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EXTERNALISM AND PSYCHOLOGICAL EXPLANATION

*Abstract*

Externalism of mental content is today one of the most influential theses in philosophy of mind. Also, it seems to have been affecting the recent development of cognitive science, insofar as it is regarded, at least by some scholars, as the fundamental idea at the basis of widespread views such as embeddedness, distributedness, situatedness.

The main reason for this influence is that externalism goes hand in hand with the “externalist explanation”, according to which, to put it roughly, one cannot account for cognitive processes and states without taking into consideration the environment of an agent.

My aim in this paper is to discuss the relationship between the externalist individuation and the externalist explanation. I will argue that the latter does not imply the former. It turns out that the use of externalism made by cognitive scientists is not properly justified, and, more generally, that there is an unwarranted inclination to regard as externalist some positions which are instead compatible with a reasonable internalism.