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VERBAL DISPUTES AND THE INTERNALISM/EXTERNALISM
DEBATE IN EPISTEMOLOGY

by

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DEDICATION

For Emily who encourages the philosophy in me.

ABSTRACT

It is common to find philosophers attempting to resolve long-standing philosophical debates by regarding them as verbal disputes. Looking at those debates which are commonly regarded as verbal disputes we can detect two kinds of verbal disputes: (STDC) cases in which disputing parties apply the Same Term or phrase to Different Concepts; (DTSC) cases in which disputing parties apply Different Terms or phrases to the Same Concept.

While cases of (STDC) or (DTSC) may be verbal disputes, I will argue that (STDC) and (DTSC) are neither necessary nor sufficient conditions for a verbal dispute. I will explore the identity of a verbal dispute, the conditions for its occurrence, and methods for detecting it. I develop a condition for verbal disputes which I call the Principle of Equal Power:

(PEP) For any dispute to be a verbal dispute requires that the linguistic frameworks of the disputing parties have equal powers to express the parties' undisputed beliefs – albeit expressed in different ways.

This condition is similar to the conditions developed by numerous verbal dispute theorists. In most cases we will not be able to analytically detect that (PEP) is satisfied. I argue that the best method for detecting when (PEP) is satisfied is an empirical method which attempts to test a sufficient number of relevant conceptual scenarios to assess whether the linguistic frameworks of each side have equal powers to express the same beliefs. Only then can we conclude that we most likely have a verbal dispute.

I will take up the internalism vs. externalism debate in epistemology and address compatibilist arguments which treat the debate as a verbal dispute. While there are a variety of brands of internalism and externalism, internalism may be defined broadly as the claim that some state internal to the agent is necessary and/or sufficient in order for that agent to be justified or for the agent to have knowledge. Externalism is the denial of this thesis. Broadly, externalism is the claim that external conditions are necessary and/or sufficient for an agent to be justified or for the agent to have knowledge.

Even though the internalism/externalism debate fits the (STDC) paradigm, this does not prove that it is a verbal dispute. In this thesis, I will argue that in the history of the internalism/externalism debate we have seen the empirical method at work through the use of test cases (even though epistemologists may not have been very self-aware of the methodology). The fact that the test cases offered by both internalists and externalists have had persuasive power in the debate between them is strong indication that they share significant overlap in their epistemological beliefs. Thus, we can employ an empirical method to determine which view has greater powers to express these shared beliefs. Though there are ways in which particular internalist/externalist debates could be compatible, there are also incompatible ones. Thus, we cannot say that internalism and externalism in epistemology are wholly compatible. Among the debates which seem incompatible, we will have to decide which view is correct by assessing which side has greater powers to express the undisputed beliefs. In the meantime, we have no good reason to think that the internalism/externalism debate is, on the whole, a verbal dispute.

INTRODUCTION

In the past two decades philosophers have begun to pay closer attention to the subject of verbal disputes. It is common to find philosophers who consider longstanding philosophical debates to be verbal disputes.¹ A verbal dispute approach to problems in philosophy focuses on the nature of philosophical debates in order to help us decide whether or not these debates are only offering a choice between linguistic options rather than a choice between claims to fact. By identifying verbal disputes in philosophy, philosophers hope to solve debates, not by proving one side in a debate and disproving another, but by dissolving the debate itself as they demonstrate that it is not a meaningful debate. In this way, identifying verbal disputes counts as a kind of philosophical progress.

One usually finds verbal dispute claims in metaontology, addressing debates such as endurantism vs. perdurantism, restricted vs. unrestricted composition, and Platonism vs. nominalism about numbers. However, it can be and has been extended to other philosophical debates as well. In the past decade, numerous philosophers have begun to argue that the internalism/externalism debates in epistemology are unnecessary debates since they consider internalism and externalism to be compatible.² Though there

¹ See Chalmers 2009, Hirsch 2005 and 2009, and Alston 2005.

² In this essay, I go back and forth between using the words “debate” and “dispute”. In keeping with the terminology that has developed, when referring to disagreement between internalists and externalists, I will usually call it a “debate” and when considering whether or not it is a meaningful debate I will use the terms “verbal dispute” and “substantive dispute”. In this context, I do not intend “debate” and

are two largely-related internalism/externalism debates in epistemology—one about justification and the other about knowledge—I will focus primarily on the debate about justification. The compatibilist view is represented in the following statements:

It is my conviction that the intuitions that motivate both [internalism and externalism] are important epistemologically, and that both define issues that must be addressed in a theory of knowledge. Hence, they can and should be understood as compatible doctrines (Sennett 1992, p. 641).

It is very likely that there are different equally good ways to fashion [the practice of achieving our epistemic goals], some internalist and some externalist. If that's the case, then we should no longer argue about whether internalism or externalism is true. They would both be true, albeit true of different (but equally good) epistemological practices (Neta 2006, p. 272).

“When people who use different concepts [for justification]...argue as to which has the correct view as to what it is for a belief to be justified or what the conditions are for that, they are not really disagreeing but simply arguing past each other” (Alston 2005, p. 27).

Suppose that an internalist foundationalist holds that a belief is justified if it is rationally grounded in evidence available to the subject, while an externalist reliabilist holds that a belief is justified if it is produced by a truth-conducive method. If we apply the subscript gambit, is there a residual disagreement over justification_1 and justification_2 ? In many cases, this is far from obvious. It may be that the parties can agree that justified_1 beliefs go with having reasons and certain subjective norms, while justified_2 beliefs go with getting things right and with certain objective norms. In this case, the original dispute was very likely verbal.” (Chalmers 2009, p. 15).

While Sennett and Neta do not directly claim that the internalism/externalism debate is a verbal dispute, the upshot of their claims that the two views are compatible is that any resulting dispute is not substantive. Regardless of whether or not they would

“dispute” to have different meanings. Thus, no importance should be attached to my different uses of these terms.

consider the debate to be a verbal dispute, their arguments lend support to this conclusion.

Before I assess whether the internalism/externalism debate is a verbal dispute, I want to get clear on the identity of verbal disputes, under what conditions they take place, and the methods for identifying them. Following that I want to consider compatibilist arguments in light of the conclusions I have drawn regarding verbal disputes and determine whether or not the internalism/externalism debate is, in fact, a verbal dispute.

What Verbal Disputes Are and When They Occur

The value of a debate turning out to be a verbal dispute is that it brings resolution to it. Naturally, philosophers want to engage in debates that are substantive and not cases of people arguing past one another. So to claim that a dispute is verbal is to say that it is not substantive, and to say that it is not substantive is to conclude that the importance of the debate is greatly diminished or that debate should be dropped altogether.

A common way of putting this, which we have already seen from Alston above, is to say that each side is talking past the other. While I think this way of talking about verbal disputes is largely uncontroversial, it isn't very helpful for understanding what a verbal dispute is, for we still want to know what it means to "talk past one another".

We can get a better picture of a verbal dispute by putting it in context of what we think disagreements should be about. When we disagree, we like to think that the

difference between us and those we disagree with is not just the language we choose but a difference between truth-values. We want to disagree about more than just the way we talk about something. We want to disagree about facts. Thus, we might think that verbal disputes occur when both sides agree about the facts of the matter. However, this definition is too strict. Even in cases where both sides are speaking truth we may not have a verbal dispute.

We can have substantive disputes when each side is speaking truth, when one side is speaking truth and another is speaking falsehood, or when both sides are speaking falsehood. As I will argue below, even in cases where each side is speaking truth, how one expresses that truth may have deep consequences for one's ability to express other important truths. It's worth considering how we detect that each side is speaking truth in different languages. Speaking the *same* truth requires that what each side is saying has the same meaning. But the fact that the claims of each side have identical truth-values cannot tell us that they have the same meaning. The same goes for when each side is speaking falsehood. Their statements may have the same truth value, but this should not be taken to entail that their statements have the same meaning. Intuitively, even if the disputed claims did have the same truth-value but nevertheless led to a substantive difference, we would not consider this a verbal dispute. A proper definition of a verbal dispute will have to drop the truth requirement and instead require that the claims involved not be attributable to substantive differences. I will explore this further below.

There are different kinds of verbal disputes as well. There are at least two ways in which we can differentiate verbal disputes: (STDC) each side is using the same

terms or phrases as another to express different concepts; (DTSC) each side is using different terms or phrases to express the same concepts. Now these conditions are not, by themselves, sufficient to bring about a verbal dispute. And this fact is relevant for understanding why ‘talking past one another’ is not a suitable definition of a verbal dispute. Though it is a minor point, (STDC) and (DTSC) may turn out to only result in misunderstanding and not a dispute. In which case, we would have two people *talking* past one another, but not two people *disputing*.

I tell you that I spent all day at the bank. You then remark that it was a beautiful day to go to the bank (a comment I find a little odd). However, by ‘bank’ I mean a financial institution where money is kept and loaned, whereas by ‘bank’ you mean the edge of a river. Or, you tell me that your favorite sport is lacrosse, and I tell you that mine is basketball. Though neither of us is aware of it, we both have the same favorite sport, since I think basketball is lacrosse.³ In neither case are we disputing, yet in both cases we are talking past one another. Thus for a verbal dispute to occur, we need more than just (STDC) and (DTSC). Rather than just talk past one another, each of us has to engage in a disagreement. That is, the ‘dispute’ part of a verbal dispute is necessary, too.

Even this is not enough, however. For a verbal dispute to occur, the misunderstanding and the argument must be attributable to either (STDC) or (DTSC) above. Unless the argument is attributable to either (STDC) or (DTSC) we could have

³ Cases of (DTSC) can be found in abundance in popular culture. Consider this case from the animated Disney film *Peter Pan* (1953). Speaking to the lost boys, precocious John states, “I should most like to see the aborigines.” Little brother, Michael, responds, “Yeah, and the Indians, too!”

disputes which satisfy (STDC) or (DTSC) but are clearly not verbal disputes. You and I argue over whether or not Ritchie is rich. You say he is; I say he's not. By "rich" you mean 'wealthy by third-world standards', and by "rich" I mean 'wealthy by first-world standards'. This scenario satisfies (STDC). However, the dispute could be unattributable to this fact. If you think he's rich by either standard and I think he's rich by neither, then our dispute is unattributable to the fact that we are both applying the same term to different concepts. Thus, even though we have a dispute which involves (STDC), this doesn't entail that we are having a verbal dispute.

We still need other conditions. Some disputes can be attributable to (STDC) and still be substantive. Two people are arguing about abortion. One is pro-life, the other pro-choice. In particular, they are disputing whether a fetus is a person. This is a case of (STDC) since the dispute concerns what concept(s) to which we should connect the term 'person'. But I don't think we could call this a verbal dispute.

David Chalmers mentions several cases in which the terminology we attach to our concepts makes important differences. In a court of law, how we define "marriage" or "murder" will have significant impact on people's lives. How we define "torture" or "terrorism" will affect what kind of punishments we hand out or do not hand out. According to Chalmers, these are still verbal disputes, albeit substantive verbal disputes. They are not, however, *mere* verbal disputes (Chalmers 2009, p. 2). Chalmers' taxonomy of disputes, although not always clear, appears to divide between non-substantive disputes and substantive disputes with a merely verbal dispute entailing a non-substantive dispute, and a verbal dispute falling under either category under various circumstances. I

differ with several philosophers in that I do not prefer to distinguish between verbal disputes and *mere* verbal disputes.⁴ I take verbal disputes to be equivalent to non-substantive disputes. However, there's no sense in risking a verbal dispute about verbal disputes. My ordering can most likely be accommodated to the others' and vice versa. The important point here is that there can be different types of (STDC)-cases. Some will be substantive other non-substantive. If we consider, as I do, that a verbal dispute is the opposite of a substantive dispute, then it is clear that (STDC) does not, by itself, render a dispute verbal – even when the dispute is attributable to (STDC).

However, I'm inclined to think the dispute over 'person' that I mentioned above is significantly different than the examples Chalmers uses. Chalmers' cases mostly revolve around the importance of fixing the definition because of the practical consequences. He argues that these are cases of verbal disputes that are, nevertheless, important disputes because of the consequences we've attached to them (Chalmers 2009, p. 2). The personhood case seems to be substantive for reasons besides the practical consequences involved in defining 'person'.

First, there is significant overlap between each party's concept of person. They both believe that whatever a person is, it has a certain dignity and rights not possessed by non-persons. In fact it is possible that two people use 'person' with the same intension and extension in every case except when applied to life in a human womb. In this case, we can't take Chalmers approach (which I will outline further below) which would simply call one use of the term "person₁" and the other "person₂". Both sides seem

⁴ For those who draw the distinction, see Sider 2006, Chalmers 2009, and Jenkins 2009.

to be agreed on the role they want ‘person’ to play, so claiming that they are using it in different ways is not altogether true. The debate isn’t dissolved just by observing that they are using the same term with different concepts. To a very high degree they attach the same concepts to ‘person’, and then they want to know if the additional concept of fetus should or should not be included as an intension of the term ‘person’ which they’ve already agreed has a great deal of content.

Second, it may be that the personhood case also differs because ‘person’ is a natural-kind term. Presumably, the division between persons and non-persons is a natural division. Never mind whether there can be vague cases of persons or for what reasons the cases may be vague. On this construal, the divide between persons and non-persons—sharp or not—is a distinction drawn by nature. I think the slogan that we should “carve nature at its joints” is correct wherever we are able to identify natural joints. However, identifying natural joints his has proved a challenging project.⁵ So I’m cautious in identifying ‘person’ as a natural-kind term, but if it is, then our use should correspond to nature’s divides. Still, I think part of the reason most of us afford a certain dignity to persons in a way we do not to non-persons is that we think that nature provides the distinction between persons and non-persons.⁶ We don’t think the dignity of persons could be altered simply by changing our referents of the term ‘person’. So a debate over

⁵ There are several challenges to the project carving nature at the joints: ontological anti-realism, ontological pluralism, epistemicism, and strict forms of semantic vagueness.

⁶ Some ethicists, most notably Peter Singer, have challenged the belief that nature divides between persons and non-persons along the distinction between humans and non-humans (See Singer 2002). However, that the dignity of a person comes from nature is a shared belief with those who divide between persons and non-persons along traditional lines.

person may be an attempt to decide whose language best carves nature at its joints.⁷ If we have a natural-kind case, it would make our language choice substantive since the best use is that which corresponds to the joints in nature. Both the term and the concept would be valuable in this case. Thus, knowing that each side is just applying different concepts to the same term wouldn't take us any further in resolving the dispute.

Methods of Identifying Verbal Disputes

Chalmers has suggested a heuristic for identifying and handling verbal disputes in (STDC)-type cases which calls for eliminating the disputed term and replacing it with a neutral term to see if any substantive dispute remains.

To apply this method to a dispute over a sentence S that is potentially verbal with respect to term T , one proceeds as follows. First: one bars the use (and the mention) of term T . Second: one tries to find a sentence S' in the newly restricted vocabulary such that the parties disagree nonverbally over S' , and such that the disagreement over S' is part of the dispute over S . Third: If there is such an S' , the dispute over S is not wholly verbal, or at least there is a substantive dispute in the vicinity. Fourth: If there is no such S' , then the dispute over S is wholly verbal (Chalmers 2009, pp. 10-11).

However, as Chalmers recognizes, sometimes we won't be able to find neutral terms. This could be for one of two reasons. We have reached a bedrock concept or we have exhausted our vocabulary options. In cases of vocabulary exhaustion, the language in use simply isn't rich enough to allow us to go any further. These cases are false positives. We have no neutral terms but we may not have reached a substantive dispute.

⁷ Ted Sider argues that there can be best candidates for terms not just according to use, but according to "intrinsic eligibility" which is decided according to joints in nature (Sider 2001, pp. xxii-xxiii).

Chalmers thinks that given the rich languages we have for expression, vocabulary exhaustion will rarely occur. Yet, Chalmers acknowledges that the method of elimination can't always reveal whether we have a case of vocabulary exhaustion or a case involving a bedrock concept. In these cases one must determine independently which it is (Chalmers 2009, p. 13).

I think cases in which the method of elimination can't distinguish between vocabulary exhaustion and bedrock concepts will be far more common than Chalmers acknowledges. Like others, I question the ready abundance of neutral terminology (see Manley 2009, p. 13). Thus, I think there will be far more cases in which we have to decide independent from Chalmers' method of elimination whether we've reached vocabulary exhaustion or a verbal dispute. In most philosophical debates, disputing parties naturally attempt to get clarity about any linguistic differences between them. Even without employing Chalmers' method, disputing parties will have already tried to state their differences in other terms and will usually have reduced them as far as they can by their lights.

Furthermore, even if we manage to find a neutral vocabulary, I don't think it will be obvious that this is a verbal dispute. If parties A and B are disputing what concept to attach to T , they are unlikely to be satisfied by attaching T_A to A's concept and T_B to B's concept. They will still want to know whether T is T_A or T_B . Ultimately, I suspect that Chalmers' method of elimination won't be as widely useful as he thinks, and we will have to rely on other methods of identifying verbal disputes.

For those cases in which the method of elimination doesn't yield clear results, Chalmers offers us a crude method for deciding between bedrock concepts (and thus, a substantive dispute) and verbal disputes. Regarding the mind physicalism debate, he says,

A proponent could try suggesting that 'physicalism' is bedrock, and that no further progress can be made by barring the term. But...this move is implausible. *It seems that if two parties agree on all the truths in non-'physicalism'-involving language, then any further dispute over 'physicalism' will be broadly verbal* (Chalmers 2009, p. 20. Emphasis added).

I take it that Chalmers intends this to bring greater clarity in cases where his method of elimination cannot. If it turns out that both parties agree on all truths expressed in non-disputed language, then it will turn out that they're engaged in a verbal dispute. There are several allowances that we need to afford Chalmers at this point. It isn't just truths that parties need to agree on. It could be that there are some important false beliefs that they need to share for the dispute to be verbal. For an argument over whether or not there are black unicorns to be a verbal dispute, there need not be any unicorns at all. What we need are beliefs they agree on, not true ones.

So we can revise Chalmers claim to say that the parties need to agree on all their beliefs expressed in non-disputed language. But this isn't quite right either. Surely they don't need agreement on *all* beliefs expressed in non-disputed language. There are some beliefs that could be expressed in non-disputed language which they need not share in order to be parties to a verbal dispute. Allowances permitted, we can take Chalmers' alternative method to claim that we have a verbal dispute when two parties are in agreement on all relevant beliefs expressed in non-disputed language.

Eli Hirsch employs a method similar to Chalmer's method of elimination. He claims that a verbal dispute occurs when each party should agree that the other is speaking truth in its own language (Hirsch 2009, p. 239). We will be able to detect a verbal dispute "only if the following condition is satisfied: Each side can plausibly interpret the other side as speaking a language in which the latter's asserted sentences are true" (Hirsch 2009, p. 231). Hirsch thinks that before we can see that this condition is satisfied we need to have the right attitude toward the language of an opposing party. We must employ what Hirsch calls, the principle of interpretive charity: "All else being equal, an interpretation's plausibility is proportionate to the interpreter's effort to make the assertions of a linguistic framework come out true or, at the least, as reasonable as possible" (Hirsch 2005, p. 71). I take it that is an important requirement. One party's decision that another party isn't speaking truth in a different language shouldn't rely on an unwillingness to interpret the other party's language in a way that allows it to be as true as possible. According to Hirsch, so long as we operate with interpretive charity we can check this condition by translating the language of each party into the language of the other(s). Thus, in a dispute between perdurantists and endurantists, he claims that any perdurantist sentence we should be able to find a translation into endurantist language (Hirsch 2009, p. 245).

It seems to me, however, that Hirsch and Chalmers aren't offering us much of a methodology beyond pointing out the conditions for verbal disputes. On Chalmers' method we will have cases where the method of elimination won't do, at which point he tells us that we'll need to look to see if each side agrees on the relevant beliefs expressed

in non-disputed language. I think agreeing on the relevant beliefs expressed in non-disputed language is a pretty good criterion, but just looking to see if the criterion is met isn't much of a method. Except in a few obvious cases, I don't see how we'll be able to tell by looking at the face of things that we have a verbal dispute.

Likewise, Hirsch thinks we should try translating the languages from one to another. Even with opposing parties interpreting as charitably as possible, it will rarely be obvious that each is speaking truth in its own language. When looking at our translations we still have to determine that it is an accurate translation. Once again, we need more methodology. Interpretive charity will, at most, correct the intention to paint the opposing framework in the worst light, but it can't tell even well-meaning translators whether they've expressed the same claim in a different language. Working with what Hirsch and Chalmers give us, I think we are left with a methodology gap. The criterion is doing double duty: as criterion and as carrying most of the methodological weight for identifying verbal disputes.

I don't deny the accuracy of Hirsch's and Chalmers' criterion. In fact, it seems it is becoming something of a consensus in the literature (though there is some disagreement about whether it is necessary and/or sufficient criteria (See Jenkins 2009, p. 10).

There are others who consider something like Hirsch's and Chalmers' criterion to be involved in some way for understanding the conditions of a dispute. Stephen Yablo claims that a question like: “Are there Xs?” is moot iff hypotheses φ that presuppose Xs are systematically equivalent (modulo π) to hypotheses $\alpha(\varphi)$ about how

matters stand X s aside" (Yablo 2009, p. 524). Understanding that, for Yablo, "moot" seems to function relatively similar to our verbal dispute, it's not hard to see how much Yablo's criterion shares in common with Hirsch's and Chalmers'. Stipulating mootness as a case in which the hypotheses that presuppose that there are X s are systematically equivalent to hypotheses that don't sounds a lot like Chalmers' stipulating (with the aforementioned allowances) that we have a verbal dispute when there's agreement between parties on all relevant beliefs expressed in non-disputed language.

John Hawthorne suggests a criterion for substantive disputes that is complimentary to Hirsch's and Chalmers' verbal dispute criterion. "Let us say that a theorist x intensionally advances over theorist y when there is some true intension that x accepts that y does not" (Hawthorne 2009, p. 220). Hirsch, Chalmers (minus the allowances), and Hawthorne all mention truth as a criterion in some way (though Hawthorne drops the truth condition later in his essay). As I stated about Chalmers, I think that a truth condition is too strict. In this case, we can widen Hawthorne's criterion a bit to say that a theorist x intensionally advances over theorist y when there is some relevant shared belief that x 's argument permits that y 's does not. The upshot of this then is that (presumably) we will have a verbal dispute when x 's and y 's arguments permit the same relevant undisputed beliefs. Again, the reason that requiring truth is too strict is that we can have verbal disputes which are not choices between truth and falsehood. What matters is that they have undisputed beliefs, not true undisputed beliefs.

Hawthorne's original criterion, as well as our modification of Hawthorne's criterion has an all-or-nothing component. Intensional advancement happens when

there's acceptance/permission. However, I think we can see a way in which advancement can be cashed out in terms of degrees. So I think we will need to change the all-or-nothing condition into something which allows degrees of intensional advancement.

A Collective Condition for Verbal Disputes

Dropping the truth condition from the above criteria, we can combine the virtues of the above criteria and offer the following criterion for a verbal dispute which I call the Principle of Equal Power:

(PEP) For any dispute to be a verbal dispute requires that the linguistic frameworks of the disputing parties entail equal powers to express the parties' undisputed beliefs – albeit expressed in different ways.⁸

With (PEP), I've tried to state more clearly what I think each of the above criterion-candidates is aiming at, while also avoiding the problems of including a truth condition. I take it that (PEP) will be fairly uncontroversial. Rather than a strict requirement that each side express truth, it only requires equal powers of expressing undisputed beliefs – whether true or not.

By differentiating between disputed and undisputed beliefs we can isolate whatever beliefs not considered part of the dispute and consider what consequences the language choice might have for those beliefs. If both languages entail the same power of expression regarding all undisputed beliefs, then the parties are engaged in a verbal dispute. Stated negatively, we can say, as regards

⁸ (PEP) should not be taken to require that the agent's employing a linguistic framework actually possess equal powers to express the parties' undisputed beliefs. For reasons not having to do with the linguistic framework, an agent may lack equal powers to express the parties' undisputed beliefs (e.g., an agent could be intoxicated, less educated, less gifted at speaking, etc.).

their undisputed beliefs, so long as one party's linguistic framework doesn't entail less power of expression than the other party's linguistic framework they are engaged in a verbal dispute. The thought is that if the choice between frameworks doesn't entail a significant difference with regard to powers to express those beliefs they don't disagree on, then it's hard to see how we could have a substantive dispute. Now, we could, of course, attach some practical consequence to the use of one framework (as in those cases Chalmer's mentions) even though it has equal linguistic power with another framework, but this won't relate to powers of expression, only the consequences of the difference in expression.

What might a difference in expressive powers look like? I find that a difference in linguistic powers could manifest in four ways: (1) it could entail a contradiction with some mutual intuition between disputing parties or perhaps an intuition held by only one party, requiring one to give up the intuition or accommodate the linguistic framework to give it power to express that intuition; (2) a change in language could entail an unexpected logical contradiction in one's overall framework; (3) a linguistic difference could entail that the framework is weaker to express shared beliefs between the parties; (4) a linguistic difference may not fit as well with an accepted scientific framework.

We will see examples of several of these from the internalism/externalism debate, or at least attempts by one party to demonstrate inferior linguistic power in an opposing framework. The point to see here is that different frameworks pick out things in different ways. It may be that this doesn't make a difference in expressive powers overall,

and that two linguistic frameworks are equally powerful to express what both parties agree on. It could be, however, that a difference between frameworks leaves someone with less capacity to express what they both agree should be expressed.

As a *criterion* for verbal disputes, I think that (PEP) is at least necessary. However, as a *method* of identification we need much more. As we saw above, Chalmers' and Hirsch's methods are inadequate, thus leaving a methodological gap. In what remains of this section I want to try to fill this gap. As we have seen, Hirsch's and Chalmers' methods eventually appeal to a (PEP)-like criterion as a method. Yet it is rarely immediately evident when (PEP) is satisfied. Chalmers' and Hirsch's methods are strongly analytic. I suggest, however, that we will need to use a more empirical method to detect verbal disputes – especially in complex cases of disputes such as the internalism/externalism debate in epistemology.

(PEP) demands that we identify a verbal dispute as a case in which the languages of disputing parties entails equally capability of describing the beliefs shared between the disputing parties and that one not entail a contradiction (at least not one that isn't also shared by the competing framework).

Conversely, if the language of one party entails less power to express some shared belief than another, then we have a substantive dispute between them. This empirical method will require testing of various conceptual scenarios to see if they are equally capable of expressing their undisputed beliefs. We could identify many scenarios in which the languages are equally powerful, but this does not mean that we have determined that there is a verbal dispute. Unless and until we have tested all relevant

scenarios, there remains the possibility that one language will be able to account for some belief that another cannot. This means that empirical methods will only be able to deal in probabilities when determining whether (PEP) is satisfied.

It may be that there are certain disputes which seem pretty clearly only to relate to a small, isolated set of undisputed beliefs. The more beliefs to which competing language frameworks relate, the more difficult it will be to identify whether the parties are engaged in a verbal dispute. Consider Karen Bennett's example of a dispute between the sorority girl and the purist over what constitutes a martini. The sorority girl considers any mixed alcoholic beverage poured into a V-shaped glass to be a martini. The purist on the other hand denies this and considers a martini to be a drink made of vodka or gin, dry vermouth and perhaps an olive set (Bennett 2009, p. 50). This strikes us immediately as a case of verbal dispute. But why? I contend that it is not because we know analytically that it is verbal. Bennett thinks that the martini example is clearly a verbal dispute because there is no fact of the matter about how to categorize these beverages. Thus, we can analytically determine that we have a verbal dispute. But facts of the matter are not the only way that a dispute can be substantive. Apart from the martini beliefs the sorority girl and the purist might share every other belief, but if it turns out that the linguistic difference between them reduces the powers of expression overall then we would have good reason to think that we a substantive dispute. But we still need to explain why the dispute strikes us so clearly as a verbal dispute. I think it does so for two reasons:

- (1) We are able to gather rather quickly that (PEP) is satisfied in the dispute by intuiting the probabilities that it will make a difference in expressive power, and so it strikes us as verbal. It seems that they will both be able to express their undisputed beliefs just as well using

slightly different linguistic frameworks. The reason we can so easily intuit that the probability is extremely low that it will make a difference in one framework's linguistic power is that the dispute has a small range: alcoholic drinks. It will be easier to conclude that small-range disputes are verbal compared to broad-range disputes. The more conceptual scenarios to which competing language frameworks relate, the more difficult it will be to identify whether the parties are engaged in a verbal dispute.

- (2) I think we tend to conflate trivial disputes and verbal disputes. Verbal disputes seem trivial or at least less important than substantive disputes. While verbal disputes may entail insignificance (for certain purposes), this is only one way for a dispute to be insignificant. Insignificance, does not entail a verbal dispute. The choice between linguistic frameworks can be trivial for several reasons, one of those being that the difference between them is only terminological, another being that the practical value of either choice is very low, such as a substantive dispute over what constitutes a martini.

The chance that it could have such an effect is extremely remote, but I'm not sure we can ever shut the door on the possibility altogether. It could be that this small change creates something of a ripple effect that reduces powers of description somewhere else. I think you'll see that we would have a substantive dispute – albeit a trivial one – but substantive nonetheless, since (PEP) is not satisfied. Still, I think we can safely conclude that the martini case is a verbal dispute, but only because we intuit the very high probability that (PEP) is satisfied, not because we employed an analytic principle for satisfying (PEP).

So when it comes to satisfying (PEP) under the empirical method we can discover the probability that a dispute is verbal by testing more conceptual scenarios where each side, within its respective language framework, is able to equivalently express the undisputed beliefs. Often the beliefs to which a language framework relates will be enormous. It will include conscious and unconscious beliefs about what is actual and

what is possible. Since testing conceptual scenarios is so massive, we will usually have to hold back from considering disputes to be verbal when the framework differences have a very broad range of application. There may yet be a set of untested scenarios about which there is a question regarding each framework's ability to express undisputed beliefs in a way equivalent to the other, and until it is tested, we cannot know that (PEP) is satisfied. So long as this possibility remains, we cannot be *certain* that we have a verbal dispute.

I don't think, however, that this invites a deep skepticism about identifying verbal disputes. Progress in identifying them can still be made. Most everyday verbal disputes will be like Bennett's martini example – they have a small range that usually allows us to intuit the probabilities and see whether the dispute is substantive or verbal.

The major philosophical debates will, of course, be more difficult to decide on, since they relate to broader range of beliefs and have many implications. But the more we test conceptual scenarios to which each linguistic framework relates and find that each language has a way of expressing undisputed beliefs, the greater the probability that it is a verbal dispute. This means that some of our current disputes have a greater probability of being verbal disputes than others. So I see no reason to deny that empirical methods can help us decide that mainstream debates are verbal disputes after we've been testing scenarios against the frameworks for a while and nothing presents itself to us as a substantive dispute. Rather than giving up on identifying verbal disputes, we should feel free to go on identifying them, but I recommend that we put most of our talk about them in terms of probabilities.

How do we test conceptual scenarios? It will often take place rather organically. We go about our day expressing beliefs via our linguistic frameworks. If we have some intuition that rubs against our framework then we find a way to either reject the intuition or make a change in the framework. Even powers of expression regarding possible-world beliefs get tested through our ‘woulds’, ‘coulds’, ‘mights’, and ‘if/then’s’. If, in conversation within someone else, we come to form a belief via the encounter with their linguistic framework, we may choose to adopt part of the other’s framework into ours or see if our own framework allows us to express the same thing in a different way. Should a dispute arise over whose description is best, we will have to see if the difference in language choice makes a difference anywhere else in the framework’s powers to express undisputed beliefs.

Sometimes we will test scenarios in a much more intentional and rigorous way. Hawthorne hones in on several scenarios which he claims are substantive metaphysical disputes since one side can express something that the other cannot. If Hawthorne is right, then we have likely identified a substantive dispute. If not, then we have increased the likelihood that the dispute is verbal.

In broad-range disputes, a substantive dispute will usually be easier to identify than a verbal dispute. We have to test a lot of conceptual scenarios to which each linguistic framework relates before we can conclude that we have a verbal dispute. So long as there are relevant untested conceptual scenarios, the probability of a substantive dispute can diminish, but some probability of a substantive dispute will always remain.

Hyperintensionality

A picture of the world will be developed in consideration of a variety of combinatory factors such as coherence, explanatory power, intuitions, and regarded scientific evidence (to name a few). We will regard the best framework to be the one which fits best with all of these. But now we face the problem of framework-independent accounts of what fits best. The framework we consider to fit best seems to be decided only according to the framework itself, even though the framework is what we are supposed be assessing. The empirical method I've presented has been an attempt to close the methodological gap, but we will still have theoretic questions about methodology. (PEP) only stipulated that the linguistic frameworks for each side of a dispute have the same linguistic powers of expression for undisputed beliefs. If they do, then the dispute is verbal. We detect verbal disputes by seeing if, in each conceptual scenario, each framework is equally capable of expressing the undisputed beliefs. The more scenarios we test, the more it increases the probability in the direction of a verbal dispute. This method takes us a bit farther beyond where Hirsch and Chalmers left us, but now we want to know how we'll know when they are equally capable of expressing the undisputed beliefs.

I'm tempted to leave this method entirely at the intuitive level. It will have to be left there to some extent, but there is a little more we can do. This involves an appeal to hyperintensional matters where we do not respect logical equivalence. To get a better sense of when each method has equal powers of expression we need something more fine-grained than logical equivalence. We saw above that we may define a verbal dispute

as a dispute in which the claims of each party have the same truth-values in the same possible worlds. However, this simply won't do for a definition. Even if we could determine that they have the same truth values, what remains unclear is the *meaning* of those propositions. If they have the same meaning, then they will have the same truth-value, but having the same truth-value does not entail that they will have the same meaning. Whether or not they have the same meaning is the point of disagreement between those who see a verbal dispute and those who see a substantive dispute. So we want to know how we can draw a semantic distinction between expressions that are supposed to have the same meaning according to a particular theory of meaning that is already model-theoretic or modal in character. Is there anything that governs a choice in our linguistic framework that isn't already determined according to the framework? Whoever finds a clear way to do this will give us a way to solve numerous metaontological issues since we'll know when (PEP) is satisfied. I don't propose beyond the intuitive level how we will decide this in an entirely model-independent way.

However, disregarding hyperintensional issues isn't an option, and thus far, Hirsch and perhaps Chalmers have only considered intensional issues with regard to verbal disputes. Unless we take into account hyperintensionality, superficialists are left with some problems. Consider a case in which you and I are disputing over propositions about the smartest man. If I believe 'the smartest man in the world is also the richest man in the world', and you believe that 'the smartest man in the world is kind', and if both of these sentences have the same truth-value, then if you disagree that that the richest man in the world is kind, you are, according to Hirsch, only in a verbal dispute with me since our

sentences have the exact same truth-values. Just by substitution, we can make these sentences say the same thing. That is, we can just translate from one to the other. But I may legitimately disagree that the smartest man is kind, and you may legitimately disagree that the smartest man is also the richest man, and so now what looked like a verbal dispute will not be—even though we can still translate from one language to the other. Abstract this situation to one involving a metaphysical dispute and it won't be clear that just because translation occurs in every case we have a verbal dispute. What we need to know is whether the richest man is kind and this is determined independent of whether the truth conditions are identical. Truth-value semantics are deaf and blind to subject matter, and so translation from one to the other won't reveal whether our frameworks have equal expressive power for all of our undisputed beliefs. An implication of the belief that the smartest man is the richest man and the truth that the smartest man is kind is that the richest man is kind, but this may not be reflected in my framework since I may not agree that smartest man is kind.

I don't propose to provide a strict method for dealing with hyperintensionality. We will have to go about testing what frameworks mean in some messy ways. But the point to see here is that translatability can be very misleading in cases of verbal disputes, and we will have to work out over time in an empirical way whose framework has the most expressive power. Translation may be useful for suggesting a way that I could adjust my framework (i.e., by adopting a portion of another disputing party's framework) but then I may find that doing so will require adjustments elsewhere in my framework which may lead to other disputes. When all is said and done, I'm looking for the

framework that optimally takes advantage of the combinatory factors involved, and hyperintensional contexts reveal that we can't just be satisfied with agreement at the intensional level and move on. So we have a strong argument in favor of not so easily dismissing major philosophical disputes.

Verbal Disputes in the Internalism/Externalism Debate in Epistemology

I've been discussing what we should believe about verbal disputes mostly in the context of metaphysics since this is what most of the literature about verbal disputes concerns, but it's time to switch gears—somewhat radically—to consider the implications for verbal dispute claims in epistemology, particularly the internalism/externalism debate over justification. Here, I find that the brand of superficialists we encounter (which are usually termed compatibilists) are not nearly as reflective and careful as Hirsch and Chalmers about what verbal disputes are. What follows is an attempt to more carefully evaluate the claim that there is something wrong with the debate itself. What is it that internalists and externalists are supposed to be confused about that would cause them to argue past each other and debate unnecessarily?

Despite the agreed-upon conclusion among compatibilists, they do not all agree on the reasons that the dispute is verbal, or the lines along which internalists and externalists are said to debate unnecessarily. The variety of reasons includes the following: justification is not a legitimate epistemic goal (Alston); distinct types of justification (Chalmers, Goldman); the divide between internalism and externalism tracks the divide between justification and knowledge. Each of these reasons will be considered in turn. What motivates compatibilists differs as well. Some identify merits of both

internalism and externalism, and thus begin to wonder to what extent the debate is even substantive. Others, primarily Alston 2005, reject the notion of justification altogether and conclude that there is nothing for either internalist or externalist pictures of justification to pick out.

On either motivation, we can see that there are metaphysical claims involved. The claim about whether or not there is anything picked out by ‘justification’ makes a metaphysical judgment as much as an epistemological one.⁹ This realization will help to see some of the continuity with the verbal disputes discussion in metaphysics.

Justification and Epistemic Goals

Compatibilists often begin by stepping back from the debate over the necessary and sufficient conditions to reconsider epistemic goals. After arguing for a chief epistemic goal, they discuss the extent to which internalism and externalism can help accomplish this goal. William Alston argues that the chief epistemic goal is to maximize our true beliefs and minimize our false beliefs about matters of interest and importance (Alston 2005, p. 30). Ram Neta, following Edward Craig, identifies the chief epistemic goal as flagging creditable informants (Neta 2006, p. 272). James Sennett holds that the maximizing-minimizing goal (such as Alston’s) is ambiguous and claims there are two distinct goals: (1) discovering and “doing” whatever it takes to contribute appropriately to finding truth; (2) identifying conditions under which truth conduciveness obtains (Sennett 1992, p. 647). Alston and Neta each concludes that there are multiple

⁹ As Alston puts it: “A belief’s being justified has no more objective reality than ether or ghosts” (Alston 2005, p. 22).

ways to go about achieving the chief epistemic goal (though they differ on what that is) while Sennett concludes that internalism is conducive to the goal of discovering what it takes to find truth, while externalism is conducive to the goal of identifying truth-conducive claims.

Justification According to a Chief Epistemic Goal

Alston argues that there is no unique concept picked out by justification. Over the years of back-and-forth debates about the definition and criteria for justification, we've just been pushing around different epistemic desiderata, all of which are valuable from a cognitive standpoint (Alston 2005, p. 22). Internalists and externalists have made the mistake of thinking that there is just one chief epistemic desideratum. Despite the fact that both sides agree that the epistemic properties are desirable, they have been pushing to identify only one of these properties with justification. According to Alston, getting rid of the concept of justification will solve the internalism/externalism debate (Alston 2005, p. 57). We should focus on the desiderata which both internalists and externalists have been emphasizing since they are valuable regardless of whether or not there is such a thing as justification.

While there are different nuances to their arguments for the compatibilism of internalism and externalism, compatibilists all dismiss the debate according to a verbal dispute condition I considered earlier: same term, different concepts (STDC). Chalmers, seeing the continuity with Alston's project, also thinks that we may be able to dissolve the internalism/externalism debate by identifying it as (STDC) via his method of elimination.

Suppose that an internalist foundationalist holds that a belief is justified iff it is rationally grounded in evidence available to the subject, while an externalist reliabilist holds that a belief is justified iff it is produced by a truth-conducive method. If we apply the subscript gambit, is there a residual disagreement over justification₁ and justification₂? In many cases, this is far from obvious. It may be that the parties can agree that justified₁ beliefs go with having reasons and certain subjective norms, while justified₂ beliefs go with getting things right and with certain objective norms. In this case, the original dispute was very likely verbal. If there is a residual disagreement, on the other hand, this will at least clarify the issue between the internalist and the externalist (Chalmers 2009, p. 15).

I think that the debate quite clearly satisfies (STDC). However, as I argued earlier, (STDC) isn't sufficient (or necessary) for a verbal dispute. Significant overlap may keep us from just barring the term and regarding two different meanings to justification. If each side wants justification to play the same role then it may be that two different senses of justification will not do (though it may be the case that the role that justification is to play can be satisfied equally by either internalism or externalism). Internalists and externalists could each be agreed on a chief epistemic goal (say the maximizing-minimizing goal) and share strong agreement about justification's role in achieving this goal. Consider the following statement stated according to the maximizing-minimizing goal:

We have no such immediate and unproblematic access to truth, and it is for this reason that justification comes into the picture. The basic role of justification is that of a *means* to truth, a more directly attainable mediating link between a subjective starting point and our objective goal (Bonjour 1985, p. 7).

Though written by an internalist, this is a statement about the role of justification on which internalists and externalists can clearly agree (provided an agreement on the chief goal).

Alston also considers that agreement on the role of justification may be enough to make the dispute substantive. He takes a maximally thin concept like: that property of belief which turns true, un-gettierized belief into knowledge (Alston 2005, p. 24) and then argues that this is not a satisfying definition of justification.

Later Alston considers particular cases of debate between internalists and externalists which involve attempting to overturn the opposing party's understanding of justification counterexamples. We need to consider one of those cases to see what Alston hopes to accomplish.

After outlining Goldman's argument regarding the forgotten evidence problem for internalism, in which Sally has a justified belief about the beneficial effects of broccoli but has forgotten her evidence for this conclusion, Alston presents Conee and Feldman's response to Goldman which holds that while Goldman's argument may work on other forms of internalism, their brand of mentalism is immune. Alston's conclusion from this debate is that "Goldman is bringing out the fact that having acquired a belief in a truth-conducive way is an epistemically favorable feature of a belief, even if one can no longer remember that way. Whereas internalists tend to be more impressed by the importance of current access to what supports the belief." In other words, each side is operating with a different conception of justifying conditions. He concludes from these examples that

Unless and until it becomes clear that 'justified' picks out a feature of beliefs about which internalists and externalists are disagreeing *and* which is of crucial importance for epistemic assessment of beliefs, we will do much better to stick with the various epistemic desiderata the alleged relevance of which to "justification" occupies so much of epistemologists' attention (Alston 2005, p. 57).

I think that he's right that each side has a different emphasis in their total picture of justification, but what we want to know is whether the difference is so great that it makes the resulting dispute between the two verbal or whether they share enough agreement that they can be said to agree on what best fulfills the shared portion of their picture of justification. Alston is highlighting the fact that each side tries to find a way to hang onto their internalist or externalist viewpoint, but he fails to see the fact that counterexamples between internalists and externalists have led to modifications in their theories and that this can only be done if they share a rich degree of common ground on justifying conditions. It is at least enough to show that the common ground exceeds the definition of justification as: 'whatever property turns true, ungettierized belief into knowledge.'

There is an easy parody to Alston's claim that unless and until it becomes clear that 'justified' attaches to a feature of belief that internalists and externalists are really disagreeing over and is a deeply important feature for epistemically evaluating beliefs, we should stick with his various desiderata approach. We could parody this conclusion with almost anything in the world we try to pick out. We'll take 'horse' in this case. Clearly there is equine desiderata. But we still want to know what are the necessary and sufficient conditions for something to be equine. It won't be enough to simply agree that each desideratum is important. We still want to know how we should arrange the desiderata. For instance, how should identify an animal when it has one equine desideratum but lacks another. Is it still a horse or not? Alston's claims could perhaps be extended to conclude that all disagreements about categorization are verbal disputes

when each side is picking out some valuable desideratum and categorizing according to it.

At this point we are back to considering the role of (PEP) in verbal disputes. We need to know that a way of categorizing doesn't make a difference in one side's power to express the disputing parties' undisputed beliefs. If it doesn't, then we have a verbal dispute. But pointing out that each side disagrees over the intension of 'justification' will not suffice to reveal a verbal dispute or that there is nothing that *should* be picked out by 'justification'. According to Alston, there's no such thing as justification, but we need to think more carefully about how we go about deciding whether something exists. We conclude that something exists when we can't order the world very well without it. Now, it may be that there are two equally good-but-different ways of ordering the world—one which denies the existence of something and another which includes it. One framework could include the existence of chairs and another deny it (as some ontologists do), but both need to be able to account for the state of being upheld in a seated position. Perhaps one working with a chairless ontology could dodge this ontological responsibility by further denying that we are ever upheld in a seated position. But then she would have something else to explain. The more divergent the pictures get from one another, the more difficult it will be to determine that they are saying the same thing in different language. In cases where it isn't analytically obvious that we have a verbal dispute (and I think these are the norm), we need an empirical method that seeks to increase the probability of a verbal dispute. Like Hirsch's and

Chalmers' method in ontology, Alston's method for identifying a verbal dispute between internalists and externalists is underdeveloped.

Neta identifies flagging creditable informants as the chief epistemic goal and thinks that an internalist approach and an externalist approach are equal in their powers to achieve this goal (Neta 2006, p. 272). Neta never presents an argument for the conclusion that internalist and externalist approaches are equally good for flagging creditable informants. Here (PEP) puts controls on how we would go about determining such a thing. It cannot be done without testing. I think most epistemologists recognize this point. Much of epistemological debate focuses on the power of counterexamples, and counterexamples are aimed at testing. They present conceptual scenarios which both sides agree need to be accounted for and then consider which side can best accommodate the scenario. I think we have good reason to deny that the internalism/externalism debate is a verbal dispute. In the history of epistemology we have seen numerous views overturned by test cases. Now it may be that a particular view can be salvaged by accommodating the counterexample. But it is questionable whether it will be able to accommodate every counterexample. In the end, we are looking to see which view will best handle all the counterexamples, and in finding one that can do this best, we will be able to decide between internalism and externalism.

Now it may be that Neta is right, and internalism and externalism are two equally good ways of reaching a single epistemic goal. However, we will only be in a position to judge through testing, and our claims that they are equally good should be stated in terms of probabilities. In the meantime, the history of the

internalism/externalism debate in epistemology has done pretty well in bringing about revision to the various brands of internalism and externalism. Internalists agree that some brands of externalism are more viable than others, and vice versa. Those internalist and externalist views which both sides now regard as less viable were not always regarded that way. They reached these judgments through testing conceptual scenarios. There is no reason to think that the debate couldn't continue on this way until the community reaches some significant measure of agreement on a view or a range of views.

Now epistemologists (like ontologists) may grow weary from the debate and decide to call a truce and move on to other issues in light of the limited time and energies they have to spend, but this wouldn't reveal that we have a verbal dispute. Testing may reveal that whatever undetermined substantive matters may remain between internalism and externalism should not be considered important enough to continue the debate. This would only establish that *most probably* they are *relatively* equal in their power to achieve Neta's chief epistemic goal.

Most internalist/externalist debates take into account the kind of "survivor mode" in which we often find ourselves in the real world. Alston and Neta are calling us to appreciate the blessings of both internalism and externalism, but having done so, we still need to know what we are supposed to think about the status of beliefs in cases when we don't have the luxury of all desiderata. We want to find out which path will best maximize true beliefs and minimize false ones. Reliability? Having good reasons? Good evidence? Most externalists won't deny that internalism will yield justification in some cases but if the goal is maximizing and minimizing, they want the maximal theory.

Alston wants us to value each of these and more as epistemic desiderata but we are often in survivor mode in our epistemic environment, and we want to know what are the best epistemic tools to take along when we don't have the luxury of employing all of them. Is there one tool in particular that will serve best for epistemic survival. Alston and Neta think not – pick whichever you like.

However, the counterexamples paint a different picture. Internalists and externalists have both felt the force of the other's counterexamples which trade on shared intuitions about justification. So for example, externalists who thought that reliability was necessary and sufficient for justification almost-universally modified their reliabilism in light of demon world cases in which one has unreliable justified beliefs (See Cohen 1984). Some moved to an actual-world reliabilism in which reliabilism only works in non-demon worlds. Others, such as Goldman, answered it by distinguishing between weak and strong justification (Goldman 1991). Similarly, as we saw above, Goldman's forgotten-evidence case was effective in challenging forms of internalism. One wonders then how we can expect that both internalist and externalist criteria will be equally good across the epistemic situations we face.

Justification According to Distinct Epistemic Goals

By my lights, Sennett's is the most promising compatibilist model. If on his model, internalism and externalism are aimed at wholly separate goals from one another, then debating whether justification is internal or external would be a verbal dispute. Here, we would not need an empirical method since the debate would be premised on an entire

category mistake. We could, in this case, know analytically that both sides are engaged in a verbal dispute.

As we saw above the distinct goals according to which internalism and externalism may be distinguished are: (1) discovering and “doing” whatever it takes to contribute appropriately to finding truth, and (2) identifying conditions under which truth conduciveness obtains (Sennett 1992, p. 647). From this Sennett concludes that “the internalist and the externalist operate from two different conceptions of epistemic appropriateness--two different points of view, as it were” (Sennett 1992, p. 642). As we will see, however, Sennett’s goals do not divide so neatly, and internalism and externalism remain competitors for each goal.

Sennett states that “internalist concerns are best directed at the development of a *theory of rationality*, while externalist concerns are best directed at the development of a *theory of conduciveness*” (Sennett 1992, pp. 647-48). Here we see the attempt to make internalism and externalism line up according to the epistemic goals he’s identified. However, this can only be done by altering the focus of both internalism and externalism. Not all construals of internalism are directed at rationality. Some are deontological and some are versions of mentalism – all issues which internalists debate among themselves. Since Sennett’s division already favors certain forms of internalism, the lines he draws cannot divide internalism/externalism proper.

Furthermore, his lines also cut across externalism. Externalists are concerned with providing a theory of rationality every bit as much as internalists. They have both a theory of rationality and a theory of how rational belief occurs under an

externalist framework. Sennett doesn't exactly deny that externalists have a theory of rationality, rather he states that internalism is the theory that is *best* directed at rationality. We can see, however, that by saying this, Sennett has already committed himself against externalist forms of justification. A less subtle way that Sennett draws these lines is to say that justification is internal and knowledge external. Sennett is quite sympathetic to both Richard Foley and Robert Audi who hold that justification and knowledge are the dividing lines of internalism and externalism.¹⁰ Clearly, none of this will suffice to demonstrate the compatibility of internalism and externalism for justification when Sennett's commitment is to a particular internalist view of justification. Ultimately, I don't think it works even if we include knowledge in order to show compatibility. A key issue in epistemology is justification's relationship to knowledge. If justification is internal and knowledge external (where something like reliability is at least necessary) then we have only made them compatible by committing to certain sides in the debate. Sennett (along with Foley and Audi) have only rejected the claims of those externalists who hold that justification is internal.¹¹ It seems as though the debate has only been pushed back. If we can't substantively dispute whether internalism or externalism is the correct epistemic path on a particular construal of the debate, then the debate will be over whether or not we have the right construal of the debate, and it isn't clear that we can achieve compatibility on this question. Sennett has in essence fixed his compatibility

¹⁰ See Foley 1987 and Audi 1987. In my reading, this view can be found most recently in Audi 2003, particularly pp. 238ff.

¹¹ See Greco 2005 for an argument for externalist justification and against internalist justification.

conclusion only by fixing the terms of the debate. Sennett begins with a commitment to particular forms of internalism and externalism, but then argues for *wholesale* compatibility between internalism and externalism. His mistake is to think that we can move from the compatibility of particular forms of internalism and externalism to the compatibility of internalism/externalism proper.

How the Internalism/Externalism Debate Could Be a Verbal Dispute

Sennett has, however, touched on what it would take to make the debate a verbal dispute. I think we can show that particular forms of internalism and externalism are compatible. We can do more than this though. We can show that disputes between parties holding to these particular forms would be verbal disputes. I think this can be done rather easily through balancing views which distinguish between necessary and sufficient conditions.

An internalist says that internalism is true, an externalist says externalism is true. The internalist thinks that for beliefs to be justified it is necessary *but not sufficient* that agents have access to the grounds of what justifies their beliefs. The internalist also believes that the doctrine of externalism entails the claim that satisfying externalist conditions is both necessary *and* sufficient for justification. The externalist by contrast, understands the doctrine of internalism to entail the claim that satisfying the internalist condition is both necessary *and* sufficient for justification, but similar to her internalist counterpart, the externalist thinks that his externalist conditions are necessary *but not sufficient*. Here, we have compatibility since the internalist is arguing only for necessity of internalism for justification and the externalist arguing only for the necessity of

externalism, but neither arguing for sufficiency. The dispute takes place because each misunderstands what the other is claiming. Thus, the externalist disagrees with the internalist when she says "Internalism is true", and the internalist disagrees when the externalist says "Externalism is true."

It is even possible to chart compatibility among brands of internalism and externalism. We begin with the various combinations of necessity and sufficiency. We get six possible combinations:

NS(int) (Pollock 1999, p. 394)
 \neg NS(int)
 \neg SN(int) (Bonjour 1992, p. 132)
NS(ext) (Bergmann 2006)
 \neg NS(ext) (Goldman 2009)
 \neg SN(ext) (forms of actual-world reliabilism)

We can eliminate \neg N \neg S(int) and \neg N \neg S(ext) since these are neither internalist nor externalist positions.

On our chart we could say that NS(int) and NS(ext) will be incompatible with one another and any other version of the other side. \neg NS(int) and \neg NS(ext) can be compatible and \neg SN(int) and \neg SN(ext) can be compatible. \neg SN(int) and \neg NS(ext) can be compatible. \neg SN(ext) and \neg NS(int) can be compatible. I say "can be" because, for example, a \neg SN(int) position does not entail agreement with the necessity of any and all externalist conditions. Clearly, then, we can get compatibility among some forms of internalism and externalism. However, just as some particular debates will be compatible, others will not be.

Unfortunately, charting compatibility and incompatibility among forms of internalism and externalism has to take more into account than just necessity and

sufficiency conditions. We also have to take into account the different types of internalism and externalism themselves. For example, there's direct access internalism (discussed in Alston 1989); potential access internalism and actual access internalism (discussed in Fumerton 2007); mentalism (held by Conee and Feldman 2001); deontic internalism (discussed Plantinga 1993); conceptual awareness internalism and non-conceptual awareness internalism (discussed in Moser 1991). I estimate that this will be more than 250 different possible permutations of internalism alone when we combine these with necessity and sufficiency conditions. It's important to note that there are some combinations which no one holds and so we could eliminate those from consideration. Once again, among the ones that are argued for, we'll have to decide who the winners are by using test cases. As I argued above, test cases have been useful for eliminating forms of internalism and externalism according to most epistemologists' lights, and arguing according to test cases is essentially the empirical method I recommended by which we assess whose framework has the most power to express the undisputed beliefs.

Alston thinks that any combination can be rendered a verbal dispute without test cases. By denying justification, Alston thinks he can rid us of the internalism/externalism debate. If there is no justification, then justification can be neither internal nor external. Even if I agreed with Alston that justification has “no more objective reality than ether or ghosts”, I wouldn't agree that all internalism/externalism debates are verbal disputes. To see this we need to reconsider hyperintensionality. Substantive disputes can take place even when each claim has the same truth-value. If there is no justification, then an argument about whether justification is internal or

external will have the same truth value. As I argued in metaphysical cases, we can't insist on a truth-condition for substantive disputes. Even if "justification" fails to pick out something in every possible world we could still have a substantive dispute. The claims of an internalist and the claims of an externalist could still be incompatible. The reason is that in spite of sharing the same truth-value, they are nevertheless different claims about the way the world is. One false belief could have greater consequence for expressive power than another, and thus, one framework could win out over another with regard to its powers to express undisputed beliefs among the disputing parties.

CONCLUSION

I have argued that (PEP) is the right condition for a verbal dispute, but in most cases we will not be able to employ an analytic method for determining when it is satisfied. The gap between criterion and methodology for detection is best filled in with an empirical method that tests conceptual scenarios for expressive power of undisputed beliefs. This method will work in both metaphysics and epistemology. I demonstrated that in the history of the internalism/externalism debate we have seen the empirical method at work through the use of test cases (even though epistemologists may not have been very self-aware of the methodology). The fact that the test cases offered by both internalists and externalists have had persuasive power in the debate between them is strong indication that they share significant overlap in their definition of justification.

Thus, even though they are applying the same term to different concepts (STDC), more will be needed to show that their dispute is verbal. We can employ an empirical method to determine which view has greater powers to express their undisputed beliefs. Though there are ways in which particular internalist/externalist debates could be compatible, there are also incompatible ones. Thus, we cannot say that all forms of internalist/externalist are compatible. Among the forms which seem incompatible we will have to decide which form is correct by assessing whether there is one which has greater powers to express the undisputed beliefs. Even if Alston is right that there is no such thing as justification, a debate over whether justification is internal or external could still be substantive. Thus, we are left with no good reason to think that the internalism/externalism debate is on the whole, a verbal dispute.

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