

William P. Alston's "Internalism and Externalism in Epistemology"

I. TWO KINDS OF INTERNALISM

- A. PERSPECTIVAL INTERNALISM (PI): Q can confer justification on S's belief that P only if Q is "within [S's] 'perspective' or 'viewpoint' on the world, in the sense of being something that [S] knows, believes, or justifiably believes. It must be something that falls within [S's] ken, something of which [S] has taken note" (p. 186).
- B. ACCESS INTERNALISM (AI): Q can confer justification on S's belief that P only if Q is "accessible to [S] in some special way, for example, directly accessible or infallibly inaccessible [*sic*]" (p. 186).

II. PERSPECTIVAL INTERNALISM

S's belief that *p* is justified if and only if S justifiedly believes that *J*, the justification for her belief that *p*, possesses justificatory efficacy.

III. THE ARGUMENT FOR PERSPECTIVAL INTERNALISM

ALSTON'S BONJOURIAN ARGUMENT FROM THE DEONTOLOGICAL CONCEPTION

1. I can rightly be blamed for believing that *p* if and only if, so far as I know, my belief that *p* fails adequately to be supported.
2. Thus, if my being justified in believing that *p* depends on whether I can rightly be blamed for believing that *p*, then my being justified in believing that *p* depends on whether, so far as I know, my belief that *p* fails adequately to be supported.
3. My being justified in believing that *p* depends on whether I can rightly be blamed for believing that *p*. **[This is the *deontological conception of epistemic justification*.]**
4. Thus, my being justified in believing that *p* depends on whether, so far as I know, my belief that *p* fails adequately to be supported.

IV. THREE THINGS UTILIZED BY THE ARGUMENT FOR PERSPECTIVAL INTERNALISM

- A. The argument for (6) "utilizes a concept of justification that assumes beliefs to be under direct voluntary control" (p. 205).

According to the deontological conception of epistemic justification, my

being justified in believing that *p* depends on whether I can rightly be blamed for believing that *p*. This suggests that I'm not justified in believing that *p* if I can rightly be blamed for believing that *p*. But I can't rightly be blamed for believing that *p* unless I have some measure of control over whether I believe that *p*. It seems, therefore, that the deontological conception of epistemic justification presumes ***doxastic voluntarism***, roughly, the view that I have some measure of control over what I believe.

But, Alston suggests, we ought to *reject* doxastic voluntarism (see p. 205). "When I see a truck coming down the street, I am hardly at liberty either to believe that a truck is coming down the street or to refrain from that belief" (p. 205).

- B. The argument for (6) presumes that the only beliefs that can count as justified are those that we *choose* to acquire, those that we acquire via *a deliberate voluntary act* (see p. 205).
1. According to the deontological conception of epistemic justification, if I acquire my belief that *p* without choosing to do so, then I can rightly be blamed for believing that *p*.
 2. Moreover, the deontological conception of epistemic justification maintains that if I can rightly be blamed for believing that *p*, then I'm not justified in believing that *p*.
 3. The deontological conception of epistemic justification is therefore committed to the following view: If I acquire my belief that *p* without choosing to do so, then I cannot be justified in believing that *p*. That is, my belief that *p* can count as justified only if it's a belief that I chose to acquire.

But, Alston suggests, this commitment signals trouble for PI. For "a concept of justification that is confined to beliefs acquired by deliberate choice covers only a small part of the territory" (p. 206) since we want the concept also to cover beliefs that are *not* acquired by deliberate choice (e.g., Henry's belief that this is a barn).

- C. It follows from the conclusions reached in B above that the argument for (6) presumes that whether S's belief that *p* is justified depends solely on *how S originally acquired the belief*. For, according to the deontological conception of epistemic justification, S's belief that *p* is justified if her acquisition of the belief is beyond epistemic reproach, that is, if she made an epistemically blameless choice to adopt the belief.

But, Alston suggests, this too is an unfortunate consequence. For beliefs can come to be justified *after* their acquisition, in which case the belief's justification depends on something *other* than how it was originally

acquired. The deontological conception of justification is only “a concept of justifiably *acquired* belief” and hence that it “is at best only a part of an adequate concept of justified belief” (p. 206).

V. TWO ATTEMPTS TO OVERCOME THESE THREE DIFFICULTIES (BY RIDDING A PI-LIKE CONCEPTION OF THE THREE PRESUMPTIONS)

- (8) DIRECT CONTROL VERSION: S is justified in believing that *p* at *t* if and only if either (a) in choosing at *t* to adopt or retain the belief that *p*, S is violating no intellectual obligations, or (b) S’s belief that *p* at *t* has such a basis that if S were to decide, in the light of that basis, to retain her belief that *p*, she would not be violating any intellectual obligations in so doing. **[Here, we have included belief retention, which drops the presumption in C above, and (b) drops the presumption in B above.]**
- (9) INDIRECT CONTROL VERSION: S is justified in believing that *p* at *t* if and only if S’s believing that *p* at *t* does not stem from any violation of intellectual obligations. **[This version drops all three presumptions.]**

VI. ALSTON’S CRITICISMS OF THESE FINAL TWO ATTEMPTS TO PROVIDE AN ADEQUATE PI THEORY

(9) is not an adequate PI theory since it maintains that the justification of S’s belief that *p* is a function of the causal history of that belief, and hence that justification is not a “perspectival” matter. This means that (9) is an *externalist* theory of justification.

(8) allows for the possibility that S’s belief that *p* is “justified by being based on some experience, even if [S] in fact has no beliefs about that experience” (p. 209) and no belief to the effect that her belief that *p* is adequately supported by the relevant experience. This means that (8), too, is an *externalist* theory of justification.

It seems, then, that no adequate defense of PI can be provided.

VII. THE INITIAL STATEMENT OF ACCESS INTERNALISM (AI)

ACCESS INTERNALISM (AI): If *q* confers justification on S’s belief that *p* at *t*, then *q* is *directly recognizable* to S at *t*, where *q* is directly recognizable to S at *t* iff S can come to know at *t* that *q* obtains simply by reflecting clear-headedly on the question whether it obtains.

VIII. ALSTON'S FORMULATION OF GINET'S ARGUMENT FOR AI

1. If S's belief that p is not justified, then S ought to withhold belief as to whether p .
2. If S ought to withhold belief as to whether p , then S can withhold belief as to whether p .
3. Therefore, if S's belief that p is not justified, then S can withhold belief as to whether p .
4. If S can withhold belief as to whether p , then she can tell whether she has justification for the proposed belief that p .
5. Therefore, if S's belief that p is not justified, then she can tell whether she has justification for the proposed belief that p .
6. If S can tell whether she has justification for the proposed belief that p , then she can directly recognize that justification.
7. Therefore, if S's belief that p is not justified, then she can directly recognize that justification.

This argument goes wrong *at the very beginning*. For it follows from 3 that

- 3*. If S *cannot* withhold belief as to whether p , then S's belief that p is justified.

This is flat-out false, and so Ginet's argument is unsound.