Concerning the first possible response to Lackey's counterexample, it may be argued that Fred has *some* positive reason, but that this reason is not adequate

to support Pauline's report concerning albatrosses. Concretely, one could hold that Fred has excellent epistemic support to believe Helen's testimony but only weaker support to believe testimony proffered by Pauline. Ex hypothesi, Fred has acquired great reasons to think that Helen's reports are mostly true. This can be understood in terms of propositional attitude and propositional content: Fred has an appropriate reason to believe (the propositional attitude) whatever it is that Helen reports (the propositional content).

If, as it is the case in »Nested Speaker«, the testimonial chain has been extended, Fred is now confronted with two separate thoughts: he believes Helen when she asserts that Pauline is a reliable testifier; and he believes Pauline when she asserts that albatrosses have the largest wingspan. As the propositional content of Helen's testimony is a recommendation for a propositional attitude towards Pauline, it could be thought that believing Helen and believing Pauline are equally warranted. However, concerning Pauline's reports, Fred no longer has appropriate positive reasons to believe a certain propositional content; he merely has appropriate reasons to believe that he has appropriate reasons to believe a certain propositional content. Arguably, Fred's reason to believe Pauline is epistemically weaker than his reason to believe Helen.

How much weaker his reason ultimately is, is up for debate. In this regard, it is a possible line of attack against Lackey to claim that Fred's reason to believe Pauline's report on albatrosses is not appropriate. Accordingly, Fred would be justified in accepting Helen's testimony about Pauline's reliability, but his reasons to believe statements from Helen do not provide him with an adequate positive reason to believe Pauline's concrete report. While Fred may have appropriate reason to his belief that Pauline is reliable in general, this reason is not strong enough for him to be justified concerning the concrete report at stake. Helen vouching for her friend does provide Fred with some reason to accept Pauline's reports – but not enough to be sufficiently warranted.

This attack on »Nested Speaker« is certainly not without appeal. Reasons about the reliability of a testifier are no claims to the testifier's infallibility. A testifier may reasonably be held to be reliable although her testimony is false on occasion. If such a reason is extended to another testifier, the room for error

increases. This opens up the possibility to claim that Fred's reason is not sufficient for him to be justified in accepting such extended (or *nested*) testimony. Overall, however, the second envisaged strategy seems to me to be an even more potent refutation of Lackey's argument. My intuition on the case is that Fred indeed has an appropriate reason to believe Pauline's claim about albatrosses and that he is indeed justified in accepting her testimony.²⁹

From an internalist viewpoint I take this judgement to be apparent. If justification has to come in a form that is "available in the cognitive repertoire of the subject" (Burge 1993: 459) a hearer's positive epistemic reasons are the obvious lynchpin. Under such a description, there can be nothing to justification over and above the reasons available to the hearer. Yet, also if we are to adopt an externalist conception of justification Fred seems to be appropriately justified in accepting Pauline's report. Ex hypothesi, "Helen is an epistemically excellent source of information" (Lackey 2008: 149) and Fred is well-advised to trust her as a speaker. What is more, Fred has accumulated a lot of positive reasons to believe Helen with regards to her recommendations of other speakers because her history of personal and professional assessments has proven to be accurate. Lackey acknowledges that a theory of epistemic justification must be primarily about "the connection between a belief's being justified or warranted and its being likely that such a belief is true" (ibid.: 151). However, she fails to see that this connection is not in principle affected by Pauline's unreliability.

It is important to note, as Lackey does, that Helen's testimony increases the probability of Pauline's testimony to be true:

"[A]s »Nested Speaker« is described, Fred *does* have reasons that [...] render it objectively likely that Pauline's testimony is true. In particular, Fred's positive reasons place those beliefs from Pauline's testimony in a category that contains beliefs that are or would be mostly true; namely, *those beliefs that are supported by Helen's testimony*. For instance, were Fred to decide between accepting the reports of two different speakers, one of whom has the support of Helen's testimony and another who lacks this support, most of the time Fred would do well to accept the reports of the

²⁹ In a footnote, Alvin Goldman (2010: 199 n. 9) also maintains that he does not fully endorse Lackey's argument that Fred is unjustified and says that "[his] own intuition about this case is murky, by no means clear-cut in Lackey's direction."

former. That is, most of the time, forming beliefs from sources supported by Helen's testimony would lead to the truth." (Ibid.: 154)

Unlike the first objection presented above, we may then agree with Lackey that Fred has appropriate epistemic reasons to believe Pauline's report. Where Lackey's perspective diverges from mine is on the question of what harm it does that Helen is wrong in her assessment of Pauline. While Lackey thinks that this, as a matter of principle, undermines Fred's justification, I maintain that it is but an honest mistake, perfectly compatible with Fred being justified in his belief about albatrosses. More often than not, Helen's vouching for a person is a good indicator of truth-conducive testimony from others. This, however, does not require *infallibility* from her. The good reasons she provides are, for Fred, a justificatory basis and they remain a justification even in the case that Helen errs. They need not be a guarantee that the justification always leads to the truth. It suffices that they are a reliable indicator of truth-conduciveness – and this is ultimately a matter of probability.

A modification of the case can serve to illustrate this point: in the scenario of »Nested Speaker«, Fred's justification, under normal circumstances, would have resulted in a false belief. The way things would have gone under normal conditions is that Pauline's testimony is false (since she knows little to nothing about ornithology and is a generally unreliable testifier) and Fred, although he had excellent positive reasons to trust Pauline, gains a false testimonial belief when he accepts her report. Yet, such falsity does not affect the *justification* but instead it merely violates the truth-condition of hearer-knowledge. Fred would gain a justified false belief and not, as Lackey would have it, lose his justification along the way.

The confusion arises as soon as Fred's belief turns out to be true by accident. It is fortuitous that Pauline's report about albatrosses is true and thus there is a significant deficiency in the process by which Fred acquires his belief. However, as I have just argued, this deficiency does not damage Fred's justification; Fred still holds a justified true belief. This justified true belief falls short of being

knowledge but the way the problem has been presented it should be clear that »Nested Speaker« so becomes a Gettier-type case.

In an attempt to demonstrate the difference between »Nested Speaker« and Gettier-examples, Lackey introduces »Unnested Speaker« which can non-controversially be regarded as a Gettier-type scenario. The example is largely akin to »Nested Speaker«, however the hearer does not receive a report from a speaker his friend has vouched for but instead from his good friend directly:

“Max has known Ethel for ten years and [...] he has acquired excellent epistemic reasons for believing her to be a reliable source of information [...]. Currently, however, Ethel is in the midst of a personal crisis, which she effectively conceals from those around her, and her emotional state of mind leads her to report to Max that her purse has been stolen, despite having absolutely no evidence for thinking this to be the case.” (Ibid.: 152)

Max readily accepts Ethel’s testimony and, fortuitously, her report turns out to be true. Now, for Lackey, the key aspect of »Unnested Speaker« which distinguishes it from »Nested Speaker« is that the hearer’s justification is not called into question since Ethel, but not Pauline, is a generally reliable testifier.³⁰

According to Lackey, a hearer may only be justified if, in addition to having epistemically adequate reasons to accept a report, the report itself “is reliable or otherwise truth-conducive” (ibid.: 74). Consequently, a hearer’s justification always includes a speaker-dimension, which ensures that the statement at stake has been formed by a reliable process. In case this speaker-condition is violated, a hearer’s positive reasons cannot result in a justified testimonial belief. Positive reasons are not sufficient for justification. This reliability thesis for statements is introduced as a replacement for the TEP-N thesis: because a speaker’s beliefs do not matter for the epistemology of testimony, Lackey demands that any report by a speaker must be produced in a reliably truth-conducive way. In this regard, there is room for an asymmetry in Lackey’s account as the epistemic status of a belief

³⁰ Lackey maintains that this is an interpretation which she would not share. Like in »Nested Speaker«, the report in »Unnested Speaker« is formed by an unreliable process and thus would not be justified on Lackey’s grounds. Yet, Lackey takes the example to illustrate that »Nested Speaker« cannot be seen as a Gettier-type case whereas such an interpretation would be open to somebody challenging »Unnested Speaker«.

(its being justified or not) does not ipso facto coincide with the hearer's positive reasons (necessary for its justification). Due to this (alleged) asymmetry Lackey is in a position to give an explanation of »Nested Speaker« which does not involve Gettier-type reasoning.

However, in section 2.3 I have shown that Lackey's rejection of the TEP-N thesis is misguided. As a consequence, I also do not endorse her project to replace the TEP-N thesis with a requirement that demands the reliability of the statement in question. An understanding of justification with such a speaker-condition in place would essentially rephrase the testimonial scenario to a degree which is so externalistic that reductionists like Fricker would probably refuse to accept the problem description from the beginning.

By this shift from the BVT to the SVT Lackey pays a high price in terms of explanatory power.³¹ Due to her commitment to the SVT, Lackey does not take into account a speaker's beliefs and instead requires the proffered statement itself to be formed by a reliable process. Her primary motivation for rejecting LR is to factor in the speaker-side of a testimonial exchange. However, the result is the opposite: she obscures the speaker-side and drowns it out with a sweeping requirement for statements. Put differently, her enterprise is tantamount to first obscuring the process by which a statement is brought into existence and then demanding that this very process be truth-conducive. Lackey works with a definition of testimony which completely disregards how (and why) reports are made, yet she postulates qualifying conditions onto the process she ignores.

This idea is entirely incompatible with the notion of testimony as statements made by persons whose intentional attitudes play a core role in explaining not only why a statement has been made but also *how a proffered statement is to be assessed* in terms of its epistemic credentials. I find it unappealing to mystify the speaker's beliefs and desires in order to declare requirements for the statements directly. If Lackey is in the business of explaining a car the explanatory power of

³¹ Cf. my discussion of »Consistent Liar« in section 2.3.1. According to the BVT, it is of epistemic import whether a speaker asserts that *p* because he is a competent believer and a sincere testifier concerning *p*. According to the SVT, a speaker is instead assessed solely in terms of being a truth-conducive testifier.

her account has to suffer if she claims that she is not interested in the concept of an engine as long as the car moves reliably.³²

It is doubtful that statements (and their reliability) can be understood without an intimate connection to the speaker's beliefs and desires. It appears to be an important factor of the truth-conduciveness of p whether or not a speaker actually believes p to be true and presents it as her true belief that p . Lackey, however, is not interested in an understanding of the process by which a report has been produced (as long as the resulting statement is truth-conducive). It can be any process, trivial or chimerical; it does not feature in her account of justification. This move is essentially a refutation of taking a speaker seriously qua person. Her intentionality becomes obsolete, the epistemic credentials are already in the statements themselves. It does not matter whether or not a proffered statement was uttered by a competent and sincere speaker because Lackey has given up this concept altogether.

I believe that this is too stark a commitment. Asking for reliability or truth-conduciveness is far more concessive than attempting a psychological explanation of the intentionality which is at the heart of such reliability or truth-conduciveness. Following Lackey, the reliability of the process by which the statement was brought about has to be postulated without any reference to the speaker's beliefs and desires. This means, Lackey does not care about any of the psychology which is involved in the production of the statement. Instead, she requires the (stringent) condition that the statement itself – be it a conscious lie, an attempt to deceive someone, a combination of words which is not even understood by the speaker, an acataphasy, a slip of the tongue – is *somehow* truth-conducive. This leads us away from incorporating the speaker into an understanding of how testimony can function and onto epistemically mystified turf.

Effectively, Lackey's rejection of transmission and of the BVT leave her no room to incorporate irrationality on the speaker-side other than to require, in the

³² The analogy is certainly not perfect. I do not want to give the impression that a statement, qua expression of a belief, is in any sense the output of a mechanical process. My claim is much weaker: I want to express that Lackey is ill-advised to try to address the statements »directly« when an assessment of their truth-conduciveness is at stake.

absence of an explanation, an appropriate truth-conduciveness which does the work *per se*. As a result, Lackey gives up too much to be able to continue to reject the BVT. I do not see an explanatory advantage in rejecting the TEP-N thesis and the BVT and replacing it with the SVT in combination with a condition that a hearer's justification requires the reliability of the statement. Given that the BVT can be regarded as unscathed by Lackey's counterexamples, her rejection of LR is equally unconvincing.

3.2. NON-REDUCTIONISM

3.2.1. Lackey's understanding of non-reductionism

Non-reductionism (NR) differs from reductionism in two crucial ways: one, while reductionists claim that for the acquisition of testimonially based knowledge a hearer must possess additional positive reasons to support the proffered testimony non-reductionists refuse such a condition. And two, whereas reductionists regard the epistemic properties of testimonially based knowledge as reducible to the epistemic properties of one or more of the allegedly more basic sources of knowledge non-reductionists see testimony as an irreducible – a basic – source of knowledge, on par with perception, memory and inference. As a result, the hearer is relieved from her task to actively monitor a testimonial scenario for independent positive reasons as NR shifts the epistemic burden towards the speaker. Consequently, the philosophical assessment of whether or not testimonial knowledge has been acquired in a given testimonial exchange is focused on requirements the *speaker* has to fulfil when faced with a credulous hearer.

As it is commonly the case, Lackey attributes the initial formulation of NR to Thomas Reid who derives his view from witnessing the unconditional trust displayed by young children who have no other option than to rely on their protective caretakers and tutors:

“Before we are capable of reasoning about testimony or authority, there are many things which it concerns us to know, for which *we can have no other evidence*. The wise Author of nature hath planted in the human mind

a propensity to rely upon human testimony before we can give a reason for doing so. This, indeed, puts our judgments almost entirely in the power of those who are about us in the first period of life; but this is necessary both to our preservation and to our improvement. If children were so framed as to pay no regard to testimony or authority, they must, in the literal sense, perish for lack of knowledge. It is not more necessary that they should be fed before they can feed themselves, than that they should be instructed in many things before they can discover them by their own judgement.” (Reid 1983: 281-282, emphasis added)

Accordingly, there can be no general requirement for corroborating positive evidence which justifies accepting a piece of testimony because we accept testimony long before we understand (and challenge) the concepts of trust and authority. The argument in this crude form does, however, not systematically prevent a paradigm change once we grow up. After all, the postulation that children are merely a special case is still available (as discussed above, this sort of disaggregation is an integral part of Fricker’s LR). Yet, Reid recognises this, and he explicitly endorses a trusting stance towards our informants also at later stages in our lives and so promotes a default-acceptance of testimony which is not confined to children:

“[W]hen our faculties ripen, we find reason to check that propensity to yield to testimony and to authority, which was so necessary and so natural in the first period of life. We learn to reason about the regard due to them, and see it to be childish weakness to lay more stress upon them than reason justifies. Yet, I believe, to the end of life, most men are more apt to go into this extreme than into the contrary; and the natural propensity still retains some force. *The natural principles, by which our judgements and opinions are regulated before we come to use of reason, seem to be no less necessary to such being as man, than those natural instincts which the Author of nature hath given us to regulate our actions during that period.*” (Ibid.: 282, emphasis added)

In Reidian terms, it is a common principle of human nature that, within a reasonable society, people can rely on one another and expect from others a high propensity to speak the truth. As a result, also at later stages in life, when our cognitive faculties are already developed to engage in critical review, “a

disposition to confide in the veracity of others” (ibid.: 95) is nonetheless a reasonable and indeed necessary attitude.

More recent accounts of NR still maintain that positive reasons are not necessary to obtain a justified testimonial belief, yet they explicitly require a *no undefeated-defeater condition*. As Burge formulates it:

“A person is entitled to accept as true something that is presented as true and that is intelligible to him, unless there are stronger reasons not to do so.” (Burge 1993: 467, original emphasis omitted)

Without any empirically acquired evidence, it is thus the natural a priori attitude to accept a proposition as true *unless there is a more compelling reason not to*. For Burge, it is justified to expect in other members of our epistemic society the same principles of rationality as we ascribe to ourselves and any utterance of an interlocutor can thus be *prima facie* taken as rational and truth-conducive.³³ Effectively, then, positive reasons are not needed as a supplement to underwrite a proposition, but they may enter the stage as defeating reasons, in the presence of which a belief would be *irrational* to take up. In accordance with this principle, Matthew Weiner (2003: 257) writes: “We are justified in accepting anything that we are told unless there is positive evidence against doing so.”³⁴

Lackey acknowledges this no-undefeated-defeater condition and adds to the requirement that a hearer has to be susceptible to defeating counterevidence which appears during the testimonial exchange. A no-defeater condition is toothless as long as the hearer is not responsive to such reasons. At the very least, a hearer must be *sensitive to the presence of potential indications* which undermine the truth-conduciveness of a report.

Therefore, Lackey (2008: 160-164) explicitly rules out cases in which a hearer “trivially, irrationally, [or] luckily” (ibid.: 164) possesses no undefeated defeaters. If a hearer does not have a defeater simply because she lacks the

³³ In this perspective, Burge is in the tradition of W.V.O. Quine (1960) and Donald Davidson (1973) who propose a »Principle of Charity« to interpret and understand other participants in a common language community.

³⁴ Similar expressions can be found notably in Coady (1992), Goldberg (2010), Goldberg and Henderson (2006), and McDowell (1998).

capacity of having defeaters the requirement becomes futile. In fact, in order for the no-undefeated-defeater condition to gain any force, a hearer must display, in general and in the particular scenario in question, *an appropriate level of sensitivity* to the presence of such defeaters. I take her counterexamples »Compulsively Good-Natured« (ibid.: 160) – where a hearer is entirely incapable to be sensitive to defeaters – and »Compulsively Paranoid« (ibid.: 161-162) – where a hearer is inappropriately oversensitive to defeaters – to make a sufficiently compelling case for the inclusion of the condition that “the agent must *substantively* satisfy the no-defeater condition” (ibid.: 161).

Still, even in the case that a hearer has no undefeated-defeaters for a particular report and that she is appropriately sensitive to the presence of such defeaters there might be ways of acquiring a testimonial belief which are significantly deficient. For Lackey, such cases, in which a hearer fails to be justified in obtaining a testimonial belief, hinge on one of two possible dimensions: either, the *testimony* has been produced in an unreliable way or, the *environment* is unsuitable for the reception of testimony. To illustrate this, Lackey provides two more counterexamples: »Incompetent Agent« (ibid.: 158) and »Insular Community« (ibid.: 164-165).

In »Incompetent Agent« a speaker is epistemically extremely unreliable, which means she is frequently forming false beliefs regardless of their source. A high percentage of her beliefs are in fact produced or sustained in an unreliable fashion and there is no appropriate connection between her beliefs and the truth. As a result, her *statements* (which, ex hypothesi, are somehow derivative from her beliefs) do not yield hearer-knowledge plainly for the fact that the process by which the proffered testimony has been produced was insupportably defective (note that while Lackey holds that the speaker’s belief as such is irrelevant for the testimonial case – recall the SVT – she insists that the production of the testimony has to be reliably truth-conducive nonetheless). Lackey thus demands a condition on the testimony itself which explicitly requires the testimony to be “reliable, truth-conducive or otherwise epistemically acceptable” (ibid.: 159, original emphasis omitted).

With a similar strategy, Lackey makes a case for the inclusion of a condition on the environment in which the testimonial exchange takes place. Consider, for example, the following situation from »Insular Community«:

“One evening, while on a road trip, Marvin stops in a small town to find a hotel for the night and he encounters a large group of people gathered for an annual neighbourhood parade. Out of this large crowd, Marvin quite fortuitously focuses on Alfred, the only member of this epistemic community who reliably shares information with ‘outsiders,’ and asks him where they are. Alfred tells Marvin that they are in Smithville.” (Ibid.: 164-165)

In this respect, a person may be offered a piece of testimony in a (systematically) very unreliable community which would render it highly accidental if she happens to obtain a true testimonial belief. Lackey therefore regards it as necessary to require explicitly that the overall conditions of the scenario must allow for the reception of reliable testimony.

Lackey’s complete conception of NR is thus a testimonial scenario in which, without a posteriori reasons, “*properly functioning recipients of testimony* may defeasibly acquire knowledge from the true reports of *reliable speakers* in an *epistemically suitable environment*” (ibid.: 167-168). The argument can be summarised in the following way:

- (P0) Testimony is a significant and rich source of knowledge.
- (P1) To trust a speaker with regards to her testimony either requires complementary empirical reasons to do so or a special presumptive epistemic right concerning testimony.
- (P2a) As hearers, we are often not capable of or not in a position to gather additional positive reasons to confirm the trustworthiness of a speaker.
- (P2b) As hearers, we are generally capable of recognising positive *defeating* reasons to challenge or rebut the trustworthiness of a speaker.

- (C1) There is a special presumptive epistemic right concerning testimony *unless* there are positive defeating reasons which the hearer has no defeaters for.

And further:

- (P3a) The speaker potentially precludes the acquisition of a justified testimonial belief by offering *testimony* that falls short of being reliable, truth-conducive or otherwise epistemically acceptable.
- (P3b) The *hearer* potentially precludes the acquisition of a justified testimonial belief by falling short of substantially satisfying the condition to be a properly functioning recipient of testimony who shows an appropriate level of sensitivity to defeating reasons.
- (P3c) The *environment* in which the testimonial exchange takes place potentially precludes the acquisition of a justified testimonial belief by being unsuitable for the reception of reliable testimony.
- (C2) There is a special presumptive epistemic right concerning testimony *unless* there are positive defeating reasons which the hearer has no defeaters for *or* the testimony fails to be reliable, truth-conducive or otherwise epistemically acceptable *or* the hearer falls short of being a properly functioning recipient of testimony *or* the environment in which the testimonial exchange takes place is unsuitable for the reception of reliable testimony.

Lackey thus defines what she perceives as the most tenable non-reductionist position like this:³⁵

NR: A hearer is epistemically entitled to believe a speaker's testimony that *p* iff

³⁵ Lackey (2008: 167). Lackey's formulation differs from mine in that in her definition there is an additional truth condition because Lackey defines testimonial *knowledge*. In line with my discussion of reductionism, however, I will stick to the definition of testimonial *justification* instead. This need not worry us here.

- (1) the hearer comes to believe that p on the basis of the content of the speaker's testimony;
- (2) the hearer has no undefeated-defeaters for the speaker's testimony;
- (3) the speaker's testimony is reliable, truth-conducive or otherwise epistemically acceptable;
- (4) the hearer is a properly functioning recipient of testimony and as such appropriately sensitive to the presence of defeaters; and
- (5) the environment in which the testimonial exchange takes place is suitable for the reception of reliable testimony.

3.2.2. Lackey's critique of non-reductionism

The method Lackey chooses to rebut NR is naturally to contrast our intuitions about illustrative philosophical counterexamples with the minimum requirements set out by the definition of NR. Should there be an non-controversial intuitive denial of hearer-knowledge even in case all conditions are sufficiently met this would appreciably challenge the notion of NR.

Lackey puts forward two counterexamples in her attempt to rebuff NR: »Alien« and a modification thereof which we shall call »Sally«. In »Alien«, a man finds a diary which he knows nothing about other than that it was written by an alien. It is now up to the philosopher to decide whether or not the alien's testimony (which *prima facie* appears to be in English) can constitute knowledge under the non-reductionist description provided above. Since the example is the lynchpin of Lackey's rejection of NR I shall quote it in full:

“Sam, an average human being, is taking a walk through the forest one sunny morning and, in the distance, he sees someone drop a book. Although the individual's physical appearance enables Sam to identify her as an alien from another planet, he does not know anything about either this kind of alien or the planet from which she comes. Now, Sam eventually loses sight of the alien, but he is able to recover the book that she dropped. Upon opening it, he immediately notices that it appears to be written in English and looks like what we on Earth would call a diary. Moreover, after reading the first sentence of the book, Sam forms the

corresponding belief that tigers have eaten some of the inhabitants of the author's planet during their exploration of Earth. It turns out that the book is a diary, the alien does communicate in English, and it is both true and reliably written in the diary that tigers have eaten some of the inhabitants of the planet in question. Moreover, Sam is not only a properly functioning recipient of testimony, he is also situated in an environment that is suitable for the reception of reliable reports.” (Ibid.: 168)

Lackey makes a case against the ascription of knowledge since accepting testimony in the complete absence of information about a testifier, as she claims is the case with an unknown alien species, is epistemically speaking highly irrational. In so doing, Lackey rejects the general conclusion of the non-reductionist argument (C2): even under the condition that all requirements of NR are fulfilled this does not necessarily lead to testimonial justified belief. In particular, even if the testimony in question is truth-conducive, the hearer is an epistemically functioning recipient of testimony and the environment is apt for the reception of reliable testimony a hearer may still fall short of acquiring a justified belief in the complete absence of a posteriori reasons.

In order to forestall any objections on the grounds that »Alien« does not affect an epistemology of testimony which is concerned with a *human* society because it operates with an unknown extraterrestrial species, Lackey offers a modified version of the scenario in which the alien is replaced by a girl called Sally:

“Sally has been in a coma for the past two months and, upon waking, discovers that she has lost all of her previous knowledge except for her competence with the English language. Upon leaving the hospital, she stumbles upon a diary of an unknown author and begins reading it. Now, ex hypothesi, Sally no longer has common-sense beliefs about human psychology, she no longer has beliefs about the general reliability of humans as testifiers, she no longer has beliefs about how diaries function in our society, and so on. Is Sally justified in accepting the contents of the diary?” (Ibid.: 174)

Ultimately, Lackey's goal is to point out a discrepancy between the verdict of non-reductionists and her own intuition. On the face of it, all conditions of NR are

fulfilled and thus the non-reductionist must come to the conclusion that Sam and Sally obtain a justified belief. On the contrary, Lackey holds that neither Sam nor Sally would be justified in holding their belief since they are entirely ignorant of the systematic circumstances under which the respective testimony has been produced. Lackey regards it as epistemically irrational to trust a proffered report without any reason to believe that the institutional context in which the speaker, the hearer and the piece of testimony are embedded is in any way reliable. Therefore, because neither Sam knows anything about Aliens nor Sally anything about humans, their respective beliefs are unjustified. NR is false.

3.2.3. Objections to Lackey's critique

In her case against NR, Lackey argues that accepting testimony in the complete absence of information about its truth-conduciveness constitutes epistemic irrationality. A hearer cannot come to know from testimony if its reliability is entirely inscrutable for the hearer. In the scenario of »Alien« the inscrutability arises because the hearer has no conception of (the psychology of) extraterrestrial species; in the case of »Sally« it arises because the hearer has lost her entire conception of (the mechanisms of) human interlocution. Lackey then maintains that her counterexamples reveal a discrepancy between her (negative) intuition of whether or not hearer-knowledge is yielded in her cases and the (positive) verdict at which a non-reductionist must arrive.

I do not agree with Lackey's argumentation to refute NR. I agree that epistemic irrationality may undermine hearer-knowledge. I also concur that the complete absence of information about the systematic goings-on of the testimonial exchange are suitable to establish such irrationality. Yet, I believe that both of these claims are largely non-controversial. Lackey does not have to prove that there is the concept of epistemic irrationality which may undermine justification but instead she has to find a compelling example in which the non-reductionist arrives at a counterintuitive verdict about this justification. I hold that Lackey fails to provide such an example.

In particular, I shall argue that »Alien« and »Sally« pose (at least) three significant problems to Lackey's undertaking. Firstly, the way these two

counterexamples are designed, they either contain an inherent contradiction or they fall short of pointing out an unreasonable verdict under the description of NR. Secondly, and relatedly, the scenarios are overly chimerical which undermines their force to rebut NR even in case their premises and conclusions would be acceptable. And thirdly, and most importantly, Lackey does not take into account the features of individual sophisticated non-reductionist accounts like those of Tyler Burge or John McDowell. Instead, she sets up a strawman – her own description of NR – without posing a real threat to any established non-reductionist position.

The first point I shall raise concerns what I perceive as an inherent inconsistency in the two scenarios which Lackey presents. This aspect can be developed in the form of a stronger or a weaker claim. The strong claim is to say that both examples, »Alien« and »Sally«, are de facto impossible as they involve, at a crucial point in their stories, a contradiction. In »Alien« this contradiction arises in Lackey's description of what Sam knows about the extraterrestrial. As quoted above:

“Although the individual's physical appearance enables Sam to identify her as an alien from another planet, he does not know anything about either this kind of alien or the planet from which she comes.” (Ibid.: 168)

Lackey needs to construct the scenario in a way which prevents Sam from having *any reason* for or against accepting a speaker's report. Therefore, Lackey has to create a speaker about who Sam is entirely ignorant and about who he has acquired no a posteriori reason to trust or distrust. At the same time, however, Lackey has to vest the hearer with the capacity to identify this speaker as being exactly of the type about which he has no information at all. I believe this is impossible.

»Sally« does not provide a remedy for this problem. There is an equally puzzling absurdity also at the core of this counterexample which makes it impossible to accept the features Lackey presents. The decisive element in the case is that Sally “has lost all of her previous knowledge except for her competence with the English language” (ibid.: 174). I fail to see how something

even remotely close to such a state should be possible. Lackey has to find a strong formulation – that Sally has lost everything she once knew – in order not to provide her with any form of *reason* about the diary she finds. In so doing, however, Lackey acknowledges that Sally does not know what a person is, what a society is, what communication is, what a language is and so forth. This is tantamount to saying that Sally does not – *can not* – still master the English language. How could she possibly utter a sentence like »This is a book.« if the very concepts referred to in such a statement are beyond her understanding? Naturally, the same applies to her as a hearer: she could not understand the sentence »This is a book.« plainly because she has lost every conception of what each part of that sentence means. This is equal to claiming that Sally has *no competence* as a language-using member of a community anymore. To postulate that she does, *ex hypothesi*, evokes a contradiction.

Still, one might object that for such counterexamples to demonstrate a certain chain of thought it suffices for them to be merely *grosso modo* workable rather than genuinely possible. In order to give such counterexamples a real chance, so it could be argued, we need to apply a very clement reading of what is intended to be expressed by the depiction of the scenario; the actual phrasing is of secondary importance.³⁶ While I do not share this view, I shall still provide an argument against it. We thus arrive at the weaker claim against »Alien« and »Sally«: even if we accept – on whatever grounds – that the counterexamples are not logically impossible, they would not accomplish a refutation of NR.

³⁶ Concerning the case of »Alien«, the scenario could be understood along the following science-fiction lines: we are in a year in the distant future and by now, scientists have found what seems to be evidence that there are alien species which are in some (epistemically relevant) respect comparable, if also not similar, to humans. What is more, although nothing conclusive has been found about just what those beings look like, such aliens generally have a bright purple shimmer which gleams from their top end. Sam, who is aware of those scientific findings, identified a silhouette with a shimmer gleaming from it when he was walking through the woods and thus has some reason to assume that what he saw was an alien. Yet, neither scientists nor Sam know anything more about such extraterrestrials.

Concerning »Sally« I find it harder to imagine what kind of clement reading could result in a more benevolent understanding.

I am generally speaking not convinced by such fanciful embellishments along the lines of science fiction novels. Yet, more and less philosophically trained debaters often seem to sympathise with such ideas which is why I want to show that they are, at least in this case, no adequate response to my objections to »Alien« and »Sally«.

Lackey rejects the idea that the fact that testimony stems from an alien is a defeater which can override the default acceptance of the report. This is because denying aliens would beg the question of whether or not we have positive epistemic support for the acceptance of such testimony (ibid.: 174). Still, if we are to accept, if only for the sake of the argument, that there is something like an alien which Sam can identify without having any conception of the alien or its epistemic practices then surely the definition Lackey provides of NR is not met to a full degree: the sudden apparition of an alien's diary is without a doubt a more profound incision in a hearer's life than Lackey is ready to admit and *it is most certainly a profound challenge with respect to the epistemic suitability of an environment*. The alien is the first contact Sam has with extraterrestrials – otherwise he would have gathered a posteriori reasons concerning aliens – and the epistemic environment is rendered unsuitable by this very unique apparition. If »Insular Community« suffices to describe an environment in which “the epistemic circumstances are not suitable to the reception of reliable testimony” (ibid.: 165) because most testifiers have a tendency to lie then Sam's knowledge that the report stems from an alien must do the same. If a neighbourhood parade is a compelling reason to dismiss an environment as epistemically suitable then, a fortiori, the introduction of an alien must push us in the same direction. As a result, non-reductionists and Lackey would come to the same conclusion regarding »Alien«.

Concerning »Sally«, the recipient of the report is defective so that she is no longer in a position to judge whether or not a statement is in any form reliable. Ex hypothesi, “she has lost all of her previous knowledge” which means that she “no longer has common-sense beliefs about human psychology” (ibid.: 174). I take it to be apparent that the hearer condition which Lackey introduced to NR is violated under such circumstances. It is sufficient for Lackey for a hearer to be overly good-natured or overly paranoid with respect to proffered reports (ibid.: 160-164). By the same token, a hearer who has no grasp of her epistemic surroundings whatsoever, who has no reasons on which to base any epistemic evaluation – and who is thus very likely to make unreasonable judgements about pieces of testimony which are offered to her – would violate the condition that a hearer

must be a properly functioning recipient of testimony. The hearer-condition of NR is clearly not met and so non-reductionists (as described by Lackey) and Lackey alike come to the conclusion that Sally falls short of obtaining knowledge. The scenarios do not exemplify a discrepancy in the verdicts of Lackey on the one hand and non-reductionists on the other.

The second point I shall raise is related to my first objection in that it is an attempt to show that the counterexamples, even if we accept their premises, fail to make a compelling case against NR. »Alien« and »Sally« are arguably the most chimerical and fanciful counterexamples in Lackey's book. By painting a very unorthodox picture, Lackey allows for the fact that there is a high degree of ambiguity in her description of the scenarios (e.g. in questions such as what the alien is like, how Sam is able to identify her as an alien, what the book looks like, what exactly Sally knows and understands and what she does not, how she arrives at an understanding of a piece of testimony and so forth) which has as a consequence that *intuitions will vary across judges* of these cases. There will be no one unanimous outlook on the two examples for the very fact that the ambiguous way in which they are described opens up a whole range of possible interpretations (cf. Faulkner 2009: 481). Intuitive ascriptions of knowledge will depend upon characteristics of Lackey's presentation which are vague and unclear.

As a result, »Alien« and »Sally« must be conceived as *borderline cases* which do not yield obvious and non-controversial judgements concerning the epistemic justification of the recipient of testimony (cf. Kusch *forthcoming*). But not only are such borderline cases controversial for they trigger different reactions, they are so atypical that it is hard to see how an established view should be overthrown merely on the basis of such a counterexample. It seems that cases as chimerical as »Alien« and »Sally« simply lack the force to rebut a recognised concept. The examples are too anti-prototypical and it appears to me that it takes more of a paradigm case to replace an established view by a novel theory.

In this sense, every concept seems to encompass paradigm cases as well as borderline cases. Paradigm cases are clearly determined by the intension of the

theory whereas borderline cases can be seen as belonging within the extension for which the theory is true or (if also only just) outside the extension (ibid.). It seems to be an unreasonable endeavour in the first place to try to refute a concept merely on the basis of a case for which it is not fully clear that it lies within the intuitive extension. It has been regarded with scepticism (e.g. Craig 1993: 9-43) whether such projects could ever yield fruitful results for the progress of a philosophical debate. Therefore, it seems fair to stipulate that Lackey would have to present more of a paradigmatic scenario to truly provide a threat to NR.

The third point I shall raise is my most central argument of why I think Lackey fails to provide a compelling line of reasoning against NR. As such, it is independent from my previous objections. Even if »Alien« and »Sally« are regarded as neither contradictory nor chimerical this does not in principle undercut appreciation for the following objection.

Lackey (2008: 155-168) makes a strenuous effort to develop a non-reductionist position which she deems to be the most tenable position available to non-reductionists. As such, Lackey does not characterise any specific non-reductionist position, but instead she sets forth those conditions which she thinks any non-reductionist should endorse as the most defensible necessary and sufficient conditions for NR. Kusch (*forthcoming*) argues that this strategy makes it impossible for her to appreciate the specific nuances of any individual non-reductionist account and results in a “low argumentative resolution.” I want to go one step further and accuse Lackey of setting up a strawman which then burns down all too easily.

Lackey deliberately renounces a comparison between her understanding of the background conditions in a testimonial exchange and the understanding of actual non-reductionist views. The two most sophisticated non-reductionist positions I have in mind are Burge (1993, 1997) and McDowell (1998). Although Lackey mentions these accounts, she forces them into a framework which is not apt to maintain a genuine non-reductionist account. The structure Lackey provides is geared towards her own view, labelled »dualism«. It has as a starting point a number of premises which are diametrically opposed to the premises non-reductionist positions rely on.

Lackey denies the transmission of epistemic credentials from a speaker to a hearer via testimony (cf. sections 2.2 and 2.3 above). On Lackey's grounds, a justification or warrant which a speaker holds for a certain belief is not transferred to the recipient of the testimony via the speaker's say-so. Instead, Lackey promotes the SVT, according to which the epistemic significance is in the report as such. Therefore, a hearer learns from words; the statements are carrying the epistemic weight. The speaker, in turn, is stripped from her epistemic import. Her beliefs are no longer relevant for the question of whether or not the hearer can gain a justified belief from her because the focus is shifted onto the report simpliciter.

The speaker's intentionality, that is her beliefs and desires, are negligible in such an account. What matters is merely the reliability of the truth-conduciveness of whatever statement may be proffered. As long as the report is *eo ipso* reliable, the speaker would not need to be a full-blooded intentional being. Although formally, Lackey does insist that testimony must come from *a person*³⁷ she does not take the consequences of this requirement seriously throughout her attempted rejection of NR. Being a person, for Lackey, is required yet irrelevant. For Burge and McDowell, however, the speaker's personhood is a salient aspect for an understanding of their accounts and not merely a toothless postulation. My claim is therefore that Lackey's arguments are not suitable to rebuff sophisticated non-reductionist positions like those of Burge or McDowell who properly acknowledge the notion of personhood in their accounts.

Applied to the scenario of »Alien«, the primary concern for an epistemological assessment has to be the question whether or not the alien sighted by Sam is a person. If the alien is not a person, Burge and McDowell (and indeed also Lackey) would regard the case as lying outside the realm of testimony. If, on the other hand, the alien is a person a clear discrepancy arises between the outlooks of Lackey and Burge.³⁸ While Lackey holds that Sam unmistakably fails

³⁷ Cf., again, Lackey (2008: 189).

³⁸ I will focus on Burge throughout the first part of this third line of objections (on »Alien«) and on McDowell throughout the second part (on »Sally«). This is a contingent choice I make for the sake of convenience. I do believe that both authors are equally well suited to reject either

to acquire a justified belief Burge would come to the conclusion that Sam is in fact justified in placing credence in the alien testimony. The underlying thought is complex and worth citing at length:

“[W]e have a general *a priori prima facie (pro tanto)* entitlement to rely on seeming understanding as genuine understanding. And we have a general *a priori prima facie (pro tanto)* entitlement to believe putative assertions that we seem to understand. These are two rational default positions. They can be overridden in particular cases if (possibly empirical) counterconsiderations arise. But if one lacks counterconsiderations, and if one has a minimal level of conceptual know-how, one is entitled to rely on one's seeming understanding of *particular* putative assertions. And one is further entitled to believe seemingly understood putative assertions – because *prima facie* they come from a rational source whose backing supports belief (assuming no counterconsiderations). If the seeming understanding is intellectual, one can, in the relevant particular cases (no counterconsiderations), be *a priori* entitled to rely on one's seeming understanding of putative assertions as genuine understanding of genuine assertions. And under the same conditions, one can be *a priori* entitled to accept particular putative assertions as true.” (Burge 1997: 21)

In short, *provided the alien is a person*, Sam has an *a priori prima facie pro tanto* entitlement to obtain a justified belief about the contents of the diary. What Lackey fails to recognise is that this is not an unconditional entitlement *in the absence of all reason* but rather an entitlement which crucially hinges on the principle features of the interlocution in question. The fact that Lackey arrives at the verdict that Sam “clearly” (2008: 169) does not gain a justified belief in »Alien« results from her unawareness of critical features of the account Burge provides.

Burge's right to accept a report depends on a number of critical presumptions: putative understanding of a linguistic item can be regarded as actual understanding as long as there are no counterconsiderations which speak against such a move. Equally, the (putative and hence actual) understanding of a putative assertion can be regarded as the understanding of an actual assertion

counterexample. But for my purposes I think it would be redundant to always weigh off three positions against one another.

(again, unless there are counterconsiderations which speak against this). Whenever a subject understands an assertion (as a result of the presumptions just explained) it is legitimate to assume that this assertion stems from a rational source. And ultimately, whenever it is legitimate to assume that an assertion stems from a rational source it is equally legitimate to presume it is true.

Such entitlement, however, is qualified as “pro tanto” (for the particular linguistic item at stake) and “prima facie” (tentative and as such subject to counterconsiderations). In the concrete case of »Alien« this would mean that Sam is tentatively justified to accept the particular report at stake *because* he is entitled to presume that it is true *because* he is entitled to presume that it comes from a rational source *because* he is entitled to presume that it is an assertion which he understands *because* he seemingly understands the linguistic item as a putative assertion.

We have thus arrived at a reasonable description of NR under which Sam is justified in accepting the alien’s testimony. Although Lackey recognises the sophistication of such a description she deliberately describes the scenario in a way which is incompatible with Burge’s account. What Lackey does is deal with the case as if the alien was a person; yet, in her depiction of the scenario she strips away everything that would lead to this very conclusion. If Sam is in no position to judge whether the alien is a person – and Lackey needs this degree of ignorance on the part of Sam for her counterexample to have any momentum – »Alien« does not pose a problem to Burge’s presumptive epistemic right in his version of NR. As Kusch maintains:

“Not knowing anything about the alien’s psychology means not knowing whether the alien has beliefs, intentions or desires. But then, by Lackey’s own criteria, Sam does not know whether the seemingly linguistic items produced by the alien are testimony at all – never mind whether they are good or bad testimony.” (Kusch *forthcoming*)

In summary, Lackey criticises Burge’s presumptive entitlement as if it was an unconditional entitlement. Burge, however, makes it very clear that a number of presumptions are of utmost importance in order to arrive at any entitlement to a

default-acceptance. *These presumptions are responsible for providing a rationale for how to deal with the testimony at stake.* Lackey needs to strip away precisely this rationale in order to claim that the hearer has no reason whatsoever to rely on.

Finally, there are two routes available to Lackey: either, she maintains her depiction of the scenario in »Alien« and acknowledges that the alien is not a person – then, however, the counterexample is situated outside the realm of testimony. Or, she explicitly claims that the alien is a person – then, however, her depiction of the scene is not sustainable. Under the presumption that the alien is indeed a person, it is by far not as clear as Lackey claims that Sam's acceptance of the testimony (*prima facie* and *pro tanto*) is a case of epistemic irrationality. But under such a description the epistemological account used to capture the scenario must give due credit to the notion that the speaker's beliefs and desires are epistemically relevant. This goes against Lackey's understanding.

»Sally« does little more in this respect than to provide the same attack from a different angle. The modification Lackey applies to »Alien« lies mainly in the shift from the speaker to the hearer with regards to what prevents the hearer from having a reason to accept the testimony in question. In »Alien« it was the peculiarity of the speaker; in »Sally« it is the fact that the girl has lost her every conception of human psychology which, for Lackey, undermines the reasonable acquisition of hearer-knowledge.

Yet, as much as (sophisticated) NR requires that a hearer may only obtain a justified testimonial belief under a set of presumptions, it requires that the hearer is intellectually aware. Such awareness is conceived of in terms of a responsible hearer, someone who is intellectually capable to discriminate between different kinds of reports and to accordingly understand the rationality behind accepting a report as true. This was the evident foundation for Burge's idea of a hearer and it is at least as explicit in the account of McDowell:

“A person sufficiently responsible to count as having achieved epistemic standing from someone else's words needs to be aware of how knowledge can be had from others, and rationally responsive to considerations whose relevance that awareness embodies. That requires his forming beliefs on the say-so of others to be rationally shaped by an understanding of, among

other things, the risks one subjects oneself to in accepting what people say.” (McDowell 1998: 434-435)

Thus, for McDowell, knowledge can only be acquired by someone who is not doxastically irresponsible in accepting the speaker’s report. Such doxastic responsibility can be fleshed out as a reasonable standing towards other people. At this point, the line of argument which was put forward against Lackey’s discussion of »Alien« can be recycled: if, on the one hand, we assume that Sally is a person, an analysis according to McDowell would yield the result that Sally has, indeed, an a priori justification to believe the report as true as long as there are no counterconsiderations which render this doxastically irresponsible:

“If one’s takings of things to be thus and so are to be cases of knowledge, they must be sensitive to the requirements of doxastic responsibility. Since following the dictates of doxastic responsibility is obviously an exercise of rationality, this can be a partial interpretation of the thought that knowledge [and its] specific epistemic positions [...] are standings in the space of reasons.” (Ibid.: 429)

On the other hand, if we assume that Sally is, even in principle, incapable of discriminating reports in a doxastically responsible fashion due to her complete ignorance concerning the workings of social interaction and human psychology we are no longer in the business of analysing a testimonial scenario.

Like in »Alien«, Lackey needs the protagonist to be *within* the extension of »a person with intentional attitudes« *and outside* the extension at the same time. Sally has to sufficiently count as a person for the counterexample to be an instance of testimony and simultaneously fall short of being a person for the counterexample to gain momentum against NR – otherwise there would not be a complete absence of reason. This is a problem for Lackey for when Sally is not regarded as a person the counterexample is obviously toothless and when Sally is regarded as a person Lackey does nothing more than state a standoff of intuitions. In this standoff, however, I take it that Lackey’s description is the more problematic view.

Bearing in mind her general rejection of the BVT, Lackey thus maintains that the speaker needs to have beliefs in general, yet any particular belief concerning the report at stake is irrelevant for the epistemological assessment of the testimonial exchange. I find this unconvincing. At best, Lackey refutes her own description of NR (against the background of her SVT) with »Alien« and »Sally«, but she does not provide a compelling objection to the individual non-reductionist accounts of Burge and McDowell. The speaker's intentional attitudes are a salient feature in cases of human interlocution for Burge and McDowell. If this aspect is appropriately appreciated, »Alien« and »Sally« both fail to provide more than an unpersuasive expression that Lackey's intuition concerning the ascription of hearer-knowledge in these two cases is at variance with the established view.

4. BEYOND THE DIVIDE

In Chapter Three I have argued that Lackey has not been successful in refuting reductionism and non-reductionism on the grounds of her philosophical counterexamples. In particular, concerning reductionism, my claim was that a hearer's adequate positive reasons are precisely what provide a justification for accepting a report as true. Lackey's attempt to show that there is an asymmetry between the positive reasons and the epistemic status of a hearer's belief has not proven to be convincing. Concerning non-reductionism, I have argued that although I agree that epistemic irrationality may undermine hearer-knowledge Lackey does not find a compelling description of how such irrationality may be constituted. I accept it as a rather non-controversial insight that the complete absence of information about the systematic goings-on of a testimonial exchange (or of interlocution in general) are suitable to establish such irrationality. Yet, Lackey's argumentation appears to fall short of presenting a compelling example in which a non-reductionist analysis would arrive at a counterintuitive verdict. Concretely, I have accused Lackey of presenting cases which are contradictory, overly chimerical and directed at her own definition of NR rather than at any individual sophisticated non-reductionist position.

At this point, it is important to recall that Lackey's attack on reductionism and non-reductionism is motivated by her agenda to promote a purely statement-oriented view of testimony. However, Lackey's objections have not shown to be convincing enough to provide a basis from which to discard beliefs as epistemically irrelevant. A person's intentional attitudes, and thus importantly a speaker's beliefs, have a role to play in interlocution. The hearer's contribution to a successful act of testimony must then include an assessment of whether or not a proffered report stems from a person, who intends to convey the message that *p* as true. A speaker's beliefs, as one part of her intentionality, cannot be given up

light-heartedly.³⁹ Consequently, LR, NR and the BVT have all remained essentially unscathed and continue to be contenders for an epistemology of testimony.

In this final Chapter, I shall present what I think are the ramifications of my objections to Lackey's critique. My aim is to show that by focusing on the strengths of LR and NR instead of their limitations there appears to be a common ground in the form of a minimum requirement which both reductionists and non-reductionists can endorse: that the hearer engages in the development of enough of a theory of the interlocution to provide a rationale for her acceptance of the report.

4.1. POSITIVE LESSONS LEARNED

I maintain that Lackey fails to rebut not only reductionism and non-reductionism but also to reject the focus on beliefs in the epistemological debate on testimony. Yet, it would certainly be wrong to hold that this is due to poor argumentative execution or that her enterprise could be saved simply by providing a better line of reasoning. Lackey's (2008) is widely recognised as one of the most densely argued and thorough studies on testimony in the recent philosophical literature and my objections are not meant to challenge this appreciation. Rather, as I see it, the problem of her endeavour is a matter of principle.

Lackey's engagement with the epistemological problems of testimony aims to show that neither LR nor NR are tenable. Even though I hold that the presentation of her objections is flawed, positive lessons can be learned from the in-depth analysis she provides. The flaw, according to my critique, is her endeavour to rebut LR and NR on the basis that beliefs are no salient feature in testimony. This appears to be counterproductive. The opposite strategy – to stress

³⁹ In my understanding, the issue of describing the epistemology of testimony as either transmissive or generative is a wider issue than the problem of deciding between the BVT and the SVT. My intention is to stay neutral (as far as possible) on the subject of individualist and comunitarian conceptions of knowledge throughout this thesis as I believe this is a subject beyond the scope of my investigation. Yet, it is important to me to object to Lackey's attempt to promote a generative view on testimony *by means of installing the SVT*. I maintain that the SVT is misguided and I see no fruitful endeavour in trying to redescribe the epistemology of testimony in terms of statements.

the strong points of both positions and understand how they respectively incorporate the intentionality of a speaker and a hearer in interlocution – may yield better results. Ultimately, it seems more appropriate to acknowledge that *both* LR and NR are able to respond to shared intuitions about interlocution scenarios, instead of stating that neither is capable to do so. Both positions answer to real testimonial challenges, although they do so by taking diametrically opposite starting points. In this regard, they try to negate the opposing stance by arguing against its respective plausibility. Axel Gelfert says it best:

“As I see it, both sides in the reductionism/anti-reductionism debate struggle to make sense of two very real, and – *at least on occasion* – rational attitudes towards testimony: the possibility of *rational rejection* of an instance of testimony, on the one hand, and the rationality, on occasion, of *simple acceptance* on trust.” (Gelfert 2009: 171)

A large proportion of testimonial cases are comprehensible from reductionist and non-reductionist positions alike. It is reasonable to assume a default acceptance as much as it is reasonable to understand such acceptance in a frame of reason. The incompatibility arises with each position denying the rationality of the competing epistemic posture. A corollary of this denial, however, is that reductionists and non-reductionists at some point encounter cases where their own description appears either too austere or too permissive:

“By overemphasising one of these reactive attitudes at the expense of the other, each side not only neglects the intuitions corresponding to the competing side; rather, [...] it also stretches its own paradigm beyond the point where it is sustainable *by its own standards*.” (Ibid.)

Put differently, reductionists and non-reductionists alike could gain from an acknowledgement of the underlying premises on which the antagonistic account is built. Given a certain testimonial scenario, one or the other position may be preponderant as regards a common intuition of how to best interpret the scenario. On the other hand, to deny, completely, the rationality of the opposing view, may harm the defensibility of each position itself. It seems fair to say that one and the same testimonial transmission could be justified under either description, the

difference being merely in the underlying thought where the analysis of its justification begins. In this respect, Adler writes:

“The anti-reductionist moves from an antecedent specifying a certain natural position or relation to a normative consequent. The reductionist requires a normative condition in the antecedent [...], although this may take the form of [a default acceptance] on a normative reading of ‘normal conditions’. Strictly, the [sic] reductionism and anti-reductionism need not be incompatible.” (Adler 2006: section 5)

The non-reductionist (Burge, McDowell) holds that our natural stance is such that there is an entitlement to accept a proffered report without a concrete corroborating reason. The reductionist (Fricker), on the contrary, holds that in case we have a reason we may believe the report. Yet, this disparity seems to arise merely from a difference in the respective understanding of what constitutes a good starting point for the analysis, in terms of a paradigm scenario of an interlocution (cf. the examples given in the introductory section 1.3).

As a result, the dichotomous division into a reductionist and a non-reductionist camp may be unable to yield substantial progress in the debate. Instead, in the form of a positive appraisal, we have to apply a meticulous reading of the concrete reductionist and non-reductionist positions available and prioritise their respective strengths over their limitations.

4.2. A DEFENSIBLE MIDDLE GROUND

This positive appraisal I am advocating can be approached from both sides of the divide: on the one hand, we have to arrive at an understanding of LR which is *less* demanding on the hearer. Therefore, I shall argue that already the Humean reductionist position has been misinterpreted to a certain extent and that Fricker’s account, in this tradition, may not place as austere conditions on the hearer as is often criticised. On the other hand, we also have to arrive at an understanding of NR which is *more* demanding on the hearer. Thus, I shall claim that the sophisticated non-reductionist accounts of Burge and McDowell require the

hearer to have a theory of the speaker which enables her to identify the source of a statement as a rational being whose motivation is to proffer a statement *qua* “presentation-as-true” (Burge 1993: 472). In this sense, the hearer needs to be aware of how knowledge can be gained from others and interpret the other person to a degree which is sufficient to establish a presumption of rationality. There seems to be at least a silver lining as regards a common ground between LR and NR.

4.2.1. On the understanding of reductionism

To begin with, it is questionable if Hume’s posture on the epistemology of testimony is as dismissive as it has been interpreted. There seems to be a noteworthy disagreement over the strong and selective readings of Hume by Coady (1992) and Goldman (1999, 2002). The passages cited by Coady and Goldman suggest a decidedly individualistic conception of testimonial knowledge which is severely sceptical and condemns any form of credulism. Hume does condemn credulism (most notably in Hume 2007: § 1.3.9). But with respect to Hume’s comments on testimony, it must not be overlooked that they are mainly found in the section »On Miracles« (Hume 2000: §§ 86-101) where Hume’s key enterprise is to negate that a miracle could ever be proven true *by the sheer act of reporting this miracle*.

It is clear that Hume’s theory of knowledge is empirical in that our knowledge of the environment depends on the regularities of nature which we may observe. Accordingly, testimonial justification is a matter of an observable causal relationship between an assertion and the event which led to the assertion. Given that we also observe human nature to be uniform, it is because of our experience of human nature (which is such that we usually respect this relationship between our statements and the underlying events which lead to those statements) that we may place credence in the reports of others (Faulkner 1998: 305-307). In this sense, Hume writes in the *Treatise of Human Nature*:

“When we receive any matter of fact upon human testimony, our faith arises from the very same origin as our inferences from causes to effects, and from effects to causes; nor is there anything but our experience of the

governing principles of human nature, which gives us any assurance of the veracity of men.” (Hume 2007: § 1.3.9)

A miracle, however, is a violation of the uniformity of nature. As soon as we jettison the idea that nature is uniform – by postulating an irregularity in the form of a miracle – we also have to give up our general credence in the very testimony which declares the miracle. The presumption of the uniformity of human nature is dependent upon the (stronger) presumption of the uniformity of nature in general. Consequently, testimony is not a suitable means to prove a miracle true:

“There must, therefore, be a uniform experience against every miraculous event, otherwise the event would not merit that appellation. And as a uniform experience amounts to a proof, there is here a direct and full *proof*, from the nature of the fact, against the existence of any miracle; nor can such a proof be destroyed, or the miracle rendered credible, but by an opposite proof, which is superior. The plain consequence is (and it is a general maxim worthy of our attention), ‘That no testimony is sufficient to establish a miracle, unless the testimony be of such a kind, that its falsehood would be more miraculous, than the fact, which it endeavours to establish; and even in that case there is a mutual destruction of arguments, and the superior only gives us an assurance suitable to that degree of force, which remains, after deducting the inferior.’” (Hume 2000: §§ 90-91)

The discussions of Coady and Goldman are strongly focused on this refutation of Hume. Yet, Hume does not want to establish a sceptical posture towards testimony in general but rather formulate a substantive counterargument against blind gullibility concerning Christian Scripture. As regards Hume’s more general remarks on testimony, he holds that “men commonly [have] an inclination to truth and a principle of probity [which are] qualities inherent in human nature” (ibid.: § 88). Such general truth-conduciveness can however be overridden “when the witnesses contradict each other; when they are but few, or of a doubtful character; when they have an interest in what they affirm; when they deliver their testimony

with hesitation, or on the contrary, with too violent asseverations” (ibid.: § 89). These are fundamentally social and essentially non-reductive remarks.⁴⁰

In order to find indications that a reductionist position need not be entirely incompatible with non-reductionist views it does, however, not suffice to question the exegesis of the Humean account. Rather, it must be shown that Fricker’s LR can be understood in a way which does not place as austere conditions on the hearer as her critics say.⁴¹ The lynchpin for this discussion is Fricker’s idea of a *critical assessment of the speaker* which every responsible hearer has to perform. Fricker explains this notion in the following way:

“In claiming that a hearer is required to assess a speaker for trustworthiness, I do not mean to insist, absurdly, that she is required to conduct an extensive piece of M15-type [sic]⁴² ‘vetting’ of any speaker before she may accept anything he says as true [...]. My insistence is much weaker: that the hearer should be discriminating in her attitude to the speaker, in that she should be continually evaluating him for trustworthiness throughout their exchange, in the light of the evidence, or cues, available to her. This will be partly a matter of her being disposed to deploy background knowledge which is relevant, partly a matter of her monitoring the speaker for any tell-tale signs revealing likely untrustworthiness.” (Fricker 1994: 149-150)

The relevant speaker-assessment thus comes in two parts: a continuous reference to relevant background knowledge and a requirement to monitor the speaker during the interlocution. It is the latter of these conditions which has been criticised as too austere. Specifically, from a non-reductionist perspective, it can be argued that a hearer has done enough by simply deploying adequate

⁴⁰ In accordance with this presentation, Saul Traiger (1993: 136) suggests that it is doubtful whether the Humean account, at any point, intends to promote a reductive view: “Hume’s empiricism does not commit him to epistemic individualism. [His] own theory of belief is decidedly social.” Cf. also Traiger (2010). In a similar fashion, Adler (94:269) regards the standard reading of Hume as biased: “While there is some textual support for their interpretation [Coady (1992: chapter 4); Stevenson (1993: 437); Webb (1993: 261-262)], none of them attempts to show how that interpretation is required for Hume’s main argument in ‘On Miracles’.”

⁴¹ I shall refrain from judging whether or not Fricker actually intends to be conducive to a less stringent understanding of the hearer’s contribution in testimonial cases. My weaker claim that her writing *can be understood* in such a way suffices for the moment.

⁴² I believe Fricker meant to refer to the MI5 vetting process which is employed at the UK national security intelligence agency, formerly known as MI5.

background considerations which potentially preclude the acceptance of a report. As Audi illustrates the Reidian view:

“[Our background beliefs] play a mainly filtering role: they prevent our believing testimony that does not ‘pass’, for instance because it seems insincere; but if no such difficulty strikes us, we ‘just believe’ (non-inferentially) what is attested. These filtering beliefs are like a trap door that shuts only if triggered; its normal position is open, but it stays in readiness to block what should not enter.” (Audi 1997: 406)

However, it is a matter of dispute how such “readiness to block” can be fleshed-out. Fricker describes this in action-vocabulary as for her it resembles a *process* more than a *disposition*. As such, the requirement for any (mature) hearer to engage in such a monitoring process is an integral part of LR. It is precisely through her critical evaluation that the hearer precludes gullibility and gains a reason which can justify her testimonial belief. In contrast to Fricker, Kusch points out that the responsibility of the hearer cannot be phrased in terms of »active monitoring« but rather that a latent passive filtering of the things we are told is sufficiently critical (2002: 26-27).

The disagreement is in large part due to the fact that Fricker (akin to everyone else) leaves an extensive room for interpretation of *how* this assessment is carried out. In spite of her explanation of the notion as “active” (1995: 405), Fricker expresses her intuition that monitoring need not be a conscious process:

“[The] monitoring for signs of untrustworthiness in a speaker is typically conducted at a non-conscious level. And while its results can generally be fished up into consciousness and expressed, albeit roughly, in words (‘I didn’t like the look of him’; ‘Well, she seemed perfectly normal’), no doubt the specific cues in a speaker’s behaviour which constitute the informational basis for this judgement will often be registered and processed at an irretrievably sub-personal level.” (Fricker 1994: 150)

At the same time, any such monitoring has to remain enough of an achievement which is attributable to the hearer in order for the resulting belief to count as knowledge (cf. Pritchard 2006). It is very hard to capture just how “irretrievably sub-personal” Fricker’s monitoring can be given that it is the decisive factor

which distinguishes the critical from the gullible. Fricker indeed adds that, in case somebody was to confront the hearer, her basis for the acceptance or rejection of a certain item of testimony must be available to her in that she must be able to defend herself and the judgement she made (Fricker 1994: 150; cf. Mackie 1970). Still, with the hearer's critical stance being the centrepiece of LR, it is unclear how Fricker may conceive of the monitoring requirement as passive and non-conscious. If the reductionist requirement becomes too weak, it seems fair to say that "the mere wholesale ability to 'fish up' such judgments in an unspecific way is not enough to underwrite the rationality of *either* rejection *or* acceptance of a given piece of testimony" (Gelfert 2009: 178).

LR appears to face a dilemma. The monitoring requirement has to be formulated in a strong enough way in order for the hearer to actually *achieve* a justification for her testimonial belief. At the same time, the burden on the hearer cannot be too heavy as a vetting process is clearly an absurd constraint.

Fricker circumvents this dilemma (to put it mildly) by remaining vague to the greatest possible extent in her concrete formulations of the monitoring requirement. Certainly, a hearer has to have a *reason* to accept a report and this reason is constituted by her filtering (on the grounds of background beliefs) and monitoring (on the grounds of detectable cues). Nonetheless, it remains fairly obscure how the process of critical assessment can be "active" and "sub-personal" at the same time and how the judgement (but not the underlying cues) must be "available" to the hearer but still has to be "fished up" before it can be expressed. Consequently, Fricker's description of what she posits as subconscious psychological mechanisms remains at a minimum in terms of an explanation. It is simply not defined how a hearer can really engage in a critical monitoring process. The idea is stuck somewhere between being theoretically feeble (if construed as too loose) and psychologically implausible (if construed as too narrow).

In turn, this opens up the opportunity to understand LR in a moderate way, so that its premises are not taken beyond the point where they are no longer epistemologically sustainable. Monitoring, in essence, enables the process of the

evolvment of a theory of the speaker. The resulting theory, then, serves to explain why a certain statement has been proffered:

“Indeed the primary task for the hearer is to construct enough of a theory of the speaker, and relevant portions of her past and present environment, to *explain* her utterance: to render it comprehensible why she made that assertion, on that occasion. Whether the speaker’s assertion is to be trusted will, generally speaking, be fall-out from this theory which explains why she made it; and it is difficult to see how sincerity and competence could be evaluated other than through the construction of such an explanation.” (Fricker 1994: 149)

Now, according to LR, this theory cannot exclusively rely on background beliefs to provide the necessary susceptibility to the epistemic credentials of a report. There also needs to be an active engagement (of some sort) with the very act of the interlocution. While the filtering according to background beliefs must yield the starting point of an interpretation qua explanatory theory, a hearer has to remain responsive to the concrete scenario of the interlocution.

My proposal is this: Fricker understands every interlocution as an activity which is necessarily accompanied by circumstantial evidence. Not every hearer shows an adequate level of susceptibility to the cues which constitute this evidence. Making observations – by being responsive to information concerning the speaker, the scene, the subject matter and so forth – is therefore a critical action which distinguishes a responsible hearer from a gullible hearer. *Engaging in the process of making observations about the circumstantial evidence available to the hearer, even if this process is to a certain degree non-conscious and sub-personal, thus puts a hearer in a position to arrive at a basic interpretation which serves as an explanation why the report in question was proffered.* This very process is the local reductionist’s monitoring requirement. It enables a hearer to obtain a justified testimonial belief.

4.2.2. On the understanding of non-reductionism

Having talked about how the monitoring requirement of LR can be understood as being less austere, it is now time to aim for an understanding of NR which is not in

principle at odds with this notion. Thus, I shall claim that the sophisticated non-reductionist accounts of Burge and McDowell are not unconditional default-acceptance views. Rather, they require the hearer to have a basic theory of the interlocution which serves as a fundamental enabling condition for any default entitlement to accept a report.

In order to comprehend NR, it is imperative to understand what the explanandum of the theory is. NR is interested in an analysis of the nature of a posited default entitlement to accept the content of a proffered report. Such an entitlement provides a rationale behind the thought that a hearer may acquire a justified testimonial belief in spite of having no corroborating empirical evidence to back up the claim of the report through which the belief has been produced (cf. section 3.2). This entitlement is in itself *not* an a posteriori reason to accept a statement, but instead an entitlement in the absence of such a reason.

In this respect, according to the theory, there is an a priori rationale behind believing a speaker. However, *the scenario of an interlocution has to be recognisable as endowing such a rationale*. In other words, the hearer has to be part of a testimonial exchange in order to be entitled to her belief. This seems obvious. What is less obvious is how this condition can actually manifest itself in any concrete interlocution. Certainly, such a condition must come apart from any a posteriori evidence concerning the contents of the report in question. To demand empirical support for p – as opposed to directly and immediately coming to know that p by someone's telling that p – is precisely what non-reductionists deny. Instead, NR requires a basic grasp of the fundamental goings-on of the interlocution. As such, anything that provides a basis for the hearer's judgement that she is confronted with the rational forces of a testimonial scenario functions as "a causal enabling condition" (Burge 1997: 23). This condition is indispensable for NR.

As has been indicated, the hearer's conceived rationality is naturally not fleshed-out in terms of empirical reasons which *add* to the justificatory force of the a priori entitlement. In the form of a fundamental requirement, it *enables* the entitlement. In this regard, although the conception of the underlying rationality of an interlocution has something to do with the hearer's empirical susceptibility to

his environment, NR is not threatened to be misinterpreted as an a posteriori notion of testimony. The considerations which put a hearer in the position of being a (rational) hearer, the “enabling conditions”, have nothing to do with the idea that testimonial knowledge is inferential in any way. Both Burge and McDowell explicitly rule out the idea that we *infer* our testimonial beliefs, even only unconsciously or implicitly, from a proffered statement. Reports are not merely premises to an argument in which we infer the proposition in question as its conclusion. Acquiring a testimonial belief remains epistemically immediate and basic.

The key corollary of these considerations is that conceiving the underlying rationality of testimony is as much a matter of understanding the content of a report as understanding the process of learning from a report itself. There is an important sense in which the aspect of presentation is a feature of interlocution:

“In interlocution, the understanding that perception triggers and to which the entitlement attaches is *an understanding of an event, a presentation of content*, not merely understanding of a content abstracted from any instantiations. [...] At issue is understanding both the presentation of content and the presentation’s mode.” (Burge 1997: 24, emphasis added)

The claim here is not that empirical considerations add to (or even sufficiently constitute) the force of the entitlement – this would be a straightforward contradiction to the principles of NR – but rather that a hearer has to find herself as being in a testimonial situation before such an entitlement even enters the picture. There has to be a rationality in taking a scenario to be a testimonial scenario and this rationality is attributable to the hearer’s capabilities of identifying herself as being in such a scenario. Burge distinguishes between a hearer’s perception and her understanding:

“Strictly speaking, we do not perceive the assertive mode, or the conceptual content, of utterances. We understand them. These are exercises of intellectual capacities. We understand events as assertions by perceiving other aspects of assertions. We understand the concepts in assertions, by perceiving expressions of them. But here *perception is part of the condition for exercising the intellectual capacity*, not – or not

normally – part of the warrant for the individual’s relying on his understanding. It is a necessary triggering mechanism, but it is not the understanding itself.” (Burge 1997: 31, emphasis added)

Once again, the idea of such a “triggering mechanism” does not conflict with the notion that a hearer need not have a posteriori support for being entitled to a belief. *It is the entire enterprise of an a priori entitlement which is conditionally dependent on a presumption of rationality.* This presumption is constituted by appealing to the hearer’s intellectual capability to understand testimony as a way of gaining knowledge from others which is confined by the forces of its own underlying rationale. Thus, a hearer needs to be aware of how knowledge can be gained from others and sufficiently sensitive to (empirical) considerations which come apart from the content of a report (its *presentation*) to establish this very presumption of rationality.

The key question to ask is: at what stage in the intellectual process does the momentum change from the establishment of the rationality to the default acceptance of the report? The way NR is described, it is a theory which characterises the nature of the a priori entitlement to believe a statement. In this sense, the starting point of the investigation *is* the entitlement. However, it is a vital consideration that this entitlement rests on a presumptive basis which ensures that a default acceptance is a rational attitude given the circumstances. In his more general remarks on knowledge McDowell says:

“[T]here are no immediate standings in the space of reasons – no absolute starting points. An absolute starting point would be a position in the space of reasons that one could occupy without needing a suitable rational sensitivity to its surroundings.” (McDowell 1998: 430)

The rationality of being in a position to accept a report without empirical support hinges on the understanding of what it means for a hearer to obtain knowledge. A hearer needs a basic sensitivity of her current epistemic position in order for her to obtain a testimonial belief that is a priori justified. This is partly a matter of *understanding* an assertion and partly a matter of being sensitive to circumstantial

evidence which constitutes the epistemic framework in which a certain testimonial scenario takes place.

“[T]he epistemological role of the rational sensitivities that I have summed up under the head of doxastic responsibility is to cash out this idea of taking cognitive capacities into the space of reasons – to apply a background that must be in place [...]” (McDowell 1998: 433)

The understandings of interlocution of Burge and McDowell are such that the workings of these “rational sensitivities” are already carried out when the concrete testimonial exchange is analysed. The investigation sets off with the default acceptance in place – the entitlement is truly *a priori* and as such a function of the basic cognitive capacities of any rational being. The conditions which enable the entitlement are established and thus not actually part of the analysis. Epistemology is therefore concerned with a situation in which the hearer merely has to be responsive to counterconsiderations which may override this default acceptance. For that reason, the analytical focus of such an account is on explaining testimonial knowledge with the entitlement already established. This is illustrated also by Fricker’s direct critique of Burge’s view:

“Burge takes it to be pretty much an epistemological datum that a hearer is entitled, in the absence of defeaters, to believe what she is told as such. [...] The task for the epistemologist of testimony, as Burge conceives it, is not to offer a suasive argument to establish, in the face of real doubt, that we are entitled to believe what we are told as such; rather, it is to offer some further explanation of this datum.” (Fricker 2006: 79)

In this regard, non-reductionists appear to focus on a different point of the analysis of the epistemology of testimony in comparison with reductionists. As I understand it, also under the description of NR a hearer must rely on the fact that her default-acceptance *presumes the rationality of an adequate testimonial scenario*. This presumption is the rational force that enables a hearer to be *a priori* entitled to a justified testimonial belief.

Ultimately, then, NR commits to the same idea that there has to be a mini-theory of the interlocution involved, providing a rationale for accepting a report.

The relevant epistemic surrounding of the interlocution provides a context and thus information, which the hearer needs to incorporate in her theory. As discussed in the previous section about LR, there is then a critical distinction between an epistemically responsible hearer, who engages in a process of critical observation by being responsive to information concerning the speaker, the scene, the subject matter and so forth, and a gullible hearer, who refrains from this action. It is the process which the default entitlement *presumes* for which also the non-reductionist has to admit the necessity of engaging in the action of making observations about the circumstantial evidence available to the hearer. This is a matter of causal, not temporal, precedence. And although there remain significant differences in the respective conceptions between LR and NR, there appears to be a common notion of a minimum requirement: that the hearer arrives at *an understanding of the interlocution* (and not only an understanding of the proffered assertion) that provides the rationality in her acceptance of the report.

4.3. POSITIVE REASONS AND COUNTERCONSIDERATIONS

4.3.1. Corroborating and enabling a posteriori reasons

Early on in the debate, Leslie Stevenson pointed out that in the end, there may not be a very big difference in practice between reductionism and non-reductionism. Having *a reason to believe* versus having *no reason to doubt* that there is an appropriate epistemic justification in the testimonial chain that was responsible for the production of the report in question “may come down to not much more than a vague impression of the general, quite unspecific likelihood of there being an appropriate chain behind most human assertions” (Stevenson 1993: 449).

Although this formulation was presented before the concrete accounts of LR and NR were developed which are the subject of this investigation, I take Stevenson’s suggestion to be of practical importance. This is because the “vague impression” of an “unspecific likelihood” of the epistemic appropriateness of a received report can be understood in terms of empirical back-up (LR) as well as in terms of an underlying fundamental presumption (NR). This relates back to the

distinction introduced in the previous section: depending on the perspective, having a theory of the epistemic rationality behind testimony will be a matter either of retrospect – when looking »back« onto the presumptive basis on which the entitlement to accept a report rests – or of prospect – when looking »ahead« onto the cues and indications which constitute the reason to believe.

As mentioned before, there is an immediate appeal to both perspectives. Getting to know via testimony is a question of direct, immediate and non-inferential understanding. At the same time, accepting testimony at face value without any considerations concerning its rationality is tantamount to crude gullibility. The plausibility of both positions therefore insinuates that establishing the rationality behind the acceptance of a report is as much the result of positive evidence as it is the result of the absence of undefeated defeaters. This part of the debate boils down to how we define evidence and defeaters. My intuition is that these two forms of reason are really just two sides of the same coin – positive reasons are generally called evidence while negative reasons are called defeaters.⁴³ However, and this is important, reductionists and non-reductionists seem to apply these terms *from their respective viewpoints*. As such, there is a key difference between how a posteriori evidence is conceived of in LR and NR which is due to a disparity concerning what the proponents of each view *use* the term for. It is for this disparity that non-reductionists maintain that a hearer need not have positive reasons while reductionists insist that positive reasons are exactly what endow the rationality behind the acceptance of a report.

In essence, positive reasons and negative reasons are two manifestations of a posteriori evidence. Consider a case in which a person tells me she ate a magdalena for breakfast today. My accepting her testimony is a function of a cognitive process which renders my testimonial belief justified. This is true for LR

⁴³ Lackey (2008: 183 n. 10) suggests that this is a broadly held view when she writes that “it is readily acknowledged that average epistemic agents have acquired ample inductive evidence for believing that certain conversational features, such as nervousness, lack of eye contact, and confused behavior, suggest *incompetence*, *insincerity*, and *unreliability*. But positive reasons are just the flip side of defeaters. For just as we have accumulated this type of negative inductive evidence, we have also accumulated positive inductive evidence for believing that certain contextual features are indicators of competence, sincerity, and reliability.” She then adds that “negative reasons are just positive reasons *against* believing a proposition, i.e., positive reasons to *not* believe a proposition” (ibid.: 199 n. 5).

and NR. If the process did not take place, it would undermine the justification for my belief because I would lack a critical attitude which keeps me from being gullible. In this regard, I need to be aware of any considerations which may affect – for the better or for the worse – the reliability of the proffered report. From a positive-reasons perspective, this cognitive process would yield questions like: »Does her voice sound normal?«, »Does she look in my eyes?«, »Is it plausible that she could buy a magdalena this morning?«, »Does she usually tell me things like this?« and so forth. If the answers to those questions are (sufficiently) positive, there is corroboration to accept her statement as true *due to the presence of positive reasons*. In turn, from a negative-reasons viewpoint, the cognitive process would trigger questions such as: »Does her voice sound strange?«, »Does she avoid looking in my eyes?«, »Is it implausible that she could buy a magdalena this morning?«, »Does she have anything to gain from telling me things like this?« and so forth. Then, if the answers to those questions are (sufficiently) negative, there is no defeater which speaks against accepting her statement as true *due to the absence of negative reasons*.

What I suggest is that this characterisation of reasons is the non-reductionist way of describing an interlocution. Within the theory, positive reasons (»I noticed that her voice was normal«) and (the absence of) negative reasons (»I did not notice anything strange about her voice.«) contribute to the same epistemic project. In reference to the hearer's default-acceptance, the nature of these a posteriori reasons is purely *corroborating* – in the positive case – or *overriding* – in the negative case. All a hearer has to do is to ensure a basic sensitivity to the presence of such reasons; in turn, if there are no such reasons, the hearer is perfectly justified in her default-stance. Yet, under this description, claiming that a hearer does not need positive reasons to accept a report is equivalent to the idea that *once the rationality of a testimonial scenario is established*, there is no need for *further* a posteriori corroboration. A mere susceptibility to the presence of undefeated defeaters is sufficient to be justified to a testimonial belief.

Even though this is not in principle at odds with LR, the situation would not be described in the same way from a reductionist point of view. The reason for this is that the reductionist's hearer has no stance (in the form of an entitlement) at

the beginning of her analysis which could be corroborated or overridden. Positive reasons can certainly play the same corroborating or defeating role also in LR. Yet, before this function can be carried out, positive and negative reasons must endow a rationality or irrationality concerning a report. In this respect, the prime usage of the term in LR refers to an *enabling* reason rather than a *corroborating* reason. The reason why a posteriori considerations play such a salient role in LR (but not in NR) is that the focus of the analysis is on the establishment of the rationale which is the basis for the hearer's understanding of testimony as a source of knowledge. These considerations play the same role in NR. However, concerning a posteriority, the non-reductionist is already a step ahead in her considerations. The focus is shifted away from the establishment of the underlying rationale (the default-acceptance is a *presumption* which is already in place) and onto any supplementary considerations which may but affect the default-stance.

For non-reductionists, there are two constituents to the analysis of testimony: one is the default entitlement qua a priori presumption; the other is the interlocution which is conditionally dependent on the default entitlement. The hearer's entitlement is *a priori* because it is not dependent on the empirical considerations discussed in the breakfast-case. Yet, this a priori entitlement critically hinges on the condition that the hearer has already established the rationality of the testimonial scenario as such. This will be, grosso modo, a matter of identifying the source of a report as a person. There is then a clear need for positive reasons to arrive at the point where the hearer can rely on a default entitlement:

“[T]he non-reductionist might agree that the hearer needs positive reasons for the belief that he is confronted with a person, and thus with testimony, while still denying that the hearer need positive reasons for being *prima facie* entitled to his or her testimonial belief.” (Kusch *forthcoming*)

Effectively, the hearer must be confronted with a statement proffered from a rational source qua presentation-as-true. I take it to be apparent that the understanding that one is in such a situation cannot be free from empirical considerations. To understand that a report comes from a person is the result of an

empirical process. The establishment of the underlying condition that *enables* an a priori entitlement is itself not a priori.

LR frames the epistemic goings-on differently. The analysis does not distinguish between the two constituents in the way NR does. The questions »Am I confronted with the report of a rational source?« and »Does her voice sound normal?« are both empirical considerations which constitute the rationality of accepting the report. For the non-reductionist, these two questions do not belong to the same class of empirical reasons. Non-reductionists distinguish between (necessary) enabling a posteriori reasons and (supplementary) corroborating a posteriori reasons. Conversely, reductionists put all of their eggs in one basket. Effectively, then, non-reductionists do not claim that a hearer need not have *any* a posteriori reasons to acquire a justified testimonial belief; the much weaker claim is that a hearer need not have corroborating a posteriori reasons once the default entitlement is established.

4.3.2. Cases of overdetermination

As indicated, the distinction between enabling and corroborating evidence is not a distinction between two different notions of empirical reasons. Rather, it is the distinction between how reductionists and non-reductionists seem to predominantly make use of the term in their respective theory. This distinction matters because it demonstrates why non-reductionists can maintain their position that a posteriori reasons are not necessary for a justified testimonial belief. To be precise, the full claim would have to be that there are no further a posteriori reasons necessary for a justified testimonial belief over and above the reasons which provide the hearer with the understanding that she is confronted with the rational report of a person.

However, since the distinction between an enabling and a corroborating reason is not a distinction between two different kinds of reasons there is the basic problem of defining what exactly constitutes the rationality of the default acceptance. Understanding that one is confronted with the rational report of a person will be the outcome of being confronted with all sorts of information which indicate (rather than fully define) the personhood of the speaker. Being a

person is not a distinct property of the speaker which the hearer has to detect; it is a theoretical construct which the hearer may appropriately apply once a number of features of the speaker allow for the presumption that the source of the report is actually a rational being.

As regards NR, any information which contributes to the understanding that the presumption of personhood is rational is a necessary part of establishing the underlying presumptive right concerning testimony. However, any information beyond this point is merely supplementary support for an already established entitlement to accept a report. The hearer does not need such supplementary reasons. Once the core rationale is established, there is no additional requirement to collect further evidence. This is not a problem as long as we consider cases in which the hearer is confronted with a plethora of empirical evidence which she can employ as arguments for and against the reliability of a statement. Overdetermination does not do any harm; NR may still claim that the presence of additional evidence is not a salient feature of the hearer's epistemic justification.⁴⁴

A corollary of this is that reductionists and non-reductionists do, in fact, agree on their intuitive judgements in the vast majority of testimonial scenarios. Under »regular« circumstances, the hearer has at her disposal a substantial amount of evidential information some of which may establish the basic rationality of the interlocution, some of which may corroborate the hearer's default entitlement, some of which are defeating counterconsiderations and some of which may be defeater-defeaters which override those counterconsiderations. As Burge puts it:

“I do not hold that we adults are in a high proportion of cases *a priori* entitled, all things considered, to particular beliefs acquired in interlocution. Perceptual elements are very frequently partly constitutive of our understanding. So understanding is often not purely intellectual. And our *a priori prima facie* entitlement to accept what we are told commonly needs empirical supplementation to override counterconsiderations. But we are sometimes so entitled.” (Burge 1997: 23)

⁴⁴ Note that while the *presence* of additional evidence is not a feature of NR, the hearer's basic sensitivity to such evidence, were it there, is still necessary.

Fricker's position on this subject fits Burge's description that a hearer is usually overwhelmed with evidence and defeaters. LR had better stay clear from the idea that a hearer has to undertake an onerous epistemic effort to obtain positive and negative reasons. This is why Fricker maintains:

“[O]n almost any actual occasion of testimony, a normally knowledgeable adult will be absolutely awash with relevant circumstantial evidence bearing on the question of whether the speaker is to be trusted on her topic. [...] Any background beliefs of the hearer which are evidence, whether circumstantial or direct, against the speaker's trustworthiness on her topic must be put onto the scales for the epistemic weighing of the reliability of the potential source of new belief, the current telling. Equally, any background beliefs which are evidence in favour of the trustworthiness of the speaker must be added on the pro-reliability side of the scales. In short, any relevant information in the possession of the hearer must properly count, and be counted, in her evaluation of the trustworthiness of the speaker.” (Fricker 2002: 380-381)

In her attempt to promote a dualist view on the epistemology of testimony, Lackey fully acknowledges this processing of available information and emphasises that the rationality for a hearer to accept a proffered statement has to be established as a response to reasons which come in a large variety of forms. There is typically a myriad of epistemically relevant reasons which the responsible hearer must be sensitive to. And even if those reasons are not directly available to the hearer in the form of a concrete conscious belief “they nonetheless play a crucial role in our epistemic lives, as we tacitly discriminate among and evaluate pieces of incoming information, and compare such input with our background beliefs” (Lackey 2008: 183).

Ultimately, then, epistemologists of all corners seem to agree (on whether or not a hearer obtains a justified testimonial belief) in (ordinary) cases where the hearer is in possession of a plethora of reasons for and against a certain report. The responsible hearer is one who distinguishes between reliable and unreliable testimony in an adequate fashion by taking into account this very information. In such cases, there is no need to single out the force of the epistemic contribution of the hearer's default entitlement.

4.3.3. The ignorant traveller and the strange passer-by

With the standard case being such that there are countless epistemically relevant positive and negative reasons available, the key disagreement between LR and NR is often not the crucial factor for the analysis of whether or not a hearer gains knowledge. The differences only arise over cases in which the hearer is no longer vested with any such reasons. Therefore, there have been many attempts to describe a scenario in which a speaker *truly lacks any relevant reasons* for and against accepting a given report.

It is worth examining some of the most notable descriptions in order to see that there is a fundamental dilemma none of them is able to escape: one alternative is to strip away, *ex hypothesi*, all empirical considerations, so that a hearer has absolutely no grounds from which to even investigate the rationality behind a report; the other alternative is to envisage a case in which a hearer only has a reason to believe she is confronted with testimony – but no other evidence which affects her default entitlement in any way. The former strategy is that of »Alien« and »Sally« where a hearer truly lacks any conception of her situation and is allegedly confronted with an isolated piece of testimony. I discuss these cases in sections 3.2.2 and 3.2.3 above where I explain at some length why I am not convinced by Lackey's argumentation. The latter strategy appears to be the more promising route. Yet, in the remainder of this section I shall argue that such a case – where a hearer has just enough reason to be rational in her acceptance of a report, but no further reason of any kind – is equally unsuitable to advocate a purely *a priori* conception of testimony.

The standard example which has been suggested is that of a traveller who arrives at a place which she is not at all acquainted with and asks a person who is completely strange to her about directions. Take McDowell's scenario:

“Consider a tourist in a strange city, looking for the cathedral. He asks a passer-by, who is in fact a resident and knows where the cathedral is, for directions, hears and understands what the passer-by says, and finds the cathedral just where his informant said he would.” (McDowell 1998: 417)

McDowell's outlook on the case is that it cannot depend on anything like evidential information (about the speaker, the environment and so forth) that we attribute the hearer with knowledge about the whereabouts of the cathedral. Rather, the case shows, according to McDowell, that the understanding of the utterance, together with an understanding of the obvious risks attached to believing a person, directly and without mediation results in hearer-knowledge.

Lackey presents an analogous example in which a tourist tries to find the Sears Tower:

“Having just arrived at the train station in Chicago, Morris wishes to obtain directions to the Sears Tower. He looks around, approaches the first adult passer-by that he sees, and asks how to get to his desired destination. The passer-by, who happens to be a Chicago resident who knows the city extraordinarily well, provides Morris with impeccable directions to the Sears Tower by telling him that it is located two blocks east of the train station. Morris unhesitatingly forms the corresponding true belief.” (Lackey 2007: 352)⁴⁵

Lackey's verdict is that although Morris can be said to know where the Sears Tower is, he does not deserve credit in any form for his knowledge, the reason for this being that he has done nothing which could count as a cognitive achievement in the process of getting to know where the Sears Tower is. Like McDowell, Lackey holds that any processing of empirical information which is available to the hearer is not responsible for the production of the testimonial belief, but instead the epistemic burden is carried by the speaker. The hearer gains a justified belief as a result of a combination of his a priori entitlement and the pure absence of counterconsiderations.

I am not convinced by these examples. Certainly, McDowell and Lackey have to acknowledge that the hearer in their cases is vested with the confidence of being in a testimonial scenario. This confidence endows a default rationality to accept a speaker's report – but it is itself a result of considerations which lead up to the conclusion that the framework is indeed that of testimony. Being a priori

⁴⁵ A variation of this case, which I have discussed in section 2.2 above, is presented in Lackey's (2008: 68). Pritchard (2006: 17-18) also discusses this example.

entitled to a testimonial belief hinges on the condition that the speaker is a person and her utterance can be understood as a presentation-as-true. In the two cases, the satisfaction of this condition obviously depends on evidential information, such as that the speaker looks like a human being, that the speaker is not on a theatre stage, that the speaker is a serious-looking adult and so forth. The default entitlement to accept the report is certainly not established by an isolated understanding of the assertion as a presentation-as-true.

Similar but somewhat more elaborate attempts to present examples in which a hearer appears to have no positive evidence yet arrives at a justified testimonial belief have been put forward by Pritchard and Faulkner. Pritchard shares my view that in the two cases above there is a significant amount of evidence involved which plays a relevant role in the acquisition of the hearer-knowledge. Therefore, he tries to design a scenario which remedies this shortcoming by further stripping away what could serve as cues for the hearer. In reference to Lackey's presentation, he calls the main character of his example Jennifer:

“[L]et us imagine that what Jennifer is trying to find out is not directions in an unfamiliar town, but rather the answer to the question of what ‘Il pleut’ means. Her situation is one of complete ignorance. She does not have any idea of what this phrase might mean, nor even what language it is in. Moreover, she is dropped in an unfamiliar place and given no information about the people who occupy this region. Furthermore, just for good measure, all the people in that region are disguised such that there is no way for Jennifer to know what sort of person she is talking to, young or old, male or female, etc. Suppose now that Jennifer asks the first person she meets for an answer to her question and this person, knowledgeable about the French language, informs her that the phrase means ‘It’s raining’.” (Pritchard 2006: 22-23)

An equally clever move is Faulkner's idea to move a conversational scenario into a warzone. He thereby establishes something like a bare epistemic landscape in which a hearer cannot distinguish between informants that can and cannot be trusted:

“Suppose that you do not presume to trust strangers even on unloaded topics; maybe this is wartime and you are in an occupied land.

Nonetheless, needing to find a certain landmark you approach a passer-by to ask for directions. It seems intuitive, if you understand what is said, that the passer-by could communicate her knowledge of the whereabouts of this landmark.” (Faulkner 2002: 359)

Concerning Pritchard's example, his own conclusion is that knowledge cannot be gained in such a situation because “Jennifer is unable to bring her relevant cognitive abilities to bear but must instead rest content with her belief’s epistemic support being entirely testimonial” (2006: 23). Pritchard uses this case to show that in order to gain knowledge from testimony, a belief must always be integrated into a set of beliefs which are not entirely testimonial. Since the situation for Jennifer, however, is such that all she could do is go and ask the next masked stranger, testimonial knowledge is not to be had by her for the lack of non-testimonial support. I take this verdict to be non-controversial, yet I want to make use of the example for a different point.⁴⁶ Regardless of whether or not a testimonial belief needs non-testimonial support, the scenario is still full of relevant evidential reasons which are available to Jennifer and which will without a doubt occupy her mind and be important concerning her belief-formation process. There must be a myriad of thoughts going through Jennifer's head, being dropped off in an unfamiliar place. Depending on how she got into this situation, my intuition is that she will be absolutely alert and highly sensitive to any positive and negative reason she can grasp. Be it out of fear (e.g. if Jennifer was kidnapped) or out of excitement (imagine she takes part in an adventurous game), I tend to believe that her ability to absorb information in such an extreme case is actually higher than it would normally be. As a result, there will be thoughts triggered in her head which speak *for* the acceptance of the report («These people are human.«, »The environment is not hostile« etc.) and even far more thoughts which speak *against* it («I don’t know where I am.«, »All people are completely disguised.« etc.). Those considerations are empirical by their very nature.

⁴⁶ Thus, this is not meant as a direct refutation of Pritchard’s considerations. I will simply employ *his* example for *my* purposes, as the case of Jennifer might be seen as providing a compelling variation of the ignorant traveller-case. Here, I want to show that it is not.

Faulkner, in his discussion, appears to concur with my explanation. His account of testimonial knowledge is such that even in a case which is seemingly radically novel for a hearer (who thus does not have any background experience about the reliability of the truth-conduciveness of a proffered report) there is still what he calls a “communicative context [which] can supply reasons for acceptance or otherwise” (Faulkner 2002: 360) of a proffered statement. As such, there are, even cases like the ones discussed in this section, features about the interlocution which provide reasons that can be picked up by a responsible hearer.

My claim is thus that a reflection of the presented scenarios shows that even in principle it seems impossible to imagine a type of case in which the hearer acquires a justified testimonial belief in a completely a priori fashion, without appealing to empirical considerations. The default entitlement of NR can never be understood as an independent epistemic rationale which justifies a hearer in scenes of a complete evidential void. It is also not a viable option for the non-reductionist to downplay available a posteriori information to mere supplementary reasons for and against a belief. A portion of a hearer’s evidence will – *always* – play a constitutive role in establishing the rationality of the entitlement to a testimonial belief.

It is true that the examples of an ignorant traveller who confronts a strange passer-by are suitable to show that there are inherent difficulties in evaluating epistemic scenarios. Given the circumstantial complications, intuitions will vary across philosophers, as well as across philosophically untrained people, who are confronted with these examples. Still, the difficulty lies in the fact that the information the hearer is confronted with is conflicting to a certain degree. The examples do not reveal the hard problem that a hearer can get to know in the absence of a posteriori reasons; instead, there is the conceptually far easier problem that there will not be a clear unanimous intuition about the cases since some information available to the hearer speaks for the rationality of accepting the report, and some of it against it.

The envisaged scene of the hard problem is one of a *clean slate* where the hearer is confronted with an isolated piece of information free of any hints or indications about its truth-conduciveness. A genuine tabula-rasa state-of-affairs

would be precisely what reductionists and non-reductionists would fail to agree upon. A scenario in which a hearer truly fails to possess evidence but still obtains a justified testimonial belief on the grounds of the rational forces of testimony is essentially the only case in which reductionists and non-reductionists arrive, *in principle*, at distinct verdicts about whether or not the hearer is entitled to her belief. But such a state is unattainable.⁴⁷

Testimony never comes engraved on a clean slate. There is no epistemologically relevant scenario which is entirely (or even sufficiently) free of both rebutting and reinforcing information, contextual as well as concerning background considerations, in which the hearer may still rationally obtain a testimonial belief. In this regard I completely concur with Fricker that “[a]ny alleged *a priori* warrant to trust the speaker *on no evidence* is simply superseded by a rich dossier of evidence for or against trustworthiness in the hearer’s possession” (2002: 381, second emphasis added).⁴⁸ Ultimately, the idea that there has to be enough of a reason to render the understanding of a statement rational in order for the resulting belief to be justified is a common notion of both LR and NR which can be appreciated under the description of either account.

⁴⁷ In this respect, Fricker speaks of a case in which “a message [is] beamed in; as if it were from Mars” (2006: 82). Her argument is that NR cannot explain why and how a hearer may obtain a justified testimonial belief because there are no such states-of-affairs “where [n]o appeal to more embedded, contextual features of our human psychology, individual and social is made” (ibid.). Consequently, NR is false. My claim is weaker than that: while Fricker maintains that we do not have intuitions about an *a priori* justification in the absence of reasons, I maintain that such an *a priori* justification *cannot be the absolute starting point of the investigation*. A hearer’s justification does not rise like a phoenix. In this regard I agree with Fricker when she says that “an illuminating account of human testimony – its nature, and as a corollary its epistemology – must start from the actual social institutions of language-use, and the social norms and conventions governing human linguistic exchange; not from an utterly abstract conception of the commingling of rational minds” (ibid.).

⁴⁸ The counterargument that young children are unable to satisfy such a description is also unconvincing. Already at an early age, children seem to trust testimony in a selective way that is sophisticated enough to doubt that they can be called credulous. Even young children seem to employ *reasons* to evaluate the trustworthiness of a speaker rather than relying on a default-acceptance (cf. Harris 2002; Koenig et al. 2004; Koenig and Harris 2005). If, however, the non-reductionist still denies the child the capacity to have reasons it is equally doubtful if the same child is able to satisfy the condition to demonstrate an appropriate level of sensitivity to the presence of defeaters. Non-reductionism is susceptible to the very same objection (cf. Lackey 2008: 196-200).

4.4. UPSHOT AND CONCLUSION

The main aim of this thesis was to express my views on how knowledge may be obtained through the testimony of others. This question has been addressed mainly in the form of a dichotomous divide between Humean and Reidian conceptions of testimonial knowledge. The standard enterprise has thus been to side with either Hume's reductionist account or with Reid's non-reductionist account and consequently find an argument why the opposing view is false. This disagreement has been a fashionable topic in the recent philosophical literature.

One of my key claims in this thesis was that a high proportion of why there was a seemingly insurmountable gap between reductionists and non-reductionists relates to differences in the understanding of what constitutes a paradigm testimonial scenario. My grappling with Lackey's seminal (2008) *Learning from Words* was thus focused to a large extent on these differences about the scope of testimony. In her book, Lackey's project is to provide an innovative perspective on the topic by suggesting a collaborative, »dualist« view of testimony, according to which there is a distribution of the epistemic work between the speaker and the hearer: roughly, the speaker has to produce, in a reliable fashion, a truth-conducive utterance and the hearer has to understand this utterance and display an appropriate sensitivity towards epistemically relevant positive and negative evidence. In her account, Lackey rejects the established view of testimony as a transmission of a belief from a speaker to a hearer in order to promote an alternative account that concentrates entirely on a speaker's statements. With the epistemological spotlight on the statements, dualism may help to overcome some of the problems of the traditional debate between reductionism and non-reductionism.

I strongly concur with Lackey's agenda that interlocution has to be understood as a process which requires both the speaker and the hearer to contribute epistemically in order for the hearer to be able to acquire knowledge via the proffered testimony. A corollary of this thought is that a hearer's justification for her testimonial belief is neither *completely recoverable* in non-testimonial reasons (as this would neglect the speaker's contribution), nor is it

fully separable from empirical considerations (as this would neglect the hearer's contribution). In Lackey's own words:

“[T]estimonial justification or warrant is neither reducible to nor independent from sense perception, memory, and inductive inference. Thus, insofar as we wish to make genuine progress in the epistemology of testimony, we need to move beyond the debate between reductionism and non-reductionism.” (Lackey 2008)

Where my agreement with Lackey ends is that she takes it to have shown by her counterexamples that dualism can successfully replace the presently available reductionist and non-reductionist accounts. I maintain that her rejection by means of philosophical counterexamples falls short of providing sufficiently compelling cases to refute those views. The main reason for this is that I find her strategy to conceptualise testimony as the transmission of a statement – without referring to it as the expression of a belief – to be a step in the wrong direction. While I agree with Lackey that a speaker's epistemic credentials are not simply transmitted to a hearer via testimony, her claim that a speaker's beliefs *do not matter epistemically* for the hearer contradicts with the notion that the concept of a person is a key component of a substantive epistemology of testimony. A person's intentional attitudes, and thus prominently a speaker's *beliefs*, have a role to play in speaker-hearer scenarios. One part of the hearer's contribution to a successful act of testimony must therefore be to identify whether the report stems from a person, who intends to convey the message that *p* as true.

In contrast to this, Lackey tries to show that a speaker's beliefs are entirely overshadowed by the reliability of the truth-conduciveness of the statement that is proffered. This, however, seems to me to be false. Lackey simply demands, for any interlocution, that a speaker's assertion has to be truth-conducive. Unless this condition is fulfilled, a hearer cannot acquire a justified testimonial belief. I have argued that a hearer's positive reasons to accept a report (and not the reliability of the report itself) are what constitute justification. As a result, Lackey's proposal to replace the established BVT with her SVT does not seem compelling. The

counterarguments which provide the argumentative foundation for this move are not plausible to a degree that would justify the shift from beliefs to statements.

Ultimately, my verdict was that Lackey's attack on reductionism and non-reductionism is not convincing enough to provide a basis from which to discard beliefs as epistemically irrelevant. Instead, there appears to be available a common notion of a minimum requirement on testimony which both reductionists and non-reductionists endorse: in order for a hearer to gain a justified testimonial belief, she needs to engage in the development of enough of an understanding of the interlocution to provide a basic rationale behind her acceptance of the report. Under this view, the rationality of believing a speaker appears to be as much a matter of the presence of positive evidence – the reductionist's position – as it is a matter of an a priori entitlement to accept testimony – the non-reductionist's position. It seems that these two viewpoints are not necessarily incompatible. On the one hand, also the accounts in the tradition of Hume can claim that testimonial knowledge is direct, non-inferential and epistemically basic. On the other hand, positive evidence has an important role to play also in the accounts in the tradition of Reid, namely to endow the basic rationale of being in a testimonial scenario.

One of the reasons why the epistemological debate has focused on the differences between reductionism and non-reductionism instead of appreciating such common ground is certainly the taxonomy of both views. The way in which reductionists speak about testimony as a derivative source of knowledge which is entirely dependent on positive, non-testimonial evidence is in stark contrast to the non-reductionist description which sees testimony as a basic source of knowledge, on par with perception, memory and inference. Also the differences in their respective narratives of reasons and rationality suggest a seemingly insurmountable gap between the Humean and the Reidian conceptions of testimony.

Such disparities notwithstanding, reductionists and non-reductionists do, however, agree on their intuitive judgements in the vast majority of testimonial scenarios. This is due to the fact that in ordinary cases, a hearer inevitably has at her disposal a plethora of evidential information and is thus completely awash with reasons. I have argued that the development of a case in which a hearer is no

longer vested with *any* reasons for and against accepting a report seems to be impossible to imagine even in principle. There would have to be a type of case in which the hearer acquires a justified testimonial belief without appealing to any empirical considerations. Such a tabula-rasa state-of-affairs would effectively be what reductionists and non-reductionists would fail to agree upon. Yet, it seems safe to say that such a state is unattainable. Ultimately, the idea that there has to be enough of a reason to render the understanding of a statement rational in order for the resulting belief to be justified is a common notion both reductionists and non-reductionists appreciate.

My argument that the clean-slate scenario is an impossible state-of-affairs is however not tantamount to saying that reductionism and non-reductionism collapse into one and the same position. The notion of a posteriority is but one aspect of an epistemological account. My claim that empirical considerations are invariably a vital ingredient to both Fricker's view (this is apparent) and Burge's and McDowell's views (in the form of enabling conditions which endow a basic rationale of a testimonial scenario) merely highlights the fact that both positions are ill-advised to attempt a rejection of the opposing view on the basis of their respective conception of what reasons are. Both notions respond to real challenges in the epistemology of testimony and both notions have their limitations. My proposition is therefore that a real understanding and a true appreciation of the strengths of the opposite position will ultimately be more beneficial for the progress of the debate on testimony than the continued attempt to reject the antagonistic position as fundamentally irrational.

I am convinced that testimony is as basic a source of knowledge as perception, memory and inference. As responsible hearers, we can obtain a justified belief from another person's say-so and the acquisition of this belief is not more or less dependent on a wider body of considerations as any perceptually, memorially or inferentially acquired belief. What is more, we may obtain a justified testimonial belief directly, that is to say non-inferentially. Testimony does not come out inferior in comparison with our non-social sources of knowledge.

What is important, however, is that any belief (testimonial or not) must be produced under appropriate conditions. Therefore, the direct acquisition of a testimonial belief hinges on the fact that a testimonial scenario has been established. The “seeming understanding of putative assertions” (Burge 1997: 21) which leads up to the hearer’s entitlement to accept a report as true (in the absence of counterconsiderations) is a function of the empirical goings-on of an interlocution. There will be no scenario where a hearer arrives at a seeming understanding of the proffered statement without appealing to her experience of the situation in which the interlocution takes place.

In this sense, naturally, testimony depends on non-testimonial considerations. Inferences from background beliefs, memories from the past or perceptually obtained beliefs will play a constitutive role in establishing the underlying rationale which provides a hearer with the entitlement to accept a statement. More than anything, this will be a matter of understanding the proffered statement as an assertion from a rational being. Yet, this does not make testimony a second-class citizen or epistemically less fundamental than the other sources. The same dependence certainly exists concerning our individual sources of knowledge. As Peter Strawson asks:

“If we are to say, as we must, that the knowledge we derive from testimony depends on perception, must we not equally say that the knowledge we derive from perception depends generally on testimony [...]?” (Strawson 1994: 26)

Reducing testimony to perception, memory and inference seems to be an ill-advised manoeuvre. As a result, the eponymous *reductio* of reductionism appears to be fundamentally misguided. Testimony is not recoverable in completely testimony-free terms. Neither is testimony a self-sufficient source of knowledge. For any belief – testimonial or not – there is a strong dependence on a wider body of beliefs which may have been obtained through any source of knowledge. For these reasons, both reductionism and non-reductionism describe rational attitudes of our epistemic lives. The key is not to stretch their respective paradigms beyond a point where they are still tenable.

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APPENDIX A: ABSTRACT (ENGLISH)

Testimony is a rich source of knowledge. It is therefore an important epistemological task to explain how we can obtain knowledge through the spoken and written words of others.

In the recent philosophical literature, the issue of how a person may reasonably acquire a justified testimonial belief has fostered a complex and controversial debate. On the one side, *reductionists* claim that it is reasonable to believe a proffered statement in view of the substantive body of inductive evidence that is provided by experience. On the other side, *non-reductionists* maintain that we may come to know from a report because our putative understanding provides an a priori entitlement to accept a statement as true.

In grappling with Jennifer Lackey's seminal (2008) *Learning from Words*, my main claim in this thesis is that a dichotomous divide between the reductionist and the non-reductionist camp is unable to yield substantial progress in the epistemological debate. By means of philosophical counterexamples, Lackey tries to reject both views and shift the focus in interlocution from a speaker's beliefs to her proffered statements. I argue that her rejections fail. In particular, I hold that her counterexamples are not convincing enough to provide a basis from which to refute the established view that testimony is best conceptualised as the expression of a belief.

Ultimately, Lackey's project to discard a speaker's beliefs as epistemically irrelevant appears to be misguided. In order to understand how knowledge may be obtained through the testimony of others it is important to appreciate the speaker's intentionality. With the notion of personhood taken seriously, both reductionism and non-reductionism seem to be able to respond to real and relevant challenges of interlocution scenarios. In this regard, the idea that there has to be enough of a reason to render the understanding of a proffered report rational in order for the resulting testimonial belief to be justified is a common notion both camps can appreciate.

APPENDIX B: ABSTRACT (GERMAN)

Zeugenschaft ist eine zentrale Quelle von Wissen. Es ist daher eine wichtige Aufgabe der Epistemologie, zu erklären, wie wir durch das gesprochene und geschriebene Wort anderer zu Wissen kommen können.

In der jüngeren philosophischen Literatur hat die Fragestellung, wie eine Person vernünftigerweise eine gerechtfertigte Meinung durch Zeugenschaft erlangen kann, zu einer komplexen und umstrittenen Debatte geführt. Auf der einen Seite behaupten *Reduktionisten*, dass es vernünftig sei, eine getätigte Aussage im Hinblick auf den reichhaltigen Schatz an induktivem Beweismaterial, das uns durch unsere Erfahrung gegeben ist, zu akzeptieren. Auf der anderen Seite verteidigen *Nicht-Reduktionisten* die Ansicht, dass wir durch die Aussagen anderer Wissen erlangen, weil unser vermeintliches Verständnis eine apriorische Berechtigung darstellt, eine Aussage als wahr zu akzeptieren.

In der Auseinandersetzung mit Jennifer Lackeys wegweisendem Buch *Learning from Words* (2008), ist die Hauptaussage meiner Diplomarbeit, dass eine dichotome Unterteilung in ein reduktionistisches und ein nicht-reduktionistisches Lager nicht in der Lage ist, substantiellen Fortschritt in der epistemologischen Debatte herbeizuführen. Durch philosophische Gegenbeispiele versucht Lackey, beide Ansichten zu widerlegen und den Fokus bei Unterredungen weg von den Überzeugungen des Sprechers, hin zu den Aussagen selbst zu verlegen. Ich behaupte, dass dieser Versuch erfolglos bleibt. Insbesondere behaupte ich, dass ihre Gegenbeispiele nicht überzeugend genug sind, um die etablierte Ansicht zu widerlegen, dass Zeugenschaft am besten als Ausdruck einer Überzeugung gefasst wird.

Letztendlich erscheint Lackeys Entwurf, die Überzeugungen von Sprechern als epistemisch irrelevant zu verwerfen, unfruchtbar. Um zu verstehen, wie Wissen durch Zeugenschaft anderer erlangt werden kann, ist es wichtig, die Intentionalität von Sprechern zu begreifen. Nimmt man Sprecher als Personen ernst, scheint sowohl Reduktionismus als auch Nicht-Reduktionismus in der Lage, auf richtige und relevante Herausforderungen von Unterredungsszenarien

antworten zu können. In diesem Sinne ist die Idee, dass es eine hinreichende Begründung geben muss, um das Verstehen einer Aussage als rational begreifen zu können, ein Gedanke, den beide Lager begrüßen können, damit eine daraus resultierende Überzeugung gerechtfertigt sein kann.

APPENDIX C: ACADEMIC CURRICULUM VITAE

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02/2007 – 04/2012	Universität Wien (University of Vienna) MA (Mag. phil.) in Philosophy Specialisations: Epistemology, Ontology, Philosophy of Mind
10/2008 – 08/2010	WU Wien (Vienna University of Business and Economics) & Handelshögskolan i Stockholm (Stockholm School of Economics) CEMS Master in International Management; class of 2008/09 Specialisations: Strategic Management, Cross-Cultural Management
10/2005 – 08/2010	WU Wien (Vienna University of Business and Economics) MSc (Mag. rer. soc. oec.) in International Business; graduated with highest distinction Specialisations: Entrepreneurship & Innovation, International Marketing & Management
09/1996 – 06/2004	Grammar School St. Johann in Tirol Matura (A-Levels); passed with highest distinction

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Brunner, A. (2010). The Applicability of Feedback Information in User Communities for the Prediction of Market Success: A Quantitative Analysis of Peer Feedback on User Designs. Vienna: University of Economics and Business, Diploma Thesis.

LANGUAGES

German: mother tongue
English: fluent in writing and speaking
Spanish: proficient in writing and speaking
French: proficient in writing and speaking