Testimonial Justification: Reductionism, Anti-Reductionism and Dualism

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Theories of Testimonial Justification

• Consist in two claims:

(1) What testimonial justification consists in.
(2) Which beliefs are supported by testimonial justification.

• Traditionally people talk about reductionist and anti-reductionist theories.
What’s Reductionism?

• Bit hard to say.

• Some people think it’s about what testimonial justification consists in.

• Others think it’s about what beliefs are supported by testimonial justification.
Nonetheless!

• This theory is reductionist:

(R1) A listener’s belief is supported by testimonial justification only if she has reasons for thinking the speaker’s testimony is true.

(R2) Testimonial justification consists in such reasons.
Anti-Reductionism

• There’s the same confusion going on here.

• But this theory is definitely anti-reductionist:

(A1) A listener’s belief does not depend on her having reasons for thinking the speaker’s testimony is true.

(A2) Testimonial justification does not consist in such reasons.
Middle Ground

• There’s clearly room between these two positions.

• Dualist theories think that (something like) (R1) is true and that (A2) is true in some form.

• Lackey and Faulkner defend this conjunction in different ways.
Dualist Theories

• So, in different ways, dualist theories are characterised by their endorsement of the following:

(D1) A listener’s belief is supported by testimonial justification only if she has reasons for thinking the speaker’s testimony is true.

(D2) Testimonial justification does not consist in such reasons.
The Big Question

• What’s the relationship between the reasons in (R1) and the listener’s belief?

• More specifically, is the belief *based on* the reasons?

• I think that either way, dualist theories have a problem.
A Negative Answer:

• Suppose the belief does NOT have to be based on the listener’s reasons.

• It’s now hard to see what they’re supposed to be doing.

• Dualist theories take it that the reasons are supposed to make the listener’s belief rational.
The Basing Relation

• The basing relation is supposed to be the relation that beliefs and reasons enter into when the reasons bear on the beliefs.

• In cases where they are not suitably related, the reasons do not rationalise the belief.

• A negative answer thus leaves (D1) unmotivated.
A Positive Answer

• Suppose the dualist says they *do* have to be based on the reasons in (D1).

• If the listener’s belief *is* based on those reasons, then surely those reasons *are* part of her justification.

• Now it seems that (D2) is false.
Overdetermination

• We can put the point in terms of overdetermination.

• Where the listener bases her belief on her reasons, these justify her belief as well as the factors dualist theories identify.

• Or at any rate, we need an account of why they don’t.
Inferential Justification

• Most theories of justification have some account of how reasons justify beliefs.

• Lackey’s theory is reliabilist, so reasons shape the process involved.

• Faulkner’s theory explicitly states that such reasons can justify beliefs.
Objection 1: That’s Not the Point!

• The dualist (D1) is not the same as the reductionist (R1).

• We might think that not all reasons justify, some merely rationalise.

• And it’s only the rationalising ones that dualists think are necessary.
Still Missing Something...

• That much might be fine, but that’s not the problem.

• Justifying reasons are \textit{a fortiori} rationalising reasons.

• And there’s still the question about what happens in \textit{this} case.
Response: The Reasons are NEVER Good Enough

• Lackey suggests that a listener’s reasons are never sufficient.

• This is because they can’t guarantee a connection to reliably formed testimony, no matter how good they are.

• So there’s no overdetermination— and hence no problem... right?
Wrong

• This seems to lead to a pretty far-reaching scepticism.

• It involves claiming that inductive reasoning is NEVER justified.

• And even other reliabilists don’t want to say this.
Reductionism Again

• This is no problem for reductionist theories.

• Reductionist theories deny (D2).

• Hence they think that beliefs DO have to be based on reasons.

• But also that the reasons DO justify the beliefs.
Anti-Reductionism Again

• There is also no problem for anti-reductionist theories.

• Anti-reductionist theories deny (D1)

• So justification does not require such reasons.

• And thus beliefs do not have to be based on them.
In Summary

• There are reasons to be dualist.

• But there’s also a problem with it— it’s hard to motivate both the claim that the reasons in (D1) are necessary and the claim that they don’t justify (even in good cases).

• So it’s all very confusing.

• But that’s what makes it cool... right?