

# TO WHAT EXTENT ARE CONTENT EXTERNALISM AND EPISTEMIC INTERNALISM COMPATIBLE?

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**Abstract:** The disputes between externalism and internalism in the philosophy of mind and epistemology are revealed to be greatly intertwined. In this paper, I would like to defend the compatibility between content externalism and epistemic internalism, and then explore some of its potential consequences. More precisely, I have a twofold goal: first, I shall examine the widespread idea that content externalism is not compatible with epistemic internalism, and argue that, if the two theses are appropriately understood, then there is no real tension between them; second, I shall sketch some interesting effects that may hopefully come from the combination of content externalism and epistemic internalism, as that of accommodating the constitutive link between justification and truth.

**Key Words:** compatibilism, content externalism, epistemic internalism, justification, privileged access.

## 1. *Introduction*

In the last few decades the disputes between externalism and internalism in the philosophy of mind and epistemology have revealed them to be greatly intertwined. In fact, it has been variously shown that considerations about the nature of mental content, justification and knowledge may be interdependent (Brown 2004; Goldberg 2007b, a; Ludlow and Martin 1998; Nuccetelli 2003). In what follows, I would like to defend the compatibility of content externalism and epistemic internalism, and then explore some of the possible consequences. More precisely, this paper has a twofold goal. First, I shall examine the widespread idea that content externalism is not compatible with epistemic internalism, and argue that, if the two theses are appropriately understood, then there is no real tension between them. I shall claim that if one can conceive content externalism as a diachronic holistic kind of externalism, then it happens to be compatible with epistemic internalism, no matter how one decides to typify the latter, that is, as mentalism (justification is completely determined by one's own mental states), accessibilism (justification is completely determined by elements to which one has special cognitive access), or "strong" accessibilism (in order to be justified, one must have special cognitive access to their own justificatory status). In fact, characterising content externalism as a diachronic holistic kind of externalism, one should not be worried about its

alleged incompatibility with either privileged access or introspective access to sameness and difference of content (or introspective knowledge of comparative concepts). Second, I shall sketch some interesting consequences that might hopefully come from the combination of content externalism and epistemic internalism. In this respect, I wish to argue that, by combining content externalism and epistemic internalism, one may discover a promising way to accommodate the constitutive link between justification and truth. However, I shall also point out that while this conclusion could possibly work for mentalism and accessibilism, it would be more problematic and less convincing as far as “strong” accessibilism is concerned.

## *2. Framing the issue*

To begin with, I feel it is reasonable to embrace both content externalism and epistemic internalism. On the one hand, content externalism seems better equipped to explain, in naturalistic terms, how our mind comes to represent the external world, and how thought and language are acquired. On the other hand, epistemic internalism seems to succeed in accommodating our intuitions about the following: the kind of knowledge we wish to attribute to a cognitive mature human being; the relationship between knowledge, reason and rationality; the importance of the knower’s perspective, and the deontological character of epistemic justification. Before arguing for the compatibility of content externalism and epistemic internalism, it is crucial to clarify the theses involved in the debate.

Broadly speaking, content externalism claims that the content of (some) beliefs constitutively depends, at least in part, on objects and events in the outside world (content internalism being the thesis that the content of all beliefs completely depends on features “internal” to the subject). Of course, this is just a general definition, as many important differences should be made between: (i) physical (causal, perceptual) vs. social (linguistic); (ii) diachronic vs. synchronic; (iii) non-holistic vs. holistic; (iv) weak vs. strong, and (v) type vs. token externalism (LePore and Ludwig 2005; Amoretti 2011a). For the purpose of this paper, however, the relevant distinctions to consider are (i), (ii) and (iii), as follows.

First, physical (causal, perceptual) externalism claims that what determines the content of (some of) our beliefs is the external object or event that has actually caused it, while social (linguistic) externalism emphasises social practices, arguing that the content of (some of) our beliefs is determined by linguistic norms and conventions. Second, diachronic externalism holds that facts about our history of past causal interactions with our environment are of central importance to what content we actually have (at least to some of them). Some scholars claim that a specific past period, basically the learning period,

may be of special importance for the fixation of content, while others think that content is more or less continuously sensitive to causal interactions with the subject's environment for a long period stretching from the present into the past. Synchronic externalism argues that the content of (some of) our beliefs depends solely on our current environment and our dispositions to respond to it, so that content is not regarded as a historical fact about us, but rather as a fact about our potentialities in relation to our present surroundings. Third, non-holistic externalism maintains that the content of (some of) our beliefs depends solely on external objects and events in an atomic way, while holistic externalism holds that, even though the content of (some of) our beliefs depends on external factors, this dependence may not be its only component. Social factors and inferential relations among beliefs may be also fundamental in determining the content of a particular belief. This two-fold dependency implies that a difference in external factors must lead to a change of content, while the sameness of external factors does not automatically lead to the identity of content.

In what follows I will try to show that diachronic holistic content externalism (DHCE) has all the resources to be compatible with epistemic internalism.

(DHCE) Diachronic Holistic Content Externalism: the content of (some) beliefs constitutively depends on the causal history that has tied up the subject with a certain external object or event in connection with various other beliefs.

In other words, DHCE holds that mental content constitutively depends on the set of those specific circumstances in which the subject has learned and effectively used the beliefs at issue, circumstances which include external objects and events, social interactions, and relations with various other beliefs.

Moving to epistemology and epistemic internalism, a preliminary distinction between internalism about knowledge and justification should be made. The former simply claims that knowledge requires justification, while the latter holds that justification should be understood "internally" (externalism about knowledge being the thesis that knowledge does not require justification, and externalism about justification that justification should be understood "externally"). Here I shall refer to internalism about justification only, so epistemic internalism would be the thesis that justification is completely determined by "internal" conditions.

Another important difference concerns the kind of justification one wishes to consider. On the one hand, propositional justification is the justification for believing that  $p$  (which is like having a good reason for believing that  $p$ ). On the other hand, doxastic justification means being justified in believing that  $p$  (or having a justified belief, or basing one's belief on reasons). As doxastic justification may clearly depend on facts external to the subject (as in the causal

relations between beliefs and reasons), many scholars have pointed out that epistemic internalism should merely focus on propositional justification (Greco 2005; Fumerton 2007). I stick with that conclusion, so I shall refer to propositional justification only.

Given the above distinctions, epistemic internalism is the claim that the justification for a belief that *p* is completely determined by some features that are “internal” to the subject’s mind. To put it another way, whether a subject is justified in believing that *p* supervenes on some elements internal to the subject’s mind. This thesis, however, can be refined at least into three different claims, which have been dubbed *mentalism* (M), *accessibilism* (A), and “*strong*” *accessibilism* (SA).

(M) **Mentalism:** justification is completely determined by one’s own mental states.

M is a rather weak claim, as it simply holds that one’s own mental states (beliefs, propositional attitudes, perceptual states, and so on) completely determine the justificatory status of one’s particular belief that *p* (Conee and Feldman 2001). This means that even non-reflectively accessible mental states – as far as they are considered mental – can determine the justificatory status of one’s particular belief.

(A) **Accessibilism:** justification is completely determined by one’s own reflectively accessible states (that is by some elements to which the subject has special cognitive access).

To put it differently, A argues that reflectively accessible states completely determine the justificatory status of one’s particular belief that *p*. Talking about “accessibility” and “special access”, scholars typically refer to what is available from introspection or reflection alone, or *a priori*, without inference from observation of one’s behaviour, speech or environment (Audi 2010). Given this definition of A, the reason why focusing on propositional justification instead of doxastic justification becomes clear: while the causal origin of a belief could be inaccessible from introspection or reflection alone, the justificatory relationships between beliefs (such as whether or not *p* contradicts *q*) are instead accessible.

(SA) “**Strong**” **Accessibilism:** one’s own justificatory status must be reflectively accessible as well.

This latter thesis is the strongest claiming that, in order to have a justification for believing that *p*, the subject must have special access to her own justificatory status. This implies that, if the subject is unable to reflectively determine whether or not her belief that *p* is justified, then she is not justified in believing

that *p*. Again, the notion of special access refers to what is accessible by introspection or reflection alone, but it is important to note that the notion of special access should not be considered as referring to either direct or infallible knowledge, as coming to know one's own justificatory status certainly requires some reasoning. Even if it is quite demanding, SA probably best exemplifies our deep intuitions about epistemic internalism.

In the next section, I shall argue that, if we characterise content externalism as DHCE, then it would be compatible with epistemic internalism, no matter how the latter is typified, that is, as M, A, or SA.

### 3. Some anti-compatibilist arguments

Starting with M, it is easy to see that anti-compatibilism cannot get off the ground. If the basic tenet of epistemic internalism is that justification is completely determined by one's own mental states, then it is clearly compatible with DHCE (and, more generally, with content externalism), as beliefs are definitely mental states, however their content would actually be determined. As Earl Conee points out, if epistemic internalism "is the thesis that for epistemic purposes the 'internal' is the mental", then "since content externalism expands the factors that fix the mental, content externalism expands the supervenience base for justification according to mentalism" (Conee 2007: 51). We can therefore easily state that DHCE is compatible with M.

The alleged incompatibility between content externalism and A, and/or SA, depends on the widespread opinion that content externalism undermines the thesis of Privileged Access (PA), that is, the subject's ability to access the content of her own beliefs by introspection or reflection alone, or a *priori*, without inference from observation of her own behaviour, speech or environment. To put it generally, content externalism claims that (some) mental contents are determined, at least in part, by external factors, but those factors, being external, may be inaccessible to the subject from introspection or reflection alone; (some of) the subject's mental contents, then, may as well be inaccessible from introspection or reflection alone. If the subject may be unable to access the content of (some of) her own beliefs by introspection or reflection alone, then PA is denied. As a consequence, the subject may also ignore the content of some of her own beliefs, and thus be mistaken about what she actually believes.

The point is that the lack of PA undercuts both A and SA. The two arguments for incompatibilism run as follows. Against A: given content externalism, the subject may lack the ability to access the content of (some of) her own beliefs by introspection or reflection alone; thus, the subject may lack the ability to access by introspection or reflection alone (some of) the factors determining the justificatory status of (some of) her beliefs. Hence, some

introspectively or reflectively inaccessible states do contribute to determining the justificatory status of (some of) her beliefs. As justification is not completely determined by the subject's own accessible states, then A is false. Against SA: given content externalism, the subject may lack the ability to access by introspection or reflection alone the content of (some of) her own beliefs; thus, the subject may lack the ability to access by introspection or reflection alone her own justificatory status. As the subject's own justificatory status may be introspectively or reflectively inaccessible, then SA is false.

Generally speaking, it is not immediately clear whether content externalism undermines PA. Externalists generally claim that to rebut this objection it would be sufficient to note that what determines the content of our first-order beliefs (I believe that p), whatever it is, is also what determines the content of our corresponding second order beliefs (I believe to believe that p), leaving no room for error (Burge 1988, 1996; Heil 1988; Davidson 1987; Sainsbury and Tye 2012). Then, although the subject may obviously have false beliefs, she would still retain PA to the content of her own beliefs.

Two arguments have been introduced to resist this compatibilist solution. First, let us consider the likelihood of slow switching, of which the subject is not aware, between Earth and Twin Earth (Boghossian 1989; Goldberg 1997, 1999; Ludlow 1995, 1997). In this case, the possibility that a sample of transparent and odourless liquid is twin-water, instead of water, becomes a relevant alternative in order to evaluate whether a subject has PA to her own water-beliefs. Given the likelihood of slow switching and the fact that they are unnoticed by the subject, she would not be able to establish by introspection or reflection alone whether she has water-beliefs or twin-water-beliefs. This means that the subject would not be able to determine by introspection or reflection alone what her own current beliefs are. The argument runs as follows:

- (P1) Before the switch, on Earth, the subject has water-beliefs;
- (P2) After the switch, on Twin-Earth, the subject has twin-water-beliefs;
- (P3) The subject is unaware of the switch and cannot distinguish Earth from Twin-Earth by introspection or reflection alone;
- (P4) The subject does not know (or is unable to determine) by introspection or reflection alone whether she has water-beliefs or twin-water-beliefs;
- (C) Thus, the subject cannot reflectively access the content of her own beliefs.

Such a conclusion obviously implies that the subject would not be able to introspectively or reflectively access (some of) the states that determine the justificatory status of (some of) her own beliefs. Thus, some introspectively or reflectively inaccessible states would possibly determine the justificatory status of (some of) the subject's beliefs, which means the denial of A. Also, the subject

would not be able to introspectively or reflectively access her own justificatory status too, which means the denial of SA.

Against this argument some scholars have pointed out that, even if the subject is unable to determine by introspection or reflection alone whether she has water-beliefs or twin-water-beliefs, this does not undermine PA (Falvey and Owens 1994). Moreover, it has been noted that the current belief that  $p$  counts as evidence for the belief of believing that  $p$ , and this would be enough to rule out all possible alternatives, relevant or not (Sainsbury and Tye 2012).

Finally, the success of the argument strongly depends on what kind of content externalism is defended. According to DHCE, what determines content is the subject's causal history (together with holistic constraints). This means that, immediately after the switch, the subject would still have water-beliefs (at least for a certain amount of time), and the second premise would simply be false. Of course, as the subject stays on Twin-Earth long enough, the contents of her beliefs would change in relation to the new environment. The point is how exactly these contents would change (Brown 2004). Some scholars argue that, after the switch, the subject would come to have both water-beliefs and twin-water-beliefs, and thus defend the "two-concepts view" (Burge 1998; Gibbons 1996). Others think that, after the switch, the content would change from water to twin-water, and thus maintain the "replacement view" (Bernecker 1998; Brueckner 1997). However, as I argued elsewhere (Amoretti 2007, 2011b), there is a third alternative that can be dubbed "amalgam view" and better fits with DHCE: after the switch the content of the subject's belief would slowly change, as new causal interactions with the novel environment take place, having a sort of "amalgam" concept referring to both water and twin-water. In this case, the subject would still be able to introspectively or reflectively access not only the states determining the justificatory status of her own beliefs, but also their own justificatory status, which means that DHCE would still be compatible with both A and SA.

Another anti-compatibilist argument is based on a *reductio* (McKinsey 1991). Let us assume that the subject knows (or is able to determine) by introspection or reflection alone the following premises:

- (P1) She believes that water is wet [given PA];
- (P2) If she believes that water is wet, then some external fact holds [given content externalism];
- (C) Hence, some external fact holds.

This would mean that the subject knows (or is able to determine) by introspection or reflection alone that some external fact holds, such as that water exists; but this conclusion would be absurd. As a consequence, holding content externalism would lead to abandon PA, and then to admit the incompatibility with both A and SA.

This argument can be resisted in various ways. First, many content externalists would simply deny that (P2) can be known by introspection or reflection alone. Moreover, even admitting that (P2) can be known by introspection or reflection alone, the *reductio* can be resisted, as additional premises would be needed. According to Colin McGinn (1989), it would be necessary to add a premise stating that the subject also believes that the belief that water is wet contains an atomic, natural kind concept, but this can hardly be known *a priori*. Tyler Burge (1979) similarly argues that it would be necessary to add a premise asserting that the subject also believes that the belief that water is wet contains a deferential concept referring to a certain linguistic community; again, this cannot be known *a priori*. Finally, Donald Davidson (1990, 1991, 1995, 1997) would probably maintain the necessity of adding a premise claiming that the subject also believes that the belief that water is wet contains a perceptual concept that “anchors” mind and language to the world, and this claim too can hardly be known *a priori* (see Amoretti 2008; 2011). So, to conclude the discussion on the compatibility of PA with content externalism, we can state that DHCE is compatible with both A and SA.

Another anti-compatibilist strategy is to argue merely against the compatibility between content externalism and SA. This move is based on the conviction that content externalism undermines the thesis of Introspective Knowledge of Comparative Concepts (IKCC) – the basic issue clearly being that the lack of IKCC would undermine SA. IKCC can be seen as the conjunction of two theses:

- i) Transparency of sameness of content (TSC): for any couple of a subject’s beliefs that *p* and that *q* entertained at a certain time *t*, if the beliefs that *p* and that *q* have the same content, then at *t* the subject knows by introspection or reflection alone that they have the same content.
- ii) Transparency of difference of content (TDC): for any couple of a subject’s beliefs that *p* and that *q* entertained at a certain time *t*, if the beliefs that *p* and that *q* have a different content, then at *t* the subject knows by introspection or reflection alone that they have a different content.

Given content externalism, a subject with two occurring beliefs, that *p* and that *q*, may not be able to establish by introspection or reflection alone whether the beliefs that *p* and that *q* have the same (or a different) content. If this is the case, then the subject cannot introspectively or reflectively grasp all the logical relations between these beliefs. As logical relations affect the justificatory status of one’s beliefs, the subject would not introspectively or reflectively know whether (some of) her beliefs are justified, and thus she would lack *a priori* access to the justificatory status of (some of) her beliefs. Accordingly, SA would be false (even if the subject might not be able to establish by introspection or reflection alone whether *p* and *q* have the same or a different



content, this does not affect A, as long as one admits that the subject has access to her own contents by introspection or reflection alone).

Two arguments have been developed to support the anti-compatibilist conclusion. First, let us suppose that, even if cilantro and coriander are clearly the same herb, the subject does not know that. The argument would run as follows:

- (P1) The subject believes that cilantro is used in Mexican dishes [hypothesis];
- (P2) The subject believes that coriander is used in Mexican dishes [hypothesis];
- (P3) The two beliefs have the same content [given content externalism];
- (P4) As the subject ignores that cilantro and coriander are the same herb, she cannot establish by introspection or reflection alone that the two beliefs have the same content [as the subject needs to make an empirical investigation to discover the identity between cilantro and coriander];
- (C) Thus, the subject cannot introspectively or reflectively grasp all the logical relations between her beliefs.

This conclusion would imply that the subject may lack introspective or reflective access to the justificatory status of (some of) her beliefs. Accordingly, SA would be false. There are various ways to resist this reasoning, but endorsing DHCE allows one to reject (P3), that is the idea that the belief that cilantro is used in Mexican dishes and the belief that coriander is used in Mexican dishes have the very same content. According to DHCE, what gives content to our beliefs is not the external cause by itself, but rather the specific causal history that has tied up the subject with a certain external object in connection with many other beliefs. To put it differently, the content is determined by the set of those specific circumstances, encompassing both causal chains and holistic relationships, in which the subject has acquired the concepts and effectively learned the beliefs at issue. As I argued elsewhere, if this externalist position holds, then there would be two different beliefs and thus no sameness of content where the anti-compatibilists see it (Amoretti 2007).

The second argument, which is based on the likelihood of slow switches and the fact that they are unnoticed by the subject, runs as follows:

- (P1) At *t*, the subject believes that, as a child, she lived near a river full of spring water [she were on Earth and thus, given externalism, her belief refers to water];
- (P2) At *t*, the subject believes that now she lives near a river full of spring water [she is now on Twin-Earth and thus, given externalism, her belief refers to twin-water];
- (P3) The two beliefs have a different content [given externalism];

(P4) As the subject is unaware of the switch and cannot distinguish Earth from Twin-Earth, she cannot establish by introspection or reflection alone that the two beliefs have a different content [as the subject needs to make an empirical investigation to distinguish Earth from Twin-Earth];

(C) Thus, the subject cannot introspectively or reflectively grasp all the logical relations between her beliefs.

This conclusion would obviously imply that the subject may lack introspective or reflective access to the justificatory status of (some of) her beliefs. Accordingly, SA would be false. In this respect, we have already seen that the plausibility of this line of argument strongly depends on how the subject's contents would actually change: only the "two-concepts view" would be challenged by the objection. On the contrary, holding the "amalgam view", the option that better fits with DHCE, the objection is immediately blocked. This means that DHCE is still compatible with SA.

More generally, and more importantly, there are some strong doubts about the very plausibility of IKCC. If this is so, then the possibility that content externalism would undermine IKCC would not be a problem for compatibilism itself. According to some scholars, requiring IKCC would be too strong a request, as there are some important analogies with perception (Sainsbury and Tye 2012). Let us think about illusions (as the Muller-Lyer illusion): in similar cases, we could perceive the same (or a different) object without recognising that it is the same (or a different) object. Moreover, the notion of rationality that is implicit in IKCC seems to be too strong: as sameness and difference of content can be determined through empirical investigation, it does not seem legitimate to pretend that they must be judged by introspection or reflection alone. The very philosophers who criticise compatibilism agree that rationality does not depend on the number of true beliefs that a subject holds, but on the logical relations linking these beliefs. And logical relations, by definition, leave aside the content of the beliefs involved. For instance, a subject would be irrational if, believing that  $a \rightarrow b$  and  $b \rightarrow c$ , she fails to recognise that  $a \rightarrow c$ ; but she should be regarded as rational if she believes that  $a \rightarrow b$  and  $c \rightarrow d$  but, ignoring that  $b = c$ , fails to recognise that  $a \rightarrow d$ , as the fact that  $b = c$  (or  $b \neq c$ ) can only be determined through empirical investigation, not by introspection or reflection alone.

For example, let us assume that a subject believes both that someone shot John Locke, and that nobody shot John Locke. It would be essential to distinguish cases where the subject is aware to hold contradictory beliefs (in this case she should be judged irrational) from cases where the subject ignores to hold contradictory beliefs, for instance, believing that someone shot John Locke (taking this claim to refer to the character of Lost), and that nobody shot John Locke (mistakenly taking this claim to refer to the philosopher). In this latter case the subject would believe falsely, but rationally and would be justified in

doing so, that someone shot John Locke and that nobody shot John Locke (Sainsbury and Tye 2012). When the aim is judging the subject's own rationality, it does not matter if she has true or false beliefs. The subject can legitimately make some inferences that are coherent with her overall knowledge, even if they are wrong from a metaphysical perspective. These inferences, in fact, can be perfectly compatible with the subject's whole set of beliefs, even though they lead to a basically wrong conclusion due to the fact that our perspective is limited and fallible. If we take as a criterion for rationality the transparency of mental content, we fail to consider one fundamental characteristic of doxastic contexts, i.e., the fact that they are opaque.

#### *4. Some consequences of compatibilism*

Having granted compatibilism between content externalism and epistemic internalism (in its various forms), it is now possible to evaluate some of its consequences. In this respect, I wish to argue that, by combining content externalism and epistemic internalism, one may discover an interesting way to accommodate the constitutive link between justification and truth. However, I shall point out that this conclusion may work for M and A, but it is more problematic and less convincing as far as SA is concerned.

According to some critics, epistemic internalism would fail to accommodate the link between justification and truth, as it does not explain how justification relates to truth, or even denies the necessity of any relation between justification and truth; whether one's belief is likely to be true is not determined by either one's own mental states or one's own introspectively or reflectively accessible states. However, granting the link between justification and truth would be important for epistemic internalism, as this would help to distinguish epistemic justification from non-epistemic justification (such as prudential, pragmatic or moral justification). Content externalism may help to accommodate this missing link by showing that beliefs are, by their own nature, veridical (Davidson 1990).

Broadly speaking, some scholars (for a review, see Brueckner 2016) have variously argued that content externalism, possibly combined with PA, may have some important epistemological consequences, such as:

- i) that we are not brains in a vat;
- ii) that a coherent set of beliefs cannot be totally or even largely false;
- iii) that it is highly probable that a coherent set of beliefs is not totally or even largely false;
- iv) that perceptual beliefs cannot be totally or even largely false, and
- v) that it is highly probable that perceptual beliefs are not totally or even largely false.

Let us consider DHCE: the content of (some) beliefs is determined by the causal history that has tied up the subject with a certain external object or event in connection with various other beliefs. This seems to imply that a coherent set of beliefs cannot be totally or even largely false. To put it another way, if one has beliefs at all, then DHCE guarantees that a set of beliefs cannot be totally or largely false, in particular as far as perceptual beliefs are concerned. Probably, as I tried to show in previous works (Amoretti 2011b, 2008b, a), DHCE has weaker consequences, such as:

- i) that a coherent set of beliefs cannot always have been totally or even largely false, or
- ii) that it is highly probable that a coherent set of beliefs would not always have been totally or even largely false.

To begin, let us apply the above consequences of DHCE to M (justification is completely determined by one's own mental states) and A (justification is completely determined by one's own reflectively accessible states). With some simplifications, we can say that in both cases justification is completely determined by reasons in the form of other (reflectively accessible) beliefs. Two classic theories of justification are typically regarded as internalist in this sense, that is, coherentism and foundationalism.

According to coherentism, all justified beliefs are inferentially justified, that is they cohere with a significant number of other beliefs. The basic idea is that there is a presumption in favour of the truth of a belief that coheres with a vast array of other beliefs, and every belief thus counts as justified in the light of such a presumption. However, a set of (at least) *largely true* beliefs is needed to secure the above presumption, and coherence alone cannot guarantee that a coherent set of beliefs is largely true (Davidson 1983, 1990). On the contrary, content externalism seems to be able to do the job granting at least that a coherent set of beliefs cannot be (or cannot always have been) totally or even largely false – or that it is highly probable that a coherent set of beliefs is not (has not always have been) totally or even largely false. If a belief coheres with a vast array of beliefs, which is not totally or even largely false, then the presumption in favour of its truth, and thus its justification, is secured.

A similar reasoning can be made for foundationalism, according to which all justified beliefs ultimately rest upon a foundation of non-inferentially justified beliefs, such as perceptual beliefs (or self-evident beliefs, etc.). Here the basic idea is that there is a presumption in favour of the truth of a belief that rest upon some non-inferentially justified beliefs, such as perceptual beliefs (which derive their justification from some non-doxastic perceptual states), and every belief thus counts as justified in the light of such a presumption. However, perceptual beliefs must be largely true to secure the above presumption, and perception alone cannot guarantee that. Again, content externalism seems at least to be able

to grant that one's own perceptual beliefs cannot be totally or even largely false – or that it is highly probable that one's own perceptual beliefs are not totally or even largely false. If a belief rests upon non-inferentially justified beliefs, such as perceptual beliefs, which are not totally or even largely false, then the presumption in favour of its truth, and thus its justification, is secured.

In both cases, content externalism seems to be able to provide the link between justification and truth that was missing from internalist theories of justification, at least conceiving them as M or A. But what about SA? I feel that, in this case, the above results would be useless. According to SA, a subject must be aware by introspection or reflection alone of her justificatory status. This means that she must be aware, by introspection or reflection alone, not only that a belief that *p* coheres with many other coherent beliefs, but also that there are good reasons to assume that cohering beliefs cannot be totally or even largely false (alternatively, not only that a belief that *p* rests upon some non-inferentially justified beliefs such perceptual beliefs, but also that there are good reasons to assume that perceptual beliefs cannot be totally or even largely false). This would be quite difficult, as it requires that the subject knows content externalism and its consequences, which is highly improbable.

To conclude, at least some kinds of content externalism, such as DHCE, are compatible with epistemic internalism in all its forms. By combining content externalism and epistemic internalism, one may discover an interesting way to accommodate the constitutive link between justification and truth – a way that can hardly be provided by epistemic internalism alone. However, this result obtains for M and A, while it is more problematic and unconvincing as far as SA is concerned.

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