The Internalism/Externalism Controversy

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Much of contemporary epistemology takes place in the shadow of the internalism/externalism debate. Its current place on the centre stage of epistemology seems appropriate given the dramatic revolution in our thought about historical and contemporary epistemological inquiry that would seem to be forced by certain paradigm externalist views. But although the controversy seems to strike deep at the heart of fundamental epistemological issues, I am not certain that it has been clearly defined. It seems to me that philosophers are choosing sides without a thorough understanding of what the respective views entail.

In this paper I want to explore a number of different ways of defining the technical distinction between internalist and externalist epistemologies. As it so often the case with technical philosophical distinctions, it is probably foolish to insist that there is only one “correct” way to define the distinction. I am interested in developing a way of understanding the controversy so that it leaves many philosophers already recognized as paradigm internalisers and externalists in their respective categories, but this is not my main goal. Indeed, while my ultimate suggestion as to how to understand internalism will include as internalists many in the history of philosophy, it may be harder to find contemporary epistemologists who satisfy my internalist criteria. My primary concerns are to define the controversy in such a way that it a) involves a fundamentally important distinction, and b) articulates the source of the underlying dissatisfaction that internalists feel toward paradigm externalist analyses of epistemic concepts. At the very least, I want to articulate this internalist’s view as to the critical mistake of externalism. As one who thinks that externalist analyses of epistemic concepts are somehow irrelevant to the traditional and appropriate philosophical interest in knowledge and justified belief, I am obviously interested in converting philosophers to my own brand of internalism, and the extreme version of foundationalism that it involves. My hope is that when philosophers realize the underlying source of their unhappiness with externalist epistemology, they will come home to a version of foundationalism that has been neglected too long. By way of achieving this last goal, I will also examine the object to one of the methodological assumptions underlying externalist epistemologies. But let us begin by trying to define the concepts of internalism and externalism.

Internalism and Internal States

The term “internalism” might suggest the view that S’s knowing that P or having a justified belief that P, consists in S being in some internal state. We might, then, understand the externalist as one who is committed to the view that two individuals could be in identical “internal” states of mind while one knows, or has evidence, or has a justified belief, while the other does not. This is surely tempting, but everything hinges on how we understand “same internal state” and “same state of mind”. If we include among the properties that define a state of mind relational properties, then it would seem obvious that an externalist can, and would, embrace the thesis that if my state of mind is identical to yours then I’ll know what you know, I’ll be justified in believing what you are justified in believing. Goldman, Nozick, Armstrong, and Dretske, to consider just a few externalists, are all willing to pick out a complex relational property that my belief has in virtue of which it constitutes knowledge or justified belief. The relational property will typically be a complex nomological property, such as the property of being caused by a process which satisfies a certain description, or being such that it would not have occurred had not certain other conditions obtained. One gets all sorts of variations on externalism depending on how the relevant nomological relations are characterized. If we are trying to define a view that these externalists reject, then, we cannot simply define internalism as maintaining that one knows or has a justified belief in virtue of being in a certain kind of state of mind when we let the relevant kind be determined in part by its relational properties.

Shall we then say that an internalist identifies knowledge and justified belief with internal states of mind, meaning by internal states of mind, nonrelational properties of a mind? The externalist, correspondingly, would maintain only that two individuals could exemplify the same nonrelational properties while one knows or has a justified belief and the other does not. We could, but then we are going to be hard pressed to find very many internalists. Certainly, on this understanding of externalism, everyone who holds that a
justified true belief can constitute knowledge even when the justification is logically compatible with the belief being false is committed to an externalist account of knowledge. A non-redundant truth condition in the traditional analysis of knowledge clearly introduces a condition that goes beyond the nonrelational properties of the knower. But even if we restrict our attention to the concept of justified belief, there seem to be precious few philosophers who would identify the having of a justified belief with the exemplification of some nonrelational property (properties).

One of the classic foundationalist approaches to understanding noninferential knowledge identifies at least one condition for such knowledge as direct acquaintance with facts. I’ll have more to say about this view later, but for now I would merely observe that at least some externalists take such positions to be paradigms of the sort of internalist epistemologies they are rejecting. But clearly when someone like Russell talked about being acquainted with a fact, he intended to be referring to a relation that a subject bears to a fact. Having a noninferentially justified belief, on such a view, would not be identical with exemplifying nonrelational properties, and a Russellian would not argue that if two people were in the same nonrelational states they would have the same justified beliefs. It is not even clear that the externalists’ favorite internalist, Descartes, would satisfy the above characterization of an internalist. If, for example, Descartes accepted a relational analysis of believing something to be the case, or having an idea of something, the states of mind that for him constitute knowledge and justified belief would not be nonrelational properties of a self. The only philosophers who could be internalists in the above sense are philosophers who embrace an adverbial theory of consciousness and identify some of the nonrelational properties, exemplification of which constitutes consciousness, with knowledge and justified belief. If one must believe all that in order to be an internalist, not very many philosophers, myself included, would want any part of the view.

Philosophers who have tried to ground knowledge and justified belief in acquaintance with facts have sometimes construed the facts with which one can be acquainted as themselves “modifications” of the mind. This might in turn suggest that one could usefully define the internalist as someone who is committed to the view that knowledge and justified belief must be identified either with nonrelational properties of the mind or with relational properties of the mind where the relata of the relations are the mind and its nonrelational properties. Such a definition would house more analyses of justified belief under the roof of internalism although any analysis of knowledge involving a nonredundant truth condition would still be externalist. But it is important to realize that such a definition of internalism would still leave philosophers who ground justified belief in acquaintance with nonmental facts (e.g., the neutral monist’s sense data, the epistemological direct realist’s surfaces of physical objects, the Platonist’s forms and their relations, the realist’s universals and their relations) in the externalist’s camp. And I don’t think the paradigm externalist wants their company. More importantly, it looks as though we are defining the internalism/externalism debate in a peculiar way by putting into opposite camps fundamentally similar views. It seems to me that if I am trying to ground the concept of justified belief in acquaintance with nonrelational properties of the mind, and you are trying to ground the concept of justified belief in acquaintance with nonmental sense data, our views are fundamentally alike. The internalism/externalism controversy will not be getting at a significant issue if one of these views gets described as a form of internalism while the other is described as a form of externalism.

Internalism and Iteration

There is, of course, more than one natural way to understand the suggestion that conditions for knowledge or justification are internal to the cognizer, or are “in the mind” of the cognizer. When philosophers talked about sense data being “in the mind,” for example, at least sometimes they seemed to be pointing to a feature of our knowledge of them. Sense data are “in the mind” in the sense that one has a kind of privileged access to them. And this analogy suggests another way of trying to understand what is really at issue between the internalist and the externalist. At least some philosophers want to understand the internalist as someone who maintains that the necessary and sufficient conditions for satisfying epistemic concepts are conditions to which one has a privileged and direct access. “Access,” of course, is itself an epistemic term. On this analysis of internalism, then, the internalist might be thought of as someone who is committed to the view that knowledge entails knowing (perhaps directly) that one knows; having a justified belief entails justifiably believing that one has a justified belief.

The above involves a very strong interpretation of having access to the conditions of knowledge and justified belief. A weaker conception of access could construe access as potential knowledge or justified belief. Thus a weaker version of internalism along these lines might insist that for a person to be justified in believing a proposition P that person must have “available” to him
a method for discovering what the nature of that justification is. Let us consider both this strong and weak attempt to understand internalism as the view that having knowledge or justified belief entails having epistemic access to the conditions for knowledge and justified belief.

As someone who has always thought of himself as an internalist, one of my first concerns with the strong requirement of access is that it might saddle the internalist with a view that requires the impossible of knowledge and justified belief. As I shall make clear in my concluding remarks, I don’t care if, on my analysis of epistemic terms, it turns out that dogs, computers, my Aunt Mary, or even the philosophically sophisticated, do not have philosophically relevant knowledge of, or justification for believing, what they think they know or are justified in believing. But I do not want to define knowledge and justified belief in such a way that having knowledge and justified belief involves a vicious regress. And the requirements that one must know that one knows P in order to know P; justifiably believe that one is justified in believing P in order to justifiably believe P, certainly seem to flirt with the prospect of a vicious regress.

In elaborating this point, one might, however, usefully distinguish inferential justification from noninferential justification. I have defended elsewhere the very strong principle that if one is to be justified in inferring one proposition P from another E one must be 1) justified in believing E and 2) justified in believing that E makes epistemically probable P. Foundationalists have traditionally maintained that if one accepts such a principle, the only way to avoid an infinite number of infinite regresses is to recognize the existence of noninferentially justified beliefs (including, of course, noninferentially justified beliefs in propositions of the form “E makes probable P”). My reservations with the strong requirement of access, then, have to do with the general thesis that all justification involves access to the conditions of justification. In his recent book [2], BonJour seems to defend a version of internalism defined in terms of a requirement of strong access and he argues, quite plausibly, that foundationalists are going to have to an exceedingly difficult time ending the regress of justification within the context of this strong internalism. If a belief that P has some feature X in virtue of which it is supposed to be noninferentially justified, BonJour’s internalism requires us to justifiably believe that the feature X is present and that it makes probable the truth of P. The regress we were trying to end with noninferential justification is obviously about to begin again. If one accepts this incredibly strong version of internalism, it seems to me that one will not be able to escape BonJour’s argument. Indeed it is all too evident that BonJour cannot escape his own argument as it might be applied to his coherential alternative to foundationalism. To his credit, BonJour recognizes that his internalism requires that in order to have empirical justification, one must have access to what one believes and the relevant relations of coherence. Since the only kind of epistemic access to empirical propositions he recognizes is through coherence, one will have to find beliefs which cohere with beliefs about what one believes. But the problem rears its head with respect to getting access to those beliefs and again we encounter a vicious regress. BonJour tries to save his view with his “doxastic presumption” (101–05) (you just take it for granted that your metabeliefs are by and large right), but it seems to me that if one reads the text closely, BonJour as much as admits that his view entails the most radical of skepticism with respect to empirical justification (105).

The only way one can satisfy the requirement of strong access for justification is to allow the possibility of a mind having an infinite number of increasingly complex intentional states. If, for example, I hold (as I do) that my belief that P is noninferentially justified when I am acquainted with the fact that P, the thought that P, and the relation of correspondence between the thought that P and the fact that P (call these conditions X) I am not, on the above view, an internalist unless I am willing to assert that in order for X to constitute my noninferential justification for believing P, I must be acquainted with the fact that X, the thought that X, and the relation of correspondence between the thought that X and the fact that X (call these Y). And I must also hold that I am acquainted with the fact that Y, and so on. Now I am not saying that this view is obviously impossible to hold. One can suppose that people have an infinite number of thoughts (perhaps dispositional) and one can think of the “layers” of acquaintance as being like perfectly transparent sheets laid one on top of another. But do we, as internalists, want to let ourselves be painted into a corner this tight where the only escape is a view that might not even be intelligible?

While it is not precisely the same problem of a formal vicious regress, the possible limitations of the mind when it comes to considering facts of ever expanding complexity might also make a proponent of the acquaintance theory of noninferential justification reluctant to accept even the weaker requirement of access. Speaking for myself, I am not sure I can even keep things straight when I try to form the thought that my thought that my thought that P corresponds to my thinking that P corre-
sponds to \( P \). And this is still only a few levels away from the first order thought that \( P \).

"Internalism" is, to be sure, a technical expression, but do we want to put a view like mine that refuses to accept either the strong or the weak requirement for access, but that defines noninferential justification in part by reference to the concept of direct acquaintance with facts, on the externalist side of the internalist/externalist controversy? My suspicion is that this is not how the issue is being understood. And to further reinforce the idea that we are not getting at the heart of the controversy by considering requirements of "access", we should reflect on how easily a mischievous externalist can "play along" with access requirements of internalism. For purposes of illustration let us take one of the paradigmatic externalist analyses of epistemic terms, the reliabilist analysis of justification offered by Goldman in [8]. In that article Goldman initially suggests the following recursive analysis of justification: A belief is justified if it results either from 1) a belief-independent process that is unconditionally reliable, or 2) a belief-dependent process that is conditionally reliable, where the "input" beliefs are themselves justified. Belief-independent processes do not have beliefs as their "input," and what makes them unconditionally reliable is that the "output" beliefs are usually true. Belief-dependent processes have as their "input" at least some beliefs, and what makes them conditionally reliable is that the "output" beliefs are usually true when the "input" beliefs are true. Qualifications having to do with the availability of alternative processes and the consequences of their hypothetical use are later suggested, but they need not concern us for the point I presently wish to discuss.

Now it is obviously a feature of Goldman's paradigmatic externalism that it does not require that a person whose belief is justified by being the result of some process have epistemic access to that process. My beliefs can be reliably produced even if I have no reason whatsoever for supposing that they are reliably produced. And this might seem to suggest that the important feature of externalism is its rejection of access requirements for justified belief. But suppose the externalist gets tired of hearing internalists complaining about allowing the possibility of having a justified belief with no justification for believing that it is justified. It is useful to ask whether a reliabilist could remain within the spirit of reliabilism and at the same time allow that reliable processes yield justified beliefs only when one is justified in believing that the processes are reliable. Certainly, a reliabilist could accept our weak requirement of access—a reliabilist could allow that a reliable process \( P_1 \) generates justified beliefs only if there is available a justification for believing that \( P_1 \) is reliable. Interpreting this justification on the reliabilist's model would presumably require there being available a process \( P_2 \) which could generate the belief that \( P_1 \) is reliable. Of course, given the requirement of weak access, \( P_2 \) would itself generate justified beliefs only if there were available a reliable process \( P_3 \) which could generate the belief that \( P_2 \) is reliable, and so on. But it is not obvious that all of these reliable processes or methods need be different (a reliabilist, as far as I can see, can allow, for example, the inductive justification of induction, perceptual justification of the reliability of perception, and so on) and in any event since they need only be available (as opposed to actually used) it is not clear that the regress is vicious.

Could a reliabilist accept even a strong requirement of access? Could a reliabilist even allow that a process \( P_1 \) generates justified beliefs only if the believer actually justifiably believes that the process is reliable? This is clearly more problematic for there would actually have to be some reliable process \( P_2 \) generating the belief that \( P_1 \) is reliable, and some reliable process \( P_3 \) generating the belief that \( P_2 \) is reliable and so on. The coherence of such a view rests on considerations concerning the potential complexity of the mind that we have already discussed in the context of wondering whether classical foundationalism can cope with strong access requirements. But suppose, for the sake of argument, that our hypothetical reliabilist convinces us that the mind has a kind of infinite complexity that renders harmless even this regress. The important question to ask is whether this hypothetical reliabilist paying his externalist lip service to our requirements of access would make the disaffected internalist happy. And I think the answer is that he obviously would not. As long as the reliabilist/externalist keeps offering reliabilist/externalist accounts of knowing that one knows or being justified in believing that one has a justified belief, the internalist isn't going to feel that anything has been accomplished by getting this reliabilist to accept the view that knowing entails knowing that one knows; having a justified belief entails being justified in believing that one has a justified belief. The obvious moral to draw is that the fundamental disagreement between internalists and externalists is not really a disagreement over such questions as whether inferential justification entails actual or potential justified belief in the legitimacy of the inference, or more generally whether justification entails actual or potential access to the fact that the conditions of justification are satisfied.
Internalism and Normativity

One of the more nebulous criteria for distinguishing internalist and externalist analyses involves the suggestion that externalists ignore the normativity of epistemic judgments. And, certainly, many of the objections levelled at reliabilism, for example, make the claim that unreliability to which one has no actual or potential access cannot decide questions about the rationality or irrationality of beliefs because charges of irrationality are relevant to evaluations of epistemic praise and blame. If my beliefs are produced by unreliable processes when there is no possible way for me to find that out, in what sense am I to be blamed for having the belief? The inhabitants of demon worlds are no more blameworthy for their demon inducted false beliefs than are the inhabitants of non-demon worlds.

Now in one sense I am perfectly prepared to admit, qua internalist, that when one characterizes a belief as irrational one is criticizing that belief, and since I think that externalist accounts are radically mistaken analyses of philosophically relevant epistemic concepts, I obviously think they have incorrectly analyzed the nature of this epistemic criticism. But being a kind of criticism is a very broad criterion for being normative. We criticize beliefs for being irrational, but we also criticize knives for being dull, cars for being too expensive, theories for being false. But does that make judgments about the dullness of knives, the cost of cars, and the falsehood of theories, normative judgments? Perhaps in a sense a judgment about the dullness of knives is relevant to a normative judgment about the goodness of that knife in that we usually consider dullness to be a property that makes the knife ineffective for achieving certain ends peculiar to the use of knives. But this is grist for the reliabilist’s mill. We criticize the processes producing beliefs for being unreliable, the reliabilist might argue, because such processes typically fail to produce what we want from them—true beliefs.

Surely both internalists and externalists will agree that in some sense charges of irrationality can be construed as criticisms. But it is important to distinguish this virtual truism, a truism that isn’t going to differentiate the two views, from so-called deontic analyses of epistemic terms, where a deontic analysis defines epistemic concepts using value terms. Deontic analyses of epistemic terms may well be incompatible with at least paradigm externalist views, but as an internalist I certainly don’t want to be stuck with defending a deontic analysis of epistemic concepts. To criticize a person’s belief is not to suggest that the person is morally reprehensible for having that belief. And this is so even if we successfully avoid the standard “conflicting duties” objections to deontic analyses that were raised against the view that Chisholm suggested in [3] (You’ve got the duty to believe you will get well—it might help—even though your evidence indicates you will probably die). Specifically, I would argue that a person’s belief can be epistemically criticized even if we decide that the person is so far gone, is so irrational, that we do not think it even causally possible for him to figure out why his beliefs are irrational. Such a person is presumably not to be blamed for believing anything. He may be doing the very best he can with the potential he has, even though his best effort still results in the having of irrational beliefs. Put another way, we do not (should not) ethically criticize an irrational person for holding beliefs that we nevertheless criticize as irrational. Again, I do not think that the externalist has a plausible understanding of the conditions under which we philosophically criticize a belief as being irrational, but for the reasons I have tried to indicate, I do not think it is useful to try to understand the internalist/externalist debate as one over the normativity of epistemic judgments. In fact, I would argue that pure deontic analyses of epistemic terms involve a mistake very much like the mistake of externalism.

Externalism and What’s Really Wrong With It

For someone whose primary interest is in defining the controversy, this section heading might seem unnecessarily contentious. But you will recall that my concern is to understand the internalist/externalist debate in such a way as to make clear what I take to be the source of the internalist’s dissatisfaction with the view, and particularly this internalist’s dissatisfaction with the view.

Old philosophical views have a way of resurfacing under new labels. And the roots of externalism go back further than the “naturalistic epistemology” encouraged by Quine. Rather, I think they lie with an old controversy concerning the correct analysis of epistemic probability. While the Russell of [15] clearly took epistemic probability to be a sui generis concept (see his discussion of the principle of induction) the Russell of [16] was bound and determined to reduce epistemic probability to a frequency conception of probability. A crude attempt to define epistemic probability in terms of frequency might hold that one proposition E makes probable another proposition P when the pair is of a kind e/p such that usually when a proposition of the first kind is true, a proposition of the second kind is true. For our present purposes we can ignore the difficult questions involving the
interpretation of the relevant frequencies, questions to which Russell devoted a great deal of attention. There is, it seems to me, an obvious connection between a frequency analysis of epistemic probability and the fundamental claims of such externalist epistemologies as reliabilism. Both are trying to understand fundamental epistemic concepts in terms of *nomological* concepts. The externalist/naturalist in epistemology (like his counterpart in ethics) is trying to define away the concepts fundamental to his discipline; he is trying to analyze fundamental epistemic concepts in terms of other non-epistemic concepts. Goldman's hard core reliabilism wants to explicate justified belief in terms of either a frequency or propensity (if that is any different) concept of probability. Nozick wants to define epistemic concepts in terms of nomological connections between facts and beliefs of the sort expressed by contingent subjunctive conditionals (in [14]). Armstrong appeals to this same concept of nomological necessity in trying to understand knowledge (in [1]). And if externalism involves a fundamental philosophical error, I would suggest that it is analogous to the alleged mistake of naturalism in ethics, or more accurately, the alleged mistake in ethics of trying to define the indefinable. I would urge you to consider the suggestion that it is a defining characteristic of an internalist epistemology that it takes fundamental epistemic concepts to be *sui generis*.

No matter how much lip service our hypothetical reliabilist tries to pay to our insistence that justified belief entails being actually or potentially aware of the conditions of justification, he won’t satisfy us as long as he continues to define the epistemic terms with which he pays us lip service in his naturalistic (nomological) way. It is the nomological analyses of epistemic concepts that leads us to keep moving up a level to ask the externalist how he knows that he knows, or knows that he knows that he knows. The externalist might be able to give correct answers within the framework of his view, but we, as internalists, will keep asking the questions until his answer invokes a concept of knowledge or justified belief not captured in terms of nomological connection. The real internalist/externalist controversy, I would suggest, concerns the extent to which *sui generis* epistemic concepts can be analyzed employing, or even be viewed as supervenient upon (where being supervenient upon involves a necessary connection stronger than causation), such non-epistemic nomological concepts as causation, universal and probabilistic law, and contingent subjunctive conditionals. Ironically, I never have been convinced that there is a naturalistic or definist fallacy in ethics. As an internalist, I am convinced that there is something analogous in epistemology and that it is at the heart of the internalism/externalism debate.

What are these *sui generis* epistemic concepts that defy reduction or analysis? This is obviously a question about which those who reject the externalists’ views will themselves disagree. Perhaps the most famous contemporary philosopher associated with internalism today is Roderick Chisholm and despite periodic flirtations with deontic analyses of epistemic terms, I think one must ultimately take seriously his insistence that we take as primitive the concept of one proposition being more reasonable to believe than another (in, for example, [4]). I would myself locate the fundamental *sui generis* epistemic concepts elsewhere.

In rejecting externalism, I have tried to be clear that I reject it only as an analysis of philosophically relevant epistemic concepts. Knowing, or having a justified belief, in the externalist’s sense doesn’t satisfy our philosophical curiosity, doesn’t answer our philosophical questions, because qua philosophers trying to be rational, we want more than to be automata responding to stimuli with beliefs. I would argue that we want *facts*, including facts about which propositions make probable others, before our consciousness. This notion of a fact being before consciousness is, of course, itself an epistemic concept, and my suggestion is that one of the fundamental *sui generis* concepts that defy further analysis or reduction is the concept of direct acquaintance with a fact that in part defines the concept of noninferential knowledge. And in the case of inferential knowledge, what one really wants as an internalist is direct acquaintance with the fact that one’s evidence makes epistemically probable one’s conclusion. Acquaintance with evidential connections would clearly be impossible if evidential connections are to be understood in terms of frequencies or other nomological connections, and that indicates that the other epistemic concept which resists further analysis is the old Keynesean notion of making probable as a *sui generis* relation between propositions, analogous to, but obviously different from, entailment. I haven’t the space to develop this view here—I have done so elsewhere.

My only concern is to sketch the kind of view, with its reliance on *sui generis* epistemic concepts, that I would take to be paradigmatically internalist.

A Presupposition of Externalism

I would like to conclude by briefly commenting on what I take to be a primary motivation of externalist analyses of epistemic concepts. I have said that there are a number of different views as to what the *sui generis* epistemic concepts might be, and the ease with which one can avoid skepticism depends very
much on the details of the view one accepts. But certainly if one accepts the extreme version of foundationalism I recommend, complete with its insistence that one must have noninferential justification for believing propositions asserting evidential connections, the externalist is going to think that the task of avoiding skepticism is impossible. The typical externalist is convinced that one simply cannot be acquainted with facts. And even the internalist will undoubtedly admit that the kinds of facts with which we can be directly acquainted constitute a tiny fraction of what we think we know. When it comes to inferential knowledge, one must take seriously Humean complaints about the phenomenological inaccessibility of the relevant probability connection even if one ultimately rejects those complaints. If one cannot find in thought sui generis probability relations holding between propositions, one may well despair of resolving skeptical problems within the framework of radical foundationalism. On the problem of justifying belief in propositions describing the external world, for example, one might begin to suspect that Hume was right when he suggested with respect to what man ends up

Nature has not left this to his choice, and has doubtless esteem’d it an affair of too great importance to be trusted to our uncertain reasonings and specula-
tions. ([11], p. 187).

Hume’s hypothesis, I suspect, is accepted by externalists, but they do not want its truth to cheat us out of knowledge and justified belief. One of the most attractive features of most versions of externalism is that it makes it easy for us to know what we think we know. As long as nature (we now prefer to talk about evolution) has ensured that we respond to certain stimuli with correct representations of the world, we will know and have justified belief. Indeed, given externalist epistemologies, there is no difficulty in any creature or machine capable of representing reality achieving knowledge and justified belief.

It seems to me, however, that contemporary epistemology has too long let its philosophical analyses of epistemic terms be driven by the desire to avoid skepticism, by the desire to accommodate “commonsense intuitions” about what we know or are justified in believing. It is true that we describe ourselves as knowing a great many things. We also say that the dog knows that its master is home, the rat knows that it will get water when it hears the bell, and the salmon knows that it must get upstream to lay its eggs. But it seems clear to me that one need not take seriously the love of anthropomorphizing when analyzing the concepts of knowledge and justified belief that concern philosophers. If Wittgenstein and his followers did nothing else they surely have successfully argued that terms like “know” are used in a wide variety of ways in a wide variety of contexts. As philosophers, however, we can and should try to focus on the philosophically relevant use of epistemic terms. And the philosophically relevant epistemic concepts are those, satisfaction of which, resolves philosophical curiosity and doubt. I remain convinced that the kind of knowledge a philosopher wants, the kind of knowledge that will resolve philosophical doubt, involves the kind of direct confrontation with reality captured by the concept of direct acquaintance. While this is not the place to argue the issue, Hume may have been right—it may not be possible to justify in a philosophically satisfying way much of what we unreflectively believe. If this should be true, we may still satisfy, of course, the externalist’s criteria for knowledge and justified belief, and these criteria may even mark a perfectly clear and useful distinction between beliefs and kind of relations they bear to the world. Internalists will continue to feel, however, that the externalist has redefined fundamental epistemic questions so as to make them irrelevant to traditional philosophical concerns.

NOTES

1 I would like to thank Richard Foley and Scott Macdonald for their helpful comments on a rough draft of this paper.
2 Goldman in [8], [9], and [10]; Nozick in [14]; Armstrong in [1]; and Dretske in (among others) [5].
3 This point is made by Luper-Foy in [13].
4 See Nozick in [14], p. 281.
5 Not always. Sometimes “in the mind” meant logically dependent on the mind—the mind was thought of as a necessary condition for their existence.
6 The argument is presented on p. 32 but is discussed in a number of places throughout the book.
7 I realize that Goldman has presented a more sophisticated view in his recent book [10]. But it is a view which strays rather far from his reliabilist intuitions. The idea that justification is a function of reliability in normal worlds where normal worlds are defined in terms of beliefs about this world is equivalent to abandoning the idea that justification involves beliefs which are (actually) reliably produced. Indeed the view seems to me to come closer to a version of coherentism than reliabilism. In any event, I gather from a paper he read at a conference in honor of Roderick Chisholm, [9], that he is now more inclined to go back to “hard core”
reliabilism for at least one fundamental concept of justification.

7 It is interesting to note that in [9] and [10] Goldman comes very close to accepting something at least analogous. He allows that the use of a method can generate a strongly justified belief only if the method has been acquired in a suitable fashion, acquired by other methods, or ultimately processes, that are either reliable or meta-reliable. He does not impose the requirement on all processes, however, and in any event his requirement seems to concern the reliable generation of methods, not beliefs about methods.

8 In [10], Goldman himself seems to be more concerned with hooking up one sense of justification, what he calls weak justification, to considerations of blameworthiness and praiseworthiness. The aforementioned retreat from pure reliabilism in [9] was presumably aimed at achieving this same end.

9 See particularly [16], Part V, Chapters V and VI.

10 Notice that I have nowhere argued that an internalist cannot make reference to concepts other than the sui generis epistemic concepts in analyses of epistemic terms.

11 See Keynes's discussion of this issue in [12], Chapter 1.

12 See particularly Chapter 2 of [6].

REFERENCES