

Free essay on internalism vs. externalism

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Internalism and Externalism

1. There is almost universal agreement that knowledge is justified true belief. However, the question of what entails justification of true belief leads to the two fundamentally different approaches –the externalism and internalism (Ichikawa, Jonathan, & Steup, 2013). According to Chisholm, the alternatives to internalism provided are just true beliefs that are not justified, and efforts to justify them calls for internalist concepts. In my opinion, Chisholm is correct in this view.

In trying to justify any true belief, there are epistemic obligations to be fulfilled. Chisholm posits that it is possible for an individual to fulfill these epistemic obligations without outside assistance by considering the state of his mind. Chisholm agrees with deontological epistemic justification, in which an individual needs to fulfill his epistemic duty of that which is true and not believing that which is false (Course Material 2013). He suggests that this can be achieved through internalistic approach, despite having some external sense. This is an opinion I share.

2. To understand which camp Goldman belongs to, it is important to understand his ex post vs. ex ante approach to internalism and externalism debate. Internalists approach the question of justifiedness from a subjective point of view. It emphasizes that the subject is justified in believing the proposition. However, externalists emphasize an objective point of view, where the subject's belief is justified (Sosa, 2007).

In his ex post approach, Goldman states that knowledge of something occurs when there is a belief, and that belief can be said to be or not be justified. Since his approach is objective, it leads me to hold the opinion that Goldman

is an externalist. In explaining his ex post view, Goldman states that it might be external to the subject that his belief is justified. This removes the element of justifiedness from the subject and places it as an object of itself, which can be determined by any other person in the same manner.

3. Theory of knowledge tries to postulate what people know and how they know it. Both internalism and externalism approaches to the justified true belief succeed in explaining what people know and how they know it. The approaches explain how we know what we know and both are correct. In my opinion some of the knowledge we hold is acquired through internalism while other part is acquired through externalism (Course Material 2013).

Instead of asking for compromise, we should be discussing what kind of actions should be justified by knowledge acquired through internalism and which actions should be justified by knowledge acquired through externalism. For every proposition and individual holds, he or she will use externalism or internalism to justify the belief. The discourse should now be on how to act with the knowledge acquired in each of the approaches. Therefore, in my opinion, a compromise is not necessary.

Response 1:

I concur with you that epistemic justification might be explicated externally in the two ways you stated. In the same breathe; I also hold the position that the alternatives given have internalism aspect that makes them justifiable.

Response 2:

Goldman is an externalist. His ex post approach has an externalist postulation. However, I am not quite sure whether “ calling previously

acquired evidence to mind, assessing the implications of that evidence, etc.” qualifies to be an internalist approach.

Response 3

In holding a certain position, it is important to be cautious not to fall into the trap of fitting a good explanation into a natural phenomenon. The way we know what we know can be explained by two distinctive approaches. Trying to come up with a hybrid that fits will fail to explain the phenomenon the theory of knowledge seeks to explain. Therefore, I differ with you on the issue of coming up with a compromise approach.

References

Ichikawa, Jonathan J., & Steup, M. (2013). The Analysis of Knowledge. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy. Edward N. Zalta (Ed.), Retrieved from <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2013/entries/knowledge-analysis/>

Sosa, E. (2007). A Virtue Epistemology: Apt Belief and Reflective Knowledge (vol. 1). Oxford: Oxford University Press.