

INTERNALISM AND THE EPISTEMOLOGY OF TESTIMONY

STEPHEN WRIGHT

ABSTRACT. This paper objects to internalist theories of justification from testimony on the grounds that they can't accommodate intuitions about a pair of cases. The pair of cases involved is a testimonial version of the cases involved in the New Evil Demon Argument. The role of New Evil Demon cases in motivating contemporary internalist theories of knowledge and justification notwithstanding, it is argued here that testimonial cases make an intuitive case against internalist theories of justification from testimony.

1. INTRODUCTION

There are various competing accounts of how testimony yields knowledge and justified belief. According to one type of account, considerations about the reliability of the process(es) involved in the listener's belief explain how testimony yields knowledge and justified belief. The idea is that I tell you something and you believe me and you thereby come to know this is because the process of believing me, or some part of it, tends to yield true rather than false outputs.¹

An alternative type of account claims that the explanation (or at least part of it) involves the speaker's justification being transmitted to the listener. This type of account takes it that testimony allows a speaker's justification for what she says to come to support a listener's belief and that this phenomenon can't be explained simply in terms of reliable processes. On this type of view, if I tell you something and you believe me, you can form a belief that is supported by my justification for what I say.²

Lastly, there are accounts that claim that testimony yields knowledge and justified belief through the listener basing her belief in the speaker says on the fact that she said it.³ According to this type of theory, a listener's belief is justified or amounts to knowledge because of the listener's reasons for thinking that the speaker's testimony is true. Importantly, advocates of this view claim that this is a model of all justification from testimony—a full account of testimony as an epistemic source.⁴ They thus deny both transmission and reliability explanations.

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¹See Goldman (1999), Goldberg (2010), Graham (2000a; 2000b; 2006), Lackey (2008) and Sosa (2006).

²See Burge (1993), Coady (1992), Faulkner (2011), Keren (2007), Wright (2014).

³It's important that the required relation is one of basing rather than *inferring*. In this way internalist theories of justification from testimony, like internalist theories of justification in general can (at least in principle) be either *foundationalist* or *nonfoundationalist*. I'm grateful to a reviewer for *Erkenntnis* for pointing this out to me.

⁴See Fricker (1994; 1995; 2006a; 2006b), Fumerton (2006) and Lehrer (2006).

This final type of theory is *internalist* in character. It is similar in spirit to internalist theories of justification in general, which endorse the following:

- (I) An individual's justification for thinking that ϕ is true is just a matter of her reflectively accessible reasons for thinking that ϕ is true.⁵

Applied to testimony, this gives the following:

- (TI) A listener's justification for thinking that ϕ is true is a matter of her reflectively accessible reasons for thinking that the speaker's testimony that ϕ is true.⁶

There are various different accounts of exactly what a listener's reflectively accessible reasons for thinking that a speaker's testimony is true amount to. Some have focused on the idea that a listener's reflectively accessible reasons are the reflectively accessible reasons that she has for thinking that testimony is generally true.⁷ Others think the relevant reasons that a listener has are those that she has for thinking that the *particular instance of testimony in question* is true.⁸

I argue in this paper that endorsements of (TI) can't give a complete account of the way testimony functions as a source of justified belief. Specifically, I argue that they can't give an intuitively adequate account of a pair of cases analogous to those involved in the *New Evil Demon Argument*. Regardless of our intuitions about the original cases, I argue that a testimonial analogue of the cases supports an argument to the conclusion that accounts of testimony as an epistemic source that endorse (TI) cannot be complete.

In §2, I introduce the cases and outline the general argument against the completeness of internalist theories of justification from testimony. I suggest that we should think that a listener confronted by testimony from a more competent speaker is better off in terms of justification in virtue of the speaker's enhanced competence than a listener confronted by a less competent speaker, but also that there is no corresponding difference in terms of reflectively accessible reasons that can support this. In other words, they can be alike internally, but differ with respect to justification. In §3, I provide an argument in support of the first of these claims; that the individuals aren't alike with respect to justification. And in §4, I consider the possibility of arguing that there is an internal difference between the listeners that internalist theories can use to underpin the epistemic difference. Ultimately, however, argue that there is not.

2. THE ARGUMENT

The argument against (TI) that I offer here is a *modus tollens* one. It establishes a consequence of (TI), argues that the consequence is false and it therefore follows that (TI) is false. As a starting point, it's worth noting that the statement of internalism given in (I) has the following consequence:

⁵This restricts the case to *accessibilist* theories and excludes *mentalist* theories. The reasons for this are twofold. The first is that applying mentalism to testimony yields a theory that resembles a transmission theory by another name. See Williamson (2000). The second is that the distinctively internalist intuitions motivate accessibilism over mentalism. See Bergmann (2006).

⁶In both (I) and (TI), the notion of something being *reflectively accessible* to the listener in question involves the listener being aware of it.

⁷See Adler (2002), Lyons (1997) and Shogenji (2006). It's traditional, though controversial, to trace this view back to Hume. Kusch and Lipton (2002) do just this.

⁸See Fricker (1994; 1995; 2006a) Lipton (2007) and Malmgren (2006).

(I*) Individuals that are alike with respect to reflectively accessible reasons are alike with respect to justification.

Earl Conee and Richard Feldman (2004) endorse internalism and accept that (I*) is a consequence of (I). In the same way that (I*) is a consequence of (I), however, the following is a consequence of (TI):

(TI*) Listeners that are alike with respect to reflectively accessible reasons for thinking that a speaker's testimony is true are alike with respect to justification for what the speaker says.

Critics of internalism have often taken aim at (I*). John Gibbons (2006) claims that the internalist commitment to (I*) creates trouble. According to Gibbons, in order to reject internalism 'you just tell some stories. If you can have two people who are the same on the inside, in the relevant sense of that expression, but different on the outside where, intuitively, one of them is justified but the other is not, then internalism about justification is false' (Gibbons, 2006, p. 20).⁹ John Greco (2010) employs a similar argumentative strategy against internalism.

Whether or not critics of (I) that have sought to argue against (I*) have been successful, I argue that (TI) is false. And I do so using exactly the kind of strategy against (TI*) that Gibbons identifies as a way of arguing against (I*). The idea is to tell a story in which two people are the same inside, different outside and different with respect to justification. I propose to do this by comparing two cases. The first is the following:

DOCTOR: One day Eric discovers a rash on his arm and goes to visit his doctor, Ernie. Eric has various reflectively accessible good reasons for thinking Ernie is a competent doctor and a sincere testifier. These reasons consist in both inductive evidence of Ernie previously having correctly diagnosed Eric's dermatological conditions in the past as well as evidence of the general competency of doctors and the accuracy of what they say. Ernie correctly tells Eric that the rash on his arm means he has condition α . Ernie correctly tells Eric that he has condition α because, whilst the rash on Eric's arm looks similar to a rash associated with condition β , Ernie can tell that the rash on Eric's arm is the one associated with α rather than the one associated with condition β .

Compare this with the following:

DOCTOR*: One day Eric* discovers a rash on his arm and goes to visit his doctor, Ernie*. Eric* has just as many and varied reflectively accessible good reasons for thinking Ernie* is a competent doctor and a sincere testifier as Eric (in DOCTOR) has for thinking Ernie is a competent doctor and a sincere testifier. Ernie* tells Eric* that the rash on his arm means that he has condition α . Like Ernie's diagnosis of Eric, Ernie*'s diagnosis of Eric* is correct. Unlike Ernie, however, Ernie* is unable to distinguish between the rash associated with condition α and the rash associated with condition β . This is because Ernie* has a more limited experience and range of

⁹Gibbons then goes on to try and do exactly this. Anthony Brueckner (2011) argues that he doesn't succeed.

expertise than Ernie and as a result is unaware of condition β and its symptoms.

The argument against internalist theories goes as follows:

- (1) Eric and Eric* are not alike with respect to justification for their beliefs that they have condition α .
- (2) Eric and Eric* are alike with respect to reflectively accessible reasons for thinking that they have condition α .

Of course, since (TI*) holds that this isn't possible, it follows from (1) and (2) that:

- (3) (TI*) is false.

And, as observed above, since (TI*) is a consequence of (TI), it follows from (3) that:

- (4) (TI) is false.

I think that both (1) and (2) are highly intuitive. If you do too, then you can probably stop reading at this point. If you think that (1) is intuitive, but (2) isn't, then you can skip §3 and go straight to §4, where I'll make a case for (2). If you don't find (1) intuitive but think that (2) is intuitive, then you probably shouldn't skip §3, where I'll make a case for (1) but can skip §4 when the time comes. To make the point explicit, the argument here does involve an appeal to intuitions. I'll further acknowledge the significance of this in §3, but the idea is that there are an important set of intuitions here that need to be taken seriously. And the more we take them seriously, the less incentivised we are to give an internalist account of justification from testimony.

The DOCTOR and DOCTOR* cases are similar to a pair of cases employed by Sanford Goldberg (2007) in arguing against *individualist* theories of testimony. In the first case, Fred tells Wilma that Professor Swinegarten was at the stone-cutters' conference with a view to sharing what he knows with her. By contrast, in the second case, Fred* tells Wilma* that Professor Swinegarten was at the stone-cutters' conference in order to get Wilma* to form a negative impression of Professor Swinegarten. Fred* has no idea whether or not Professor Swinegarten was actually at the conference (Goldberg, 2007, pp. 138-139).

The individualist account of justification from testimony holds that it is facts to do with the listener that confer justification on her belief. An individualist account might be set up in either internalist or externalist terms, depending on whether or not one thinks that the listener needs to be aware of the facts about her that confer her justification. Directing the type of case that I've developed here against internalist theories is thus different to directing them at individualist theories, as Goldberg does.

Whilst the cases given by Goldberg are obviously similar to the DOCTOR and DOCTOR* cases, they are different in at least one important respect. In the case of DOCTOR*, Ernie* does have *some* justification for thinking that Eric* had condition α and seeks to inform Eric* about this. In the case of Fred* and Wilma*, it's explicit that Fred has *no idea* about whether or not Professor Swinegarten was actually at the conference and isn't particularly seeking to be informative to Wilma*. This difference, I'll argue in §4, means that a line of response open to the internalist in characterising Goldberg's cases isn't available as a characterisation of the DOCTOR and DOCTOR* cases.

3. THE EPISTEMIC DIFFERENCE

I suspect that the claim that Eric and Eric* aren't alike with respect to justification is likely to be the more controversial of the two claims.¹⁰ In particular, this is because, as I mentioned in §2, the appeal of the claim is primarily supposed to be intuitive, rather than the product of an independent theoretical argument. At the end of this section, I'll say more about the use of intuitions in this domain, but the main argument that I'm going to offer in support of the claim that Eric and Eric* aren't alike with respect to justification concerns revisability. The idea is that, by reflecting on what would happen if Eric and Eric* were each made aware of the full facts of their own situation and the other's, it becomes intuitive to Eric and Eric* that they aren't alike with respect to justification.¹¹ Furthermore, it becomes intuitive that not only are they not alike with respect to justification, but they *never were* alike with respect to justification.

Suppose, then, that the full facts of both DOCTOR and DOCTOR* are made available to both Eric and Eric*. That is to say, Eric finds out that Ernie can distinguish between condition α and condition β but Ernie*, who told Eric* cannot. And in the same way, Eric* comes to find out that Ernie* cannot distinguish between condition α and condition β but that Ernie, who told Eric, can. It seems as though the natural thing to think, once Eric and Eric* have become aware of these facts, is that Eric's belief that he has condition α enjoys a degree of justification that Eric*'s corresponding belief that he has condition α does not.

This, by itself, poses no problem for internalist theories. Internalist theories are perfectly capable of explaining why both Eric and Eric* should think that Eric's belief is justified to a degree that Eric*'s is not when they find out the full facts of the case. This is because, once the facts of the case are made manifest to them, Eric and Eric* have reflectively accessible reasons for thinking that Eric's belief enjoys a degree of justification that Eric*'s does not. Both of them have reflectively accessible reasons for thinking that Ernie, who diagnosed Eric, has an epistemic competence relevant to the diagnosis that Ernie*, who diagnosed Eric* lacks. So internalist theories can say that it's this difference in reflectively accessible reasons that underpins the idea that, once the facts of the case have been revealed to Eric and Eric*, it's intuitive that Eric has a degree of justification for thinking that he has condition α that Eric* doesn't have for thinking that he has condition α .

What internalists aren't able to explain, however, is the idea that, when the facts of the case are made apparent to Eric and Eric*, they realise that they never were alike with respect to justification in the first place. Internalists can make good sense of the idea that Eric and Eric* aren't alike with respect to justification *once they find out about the facts of the case*. This is because finding out the facts of the case means that they aren't alike with respect to reflectively accessible reasons. But they can't hold that what happens when the facts are made manifest to Eric and Eric* is that *they realise that they were never actually alike in the first place*. Before they find out the

¹⁰Of course, an internalist theory might attempt to claim that the listeners *are* alike with respect to justification but aren't alike with some other epistemic property relevant to, say knowledge. This still amounts to a serious concession from the internalist, however, since it devalues justification, as internalists conceive of it, detaching it from knowledge.

¹¹By "the full facts of the situation" here, I mean the full facts about the speakers and their diagnostic competences. The fact that each of them actually has condition \exists is excluded from "the full facts" for obvious reasons.

details of the case, Eric and Eric* are supposed (by the internalist) to be similar with respect to justification in virtue of being similar with respect to reflectively accessible reasons. It's stipulated in the cases that Eric and Eric* have equally many and varied good reasons for thinking that what their doctors say is true. This is crucial to the internalist characterisation of the case that Eric and Eric* go from being alike with respect to justification to different with respect to justification, when they find out the details of the case.

This, however, seems highly unintuitive. It doesn't seem correct to think that, when Eric and Eric* find out the facts of the matter, their epistemic status with respect to their beliefs *changes*. It seems far more intuitive to say that Eric and Eric* *find out about* their justificatory statuses when they find out about the details of the case. This is brought out by considering an alternative case. The following passage from Alvin Goldman is a familiar one:

Henry is driving in the country-side with his son. For the boy's edification Henry identifies various objects on the landscape as they come into view. "That's a cow," says Henry, "That's a tractor," "That's a silo," "That's a barn," etc. Henry has no doubt about the identity of these objects; in particular, he has no doubt that the last-mentioned object is a barn, which indeed it is. Each of the identified objects has features characteristic of its type. Moreover, each object is fully in view, Henry has excellent eyesight, and he has enough time to look at them reasonably carefully, since there is little traffic to distract him (Goldman, 1976, p. 772).

Goldman observes that, intuitively, most of us would want to say that, given the truth of his beliefs, Henry knows that he's looking at a cow, a tractor, a silo and a barn. At least, we would until we find out some crucial information:

[U]nknown to Henry, the district he has just entered is full of papier-maché facsimiles of barns. These facsimiles look from the road exactly like barns, but are really just facades, without back walls or interiors, quite incapable of being used as barns. They are so cleverly constructed that travelers invariably mistake them for barns. Having just entered the district, Henry has not encountered any facsimiles; the object he sees is a genuine barn. But if the object on that site were a facsimile, Henry would mistake it for a barn (Goldman, 1976, p. 773).

When we find this out, Goldman correctly observes, we're more reluctant to say Henry knows that he's looking at a barn. Once we realise how easily he might have been deceived—it seems to be a matter of mere luck that he happened to see a genuine barn rather than a facsimile—we take it that Henry doesn't know that he's looking at a barn. In the same way that we don't want to say that Henry's status with respect to knowledge changes when the full facts of the situation come into view, I don't think that we should say that Eric and Eric*'s statuses with respect to justification change when the facts of their situation come into view. Justification is that which puts someone in a position to know things. And the idea is that, upon finding out the facts of his situation, Henry should think that he was never in a position to know that there was a barn in the first place, not that he used to be in a position to know but now isn't.

Importantly, the same goes for Henry's son (remembering that Henry, in this case, is a *testifier*). It seems natural to think that, if Henry's son found out about the facsimile and that his father was unable to tell the difference between the barn and the facsimiles, he should also come to think that he in fact was never in a position to know that he was looking at a barn, rather than that he used to be but isn't. In this case, what is recognised is a feature of the individual's justification—that it isn't sufficient for knowledge, rather than that he has a complete lack of it—but this is enough to indicate that facts about justification are *revealed* rather than *altered* by finding out the full facts of the situation. And the same is true in the case of Eric and Eric*. Finding out the facts about their situation reveals rather than alters the epistemic facts about them. It isn't the case that they *become* unequal with respect to justification. Rather, they find out that they *always were* unequal with respect to justification.

These observations, I think, generate a case supporting an externalist reading of the situation in DOCTOR and DOCTOR*. Unlike an internalist reading, according to which Eric and Eric* are alike with respect to justification until they find out the details of their cases and then they become unequal, an externalist interpretation of DOCTOR and DOCTOR* takes it that Eric and Eric* aren't alike with respect to justification before they find out about the details of the cases at which point they find this out. The result is that an externalist account of the cases can make sense of the thought that Eric and Eric* finding out about the details of the case reveals (to them) rather than alters the epistemic facts about their situation. So there's reason for thinking that an externalist account of DOCTOR and DOCTOR*, according to which there is an epistemic difference between Eric and Eric* is correct.

In spite of this, the externalist account is likely to be controversial. The DOCTOR and DOCTOR* cases resemble the cases involved in the New Evil Demon Argument, as developed by Keith Lehrer and Stewart Cohen (1983). And the cases involved in the New Evil Demon Argument are supposed to motivate *internalist* theories of knowledge and justification, by drawing out the intuition that the individuals involved in the cases are alike in epistemic terms. So using the DOCTOR and DOCTOR* cases to make an intuitive case against an internalist conception of justification from testimony is likely to be controversial at best.

The cases that motivate the New Evil Demon Argument involve an individual who forms perceptual beliefs through reliable processes in normal conditions and a brain in a vat, who forms beliefs with the same propositional content on the basis of subjectively indistinguishable hallucinations. The idea is that, by externalist lights, everything goes well for the individual forming perceptual beliefs, since the processes he employs are reliable and he generally forms true beliefs. By contrast, everything goes badly for the brain in a vat, which forms (mainly) false beliefs based on unreliable processes.¹²

Intuitively, Lehrer and Cohen suggest, we should think that the beliefs the brain in the vat forms and the beliefs that the individual employing reliable processes forms are alike with respect to justification. This is encapsulated in the claim that:

Justification is a normative concept. It is an evaluation of how well one has pursued one's epistemic goals. Consequently, if we have

¹²The brain will presumably form some true beliefs, such as the belief that Paris is the capital of France, that gold has the atomic number 79 and that whales are mammals. Importantly, however, these are ones that are not formed through reliable perceptual processes.

reason to believe that perception, for example, is a reliable process, then the mere fact that it turns out not to be reliable, because of some improbable contingency, does not obliterate our justification for perceptual belief (Lehrer and Cohen, 1983, p. 193).

Now, there might be ways of affirming the externalist intuitions that I've tried to extract from the DOCTOR and DOCTOR* cases whilst simultaneously affirming the intuitions that Lehrer and Cohen seek to extract from the cases in the New Evil Demon Argument, thus yielding an internalist account of perceptual justification and an externalist account of justification from testimony. But I think that there's a case for denying the claim that the perceiving individual and the brain in the vat are alike with respect to justification.¹³ The idea motivating the internalist account is that justification is a normative concept, as Lehrer and Cohen claim. This, however, is neutral between internalist and externalist theories of justification. To see this, consider Ernest Sosa's claim that:

Belief is a kind of performance, which attains one level of success if it is true (or accurate), a second level if it is competent (or adroit), and a third if its truth manifests the believer's competence (ie., if it is apt) (Sosa, 2010, p. 1).

This is at the heart of Sosa's theory of knowledge. But Sosa's theory of knowledge isn't internalist. It denies the claim that justification is simply a matter of reflectively accessible reasons, as stated in (I). So the thought that justification is a normative concept doesn't by itself mean that internalism is correct. Sosa's theory holds that justification is a normative concept to do with how one has pursued one's epistemic goals, but also holds that this is to be evaluated *objectively* rather than from the subject's own perspective.

This, of course, prompts the question of what someone's epistemic goals are. And that is a question that is, to a large extent, beyond the scope of the paper. However, for the purposes of this paper, I am taking it that getting at the truth in some (objectively) non-accidental way is at least *part* (even if not all) of the aim of distinctively epistemic inquiry. This, I think, should be neutral between defenders and critics of internalism.

With this in view, the question then becomes whether or not we should think that the correct way to judge how well someone has pursued her epistemic goals is from her perspective, or from an objective perspective. And I think that the argument from the considerations about what happens if Eric and Eric* find out the facts about their cases makes an argument against the idea that the correct perspective is the perspective of the believing subject. The idea is that, since it's intuitive that Eric and Eric* find out that they were never alike in the first place with respect to justification for their beliefs, we don't think that Eric and Eric*'s justificatory statuses should be evaluated from their own subjective perspectives. Their justificatory statuses don't

¹³This view is also shared by Pritchard (2012) and Sutton (2005; 2007), albeit in different ways. Sutton holds that only knowledge can provide justification for beliefs because justification just is knowledge. This claim is also shared by Unger (1975) and Williamson (2000). The idea is that since brains in vats don't have knowledge, nor do they have justification. Pritchard's reasons for rejecting the internalist characterisations in the New Evil Demon cases come primarily from the idea that justification needs to be truth-conducive. Something like this intuition is what motivates the claim here, but Pritchard ultimately puts it to work in motivating the epistemological disjunctivist theory, which I'm not arguing for in the case of testimony here.

change with their changing perspectives. Rather, we think that their justificatory statuses should be evaluated objectively.

This is the case for thinking that Eric and Eric* aren't alike with respect to justification for their beliefs, as claimed in (1). The idea is that, if Eric and Eric* find out about the difference in competence between Ernie and Ernie*, they'll think that they aren't alike with respect to justification. And because they are just finding out facts about the epistemic situation, they haven't become dissimilar with respect to justification. Rather, they find out that they were different all along.

I've been arguing that there's a difference between Eric and Eric* in terms of justification, which shows that there has to be more to justification from testimony than internalist theories can allow. Of course, it might well be that, for all that I've said here, someone antecedently committed to an internalist theory might just deny this. But the point here isn't to try and convince round internalist theorists, so much as it's to make a case against opting for an internalist theory in the first place—an altogether more modest epistemic aim.

Something similar often gets said on behalf of anti-sceptical strategies. In this spirit, Timothy Williamson states that:

If a refutation of scepticism is supposed to reason one out of the hole, then scepticism is irrefutable. The most to be hoped for is something which will prevent the sceptic (who may be oneself) from reasoning one into the hole in the first place (Williamson, 2000, p. 27).

As with scepticism, so (I claim) with internalism. The claim here is that considering the justificatory statuses of Eric and Eric* gives us a reason to avoid opting for an internalist theory of justification from testimony in the first place. Someone who already has an antecedent commitment to internalism may well be unconvinced that internalism is false, but there's a sense in which that's beside the point. The argument here isn't that internalism is *incoherent*, so an internal critique of internalism isn't possible. The argument is that there's an intuition that's at odds with internalist accounts of justification from testimony and that ought to be taken seriously by everyone, internalist or otherwise.

There is one final point to make on the use of intuitions in this domain. Whilst the argument in this paper does importantly depend on intuitions, it's also worth noting that the main arguments for internalism are also intuitive arguments. Internalist theories of justification from testimony are primarily motivated by considering the issue of *gullibility*.¹⁴ The idea is that a listener who believes a speaker's testimony without reasons for doing so exhibits an irrationality that is incompatible with the formation of a justified belief. And this is best explained by an internalist account of justification from testimony. But arguments concerning gullibility also make an essential appeal to intuitions. In the same way that internalism isn't internally incoherent, nor is externalism.

¹⁴See Fricker (1994; 1995). Arguments from gullibility are analogous to *clairvoyant* arguments for internalist theories of justification in general. I say "analogous" rather than identical to, because those that defend internalist theories of testimony often think that the intuitions are particularly strong when applied to testimony.

This observation is important for two reasons. Firstly, it means that considering the DOCTOR and DOCTOR* cases shows that intuitions in the epistemology of testimony don't all go the internalist's way. This gives a significance to the counterargument here. The idea is that there are important considerations on the externalist side of the debate. Secondly, it indicates that marshalling intuitive considerations in this domain *is* the correct way to go. Internalist theories are motivated by intuition-backed observations, so it seems legitimate to use competing intuition-backed observations to counterbalance these. There may thus be limitations on what can be established by using intuitions, but that in itself doesn't mean that there isn't something important to be observed here.

4. THE INTERNAL SIMILARITY

As well as being epistemically different, it's crucial to the argument against internalist theories that Eric and Eric* are alike internally or, equivalently, with respect to reflectively accessible reasons, as stated in (2). Unlike the case for (1), where there was a requirement on the critic of internalism to argue that Eric and Eric* aren't alike in terms of justification, I think that the requirement is this time with the internalist to provide some sort of explanation of why (2) is false. On the face of it, it seems as though (2) can be established by stipulation. In describing the cases, I claimed that Eric's reasons for thinking that Ernie's testimony is true consist in some general inductive evidence about doctors as well as some equivalent particular evidence about Ernie's competence specifically. It's not immediately obvious why Eric*'s reflectively accessible reasons for thinking that Ernie*'s testimony is true shouldn't consist in an equivalent set of general inductive observations about doctors and an equivalent body of specific evidence about Ernie* in particular. So it's up to internalist theories to indicate how an internal difference might be found.

Nonetheless, if (2) can't be established, then the argument against internalist theories fails. If internalist theories have an available way of resisting (2), then they can claim that the epistemic difference stated in (1) is underpinned by an internal difference. And this is no problem at all for the internalist statement of testimony given in (TI). Internally different listeners can, for all (TI) says, differ with respect to justification. I therefore consider two internalist strategies for resisting (2). The first seeks to deny (2) by positing an internal difference in terms of false beliefs between Eric and Eric*. The second seeks to deny (2) by positing an internal difference in terms of Eric*'s evidence being misleading where Eric's isn't. I argue that neither is ultimately successful.

The first strategy for identifying a difference with respect to reflective reasons concerns the idea of false beliefs. If it's accepted that Eric's justification for thinking that he has condition α outstrips Eric*'s justification for his corresponding belief, then this is to be explained in terms of the idea that Eric* has a false belief about Ernie* that Eric doesn't have about Ernie. This means that, contrary to (2), Eric and Eric* aren't alike internally—with respect to reflectively accessible reasons. Eric*'s false belief is damaging to his justification. Obviously, the success or otherwise of this strategy is determined by the plausibility of an internalist account of the false belief in question. If the internalist strategy is to claim that Eric* has a false belief that Eric lacks, then we are owed an account of what this false belief is. I argue that there's no good account to be given and the false belief strategy fails as a result.

One might wonder why a difference in the truth values of beliefs might be the kind of thing that an internalist theory can appeal to, given that true beliefs are phenomenologically indistinguishable from false ones. Ultimately, I do think that this fact prevents internalist theories appealing to false beliefs. But there is a *prima facie* reason for thinking that internalist theories might be able to use the difference between beliefs, in that internalist theories think that justification is a matter of what an individual is aware of and an individual's beliefs are, at least, the kind of thing that she is aware of. Since I also believe that, even if the false beliefs are allowed to count as internal, this still doesn't provide the kind of difference that internalist theories can appeal to, I propose to allow a difference in terms of the truth values of the beliefs to count as internal for the purposes of this discussion.

An obvious first candidate for the false belief is that Ernie* can distinguish between condition α and condition β . If Eric* believes this about Ernie*, then his belief is clearly false. And if Eric believes that Ernie can distinguish between condition α and condition β , then his belief is true. So this makes an obvious initial candidate for the false belief that Eric* might have about Ernie* that Eric lacks about Ernie.

The trouble with this explanation is that the case can be set up in a way that it's just implausible to think that Eric and Eric* believe this about Ernie and Ernie* respectively. Suppose that condition β is an extremely complex condition. Indeed it's so complex that neither Eric, nor Eric* (who haven't undergone medical training) are even aware of it. It's complexity notwithstanding, it's actually a relatively common condition. Since neither Eric nor Eric* have heard of condition β , it's just implausible to think that Eric and Eric* believe that Ernie and Ernie* respectively are able to distinguish between condition α and condition β . The beliefs that Eric and Eric* have about their doctors just aren't sophisticated enough to make sense of being able to distinguish specifically between condition α and condition β .

Furthermore, this translates into our everyday life. It seems extremely implausible to think that, when we form beliefs based on testimony, we do so with specific beliefs about what speakers are able to distinguish between in every case. For one thing, as with DOCTOR and DOCTOR* there might be possibilities that we've never even heard of. So all that's needed is a case in which the listeners have a suitably unsophisticated knowledge of the relevant subject area to show that they can't plausibly have the relevant false belief about the speaker's ability to distinguish between cases in which what she says is true and cases in which a similar but different alternative is true. It's important to internalist theories that the account they give can be generalised. This means that the claim that Eric truly believes that Ernie can distinguish between condition α and condition β , where Eric* falsely believes that Ernie* can distinguish between condition α and condition β can't yield an adequate account of the internal difference that internalist theories require.

A second option is available, though. One might think that the false belief concerns the general competence of the doctors, rather than the specific range of conditions that they are able to distinguish between. So rather than believing that Ernie can distinguish between condition α and condition β , Eric believes merely that Ernie is competent at diagnosing condition α and Eric* believes merely that Ernie* is competent at diagnosing condition α .¹⁵

¹⁵By 'competent at diagnosing' in this context I mean someone who has the appropriate capabilities to pass the relevant examinations for admission into the medical profession. This idea is that condition β is just too complicated for this.

It's also worth noting that this candidate belief succeeds where the first one failed. The belief that Ernie or Ernie* is competent at diagnosing condition α is general enough to be a plausible account of Eric and Eric*'s beliefs. We might generally think that people are competent regarding what they say. So the idea that Eric* has a false belief that Eric doesn't might come from the idea that Eric* falsely believes that Ernie* is competent at diagnosing condition α , where Eric's belief that Ernie is competent at diagnosing condition α is true.

The trouble is, where this candidate belief succeeds where the first failed, it also fails where the first succeeded. Obviously, there are two conditions that a candidate false belief needs to meet. The first is that it needs to be something that the listener could plausibly believe. The second is that it has to be false. Whilst the belief that Eric* was capable of distinguishing between condition α and condition β was too specific to be included in a plausible account of Eric*'s beliefs, it was at least false. The trouble with the belief that Ernie* is competent in diagnosing condition α is that the case can be set up in such a way that it's true.

It might, for all the case says, be true that Ernie* is really quite competent at diagnosing condition α . For all the case says, it might be that Ernie* is capable of distinguishing between a patient with condition α and a patient with condition γ , between a patient with condition α and a patient with condition δ , between a patient with condition α and a patient with condition ε and between a patient with condition α and a patient with condition ζ . And all of these discriminatory capacities might make it the case that Ernie is in fact extremely competent at diagnosing condition α . It's just that, these other capacities and his competence notwithstanding, he can't distinguish between a patient with condition α and a patient with condition β .

This is where I think that the DOCTOR and DOCTOR* cases present a challenge to the internalist theory that isn't presented by the cases from Goldberg outlined in §2. In the cases that Goldberg presents, I think it's quite plausible that Wilma and Wilma* both believe that Fred and Fred* are speaking sincerely and competently. But, of course, this is true of Fred and false in the case of Fred*. The internalist might thus seek to characterise Goldberg's cases in terms of Wilma* thus having a false belief that Wilma lacks. This strategy isn't so obviously available in the DOCTOR and DOCTOR* cases. We can make sense of Ernie* as competent where we can't with Fred*.

There is, however, a third option available. Suppose that Eric believes that *Ernie is able to tell the difference between the condition he diagnoses me as having and other conditions that exhibit superficially similar symptoms* and Eric* has the corresponding belief about Ernie*. One might think that this avoids both of the two previous problems. On the one hand, it seems to be true of Ernie and false about Ernie*, since Ernie but not Ernie* can distinguish between condition α and condition β . On the other hand, it seems to be sufficiently general that it might plausibly be something that Eric and Eric* actually believe. So there's a *prima facie* case for thinking that this account of the false belief that Eric has that Eric* lacks might avoid the problems of both of the previous two accounts.

Ultimately, however, I think that this merely obscures the problem rather than resolving it. To see this, note first that there has to be some fact of the matter about whether or not Eric*'s belief that *Ernie* is able to tell the difference between the condition he diagnoses me as having and other conditions that exhibit superficially similar symptoms*

includes the claim that Ernie* is able to distinguish between condition α and condition β . Either it does or it doesn't. If it does, then we have the problem with the first strategy again—it can be stipulated unproblematically that this isn't in Eric*'s beliefs. If it doesn't, then we have the problem with the second strategy again—the case can be set up such that it's just not false about Ernie*.

The strategy of positing an internal difference between Eric and Eric* in the form of a false belief is thus problematic. More accurately, it faces a dilemma. On the one hand, the belief in question has to be relatively *specific*. Otherwise, it doesn't actually come out true in Eric's case but false in Eric*'s. But on the other hand, the belief in question has to be relatively *general*. Otherwise, it can simply be stipulated that it isn't something that Eric and Eric* actually believe. These considerations mean that, whilst a difference in terms of false beliefs might be the kind of thing that internalist theories defending (TI) might want to appeal to, there are reasons for thinking that this strategy ultimately won't succeed.

It's also worth reiterating the shape of the dialectic here. All that's required for the argument against internalist theories here is that there is some psychologically plausible account of the beliefs that Eric and Eric* have, such that Eric and Eric* are alike with respect to the truth or falsity of their beliefs. Insofar as an internalist theory wants to maintain that there is a genuine epistemic difference between them, it must maintain that this is *always* underpinned by a corresponding internal difference. Thus, while I think that there are a number of plausible accounts of what Eric and Eric* believe that are problematic for internalist theories and that no account can be given of Eric and Eric*'s beliefs such that Eric's belief is true, Eric*'s is false and the account is plausible to underpin an internalist explanation of all possible types of the DOCTOR and DOCTOR* cases, this isn't logically required for the argument here.¹⁶ All that's *logically* required is that there is one such account.

Alternatively, an internalist rejection of the claim that Eric and Eric* are alike with respect to reflectively accessible reasons, as stated in (2) might seek to argue that Eric's reflectively accessible reasons are misleading, where Eric*'s evidence isn't. Again, the idea is that this means that there's a difference with regard to reflectively accessible reasons that underpins the intuitive difference with respect to justification.

Specifically, the idea is that Eric's reflectively accessible reasons indicate that Ernie is capable of distinguishing between condition α and condition β . Likewise, Eric*'s reflectively accessible reasons indicate that Ernie* is capable of distinguishing between condition α and condition β . Their reflectively accessible reasons indicate this whether or not Eric and Eric* are actually aware of the existence of condition β . So the idea is that Eric*'s reflectively accessible reasons are misleading in a way that Eric's aren't exactly because Ernie is capable of distinguishing between condition α and condition β and Ernie* isn't.

On the face of it, this looks like a promising strategy. It identifies a difference in terms of the reflectively accessible reasons accessible to Eric and Eric* and the difference is exactly sensitive to the different capabilities of Ernie and Ernie*. Since it's the difference between Ernie and Ernie* that generates the intuition that Eric and Eric* aren't alike with respect to justification, this seems like an extremely promising strategy.

¹⁶I'm grateful to Marthe Kerkwijk for pointing this out to me.

Nonetheless, whilst it looks promising, this strategy is ultimately problematic. Contrary to initial appearances, appealing to this kind of difference in Eric and Eric*'s reflectively accessible reasons isn't a strategy that's available to internalist theories. The problem with this strategy can be put in terms of the following slogan: *the reasons are reflectively accessible, but the difference between them isn't*. Internalist theories think that the factors relevant to a listener's justification are those that she has reflective access to. This claim is encapsulated in (I) and (II). This means that, for the fact that Eric*'s reflective reasons are misleading where Eric's aren't to be the relevant difference, it must be the case that the fact of this difference is reflectively accessible to Eric and Eric*. And it's just implausible to think that the fact that Eric*'s reflective reasons are misleading and Eric's aren't is something that Eric and Eric* have reflective access to.¹⁷ So it can't be the relevant difference.¹⁸

This point can be made more forcefully. Suppose, for *reductio* that the fact that Eric*'s reflective reasons are misleading and Eric's are not is reflectively accessible. This means that it's reflectively accessible to Eric that his reflective reasons aren't misleading. If this is true, then, assuming that he is capable of making competent deductions, Eric can tell by reflecting on his reflectively accessible reasons that Ernie is capable of distinguishing between condition α and condition β . Eric can tell by reflection that his reasons aren't misleading. He also knows that if they aren't misleading, then Ernie is capable of distinguishing between condition α and condition β . So there's a justificatory route open to Eric from considering his reflectively accessible reasons to the conclusion that Ernie is capable of distinguishing between condition α and condition β .

Likewise, Eric* can apparently discover, simply by considering his reflectively accessible reasons, that Ernie* can't distinguish between condition α and condition β . If Eric* has reflective access to the fact that his reflectively accessible reasons are misleading and is aware that if his reasons are misleading, then Ernie* can't distinguish between condition α and condition β , then Eric* can establish that Ernie* can't distinguish between condition α and condition β in the same way that Eric can establish that Ernie can.

On the face of it, this conclusion is intolerable. Firstly, it seems intolerable because it generates a McKinsey-style absurdity, according to which people can find out things about the external world (in this case about the competences of Ernie and Ernie*) just by reflection (in this case, Eric and Eric* reflecting on their reasons).¹⁹ This provides one reason for rejecting an internalist strategy of claiming that Eric and Eric* aren't alike with respect to reflectively accessible reasons.

Even if this objection can be met, though, there's another reason for thinking that defenders of internalist theories are committed to thinking that there isn't an internal difference between Eric and Eric*. It comes from reconsidering the cases in the New Evil Demon Argument. Internalist theories sought to claim, in the cases in the New Evil Demon Argument that the perceiving subject and the envatted brain were alike internally. This was supposed to connect up with a claim that they're also

¹⁷Faulkner (2011) argues this point against McDowell (1994).

¹⁸Note that this doesn't involve withdrawing the claim that the *falsity* of a listener's belief might be internal.

¹⁹See McKinsey (1991). Pritchard (2012) argues that something similar can be argued away in the case of visual perception, but it's far from clear that any analogous strategy is available in the case of testimony.

alike epistemically, as observed in §2. But it's hard to see how the perceiver and the brain in the vat might be alike with respect to reflectively accessible reasons, if Eric and Eric* aren't.

Ultimately, the strategy of trying to argue for a difference with respect to reflectively accessible reasons between Eric and Eric* fails. Whilst it's true that Eric*'s reflectively accessible reasons are misleading in that they indicate that Ernie* can distinguish between condition α and condition β and this isn't true of Eric's reflectively accessible reasons, this distinction isn't the kind of thing that internalist theories can appeal to. This attempt at motivating a difference concerning reflectively accessible reasons ultimately fares no better than the attempt involving false beliefs.

5. CONCLUSION

I began by outlining three distinct types of explanation of how testimony yields knowledge and justified belief. I've argued elsewhere that an explanation in terms of reliability can't provide a complete account of the way that testimony yields knowledge and justified belief.²⁰ And the argument here is that an internalist explanation, which takes knowledge and justification from testimony to be a matter of a listener basing her belief on her reflectively accessible reasons, equally can't provide a complete explanation of the way that testimony yields knowledge and justified belief.

This isn't to say that there's no place in the epistemology of testimony for the kind of explanation that internalist theories give. I think that such a claim is obviously false. It's certainly true that the internalist explanation of how testimony yields knowledge and justified belief accurately describes one way that testimony can yield knowledge and justified belief. But it doesn't describe the only way.

It's intuitive that the internalist account is incomplete, because it's intuitive that, at least sometimes, facts about the epistemic competence of the speaker matter to a listener's justification. This intuition is brought out by considering the DOCTOR and DOCTOR* cases. It's intuitive that the fact that Ernie has an epistemic competence that Ernie* lacks makes Eric better off with respect to justification than Eric*. And this kind of feature has no place in an internalist theory of testimony. There's also no suitable difference with respect to reflectively accessible reasons that directly derives from this difference. This means that internalist accounts of how testimony yields knowledge and justified belief are importantly incomplete.

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²⁰See Wright (2014).

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