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## **TWO NOTIONS OF THE INTERNAL AND GOLDMAN'S EPISTEMIC EXTERNALISM**

**ABSTRACT.** Two concepts of the internal should be distinguished in the current epistemic internalism/externalism debate: (1) the internal in an introspective sense as what is accessible by introspection and (2) the internal in a biological sense as what is inside the organism's nervous system. When "internal" is meant in the introspective sense, Goldman's process reliabilism is externalist, but when "internal" is taken in the biological sense, Goldman's process reliabilism is internalist. Goldman as a naturalist prefers "internal" in the biological sense, but the concept is unsuitable for presenting the current epistemic internalism/externalism controversy. If one understands "internal" in the introspective sense, Goldman's reliabilism is strongly externalist.

Alvin I. Goldman rejects epistemic internalism (1999, p. 293) but he also claims that his "process reliabilism is not externalist" (1992a, p. 434). Although he is recognized as a prominent epistemic externalist, Goldman himself rejects the internal/external distinction as such.<sup>1</sup>

Kim (1993) tries to explain Goldman's epistemological position by saying that it is partly externalist and partly internalist. In this paper I shall try to show that Kim's account is incoherent and that Goldman's process reliabilism is strongly externalist given Kim's definition of the internal.

I think that the way to resolve the confusion about Goldman's epistemic externalism is the distinction between two notions of the internal which has often been blurred in the current debate on epistemic internalism and externalism. The two senses of "internal" are as follows:

- (1) "internal" is that which is accessible by mere introspection or reflection (I shall call it internal in the introspective sense);
- (2) "internal" is that which is within the organism's nervous system or, simply, within the organism (I shall call it internal in the biological sense).

The first, introspective, sense of "internal" is distinctive for the epistemic internalism/externalism controversy in the theory of knowledge and justification. The second, biological, sense of "internal" is distinctive for the semantic or content internalism/externalism controversy in the philosophy of mind and lan-

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<sup>1</sup>Similarly, Pollock seems to be an epistemic externalist but he calls himself "naturalistic internalist".

guage. In his theory of justification Goldman uses “internal” in the biological sense and this, in my opinion, has generated some misunderstandings.

### 1. Introspection

Externalism is complementary to internalism and the meaning of externalism depends on the meaning of internalism. The basic idea of epistemic internalism is that of cognitive access to justifiers (justification making properties of a belief). Alston says that internalists

restrict justifiers to items that are *within* something, more specifically, within the subject. But, of course, not everything that is “within” a knowing subject will be admitted as a possible justifier by an internalist. Physiological processes within the subject, of which the subject knows nothing, will not be allowed (Alston 1989, p. 185).

Alston himself does not precisely determine the internal justifiers. He only says that they must be fairly directly accessible to their subject on reflection. Kim (1993, p. 305) says that epistemic justifiers accepted by most internalists are the justifying factors graspable by introspection (they are introspectible). He presupposes that knowledge achieved by reflection coincides with knowledge achieved by introspection, and I agree with him on this point. Even though reflection may include certain memories and reasoning, all results of reflection are graspable by introspection.

Introspection is a highly controversial concept. However, I think that it is the best one to grasp what the internalists mean by the subject’s access to justifiers. Introspection is a kind of access to the subject’s conscious states.

Internalists usually use the term “introspection” in a broad sense including memory (retrospection) and reason. Externalists are more strict in their use of the term “introspection”: “the only facts that an agent can know by introspection are facts concerning what conscious states he is (or is not) currently in” (Goldman 1999, p. 278). I think that it is rather pre-introspective awareness that “shows” what conscious state I am *currently* in. Pre-introspective awareness<sup>2</sup> is not a kind of observation, because it is not at the center of our attention. Proper introspection as always occurs later than its subject is not observation either; it is rather retrospection (including some reasoning or even imagery) of the pre-introspective awareness. That is why introspection is not direct, not perception-like and not independent of our previous knowledge. And the results of introspection are not infallible or incorrigible. There is, however, a kind of knowledge achieved by introspection (so called first-person knowledge) or,

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<sup>2</sup>When I think about water, the water is the only subject of my attention, but I am also pre-introspectively aware that I am thinking about water.

at least, some well-grounded beliefs concerning our own recent experience and thinking.<sup>3</sup>

Naturalistic epistemologists usually do not accept the traditional concept of introspection. The first reason is that the majority of cognitive processes are not available to introspection and, therefore, it is the data of cognitive science and not the results of introspection that are important for naturalists. Second, the borderline between what is accessible by introspection and the rest of the world is not important for the proponents of the theory that mental states are identical with physical states. And the borderline between the organism and the rest of the world is clear and important for them. This is why naturalists prefer the biological sense of "internal" and not the introspective one.

Goldman is a naturalist and he seems to avoid the concept of introspection when specifying his own position. However, he cannot avoid it when speaking about the proponents of epistemic internalism (1999, p. 277) since the point of the epistemic internalist/externalist controversy is the introspective access to justifiers. It is the introspective sense of "internal" not the biological one that refers to that access. The biological sense of "internal", although useful for the externalist, is unsuitable for presenting the standpoint of the traditional internalist and the epistemic internalism/externalism controversy.

## 2. Kim about Goldman

I accept Alston's general concept of justification that there are three conditions for a belief to be justified: (1) the belief must have grounds, (2) the grounds have to be adequate, and (3) there must be a basing relation between the belief and its grounds. As Kim accurately noticed, each of those three elements of justification provides scope for an internalism/externalism distinction depending on the introspective access criterion.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, we may say that epistemic externalism falls into three kinds: (1) ground externalism, (2) adequacy externalism, and (3) connection externalism. I shall focus here on ground externalism only, since it is the main concern of my argument; Kim claims that Goldman's process reliabilism is ground internalism and I shall try to show that it is ground externalism.

According to Kim, one is a ground internalist if one adheres to the idea that the only possible grounds for justification are psychological states accessible by introspection, whereas the externalist allows for some different justifying

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<sup>3</sup>The epistemic internalists assumes that such introspective knowledge exists and that all justifiers should be available to the subject by introspection.

<sup>4</sup>A theory of justification is internalist if it requires the justification making properties to be accessible by introspection. And a theory of justification is externalist if it allows the justifiers to be not accessible by introspection.

grounds, e.g., a proper causal relation. He admits that to be an externalist it is enough to agree that “for some beliefs, their justifying grounds can be something external” (Kim 1993, p. 308). Furthermore, if that which is internal is accessible by introspection and that which is external is not (the concept of the internal and the external are, according to Kim, mutually exclusive and jointly exhaustive), such cognitive processes as unconscious happenings within the brain or retinal stimulation or neurophysiological processes are external. It is true that Goldman’s process reliabilism allows such cognitive processes as justifying factors (Goldman 1992b, p. 156). Thus, the following argument can be formulated (see Ziemińska 1998, p. 58):

- (1) in order to be a ground externalist it is enough to claim that some justifying grounds can be external (Kim 1993, p. 308);
- (2) that which is external from an epistemic point of view is not accessible by introspection (Kim 1993, p. 305);
- (3) unconscious cognitive processes are not accessible by introspection (assumption);
- (4) Goldman’s process reliabilism allows unconscious cognitive processes as justifying factors (Goldman 1992b, p. 156) and, therefore;
- (5) Goldman’s process reliabilism is ground externalism.

Kim does not follow this line of reasoning. He accepts the denial of my assumption (3). Although he admits that his standpoint involves certain problems, he finally disregards the difference between cognitive states accessible by introspection and those that are not. He says that all cognitive processes may be taken as accessible by introspection. This is an untenable oversimplification. The introspective access to all cognitive processes requires that any unconscious brain process is accessible by introspection. But this is not the case. Introspection is a kind of access to conscious states only. However, many cognitive processes, for instance brain processes, are not conscious.

Kim’s main reason for recognizing Goldman’s process reliabilism as ground internalism is the statement by the latter that only internal cognitive processes are relevant to his theory of justification. It is true that Goldman uses the term “internal” when discussing cognitive processes relevant to his theory of justification. However, Goldman’s “internal” is not the same as Kim’s “internal”. Kim adopts the concept of the internal in the introspective sense (accessible by introspection), and Goldman uses the concept of the internal in the biological sense (within the organism’s nervous system). Goldman’s process reliabilism assumes that we are justified in believing something only if our belief is produced by a reliable cognitive process. Belief-forming processes are restricted to processes within the organism’s nervous system and in this sense they are internal. Goldman does not claim that the only justifiers can be mental states accessible by introspection.

Kim does not distinguish between the two concepts of the internal. However, if "internal" is understood as "being inside the organism", then Goldman's process reliabilism is internalist, and if "internal" means "accessible by introspection", Goldman's process reliabilism is externalist. Interference of the two concepts has been in my opinion the source of Kim's confusion about Goldman's externalism; Goldman uses "internal" in the biological sense, while Kim in the introspective one.

### 3. Goldman's Externalism

Goldman states clearly that his "process reliabilism is not externalist, since it focuses on 'inner' processes" (1992a, p. 434). The term "externalist" in the quoted sentence refers to the concept of the internal in a biological sense (Goldman writes about processes that are "beneath the skin"). Goldman never declares himself to be an internalist in the introspective sense of "internal". On the contrary, he claims that epistemic internalism is an unattainable idea; he exposes and rejects the general structure of internalism: "I see no hope for internalism" (Goldman 1999, p. 293). For Goldman all internalist accessibility requirements are unclear and problematic (1999, p. 293), and he tries to avoid referring to the introspective notion of the internal. He himself seems to be unaware of the interference of the two concepts of the internal I discussed above. When speaking about epistemic internalists, Goldman uses "internal" in the introspective sense, but considering his own position he uses "internal" in the biological sense. Perhaps this is why Goldman rejects the internal/external distinction as such. The biological sense of the terms is unsuitable for presenting the epistemic internalism/externalism controversy. The introspective sense of "internal" denoting that what is accessible by introspection is in turn not suitable for naturalist epistemology. Perhaps this is a dilemma for Goldman to resolve.

Goldman introduces some internalist factors to his process reliabilism. The theory of normal worlds as the domain of reliability (to meet the Cartesian demon world counter-example) refers to our general beliefs about the actual world and is a kind of internalisation. Goldman's virtue reliabilism brings a further internalisation of reliability: beliefs are justified if we consider them to be produced by a reliable (virtuous) process. Perceptual beliefs of the victims of the Cartesian demon may be justified (although they are not produced by reliable processes) if the inhabitants of the Cartesian demon world *judge* perception to be a reliable process (Goldman 1992b, p. 158).

However, Goldman's epistemology is still externalist in the standard sense because there is no guarantee of introspective access to justifiers. Which processes are generally judged to be reliable in a certain world is something not

accessible by introspection. If we continue to use “internal” in the introspective sense, Goldman’s reliabilism is strongly externalist.

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