

The Authority Rule of Assertion

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Knowledge

- There are rules about what we can and can't assert.
- A common view about assertion is that it is governed by a rule stating that one must: assert that p only if one knows that p .
- This is the *knowledge rule*.
- I'd like to **tentatively** suggest an alternative.

Authority

- I'd like to suggest that one must: assert that p only if one is in a position of epistemic authority (relative to the listener) with respect to p .
- Call this the *authority rule*.
- You are in a position of epistemic authority (relative to me) just in case I would benefit from acquiring your justification.

Epistemic Peers

- I might *trivially* benefit from acquiring your justification if you and I have the *same* justification.
- So an additional condition on being an epistemic authority is not being one's epistemic peer.

Motivations for the Knowledge Rule

- There are three traditional motivations for the knowledge rule.
- The first concerns lotteries.
- The second concerns statements of the form ' p and I don't know that p .'
- The third concerns asking how a speaker knows what she says.

Authority and Lotteries

- The authority rule handles the lottery case.
- Furthermore it explains the impropriety in exactly the same way as the knowledge rule.
- So the lottery case doesn't speak against the authority rule.

Authority and Assertion

- Ordinarily, we ascribe knowledge to people with more/less any (good) justification.
- So asserting that ' p and I do not know that p ' ordinarily implies that one lacks any justification.
- And this is incompatible with being in a position of epistemic authority.
- Hence the authority rule explains why we can't assert ' p and I do not know that p .'

Authority and Assertion Again

- The same is true when asking how someone knows.
- Admitting that one does not know implies that one lacks justification.
- Since this is incompatible with being in a position of authority, the authority rule explains why this indicates a bad assertion.

Gettier Cases

- The authority rule also handles Gettier cases that trouble the knowledge rule.
- It's ok for you to tell me the time having looked at the stopped clock because it furnishes you with some justification and can put you in a position of authority.
- (If it doesn't, it's not a Gettier case).

Against the Authority Rule

- What about an analogous case where you are (unbeknownst to me) looking at a better clock?
- This assertion seems fine.
- And I'm NOT in a position of authority— I merely think I am.

In Defence of the Authority Rule

- I'm not really sure what to say here.
- But the moves available are analogous to those that the knowledge rule has available in response to Gettier cases.
- So it's not so clear to me that the knowledge rule has so much going for it over and above the authority rule.