

# Testimonial Justification: A Paradox

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# Introduction

- ▶ Dualist theories of testimony have a problem.
- ▶ I don't know how to sort it out, so we have a paradox.

# Reductionism

- (R1)** A listener's belief in a speaker's testimony is supported by testimonial justification only if she has reflectively accessible reasons for thinking that the speaker's testimony is true.
- (R2)** Testimonial justification consists in the above reasons.

# Anti-Reductionism

**(A1)** A listener's belief in a speaker's testimony can be supported by testimonial justification even if she lacks reflectively accessible reasons for thinking that the speaker's testimony is true.

**(A2)** Testimonial justification does not consist in the above reasons.

# Dualism

**(D1)** A listener's belief in a speaker's testimony is supported by testimonial justification only if she has reflectively accessible reasons for thinking that the speaker's testimony is true.

**(D2)** Testimonial justification does not consist in the above reasons.

# Why Dualism?

- ▶ It's irrational to believe what a speaker says without reasons for thinking that what she says is true.
- ▶ It's better to be told that  $p$  by a more reliable speaker/someone in a better epistemic position with respect to  $p$ .

# The Question

*A listener's belief in a speaker's testimony is supported by testimonial justification only if her belief is **based on** her reflectively accessible reasons for thinking that the speaker's testimony is true.*

## Answer 1: No (Anti Reductionists)

Suppose I have a variety of good reasons for thinking that my wife is having an affair. I find text messages on her phone that she has been unfaithful, she regularly disappears in the evenings without explanation and someone even claimed to me to be the person that she was having an affair with.

Nonetheless, I maintain my belief that my wife is not having an affair and dismiss all of the evidence as misleading until one day I meet a fortune-teller who tells me that she is in fact having an affair. At this point I come to believe, based on the fortune-teller's testimony, that my wife is having an affair.



# Is My Belief Rational?

- ▶ Surely not!!
- ▶ If a belief is *not* based on a reason, then the reason does not contribute to the rationality of the belief.

# Back to Dualism

- ▶ If I have a reason but do not base my belief on it, then I am rationally no better than someone who has no reasons.
- ▶ Which means that **(D1)** is false – it cannot be that I must merely *have* reasons.

## Answer 2: Yes (Reductionists)

Suppose you tell me that my wife is having an affair. I consider carefully what you say and decide that, since I have known you for many years and have observed (inductively) that you generally say true things and believe that, mindful of the kind of damage that being wrong about this kind of thing would cause, you would not say this kind of thing without overwhelming evidence, I decide to believe what you say.

# Evidence

- ▶ This looks like an ordinary inferential belief:
  - (1) S said that  $p$ .
  - (2) The fact that S said that  $p$  is evidence that  $p$ .

Therefore

- (3)  $p$ .

# Inferential Beliefs

- ▶ Beliefs formed through inference are paradigmatically supported by the beliefs they are inferred from – the premises.
- ▶ This is true whether you think of justification in terms of reliability or evidence.

# Dualism Again

- ▶ Where you base your beliefs on your background reasons, your justification consists in your beliefs.
- ▶ This maintains **(D1)** but at the cost of **(D2)**.

# An Objection

- ▶ This is the wrong account of a listener's reasons.
- ▶ Dualist theories think a listener's reasons merely need to *rationalise* not *justify*.

## Response: So What?

- ▶ I don't see how this matters – the causal (basing) connections are still the same.
- ▶ Any other inference stands or falls with its premises, so what's different here?



## Another Objection

- ▶ There are different types of reasons.
- ▶ Some go through the premise that the speaker is an epistemic authority and only these put you in touch with testimonial justification.

## Response: Aren't You Paying Attention?

- ▶ Same as the previous response.
- ▶ The causal connections between belief and reason are still the same, so why does one type of reason connect us to justifying factors that other reasons paradigmatically do not?

# Rethinking the Epistemology of Testimony

- ▶ **(D1)** and **(D2)** can be motivated independently, but we have a problem with the theory that results from them.
- ▶ We thus get the following paradox:
  - (1) **(D1)** (because of gullibility considerations).
  - (2) **(D2)** (because of authority considerations).
  - (3)  $\neg((\mathbf{D1}) \wedge (\mathbf{D2}))$  (because of the above dilemma).

# The End

Thankyou much :-)