

Exercise: Internal/External Objections

Due by e-mail: Tuesday, April 8th

Goal:

It is common for people to think that the important question, about an objection to a view, is whether proponents of that view *should* be worried by that objection. After all, if their view cannot accommodate proposition P, and proposition P is true, that really does seem like enough to make trouble for their view. But, especially in historical philosophy—though not exclusively—it is very important to know whether proponents *would* be worried about the objection. We might be tempted to think about this as the difference between assessing the correctness of a view, and assessing its coherence, but that is a slightly different distinction from the one I have in mind.

The distinction I have in mind is this: You notice that some philosopher's view has some feature: that feature could be things like: "is metaphysically weighty", "is compatible with moral relativism", "entails the falsity of quantum physics", etc. Setting aside the issue of whether they would agree that their view has that feature, there is an important distinction between the case where the figure would say "if my view has that feature, my view is in trouble" and the case where the figure would say "if my view has that feature, so be it".

Of course, in historical philosophy we usually can't ask the figures we work on how they feel about an objection. Fortunately, knowing their philosophical motivations can help us make this determination, because those motivations often include explanatory aims. And those aims can tell us what sorts of objections the philosopher is *committed to taking seriously*. When an objection is of that type, I call it an "internal objection", when it is not, I call it an "external objection".

Since you should be starting to think about your final papers at this point, I am going to leave the question of which part of the text you focus on to your discretion. I recommend focusing on something related to a topic you might want to write about.

Pick a position of Hume's from the readings. Briefly present that position (no more than 3 sentences). Then, identify two objections to that position (one internal, and one external). For each objection: Present the objection (2-3 sentences), explain why you think it is internal or external (3-4 sentences), and outline how best to respond on Hume's behalf (4-6 sentences).