

SCHOENFIELD (2015) INTERNALISM WITHOUT LUMINOSITY

Handout for Epistemology Reading Group, Adrian Liu, Mar 11, 2025

Schoenfield argues for **moderate internalism**: internalist epistemic norms have *some* important role to play in epistemology. This is *contra* the *hardcore externalist*, who says that internalist norms play no interesting role in epistemology.

Internalism: whether one is justified in adopting some belief is determined by whether one conforms to a set of *internalist epistemic norms*, where an *epistemic norm* is a conditional of the form “In circumstances C, adopt doxastic state *d*.” An *internalist epistemic norm* is a norm where C is an internalist condition.

The Externalist Challenge: Take whatever role R that you think a set of exclusively internalist norms are especially well suited to play. Explain why a set of externalist norms can't equally well play role R.

For example, suppose we want to say that *epistemic blameworthiness* is governed by internalist norms. We could argue as follows:

- P1. **BLAMEWORTHINESS**: If N is a norm that determines blameworthiness, then, whenever the antecedent of N obtains, an agent must be in a position to know that it obtains.
- P2. **B-LINK**: Only internalist conditions are such that, whenever they obtain, agents are in a position to know that they obtain.
- C. Therefore, the antecedent of N must be an internalist condition.

But then for there to be *any* nontrivial norms that determine epistemic blameworthiness the following must be true:

LUMINOSITY: there is a non-trivial set of conditions such that, whenever we are in them, we are in a position to know that we are in them.

And externalists (famously Williamson) will want to deny LUMINOSITY.

DOXASTIC PLANNING AND INTERNALIST NORMS

We can think of the project of deliberating about and then settling on what to believe as the project of *doxastic planning*. A doxastic plan can be represented as a set of conditionals of norms. An plan is internalist if its antecedents are all internalist conditions, and externalist otherwise.

The Revere Plan: light one lantern if the British come by land, and two lanterns if the British come by sea.

The Revere Plan*: light one lantern if it *appears* that the British are coming by land, and two lanterns if it *appears* that they are coming by sea.

Intuition: if the group adopts *The Revere Plan*, they should expect that they will actually conform to *The Revere* Plan*. So it only makes sense to adopt *The Revere Plan* if it's sufficiently unlikely that the British will use decoys to disguise how they're coming.

More generally, Schoenfield will argue that *internalist plans are the plans that we should expect to conform to as a result of making whatever plans we make*, and therefore that we should not make plans unless there are nearby internalist plans that we value sufficiently highly.

- P1. ENDORSEMENT: When the aim of planning is to bring about a valuable state of affairs, and you expect that the result of making a plan P is that you conform to a plan P*, then, you should not make plan P unless you assign a (relatively) high expected value to conforming to P*.
- P2. IMPLEMENTATION: For any plan P, there is some internalist plan P* such that you should expect that, as a result of making P, you will conform to P*.

It follows from ENDORSEMENT and IMPLEMENTATION that

- C. E-LINK: When the aim of planning is to bring about a valuable state of affairs, then, for any plan P that you make, there is some internalist plan P* such that, you should not make plan P unless you assign a (relatively) high expected value to conforming to P*.

Implications:

1. **Skepticism:** If I take the externalist's recommendations for what to believe, I should expect to follow an internalist plan anyway! So externalist plans don't seem to have much of an advantage over their internalist versions in terms of alleviating skepticism.
2. **The Antecedent Unlikelihood of Bad Cases:** frequently, when we make plans, we are committed to thinking *prior to the circumstances in question arising*, that it is unlikely that we'll find ourselves in a skeptical scenario. Whatever plans externalists make, they too will be duped in skeptical scenarios. So if they are to continue to endorse the plans, they must, in the planning phase, regard such scenarios as antecedently unlikely.
3. **Epistemic Praise and Blame:** Follow Dogramaci in thinking that the function of epistemic praise and blame is to modify and regulate the epistemic behavior of others. Suppose P is a plan we want agents in our community to adopt. Grant that it might be an externalist plan. Suppose an agent violates P but conforms to P*. Should we blame this agent? No, we should criticize them only if we want their behavior to change. But we want them to conform to P, and if we criticize the agent for conforming to P* in virtue of trying to conform to P, then we give the agent reason to avoid conforming to P*. And since the agent is likely to conform to P* if they plan to follow P, we will modify their behavior *away from* planning to conform to P.
4. **Expectation and Induction:** a prerequisite for sensibly engaging in *any* sort of planning, or settling, is that one have *some* expectations about the future which make it reasonable to predict that the mental act one is engaged in (the planning or settling) will yield certain sorts of outcomes. This means that, at minimum, some beliefs (which need not be consciously entertained) about *psychology* are required for planning.