

Internalisms

Within moral theory the label “internalism” is applied to a broad range of views, the differences among which often matter a great deal. Just to give you a sense of the variety, here are some views that, despite their differences, would all count as versions of internalism.

Consider, for instance, the following views as they relate value (either value itself or value judgments) either to motives or to reasons, either unconditionally or conditionally. I am leaving off, here, the variations that emerge if one supposes the connection at issue is stronger than the one mentioned (e.g., one might hold, as Mackie says Plato does, that the good is such that “knowledge of it provides the knower with both a direction and an *overriding* motive” [italics added]).¹ It’s worth noting that as the qualities or judgments at issue change, so too might the relative plausibility of there being stronger connections between them and either motives or reasons. So, for instance, if rightness or obligatoriness are at issue, rather than value, it might be more plausible than otherwise to think overriding motives or reasons are at issue. In any case, here are some options:

Concerning motives:

To know (recognize) that x is good is, ipso facto, to have a stronger tendency to act in its favor (than one otherwise would)

For x to be good is, ipso facto, to have a stronger tendency to act in its favor

To believe that x is good is, ipso facto, to have a stronger tendency to act in its favor

Versions conditional on one’s moral character:

To know (recognize) that x is good is, ipso facto, to have a stronger tendency to act in its favor (than one otherwise would), if one is moral

For x to be good is, ipso facto, to have a stronger tendency to act in its favor, if one is moral

To believe that x is good is, ipso facto, to have a stronger tendency to act in its favor, if one is moral

Versions conditional on one’s rationality:

To know (recognize) that x is good is, ipso facto, to have a stronger tendency to act in its favor (than one otherwise would), if one is rational

For x to be good is, ipso facto, to have a stronger tendency to act in its favor, if one is rational

To believe that x is good is, ipso facto, to have a stronger tendency to act in its favor, if one is rational

¹ Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong, p. 40

Concerning reasons:

To know (recognize) that x is good is, ipso facto, to have a reason to act in its favor (that one would not otherwise have)

For x to be good is, ipso facto, to have a reason to act in its favor

To believe that x is good is, ipso facto, to have a reason to act in its favor

Versions conditional on one's moral character:

To know (recognize) that x is good is, ipso facto, to have a reason to act in its favor, if one is moral

For x to be good is, ipso facto, to have a reason to act in its favor, if one is moral

To believe that x is good is, ipso facto, to have a reason to act in its favor, if one is moral

Versions conditional on one's rationality:

To know (recognize) that x is good is, ipso facto, to have a reason to act in its favor (than one otherwise would), if one is rational

For x to be good is, ipso facto, to have a reason to act in its favor, if one is rational

To believe that x is good is, ipso facto, to have a reason to act in its favor, if one is rational