

What the Basing Relation can Teach Us About the Theory of Justification

1. My topic is a common conception of the relation between a person's *being justified* in believing as she does and her *ability to justify the belief*. This conception is implicit in Robert Audi's comment, "It would seem that just as a little child can be of good character even if unable to defend its character against attack, one can have a justified belief even if, in response to someone who doubts this, one could not show that one does."¹ And it is voiced by William Alston: "the *state* concept [pertaining to *being justified*] is the more basic one, since the activity of justifying is an activity directed to showing that a belief is in the *state* of being justified."² To put it crudely, according to these philosophers the activity of justifying is epistemologically irrelevant. In more detail, the conception can be put like this:

The justificatory status of a person's belief is fully determined by certain facts which obtain prior to and independently of, and are not directly affected by, what goes on when the person attempts to justify the belief. So the activity of justifying is a secondary and optional matter of attempting to determine and report, as far as conversationally necessary, the prior and independent facts which determine justificatory status. Even if things go badly wrong in the course of the activity, that will not affect one's actual justificatory status.

I call this view *the Spectatorial Conception*, since it holds that positive justificatory status is something which one attempts to find out about, not something which one brings about or directly affects through the activity of justifying. This view is endorsed by a wide swath of "naturalists," "externalists", and "reliabilists", as well as by many so-called "internalists".³ My aim in this paper is to show its inadequacy and suggest a better way. My argument will depend upon considerations about the *epistemic basing relation*, the

relation between a belief and the reasons for which the person holds it. As I will argue, the Spectatorial Conception fundamentally distorts our thinking about this relation.⁴

2. Any Spectatorialist account of justification needs to appeal to basing relations. Here's why. The Spectatorial Conception is a view about what it is for persons to be justified in believing as they do. A person who believes p and who possesses evidence which adequately indicates p 's truth, or who believes things which enable an acceptable inference to it, may still not have a justified belief, since he may believe p for some ridiculous reason and not for the good reasons which he possesses. The trouble is not that he lacks good grounds for his belief, but that his belief is not appropriately related to those grounds. Any Spectatorialist account of justification must capture this difference without appealing to considerations about the person's justificatory activity. To do so, it will appeal to the epistemic basing relation.⁵

The Spectatorial Conception constrains how one can conceive of the basing relation, since it holds that all factors relevant to justificatory status are in place independently of the person's justificatory activities and are not directly affected by them. So the view is this:

The facts which determine basing relations are in place independently of the person's attempt to formulate a justification for her belief — her explicit deliberation, reasoning, or declaration of reasons — and are not directly determined by any of this explicit deliberative or justificatory activity.⁶

Gilbert Harman has offered an influential presentation of this view.⁷ According to Harman, we come to have beliefs through processes of reasoning which are largely subconscious or unconscious. Our reasons are the considerations which, by figuring in these reasoning processes, lead us to have the beliefs that we have.⁸ Thus, according to Harman, the reasons upon which a belief is based are the considerations which figure in a correct scientific-psychological explanation of why the person believes as he does. This

explanation is distinct from what the person says when asked to justify his beliefs; what a person appeals to or offers when attempting to justify a belief are, at best, merely those aspects of the explanation which he has managed to bring to consciousness (and Harman is pessimistic about our capacity to identify the correct explanations of our beliefs⁹).

This view brings with it a view of what one is doing when one attempts to justify a belief. Deliberation concerning the reasons for which one holds a given belief gets construed as an attempt to find out about prior and independently-obtaining basing relations, and sincerely stating one's reasons — i.e., offering a justification for a belief — gets construed as issuing a report about these independent relations.¹⁰

3. This view fits poorly with what actually goes on when people develop or offer justifications for their beliefs. In many cases, one does not answer the question, “What are your reasons for believing that?”, by considering one’s psychology or the etiology of one’s belief; instead, one considers what there is to be said in favor of the belief — whether and why one should hold it. Likewise, we ordinarily proceed as if someone who deliberates about or offers reasons in justification of a belief is not attempting to state prior and independent facts about her belief, but rather doing something which fixes what her reasons are: namely, *committing to particular reasons for holding the belief*. For instance, we might ask someone, “Are you really willing to base your belief in the suspect's innocence upon the testimony of a convicted felon?”¹¹ Such questions indicate that we generally don't treat what people say in defense of their beliefs as merely *evidence about*, or an *indication of*, the reasons for which they hold their beliefs, but rather as a direct expression of their rational activity. And there are many cases in which it would be inappropriate to regard one's own declarations of reasons in any other way.

4. Consider the role we expect to be played by *a person’s holding a belief for a reason*. If a person holds a belief on the basis of particular reasons, then her justificatory

status with regard to the belief is thereby tied to the adequacy of those reasons. Basing relations thus open the person to epistemic evaluation, and to further normative consequences, on account of the adequacy of the belief's grounds, and they engender an obligation to give up the belief or seek better reasons if its grounds prove inadequate.¹² We thus expect the basing relation to span the space between a person, a belief, and particular reasons, so that the person's attitude of belief becomes linked to those reasons in such a way that their adequacy or inadequacy can provide a fair basis for epistemic evaluation of the person and can engender further obligations or responsibilities.

Consider how this plays out in an ordinary sort of case. Suppose that you consider reasons for and against a claim, find that certain reasons decisively support holding it, and sincerely declare that you believe the claim for those reasons. In the usual case, you thereby directly determine what the reasons are for which you hold the belief. (By "directly determine," I mean a role of the sort we ordinarily play in establishing our intentions when we seriously and sincerely declare "I intend ..." Barring fundamental irrationality, such a declaration of intention precludes one's not so intending, unless one changes one's mind.) And in declaring your reasons you both open yourself to epistemic evaluation or criticism on account of those reasons' inadequacy and incur certain obligations — in particular, an obligation either to give up the belief or to seek better reasons, should those reasons prove inadequate. A minimal adequacy condition for an account of the epistemic basing relation is that it *allow* (1) that the reasons for which a belief is held can be directly determined in this way, and (2) that one sometimes directly opens oneself to epistemic criticism and incurs further justificatory responsibilities by sincerely declaring that one holds one's belief for particular reasons.¹³

5. The Spectatorial Conception doesn't meet either requirement. According to the Spectatorial Conception, basing relations will *never* be directly fixed by the conclusions of one's explicit evaluations of reasons; otherwise what one sincerely says in defense of

one's belief will be determinative of the belief's justificatory status. Whenever one sincerely declares, after explicit reflection upon the available reasons, "*these* are my reasons for holding this belief," one must either be issuing a hypothesis about what explains one's belief or giving oneself a recommendation.¹⁴ And for this reason, sincere declarations of reasons will not open us to epistemic criticism and further responsibilities. If one's statement of reasons is merely a recommendation or hypothesis about what one's belief is independently based upon, then one could take comfort if the stated reasons are met with decisive criticism. One could say, "Well, I might be wrong, those might not actually be the reasons upon which my belief is based, and so my belief might be justified nonetheless ..." Thus even if one acknowledges that the reasons one has offered are inadequate or false, one could always beg off any responsibility either to give up the belief or to come up with better reasons for holding it. The Spectatorial Conception thus prevents us from directly evaluating a person on the basis of what she sincerely says about the reasons for which she holds her beliefs.¹⁵

6. These failings are symptomatic of a fundamental flaw. According to the Spectatorial Conception, your relation to the bases of your own beliefs is fundamentally like your relation to the bases of someone else's beliefs. The only difference is that the facts which determine the grounds of your beliefs are "in you." Consider, then, that having discovered the reasons upon which someone else's belief is based, you might conclude that they are inadequate or even false. If the Spectatorial Conception is correct, there is no reason why your own case should be any different. Hence, after determining the correct explanation of your own belief, you should be free to conclude, "*q* is the reason upon which my belief that *p* is based, but *q* is a lousy reason for believing that *p*." Now, if you determine that *q* is a poor reason for believing that *p*, then you are ordinarily entitled to repudiate it as a reason for believing that *p*; you may declare, "I do not believe that *p* on the basis of *q*." So insofar as the Spectatorial Conception is intended to account

for our ordinary notion of holding a belief for a reason, it leaves us free to say, "My belief that p is based upon q , but *I* don't believe that p on the basis of q , because q is an entirely inadequate reason." But this is incoherent. One cannot simultaneously declare that one's belief is based upon a particular consideration and repudiate that consideration as one's reason for holding the belief. One can, of course, discover or conclude that one has held a belief for bad reasons. But to state the reasons my belief is *now* based upon is to state the reasons *I* base it upon, the reasons for which I hold it. And I cannot simultaneously declare that I both do and do not hold a given belief for given reasons.¹⁶

This problem arises because of a fundamental bifurcation which the Spectatorial Conception forces within our thinking about a person: on one side are the facts which determine basing relations, on the other is the person's overt deliberative and justificatory activity (including her explicit evaluations of reasons), and the latter does not ever directly determine the former. Once we recognize this division, we can see that the Spectatorial Conception of the basing relation doesn't do the necessary work: it does not provide an adequate basis for the epistemic evaluation of the person, because the facts which it treats as determining basing relations do not establish the right sort of link between the person and the reasons upon which her beliefs are putatively based. The crucial issue here is the difference between, on the one hand, sub-personal states and processes (such as the states and processes which result in perceptual beliefs) as well as states and processes to which the person is merely passively subject (such as bizarre inferential habits resulting from a brain lesion) and, on the other hand, states and reasoning processes *of the person*. To enable epistemic evaluation of the person, basing relations must be attributable *to the person* and not merely to some reasoning-like process which takes place "in" him or her. But the Spectatorial Conception prevents this. The problem is not that the Spectatorial Conception places basing relations outside the person's voluntary control; basing relations, on any plausible view, can't be modified simply at will. The problem is rather that according to the Spectatorial Conception

basing relations are never directly determined through the person's explicit evaluation of reasons. States of a sort which are never directly determined by a person's best explicit evaluation of reasons are not attributable to her in the relevant sense.¹⁷ So while the Spectatorial Conception needs basing relations in its account of justification, whatever it calls a "basing relation" will not be the relation which is involved when a person holds a belief for a particular reason.

7. What the Spectatorial Conception misses is that basing relations depend upon a person's *commitments*. Holding a belief for particular reasons is a complex attitude of the person — a matter of taking up a certain normative position — which links the belief and the reasons in a way that opens the possibility of evaluating the person on their basis. It involves, in particular, endorsement of certain considerations as adequate reasons for holding the belief and a commitment to give up the belief (or appropriately hedge one's conviction and seek better reasons) if those reasons prove inadequate. A person with proper background capacities can explicitly take on such commitments in the course of her deliberative and justificatory activity. She can also implicitly take them on through what she says or does, even through forming a belief in an appropriate way in appropriate circumstances. And as with all commitments, basing relations must be capable of being manifested, expressed, or acknowledged in certain characteristic ways in the person's explicit thought, conversation, and other conduct. This requirement is defeasible. One must be able to manifest basing relations unless there is some special circumstance (such as absentmindedness, forgetfulness, temporary amnesia, anxiety, exhaustion, or repression) which hinders one from doing so.

8. Emphasizing the person's commitments is compatible with maintaining a link between basing relations and person-level commonsense psychological explanation. First, if one holds a belief for particular reasons, that fact can explain certain features of one's

thought and conduct. In this regard, basing relations are like other commitment-related states of the person, such as having promised, which play a role in commonsense psychological explanations. Second, explanatory considerations can sometimes fix basing relations even if one has not engaged in any explicit deliberative or justificatory activity. When a mature human being with appropriate background abilities forms a particular belief in an appropriate way in an appropriate setting, that can constitute undertaking the commitments necessary for the establishment of basing relations. Finally, it is arguably constitutive of the basing relation that if one holds a belief for particular reasons, then those reasons figure in an adequate commonsense psychological explanation of one's belief.¹⁸ This has an important consequence. Sincerely declaring one's reasons only establishes basing relations if one's rationality is not impaired. For instance, a rationalizer may sincerely offer reasons in defense of his belief and utilize them in his private reflections, but he does not thereby make them his reasons for believing as he does. This is because they do not explain why he believes as he does. But this is a special case. If one is functioning rationally, then one's consciously adopted commitments *can* explain one's beliefs, and one can directly establish basing relations through one's conscious deliberations or explicit declarations of reasons.¹⁹

9. Here, then, is my proposal. To be in the business of holding beliefs for reasons, one must have the ability to make considerations one's reasons by undertaking certain commitments. Against this background, a proposition *q* is a reason for which one believes *p* just when (1) one believes *q*, endorses its adequacy as a reason for believing *p*, and is committed to responding in appropriate ways if *q* proves to be an inadequate reason, and (2) these endorsements and commitments play appropriate roles in commonsense psychological explanations of one's belief, thinking, and conduct. As a condition on having the relevant commitments, one must be able to express, manifest, or acknowledge the relevant reasons in one's conscious thinking or sincere conversation

provided there are no special conditions preventing exercise of this ability.²⁰

Consequently, if someone is justified in believing as he does in virtue of basing his belief upon good reasons, then, provided nothing of an appropriate sort prevents him from doing so, he must be able to justify his belief by articulating his reasons. This is not yet to say that being justified requires the ability to justify. But it brings us very close.

10. The Spectatorial Conception regards the activity of justifying as epistemologically irrelevant *because justifying is aimed at showing that one possesses a status which is fully independent of this activity*. This is incorrect. The basic point of the activity of requesting and offering reasons in defense of beliefs is to provide a setting within which entitlements to hold beliefs can be challenged, defended, established, and shared. To develop a justification for one's belief is to attempt to establish or secure a positive normative status by basing one's belief upon adequate reasons. Successfully justifying is thus paradigmatically like achieving a checkmate, not like showing or reporting that one has won the game. We can't make sense of *being justified* except in relation to the activity of justifying.

¹ “The Foundationalism-Coherentism Controversy,” in R. Audi, *The Structure of Justification*, Cambridge University Press, 1993, p. 145.

²*Epistemic Justification*, p. 7. Italics in original. Elsewhere he comments, “We must clear out of the way a confusion between one's *being* justified in believing that *p*, and one's *justifying* one's belief that *p*, where the latter involves one's *doing* something to show that *p*, or to show that one's belief was justified, or to exhibit one's justification. The first side of this distinction is a state or condition one is in, not anything one does *or any upshot thereof* (*op cit*, p. 82, final italics added). He adds that one's belief may be justified even if one is *incapable* of justifying it (p. 83, fn. 3).

³ Even Bonjour in his coherentist phase seems to have agreed. On one plausible interpretation, Bonjour held that positive justificatory status accrues to each belief in a system of beliefs in virtue of features of the whole system such as logical consistency and wide-ranging relations of mutual inferability. A given system of beliefs will possess or fail to possess these features quite independently of its possessor's attempts to justify his or her beliefs. Consequently, Bonjour held that though justification requires that there *be* an acceptable inference from other things one believes, and that the acceptability of this inference not be undercut by other things which one believes, one need not have made the inference or its acceptability explicit in an attempt to justify the belief (*The Structure of Empirical Knowledge*, Harvard University Press, 1985, p. 19). In fact, Bonjour allowed that the belief will be justified even if one is incapable of making the justification explicit at all. One might, he wrote, be too stupid (p. 20). In subsequent discussions, Bonjour was not always perfectly consistent on this point. However, it is compatible with his “accessibility internalism” to deny that being justified requires the ability to justify; one can maintain (as Bonjour did) that what makes one's belief justified must be something

which is in principle cognitively accessible through introspection and a priori reasoning *without* also holding that to be justified, one must have the ability to cognitively access it.

⁴ I should stress that my topic is not the familiar debate between “internalism” and “externalism”. In one form, that debate concerns “accessibility internalism,” the view that all the factors in virtue of which one is justified must be the sorts of things that one can find out about through introspection and a priori reasoning. Denying the Spectatorial Conception does not commit one to accepting this view. A second incarnation of the internalism/externalism debate concerns the *location* of the factors which determine whether a belief is justified; the internalist holds, and the externalist denies, that these factors are all internal to the psychology of the believer. On this issue, too, one could both deny the Spectatorial Conception and side with the externalist.

⁵ I don’t claim that the Spectatorial Conception logically or conceptually entails an appeal to basing relations, but rather that an appeal to basing relations is needed in order to work out the basic idea of the Spectatorial Conception in a plausible way. This need has been widely recognized. See, for instance, Roderick Firth, "Are Epistemic Concepts Reducible to Ethical Concepts?" and lecture II of his 1978 Schneck Lectures, and Hilary Kornblith, "Beyond Foundationalism and the Coherence Theory," *Journal of Philosophy* 77 (1980), 597 - 612. Indeed, the need to appeal to basing relations provides a crucial part of a standard argument for "naturalizing" the theory of justification (see Kornblith, *op. cit.*, pp. 601 – 3, P. Kitcher, “The Naturalists Return,” *Philosophical Review*, 101, 1992, pp. 53 – 114, esp. p. 60.)

⁶ Recent work on the basing relation is squarely within the terms of this picture. The dominant view is that basing relations are determined, somehow, by the factors causally responsible for originating and sustaining the belief. For representative statements, see Alston, *Epistemic Justification*, pp. 228-8; Audi, "Psychological Foundationalism," in *The Structure of Justification*, p. 54 , and "Belief, Reason, and Inference," *ibid.*, pp. 233 -

273; Pollock, *Contemporary Theories of Knowledge*, p. 37. See also Swain, "Justification and the Basis of Belief," in G. Pappas (ed.), *Knowledge and Justification*, pp. 25 – 50. For a survey of recent work on the basing relation in this broad tradition, see Keith Korcz, "Recent Work on the Basing Relation," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 34, 1997, pp. 171 – 91. Even theorists who reject this approach have mainly conceived of basing relations as being established independently of the subject's justificatory activity. For instance, Keith Lehrer denies the causal view and, it seems, etiological views as well (*Theory of Knowledge*, Westview Press, 1990, p. 171). Nonetheless, he maintains that the reasons upon which a belief is based are determined by the correct answer to the question, "How do you know that *p*?", and he insists that the answer to this question "need not be anything S would be able to produce" ("How Reasons Give Us Knowledge," *Journal of Philosophy* 68 (1971), p. 312).

⁷ Harman's paper, "Knowledge, Reasons, and Causes" (*Journal of Philosophy* 67 (1970), pp. 841-55), offered arguments against an earlier characterization of basing relations offered by Lehrer, according to which a belief is not based upon particular reasons if the person would not appeal to those reasons to justify his belief ("Knowledge, Truth, and Evidence," 1965, reprinted in L. Galis and M. Roth (eds.), *Knowing: Essays in the Analysis of Knowledge*, University Press of America, 1984, at p. 56). Lehrer's suggestion is the last instance of an earlier tradition which took the person's justificatory activity to be centrally important in establishing basing relations. Lehrer accepted Harman's criticisms ("How Reasons Give us Knowledge," p. 311), and the subsequent discussion has been structured around the view laid out by Harman. (Though Harman rejected the causal view on the grounds that reasons-explanations of people's beliefs are not, strictly speaking, *causal* explanations, he defended an etiological account of the basing relation. Most later writers rejected Harman's restrictive conception of causal explanation while maintaining the purely etiological approach.)

⁸Compare Alston's description of the grounds of a belief as "those features of the input to the formation of the belief that were actually taken account of in the belief formation" (*op. cit.*, p. 231).

⁹"People often believe things for good reasons, which give them knowledge, even though they cannot say what those reasons are. In most cases a person is unable to state his reasons in any sort of detail. At best he can give only the vaguest indication of the reasons that convince him. It is only in rare cases that we can tell a person's reasons from what he can say about them. Indeed, it is doubtful that a person can ever fully identify his reasons" ("Knowledge, Reasons, and Causes," p. 844).

¹⁰Harman writes, "When a person wonders whether a consideration represents one of his reasons, he wonders whether that consideration influenced his conclusion. But that is to wonder whether it has anything to do with why he believes as he does, with the explanation of his belief" (*op cit.*, p. 845).

¹¹I am grateful to [] for this example.

¹²It might be argued that the basing relation does not play this normative role. It seems undeniable, however, that if there is such a thing as the epistemic evaluation of persons, then we must postulate a relation playing the role I describe. And it seems plain that we do engage in epistemic evaluation of people and that we do place normative epistemic demands upon them. (One might doubt that such evaluation is really appropriate or really makes sense, e.g., on the grounds that we lack voluntary control over our beliefs, but that is another issue. As I explain below, I do not think that these forms of evaluation presuppose or require voluntary control.)

¹³ As will become apparent, these two requirements are linked: in order for an account to meet the second requirement, it must meet the first.

It may be helpful to clarify the first requirement slightly. By saying that serious and sincere declaration enables us to directly determine basing relations, I *do not* mean to

be saying that one can establish basing relations at will. Again, the declaration of intention provides a helpful analogy. I cannot now, simply by an act of will, intend to jump out of the window of my third-floor office (C. Ginet, "Contra Reliabilism," *Monist* 68, 1985, pp. 175 – 87, at p. 183). Nor can I seriously and sincerely declare that I intend to do so. Nonetheless, my declarations of intention often directly determine my intentions.

¹⁴ For instance, recall Harman's view. Every belief is the product of a process of unconscious or subconscious reasoning in virtue of which basing relations are in place. Suppose then that one explicitly engages in a course of reasoning in order to arrive at reasons to offer in defense of one's belief. One's explicit reasoning and inference will determine the reasons for which one holds the belief only if that reasoning actually explains why one holds the belief. For it to do so, an additional step is needed: the actual explanatory relations between one's beliefs have to be made to line up with one's explicit reasoning. A similar point applies even when it seems, from the first-person perspective, that one has arrived at a belief through a course of explicit inference and reasoning. Thus, for Harman, whenever one sincerely declares, after explicit reflection upon the available reasons, "*these* are my reasons for holding this belief," one must either be issuing a hypothesis about what explains one's belief or giving oneself a recommendation. One is not, then and there, directly determining what one's reasons are. Harman can, of course, give a role to explicit reasoning and inference, since he can allow that it is a (contingent) psychological fact about creatures like us that when we explicitly infer a conclusion from particular considerations, the corresponding beliefs ordinarily figure in the correct explanation of our belief in the conclusion. On his view, however, the correct scientific-psychological explanation does all the work. Basing relations would still be in place even if our explicit reasoning and inference *never* caused any change in the correct scientific explanation of our beliefs.

¹⁵The argument of this paragraph uses an assumption which is strictly speaking inessential to the Spectatorial Conception, namely, the thought that if stating one's reasons is a matter of offering a report about prior and independent causal or etiological relations between one's beliefs, then statements of one's reasons will have to be construed as *fallible*. In principle, one could combine the Spectatorial Conception with the claim that barring irrationality (such as rationalization or self-deception), we are guaranteed to be right about what our beliefs are based upon whenever we make a judgment about the matter. Robert Audi suggests such a view — a (more or less) causal account of the basing relation plus a *ceteris paribus* infallibility condition — in "Belief, Reason, and Inference," in *op. cit.*, pp. 233 – 273, especially pp. 250 ff. The resulting view seems implausible. Why think that barring irrationality we have infallible access to the correct causal explanations of our beliefs? Surely we don't. (This is not to deny that people *do* speak with authority about their reasons when they are not suffering from irrationality. But this fact cannot really be rendered intelligible within the terms of the Spectatorial Conception.)

¹⁶One can say, without incoherence, "q is my reason for believing that p, but I admit that it is a rotten reason." However, though not incoherent, this is irrational; it marks a failing on the part of the agent. Another way to put the problem with the Spectatorial Conception is to note that if it were correct, such a statement would not mark any failing by *the person*, but only a failing in the causal processes within him which produce or sustain the belief.

¹⁷For an important recent discussion of when it is appropriate to treat a condition as attributable to a person for the purposes of normative evaluation of that person, see T. M. Scanlon, *What We Owe to Each Other*, Harvard University Press, 1998, pp. 17 - 25 and 267 - 290. Scanlon argues, correctly in my view, that normative appraisal of the person

does not require the person's voluntary control over the condition in question, but rather the direct dependence of the condition upon the person's evaluations of reasons.

It might be suggested that it is enough for purposes of attributability and evaluation that basing relations be reliably caused by the conclusions of a person's explicit deliberations. However, reliable causal control isn't sufficient to make a state "mine" in the relevant sense. Suppose, for instance, that I am an excellent hypnotist. As a result, I have a great deal of causal control over the beliefs of my victims. (We might even imagine that I have perfect causal control.) I may justly be held responsible for bringing it about that they have certain beliefs rather than others. That is something which is attributable to me. But their beliefs are not thereby mine: their beliefs are not attributable to me in the relevant sense, since I may not believe what they believe. And one part of the explanation of this fact is that their beliefs are not open to direct determination through my first-personal deliberations about what I should believe. (For an important discussion of the role of first-personal deliberation, particularly in relation to self-knowledge, see Richard Moran, *Authority and Estrangement*, Princeton University Press, 2001.) Similarly, on a version of the Spectatorial Conception which allows me reliable causal control over (so-called) basing relations, I may justly be held responsible for bringing it about that there are certain relations and not others. But that alone does not make the basing relations in question mine in the relevant sense; it is not enough to establish that *I* hold the beliefs for those reasons. Imagine, for instance, that there is a systematic derangement of the causal processes. Suppose that we human beings were such that when we arrived at conclusions through explicit processes of deliberation, this causally affected the relations amongst our beliefs in a systematic and predictable way, but in such a way that certain beliefs *other* than our beliefs in the premises took on the causally sustaining role. In that case, too, we would have reliable causal control over the relations in question. But it would be perverse to hold that the resultant relations fix one's

reasons for holding one's beliefs and to evaluate one on their basis. They are not attributable to one in the right sort of way.

A full discussion of these issues is beyond the scope of this paper. However, the need for such discussion points towards a potentially fruitful interaction between epistemology, philosophy of mind, and ethics (particularly, the literature on "moral responsibility") and reveals one of the many ways in which epistemology is part of the larger philosophical project of understanding the normative aspects of our lives.

¹⁸ It doesn't follow that a correct causal or other psychologically explanatory account of a belief always suffices, merely as such, to establish that the person holds the belief on the basis of given reasons. Explanatory factors will fix basing relations only in appropriate circumstances and against a background of appropriate capacities on the person's part. And this means that we can't hold that a basing relation is established merely in virtue of the fact that a cognitive-psychological process went on which we want to model as reasoning, since these processes can go on even in creatures which lack any ability to make the relevant endorsements and commitments.

Lehrer has offered putative counterexamples to the explanatory requirement (his well-known example of the Gypsy Lawyer in "How Reasons Give Us Knowledge" and the slightly different example of Mr. Raco in *Theory of Knowledge*). In these examples, a person believes something as a result of non-epistemic (e.g., emotional) motivating factors, but also comes to possess what he recognizes to be good epistemic reasons for holding the belief. When queried, he defends his belief by appealing to these reasons. But his acceptance of these reasons plays no role in explaining why he believes as he does; he would hold the belief even if he did not possess these reasons (and had no others), and these reasons do not now move him to believe as he does. Lehrer maintains that this is a case in which someone holds his belief on the basis of reasons which do not explain why he believes as he does. However, this assessment of the example does not

entail that the explanatory requirement is completely wrong, since this assessment is compatible with holding that the explanatory requirement is defeasible. The upshot would be that it is constitutive of the basing relation that the reasons for which one holds a belief provide part of a correct commonsense psychological explanation of why one holds the belief *unless there is some special condition (such as a relevant form of irrationality) which precludes such an explanation*. If the requirement is defeated in this way, the ascription of a basing relation would still be licensed if: (1) the person has sincerely made all the relevant commitments, (2) the person engages in some appropriate forms of thinking and conduct (e.g., appeals to the appropriate considerations when attempting to defend the belief, searches for other evidence when these considerations are called into doubt, etc.), and (3) the person's commitments play an appropriate role in explaining much of what goes on in the person's conversation, conduct, and conscious thinking. (I should note, however, that I am not sure that I really understand Lehrer's examples. The problem concerns the claim that the person's epistemic commitments currently play no explanatory role. If all else remained equal, the person is rational in all relevant respects, and he lost his non-epistemic motivation for the belief, would he continue to hold the belief? If the answer is yes, then I see no reason not to say that the epistemic reasons are part of what explains why he believes as he does now. If the answer is no, however, then I do not see how we can say that he now bases his belief upon them; he is not currently committed to their adequacy as reasons for believing as he does. Either way, the link between basing relations and explanation is maintained.)

¹⁹ Harman appeals to rationalization as support for a purely explanatory or etiological account of the basing relation and against the suggestion that one must be able to express one's reasons (*Thought*, Princeton University Press, 1973, p. 28.). In his example, a person holds a belief for certain reasons which, because of repression, he cannot acknowledge even in his own private deliberations. It appears possible for someone to

get into such a fix. However, this does not tell against my proposals. In such cases, the correct explanation of the person's belief shows that he holds the commitments necessary for making the repressed considerations his reasons for believing as he does. However, because he has repressed the relevant beliefs they are not available to his conscious thought when he reflects upon the grounds for and against the belief in question. Consequently, he cannot acknowledge his commitments in his explicit thinking, nor can he currently change the reasons for which he holds this belief in the usual way. But it remains the case that *if* the repression were lifted, then he would both be able to acknowledge these commitments and modify them in the usual way. Such a case is thus a highly derivative one; it depends upon the person's background ability to explicitly undertake the relevant commitments, his having the relevant commitments in the particular case, and his possession of the psychic structures necessary for repression and self-deception. Consequently, even if (as I am willing to grant) such examples are intelligible, they do not show that explanatory factors alone always suffice to establish basing relations or that basing relations are ordinarily in place even if one can't acknowledge them. Nor is it appropriate to take such a case as central for an account of the basing relation, as Harman in effect does.

²⁰ This is not to say that basing relations are always determined by what one would sincerely say when asked. That claim conflicts with the manifest facts about the explanatory role of basing relations and the ways in which we can lose rational authority over our mental lives.