EXTERNALISM AS THE BASIS OF JUSTIFICATION IN AFRICAN EPISTEMOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary African epistemologists share a common commitment to promotea conception of knowledge that reflects the African cultural background and collective experience. However, they differ over the basic nature of justification in African epistemology. The challenge which centres on the Internalist-Externalist debateis that of deciding whether the factors by virtue of which beliefs acquire the status of being epistemically justified in African epistemology are internal or external to the African. With no possible resolution in sight, the intense intellectual scuffles generatedby the debatetend to heighten the division between sympathizers of eachperspective among contemporary African epistemologists. In view of resolving this seeming impasse, this paper advances reasonsto enhance the appreciation of the centrality of externalismin African epistemology. It rejects internalism as incompatible with justification in African epistemology, given the context-dependent and social nature of knowledge in African epistemology, where the role of the community is central in epistemic practices.The analytic, expository and critical methods of research are adopted in the paper.

KEYWORDS

Internalism, Externalism, African Epistemology, Justification, Context-Dependent.

1. Introduction

An issue of major concern, which has captured the attention of many epistemologists in contemporary epistemology is the Internalism-Externalism (I-E) debate. At the heart of this debate is the quest to determine whether grounds for justifying beliefs are internal or external. This debate"coincides with the rebirth of epistemology after Edmund Gettier's famous 1963 paper, 'Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?'" (Poston 1995: 1). Proceeding by way of counter examples, Gettier presented several cases to demonstrate that knowledge is not irrefutablyidentical to justified true belief. This is because, a justified belief may be held on the basis of facts irrelevant to the truth of the belief; making it possible for one to have internally adequate justification, but, without knowledge. This awareness by Gettiernecessitated rethinking the connection between true belief and knowledge. A series of discussions precipitated by this has generated what has become the Internalist-Externalist (I-E) debate over the nature of justification in knowledge in contemporary epistemology.

Whereas for the internalists, justification is solely determined by factors that are internal to a knowing subject in that, he or she must have a direct cognitive access to it, the externalists, on the other hand,assert that justification depends on additional factors that are external to the knowing subject. Attempts to reconcile issues in the debates by many epistemologists have not availed much as"disagreement between the internalists and externalists as to whether grounds of justifying beliefs are internal or external, persist (Nwosimiri 2019: 146). Given its significance in contemporary epistemology, this controversy has found a home in contemporary African epistemology, where there are enduring intellectual scuffle between African epistemologists sympathetic to internalismand advocates of eternalism about the nature of epistemic justification in African epistemology.

Weighing into this controversy with the view to contributes to resolving it, this paper presents some more insights towards clarifying the nature of epistemic justification in the African indigenous knowledge system. It undertakes a critical examination of both the internalist and the externalist conceptions of justificationin African epistemology. It also advances reasons to reject internalism (especially as represented by the duo: Adebayo Ogungbure and NwosimiriKodilinye– discussed in the paper) and at the same time, justify externalism as the basic nature of justification in African epistemology.

2. Justification and Knowledge

The traditional analysis of knowledge conceives knowledge as "justified true belief" (Dancy 1991: 23). This definition, which hacks back to Plato's attempt to distinguish between knowledge and opinion in his *Theaetetus,* emerges from his conception of knowledge as "a true belief, equipped with a suitable rationale" (291c – 210d). This Plato's proposalis the root of the traditional or tripartite conception of knowledge epistemologists as *justified true belief* (JTB). The assumption behind this conception of knowledge is that for the attribution of knowledge, a belief claim is not only necessary, it must be true and *justifiedly* held. How *justified* a person is inholding a belief depends not just on what he believes, but on *why* he believes. The *why* here is of utmost importance because, "knowledge is not simply a matter of having a true belief that is *somehow* justified, but rather, knowledge calls for having a true belief that is appropriately justified" (Rescher 2003: 4).Thus, having adequate or appropriate reasons for a claim, is an essential condition that turns a true belief into knowledge. That is, there can be no problem in crediting *x* with knowledge of *p* if and only if *x* believes *p* on grounds sufficient to guarantee and realizes this to be the case.This enunciates the importance of justification component in knowledge in epistemology.

However, justification tends to be a highly problematic component, because,often, the grounds that lead a subject to adopt a belief do not always seem sufficient or adequate enough to establish the

belief's truth.Edmund Gettier who reflected on this problematic issue in his famous 1963 article, called to question the adequacy of the tripartite conditions in the traditional (JTB) account of knowledge. With his counter examples, he demonstrated that knowledge is more than justified true belief; for, in fact, it is possible for someone not to know even when he has a justified true belief. One of his counter examples can be summarized as follows: Suppose that Smith possesses a good deal of evidence for the belief that someone in his office owns a Ford. Smith's evidence includes such things as that Smith sees Jones drive a Ford to work every day and that Jones talks about the joys of owning a Ford. It turns out, however, that (unbeknownst to Smith) Jones is deceiving his coworkers into believing he owns a Ford. At the same time, though, someone else in Smith's office, Brown, does own a Ford. So, Smith's belief that someone in his office owns a Ford is both justified and true. Yet, Smith's belief is not an instance of knowledge, because, it is not based on conclusive evidence (Gettier 1963: 122-123). His knowledge is based on luck or accidental circumstance.

The core of Gettier's argument is that a person may hold a justified true belief and yet he would not be credited with knowledge because he holds a true justified belief on the basis of a fact irrelevant to the truth of the belief. With this, Gettier not only shows that our justification may be false even when our belief is true, but he basically called to question the adequacy and sufficiency of the traditional (JTB) account of knowledge. This Gettier problem elicited a storm in the epistemology world, tilting the course of epistemological discussions in recent times to efforts to revise the traditional analysis of knowledge in ways that will render it immune to Gettier-style cases or counterexamples. In the sequel, a flurry of post-Gettier theories of justification have emerged in contemporary epistemology, such as, the defeasibility, causal, reliability, virtue theories, etc. – committed to addressing the problem of justification in the wake of the Gettier challenge. However, whereas some of these theories defend the internalist perspective of justification, others represent the externalist perspective. This major concern is at the heart of the Internalist-Externalist debate in epistemology among the post-Gettier theories of justification.

3. Internalism and Justification

Internalism is the epistemological position which holds that knowledge requires justification,but that the nature of this justification "is solely determined by factors that are *internal* to a person" (Poston 1995: 1).Internalists assume that justification-conferring factors for knowledge-claim must all be 'internal' to the subject's perspective on the world; for "epistemic justifiedness is *exclusively* a function of states internal to the cognizer" (Engel 2020: 56).For this reason, the internal states of the cognizersare deemed to be pertinent to determining which of the cognizers' beliefs are justified (Pollock 1999: 338). For the internalists, therefore, to be justified, the epistemic subjectmust not just claim knowledge, he needs to be aware of the basis for his knowledge.According to Steup, "What makes an account of justification internalist is that it imposes a certain condition on those factors that determine whether a belief is justified…. The condition requires [such factors] to be internal to the subject's mind or, to put it differently, accessible on reflection" (1996: 84).

Epistemic internalism about justification appears in different forms. However, thetwo main versions are, Access (Accessibilist) internalism and Mentalist (Mentalism) internalism. Access internalism is the most common form of internalism, since accessibility is the core idea behind internalism. It holds that justification-conferring factors must be reflectively accessible to the subject, such that he is able to have some kind of reflective access or awareness to whatever justifies his belief (Sosa *et al.,* 2008: 305). The key idea here is that a believer must have internal access to the justifier(s) of his belief *p* in order to be justified in believing *p*.This means that, one knows some proposition *p* only if one can become aware by reflection of one's basis orjustifier for *p*(Pappas 2023: 2).William Alston explains that the "justifiers are those items, whether experiences, states of affairs, or other beliefs, on which the person's current justification is based" (1989: 189).

The second type of internalism – the Mentalist internalism – isthe view that justification for a belief is established by one's mental states. That is "what ultimately justifies any belief is some mental state of the epistemic agent holding that belief" (Pappas 2023: 2).Conee and Feldman define mentalist internalismas the view that justification of a belief is determined by the subject's "occurrent and dispositional mental states, events, and condition" (2004: 55–56). In other words, a person's beliefs are justified only by things that are internal to the person's mental life (Conee and Feldman 2001: 233). Not with standing the distinction, both versions of internalism are often thought to go together sincethey commit to"the idea of epistemic responsibility on the part of the subject" (Nwosimiri2019: 149); and most importantly the fact that they "treats justifiedness as a purely internal matter: if *p* is justified for *S*, then *S* must be aware (or at least be immediately capable of being aware) of what makes it justified and why" (Bach 1985: 250).

4. Externalism and Justification

Externalism or externalist conceptions of justification is the denial or negation of the position of internalism regarding justification.Contrary to internalism, externalism asserts that a believer need not have any internal access or cognitive graspof reasons or facts which make their belief justified (BonJour 2008: 365); rather, justification depends on additional factors that are *external* to a person. In other words, the justification for someone's belief can come from facts that are entirely external to the agent's subjective awareness (Sosa *et al.:* 2008. 307).John Greco defines externalism in epistemology as the view that "some factors that are relevant to epistemic status are not internal to the believer's perspective" (2005: 258). For Engel "an externalist theory is any theory that maintains that epistemic justifiedness is at least partly a function of states or factors external to the cognizer, i.e., states or factors outside the cognizer's ken" (2020: 56).In the words of Pollock and Cruz, externalism in epistemology is the position that "more than just the internal states of the believer enter into the justification of beliefs" (2012: 26). From these, it is clear that in an externalist account of justification, the justification-conferring factors of a belief are permitted to fall outside the subject's ken and beyond the reach of the subject's reflective access.Externalism is motivated by the intuition that epistemic justification must be conceptually connected to truth such that the conditions that make a belief justified also make it objectively probable. Justification relates one's belief to the external world in a way that guarantees that the beliefs are possibly true. Steup conveys this idea in these words:

> Externalists about justification would point to the fact that animals and small children have knowledge and thus have justified beliefs. But their beliefs can't be justified in the way evidentialists conceive of justification. Therefore, we must conclude that the justification their beliefs enjoy is external: resulting not from the possession of evidence but from origination in reliable processes. And second, externalists would say that what we want from justification is the kind of objective probability needed for knowledge, and only external conditions on justification imply this probability. So, justification has external conditions (2017 § 2.5)

The dominant externalist theory of justification is reliabilism, which holds that a belief is justified if and only if it isproduced by a reliable process. Alvin Goldman, one of the most well-known proponents of externalism in epistemology, is known for having developed this popular form of externalism.Externalist theories have seemed to provide the only possible candidates for naturalistic reductions of epistemic norms; and this has made them attractive in the eyes of many philosophers.

5. The Nature of African epistemology

An understanding of the nature of indigenous African system of knowledge(African epistemology) is essentialfor establishing a case for externalism in African in epistemology. African epistemology is a subset of African philosophy (Khaphagawani and Malherbe 2003: 219). It may be defined as"the African conception of the nature of knowledge, the means used to gain knowledge, the criteria for assessing the validity of knowledge, the purpose of the pursuit of knowledge, and the role that knowledge plays in human existence" (Ani 2013: 6). It can also be understood as"the way the African conceptualizes, interprets, and apprehends reality within the context of African cultural or collective experience" (Anyanwu 1983: 60).The African sees and talks about reality in his own peculiar way that relates with his cultural experience.This influences his understanding of what constitutes knowledge. How the African knows, what he means and understands when he makes a knowledge claimare the basic concerns of African epistemology.

Often, a people's worldview is related to the way they know and interpret reality (Ijiomah 2014: 58). Expectedly, African epistemology issituated within the African cultural context and necessarily rooted in African ontology(Jimoh 2017: 125). For this reason, to understand the African cultural and ontological conception of reality is an imperative for understanding the African approach to knowledge. Willem De Liefdecaptures this point well in his view that African thought and culture belong together in a mutually supportive interrelationship where they also preserve each other (2003: 52). African ontology has to do with African traditional thoughts, African experience and a cultural view of reality, which is essentially *unitary* in nature – presenting a totality of beings, comprising of the Creator and the creatures in a harmonious communal relationship; a worldview, where there is no significant distinction between the spiritual and the material existents (Etuk 2000: 53). It is unlike the dualistic ontology of the west, where reality is polarized between the spiritual and the material.

Within this understanding of African unitary ontology there is an interconnectedness of realities, whereman and nature are seen as "sacredly united" (Jimoh and John 2015: 58) and not ontologically separate existents, except in terms of conceptual numericality(Shewadeg 2003: 115). Also, "the visible and the invisible are perceived as one, interrelated, interacting systems where agency and causality form a gigantic network or reciprocity, which translates into several acts of what we call religion, worship, respect, sacrifice, divination, communism which mark the relations between spirits and ancestors on the one hand and men on the other hand (Okeke 2005: 3). Molefi Asante lists the elements of the African unitary ontology in the mind of Africa that govern how humans behave with regard to reality as: the practicality of holism, the prevalence of poly-consciousness, the idea of inclusiveness, the unity of worlds, and the value of personal relationships" (2000: 2).According toTempels, the African view of a world of forces (beings) is like 'a spider's web of which no single thread can be caused to vibrate without shaking the whole network' (1959:41).

In line with this unitary ontology, the indigenous African mode of thought relies on the logic of *duality* (three-valued logic), where two contrary realities or opposites (e.g. material and spiritual realities) can unite without producing a contradiction, for a stable whole to be realized (Ijiomah 2014: 134).African epistemology takes its root from this unitary ontology as it conceives the world as a basic unitary system, and therefore, sees reality as interwoven and connected (Jimoh and Thomas 2015: 61). Biruk Shewadeg emphasizes that: "While restriction to the scientific method of abstraction and bifurcation of reality tosubjective and objective in consonance with its ontology characterizes Western epistemology, the African epistemology in consonance with the African ontology conceives the world as a basic unitary system therefore considers reality as interwoven and connected" (2003: 116).It is impossible to separate the human person from nature in African epistemology.

To attempt such a separation is to close the doors against human knowledge of reality because knowledge arises from the connection between the interaction and cohesion of things in the African understanding of reality (Ani2013: 306). For this reason, there is no one way or only two ways of looking at reality in African epistemology; for, knowledge is an integrated whole in which all human and non-human powers – physical and spiritual forces – interact in a mutually reinforcing manner to enable man acquire the knowledge he needs to resolve his natural and supernatural needs and to relate well with nature. Hence, African-oriented knowledge is a derivative from a chain of relationships. Like a spider's web, the knowledge of one aspect of reality is intertwined with the knowledge of other aspects (Tempels 1959:41). In this regard, African epistemology takes on a holistic approach that encompasses experiential, rational, religious, intuitive, symbolic, mythical, and emotional aspects of reality (Ani 2013: 305). Given the framework of this understanding, the African interprets and makes meaning of phenomena in relation to his being-in-harmony with reality. Thus, the notion of a 'being-in-harmony with reality' describes the principal African communitarian view of reality, which according to Molefi Asante (2000: 2) is often difficult to understand by those educated and influenced by the linearity in the Western notion of reality. The latter is caught in a fixed and rigorous distinction between the rational and empirical (Jimoh 2023: 12).

In African epistemology, therefore, knowledge can be gained not just through reason and sense experience, but through the integrated media of the senses, reason and revelation or extra-sensory perception. This corresponds with the three kinds of knowledge possible in Africa, namely: experiential knowledge, rational/reflective knowledge and revelational knowledge. This makes knowledge in African epistemology a holistic thing, embracing the physical, mental and spiritual – in consonance with the African interrelated and unitary ontology. The revelational knowledge has the advantage of supplying for the missing link and limitations of physical (empirical) and the mental (rational) knowledge, making the extension of knowledge beyond such limits possible for man in African epistemology. In this way, knowledge goes beyond the physical and the mental, to the revelational knowledge. Africans believe that "divine beings are actively engaged in the epistemic experience of humans as they directly or indirectly reveal things to human beings in their experiences (dreams and life experiences)" (Ani 2013: 309). It is for this reason that the indigenous African epistemic orientation is often described as empirico-ratio-intuitionism (Agbakoba 2013: 23).

For the Africans, to know reality is to experience it personally, without completely detaching oneself from the object of knowledge. In this situation, "The epistemic subject, which experiences the epistemic object, and the epistemic object, which is experienced, are joined together such that the epistemic subject experiences the epistemic object in a sensuous, emotive, intuitive, abstractive understanding, rather than through abstraction alone, as is the case in Western epistemology" (Jimoh 2017: 126). There is no such division as rationalism and empiricism, subjectivism and objectivism, secular and the supernatural among many other western-driven dichotomies (Ajei 2007:190). Subjectivism and objectivism do not, therefore, constitute a problem in African epistemology, since both are subsumed in the unity of existence.

Moreover, the holistic and integrative nature of knowledge in African epistemology entails the intuitive, religious, and mythological (Ani 2013: 309). It is intuitive because as Ruch and Anyanwu argue, it is an immediate, unmediated contact with reality that involves the entirety of the human faculties without "follow[ing] the fragmenting activity of abstractive knowledge" (1984: 46). In other words, all human faculties; intellect, senses, and emotions cooperate to provide the agent an embracive grasp of the object of cognition. It is religious because among Africans, religion consists in the belief in an invisible world, that is though distinct from, but not separated from the visible world. Hence, the epistemic experience of the agent accommodates the idea of a transcendental being who

sheds light on material existence and human experiences. In this way, Africans make sense of existence via religious prism (Ellis andTer Haar, 2007: 387). The African strives to understand phenomena from both the physical and non-physical (spiritual) aspects of reality because he believes in the intrinsic relationship between the material and the spiritual. As Ani puts it, the African believes that "divine beings are actively engaged in the epistemic experience of humans as they directly or indirectly reveal things to human beings in their experiences (dreams and life experiences)" (2013: 309). Knowledge also entails the mythological for the African because, he tries to deal with life questions such as the origin and destiny of the human person, evil, providence, life, and death, by way of mythical consciousness (Ruch and Anyanwu1984: 35). These features of African epistemic orientation tend to puzzle the minds of non-Africans, who often, out of insufficient understanding of African ontology and epistemology, misjudge African indigenous knowledge as "irrational, nonsensical and unworthy of being referred to as knowledge at all" (Ajei 2007:112).

6. Claims of Internalist in African Epistemology

Some African epistemologists reject the special place of externalism, arguing that internalism is also a defining feature of epistemic justification in African epistemology. At the base of their argument for internalism is that knowledge is an individual thing because it starts with the self in terms of rational cognition. Somelines of arguments advanced for internalism in African epistemology bytwo famous scholars – Adebayo Ogungbure and OvettNwosimiri– shall here be examined and thereafter, critically evaluated. In his essay, "Towards an Internalist Conception of Justification in African Epistemology", Ogungbure submits that, "in the current discussions on African epistemology, justification is majorly described as achievable through the means of empirical verification and social context of discourse"(2014:40). However, he perceives a "knowledge-gap" in this in African epistemology, based on his conviction that"both internalist and externalist perspectives are needed to arrive at a holistic notion of epistemic justification" (2014:40). For him, the problem with the externalist view of justification in African epistemology is that it does not account for those aspects of the African worldview expressed in oral traditions and existential relations, and, as such, does not give a full picture of how Africans apprehend reality in general (43).

In view of filling this gap, he seeks to present a line of argument to demonstrate that"contrary to what the advocates of the externalist account of justification in African epistemology would have us believe, beliefs can pass as knowledge in so far as the epistemic agent has some rational grounds for thinking that the beliefs are true" (2014: 44).In other words, he seeks to show "the consistency of the rational basis of traditional African beliefs with the internalist notion of justification" (2014: 44).Among the African beliefs he cites as examples of rational beliefs where knowledge is justified through the internalist framework in African epistemology is the Yoruba cultural belief in *Olodumare*(God in Yoruba belief), generally believed by the Yorubas to be "the origin and ground of all that is" (Idowu 1962, 17).Ogungburesays this cultural beliefof theYorubas, is not based on any positivist criterion for justification, rather, that is it"appropriated through introspection and reasoning, and those who share this cultural background come to accept such facts as reasonable grounds for belief in and reverence for *Olodumare"* (2014: 42).

According to him, the reasons behind this belief often have a religious orientation, and the people seldom question its veracity, mainly because such belief is connected to their cultural roots. For him, the basis for regarding such belief as knowledge is consistent with the internalist criterion for justification, namely, that an epistemic agent should have some reasonable grounds for regarding his or her beliefs as true and as thereby constituting knowledge, and that such item of knowledge (gained through intuition or reflection) should be cognitively available to the knower. Going by the dictates of the internalist theory of justification, therefore, all that is needed in order to justify a knowledge-claim

is to determine whether the individual who claims to know, for instance, that "*Olodumare* is the ground of all being" has cognitive access to this belief, and whether or not the conditions that validate such a belief are located within the knowing subject.He believes that this belief and many others "held in the manner outlined above are numerous in most African cultures, and they represent the internalist aspect of conceptions of knowledge in African thought" (2014: 42).

OvettNwosimiriis another notable advocate ofinternalism in African epistemology. In his work "Epistemology in African Philosophy: A Critique of African Concepts of Knowledge", he asserts the unrecognized presence of internalismin African epistemology:"The protagonists of African epistemology base their justification of knowledge claims on the external or externalist perspective without recognizing and acknowledging that part of their basis of justification is internal" (2019: 157). For him,"internalism is (deliberately) side-lined for externalism in the idea of holism in African epistemology" (2019: 154). The idea of holism in African epistemology, according to him, is used as a 'cover-up' by most African epistemologists to mask their preference for externalism by casting"the entire picture of the justification of knowledge as a holistic one to avoid the discussion of internalism (2019: 154).Nwosimiri, therefore,thinks it needful to present somearguments from the epistemological perspective of the Yoruba cultural practice of consulting the*Ifá* divination, to demonstrate the presence of internalism in African epistemology.

According to him, divination as a way of knowing, represents the epistemological perspective of the internalists' conception justification as exemplified in the Yoruba practice of *Ifá*divination. He explains that going by the internalist justification of knowledge, one of the requirements for justifying a knowledge claim is to determine whether the individual who claims to assert or know, for example, that "divination is a way of knowing in Africa or African epistemology" has cognitive access to this belief. He argues that, in the search for knowledge, divination helps to light the path of an individual in his/her quest (2019: 158). The inquisitiveness of the mind forces an African into yearning and longing to know more about oneself and of the universe. According to him, such reflective awareness forces the Yoruba into consulting *Ifá*in search of answers (2019: 159). Such reflective awareness which manifests itself in the inquisitiveness of the mind of the Yoruba into yearning and longing to know more about himself and of the universe, according to Nwosimiri, constitutes the rational basis or reason for the belief Yoruba belief the *Ifa* divination. Therefore, the reason and justification for such a belief is internal rather than external (2019: 159). He concludes that: "One's rational grounds, cognitive access and reflective awareness of one's cultural and traditional belief are evidence of internalism or an internalist perspective of epistemic justification within African epistemology" (2019: 160).

Critique of Internalism in African Epistemology

Unarguably, the arguments advance by Ogungbureand Nwosimirifor internalism in African epistemology as summarized abovemay provide some useful insights intoappreciating the role of reason inknowledge production in African epistemology. However, they do not appear adequate and rationally satisfying to justify their arguments of internalism in African epistemology, as theyoffer very limited understanding of what constitute knowledge in the African cultural background of collective experience and interrelatedness of reality. Ogungbure's argument that Yoruba belief in *Olodumare*and Nwosimiri'sargument that the Yoruba belief in *Ifa* divination is appropriated through introspection and reasoning, and that these constitute instances of internalism in African epistemology tend to isolate the African situated knower from his *situatedness* of collective epistemic and cultural embeddedness. It is an attempt to interpret African epistemology with the lens of the western individualism andrationalistic cognitive category. It is therefore, practically inconsistent with the

traditional African epistemic orientation, where epistemic practices (including knowledge justification) are approached from a collective standpoint.

Besides, given the framework of the African unitary ontology, the African interprets and makes meaning of phenomena not from a rationalistic standpoint but in relation to his being-in-harmony with reality. Hence, BertHammingais instructive in noting that the African epistemological view is immediately social" (2005:57). That is,African epistemology is "social and communitarian in character" (Jimoh 2023: 6), because the role of the community or society is centralized in epistemic practices(2023: 9). Thus, in African epistemology, justification is external because knowledge is social; and knowledge is social in the sense that what you think you know is subjected to the tribe because they actually taught you what you know. To put it simply, "All power comes from the forces preceding us: our ancestors" (Hamminga2005: 59)

Furthermore, inAfrican epistemology, which proceeds from the African unitary ontology, the knowing subject is a communal being, who interprets, and makes meaning out of interactions among other beings and reality (Jimoh, 2017: 41). For this reason, an individual's introspection and reflective awareness or reasoning for a given cultural belief in Africa – as Ogungbure argues for internalsim in Yoruba belief in *Olodumare* and as Nwosimiriargues for the Yoruba belief in *Ifa*– do not essentially justify the knowledge claim for such beliefs in African epistemology. The reason is that, in African epistemology, knowledge is a not private thing but a product of the community. As Godfrey Ozumba rightly observes, within the context of African epistemology, "knowledge is a well-rehearsed and rationalized set of ideals, which are seen as having met the optimal standards of rationality, acceptance, with evidential corroboration within the traditional community" (Ozumba 2015: 158).Introspection, reasoning or reflective awareness, are not to be understood in abstract or individualistic terms in African epistemology. One only has knowledge when one's belief is reliably consistent with what the community or society accept as knowledge; otherwise, one'sprivate introspection and reasoning may be described as mere opinion over any issue.

Within the context of African epistemology, reason (introspection/reflection) and rationality are cultural to the African experiences. They are contextual and communal as they apply to any case of African cultural beliefs.Hence,although introspection and reasoningor reflective awareness may apply and make a case for internalism in western epistemology as such with its dualistic and individualistic ontological outlook, yet, such abstract, dualistic and individualistic understanding of these terms may not apply in the African epistemic context with a unitary ontology and communal orientations. The African knowing subject's introspection and reasoning are not therefore, the justifiers of the knowledge of their cultural beliefs, which they hold. What justifies such beliefs is the society or the community, which owns the beliefs. Hence, whether a belief is epistemically responsible is a function of the belief's etiology, or how the believer came to have the belief in the first place. This is why in African epistemology,"it is insufficient to attain knowledge alone without doing so in a social context" (Ajei 2007:191).It is instructive at this point, therefore, to stress that the idea of introspection or reflective awareness and reasoning concerning of the Yoruba's beliefs in *Olodumare*and *Ifa* adduced by Ogungbure andNwosimirirespectively, as the basisof their internalist conception of justification in African epistemology, are *mistakenjustifiers* of these beliefs. What justifies these beliefs, instead, is external to the individual knowing Yoruba subjects, namely, the Yoruba community, which situates the individuals, who simply share in the rationality of theYoruba cultural regarding these cultural beliefs. What Ogungbure andNwosimiri consider as the individual subject's reasoning or rational basis for these beliefs, is, therefore, not his own, so to say, but the product of his Yoruba community, held in social context.

What is more, in African epistemology, justification is undertaken in a way that minimizes the importance of an individual's reasons or evidence for a belief. What justifies a belief is not any mentally accessible reasons or evidence that an individual person has for the belief, but the society or community (the collective experience of the community) that owns the belief. This does not mean that individual rationality is non-existent;rather, it is a demonstration of the social and context-dependent nature of justification in African epistemology. Ernest Ruch captures this point succinctly:"the African knower thinks in, for and through his/her society"(1984:47). In this respect, knowledge in African epistemology comes as a given via tradition, ancestors and heritage. Chemhuruhas this too in mind when he argues that in African epistemology, "the community plays a very central epistemological and moral role in inculcating what responsibility is, and how it ought to be understood and evaluated in community" (2019: 2).

The underlying communality of African cultures, in which the self (cognitive agent) and the material (cognized object) are interwoven in a human correlativity by custom and tradition, undergirds the mechanism of social context of justification of knowledge in African epistemology, which is obviously externalist rather than internalist in nature; for, here, the acquisition of knowledge becomes a 'we' enterprise (Hamminga 2005:58). From the foregoing, it is obvious that internalism cannot be regarded as the basis of justification in African epistemology. It would be necessary at this point to offersome more reasons not only to demonstrate the incongruity of internalismwith African epistemology, but to think through the thoughts of some experts to re-enforce the externalist basis of epistemic justification in African epistemology.

Justification of Externalism in African Epistemology

African epistemology is, certainly, a context-dependent theory of knowledge that takes into account the important role that human and social factors play in establishing and justifying a knowledge claim. African epistemology is able to see beyond the issues of the distinction between knowledge and belief, the subject and the object, the noumena and the phenomena, and appreciates the role and contributions of the human person, the environment, and the society to our epistemic claims. This is why in African epistemologyit makes sense to emphasisthe externalist perspective of justification – where justifiers for a claim are to be identified not within the subject but outside the subject's mind or some objective features of the world such as the people's culture or social convention.

The externalist idea of justification within the discourse on African epistemology has gained prominence through the works of some notable African epistemologists such as Anyanwu (1983), Ogungbure(2014), Jimoh (1999), Udefi (2009), Ruch (1984) and Njoku (2000). They agree that the ways by which Africans justify their knowledge of something can be explained especially from the contextualist perspective, where one's knowledge claim as situated within a social environment, so that one should not think of knowledge, truth and rational certainty in abstract terms (Jimoh 1999: 37; see Ogungbure 2014: 43). This perspective is embedded in the externalist view of justification – the idea that knowledge is a product of external conditions of justification. They maintain the viewthat in African epistemology, justification of knowledge has a communal orientation, since knowledge is seen more as a product of societal convention rather than an individual property (Shewadeg 2003:116).

Anyanwu implies this externalism perspective in African epistemology when hetalks about African epistemology in terms of culture, belief and experience: "the beliefs in God, divinities, spirits, ancestors, living, dead, etc…, are beliefs of some people about certain things. If these beliefs have any meaning, value and justification, they must have arisen from human experience and must be products of culture" (Anyanwu 1981: 82). In the same vein Jimoh rightly observesthat in African epistemology, knowledge claims are dependent on human and social factors; that is, situated within a

social milieu so that we should not think of knowledge, truth and rational certainty in abstract, objective and impersonal terms (1999: 37). In other words, justification of knowledge claims in African epistemology is culture bound and therefore context-dependent.Onyewuenyi's conception of knowledge in the African theory of knowledge, as implying, "how deeply he (the African) understands the nature of forces and their interaction" (1976: 525), references the externalist notion of justification in African epistemology. In view of these, although knowledge in African epistemology is still "justified true belief", the difference with the west in this regard lies in the context of justification: Whereas the western theories of justification appeal in varying ways to reason (rationalism) or sense experience (empiricism), or a combination of both, in African epistemology, justification is holistic and integral, and has asocial orientation.

We may appeal to another argument from Bert Hamminga who explains the notion on African epistemology by articulating his idea of the traditional African view of knowledge. His argument was grounded on three points: the first is that "in the traditional African view, knowledge is not acquired by labour but 'given' by the ancestors". The second is that knowledge is "immediately social: not 'I' know, but 'we' know". And the third is that knowledge is not universal but locally tribal: other tribes have different knowledge. Like other things in nature, knowledge has its 'biological variations'" (2005: 57). What he means in the first point is that the traditional African people do not need to labour for knowledge, because all knowledge is given to them by their ancestors. In other words, they depend on their ancestors for knowledge. The second point simply means that you as an individual are not the knowing subject, but the clan or tribe is the knowing subject. Knowledge becomes social in the sense that what you think you know is subjected to the tribe because they actually taught you what you know. To put it simply, "All power comes from the forces preceding us: our ancestors" (2005: 59).

The third point explains the point that knowledge is not universal. It explains the idea that knowledge varies from culture to culture. Hamminga concludes by saying that "in classical African culture, knowledge is not produced, but it comes, is given to you by tradition, the ancestors, as a heritage. So, knowledge acquisition is purely social matter, a matter of teaching, of being told, "uploaded" (by living, dead or spiritual powers) only" (2005: 76). From the foregoing, one can then understand why in African epistemology, the justification of beliefs and epistemic claims are mostly considered from an externalist perspective. it is obvious that the method of justifying epistemic claims in African epistemology ismostly by external means of socio-cultural interaction with others.

Conclusion

In view of the current debate between the Internalists and the Externalists over the nature of epistemic justification in African epistemology, this paper sought to justify the centrality of the externalist conception of justification in African epistemology. As underscored in the paper, African epistemology is a context-dependent theory of knowledge, where the role of the community or society is centralized in epistemic practices. For this reason, justification is undertaken through external means in a way that minimizes the importance of an individual's reasons or evidence for a belief, but emphasizes the role of the society, since "the African knower thinks in, for and through his/her society" (Ernest Ruch 1984: 47). Within the context of this experience, it makes sense to conclude that externalism, rather than internalism, is, the basis of epistemic justification in African epistemology.

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