Externalism

Externalism is a group of positions in the philosophy of mind which hold that the mind is not only the result of what is going on inside the nervous system (or the brain) but also of what either occurs or exists outside the subject. It is often contrasted with internalism which holds that the mind emerges from neural activity alone. Externalism articulates the belief that the mind is not just the brain or what the brain does.

There are different versions of externalism based both on the strength of the relation, and on what the mind is taken to be.[1] Externalism stresses the importance of factors external to the nervous system. At one extreme, the mind could possibly depend on external factors. At the opposite extreme, the mind depends necessarily on external factors. The most extreme form of externalism maintains that the mind is either constituted by or identical with physical processes partially or totally external to the nervous system.

Another important criterion is which aspect of the mind is addressed. Some externalists focus on purely cognitive aspects of the mind – such as Andy Clark and David Chalmers,[2] Shaun Gallagher[3] and many others[4] – while some tackle either the phenomenal aspect of the mind or the conscious mind itself. A few consider only the phenomenal content, such as William Lycan,[5] Alex Byrne[6] or Francois Tonneau;[7] while others also argue the role of the mind as a vehicle of mental phenomenal activity, such as Teed Rockwell[8] or Riccardo Manzotti.[9]

One last important differentiating factor is whether what is external to the mind is the content or the vehicle of the mind. A neurobiological theory that relies on externalism for explanation of mental phenomena is called practopoiesis.

Contents

Proto-externalists

To this group belong many authors who weren't dubbed as externalist but whose work suggested views not too far from current forms of externalism.

The first group of protexternalists to consider is the group of neorealists active at the beginning of 1900.[10] In particular, Edwin Holt suggested a view of perception that considered the external world as constitutive of mental content. His rejection of representation paved the way to consider the external object as being somehow directly perceived: "Nothing can represent a thing but that thing itself".[11] Holt's words anticipated by almost a century the famous anti-representationalist slogan by Rodney Brooks: "The world is its best representation".[12] Recently, neorealist views were refreshed by Francois Tonneau, who wrote that "According to neorealism, consciousness is merely a part, or cross-section, of the environment. Neorealism implies that all conscious experiences, veridical or otherwise" (Tonneau 2004, p. 97)[7]

Another author to be taken into account is Alfred North Whitehead, whose process ontology is a form of externalism since it endorses a neutral ontology, whose basic elements (prehension, actual occasions, events, and processes) seamlessly proceeded from microscopic activity up to the highest level of psychological and emotional life. Although the main Whitehead text is rather difficult,[13] David Ray Griffin recently wrote an interesting update on Whitehead's thought.[14]

John Dewey also expressed a conception of the mind and its role in the world which is very sympathetic with externalism (Dewey 1925).

More recently, James J. Gibson defended an ecological view of perception and thus of many aspects of the mind.[15] He re-formulated several notions of various cognitive processes which are customarily internal to the brain. Two clear examples are optical flow and information. For Gibson the optical flow is not the computation of the spatial derivatives of the images acquired by the retina as in the classic computational view of the mind championed by David Marr[16] and many others,[17] rather the optical flow is an environmental dynamic manifold into which the agent is moving. In Gibson's system, information gets a twist, too, and it is relocated at an ecological level. Gibson introduced the notion of affordance which is external to the agent as such being the potential causal engagement between the body of the agent and some other object.

Gregory Bateson also outlined an ecological view of the mind.[18] Because of his background in cybernetics, he was familiar with the notion of feedback that

somehow hampers the traditional separation between the inside and the outside of a system. He questioned the traditional boundary of the mind and tried to express an ecological view of it, attempting to show that the chasm between mind and nature is much less obvious than it seems.[19]

Semantic externalism

Semantic externalism is the first form of externalism which was dubbed so. As the name suggests it focuses on mental content of semantic nature.

Semantic externalism suggests that the mental content does not supervene on what is in the head. Yet the physical basis and mechanisms of the mind remain inside the head. This is a relatively safe move since it does not jeopardize our beliefs of being located inside our cranium. Hilary Putnam focused particularly on intentionality between our thoughts and external state of affairs – whether concepts or objects. To defend his position, Putnam developed the famous Twin Earth thought experiment. Putnam expressed his view with the slogan "'meanings' just ain't in the *head*."[20]

In contrast, Tyler Burge emphasized the social nature of the external world suggesting that semantic content is externally constituted by means of social, cultural, and linguistic interactions.[21]

Phenomenal externalism

Phenomenal externalism extends the externalist gist to phenomenal content. Fred Dretske (Dretske 1996) suggested that "The experiences themselves are in the head (why else would closing one's eyes or stopping one's ears extinguish them?), but nothing in the head (indeed, at the time one is having the experiences, nothing outside the head) need have the qualities that distinguish these experiences." (Dretske 1996, p. 144-145).[22] So, although experiences remain in the head, their phenomenal content could depend on something elsewhere.

In similar way, William Lycan defended an externalist and representationalist view of phenomenal experience. In particular, he objected to the tenet that qualia are narrow.[23]

It has been often held that some, if not all, of mental states must have a broad content, that is an external content to their vehicles. For instance, Frank Jackson and Philip Pettit stated that "The contents of certain intentional states are broad or context-bound. The contents of some beliefs depend on how things are outside the subject" (Jackson and Pettit 1988, p. 381)[24]

However, neither Dretske nor Lycan go far as to claim that the phenomenal mind extends literally and physically beyond the skin. In sum they suggest that phenomenal contents could depend on phenomena external to the body, while their vehicles remains inside.

The extended mind

The extended mind model suggests that cognition is larger than the body of the subject. According to such a model, the boundaries of cognitive processes are not always inside the skin. "Minds are composed of tools for thinking" (Dennett 2000,[25] p. 21). According to Andy Clark, "cognition leaks out into body and world". The mind then is no longer inside the skull, but it is extended to comprehend whatever tools are useful (ranging from notepad and pencils up to smartphones and USB memories). This, in a nutshell, is the model of the extended mind.[26] When someone uses pencil and paper to compute large sums, cognitive processes extend to the pencil and paper themselves. In a loose sense, nobody would deny it. In a stronger sense, it is rather controversial whether the boundaries of the cognitive mind would extend to the pencil and paper. For most of the proponents of the extended mind, the phenomenal mind remains inside the brain. While commenting on Andy Clark's last book *Supersizing the Mind*,[27] David Chalmers asks "what about the big question: extended consciousness? The dispositional beliefs, cognitive processes, perceptual mechanisms, and moods […] extend beyond the borders of consciousness, and it is plausible that it is precisely the nonconscious part of them that is extended." (Chalmers 2009,[28] p. xiv)

Enactivism and embodied cognition

Enactivism and embodied cognition stress the tight coupling between the cognitive processes, the body, and the environment.[29] Enactivism builds upon the work of other scholars who could be considered as proto externalists; these include Gregory Bateson, James J. Gibson, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Eleanor Rosch and many others. These thinkers suggest that the mind is either dependent on or identical with the interactions between the world and the agents. For instance, Kevin O'Regan and Alva Noe suggested in a seminal paper that the mind is constituted by the sensory-motor contingency between the agent and the world. A sensory-motor contingency is an occasion to act in a certain way and it results from the matching between environmental and bodily properties. To a certain extent a sensory-motor contingencies strongly

resembles Gibson's affordances. Eventually, Noe developed a more epistemic version of enactivism where the content is the knowledge the agent has as to what it can do in a certain situation. In any case he is an externalist when he claims that "What perception is, however, is not a process in the brain, but a kind of skilful activity on the part of the animal as a whole. The enactive view challenges neuroscience to devise new ways of understanding the neural basis of perception and consciousness" (Noë 2004,[30] p. 2). Recently, Noe published a more popular and shorter version of his position.[31]

Enactivism receives support from various other correlated views such as embodied cognition or situated cognition. These views are usually the result of the rejection of the classic computational view of the mind which is centered on the notion of internal representations. Enactivism receives its share of negative comments, particularly from neuroscientists such as Christof Koch (Koch 2004,[32] p. 9): "While proponents of the enactive point of view rightly emphasize that perception usually takes place within the context of action, I have little patience for their neglect of the neural basis of perception. If there is one thing that scientists are reasonably sure of, it is that brain activity is both necessary and sufficient for biological sentience."

To recap, enactivism is a case of externalism, sometimes restricted to cognitive or semantic aspects, some other times striving to encompass phenomenal aspects. Something that no enactivist has so far claimed is that all phenomenal content is the result of the interaction with the environment.

Recent forms of phenomenal externalism

Some externalists suggest explicitly that phenomenal content as well as the mental process are partially external to the body of the subject. The authors considering these views wonder whether not only cognition but also the conscious mind could be extended in the environment. While enactivism, at the end of the day, accepts the standard physicalist ontology that conceives the world as made of interacting objects, these more radical externalists consider the possibility that there is some fundamental flaw in our way to conceive reality and that some ontological revision is indeed unavoidable.

Teed Rockwell recently published a wholehearted attack against all forms of dualism and internalism. He proposed that the mind emerges not entirely from brain activity but from an interacting nexus of brain, body, and world.[8] He therefore endorses embodied cognition, holding that neuroscience wrongly endorses a form of *Cartesian materialism*, an indictment also issued by many

others.[33] Dwelling on John Dewey's heritage, he argues that the brain and the body bring into existence the mind as a "behavioral field" in the environment.

Ted Honderich is perhaps the philosopher with the greatest experience in the field. He defends a position he himself dubbed "radical externalism" perhaps because of its ontological consequences.[34] One of his main examples is that "what it actually is for you to be aware of the room you are in, it is for the room a way to exist."[35] According to him, "Phenomenologically, what it is for you to be perceptually conscious is for a world somehow to exist".[34] Therefore he identifies existence with consciousness.

Another radical form of phenomenal externalism is the view called the *spread mind* by Riccardo Manzotti.[9] He questions the separation between subject and object, seeing these as only two incomplete perspectives and descriptions of the same physical process.[36] He supports a process ontology that endorses a mind spread physically and spatio-temporally beyond the skin. Objects are not autonomous as we know them, but rather actual processes framing our reality.[37]

References

1. **Jump up^** Rowlands, M., (2003), Externalism. Putting Mind and World Back Together Again, Chesham, Acumen Publishing Limited.
2. **Jump up^** Clark, A. and D. Chalmers, (1999), "The Extended Mind." in Analysis, 58(1): 10-23.
3. **Jump up^** Gallagher, S., (2009), "Philosophical Antecedents of Situated Cognition" in P. Robbins and M. Aydede, Eds, The Cambridge Handbook of Situated Cognition, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
4. **Jump up^** Robbins, P. and M. Aydede, Eds, (2009), The Cambridge Handbook of Situated Cognition, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
5. **Jump up^** Lycan, W. G., (2001), "The Case for Phenomenal Externalism" in J. E. Tomberlin, Ed., Philosophical Perspectives, Vol. 15: Metaphysics, Atascadero, Ridgeview Publishing: 17-36.
6. **Jump up^** Byrne, A. and M. Tye, (2006), "Qualia ain't in the Head." in Noûs, 40(2): 241-255.
7. ^ Jump up to:*a b* Tonneau, F., (2004), "Consciousness Outside the Head." in Behavior and Philosophy, 32: 97-123.
8. ^ Jump up to:*a b* Rockwell, T., (2005), *Neither Brain nor Ghost*, Cambridge (Mass), MIT Press.

9. ^ Jump up to:*ᵃ ᵇ* Manzotti, R., (2006), "An alternative process view of conscious perception." in Journal of Consciousness Studies, 13(6): 45-79.

10. **Jump up^** Holt, E. B., W. T. Marvin, et al., (1910), "The program and first platform of six realists." in The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods, 7: 393-401.

11. **Jump up^** Holt, E. B. (1914). The concept of consciousness. New York: Macmillan. p. 142

12. **Jump up^** Brooks, R. A., (1991), "Intelligence Without Representations." in Artificial Intelligence Journal, 47: 139-159.

13. **Jump up^** Whitehead, A. N., (1929/1978), Process and Reality, London, Free Press.

14. **Jump up^** Griffin, D. R., (2007), Whitehead's Radically Different Postmodern Philosophy: An Argument for its Contemporary Relevance, Albany (NY), State University of New York Press.

15. **Jump up^** Gibson, J. J., (1979), The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception, Boston, Houghton Mifflin.

16. **Jump up^** Marr, D., (1982), Vision, S.Francisco, Freeman.

17. **Jump up^** Churchland, P. S. and T. J. Sejnowski, (1992), The Computational Brain, Cambridge (Mass), MIT Press.

18. **Jump up^** Bateson, G., (1972/2000), Steps to an Ecology of Mind, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press.

19. **Jump up^** Bateson, G., (1979/2002), Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity, Cresskill (NJ), Hampton Press.

20. **Jump up^** Putnam, H. (1975/1985) "The meaning of 'meaning'". *In Philosophical Papers, Vol. 2: Mind, Language and Reality*. Cambridge University Press, 215–271, here: p. 227

21. **Jump up^** Burge, T., (1979), "Individualism and the Mental" in French, Uehling and Wettstein, Eds, Midwest Studies in Philosophy IV, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press: 73-121.

22. **Jump up^** Dretske, F., (1996), "Phenomenal externalism, or if meanings ain't in the head, where are qualia?" in Philosophical Issues, 7.

23. **Jump up^** (Lycan 2001)

24. **Jump up^** Jackson, F. and P. Pettit, (1988), "Functionalism and Broad Content." in Mind, 97(387): 381-400.

25. **Jump up^** Dennett, D. C., (2000), "Making Tools for Thinking" in D. Sperber, Ed., Metarepresentations: A Multidisciplinary Perspective, Oxford, Oxford University Press: 17-29.

26. **Jump up^** Clark, A. and D. Chalmers, (1998), "The Extended Mind." in Analysis, 58(1): 10-23.

27. **Jump up^** Clark, A., (2008), Supersizing the Mind, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

28. **Jump up^** Chalmers, D., (2009), "Foreword" in A. Clark, Ed., Supersizing the Mind, Oxford, Oxford University Press: i-xxviii.

29. **Jump up^** * Varela, F. J., E. Thompson, et al., (1991/1993), The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience, Cambridge (Mass), MIT Press.
   - Pfeifer, R. and J. Bongard, (2006), How the Body Shapes the Way We Think: A New View of Intelligence (Bradford Books) New York, Bradford Books.
   - Pfeifer, R., M. Lungarella, et al., (2007), "Self-Organization, Embodiment, and Biologically Inspired Robotics." in Science, 5853(318): 1088 - 1093.
   - Haugeland, J., (1998), "Mind embodied and embedded" in j. Haugeland, Ed., Having thought: Essays in the metaphysics of mind, Cambridge (Mass), Harward University Press.
   - Thelen, E., G. Schoner, et al., (2001), "The dynamics of embodiment: A field theory of infant perseverative reaching." in Behavioral and Brain Sciences, 24: 1-86.
   - Robbins, P. and M. Aydede, Eds, (2009), The Cambridge Handbook of Situated Cognition, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

30. **Jump up^** Noë, A., (2004), Action in Perception, Cambridge (Mass), MIT Press.

31. **Jump up^** Noë, A., (2009), Out of Our Heads: Why You Are Not Your Brain, and Other Lessons from the Biology of Consciousness, Hill and Wang.

32. **Jump up^** Koch, C., (2004), The Quest for Consciousness: A Neurobiological Approach, Englewood (Col), Roberts & Company Publishers.

33. **Jump up^** Bennett, M. R. and P. M. S. Hacker, (2003), Philosophical Foundations of Neuroscience, Malden (Mass), Blackwell.

34. **^** Jump up to:*ᵃ ᵇ* Honderich, T., (2004), On Consciousness, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press.

35. **Jump up^** Honderich, T., (2006), "Radical Externalism." in Journal of Consciousness Studies, 13(7-8): 3-13.

36. **Jump up^** Manzotti, R. and V. Tagliasco, (2001), Coscienza e Realtà. Una teoria della coscienza per costruttori e studiosi di menti e cervelli, Bologna, Il Mulino.

37. **Jump up^** Manzotti, R., (2009), "No Time, No Wholes: A Temporal and Causal-Oriented Approach to the Ontology of Wholes." in Axiomathes, 19: 193-214.

Internalism and externalism

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Internalism and **externalism** are two opposing ways of explaining various subjects in several areas of philosophy. These include human motivation, knowledge, justification, meaning, and truth. The distinction arises in many areas of debate with similar but distinct meanings. Usually 'internalism' refers to the belief that an explanation can be given of the given subject by pointing to things which are internal to the person or their mind which is considering them. Conversely, externalism holds that it is things about the world which motivate us, justify our beliefs, determine meaning, etc.

Contents

Moral philosophy

Motivation

In contemporary moral philosophy, **motivational internalism** (or **moral internalism**) is the view that moral convictions (which are not necessarily beliefs, e.g. feelings of moral approval or disapproval) are intrinsically motivating. That is, the motivational internalist believes that there is an internal, necessary connection between one's conviction that X ought to be done and one's motivation to do X. Conversely, the **motivational externalist** (or **moral externalist**) claims that there is no necessary internal connection between moral convictions and moral motives.[1] That is, there is no necessary connection

between the conviction that X is wrong and the motivational drive not to do X. (The use of these terms has roots in W.D. Falk's (1947) paper *"Ought" and Motivation*[2]).

These views in moral psychology have various implications. In particular, if motivational internalism is true, then an amoralist is unintelligible (and metaphysically impossible). An amoralist is not simply someone who is immoral, rather it is someone who knows what the moral things to do are, yet is not motivated to do them. Such an agent is unintelligible to the motivational internalist, because moral judgments about the right thing to do have built into them corresponding motivations to do those things that are judged by the agent to be the moral things to do. On the other hand, an amoralist is entirely intelligible to the motivational *externalist*, because the motivational externalist thinks that moral judgments about the right thing to do not necessitate some motivation to do those things that are judged to be the right thing to do; rather, an independent desire—such as the desire to do the right thing—is required (Brink, 2003[3]),(Rosati, 2006[4]).

Reasons

There is also a distinction in ethics and action theory, largely made popular by Bernard Williams (1979, reprinted in 1981),[1] concerning internal and external reasons for action. An *internal reason* is, roughly, something that one has in light of one's own "subjective motivational set"---one's own commitments, desires (or wants), goals, etc. On the other hand, an *external reason* is something that one has independent of one's subjective motivational set. For example, suppose that Sally is going to drink a glass of poison, because she wants to commit suicide and believes that she can do so by drinking the poison. Sally has an internal reason to drink the poison, because she wants to commit suicide. However, one might say that she has an external reason not to drink the poison because, even though she wants to die, one ought not kill oneself no matter what—regardless of whether one wants to die.

Some philosophers embrace the existence of both kinds of reason, while others deny the existence of one or the other. For example, Bernard Williams (1981)[1]argues that there are really only internal reasons for action. Such a view is called *internalism about reasons* (or *reasons internalism*). *Externalism about reasons* (or*reasons externalism*) is the denial of reasons internalism.[5] It is the view that there are external reasons for action; that is, there are reasons for action that one can have even if the action is not part of one's subjective motivational set.

Consider the following situation. Suppose that it's against the moral law to steal from the poor, and Sasha knows this. However, Sasha doesn't desire to follow the moral law, and there is currently a poor person next to him. Is it intelligible to say that Sasha has a reason to follow the moral law right now (to not steal from the poor person next to him), even though he doesn't care to do so? The reasons externalist answers in the affirmative ("Yes, Sasha has a reason not to steal from that poor person."), since he believes that one can have reasons for action even if one does not have the relevant desire. Conversely, the reasons internalist answers the question in the negative ("No, Sasha does not have a reason not to steal from that poor person, though others might."). The reasons internalist claims that external reasons are unintelligible; one has a reason for action only if one has the relevant desire (that is, only internal reasons can be reasons for action). The reasons internalist claims the following: the moral facts are a reason *for Sasha's action* not to steal from the poor person next to him only if he currently *wants* to follow the moral law (or if not stealing from the poor person is a way to satisfy his other current goals—that is, part of what Williams calls his "subjective motivational set"). In short, the reasoning behind reasons internalism, according to Williams,[1] is that reasons for action must be able to explain one's action; and only internal reasons can do this.

Epistemology

Justification

In contemporary epistemology, internalism about justification is the idea that everything necessary to provide justification for a belief must be immediately available to an agent's consciousness. Externalism in this context is the view that factors other than those internal to the believer can affect the justificatory status of a belief. One strand of externalism is reliabilism, and the causal theory of knowledge is sometimes considered to be another strand. It is important to distinguish internalism about justification from internalism about knowledge. An internalist about knowledge will likely hold that the conditions that distinguish mere true belief from knowledge are similarly internal to the individual's perspective or grounded in the subject's mental states. Whereas internalism about justification is a widely endorsed view, there is debate about knowledge internalism, due to Edmund Gettier and his Gettier-examples. These are claimed to show that knowledge is not simply justified true belief. In a short but influential paper published in 1963,[6] Gettier produced examples that seemed to show that someone could be justified in believing something which is actually false, and inferring from it a further belief, this belief being coincidentally true. In this way, he claimed that someone could be justified in

believing something true but nevertheless not be considered to have knowledge of that thing.

One line of argument in favor of externalism begins with the observation that if what justified our beliefs failed to eliminate significantly the risk of error, then it does not seem that knowledge would be attainable as it would appear that when our beliefs did happen to be correct, this would really be a matter of good fortune. While many will agree with this last claim, the argument seems inconclusive. Setting aside sceptical concerns about the possession of knowledge, Gettier cases have suggested the need to distinguish justification from warrant where warrant is that which distinguishes justified true belief from knowledge by eliminating the kind of accidentality often present in Gettier-type cases. Even if something must significantly reduce the risk of error, it is not clear why justification is what must fill the bill.

One of the more popular arguments for internalism begins with the observation, perhaps first due to Stewart Cohen,[7] that when we imagine subjects completely cut off from their surroundings (thanks to a malicious Cartesian demon, perhaps) we do not think that in cutting these individuals off from their surroundings, these subjects cease to be rational in taking things to be as they appear. The 'new evil demon' argument for internalism (and against externalism) begins with the observation that individuals like us on the inside will be as justified as we are in believing what we believe. As it is part of the story that these individuals' beliefs are not produced by reliable mechanisms or backed by veridical perceptual experiences, the claim that the justification of our beliefs depends upon such things appears to be seriously challenged. Externalists have offered a variety of responses but there is no consensus among epistemologists as to whether these replies are successful (Cohen, 1984; Sosa, 1991[7][8]).

As a response to skepticism

In responding to skepticism, Hilary Putnam (1982 [9]) claims that **semantic** externalism yields "an argument we can give that shows we are not brains in a vat (BIV). (See also DeRose, 1999.[10]) If semantic externalism is true, then the meaning of a word or sentence is not wholly determined by what individuals think those words mean. For example, semantic externalists maintain that the word "water" referred to the substance whose chemical composition is H_2O even before scientists had discovered that chemical composition. The fact that the substance out in the world we were calling "water" actually had that composition at least partially determined the meaning of the word. One way to use this in a response to skepticism is to apply the same

strategy to the terms used in a skeptical argument in the following way (DeRose, 1999 [10]):

Either I am a BIV, or I am not a BIV.

If I am not a BIV, then when I say "I am not a BIV", it is true. If I am a BIV, then, when I say "I am not a BIV", it is true (because "brain" and "vat" would only pick out the brains and vats being simulated, not real brains and real vats).

My utterance of "I am not a BIV" is true.

To clarify how this argument is supposed to work: Imagine that there is brain in a vat, and a whole world is being simulated for it. Call the individual who is being deceived "Steve." When Steve is given an experience of walking through a park, semantic externalism allows for his thought, "I am walking through a park" to be true so long as the simulated reality is one in which he is walking through a park. Similarly, what it takes for his thought, "I am a brain in a vat," to be true is for the simulated reality to be one where he is a brain in a vat. But in the simulated reality, he is not a brain in a vat.

Apart from disputes over the success of the argument or the plausibility of the specific type of semantic externalism required for it to work, there is question as to what is gained by defeating the skeptical worry with this strategy. Skeptics can give new skeptical cases that wouldn't be subject to the same response (e.g., one where the person was very recently turned into a brain in a vat, so that their words "brain" and "vat" still pick out real brains and vats, rather than simulated ones). Further, if even brains in vats can correctly believe "I am not a brain in a vat," then the skeptic can still press us on how we know we are not in that situation (though the externalist will point out that it may be difficult for the skeptic to describe that situation).

Another attempt to use externalism to refute skepticism is done by Brueckner[11] and Warfield.[12] It involves the claim that our thoughts are *about* things, unlike a BIV's thoughts, which cannot be *about* things (DeRose, 1999 [10]).

Semantics

Semantic externalism comes in two varieties, depending on whether meaning is construed cognitively or linguistically. On a cognitive construal, externalism is the thesis that what concepts (or contents) are available to a thinker is determined by their environment, or their relation to their environment. On a

linguistic construal, externalism is the thesis that the meaning of a word is environmentally determined. Likewise, one can construe semantic internalism in two ways, as a denial of either of these two theses.

Externalism and internalism in semantics is closely tied to the distinction in philosophy of mind concerning mental content, since the contents of one's thoughts (specifically, intentional mental states) are usually taken to be semantic objects that are truth-evaluable.

See also:

- Linguistic turn and cognitive turn for more about the two construals of meaning
- Swamp man thought experiment
- Twin Earth thought experiment

Philosophy of mind

Within the context of the philosophy of mind, externalism is the theory that the contents of at least some of one's mental states are dependent in part on their relationship to the external world or one's environment.

The traditional discussion on externalism was centered around the semantic aspect of mental content. This is by no means the only meaning of externalism now.Externalism is now a broad collection of philosophical views considering all aspects of mental content and activity. There are various forms of externalism that consider either the content or the vehicles of the mind or both. Furthermore, externalism could be limited to cognition, or it could address broader issues of consciousness.

As to the traditional discussion on semantic externalism (often dubbed *content externalism*), some mental states, such as believing that water is wet, and fearing that the Queen has been insulted, have contents we can capture using 'that' clauses. The content externalist often appeal to observations found as early as Hilary Putnam's seminal essay, "The Meaning of 'Meaning'," (1975).[9] Putnam stated that we can easily imagine pairs of individuals that are microphysical duplicates embedded in different surroundings who use the same words but mean different things when using them.

For example, suppose that Ike and Tina's mothers are identical twins and that Ike and Tina are raised in isolation from one another in indistinguishable environments. When Ike says, "I want my mommy," he expresses a want satisfied only if he is brought to his mommy. If we brought Tina's mommy, Ike

might not notice the difference, but he doesn't get what he wants. It seems that what he wants and what he says when he says, "I want my mommy," will be different from what Tina wants and what she says she wants when she says, "I want my mommy."

Externalists say that if we assume competent speakers know what they think, and say what they think, the difference in what these two speakers mean corresponds to a difference in the thoughts of the two speakers that is not (necessarily) reflected by a difference in the internal make up of the speakers or thinkers. They urge us to move from externalism about meaning of the sort Putnam defended to externalism about contentful states of mind. The example pertains to singular terms, but has been extended to cover kind terms as well such as natural kinds (e.g., 'water') and for kinds of artifacts (e.g., 'espresso maker'). There is no general agreement amongst content externalists as to the scope of the thesis.

Philosophers now tend to distinguish between *wide content* (externalist mental content) and *narrow content* (anti-externalist mental content). Some, then, align themselves as endorsing one view of content exclusively, or both. For example, Jerry Fodor (1980[13]) argues for narrow content (although he comes to reject that view in his 1995), while David Chalmers (2002)[14] argues for a two dimensional semantics according to which the contents of mental states can have both wide and narrow content.

Critics of the view have questioned the original thought experiments saying that the lessons that Putnam and later writers such as Tyler Burge (1979,[15] 1982[16]) have urged us to draw can be resisted. Frank Jackson and John Searle, for example, have defended internalist accounts of thought content according to which the contents of our thoughts are fixed by descriptions that pick out the individuals and kinds that our thoughts intuitively pertain to the sorts of things that we take them to. In the Ike/Tina example, one might agree that Ike's thoughts pertain to Ike's mother and that Tina's thoughts pertain to Tina's but insist that this is because Ike thinks of that woman as his mother and we can capture this by saying that he thinks of her as 'the mother of the speaker'. This descriptive phrase will pick out one unique woman. Externalists claim this is implausible, as we would have to ascribe to Ike knowledge he wouldn't need to successfully think about or refer to his mother.

Critics have also claimed that content externalists are committed to epistemological absurdities. Suppose that a speaker can have the concept of water we do only if the speaker lives in a world that contains H_2O. It seems this speaker could know a priori that she thinks that water is wet. This is the thesis of privileged access. It also seems that she could know on the basis of simple

thought experiments that she can only think that water is wet if she lives in a world that contains water. What would prevent her from putting these together and coming to know a priori that the world contains water? If we should say that no one could possibly know whether water exists a priori, it seems either we cannot know content externalism to be true on the basis of thought experiments or we cannot know what we are thinking without first looking into the world to see what it is like.

As mentioned, content externalism (limited to the semantic aspects) is only one among many other options offered by externalism by and large.

Historiography of science

Externalism in the historiography of science is the view that the history of science is due to its social context – the socio-political climate and the surrounding economy determines scientific progress.

Internalism in the historiography of science claims that science is completely distinct from social influences and pure natural science can exist in any society and at any time given the intellectual capacity.

References

1. ^ Jump up to:*a b c d* Williams, Bernard (1981) "Internal and External Reasons", in Williams's *Moral Luck*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 101–13.
2. **Jump up^** Falk, W. D. (1947) "'Ought' and Motivation", Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, 48: 492–510
3. **Jump up^** Brink, David (1989) "Moral Realism and the Foundations of Ethics", New York: Cambridge University Press, Ch. 3, pp. 37–80.
4. **Jump up^** Rosati, Connie S. (2006). "Moral Motivation", The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy Edward N. Zalta (ed.).
5. **Jump up^** Finlay, Stephen & Schroeder, Mark (2008). "Reasons for Action: Internal vs. External" (§1.1). The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Edward N. Zalta (ed.))
6. **Jump up^** Edmund L. Gettier, "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?" Analysis, Vol. 23, pp. 121–23 (1963).
7. ^ Jump up to:*a b* Cohen, Stewart (1984) "Justification and Truth", Philosophical Studies 46, pp. 279–296.
8. **Jump up^** Sosa, Ernest (1991) "Reliabilism and Intellectual Virtue," in E. Sosa, Knowledge In Perspective, Cambridge Press, pp. 131–145.

9. ^ Jump up to:*ᵃ ᵇ* Putnam, H. (1981): "Brains in a vat" in Reason, Truth, and History, Cambridge University Press; reprinted in DeRose and Warfield, editors (1999): Skepticism: A Contemporary Reader, Oxford UP.
10. ^ Jump up to:*ᵃ ᵇ ᶜ* DeRose, Keith (1999) "Responding to Skepticism", Skepticism: A Contemporary Reader.
11. **Jump up^** *Brueckner, Anthony (1999), Semantic Answers to Skepticism, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 43–60*
12. **Jump up^** Warfield, Ted A. Skepticism (1999, ed. with Keith DeRose, Oxford, 1999)
13. **Jump up^** Fodor, Jerry (1980) "Methodological Solipsism Considered as a Research Strategy in Cognitive Psychology", Behavioral and Brain Sciences 3:1.
14. **Jump up^** Chalmers, David (2002) "The Components of Content", in Chalmers (ed.) Philosophy of Mind: Classical and Contemporary Readings, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
15. **Jump up^** Burge, Tyler (1979) "Individualism and the Mental", in French, Uehling, and Wettstein (eds.) Midwest Studies in Philosophy IV, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, pp. 73–121.
16. **Jump up^** Burge, Tyler (1982) "Other Bodies", in Woodfield, Andrew, ed., Thought and Object. New York: Oxford.
17.

Further reading

- Brink, David (1989) "Moral Realism and the Foundations of Ethics", New York: Cambridge University Press, Ch. 3, pp. 37–80.
- Brown, Curtis (2007) "Narrow Mental Content", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2007 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.). (link)
- Burge, Tyler (1979) "Individualism and the Mental", in French, Uehling, and Wettstein (eds.) *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* IV, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, pp. 73–121.
- Burge, Tyler (1982) "Other Bodies", in Woodfield, Andrew, ed., Thought and Object. New York: Oxford.
- Chalmers, David (2002) "The Components of Content", in Chalmers (ed.) *Philosophy of Mind: Classical and Contemporary Readings*, Oxford: Oxford University Press. Preprint available online
- Cohen, Stewart (1984) "Justification and Truth", *Philosophical Studies* 46, pp. 279–296.

- DeRose, Keith (1999) "Responding to Skepticism", *Skepticism: A Contemporary Reader*.
- Falk, W. D. (1947) "'Ought' and Motivation", *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 48: 492–510
- Finlay, Stephen & Schroeder, Mark (2008). "Reasons for Action: Internal vs. External". *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.). (link)
- Fodor, Jerry (1980) "Methodological Solipsism Considered as a Research Strategy in Cognitive Psychology", *Behavioral and Brain Sciences* 3:1.
- Fodor, Jerry (1995) *The Elm and the Expert: Mentalese and its Semantics*, Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Kornblith, Hilary (ed.) (2001) *Epistemology: Internalism and Externalism*, Blackwell Press.
- Lau, Joe (2004) "Externalism About Mental Content", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2004 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.). (link)
- Le Morvan, Pierre (2005) "A Metaphilosophical Dilemma for Epistemic Externalism", *Metaphilosophy* 36(5), pp. 688–707.
- Pappas, George (2005) "Internalist vs. Externalist Conceptions of Epistemic Justification", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2005 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.). (link)
- Putnam, Hilary (1975) "The Meaning of 'Meaning'", in Keith Gunderson (ed.) *Language, Mind and Knowledge*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, pp. 131–93 (reprinted in Putnam (1975), *Mind, Language and Reality: Philosophical Papers Volume 2*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press). (link)
- Putnam, Hilary (1982) "Brains in a Vat", in *Reason, Truth, and History*, Cambridge University Press. (link)
- Rosati, Connie S. (2006). "Moral Motivation", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* Edward N. Zalta (ed.). (link)
- Smith, Basil (2013). "Internalism and Externalism in the Philosophy of Mind and Language," 'The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy,' P. Saka (ed.). (link)
- Sosa, Ernest (1991) "Reliabilism and Intellectual Virtue," in E. Sosa, *Knowledge In Perspective*, Cambridge Press, pp. 131–145.
- Williams, Bernard (1981) "Internal and External Reasons", in Williams's *Moral Luck*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 101–13.