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Missing the Matter of Fact: Justification in Testimony

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, I argue that reductionism fails as an adequate account of testimonial justification. In order to do so, I will offer Jennifer Lackey's objections against reductionism. I challenge Lackey's objection and argue that reductionism fails because of asymmetry availed by the positive reasons thesis. In all, I argue that reductionism fails because of the ambiguities and resulting epistemic asymmetry of the positive reasons thesis.

KEYWORDS

Epistemology, Testimony, Reductionism, Lackey

How do we acquire justified beliefs through testimony? Answers to this question generally fall into two camps: reductionism and non-reductionism. Reductionism and non-reductionism argue, differently, that certain conditions must be satisfied in order for a hearer to acquire a justified belief from a bit of testimony. In this paper, I will be largely focused on the reductionist account of testimonial justification. Reductionism, largely credited to Hume in his *Of Miracles* (1748), is the thesis that testimonial justification just reduces to other epistemic faculties, including induction and memory.

In *Learning from Words* (2008), Jennifer Lackey articulates the reductionist view of testimony. More specifically, she contests that reductionism fails to provide a satisfactory account of testimonial justification. In other words, reductionism fails to provide conditions that explain how a hearer may acquire a belief from a speaker through testimony. In this paper, I will argue that reductionism fails as an adequate epistemology of testimony. However, I will also argue that Lackey's objection to reductionism is unsuccessful. My objection to Lackey's analysis will serve to elucidate what I find faulty in the reductionist thesis- the ambiguity and lack of restrictions on what is called the positive reason requirement. My process in reaching this conclusion is as follows: 1. I will articulate the reductionist thesis, as offered by Lackey. Of import in this section will be the matter of fact or the questions of "what reduces to what"; 2. I will argue that Lackey's example, UNNESTED SPEAKER, fails to refute the Reductionist thesis; 3. I will expand on the failing of UNNESTED SPEAKER, and incorporate the analysis of C.A.J Coady's, *Testimony: A Philosophical Study* (1992), in order to explain what I think the real failure of Reductionism is. In all, I argue the reductionism fails because there is a lack of restriction/generality on the positive reason requirement, a problem with devastating epistemic consequences.

Before articulating Lackey's analysis and my objection, I'll characterize reductionism in testimony. The general thesis of reductionism states that a hearer is justified in believing the words of a speaker just in case they have independent, non-testimonial reasons for doing so. Perhaps my friend, who I know to be a very reliable testifier, tells me that the latest train from Chicago to Champaign departs at 9:50. Here, I am justified in accepting his report because I know him to be a reliable speaker. My reasons for believing his testimony *reduces* to my belief in his reliability, in other words, the positive reasons I have for believing him. The belief I acquire, that the train leaves at 9:50, is justified by observed instances of my

friend's reliability. Reductionism is the general view that testimony is a species of other sources of evidence since the justification for testimonial beliefs typically lies in inductive inference, memory, or perception (Coady 1992, 80) This is in contrast to the non-reductionist, who claims testimony is a source of knowledge on par with those other sources.

There are two specific sects of reductionism, *global* reductionism, and *local* reductionism. We can frame the difference between both global and local reductionism in terms of their epistemic relata—how each answers the question of “what reduces to what?” According to Lackey, global reductionism “is (the view) that the justification/warrant of testimony as a source of belief reduces to the justification of sense perception, memory, and inductive inference, (Lackey 2008, 145) and further, “...in order to justifiably accept a speaker's report, a hearer must have non-testimonial based positive reasons for believing that testimony is generally reliable,” (Lackey 2008, 145) Global reductionism requires a hearer have a good reason to believe that testimony, as a source of belief, is generally reliable. Global reductionism is “global” because our justification for some testimonial belief *reduces* to the reliability of testimony as a general source of knowledge. This kind of requirement demands a hearer to evaluate a wide range of reports in order to establish the general reliability of testimony. I won't discuss objections to global reductionism in length, but there are a few important ones to consider. One challenge to the global reductionist view is the near impossibility of establishing the general reliability of testimony. Coady (2002, 82) remarks that it “seems absurd to suggest that, individually, we have done anything like the amount of fieldwork that reductionism requires.” Another challenge to the global reductionist thesis is that, in order to evaluate the reliability of testimony, one must accept a variety of testimonial reports. However, we aren't justified in accepting testimony unless we have reason to believe its general reliability. So, a circularity in justification arises: we need to accept testimony to evaluate it, but we can't accept it unless we know testimony is reliable. These two objections are articulated in some fashion by both Lackey (2008) and Coady (1992), but Lackey presents a third unique objection to global reductionism.

The third objection goes something like this: let's say I establish the general reliability of testimony, in accordance with global reductionism. Presumably, this sort of general reliability is based on an expansive variety of reports. Some reports may be about science, some about sports, some about farming, perhaps. The

general reliability of testimony depends on a massive collection of specific types of reports. If we want to establish general reliability, we want a general set of reports. But what does this established reliability say about the accuracy of a given report? Lackey expresses this challenge in an example she offers (Lackey 2008, 145). According to Lackey, let's I establish that 70% of all reports are true. Next, I'm confronted with a report about my friends' child's accomplishment, and reports about friends' child's' accomplishments are only accurate 15% of the time. In this case, the general reliability of testimony says very little about the general reliability of a given report. In other words, global reductionism is a poor justificatory system because it says very little about the reliability of specific types of reports.

Considering these shortcomings, a more favorable, version of reductionism, *local* reductionism, emerges. According to Lackey, "The second version of reductionism-often called local reductionism- is that the justification/warrant of each particular report or instance of testimony reduces to the justification/warrant or instances of sense perception, memory, and inductive inference." (Lackey 2008, 148) Local reductionism evades the problems that plague global reductionism. One must possess positive reasons for believing a speaker on a *particular* report. Issues including the reliability and competence of individuals are of import, now. The obvious draw for local reductionism is that justification for accepting testimony is easier to come by. It's easier to establish the reliability of individuals or specific reports than it is to establish the general reliability of testimony. Lackey articulates two distinct ways of understanding the local reductionist's positive reasons thesis. "Positive reasons thesis" simply refers to the requirement that a hearer have positive reasons for believing a speaker. The two versions read:

1. PR-N: Appropriate positive reasons are necessary for testimonial justification
2. PR-N&S: Appropriate positive reasons are necessary and sufficient for testimonial justification. (Lackey 2008, 148)

Lackey thinks that PR-N&S is a better way to capture the positive reasons thesis. Since the local reductionist wants to argue that the testimonial belief is *reducible* to the positive reasons for belief, the epistemic status of each, positive reason and testimonial belief, must be equivalent. You can't have a positive reason with high epistemic status, and a testimonial belief with low epistemic status. In that

instance, the testimonial belief isn't reducible since it enjoys a different epistemic status than the positive reason in question. PR-N&S is better suited to capture the need for this equivalence. To say that positive reasons are sufficient for testimonial justification is just to say that each enjoys the same epistemic status- they are symmetrical. Lackey goes on to argue that PR-N&S is false in her rejection of reductionism. In order to reject PR-N&S, Lackey must show that positive reasons for believing a speaker are not always sufficient in acquiring justified testimonial belief. Otherwise put, there must be a case where positive reasons for belief are epistemically excellent, yet the testimonial belief being reduced is unjustified, or of low epistemic status. Lackey offers an example, NESTED SPEAKER, to make her case (Lackey 2008, 149). In the interest of clarity, I've re-formatted Lackey's version of NESTED SPEAKER.

Cast:

Fred Friend of Helen, who believes Pauline based on Helen's word.

Helen Fred's friend, a highly reliable testifier

Pauline Helen's friend, a highly unreliable testifier

1. Fred has excellent epistemic reasons for believing that Helen is a reliable testifier. She has always been truthful in her reports to Fred, on a wide range of topics.
2. Helen tells Fred that Pauline, her friend, is a highly trustworthy person, especially when it comes to information about wild birds.
3. Fred, then, believes Pauline when she tells him that "Albatrosses have the largest wingspan among wild birds"
4. Even though Helen is generally reliable, she made a mistake on this occasion. Pauline is an incompetent, insincere speaker, *especially* regarding info about wild birds.
5. Pauline is correct in her report about albatrosses, but she came to hold this belief by wishful thinking, not any reliable method. (Lackey 2008, 149)

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|---|--|
| Fred's positive reason for believing Pauline ↓ | Testimonial-based belief that Fred acquires from Pauline ↓ |
| Helen's excellent reliability (Justified/ High Epistemic Status) | Albatrosses have the largest wingspan of wild birds (Unjustified-poor Epistemic Status) |

The diagram above is designed to show the different epistemic status of 1) the positive reason Fred has and 2) the belief that Fred acquires. The problem is that Helen's reliability is an excellent positive reason for believing Pauline, but the belief Paul acquires is an unjustified true belief. Pauline gained the true belief by sheer luck, rather than the use of any reliable capacity. It just so happens her belief turns out to be true, and she relays it to Fred. The best way to think of NESTED SPEAKER is as a counter-case to PR-N&S. Recall the PR-N&S thesis means that possession of a positive reason necessarily puts one in contact with a true, justified belief. Fred possess excellent reasons for belief, but those excellent reasons do not put him in contact with a justified belief. This example, Lackey thinks, proves the PR-N&S thesis false, which, by extension, demonstrates the inadequacy of local reductionism as a theory of justification. Lackey thinks that this example displays an asymmetry between the positive reason and the epistemic status of the belief. Since NESTED SPEAKER is a counter-case to PR-N&S, and PR-N&S is vital to the local reductionist, local reductionism fails to provide an adequate theory of justification. To summarize this point, Lackey says, "For, if the Reduction thesis were correct, there wouldn't be any difference between the epistemic status of the testimonial belief being reduced and the positive reasons doing the reducing," (2008, 151).

I do not think NESTED SPEAKER is a fatal objection to local reductionism. More specifically, I believe the PrN&S survives the example of NESTED SPEAKER. Here is the broad scope of my argument: Lackey's refutation of local reductionism depends on her refutation of PrN&S. Her refutation of PrN&S is based on a single case where excellent positive reasons is not sufficient for testimonial belief. However, NESTED SPEAKER wrongly assumes that "Helen's reliability" is the only logically permissible positive reason available to Fred. There are other positive reasons in NESTED SPEAKER, which do not lead to asymmetry. So, Lackey's refutation of local reductionism hinges on a single case that fails to explore

alternative positive reasons. The availability of other logically permissive positive reasons is important because it alters the question of “what reduces to what?” NESTED SPEAKER shows an asymmetry between a single positive reason but fails to narrow the scope on positive reasons. Going forward, I’ll explore the epistemic consequences of ignoring the availability of other positive reasons.

First, recall the third objection Lackey provided to the *global* reductionist thesis: the general reliability of testimony says little about the accuracy of specific types of reports (2008, 147). The attractiveness of local reductionism, in contrast, is the fact that the positive reason says a lot about the accuracy of testimonial report. Local reductionism provides an account where the positive reason is closely related to the acquired testimonial belief, simply because the positive reasons employed are specific, sensitive to the report in question. What this means is that the spirit of local reductionism requires a positive reason as closely aligned to the acquired belief as possible. In other words, the more attuned the positive reason for believing is to the report in question, the higher chance of symmetry between positive reason and acquired belief.

We can extend Lackey’s objection to NESTED SPEAKER. In Lackey’s example, Helen’s general reliability is Fred’s positive reason for believing Pauline’s testimony. But, like the way global reliability of testimony says little about a given report, general reliability may say very little about reliability with respect to a specific topic. Consider that while Helen is generally reliable, she consistently misrepresents the bird-related expertise of others. For whatever reason, Helen reports that certain people are bird-experts when they really aren’t, and vice versa. Let’s say this weakness isn’t due to deception, or any kind of feature that would challenge general reliability. Lackey specifically writes that “Helen told him that Pauline... Is a trustworthy person, *especially when it comes to information regarding wild birds,*” (Lackey 2008, 149, emphasis added).

Let’s reconsider the positive reason/ acquired belief chart, now with knowledge that Helen is unreliable in testifying about the bird-related knowledge of others.

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| Positive reason ↓ | Acquired Belief ↓ |
| Helen’s testimony regarding Pauline’s knowledge of birds, given Helen is unreliable in her reports about others’ degree of expertise regarding birds | Pauline’s testimony that Albatrosses have the largest wingspan of wild birds |

How does this reformulation of the positive reason/acquired belief chart help the local reductionist avoid the asymmetry charge? Asymmetry refers to a difference in the epistemic status between positive reason and acquired belief (Lackey 2008, 148). Epistemic status refers to the justification and proximity to truth. A belief with high epistemic status is justified and proximal to truth. In the original formulation of NESTED SPEAKER, the positive reason for belief is of high epistemic status, and the acquired belief very low. Now, we have a positive reason with a poor epistemic status. Therefore, it would be unwise to believe Helen’s testimony in this specific case, because she is unreliable in this specific domain. Further, the acquired belief is the same as in the example. It’s a belief with poor epistemic status. There is no asymmetry now, because both the positive reason and acquired belief hold a poor epistemic status. The positive reasons thesis is not threatened by this formulation, because there are no excellent positive reasons to begin with. In a sense, the question of “what reduces to what” never gets off the ground floor; we aren’t discerning the quality of the acquired belief because we lack the positive reasons to even consider the truth of the statement. If we frame this worry in the context of NESTED SPEAKER, if Fred believes Pauline on the basis of Helen’s word, then he is a bad epistemic agent. He employs reasons with low epistemic status to justify his acceptance of an unjustified belief. In this sense, the reformulation of positive reasons erases the charge of asymmetry and brings a new charge: epistemic irrationality on the part of Fred.

The crux of this investigation deals with the ambiguity of “positive reasons” We saw that the difference between global and local reductionism dealt with the scope of the positive reason. I don’t think local reductionism has a properly fleshed notion of positive reasons. There is no requirement as to which positive reason must be used for justification. So, Lackey’s (2008, 151) use of the “general reliability of Helen” does not prove the PRN&S false. Instead, it shows that there is an asymmetry between Helen’s reliability as a specific positive reason, and

belief acquired through testimony. I think that Lackey's objection misses the mark because it depends on a specific positive reason.

Lackey's response to my concern may go something like this: Fred has established Helen's credibility through a long series of matching her reports to facts about the world. Fred has done enough to establish Helen as a reliable testifier. Fred has not independently verified Helen's reliability in her reports about other's knowledge of birds. Regardless, Helen's general reliability suffices as an excellent reason to believe her reports. As such, the positive reason of Helen's general reliability is available to Fred, and thus appropriate in justifying his acceptance of her word. Thus, Helen's general reliability is the *most* appropriate positive reason, because it has been verified by Fred's experience. If we accept the general reliability as an excellent positive reason, we see an asymmetry between positive reason and acquired belief. There may be a rare case where some speaker is generally unreliable in a specific domain, *and the* testimonial belief acquired is in that domain. General reliability is a strong predictor of the truth of a given report, and its generality allows a hearer/agent to test it. It is unrealistic to superimpose all these positive reasons that lie in a practically inscrutable domain: who could ever possess the requisite experience to check for the reliability of some speaker's bird references? This response is after a bigger question. It seems like local reductionism needs a condition that restricts the generality of positive reasons. This kind of condition would cast a limit to the number of potential positive reasons used in justification, which may alleviate concerns about asymmetry in justification.

The question that emerges from NESTED SPEAKER and my counterexample, is to question whether there are constraints on the positive reasons employed in justification. We've seen the effects of this uncertainty: in NESTED SPEAKER, using "general reliability" as a positive reason yields an asymmetry and refutation of local reductionism. In my counterexample, NESTED SPEAKER provides no asymmetry, and local reductionism is unscathed. These two starkly different consequences are owed to a difference in the positive reason used in justification. One aspect of the problem is the PrN&S is potentially vague. A more specific articulation than "positive reason" is necessary to understand the matter of fact, and provide a clear answer to "what reduces to what?" To disentangle this problem, it will be helpful to visit C.A.J Coady's treatment of the same issue. In his seminal work *Testimony: A Philosophical Study* (1992) C.A.J Coady remarks on a similar

confusion. In chapter 4 of *Testimony*, Coady investigates global reductionism, and local reductionism. His account is largely a Humean one, which means that his articulation of reductionism is based on Hume's *Of Miracles* (1748). Coady denies the global reductionism Hume endorses, and formulates a favorable local reductionist argument:

We rely upon testimony as a species of evidence because each of us observes for himself a constant and regular conjunction between what people report and the way the world is. More particularly, we each observe for ourselves a constant conjunction between kinds of report and kinds of situation so that we have good grounds for expecting this conjunction to continue in the future. (Coady 1992, 82)

Before proceeding, it'll be helpful to flesh out these "constant and regular conjunctions" Thinking of justification in terms of constant conjunctions is just a different way of capturing the positive reason requirement. I am entitled to believe a speaker if the conjunction of (my experience of her reports) and (accuracy of those reports) is constant and regular. The strength of these connections amount to something like reliability: past experiences of truthfulness are a good indicator of future truthfulness. I'll be referring to these conjunctions as "justification conjunctions" for the rest of the paper.

Referring back to Coady, the justification conjunction he's referring to is: (Kind of Report) and (Situation indicated by report). Another way to capture this is the following: I am justified in believing a speaker provided that I have witnessed a past conjunction between the kind of report offered, and the accuracy of that report. Justification amounts to having a track record of accuracy. Roughly speaking, Lackey's local reductionist argument tracked the reliability of the speaker. Framed differently, the observed success of this conjunction, (Speaker's report) and (Situation indicated by report), amounts to positive reasons for belief (Lackey 2008, 148). The important takeaway is that I challenged Lackey's local reductionism on the grounds that her positive reason requirement was vague. Now, it appears Coady has presented a reductionist account that is even more vague. The fact that each account struggles to clarify their positive reason requirements, namely "Kind of report," could mean many things, and avails us of an even more confusing view than Lackey's local reductionism. I won't elaborate on the vagueness of "kinds of

report," because Coady investigates it the vagueness. Keep in mind he intends to refute reductionism, much like Lackey. Regarding the ambiguity of "Kind of Report" Coady writes that "It seems to me that "kind of report" may be meant to refer either to the kind of speaker who gives the report or to the kind of content the report contains," (1992, 83).

So, on the one hand, "kind of report" may refer to the reliability of the speaker, or reliability of the content of the report. To capture the difference, accept Coady's simple example: "My friend testifies to me that "There is a sick lion in Taronga Park Zoo,"" (Coady, 1992, 84). If we take "kind of report" to mean reliability of the speaker, then I'm accessing my friend's general reliability, and the accuracy of his reports. If I take "kind of report" to mean the content of the report, then I'm tasked to find out whether reports about lions are generally reliable. Moreover, I may be tasked with figuring out whether reports about sick lions are reliable, or whether reports about Taronga Park Zoo are reliable. Perhaps reports about Taronga Park Zoo are highly reliable, and I have confirmed this reliability through my own experience- when people report about Taronga Park Zoo, the reports are accurate. However, I have little experience in confirming reports about sick lions, and thereby lack the grounds to justifiably believe the report in question.

Another way of framing this issue is that there is no clear classification requirement for "kinds of report" and there are blatant epistemic consequences for this classification issue. Whether we classify the report as a zoo report we are justified in accepting, but if the report is classified as a "sick lion" report, it appears we are unjustified. So how would we go about classifying the kind of report, and by extension, our justification be believing some report? The concerns that arise from the Coady example start to resemble the concerns I showed with NESTED SPEAKER. There must be a way to classify "kind of report" because the myriad of ways we are able to determine the scope, reference of "kind of report" has clear consequences. Regarding this issue, Coady writes:

Since either classification is logically permissible, then it seems to be purely a matter of whim whether Jones (the hearer in the zoo example) has or has not good reason for accepting the report. Clearly some sort of non-arbitrary restriction on the scope of "report of a kind of situation' is required to make this notion of any real value in the elaboration of RT'. (1992, 84-85)

RT' refers to Coady's reformulation of Hume's global reductionism and can be understood as a local reductionist account. In this passage, Coady acknowledges that there are several logically permissible ways to classify our justification conjunction. Put simply, there are several logically permissible ways to justify belief of some report. The problem amounts to something like this: Reductionism lacks a condition regarding classification of the report. In other words, there is no way of determining the appropriate positive reasons for a given report, and numerous positive reasons are logically permissible. The problem here is that while numerous positive reasons are logically permissible, there are different epistemic consequences depending on which reason you accept. Certain types of report are unreliable, others are reliable. Furthermore, the reliability of certain reports is unknown or inaccessible to the hearer. If we classify the zoo report as a report about zoo animals, then our hearer is tasked with knowing the general reliability of that specific report. If the hearer lacks requisite experience to check such reliability, they are unjustified in accepting the testimony. The reverse is true if we think of the "kind of report" as referring to the kind of speaker. In this case, the hearer may have requisite experience for determining the speaker's reliability, and by extension is justified in accepting the report. It should be noted that Coady does not pursue this objection very far. He offers the issue of generality but leaves it to the reader to pursue further.

There's another issue that arises with Coady's example. Let's grant that we find a way of determining the kind of report, and the justification needed to accept the report. In many cases, the necessary positive reasons will be beyond the speaker's experience. Perhaps we classify the Taronga Park zoo example as a report about sick lions. Our hearer lacks the requisite experience to determine the reliability of the report, given that there is a restriction on the justification. The hearer has no experience with reports about sick lions. However, our hearer has plenty of experience with the reliability of the speaker, his friend. It seems intuitive that the reliability of the speaker justifies the hearer's acceptance. But since we have classified the report as a "sick lion report" it's unclear just how far the speaker's general reliability will take us in terms of justification. The hearer must be justified with regard to the kind of report, and that kind of report is "sick lion reports" not, "the reliability of the speaker's reports." So, the problem is that finding a way of classifying restrictions on reports makes justification a whole lot harder to come by. Further, acceptance of testimony would require a lot of fieldwork that most

people simply couldn't do. This objection mirrors Coady's point that "many of us have never seen a baby born, examined circulation of the blood..." (1992, 82). Coady brings up this point before arguing for the "kind of report" ambiguity. I think the practical objection regarding field work/observation holds even if we find a way to classify kinds of reports, and thereby demand specific kinds of positive reasons. Given this restriction, and the requirement of more work, perhaps a hearer is entitled to employ general positive reasons. For instance, lacking insight on the accuracy of "sick lion reports," a hearer is entitled to opt for something like the general reliability of the speaker. Although general reliability may not speak to the accuracy of the given classification, it's surely a predictor of arriving at true beliefs. The alternative, given a rigid classification and lack of positive reasons, would be a suspension of judgment.

So far, I have argued that Lackey's refutation of local reductionism is unsuccessful and have objected to local reductionism through the lens of Coady. Exploring the "kinds of report" ambiguity will provide better grounds for challenging Lackey, specifically on her asymmetry charge. Lackey argues that local reductionism fails because of the PRN&S condition, that possession of excellent positive reasons for believing the speaker justifies the hearer in believing the speaker's testimony. The PRN&S failed because NESTED SPEAKER showed a case in which a hearer possessed excellent positive reasons for believing yet acquired an unjustified belief. The high epistemic status of the positive reasons compared to the low epistemic status of the acquired belief is the gist of the asymmetry charge. Because of the asymmetry, PRN&S fails, and since PRN&S is vital to local reductionism, local reductionism fails. My objection to this argument is that if you change the positive reason for belief in NESTED SPEAKER, then you encounter a situation in which there is no asymmetry between the positive reason and acquired belief. Considering Coady's discussion of the "kind of report" ambiguity, it's clear that local reductionism lacks a clear restriction regarding classifying reports. These restrictions, or ways of classifying reports, yields different positive reasons (A report classified as "sick lion report" is justified by the accuracy of "sick lion reports"). Let's revisit NESTED SPEAKER with the classification ambiguity in mind.

Let's once again assume we have a way of classifying reports according to Coady. Let's say NESTED SPEAKER will be classified as a "report about birds." We can call this case one. As such, Fred (hearer) must possess some general assessment of the reliability of "bird reports." The justification conjunction here

would look like (Past reports about birds) \wedge (Accuracy of those past reports). If Fred has witnessed high correlation between these conjuncts in the past, he is justified in believing Pauline's word. This example is no different than NESTED SPEAKER as given, since we have some excellent positive reason for belief, and the acquisition of an unjustified belief. The only difference between case one and NESTED SPEAKER is that the excellent positive reason focus has shifted from Helen's reliability to "bird reports" in general. Given this classification, the asymmetry charge holds. Now case two: NESTED SPEAKER is classified as a "report about Helen's testimony regarding other speakers' knowledge of birds" The appropriate justification conjunction is: (Times Helen has testified about others' knowledge of birds) \wedge (Times those people demonstrated knowledge of birds).

This is an attractive conjunction. Because of the extremely narrow restriction on the kind of report, positive reasons for belief should be based on Fred's observation of Helen's testimony in that extremely narrow domain. If we accept that a kind of report requires excellent positive reasons within that report's domain, then we clearly have a situation where Fred lacks positive reasons. On the rare chance he has observed Helen's testimony in this regard, then he is presented with her unreliability in this regard. On the probable chance that he lacks an observance of her testimony in this domain, then he simply lacks positive reasons for belief, because he has no reasons. But there are two possible readings of the "kind of report" confusion. The first has been established: types of reports requires types of reasons within the domain of the report. The second was brought up above. If a hearer lacks positive reasons in the specific domain, they may favor a more general positive reason. In the context of NESTED SPEAKER: If Fred lacks observations of Helen's testimony in this specific domain (the conjunction above) he may rely on her general reliability as a speaker as reason for/ against believing. Since, as Lackey writes, Helen is reliable, then Fred can defer to that general reliability if he lacks the specific, domain aligned positive reason. The positive reason of Helen's general reliability leads to asymmetry, as established. But the mere availability of a more general positive reason, and a demonstration of asymmetry, is not enough to defeat local reductionism. If we accept a restriction on kinds of reports, then we accept that excellent reasons for believing that report lie in the domain of the report and are as closely aligned to the kind of report as possible. In the event that such reasons escape the hearer, opting for the general reliability of the

speaker as a positive reason is generally truth conducive, and in the absence of those positive reasons, even more general ones may be available. Reductionism seems to fail because there's an indeterminacy in the identity of "kind of report." In NESTED SPEAKER, Lackey inadvertently answers the question of "what kind of report" is in question by offering "general reliability" as the positive reason for belief. In this sense, submitting "general reliability" opens the window for the viable use of different positive reasons. In other words, the asymmetry charge is avoided because Lackey doesn't rule out the use of other positive reasons.

A better objection to local reductionism deals with the ambiguity regarding "what reduces to what?" There is no obvious restriction/scope to the justification we seek. As demonstrated, the permissibility of different sets of positive reasons avail different epistemic consequences. Two logically permissible sets of positive reasons, as shown, can lead to an asymmetry of justification, or fail to provide an asymmetry. In NESTED SPEAKER, we have two available positive reasons. Choosing "general reliability" led to asymmetry and choosing the one I proposed avoided that charge. We have widely different consequences depending on which route we choose, and both appear permissible. A lack of restriction means a lack of consistency in application: the local reductionist must accept justification, and a lack of justification as permissible for a single bit of testimony. While I agree with Lackey that reductionism fails to provide an adequate epistemology of testimony, I don't think her objection, NESTED SPEAKER, provided a successful objection to the reductionist. Lackey's claim that PrN&S fails depends on a faulty assumption that there is only one permissible positive reason. A better objection to the local reductionist should *start* with the problem of multiple permissible positive reasons. On this note, local reductionism fails to provide an adequate epistemology of testimony because it fails to provide consistent justificatory explanations. The ambiguity of "positive reasons" presents a major epistemic challenge to the reductionist. Different positive reasons lead to different verdicts on justification.

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