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The Epistemology of Testimony, edited by Jennifer Lackey and Ernest Sosa. Clarendon Press: Oxford. Pp. 312.

“In recent years”, Lackey begins, “the epistemic significance of testimony has been more fully appreciated. ... *The Epistemology of Testimony* is intended to build on and further develop this work.” (P.1) This it does. The volume contains twelve papers which have been commissioned bar one. Many of these papers will undoubtedly prove key references in future research on testimony.

In my opinion, this is particularly true of Richard Moran’s “Getting Told and Being Believed”. Moran focuses on a speaker telling an audience something and asks what reason this provides the audience for believing what is told. Since it is assumed that it is these reasons that justify the audience’s testimonial belief, this feeds into the central task of any epistemological theory of testimony which is explaining how such beliefs get to be justified. Now in the case of perception one could claim that perceptual belief is justified through standing in a certain relation to perceptual appearances, or that it is justified on the basis of beliefs about testimonial appearances. And there are parallel options in the epistemology of testimony. Similarly, one could make the positive claim that testimonial beliefs are associated with a unique type of justification – namely that given by forming belief on the basis of testimonial appearances. Or one could deny this positive claim: testimonial justification is not to be accounted for by a belief’s relation to testimonial appearances but by further beliefs one has about testimonial appearances or by facts about how the belief is reached; in familiar terms, one could propose an

antireductionist or a *reductionist* theory of testimony. Moran's bold and brilliantly substantiated claim is that existing theories of testimony almost universally fail to correctly represent the testimonial relationship and through doing so mischaracterise the justification we have for our testimonial beliefs. In framing the dispute as one over whether it is *a priori* that testimonial appearances provide evidence — over whether testimonial appearances *themselves* provide evidence — there is agreement that our testimonial beliefs are justified by what evidence testimonial appearances provide. However, this agreement makes it a mystery why we should ever prefer a speaker's *word* over other revelations of the speaker's beliefs that are not so open to manipulation. The central task for an epistemological theory of testimony, he then claims, is to explain how the *intentional character* of telling can *add* to an audience's reason for belief. This challenge Moran answers by conceiving of telling as *assurance*: "On a genuinely non-Humean [i.e. non-evidential] account, when someone tells me it's cold out I don't simply gain an awareness of his beliefs, I am also given his *assurance* that it's cold out. This is something I could not have gained by the private observation of his behaviour. When someone gives me his assurance that it's cold out he explicitly assumes a certain responsibility for what I believe." (P.278) Now there is the pressing question of why an audience should accept a speaker's assurance, given that it too is open to manipulation. And it should be clear that Moran does not specify an alternative to either antireductionism or reductionism but a specific positive account of how our testimonial beliefs are associated with a unique type of justification. But this does not detract from the fact that his paper offers an engaging new perspective in the testimony debate and trenchant criticism of existing theory.

It attempts to see around existing theory, to find some disputable but common assumption or some alternative to either an antireductive or reductive theory of testimony, that is a theme of most of the articles in this collection. In their own ways the papers by Robert Audi, Peter Graham, Sanford Goldberg, Keith Lehrer, Jennifer Lackey and Elizabeth Fricker have this concern. Audi makes a novel and motivated proposal. He offers an antireductive account of testimonial knowledge: a speaker's knowing what he says is sufficient to put an audience in a position to acquire this knowledge; testimonial appearances can themselves be knowledge supporting. But then combines this with a reductive theory of testimonial justification: a speaker's being justified in believing what he says is not sufficient for an audience being justified in believing what the speaker says; for this the audience must further believe that the speaker is not misguided etc. This division is motivated in that it explains various intuitions; for instance, how children get to know things on the basis of testimony. However, it comes at a cost: a fundamental distinction is thereby drawn between knowledge and justified belief. Meanwhile Goldberg argues that one can deny the positive antireductive claim and yet still maintain that testimonial justification is a unique kind, even though this is ordinarily taken to be just the claim that testimonial beliefs are justified simply by their relation to testimonial appearances (i.e. the positive antireductive claim). Testimonial justification is unique, Goldberg argues, because when a belief is formed on the basis of testimonial appearances it "gives rise to the hearer's right to *pass the epistemic buck* after her own justificatory resources have been abandoned." (P.134) When an audience 'passes the epistemic buck' she holds a speaker responsible for the justification of her testimonial belief. This is consistent with denying the positive antireductive claim because it is a "last resort" and

available “only given that recipient of the testimony has *already* justified her reliance on that testimony.” (P.136) This seems to imply, as one would expect, that testimonial justification is unique because the positive antireductive claim holds; except now it only holds in a situation of ‘last resort’. However, how could an audience’s running out of steam when it comes to defending her testimonial belief change the nature of that belief’s justification? If her belief can ultimately be justified simply on the basis of testimonial appearances, why cannot it be so justified throughout? Lehrer advances the reductive position that testimonial justification is given by beliefs about testimonial appearances or, in his terms, beliefs about the trustworthiness of speakers. However, a complete theory of testimonial justification, he notes, must then explain the justification we have for these beliefs. Appeals to observation cannot suffice across the board. So Lehrer proposes the general principle: “T: I am trustworthy in what I accept.” (P.155) Principle T equally cannot be grounded on personal observation, so this reductive project fails. However, if T is true, I will be trustworthy in my beliefs about trustworthiness; and trustworthy in my acceptance of T. Thus, T is basic for Lehrer: it represents a confident start from which one can work to non-sceptical conclusions. The resulting theory of testimony however is straightforwardly reductive all the while the truth of T can be understood in reliabilist terms. Rather than reconcile antireductive and reductive theories Graham purports to offer a ‘third way’ between these theories through introducing the idea of ‘*pro tanto* justification’. He says: “‘Pro tanto’, as I understand it, means ‘as far as it goes’ or ‘to that extent’. I contrast it with ‘on balance’. A *pro tanto* justification is a consideration in favor of a certain belief.” (P.104) A testimonial belief is then justified by its relation to a testimonial appearance but this relation is not sufficient for this belief being justified ‘on

balance'. For a testimonial belief to be justified the audience must further justify it on the basis of beliefs about the testimonial appearance. To my mind this is just to deny the positive claim made by antireductive theory: standing in a certain relation to testimonial appearances does not itself justify belief. No doubt this is to miss the distinction Graham draws between 'pro tanto' and 'on balance' justification, but then I do not understand how something can be an (undefeated) justifier and yet not justify belief. Lackey similarly denies the positive antireductive claim: a testimonial belief cannot be justified by its relation to testimonial appearances alone, an audience must also justify this belief with further beliefs about the testimonial appearances. However, Lackey claims, this is not to endorse a reductive theory because beliefs about testimonial appearances are not sufficient to justify testimonial belief since there is a reliability constraint on justification. This necessitates that the testimonial appearance is a reliable indicator of its truth. Whilst I think that this is true, at least for the acquisition of testimonial knowledge, and that the point is well made by Lackey, again at least in regard to the acquisition of testimonial knowledge, this is not to propose an alternative to reductionism. What justifies an audience's testimonial belief will be beliefs about testimonial appearances in conjunction with facts about how the testimonial belief is connected via appearances with its truth, but it will not be simply the belief's standing in a certain relation to these testimonial appearances. By contrast, Fricker's theory appears to be anti-reductive in two respects. First, she speaks of 'knowledge from *trust* in testimony'; second, she proposes that an audience knows on the basis of 'trust in testimony' only if there is someone who knows in non-testimonial way, or if there is non-testimonial knowledge supporting evidence, as in the case of scientific knowledge. The first of these respects is misleading however

since ‘trust’ is not sufficient for ‘proper acceptance’ unless it is coupled with a belief in sincerity and competence, (her principle TDAP2, p.232). In this case, I am unclear what ‘trust’ adds to acceptance; it is certainly not to be equated with Moran’s ‘believing a speaker’ which is arguably how ‘trust’ is ordinarily understood and which would suffice for proper acceptance — at least if Moran is correct. Nevertheless, the resulting combination Fricker proposes of requiring reasons for justified acceptance and yet making the justification of testimonial belief depend on the wider system seems correct. (Indeed I have argued for exactly this combination in “The Social Character of Testimonial Knowledge”, *Journal of Philosophy* 97, 581-601.)

The remaining papers include a careful exegesis of Reid by James Van Cleve, a nice comparison of testimony and memory by Frederick Schmitt, a discussion of foundationalist principles by Richard Fumerton and papers from two luminaries of epistemology and testimony, respectively Ernest Sosa and C.A.J.Coady. In “Pathologies of Testimony” Coady analyses the nature and epistemic status of gossip, rumour and urban myth and, in line with his general defence of testimony, concludes that none need be epistemically worthless. Sosa’s paper, meanwhile, is titled “Knowledge: Instrumental and Testimonial” and is a discussion of instrumental knowledge – i.e. the knowledge we gain from instruments. In relying on “GPS devices, cellular telephones” etc. (p.117) we presume their reliability. This presumption of reliability can be justified on the basis of testimony or inductive generalisation. However, we cannot thereby reduce instrumental knowledge to testimonial knowledge, Sosa claims, because understanding or interpretative knowledge “is a kind of instrumental knowledge” (p.121). Nor can we reduce it to inductive knowledge since “the instruments on which we depend most

extensively and fundamentally are the perceptual modules” (p.122). Now one thing unusual about this is that the comparison of testimonial knowledge with instrumental knowledge is normally the sign of a reductive theory: speakers can be, and shown by experience to be, reliable instruments. However, Sosa concludes that “[h]uman testimony stands with the senses in providing default rational justification” (p.123). Now I presume that Moran would accept this conclusion, understood in a particular way, but reject any comparison of testimonial with instrumental knowledge. In this respect, *The Epistemology of Testimony* contributes to work on testimony through both developing its debate and showing that this debate remains open.