

Careful consideration of epistemic justification appears to stem from Edmund Gettier's counter-examples to the tripartite analysis that ~~knowledge~~ is defined ~~as true, justified belief~~ (Pojman, p. 81). Within the different theories of epistemic justification, two are considered to be at odds with one another: *internalism* and *reliabilist externalism*. In the first section of this undertaking I examine and explain each one separately and individually. In the second portion I analyze what are considered to be the general strengths and weaknesses of each particular theory. Lastly, in the third and final part, I argue for why I believe reliabilism to be a more viable theory of epistemic justification than internalism.

Why?
Saying what? Be specific
State why here...

Pojman states that "internalism stresses having reasons for one's beliefs that ground or justify those beliefs" (Pojman, p. 136). It is clear from this statement that the internalist emphasizes personal reflective access to reasons or evidence for their belief as a necessary condition. This being the case, internalism's accessibility requirement may broadly be summarized as such:

- (1) Individual P has belief *q*.
- (2) P may be justified in belief *q* if and only if P has sufficient internal access and awareness to some other reason/evidence that satisfies the truth of belief *q*.
- (3) P has internal access and awareness of reason/evidence *r*, which satisfies the conditions for the truth of belief *q*.
- (4) Therefore, P is justified in belief *q*.

A second, yet supposedly peripheral requirement for internalism emerges in the form of epistemic responsibility, or deontology. Pojman presents the issue in a way that if the evidence for the belief of the individual "has not been obtained or is not sustained by truth-seeking dispositions,

they are not justified in holding the belief” (Pojman, pp. 137-138). Ted Poston adds “one fulfills one’s intellectual duties when one has properly taken into account the evidence one possesses” (Poston, 2., b. 2nd paragraph). In this sense, a person has the duty to seek out truth to the best of their cognitive abilities. Coupled together with its necessary cognitive accessibility requirement, internalism emphasizes that we ought to have good and truthful reasons for our beliefs and not mediocre or bad inferences.

Reliabilism, on the other hand, does not have a necessary requirement that one have introspective access to the reasons for their beliefs. ^{Why not?} Epistemic justification for the reliabilist form of externalism depends on whether a person acquired their belief in such a way that is well founded or reliable. To add to this, Pojman is again helpful in stating that what counts aren’t correct access to internal reasons of belief, but whether your belief-forming mechanisms are functioning properly in a suitable context (Pojman, p. 143).¹ Another way of putting it is to say that as long as the appropriate external causal conditions have been fulfilled, then one is justified in the resulting belief. To reiterate, reliabilism may be approximated in this fashion:

- (1) Individual P has belief q .
- (2) P may be justified in belief q if the belief was caused in such a way that is reliable.
- (3) Belief q was caused in a reliable way for P.
- (4) Therefore, P is justified in belief q .

There are strengths and weaknesses for each particular view. Internalism is attractive to many because it seems that we like having good reasons or evidence for our beliefs, as these are helpful in substantiating our claims regarding the reality of the external world. However, just as this seems very inviting, internalism has its drawbacks. In particular, the accessibility requirement

gives an impression that we have infallible access to our reasons for beliefs. This can be illustrated if we can conceive of an example where a logician examines the structure of a logical argument for validity, and in order to do so a truth table is constructed. Let's assume that one week has passed since she has determined that said truth table proved to be invalid, and she has forgotten the necessary steps that were taken to arrive at her correct conclusion. We then ask her how she arrived at invalidity, and she answers by stating that she followed the necessary steps and rules required. The natural question to follow would be to ask *what* those necessary steps were. Even though she may have followed the necessary steps to arrive at invalidity correctly, she does not remember the particular details. According to internalism, she is not justified in her belief, because she forgot those details. It also seems that if she were able to remember the details, we could ask how she knew that her assessment of the details were correct. So it appears, at face value, that it is difficult for epistemic internalism to avoid an infinite regression of reasons in order to be justified. Appealing to a set of self-evident or incorrigible beliefs doesn't seem to work because the things we consider to be so (i.e. pain, color sensations, emotions, desires, etc.) have at least one demonstrable counter-example (Pojman, pp. 139-141).²

Reliabilism also has its alluring points as well as complications. It has the advantage that it is able to look beyond strict internal factors to the outside world. Another strong point is that it can attribute knowledge to epistemically flawed individuals such as "unsophisticated persons, children, and some animals. These individuals, though, lack internalist justification". This lends credence to the idea that justification should be understood externally (Poston, 3., b. 1st paragraph). Reliabilism also gives a better account for things that we are unable to prove that are internal to other people, such as other minds apart from ours (Pojman, p. 146).³ Just as these seem promising, reliabilism is not without its flaws. Just what exactly is the criterion by which we judge a process

to be reliable? Not only does Pojman raise this point, but also he quotes Alvin Plantinga who brings to light that it is possible to come to a belief by multiple alternative reliable processes. Or even worse, that an alternative reliable process might show the opposite of the belief to be true (Pojman, p. 148). Since this is possible, how does one determine which reliable process is superior? These ideas come into view as somewhat vague, which present many difficulties for the reliabilist.

It is no easy task to determine which method of epistemic justification is the superior of the two in the I-E debate. While I believe internalism has many strong points, I feel forced to concede with Alvin Goldman that internalism fails to meet its own demands. Internalism implies that correctness of conditions must be internally accessible, but it seems there is no way to internally access this principle (Poston, 2., a. 4th paragraph).⁴ Reliabilist externalism doesn't appear to have this problem since beliefs are caused simply in an external reliable way that fulfills the conditions. Not only this, but also another issue with the deontological responsibility condition causes me to be hesitant in embracing internalism wholly. I do not feel that I, nor others, are always in a mind state where we are in control of our beliefs. Reliabilism is easier to accept in regards to this concept since so many of our beliefs give an impression of being governed by outside inductive circumstances.

Even though I have argued reliabilism is more profitable, Louis Pojman makes an important point that "reliabilism seems a better account of what it is to *know* a proposition, and internalism seems a better account of what it is to be justified in believing a proposition" (Pojman, p. 153). Externalism is more attractive because of the above listed reasons, however I think it is a mistake to throw out internal reasons and evidence altogether, as these things can only strengthen an

externalist's beliefs. The most trouble I perceive for the reliabilist position is the vagueness of what counts as a reliable process. However, I think that if we are given the proper context and differentiate between types of beliefs, this might be more easily answered in terms of what processes can be considered relevant to determining what is deemed reliable. I am far from embracing reliabilism completely, but I think it offers a better scenario to the epistemic big picture of justification than internalism.

Here, I have examined the general concepts of the I-E debate within epistemic justification that stems from Gettier's counter-examples to JTB as knowledge. I have shown that internalism focuses on an individual's introspective reasons for such, whereas reliabilism relies on external proper causality of beliefs. We have seen that there are strengths and weaknesses within each particular system that deal with the nature of how one is justified in their beliefs. In summation, I have argued that, while internalism has much that is favorable, reliabilism is a more reasonable theory of justification.

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NOTES

¹ Pojman refers to belief-forming mechanisms as such things as senses, memory, introspection, testimony reports, and ability to make valid inferences.

² Here Pojman references several other psychological and philosophical counter-examples such as Ruth who is tricked into thinking she isn't really sad when she is; Paul, whose therapist convinces him he doesn't have back pain when he actually does; and Sally whose color sensations are called into question.

³ Pojman adds that the reliabilist may say that we have natural belief-forming mechanisms that cause us to have these self-evident beliefs regarding other minds.

⁴ Poston references Goldman who claims that there is no definite and acceptable set of internalistic conditions that determine what cognitive attitude a subject should have given their evidence.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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