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On Being Internally the Same

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1. Introduction

There are many disagreements among philosophers about the nature of the mind. One which has shaped the landscape of contemporary philosophy of mind is the debate between internalism and externalism about the nature of mental states. This debate focused initially on mental states with content but has since extended into many other areas, including the nature of causal psychological explanations, the epistemic status of self-knowledge, and the proper scientific methodology for cognitive psychology. Yet despite the widespread influence of these two doctrines, it is not clear what substantive philosophical issue divides internalists and externalists. That is, when internalists and externalists disagree, what are they disagreeing about?

Standard formulations of internalism and externalism formulate the theses in metaphysical terms, often using supervenience claims (Brown, 2009; Lau & Deutsch, 2016). There is nothing mistaken or incoherent about adopting such formulations. But we will suggest in this chapter that they are to be rejected. We will instead sketch the outlines of an alternative epistemic formulation of internalism and externalism according to which internalism and externalism are doctrines about the extent to which an agent's mental states can vary independently of the capacity for introspective discrimination. We aim to show that this epistemic formulation can avoid certain objections, and that it improves in key ways on the metaphysical formulations we discuss in the first part of the chapter. We shall also argue that the epistemic formulation marks a substantive distinction, one which is important for philosophical theorizing about the nature of the mind.

To make things more precise, we borrow our terminology and initial set-up from Williamson (2000), with slight emendations. Let a *case* be a possible total state of a system, consisting of an agent at a time paired with the external environment. *Conditions* are specified by 'that' clauses and obtain

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or fail to obtain in each case. A case α is *internally like* a case β if and only if the agent in α is internally the same as the agent in β. We leave open for the moment what has to be the case for two agents to be internally the same. A condition C is *narrow* if and only if for all cases α and β, if α is *internally like* β, then C obtains in α if and only if C obtains in β. A state S is *narrow* if and only if the condition that one is in S is narrow; otherwise S is broad. Internalism about a set of mental states is the claim that those states are narrow; externalism is the denial of internalism.

Using this framework we can distinguish different accounts of the internalism/externalism distinction in terms of the requirements which have to hold in order for two agents to be internally the same. Differing accounts of what it is for two agents to be internally the same will have different consequences for which mental states count as narrow. And even when differing accounts of internal sameness happen to agree on which states count as narrow, they will present us with different ways of understanding the distinction between internalism and externalism.

This suggests two ways in which we can compare and contrast competing accounts of internal sameness. First, we can examine which states an account classifies as narrow and assess whether this partition is theoretically fruitful. Some accounts of internal sameness will yield a partition that is theoretically unproductive or ad hoc. Second, we can consider which account of internal sameness presents the most philosophically illuminating way of understanding the distinction between internalism and externalism. The aim here is not to elucidate existing debates in the literature, but instead to hone in on a philosophical issue which is the best candidate for a substantive point of disagreement between internalists and externalists.

To see how this second criterion can be applied, consider a longstanding debate between groups of neighbours about whether to install speed humps on Princes Street. At one level, this debate can be correctly characterized as obtaining between those who are in favour of the installation of speed humps, and those who are against it. But reflection on other cases—speed humps which are ineffective; making Princes Street into a one-way street; other traffic-calming measures—can help us to see that the debate is more perspicuously characterized as between those who think commuting efficiency poses an acceptable risk to child safety, and those who disagree. That is to say, although the neighbourhood disagreement superficially concerns the presence of speed humps, it is more fundamentally about the relative values of child safety and ease of commuting. This is the substantive point of

disagreement between the groups of residents. We will apply similar considerations to competing formulations of internal sameness.

Since the terms 'internalism' and 'externalism' are terms of art, there is no simple way to apply these two tests, and we cannot decide which account of internal sameness to accept based on which best corresponds to pre-theoretic notions. Instead, we need to assess each account in turn and consider whether its formulation of internal sameness provides a theoretically appropriate partition of views, and whether it captures a substantive issue underlying philosophical disputes between internalists and externalists.

In this chapter, we shall consider five accounts of internal sameness. The first three are *metaphysical accounts* in that they take two agents to be internally the same in virtue of some metaphysical truth about the agents. They are familiar from standard presentations of internalism and externalism. According to the *physical account*, two agents are internally the same if and only if the total internal physical states of the agents are the same. According to the *functional account*, two agents are internally the same if and only if the total internal functional states of the agents are the same. And, according to the *phenomenal account*, two agents are internally the same if and only if the total phenomenal states of the agents are the same.

Each of these accounts provides a clear formulation of internal sameness. To that extent, they are unproblematic. Nevertheless, we shall argue that they fail when matched against the two tests noted above. In some cases, the grouping of states which the account classifies as narrow looks theoretically ad hoc. And in some cases, the resulting distinction does not seem to identify a substantive philosophical issue which distinguishes internalists and externalists.

What are the options if we reject these metaphysical accounts? In the second part of the chapter we will investigate the prospects for endorsing an *epistemic account* of internal sameness. Epistemic accounts take two agents to be internally the same in virtue of some epistemic fact about the agents. According to the epistemic accounts that we shall consider, two agents are internally the same if and only if the total states of the agents are *introspectively indiscriminable*. We will argue that objections raised to epistemic accounts apply only to those formulated in terms of a *personal* conception of indiscriminability. This leaves open that a notion of impersonal indiscriminability can be used to formulate an account of internal sameness which is both theoretically productive and tracks a fundamental issue in

philosophy of mind that is at the centre of the dispute between internalists and externalists. On the resulting view, the question of whether to endorse internalism or externalism turns out to be a question about the extent to which our mental lives are constrained by our capacities to introspectively discriminate our perspective on the world from certain alternative kinds of perspectives. We end the chapter by suggesting that this might be a question which clarifies why debates about internalism and externalism matter for our theoretical endeavours.

Here's the structure of the chapter. In Section 2, we'll summarize the standard twin-earth argument for externalism. In Sections 3 and 4, we'll consider three *metaphysical* accounts of internal sameness: a *physical* account, a *functional* account, and a *phenomenal* account. We shall argue that each account has problematic consequences insofar as either it entails an unconvincing partition of philosophical theories, or it fails to characterize a substantive issue of concern in the internalism and externalism dispute.

In the second part of the chapter, we turn to *epistemic* accounts. In Section 5, we suggest that an account of internal sameness which makes use of an *impersonal* notion of introspective indiscriminability can avoid some of the standard problems raised against epistemic accounts. In Section 6 we consider an objection to the impersonal account which concerns the grounding of epistemic facts. Finally, in Section 7, we suggest that this epistemic account captures an important distinction within the philosophy of mind.

2. Externalism

Externalism is often motivated by the idea that propositional attitudes are individuated by their contents, and that the contents ascribed to propositional attitudes depend on features of an agent's environment. This form of argument for externalism traces back to the work of Hilary Putnam (1975, 1981) and Tyler Burge (1979, 1982), and it is with externalism so understood that we'll be concerned in this essay.[1]

[1] Instead of the terms 'internalism' and 'externalism', Burge prefers to use the terms 'individualism' and 'anti-individualism', but he regards the two sets of terms as interchangeable (Burge, 2007). In his earlier writings, Burge seems to take the term 'individualism' primarily to designate a view that denies 'essential reference to the social context' of an individual (1979, pp. 132–3). In later work, he describes 'individualism' as denying constitutive relations between a person's mental states and her physical *or* social environment (1986b, p. 221, our emphasis),

Consider the state of thinking that water quenches thirst. Externalists hold that this state is broad, which is to say that it does not follow from the fact that two agents are internally the same that they are both thinking that water quenches thirst. A standard externalist argument for this conclusion proceeds as follows: consider a world which is the same as ours in all respects except that it contains not water, but a colourless, odourless liquid with the same appearance but with a different chemical structure. Call this *twin-water*. In this counterfactual world, there is a twin-version of you who is *internally the same* as you. When you use the term 'water', you refer to H_2O, but when your twin uses the term 'water', she refers to XYZ. Thus, the thought that you express by a sentence of the form 'water quenches thirst' is true because water quenches thirst, whereas the thought that your twin expresses by a sentence of the form 'water quenches thirst' is true because *twin-water* quenches thirst. Since the truth-conditions for the thoughts differ, the mental states themselves differ: you and your twin are thinking different thoughts. It follows that the state of thinking that water quenches thirst is broad.

This is a standard version of twin-earth reasoning. It has been an enormously influential form of argument in the philosophy of mind, and many philosophers share the judgement that twin-earth reasoning picks out something philosophically interesting. Even philosophers who are not persuaded by this form of argument take their disagreement about how to evaluate twin-earth cases as a substantive disagreement about the conditions

and Burge himself reports that 'by the mid-1980s' he came to consistently use the term 'individualism' to apply to 'any view that takes the nature of mental states to depend entirely on physical factors in the individual or psychological resources cognitively available to the individual' (2007, p. 153). This may suggest that Burge takes 'individualism' to be a doctrine about the relation of mental states to some metaphysical facts about the physical environment, along the lines of some of the metaphysical formulations that we canvass below. However, Burge has also emphasized how various historical versions of 'individualism' are typically motivated by epistemological considerations, and he sometimes uses the notion of a subject's 'discriminative abilities' in formulating his main argument against 'individualism' in a way which may suggest an epistemic formulation of individualism and anti-individualism along the lines that we propose later in this chapter (Burge, 1986a). This doesn't seem to us to be an equivocation. Throughout his work, Burge is primarily concerned with defending the specific externalist doctrine that an individual's mental states are 'constitutively what they are partly by virtue of relations between the individual in those states and a wider reality' (2007, p. 3). To defend this thesis, however, Burge does not need a single precise conception of individualism; rather, he can simply appeal to our intuitions about conditions that are obviously part of 'wider reality'. Since there are very different sorts of 'individualist' theories found throughout the history of philosophy, and his work aims to refute all of them, Burge often intentionally characterizes 'individualism' in very broad terms. Thus, we can think of Burge's anti-individualism as denying the disjunction of all the accounts of internalism presented in this chapter.

for thinking that *p*. This suggests that our intuitions about twin-earth cases are sensitive to whatever differences between earth and twin-earth are relevant for individuating states of thinking that *p*.

In what follows, we shall assume that twin-earth reasoning is coherent, which means that it relies upon a substantive and intelligible notion of internal sameness holding between you and your twin.

3. Physical and Functional Accounts

So how should we understand the notion of internal sameness in the above argument? The classical presentation of externalism takes it that two agents are internally the same if and only if the total internal physical states of the agents are the same (cf. Burge, 1986b, p. 6; Crane, 1991; Fodor, 1987; Gertler, 2012; McLaughlin & Tye, 1998). Call this the *physical account*.

Although the physical account remains popular in orthodox presentations of externalism and internalism, it faces difficulties. The first is that it appears to misclassify certain forms of dualism as externalist. According to the physical account, any dualist theory which endorses the claim that it is possible for states of thinking that *p* to vary independently of physical states is thereby committed to thinking that all states of thinking that *p* are broad. Such views allow that two agents who are in the same total internal physical state can differ as to whether they are thinking that *p*, because whether or not one is thinking that *p* is not determined by one's total internal physical state. So, they allow some cases which are internally alike, but which differ as to whether the agent is thinking that *p*. Therefore, on the physical account, these dualist theories have the consequence that all states of thinking that *p* are broad.[2]

Is this a serious problem for the physical account? It is often assumed that all dualist theories are internalist, but we do not make this assumption. Rather, our claim is that *this* form of dualism should be classified as internalist. For even though it holds that states of thinking that *p* vary independently of an agent's total internal physical state, those states of thinking do not depend on anything obviously *external* to the agent. From a theoretical perspective, it looks odd to group these dualist theories with the externalist theories of Putnam and Burge.

[2] Several philosophers have recognized this as a problem for the physical account. See, for instance, Burge (1986a), Farkas (2003), and Gertler (2012).

The second problem for the physical account is more delicate. As we saw, Putnam's original motivation for externalism focused on the reference of 'water'. However, the standard way of presenting this argument for externalism fails. For the physical account claims that two agents are internally the same if and only if the total internal physical states of the agents are the same. And philosophers standardly assume that an agent's *skin* demarcates a natural boundary for the total physical state of an agent (Davies, 1993, 1998; cf. Gertler, 2012). But if we define our counterfactual world as qualitatively identical to the actual world except for the fact that every instance of water is an instance of *twin*-water, then you and the twin-version of you are *not* internally the same. You are partly composed of water, so, if your twin is composed of *twin*-water, it is false that there is an agent in the counterfactual world who is internally the same as you. If we find Putnam's twin-earth reasoning compelling, it suggests that his argument does not really require that agents be internally the same if and only if they are in the same *total* physical states.[3]

Can we amend the physical account to overcome these problems? In debates about the metaphysics of the mind, the recognition that individuals can differ physically whilst remaining mentally the same prompted the development of functional accounts of the mental (Armstrong, 1968; Lewis, 1972; Putnam, 1967). A natural response to the second worry is to claim that although the agents are not 'molecule for molecule' physical duplicates, still they share all the same internal *functional* properties, and this suffices for internal sameness. This recommends adopting a *functional account* of internal sameness. According to the functional account, two agents are internally the same if and only if the total internal functional states of the agents are the same. Assuming, again, that we can use an agent's *skin* to demarcate a natural boundary for the total functional state of an agent, Putnam's initial case involves agents who are functionally the same.

But the functionalist account faces the same problem as the physical account when it comes to partitioning philosophical theories. In the same way that a dualist may take states of thinking that *p* to vary independently of the physical state of the agent, so too might a dualist take states of thinking that *p* to vary independently of the *functional* profile of the agent, such that there are cases in which two agents are in the same total internal functional

[3] Farkas (2003) uses a twin-earth case involving differences in the bacterium responsible for meningitis to suggest that twin-earth reasoning is insensitive to the physical sameness of the agents involved.

state but differ as to whether they are thinking that *p*. The functional account is committed to the claim that these forms of dualism treat states of thinking that *p* as broad. Again, this seems to us to be a theoretically unhelpful classification.

If one is sceptical as to whether there are possible views on which states of thinking vary independently of the functional profile of agents, we can broaden our discussion to mental states more generally. Consider those who think that phenomenal states—those states for which there is something it is like to be in them—vary independently of the functional profile of agents (Block, 1978). These views hold that there are cases in which two agents are in the same total internal functional state but differ as to whether they are in the same phenomenal state. The functional account of internal sameness is committed to classifying these types of views as externalist. Once again, this seems to us to be an unhelpful classification.

4. The Phenomenal Account

In recognition of some of the concerns in the previous section, Farkas proposes that two agents are internally the same if and only if they are in the same phenomenal states. She claims that you and your twin counterpart are subjectively the same, where this means that 'things appear (look, taste, smell, sound) the same for [you]; or the world is (and has always been) the same from [your] subjective viewpoint' (2008, p. 83). Call this the *phenomenal account*: two agents are internally the same if and only if the total phenomenal states of the agents are the same.

Farkas's account makes sense of the emphasis placed in Putnam's original argument on the fact that twin-earth is a place where everything *appears* the same to the subject. On Farkas's view this is not a coincidence: in keeping appearances fixed, we fix the phenomenal properties of a subject's experiences: 'when I say that things appear the same (colour, shape, or otherwise), this amounts to saying that the experiences of things looking in this way for some subjects have a common phenomenal property' (2008, p. 89). Thus, according to the phenomenal account, the thesis of externalism is the denial of the claim that the phenomenal properties of mental states determine the content of those mental states.

Does the phenomenal account improve on the physical and functional accounts? It seems to fare better with cases which raised problems for physical and functional accounts. The forms of dualism we considered are

plausibly cases in which the agents are in the same internal phenomenal states. And in Putnam's initial twin-earth case, although the agents are not in the same physical state, it is natural to think they are in the same internal phenomenal states, and that this explains why internalists and externalists are inclined to treat them as internally alike.

But there is a concern, which Farkas recognizes, parallel to the problem we raised for physical and functional accounts. To recap, the problem was that each of these views misclassifies certain forms of dualism as holding that all states of thinking that *p* are broad. Similarly, the problem for the phenomenal account is that it forces us to classify certain views about phenomenal character as internalist, when it seems like they ought to count as externalist. We take this to count against the phenomenal account.

Consider strong representationalist views which take the phenomenal character of an experience to be identical to its representational content. These views hold that the state of having phenomenal property P is identical to some state of representing *p* (Tye, 1995). Can this view be combined with the view that states of representing *p* are broad? On the face of it there is nothing to prevent them from being combined, and a number of authors have endorsed this combination (e.g. Dretske, 1996; Lycan, 2001). Following Dretske, we can call this combination of views *phenomenal externalism*. Phenomenal externalists not only deny that the agents in the twin-earth cases are in the same representational state—since they take states of representing *p* to be broad—but they also deny that the agents in the twin-earth cases are in the same *phenomenal* state.

An example will help illustrate the view. Take the visual experience of a glass of water. According to the phenomenal externalist, the phenomenal properties of your visual experience are just representational properties. Say those representational properties are the ones involved in the state of representing that there is a glass of water in front of you. Then the phenomenal character of your visual experience must be characterized in terms of what it is like to see *water* in front of you. Your twin is not representing a glass of *water* in front of her; she is representing a glass of *twin*-water. So the phenomenal character of *her* visual experience can only be characterized in terms of what it is like to see *twin*-water in front of her. The content involved in the state of representing determines the phenomenal character of the agent's experience.

Phenomenal externalism looks like a coherent view. But the phenomenal account of internal sameness has an odd implication for this view: namely that all states of representing *p* which are identical to states exemplifying

phenomenal property P are trivially narrow. More precisely, the phenomenal account holds that a state S is narrow if and only if, for all cases α and β, if the agent in α is in the same phenomenal state as the agent in β, then the condition that one is in S obtains in α if and only if the condition that one is in S obtains in β. But phenomenal externalism claims that states of having phenomenal property P are identical to states of representing *p*. It follows from this that representational states which are identical to phenomenal states are trivially narrow. So, the phenomenal externalist cannot hold that all states of representing *p* are broad. This is an odd implication.

The problem ramifies when we broaden our focus to mental states more generally. Certain naïve realist views in the philosophy of perception hold that an agent's perceptual experience is partially constituted by the objects of which she is perceptually aware (Brewer, 2011; Campbell, 2002; Martin, 2004). These types of views look like they should count as externalist, since they hold not just that the *content* of our mental states depends on features of the external environment, but that certain kinds of phenomenally conscious mental episodes depend on features of the external environment. But these views are also classified as internalist by the phenomenal account. The reasoning is the same as above: since the phenomenal character of a perceptual experience is constituted by the objects perceived, all perceptual experiences with the same phenomenal character are relations to the same objects. Thus, any cases in which agents are in the same phenomenal state are trivially cases in which agents are in the state of perceiving a certain object. The phenomenal account strangely classifies naïve realist views as holding that states of perceiving are narrow.

Farkas acknowledges this problem for the phenomenal account, but we do not think she fully recognizes its force. Farkas's response is not that these views *should* be classified as internalist, but that there is no better account of internal sameness. For, she suggests, the only other option is to characterize the internal sameness relation in epistemic terms—and this, she thinks, won't work. The remainder of this chapter evaluates the epistemic option.

5. Epistemic Accounts and Indiscriminability

Farkas notes that a natural option for a phenomenal externalist is to characterize the sense in which you and your twin are internally the same in epistemic terms: your twin's case is, in some sense, *indiscriminable* from

yours. This suggests that we can use the notion of indiscriminability to fix the notion of internal sameness.

The central idea is that two agents are internally the same if and only if the total states of the agents are *introspectively indiscriminable*. Following Williamson (1990, p. 7), we can think of discrimination as the process of activating knowledge that two things are distinct. Thus, two states are introspectively indiscriminable if and only if an agent is not in a position to know through introspection that the states are distinct. The qualifier 'through introspection' is important, since disciminability is sensitive to *modes of presentation*. Two objects which are indiscriminable under one mode of presentation may be discriminable under another (Williamson, 1990, pp. 14–20). So, states that are indiscriminable through introspective reflection may well be discriminable in other ways. Indiscriminability is thus to be understood as the impossibility of activating knowledge that two things are distinct, and *introspective* indiscriminability as the impossibility of activating knowledge that two things are distinct on the basis of introspection.

This epistemic account has all the benefits of the phenomenal account, since if two agents are in the same phenomenal state, then neither is in a position to know through introspection that the states are distinct. So, any two cases which are internally the same according to the phenomenal account are internally the same according to the epistemic account. But the epistemic account is wider in scope than the phenomenal account, since it allows for cases where states are introspectively indiscriminable but not phenomenally identical. This is the source of the epistemic account's advantage over the phenomenal account, but also the source of its difficulties.

It is a source of advantage because this feature of the epistemic account allows it to correctly classify phenomenal externalism *as* externalist. On the phenomenal externalist view, the state of your representing that *water* is in front of you is not identical to your twin's state of representing that *twin*-water is in front of her, because the contents of those states are determined by a relation which each of you stand in to your environment. It follows that your conscious experience of a glass of water is not identical to your twin's conscious experience of a glass of *twin*-water. It is this difference in phenomenal character which presented problems for the phenomenal account.

But the epistemic account has no problem here, for phenomenal states which are intrinsically quite different may nevertheless be indiscriminable (cf. Fish, 2008). So, even though the phenomenal externalist view entails that there is a difference in phenomenal character across twin-earth cases, one

might nevertheless think that these states are introspectively indiscriminable, since neither you nor your twin is in a position to discriminate the conscious experience of water from the conscious experience of *twin*-water. (How could you be, since they look the same?) If this is the case, then the epistemic account correctly classifies phenomenal externalism as a form of externalism.

This advantage turns on the thought that the states in these cases are introspectively indiscriminable despite having different phenomenal characters. Making good on this claim requires us to say more about the notion of introspective indiscriminability. We said above that two states are introspectively indiscriminable if and only if an agent is not in a position to know through introspection that the states are distinct. Suppose that one thought that knowing something through introspection involved the presence of an introspective state which represents some aspect of the state which one introspects.[4] Then one might also hold that an agent is not in a position to know through introspection that two mental states are distinct iff she is in the same introspective state with regard to both of those states. On this way of cashing out the notion of introspective indiscriminability, the impossibility of discrimination is explained not by the sameness of the introspected phenomenal states, but by the sameness of the introspective states which target the qualities of those states.

But this way of explicating the notion of introspective indiscriminability leads to problems similar to those faced by the phenomenal account of internal sameness, for it forces us to classify certain views about introspection as internalist, when it seems like they ought to count as externalist. Consider a view of introspection which takes states of introspective awareness to depend on the mental states which they represent. One example is those accounts of phenomenal introspection which take qualities of introspected phenomenal states to be embedded within, or otherwise partly constitutive of, the states of introspective awareness which underlie our knowledge of our own phenomenal states (Chalmers, 2003, p. 235; Gertler, 2001, p. 307). Can these views of introspection be combined with phenomenal externalism about the phenomenal properties of mental states? Call such a combination *introspective externalism*.[5] Introspective externalism

[4] Given the dialectic, we focus here on the possibility of introspectively discriminating phenomenal states, but the same considerations apply to those who hold that non-phenomenal states are introspectable.

[5] Thanks to Uriah Kriegel for pushing us to think about this view.

holds that introspective states depend on the states which they represent, and that states exemplifying phenomenal properties are identical to representational states, which are themselves broad. Introspective externalists deny that agents in the twin-earth cases are in the same representational state; they deny that agents in the twin-earth cases are in the same phenomenal state; and, most importantly, they deny that agents in twin-earth cases are in the same *introspective* state.

Introspective externalism looks like a coherent view. But, if the epistemic account of internal sameness understood introspective indiscriminability in terms of sameness of introspective state, then we would have a recurrence of the problem which was raised above for the phenomenal account: since all states of representing *p* which are identical to states exemplifying phenomenal property P are trivially narrow, any two cases in which agents are in the same introspective state are also trivially narrow. The type of introspective externalist view under consideration therefore comes out as internalist. This classification seems to us to be mistaken, and we think it would be a problem for the epistemic account if it had this result. However, the lesson is not that we should reject the epistemic account but that we should not understand introspective indiscriminability in terms of sameness of introspective state.

How, then, should we understand introspective indiscriminability? We introduced introspective indiscriminability as the impossibility of activating knowledge on the basis of introspection that two things are distinct.[6] The kind of discrimination in play here isn't one which involves holding up two particulars and comparing them. For instance, when one introspects one does not simultaneously apprehend both one's current thought that water quenches thirst and the thought of one's twin-counterpart that twin-water quenches thirst, as one might do when discriminating two apples or two colours. Rather we take introspective indiscriminability to involve an agent not being in a position to know through introspection that her current mental state is distinct from the type of mental state her twin exemplifies. In other words, it is not possible for an agent to know through introspection

[6] There is a trivial sense of discriminability in which an agent can know of any particular with which she is consciously acquainted that is not any other thing. But this is not the sense that figures in the epistemic account. If I'm consciously acquainted with Batman, then I can discriminate him from any other distinct individual. But this is compatible with my not knowing that he is distinct from Clark Kent. It is this latter sense of discrimination—discrimination of an item from some relevant comparison class—which is in play in our account.

that her current thought is not one of the *twin-water* thoughts.[7] This impossibility is perfectly compatible with an agent and her counterpart being in different introspective states.

Our picture here is one on which internal sameness is explicated fully in terms of the epistemic capacities of possible agents. Someone who is thinking about water is not in a position to know through introspection that her current thought is not among the class of thoughts we demarcate by considering the counterfactual twin-earth case. It is worth noting that this need not have sceptical implications for an agent's self-knowledge. Someone who is not in a position to know through introspection that her current thought is not a twin-water thought may still be in a position to know that she is thinking about water, either because knowing that one is thinking about water does not require one to rule out that one is not thinking about twin-water (Falvey & Owens, 1994; Gibbons, 1996; Sainsbury, 1997; Williamson, 2000, ch. 5), or because she can rule out that she is not thinking about twin-water, albeit not solely on the basis of introspection.[8]

On this conception of internal sameness, it is perfectly possible for agents to be unable to discriminate introspective states which are actually rather different, just as we saw earlier that it might be possible for agents to be unable to discriminate phenomenal states which are actually different. Thus, one can allow introspective states to be partially constituted by the introspected states which they represent, and hold that some of those introspected states depend on aspects of the environment, whilst recognizing that agents are unable to discriminate those introspective states from the differently constituted states of their twin-earth counterparts. Introspective externalism is correctly classified by the epistemic account as a form of externalism.

[7] It isn't clear that the predicate 'is one of the Fs' expresses the relation of identity. In plural logic it is standardly thought of as a primitive logical relation that holds between a singular term and a plural term (Linnebo, 2017). Nevertheless, once we understand 'discriminability' in Williamson's terms of activating knowledge, then the central claim of the epistemic account is that it is not possible for an agent to know through introspection that *a* is not one of the Fs (i.e. that her current mental state is not one of the twin-water thoughts). We take no stand on how to correctly interpret the logical form of the content of the agent's knowledge. Failures of discrimination are just failures to know something.

[8] This latter option might be pursued by someone who thinks that an agent can rule out the possibility that she is thinking about twin-water on the basis of her knowledge that she is thinking about water, and the knowledge that this is incompatible with thinking about twin-water. McKinsey (1991) suggests that this raises additional questions about the range of a priori knowledge; we won't consider this issue in this chapter.

So far, so good. But Farkas levels several objections to accounts which characterize internal sameness in terms of introspective indiscriminability. In each case, the charge is that the epistemic account is committed to treating pairs of cases as internally the same which we are not inclined to treat as such.

The first form of the objection concerns cases in which the agents involved are non-human animals such as cats that lack the capacity to introspectively discriminate their experiences (cf. Siegel, 2008). Since *any* pair of cases would be introspectively indiscriminable to cats, it would follow that *any* pair of cases is internally the same. This is too liberal a conception of internal sameness.

Farkas's second objection is that many states are introspectively indiscriminable from each other in virtue of the fact that the agent lacks sufficient knowledge of what they are like. Consider an agent who can't tell the difference between a female house finch and a female Cassin's finch: her perceptual experiences of these birds would be introspectively indistinguishable, but Farkas thinks that we shouldn't treat these cases as internally the same. This objection could possibly be avoided if we rule out cases that a subject cannot discriminate simply because of ignorance. We are not bird enthusiasts and so neither of us can discriminate an experience of a female house finch from one of a female Cassin's finch. But that does not make them introspectively indiscriminable to us. If we spent some time learning about finches, we'd be able to tell the two apart.

Farkas's third objection holds that this response won't work in general, because there will ultimately be certain pairs of mental states that one is not able to discriminate because of natural limitations on one's discriminatory capacities. Farkas focuses on limitations of memory and makes her point with the following example: 'When I have the taste of one wine, the experience is present in all its completely determinate phenomenal specificity, to the exclusion of all others; but, as soon as the experience is gone, the details immediately fade from reflective consciousness, and what we retain in memory for comparative purposes is less specific' (2008, p. 113). The worry here is that because Farkas's own discriminatory capacities are limited by the capacity of her memory, small differences in the phenomenal character of her experiences of different wines will not be discriminable. In that case, however, it will be possible that certain pairs of introspectively indiscriminable mental states will nevertheless be phenomenally distinct. And Farkas believes it is a mistake to think that two different conscious experiences, of two different wines, are internally alike simply because the

subject of these experiences cannot remember fine-grained phenomenal information.

It is this last concern which really gets to the heart of Farkas's objection to the epistemic account. The problem is that there seem to be pairs of cases which an agent cannot discriminate, not because these experiences are internally the same, but because the agent's discriminatory capacities are limited. That limitation may be temporary, as in the case of ignorance, or more permanent, as in the case of the natural limitations of memory, and at its extreme it may involve the lack of a discriminatory capacity at all, as in the case of non-human animals. In each case, the problem is the same: certain limitations in an agent's discriminatory capacities seem to result in the epistemic account classifying pairs of cases as internally the same which should not be so counted. The epistemic account has too liberal a conception of internal sameness.

This is an important objection. But we do not think that it applies to all forms of an epistemic account. It demonstrates that a plausible epistemic account should not characterize introspective indiscriminability in terms of the psychological capacities of specific agents. Let's call such an account a *personal* conception of introspective indiscriminability. Such a conception holds that if there is some particular agent that cannot introspectively discriminate between two states, then these two states are introspectively indiscriminable for that agent. But, as Farkas's objections show, the personal conception is too liberal. When considering whether certain types of mental states are internally the same, our interest is not with whether some particular person has a good memory, or has some specific level of introspective acuity. If the personal conception were the only way to explicate the epistemic account, then we agree that it would be in trouble.

But, setting aside questions about whether some particular agent is able to discriminate two states, we might also be concerned about whether it is possible for introspective reflection to discriminate two mental states. Following Martin (2006), we shall call this more demanding notion an *impersonal* conception of introspective indiscriminability. Whereas the *personal* conception holds that the conscious states of two agents are *introspectively indiscriminable* just in case *those* agents are unable to know through introspection that their states are distinct, the *impersonal* conception of introspective indiscriminablity prescinds from any reference to actual persons. Instead, it holds that the states of two agents are *introspectively indiscriminable* if and only if it is not possible to know through introspection that the states are distinct. The impossibility here is

unrestricted. It is a claim about the limitations of introspection itself rather than any particular agent's exercise of that capacity (cf. Soteriou, 2016, ch. 3).

The impersonal conception of introspective indiscriminability can avoid Farkas's worries about cats, the ignorant, and folks who have deficits or limitations on their discriminative capacities. Contrary to what Farkas suggests, it is possible for some agent to introspectively discriminate distinct experiences had by a cat, even though that cat herself cannot do so. And it is possible for some agent to introspectively discriminate the experience of a female house finch from the experience of a female Cassin's finch, even though we cannot. And it is possible for some agent to introspectively discriminate distinct experiences of wine, even if Farkas cannot.

We suggest, then, that Farkas's objections to an *epistemic* account of internal sameness apply only to one which characterizes the notion in terms of a *personal* conception of introspective indiscriminability. This suggests that the objections can be avoided if we use an *impersonal* conception. Therefore, we propose the following epistemic account of internal sameness: a state S is narrow if and only if, for all cases α and β, if the total state of the agent in α is impersonally introspectively indiscriminable from the total state of the agent in β, then the condition that one is in S obtains in α if and only if the condition that one is in S obtains in β.

This proposal improves on the metaphysical accounts we considered earlier. It provides us with the most theoretically appropriate grouping of views, explaining the sense in which the type of dualist views we considered earlier are internalist and why phenomenal externalism is externalist. It also identifies a substantive fault line in the philosophy of mind, a dispute about whether one's mental states can vary independently of certain introspective capacities. This is an issue worth caring about.[9]

[9] One additional point in support: at the end of 'The Meaning of "Meaning"', Putnam makes clear that the entities which populate twin-earth can be thought of as *epistemic counterparts* of the entities which populate our earth (Putnam, 1975, pp. 242–3; cf. Putnam, 1990, pp. 55–6). This supports the claim we have made in this section: the fundamental relation which holds between you and your twin is an *epistemic* relation. Putnam notes that the phrase 'epistemic counterpart' comes from Kripke, and many who have followed Kripke have supposed that an object on twin-earth is an epistemic counterpart of an object on earth because on twin-earth I would have—as Kripke puts it—'the same sensory evidence that I in fact have' (Kripke, 1980, p. 142; cf. Sawyer, 1999, p. 361). But the previous discussion of phenomenal externalism and naïve realism shows why this further step is unwarranted: two cases can involve epistemic counterparts even when one's sensory evidence is different in the two. The characterization of twin-earth as an epistemic counterpart of the earth motivates a formulation of internal sameness in terms of introspective indiscriminability.

In the next section, we consider an objection to the epistemic account; in the final section, we argue that formulating the notion of internal sameness in epistemic terms can better capture the significance of the dispute between internalism and externalism when thinking about the nature of the mind.

6. Grounding Introspective Indiscriminability

The epistemic account under consideration holds that two agents are internally the same because the mental states of those agents are introspectively indiscriminable. As we saw, the phenomenal account also has this consequence. However, unlike the epistemic account, the phenomenal account is in a position to explain why the mental states of two agents are introspectively indiscriminable, namely because those states share the same phenomenal properties. So, although the phenomenal account faces some obstacles, it might seem like a positive feature of the account is that it at least is in a position to explain why two states are introspectively indiscriminable.

In contrast, the epistemic account looks to have *no* explanation of why the states in question are introspectively indiscriminable, at least so long as any explanation is to turn on features of the objects of introspection. It may be true that you cannot know through introspection that your current thought is not one of the *twin*-water thoughts, but, for the epistemic account, this is not *because* of some feature or property of your thought. This would not be problematic if we were operating with a personal notion, since we could at least then explain why two states could not be discriminated by appealing to facts about the psychological capacities of agents. But once we adopt an *impersonal* conception of indiscriminability, it is less clear what sort of explanation we can give of why two states cannot be discriminated.[10]

Consider an analogy with visual indiscriminability. Suppose that we wanted to fabricate a bunch of replica apples. If we had a sufficient level of skill, and designed the right equipment, we might succeed in producing schmapples, perfect replicas that are visually indiscriminable from genuine

[10] This worry seems to lie behind one of Brie Gertler's objections to an epistemic account. Gertler presents a dilemma for the externalist who must decide whether a difference in an agent's intensional contents 'must be' introspectively discriminable. If the externalist takes the second horn of the dilemma, Gertler complains that since a difference in intensional content would not suffice for introspective discriminability, it is unclear what could possibly ground or explain the introspective discriminability of two thoughts. She concludes that 'the only feature that could ground subjective distinguishability seems to be phenomenal character' (Gertler, 2012, p. 62).

apples. Suppose further that not only can we not visually distinguish them, but that no possible visual system can discriminate schmapples from apples. They are impersonally visually indiscriminable. A very natural thought is that schmapples must have roughly the same size, shape, and colour of real apples and, moreover, it is *because* of this that they are impersonally visually indiscriminable. The fact that schmapples are *impersonally* visually indiscriminable from apples looks to be explained by the fact that they share certain basic visible properties with apples. If schmapples had nothing in common with genuine apples, it would be very hard to grasp why no possible visual system could distinguish the two.

The challenge for the epistemic account is thus either to provide a plausible, non-question-begging, explanation of why the mental states of two different agents cannot be discriminated, or to make plausible the idea that no such explanation is required. In the case of vision, we are able to explain why two distinct objects are impersonally indiscriminable by appeal to a common appearance. This puts pressure on the first horn. But the second horn looks to involve a mysterious ungrounded epistemic capacity.

This is a serious objection. Nevertheless, there may be ways in which a defender of the account could mitigate its force. One option is for the epistemic account to reject the claim that facts about the introspective indiscriminability of two mental states must ultimately be explained. This would be a way of taking the fact that two mental states are impersonally introspectively indiscriminable to be basic. Although this would be in the spirit of the epistemic account, some will object to the postulation of mysterious ungrounded epistemic facts.

More plausibly, the epistemic account could reject the idea that our explanation of visual indiscriminability should be used as a model for explaining impersonal introspective indiscriminability. Our capacity for visual discrimination has certain impersonal limits, and, as we have seen, these can partly be explained by facts about visible appearances. But if we apply this model to our capacity for introspective discrimination, then we would have to think that the limits of that capacity are similarly to be explained in terms of the appearances of introspectable mental states. This looks to assume that we should treat our introspective relation to our own mental states on the model of perceptual awareness of objects in our environment. And there are reasons to resist that assumption.[11]

[11] See Martin (2006) for a development of this line of thought, and Shoemaker (1994) for influential objections to a perceptual model of introspection.

Once we set aside the analogy with visual discrimination, we can see that it is possible that limitations on the capacity for introspection discrimination should not be explained in terms of any features of the objects of introspection, but in terms of the nature of that capacity itself. In other words, it is the capacity of introspective discrimination, impersonally conceived, that is limited in terms of what it is able to discriminate. And an explanation of those limits need only appeal to the character of introspection itself, rather than to the character of the objects over which it ranges.[12]

7. Indiscriminability and the Nature of the Mind

Let us assess the balance sheet. We have argued that the epistemic account provides a more plausible grouping of views as internalist and externalist since it has the resources to explain why phenomenal externalism counts as externalist and why certain dualist views count as internalist. But we recognize that this incurs the burden of explaining why it is that two mental states are impersonally introspectively indiscriminable. In this final section we shall suggest that the epistemic account has the further advantage of capturing a substantive philosophical issue which figures centrally in debates about the nature of the mind. On the epistemic formulation of internal sameness, internalism says that two agents who are in introspectively indiscriminable mental states are in the same mental state; externalists deny this. So, adopting the epistemic formulation allows us to see how certain debates about the nature of the mind can be usefully characterized as concerning the relation between an agent's mental states and the capacity for introspective discrimination.

We will motivate this thought with reference to the perspective that the epistemic formulation gives us on what many take to be a paradigm of internalism, namely the position put forward, even if not endorsed, in Descartes's First Meditation.[13] The basic structure of the First Meditation

[12] One might worry that this line of response involves 'idealization' of the capacity for introspective discrimination. But bear in mind that an impersonal conception of introspective indiscriminability quantifies over possible agents. So, if two mental states are impersonally introspectively indiscriminable, then they cannot be discriminated by any possible agent. It is not unreasonable to think of this as a general feature of the capacity for introspective discrimination, but it is not an idealization.

[13] Internalism about the mind is often attributed to Descartes (Burge, 1986b, p. 117; Crane, 1991; Farkas, 2008; McDowell, 1986), but it is now recognized that this attribution is complicated by Descartes's appeal in the Third Meditation to the principle that 'in order for a given

involves an attempt to challenge the foundations of the meditator's knowledge, first through consideration of doubt occasioned by recognition that the meditator might be dreaming, and then by consideration of the possibility of being misled by an evil demon. One natural way to read this as presenting a form of internalism is by taking the evil demon scenario as providing a test for narrowness: the states which would be present in both your case and the counterfactual evil-demon scenario are *narrow*. The First Meditation presents a form of internalism to the extent that it shows that all and only mental states are so present. (Farkas makes this explicit; see her 2008, pp. 19–24).

This suggests that we can draw upon different accounts of internal sameness in thinking about how to best understand the position presented in the First Meditation. This is a difficult scholarly issue, which we won't pretend to resolve here, but we believe a couple of points are worth making. First, it is very implausible to think that Descartes is attempting to identify some *physical* states which would be present in both the ordinary and evil demon cases. The meditator has, after all, already been led to doubt that she has hands or a body (AT 7:19–20; CSM 2:13). So it is implausible to think the evil demon scenario is one in which you are in the same total physical state as you are in the normal case. Nor does Descartes focus on any behavioural commonalities between the two cases, of the sort which would help identify a functional state obtaining in both cases.

More plausible is the idea that the evil demon scenario is one in which one's perspective on the world remains the same even whilst the nature of the world is radically different. But how should we understand this notion of a 'perspective on the world'? Farkas's suggestion is, in effect, that it involves the presence of phenomenal properties.[14] But there are reasons to think this

idea to contain such and such objective reality, it must . . . derive it from some cause which contains at least as much formal reality as there is objective reality in the idea' (AT VII:40–1; CSM II:28–9), a principle which, on the face of it, looks to involve the rejection of internalism for some mental states. But even if we should be careful about the attribution of internalism to Descartes given his overall commitments, it is still widely assumed that at least the First Meditation presents a classical internalist scenario—even if it is one that Descartes will later take himself to show is not ultimately coherent (Burge, 2007, pp. 420–1).

[14] Farkas argues that those states which obtain in both the normal and the evil demon scenarios are those to which the agent has privileged access, in effect delimiting the features in question on the basis of how they can be known (2008, pp. 19–24). But she also argues that all and only those states to which an agent has privileged access are phenomenal states: states with phenomenal properties (2008, pp. 130–3). So the initial epistemic delimitation of the states in question is grounded in some metaphysical facts about the nature of those states, such that it is those states with phenomenal properties which obtain in both normal and evil demon cases.

is unsatisfactory. First, it sits uncomfortably with the text. The progression in the First Meditation does not involve a winnowing away of features about which one can be mistaken, until one is left with a realm of the phenomenal.[15] This is particularly clear in the comparison between painting and thinking, which structures the move from the consideration of dreaming to the evil demon scenario. In this passage, Descartes doesn't build on the dreaming scenario by noting that it involves a set of phenomenal states about which one cannot be mistaken. Instead, he points out that experiencing and thinking might involve the jumbling up of simpler universal things. This would be curious if his aim was to identify a certain realm (the phenomenal) about which one couldn't be deceived.

Secondly, although it is common to present the First Meditation as involving the identification of an impregnable phenomenal realm, this reading sits uncomfortably with Descartes's insistence on God's omnipotence. God is free to make it not true that all the radii of the circle are equal (AT 1:152–3; CSMK III:25–6), or that 1 and 2 are not 3 (AT 5:224; CSMK III:358–9). This omnipotence would seem to preclude there being a set of phenomenal states about which the meditator simply cannot be deceived.[16]

How, then, should we understand the thought that the evil demon scenario is one in which one's perspective on the world remains the same? The epistemic account offers a nice suggestion: the evil demon scenario is introspectively indiscriminable from one's actual case. Descartes tells us of the dreaming scenario that, 'there are never any sure signs by means of which being awake can be distinguished from being asleep' (AT 7:19; CSM II:13); and, in the discussion of the evil demon scenario, he places great weight on the possibility that it might be an imperfection in oneself which underlies one's inability to rule out that alternative. The First Meditation thus provides a way of making vivid that certain cases are introspectively indiscriminable from one's own, and the Second Meditation onwards can be seen as an attempt to isolate what can be salvaged from that observation. If this is right, then to the extent that we think of the First Meditation as a paradigm of internalism, it is because it presents a series of cases which are introspectively indiscriminable from one's own. And the internalist thought is that *those* cases are ones in which agents are in the same mental states.

[15] Rorty (1980) and Williams (1986) sometimes present the first *Meditation* in this way.

[16] For a summary of some of the complications in Descartes's account of the metaphysics of modality, see Cunning (2014).

Why is this relevant? Many debates in the philosophy of mind are viewed as debates in the metaphysics of mind, as if the relation between the mental and the physical were the only substantive issues of interest or concern. We think the interest and significance of the First Meditation is obscured when one reads it as making a point about the metaphysics of mind. Similarly, we think the interest and significance of twin-earth reasoning and the internalism/externalism distinction are similarly obscured when one understands them as marking a distinction in the metaphysics of mind. The First Meditation encourages us to think about the relation between certain introspective capacities and the nature of mentality itself. The case of twin-earth does likewise. Both present the possibility of cases which are introspectively indiscriminable from one's current case. On the epistemic account, the internalist and externalist disagree about the implications this has for an agent's mental states. That is, they disagree about whether limitations on the capacity for introspective discrimination fix or determine an agent's mental states. This is a dispute which is worth marking.[17]

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