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# METAPHYSICAL LIBERTARIANISM AND THE EPISTEMOLOGY OF TESTIMONY

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### I

Hume says "there is no species of reasoning more common, more useful, and even necessary to human life, than that which is derived from the testimony of men, and the reports of eye-witnesses and spectators."[1] Testimony is a fundamentally important way of coming to justifiably believe and know things about each other and the world around us. Why is reliance upon testimony justified? Why is it one way, among others, of acquiring knowledge?

Reductionists think testimony is a source of knowledge and justified beliefs because testimonial warrant or entitlement is just inductive warrant or entitlement. They deny that testimony is epistemically fundamental. Testimonial warrant reduces away to inductive warrant, viz., either enumerative induction or inductive reasoning construed more broadly. A subject is justified when relying upon others because he has positive inductive reasons for thinking that his interlocutors are reliable. The subject has figured out, first hand, that people more or less say what they believe when they believe it, and that people are more or less right in what they believe. He knows, more or less, the track record of the kinds of interlocutors he has encoun-

tered in his life. Knowing such a track record is necessary and sufficient for entitled acceptance.

Anti-Reductionists, on the other hand, think that testimony is a distinctive source of *prima facie* justified beliefs. Testimony is like perception in this respect. Understanding the testimony of another is a starting point for reason in a fashion similar to the way a perceptual experience or perceptual belief is a starting point for reason. So just as ordinary subjects do not need positive inductive evidence in favor of the reliability of perception, so too they do not need positive inductive evidence in favor of the trustworthiness of their interlocutors. Naturally it helps to know the track record of interlocutors, but such knowledge is not necessary for entitled acceptance.[2]

This debate has recently received serious attention.[3] This essay contributes to the discussion. The aim is not to show that either side is correct, though it does advance the Anti-Reductionist case. The present paper strives to rebut a consideration that might lead one to think that Anti-Reductionism cannot be correct.

The consideration is this. Perception is reliable when it is because of lawful regularities between one's perceptual system and the environment. Mechanism does all

the work. But testimony crucially involves agency. The speaker *chooses* to say what he or she believes. Agency is behind the production of testimony, not mechanism. This consideration matters to the testimony debate in at least three ways.

First, if people are free, then they can choose to lie or mislead on *any particular* occasion. Further, this is a fact that hearers are aware of when they fully comprehend assertions. But there is no such parallel awareness in the case of perception or memory; there is no such recognition of the possibility of error that is constitutive of the process for perception or memory. Competent hearers are thus aware of the possibility that the speaker may be lying or otherwise misleading. There would thus always be a reason to be less trustful of testimony than perception. Understanding testimony would not, as such, be a *prima facie* reason to believe what one takes the speaker to have asserted.[4]

Second, if people are free, then it is not *necessarily* true that they must be truthful *in general* for communication to succeed *in general*. It is thus not necessarily true that people are, for the most part, trustworthy. But this, one might argue, is not true for perception. One might argue that perception is necessarily reliable for the most part. Hence one is not entitled to trust testimony in the same way that one is entitled to trust perception. Positive background evidence of sincerity would be necessary to make up for the lack.

The third argument turns on a general hunch that there is a deep ontological difference that entails an epistemological difference. It is the aim of this essay to root out the source of this hunch, to show what form it would have to take in order to undermine Anti-Reductionism, and then to show that if the hunch does undermine Anti-Reductionism, then it undermines Reductionism as well. It is difficult to turn the hunch into a straightforward argument.

The argument is as follows. Suppose Metaphysical Libertarianism is true: people are free because indeterminism is true about human choices and acts. There thus is a fundamental metaphysical difference between testimony and perception: assertions are not determined, but perceptual experiences are; there is a counterfactual regularity in the latter case but not in the former. This difference implies an epistemological difference: If the reason one is justified in trusting perception involves the fact that perception is a counterfactually regular belief forming process, then *that very same fact* will *not* be true of testimony *if* Libertarianism is true. Perception may be counterfactually regular, and so it may be a source of basic beliefs. But if Libertarianism is true, it cannot be that the same thing is true of testimony; Metaphysical Libertarianism implies that free acts are not necessarily counterfactually regular; there is no fact of the matter that counterfactually constrains an agent's free choices and intentional acts. A crucial epistemically relevant fact about the epistemology of perception would not carry over, and the analogy would break down. Anti-Reductionism must presuppose that Libertarianism is false.

There are two possible readings of the force of this argument. On the stronger version, Libertarianism is assumed. It would then follow, if the argument is effective, that Anti-Reductionism is false. On the weaker version, it is only assumed that Libertarianism *may* be true, and it is inferred that the epistemology of testimony should not turn, all else being equal, on whether Libertarianism is true; Reductionism would thus be preferred to Anti-Reductionism. This difference is ignored in what follows.

All three reasons for thinking the role of agency matters to the epistemology of testimony debate are inconclusive. The first argument can be shown to be ineffective.

The second argument is more challenging, and requires extensive discussion. Only the third argument will be discussed here.[5]

At first glance the third argument seems unpersuasive. This is not an uncommon reaction. Upon reflection it might seem clearly false. However, this reaction is not widely shared. In private conversations and in public presentations of related material something like the argument as presented is often made. There are those that insist that testimony cannot be on a par with perception and memory because in the former case the will is involved and in the latter case only mechanism is involved. And in order to seal the point it is further remarked that if Libertarianism is true testimony cannot be counterfactually dependable or trustworthy in the way that perception and memory are. If Libertarianism is true, the thought is, there are no "guarantees" or "metaphysical assurances" that a speaker will say what he or she believes on this, or any other, occasion. There is a widely shared hunch that if Libertarianism is true we cannot treat all three sources of belief as epistemically on a par.[6]

This essay is an attempt to make explicit the line of reasoning to which such a hunch must be committed, why it involves premises that are arguably false, and why, if it were an effective line of reasoning, it would go too far. To use the metaphysics of the will in a case against Anti-Reductionism, one must either deny something deeply held about the regularity of human behavior, or one must give up on the rationality of trusting testimony altogether.

The thesis of the present paper is that the third line of reasoning is mistaken: *either* Anti-Reductionism and Libertarianism are compatible, *or* both Reductionism and Anti-Reductionism are *in*compatible with Libertarianism. The argument for the first disjunct is taken up before the second. The overall argument is that either Libertari-anism is compatible with counterfactual supporting regularities "governing" human action or it is not. If it is, then Anti-Reductionism is compatible with Libertarianism. If it is not, then both Reductionism and Anti-Reductionism are incompatible with Libertarianism. The upshot is that only a radical Libertarian view threatens the rationality of trust in the reliability of testimony, and that such a radical view rules out both Anti-Reductionism and its rival. If the radical version is correct, skepticism ensues.

The paper does not, as already said, respond directly to either the first or second reasons in favor of Reductionism. It will thus not take up in its entirety the issue of lying, of whether testimony is *as a matter of fact* less reliable than perception or whether testimony is *at best only contingently reliable* or trustworthy. Although all three arguments are importantly related, the question addressed by the paper does not centrally have to do with the fact that speakers do not have to say what they believe, but can (and often do) say something that would mislead the hearer. The question is not *that* question for that is a question a *Compatibilist* will also have to address as well. Speakers can lie even if Compatibilism is true. Lying is just a fact. The question of the present paper is deeper than the questions raised by the first two ways of supposing agency might matter. It is really a question about whether it is a category mistake to say that testimony *can* be reliable, not whether it *is* or *must* be reliable. The present question is not whether it is *actually* or *necessarily* trustworthy but whether it is *possibly* trustworthy.

Nor will the present essay take up other reasons to be hostile towards Anti-Reductionism. There are plenty of good reasons to be suspicious. But discussing those reasons would be another essay, if not an entire book. The paper does not argue directly

for Anti-Reductionism. It must be argued for one step at a time.

The issues taken up are interesting in their own right. Libertarianism is enjoying something of a renaissance in metaphysics,[7] and the testimony literature is beginning to flourish.[8] What is clearly metaphysically distinctive about testimony, as compared to perception or memory, is that it goes through the will of the speaker. An interesting question in its own right is thus whether the epistemology of testimony turns in any important respect on the debate between Compatibilists and Libertarians.[9]

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Section II states what it would mean for the free acts of agents to be predictable, and so what it would mean for testimony to be reliable. Section III says what follows if Libertarianism can accommodate predictability, and section IV says what follows if Libertarianism cannot accommodate predictability. If Libertarianism can accommodate predictability, then Anti-Reductionism is not threatened by Libertarianism, and if Libertarianism cannot accommodate predictability, then both Reductionism and Anti-Reductionism are incompatible with Libertarianism. Or so it is argued.

## II

People say what they believe because they are naturally disposed to do so, or because they were raised that way, or because they believe it is the right thing to do, or out of laziness or self-interest, or for some other reason. It has to do with the agent's character, with her stable beliefs and desires, dispositions, and so forth. It also has to do with the agent's perspective on her situation, on how she takes her circumstances. And people say what they do not believe for the same reasons. She may be an honest person, but she sees that in this circumstance it will further her in-terests to lie. Or he may be a dishonest person, but here he thinks it would be best to tell the truth.

Explanations that appeal to character, to beliefs, to desires, intentions, and so forth, are intentional. They appeal to intentional or psychological regularities. Compare doing something with saying something. Consider walking to the café for an espresso and saying that one can get espresso at the café. Even though walking to the café involves agency, there are still intentional or psychological counterfactual-supporting regularities "governing" the behavior. A counterfactual supporting regularity is a regularity that is not a *mere* regularity, where in actual circumstances two things just happen to come together. It is a regularity that supports or explains what *would* happen in *counterfactual* circumstances. So if Chris always happen to walk to the fridge in the afternoon for a beer, that regularity is counterfactual supporting if, on the counterfactual condition that Chris did not believe there was any beer left in the fridge, Chris would not get up and walk to the fridge in the afternoon. He also loves the smell of fresh espresso and believes he can purchase one at the café. That is why he gets up and walks to the café on a regular basis. Such regularities explain behavior; they support counterfactuals: if he did not want an espresso, he would not have gotten up. *Mutatis mutandis* for why he *said* that one can get an espresso at the café. He told his interlocutor that she can get one there because he believes they sell espresso and wants to inform her. If he didn't so believe or desire, he would not have said so. He is a trustworthy person and has no reason to mislead her. Stable character underwrites stable counterfactual supporting generalization about how people behave. If he were not the kind of person who desired coffee, in circumstances where it was available, it

is not likely that he will ask for a cup, even though on certain occasions when he does happen to desire a cup he might very well ask for one.

Many are convinced that stable characters underwriting counterfactual supporting intentional regularities (though not strict laws) exist.[10] Regularities that depend upon the will of agents *and* regularities that depend upon natural laws are treated *on a par* in ordinary practical reasoning. When Andy is deliberating on whether to take the bus to work or drive, he takes into consideration the weather, the reliability of his car, the skill of bus drivers, the goodwill of other motorists, and whether the owner of the local gas station will have gone on vacation and closed the shop or not. In his reasoning he does not treat the facts that depend on the choices of agents any differently from how he treats the facts that depend upon natural laws and the laws of auto-mechanics. Hume uses this point to support his contention that there really is no difference between regularity that is due to agency and regularity that is due to nature: "The internal principles and motives may operate in a uniform manner . . .; in the same manner as the winds, rain, clouds, and other variations of the weather are supposed to be governed by steady principles."[11] But one need not go so far as Hume does to make the point: there are such regularities, and they exist whether they turn on the laws of nature or on the will of agents.

So even if there is an important metaphysical difference between physical necessity and action, it does not follow that there are no regularities that "govern" human behavior. Both physical causation and action involve regularities that are counterfactual supporting; ordinary practical reasoning treats them as such. Regardless of whether this is really so, however, the relevant point here is that either the Libertarian can accommodate these points or she

cannot. If she can, then there is no significant threat from Libertarianism to the parallel between perception and testimony. If she cannot, then both Reductionism and Anti-Reductionism are in trouble. The former is argued for in the next section, and the latter in section IV.

## III

Libertarianism is about free agency. The Libertarian holds that human agents are free and responsible, and that freedom and responsibility are incompatible with determinism, for if determinism is true then choices and acts are not *up to the agent*; agents are not in *control* of what they do.[12] The Libertarian thus holds that previous states of the universe and the laws of nature do not determine the choices agents make. Even a Laplacian demon who knew the total state of the universe just prior to the decision and the laws of nature could not predict the agent's choice. Does this mean, however, that human acts are not predictable with some very high degree of accuracy? Does it mean that one might as well guess what people will do? Does it mean that people's choices and actions are randomly produced, that they come out of nowhere, as it were? Libertarians have two options here. They can embrace randomness or deny it. Traditionally it is argued against the Libertarian that choices are either determined or they are random.[13] It is now widely held, however, that indeterminism *per se* does not entail that an agent's actions or choices are randomly produced. Libertarians have made progress on that front. The rest of this section investigates what follows if Libertarianism can avoid the randomness objection, and the next investigates what follows if Libertarianism cannot.

It is thus assumed that when an agent chooses between A and B it does not follow that the choice is randomly made even if a Laplacian demon cannot predict it.

What explains why the agent chooses A instead of B are facts about the agent's motives, character, nature, and so forth. It is also assumed that these facts are counterfactual supporting. If so, then of course it will not follow from the fact that a *Laplacian demon* cannot predict *exactly* what someone will do, that it (or anyone else for that matter) cannot predict with some *high degree of accuracy* what someone will choose to do. Libertarianism need not entail that human choices are not predictable. And if human agents are *genuinely* predictable, even if not always *entirely* predictable, there is an important sense in which what they choose to say and do say can occur in a reliable, counterfactually regular way. An ordinary observer could predict what they would do in counterfactual circumstances. Libertarianism would then be no threat to the reliability of testimony. People may in fact not be all that trustworthy; they may mislead or speak without knowledge a good deal of the time. But Libertarianism *per se* does not show that people *cannot be* reliable. It does not show that being reliable and being free are metaphysically incompatible properties of agents.

Libertarians who deny randomness follows from indeterminism offer a number of competing explanations for why agents are predictable.[14] It is not a burden of the present essay to sort out these views or adjudicate between them. All that is needed for present purposes is the disjunctive claim that either the Libertarian allows for genuine predictability or she does not. This section draws out the consequences of the first disjunct. Assuming the first disjunct, it follows that counterfactual-supporting regularity is not incompatible with Libertarianism, and so Libertarianism is not incompatible with an Anti-Reductionist treatment of testimony, one that helps itself to the possible reliability of testimony.

Of course supposing that people are genuinely predictable does not show that they are generally trustworthy. All that has been argued so far is that they *can* be reliable in the sense that what they do and why they do it is produced in such a way that counterfactual supporting regularities come into play. If Anti-Reductionism requires that testimony be predictable in a counterfactual supporting way, in a way similar to perception, then the fact that Libertarianism might be true is no reason to suspect that Anti-Reductionism might not. Agency and (deterministic) mechanism may be incompatible, but agency and predictability are not. Mechanism and circumstance explain the predictability of perception. Given the right mechanism and the right circumstances, perception is trustworthy. Character, circumstances, and how the circumstances are taken explain the predictability of testimony. Given the right character, the right perspective on how things are, and the right circumstances, testimony can be as reliable as one pleases.

There is a debate about the status of these counterfactual or subjunctive conditionals among Libertarians. Some hold that they support *would definitely* predictions: that if some condition were to obtain then a subject with a certain character *would definitely* do such and such, and that is because it is the agent that is in control of what happens. But some think this "would prediction" is incompatible with the agent truly acting freely. On this view, one cannot *definitely* predict what the agent *would* do if one knew all the laws, the previous state of the universe, *and the facts about the agent's character*. It would still be open what the agent would do, and that is where the subject's freedom lies. Not even God could know what we would do. Does this debate matter for present purposes? It is unlikely. For if Libertarianism entails the latter view, there are still counterfactual

supporting regularities, though not strong *would definitely* counterfactuals. One can say or predict what an agent *most likely* or *nearly definitely* would do. One can say it is nearly certain but not entirely certain that the subject would do such and such. One just cannot say what the agent would do *full stop*. The agent's character would still be a metaphysical ground supporting counterfactuals. The counterfactuals would just have to be read in a weaker, though not much weaker, way. The failure of "would definitely" counterfactuals would not imply *randomness*.[15]

It is worth mentioning Thomas Reid's view on the laws of nature in the present context. Reid thought that the laws were only genuinely laws because God so willed the event types conjoined by the law to regularly follow one another.[16] God's free will is behind the modal or counterfactual force of laws of nature. The reason why the pen would drop if I were to let go depends ultimately on the free agency of God. It is God's good will that we have to thank for the reliability of perception.[17] Likewise, if Libertarianism is true then it is the good will of one's interlocutors that one has to thank for the trustworthiness of testimony, just as it is the ill will of those one talks to that one has blame for cases where testimony is not trustworthy. In both cases there is the co-presence of will and reliability.

There is a related point concerning the analogy between perception and testimony. If Libertarianism is true, then indeterminism is true about the laws of nature.[18] And if indeterminism is true about the laws, then it is also true about, or at least will make a difference to, the laws governing perception. But one would not give up one's conviction that perceptual systems are highly reliable and justification- and knowledge-conferring just because indeterminism is true. Indeterminism seems to be, from the point of view of reliability, a

red herring. Indeterminism does not entail an absence of lawfulness in the universe.

Before concluding this section, a word or two about the phenomena of acting on a whim: either agents really do act on whims—and so act out of character in unpredictable ways—or certain acts are simply described—acts that one (or even the agent) could have predicted if one had complete knowledge of the agent's character, perspective, and so forth—as whims. If the latter, then predictability (even "would definitely" counterfactuals) is not threatened. Whims are epistemic facts, not metaphysical ones. If only more were known. But if the former, then perhaps indeterminism really is true; indeterminism allows room for agents to act out of character. But, as above, even if it is true, it again follows that agents could be highly predictable. That agents really can act out of character does not show that they do not act in genuinely regular and highly predictable ways.

## IV

The second possible reading of Libertarianism, the strong or radical reading, where predictability and so Anti-Reductionism would be under threat, is treated in this section. It is argued that if Anti-Reductionism is under threat by this stronger version, so too is Reductionism. This section investigates the consequences of supposing that Libertarianism is incompatible with predictability. Libertarianism with this consequence is called "Radical Libertarianism."

For Libertarianism really to be a point against Anti-Reductionism, Libertarianism would have to entail that the word of another is *epistemically neutral*. States that are epistemically neutral are states that do not provide grounds to believe unless one knows about the connection between the state and what the state would be evidence for. Two subjects may both possess knowledge of state E, but the first knows about

the connection between E and C and the second does not. E, for the second, is epistemically neutral; it does not give the second a ground or warrant for inferring C. For example, hearing a random sound does not (by itself) give you a ground to believe something, or hearing a report in a language you do not understand does not give you a ground to believe what the speaker actually said (in most cases).

Now this is just what the Reductionist thinks about reports you understand: an understood report is, as such, epistemically neutral. Given that it is neutral, knowing that the speaker reported that P cannot be a ground or reason to believe that P until the hearer has some independent grounds or reasons for believing that the speaker is trustworthy. Once the hearer knows the speaker's track record (or the track-record of speakers of this kind, or an explanatory theory), then the fact that the hearer knows that the speaker reported that P becomes a reason to believe that P. But without that background knowledge, the speaker is not to be trusted. On the Reductionist view, a hearer is justified in believing a speaker if and only if the hearer knows the positive track record of the (kind of) speaker (or some explanatory theory of the (kind of) speaker). Now how could the fact that the speaker is an agent not constrained by deterministic law show that what a speaker says is epistemically neutral? Is it *a priori* knowable that Libertarianism entails neutrality?

It is argued that the answer is no; there is no *a priori* knowable connection between Libertarianism and neutrality. Rather, there is a connection between a *radical* reading of the doctrine and epistemic *bankruptcy*. A state F is epistemically bankrupt when knowing it obtains gives one no ground or reason to believe some other state obtains, even if one knows that events of type F have occurred in conjunc-tion with states of some other type. The difference between neutrality and bank-ruptcy is this. F is epistemically *neutral* with respect to G for some subject S if S does not know that Fs are connected to Gs even though Fs and Gs are lawfully or counterfactually connected. Once S knows about the connection, S can use an F as a ground or reason to believe there is a G. S's use of F to believe G warrants S's be-lief. F is epistemically *bankrupt* with re-spect to G for some subject S if there is no lawful or reliable connection between F and G even if S is aware that many Fs and Gs show up together. S can never use an F as a *genuine* ground or reason for a G; S cannot *know* on the basis of an F that there is a G. An epistemically neutral state is genuinely epistemically relevant to belief in favor of some other state but it must be known what it epistemically supports for it to rationalize or warrant a subject's be-lief.[19] An epistemically bankrupt state is not an objective ground or warrant at all even if the subject is aware that it is con-joined in actual circumstances with some other kind of event. Knowledge of a bank-rupt state cannot warrant belief in some other state.

Here is an example of epistemic bank-ruptcy. Consider a fair coin tossed a num-ber of times that is completely fair and there is nothing abnormal in the circum-stances; the tosses are not rigged. Given that the coin is fair, and nothing is rigged, it is just as likely as not that the coin will turn up tails as heads. An observer cannot predict what will happen. But suppose the observer also knows that the last two hun-dred tosses (the only tosses observed) came up heads.[20] Every time she did "predict" correctly—if she started guessing heads— her correct prediction would just be a lucky guess; she would not have a *ground* or *rea-son* or *warrant* for her prediction. The ob-server might start to think that the case is

rigged or the coin is not fair. But if the case is not rigged and the coin is fair, the chances it will come up heads next time is only fifty-fifty. She has no *genuine* or *objective reason* or *warrant* to believe it will be heads next as opposed to tails. She cannot *know* that it will come up heads.[21]

This contrast can be put in other terms. A subject knows something just in case she has formed her belief in both a *rational* and a *reliable* way. There is a subjective as well as an objective dimension to knowledge; from the objective point of view, the agent must have formed her belief in a reliable or truth-conducive way, and from the subjective point of view, the same must also be true; that is, she must believe (or be disposed to believe, or if she were to become a reflective agent, she would be disposed to believe) that she formed the belief in a reliable way.[22] When it comes to inductively backed knowledge, the subjective condition is fulfilled when the relevant kind of track-record or explanatory theory is known, and the objective condition is fulfilled when there is a lawful connection between the evidence and what it is evidence for. A state is epistemically neutral when only the objective condition is met. The state only becomes a warrant conferring reason when the subject knows the track record or the relevant theory. Inductive reasoning trades in epistemically neutral states as starting points. A state is *bankrupt* when the *objective* condition is not met. The state does not confer warrant when the subject "knows" a track record or an explanatory theory. The state cannot warrant the subject's belief, no matter how much the subject might *think* it does. Bankrupt states cannot confer inductive knowledge on a subject.

Suppose Radical Libertarianism establishes evidential bankruptcy. If so, then Radical Libertarianism is incompatible with both Anti-Reductionism and Reduc-

tionism. If this radical version is correct, then testimony is *never* a source of knowledge *no matter what* background evidence the hearer possesses. Radical Libertarianism would not be a reason to reject Anti-Reductionism. It would be a reason to reject the data that the two competing theories are both trying to explain: that we enjoy testimony based knowledge. It would entail skepticism. Or so it is now argued.

Radical Libertarianism goes as follows. Suppose in fact people are, or at least have been, regular in the sense that they usually say what they believe and what they believe is usually true *but* this "regularity" is not counterfactual supporting, so that even if one knew these facts about people one could not genuinely predict (as above) what they would say. It would always be completely up in the air what would happen next, whether they would say what they believe, for what happens next will always present some new circumstance, if only a different *time*. People would be metaphysically random, even if "accidentally regular," as it were. People would be like fair coins that, even though they are fair and not rigged, turned up heads nearly always. So if Radical Libertarianism is true, there is no nomic or counterfactual supporting relationship between an agent's character and the agent's choices. It is all up for grabs. The agent is wholly and entirely unconstrained in some important and radical way every time she makes a choice. And when she does act in a way that is much like the way she acted before, there was no predicting that this is what she would (definitely or probably) do. She cannot be *reliable*. It is all a roll of the dice. But if she cannot be reliable, then one cannot *learn* anything from believing what she says.

The main point can be put this way. Both Reductionism and Anti-Reductionism require that the connection between what people say and how the world is a reliable

one. They disagree over what is necessary to rationalize trust, what is necessary for knowledge beyond reliability. Reductionists think knowledge of a track record is necessary. Anti-Reductionists disagree; understanding that the speaker has said that such and such is (sometimes) enough. But if, in some important sense, the connection between testimony and reality cannot be a reliable connection, then whether a hearer has what would rationalize the belief from the subjective point of view does not matter to whether the belief so subjectively rationalized could be warranted. If not reliable, testimony cannot warrant belief, period. Knowing a track record, then, may make one *think* one has a reason to believe what one is told, but it cannot *in fact* give one a genuine reason to believe what one is told. The debate thus effects both internalists and externalists: though the debate about justification is more naturally at home within an internalist framework, the debate about knowledge clearly fits within both externalist and internalist frameworks, for if testimony cannot be reliable, then it cannot satisfy a condition on knowledge that both the internalist and the externalist accept (see note 21).

It should thus be clear why both the Libertarianism of the previous section and the Libertarianism of this section cannot be a threat to Anti-Reductionism. If Libertarianism is compatible with reliability, then a necessary condition for warrant obtains. It is still an open question whether Anti-Reductionism or Reductionism is the correct account of what else is necessary (if anything). And if Libertarianism is incompatible with reliability, then a necessary condition fails to obtain, a necessary condition that is neutral between the Reductionist and the Anti-Reductionist (and neutral between the internalist and the externalist). The Reductionist could not possibly argue that knowledge of a track record is necessary *because* testimony is not genuinely reliable. Knowledge of a track record may be necessary for warrant (that claim has not been argued against here), but it cannot be that it is necessary *because* testimony *cannot* be reliable. It is supposed to fill a lack, a lack of subjective rationality. But it cannot be argued for as a requirement if the argument appeals to a lack of an *objective* connection. If testimony cannot *be* reliable, it cannot be a source of knowledge, whether track records or explanatory theories are "known" about or not. The real worry that calls Anti-Reductionism into question, the worry that if Libertarianism is true testimony cannot be genuinely reliable, calls not only Anti-Reductionism into question, but Reductionism as well.

This has all been put it terms of what is compatible or incompatible with what. However, one might say instead that if the radical form of Libertarianism is true, neither Reductionism nor Anti-Reductionism are challenged as true theories of when testimony based beliefs are warranted. Either theory may be correct construed as necessary and sufficient conditions for testimonial knowledge. But if Radical Libertarianism is true, a shared condition is not met. That is why skepticism would follow if Radical Libertarianism is true. But one could also see both theories as theories that hold that *ordinary people do know things from testimony* because certain conditions *are met*. If Radical Libertarianism is correct, then both theories as theories that claimed *that* would be false. Either way the point is made, however, the underlying moral follows: the possible truth of Libertarianism, either modest or radical, is no reason to prefer Reductionism to Anti-Reductionism. Libertarianism does not imply the epistemic neutrality of the word of another.[23]

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## NOTES

1. David Hume, *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, section X, part I, ed. Thomas Beauchamp (Oxford University Press, 1999).

2. The Reductionism-Anti-Reductionism debate makes the most sense in the context of Foundationalism. The Reductionist holds that perceptual beliefs are basic but testimonial beliefs are not. They must be inferentially grounded in basic beliefs. The Reductionist embraces two theses: (a) inferentialism—justified acceptance requires positive background beliefs, and (b) epistemic priority—the background beliefs must come (in the end) from basic sources. How do Coherentists fit into the present debate? They embrace (a) but reject (b). They are thus not *strictly speaking* Reductionists, for the "reductionist" part of Reductionism is thesis (b); testimonial warrant reduces to some other form of warrant. There is thus a sense in which Coherentists are Anti-Reductionists; testimony and perception are, for the Coherentist, on a par; there is no hierarchy of epistemic kinds. However, because Coherentists embrace (a), there is a sense in which the Coherentist would reject standard construals of Anti-Reductionism; positive background support is required for testimonial warrant. The argument here is that the appeal to agency does nothing to establish either (a) or (b).

3. Although important works appeared before C. A. J. Coady's book, *Testimony: A Philosophical Study* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), his book and Tyler Burge's "Content Preservation" (*Philosophical Review*, 1993), and then a collection of papers edited by Matilal and Chakrabarti, *Knowing from Words* (Dordrecht, 1994), which included papers by Peter Strawson, John McDowell, Michael Welbourne, Michael Dummett, Keith Lehrer, Ernest Sosa, and Elizabeth Fricker, spawned the recent literature. Anti-Reductionists include Coady, Burge, McDowell, Dummett, Welbourne, and Strawson. See also Patrick Rysiew, "Testimony, Simulation, and the Limits of Inductivism," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 78, no. 2 (June 2000); Richard Foley *Intellectual Trust in Oneself and Others* (Cambridge University Press, 2001); and Michael Welbourne, *Knowledge* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002). Those with Reductionist leanings include Fricker, "Against Gullibility," in *Knowing from Words*, ed. Matilal and Chakrabarti; Paul Faulkner, "The Social Character of Testimonial Knowledge," *Journal of Philosophy* (2000); Jennifer Lackey "A Minimal Expression of Non-Reductionism in the Epistemology of Testimony," *Nous*, forthcoming; Robert Audi, "The Place of Testimony in the Fabric of Justification and Knowledge," *American Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 34 (1997); Jonathan Adler, *Beliefs Own Ethics*, (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002); Michael Root, "How to Teach a Wise Man," in *Pragmatism, Reason, and Norms*, ed. K. Westphal (Bronx: Fordham, 1998); and Jack Lyons, "Testimony, Induction, and Folk Psychology," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 75 (1997), pp. 163–178. For further references, see the references to Sanford Goldberg, "Testimonially Based Knowledge From False Testimony," *The Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 51 (2001), pp. 512–526. Very recent papers include Catherine Elgin, "Take it from Me: The Epistemological Status of Testimony," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, vol. 65 (2002); Steven Reynolds, "Testimony, Knowledge, and Epistemic Goals," *Philosophical Studies*, vol. 110 (2002), pp. 139–161; and Gary Ebbs, "Learning from Others," *Nous*, vol. 36 (2002), pp. 525–549.

4. This objection and the next have not been formulated in exactly these terms in print. Burge, "Content Preservation" *op. cit.*, is concerned to rebut the second, and Paul Faulkner, "The Social Character" *op. cit.*, thinks Burge's attempt is inadequate. It is perhaps Faulkner's paper that draws attention to the role of agency in undermining Anti-Reductionism more generally. The central claim the Anti-Reductionist makes is that the epistemologies of perception, memory, and testimony should all look more or less alike. Faulkner thinks the fact that testimony goes through the will of another person "renders testimony epistemologically distinctive" (p. 585). In personal

correspondence Faulkner says he endorses both the first and second arguments. Faulkner concludes that since a speaker may lie or mislead and since not lying or not misleading is essential to learning from a speaker, it is "doxastically irresponsible to accept testimony without some background belief" in the speaker's trustworthiness (p. 587). This is what makes testimony "epistemologically distinctive."

5. For discussion of the first and second arguments, see Peter J. Graham, "Testimonial Justification and the Possibility of Deceit" (ms.).

6. Further, the information-theoretic account of knowledge applied to testimony seems to turn on Compatibilism. See Peter J. Graham, "Transferring Knowledge," *Nous*, vol. 34 (2000), pp. 131–152. There it is argued that a hearer would only come to *know* that P from a speaker who asserted that P only if the speaker would not have said that P unless P. This "would" counterfactual may be incompatible with Libertarian freedom, for it presupposes true counterfactuals of freedom (see below). It may be that there is thus a *prima facie* case for supposing that the Anti-Reductionist case turns on the truth of Compatibilism. If the present paper is correct, this is not true about Anti-Reductionism in general.

7. Recent Libertarians include Robert Nozick, *Philosophical Explorations* (Harvard, 1981); Carl Ginet, *On Action* (Cambridge, 1990); Randolf Clarke, "Towards a Credible Agent-Causal Account of Free Will," *Nous*, vol. 27 (1993), pp. 191–203; Hugh McCann, *The Works of Agency* (Cornell, 1998); Storrs McCall, *A Model of the Universe* (Oxford, 1994); Laura Eckstrom, *Free Will: A Philosophical Study* (Westview, 2000); Robert Kane, *The Significance of Free Will* (Oxford, 1996); Timothy O'Connor, *Persons and Causes* (Oxford, 2000); and Peter van Inwagen, *An Essay on Free Will* (Clarendon, 1983). Major twentieth-century exponents include Roderick Chisholm and Richard Taylor. Thomas Reid's view is well-known. For discussion of Reid's view, see William Rowe, *Thomas Reid on Freedom and Morality* (Cornell, 1991).

8. See note 3.

9. If hard determinism is true, the issues raised, of course, do not actually arise. Free Agency would be an illusion, and the parallel between testimony and perception would not be under threat. The issue under consideration here is whether the epistemology of testimony should turn on the truth of one or another account of agency.

10. This common conviction is, of course, no argument. What is said in the rest of the paragraph may show that most readers are convinced as well. For some discussion, see Alvin Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity* (Clarendon Paperbacks, 1974), pp. 174–180. But if the remarks in this paragraph are found wanting on the grounds that indeterminism is true, then the view that results will be addressed in section IV. If one denies stable characters on the grounds that they presuppose modal facts and there are no modal facts, then the present section is not relevant.

Gilbert Harman's skepticism about character is not relevant here (see his *Explaining Value and Other Essays in Moral Philosophy* [Oxford University Press, 2000]). His skepticism is about folk explanations on the grounds that they make *the fundamental attribution error*: presuming that agents act (solely) because of their character and not (mostly) because of their (perceived) situation, when focusing on situation is actually a better predictor of behavior. What really happens, then, is that character plus how the agent perceives the situation explain behavior, not character alone. Ordinary folks mistakenly infer the nature of an agent's character from how they act in a situation, and tend to leave out how the agent perceived the situation. Character may also not be that stable over the long haul. Neither reason for skepticism matters here.

11. *Enquiry*, Section VIII, Part I.

12. Libertarians also argue that if determinism is true then we cannot do otherwise, and if we cannot do otherwise, we cannot be held responsible for what we do. Regardless, what is distinctive of Libertarianism is its insistence on the truth of indeterminism.

13. See, for example, Schopenhauer or A. J. Ayer.

14. For defenses of Libertarianism, see the references in note 6. See also the collection of papers edited by Timothy O'Connor, *Agents, Causes, and Events* (Oxford University Press, 1995); *Free Will*, ed. Robert Kane (Blackwell, 2002); and the second edition of Gary Watson's *Free Will* (Oxford, 2003).

15. Robert Adams, William Hasker, and Peter van Inwagen have argued against "would definitely" counterfactuals on the grounds that they are incompatible with free choice. There are, they say, no true "counterfactuals of freedom." See Adams, "Middle Knowledge and the Problem of Evil," *American Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. 14, pp. 109–117, reprinted in his *The Virtue of Faith* (Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 77–93; "An Anti-Molinst Argument," in *Philosophical Perspectives*, vol. 5 (1991); Hasker, "A Refutation of Middle Knowledge," *Nous*, vol. 20 (1986), pp. 545–557; van Inwagen, "Against Middle Knowledge," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*. For rebuttals to Adams *et al.*, see Alfred Freddosso, "Introduction," in Luis de Molina, *On Divine Foreknowledge* (Part IV of the "Concordia") (Cornell University Press, 1988);and Edward Wierenga, *The Nature of God: An Inquiry Into Divine Attributes* (Cornell University Press, 1989). It seems that many "would definitely" counterfactuals are true. If a philosopher were offered a tenured position at the Sorbonne with a million dollar salary, and his home institution made no comparable counteroffer, he would definitely, and not just probably, take the offer. Surely both God and the philosopher in question know that that is what he would do. Thanks are due to John Fischer for discussion of this point. See also Plantinga, *op. cit.*

16. Thomas Reid, *Essays on the Active Powers of Man,* in *Thomas Reid's Inquiry and Essays,* ed. Keith Lehrer and Ronald Beanblossom (Hackett Publishing, 1983).

17. The fact that God's plan did not require that perception be unreliable for the most part is also to be thanked. That is, that the unreliability of perception is not a necessary evil in God's overall plan is to be thanked. What this shows is that one should not be too quick to infer that perception must be trustworthy if God created humans and the laws of nature and God is all good and all-knowing, for it may be a part of his overall plan or creation that perception go wrong more often than not, just as it may be a part of his plan that certain natural evils occur. So one should not think that since God is necessarily good that perception is necessarily reliable. God may, *pace* Descartes, be a deceiver if that is necessary for the production of the greatest good. It is fortunate that when it comes to how he created humans (if he did) that he is not a deceiver.

18. It is not plausible to hold that indeterminism is true for human acts but false for everything else that happens, for human acts could affect nearly everything else. It cannot be determined that the ball will fall, for a human may intervene and stop its descent. If the intervention is not determined, then whether the ball falls is not determined. Furthermore, it is not plausible for the Libertarian to hold that some laws are deterministic and others are not, for the Libertarian argues in favor of indeterminism about our choices on the grounds that indeterminism is true about the relevant laws generally.

19. In Peter Achinstein's terms it is *potential* (or even *veridical*) evidence but it is not the *subject's* evidence. See his *The Book of Evidence* (Oxford, 2001), chapter two.

20. Recall the opening of Tom Stoppard's play *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* where Rosencrantz (or is it Guildenstern?) is flipping a coin over and over again that continually comes up heads. What are the odds of that, he asks.

21. Knowledge of actual co-occurrences of events is often evidence for counterfactual connections between events. So in real life it is nearly impossible to distinguish event types that are epistemically neutral from those that are epistemically bankrupt with respect to some other event type. But the point here concerns not the ability to determine, in real life, whether there are any genuinely bankrupt states that co-occur with other state types, but whether there is a conceptual or *a priori* argument for the lack of the right connection, and so whether radical Libertarianism entails some epistemic fact about trusting testimony.

22. The present discussion is not intended to pass by epistemic externalists. Many externalists are right that a subject need not know or justifiably believe that she knows or justifiably believes that such and such in order to know or justifiably believe that such and such. Many internalists over-intellectualize epistemic justification. But just as internalists sometimes go too far in one direction, epistemic externalists sometimes go too far in the opposite direction. Mad-dog reliabilism is not a plausible view of epistemic justification, nor is it a plausible view about knowledge without substantial emendation and elaboration. Be this as it may, the argument in the text applies to all parties. If the word of another is epistemically bankrupt, then it fails to satisfy even the extreme externalist or mad-dog reliabilist; it is, as such, a reliable indicator of nothing. All parties agree that knowledge depends on reliability. They disagree on what else is required, and whether it is also required for justification. Reductionists and Anti-Reductionists who are internalists both need testimony to be reliable as a necessary (but not sufficient) condition to confer warrant or knowledge, and Reductionists and Anti-Reductionists who are externalists (and think that reliability is, more or less, sufficient for justification and knowledge) need testimony to be reliable too. So the question of whether radical Libertarianism is true affects all parties to the debate.

23. Many people are to be thanked for their help: the anonymous referees for *American Philosophical Quarterly*, an audience at Stanford University in March 1999, an audience at UC Irvine in October 2001, the participants of the agency workshop at UC Riverside in December 2002, Robert Audi, William Bracken, John Fischer, Jennifer Lackey, Dion Scott-Kakures, Gary Watson, and Gideon Yaffe. The paper grew out of a conversation about Paul Faulkner's paper with Peter Kung while walking to meet a friend in mid-town Manhattan. It grew into the present paper because of his penetrating and challenging comments on multiple drafts. He is to be thanked most of all.