

Fricker – Is knowing a state of mind? The case against

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Fricker's main target:

Williamson's Weaker Thesis: for one who accepts externalism about mental content, there is no good ground not to take the further step of accepting factive mental states as fully mental.¹ (36)

¹ NB the close affinity to Martin's thesis.

For dialectical purposes EF makes two big concessions to Williamson: that there is no conjunctive analysis (e.g. JTB) of knowledge, and that mental content externalism is true.

Recall that one way TW argues for KMS is to identify certain 'marks of the mental' – characteristic properties of paradigmatic mental states such as believing or fearing – and arguing that knowing has those marks too. In particular, he identifies:

Mark 1: Special Access: We have psychologically immediate and epistemically basic non-inferential knowledge of our own mental states. Thus there is an epistemic asymmetry between first-person and third-person mental knowledge: I have a special way of knowing about my own mental states, not based on evidence, which others lack.

Mark 2: Causal-Explanatory Role in Relation to Action: Mental predicates are apt to feature in causal explanations of action and other behaviour. They do so within an everyday theory of the mind, 'folk psychology', of whose principles we all have a tacit grasp. Typical folk psychological explanations rationalise the action explained.

EF also concedes that knowing satisfies both marks 1 and 2 of the mental, admits on that basis that knowing is 'weakly mental'.

But knowing does not satisfy:

Mark 3: Internality or 'narrowness': An internalist about the mental holds that a genuine mental state can have no constitutive dependence on any feature of the person's environment—cannot be 'world-involving': all truly mental states must be 'narrow', not 'broad'. (Given a mild physicalism, this internalism can be expressed as the thesis that a person's mental states supervene on the physical state of her own body—her environment plays no role in fixing them.)

Mark 4: A state is mental in the fullest sense just if it is Purely mental.

Taxonomy

So a state is *weakly mental* only if it satisfies marks 1 and 2

A state is *purely mental* iff

1. it satisfies marks 1 and 2, and
2. is not a 'metaphysical hybrid' of some other mental state and a non-mental condition

Available positions:

Strong internalism all mental states are purely mental

Weak internalism Some mental states are broad – they are essentially environment-involving – but such states are at most *weakly* mental, never purely mental. I.e., they satisfy M1 and M2, but they are all metaphysical hybrids of some *other* mental state together with a non-mental condition. That other mental state is not itself broad.²

- example: my experience of the wetness of the water is broad, since that thought is about *water* (rather than *twater*) in part because of facts about my environment. But that thought itself is a hybrid of another mental state – perhaps some phenomenal component of the experience that does not on its own have content – together with facts about the environment. So the water experience is not purely mental, but the core phenomenological component is purely mental.
- consequence: factive states are at most *impurely* mental

Externalism broad mental states needn't be metaphysical hybrids of narrow and broad states: some are *purely* mental

EF's thesis: Externalism (so defined) does not establish KSM. Distinction:

non-factive broad states environment helps determine content, but needn't be true

factive broad states environment helps determine content, and is true

- Both types of states are broad/ environment involving. With factive mental states, the environment plays the dual role of determining content and making true; with non-factive mental states, the environment plays on the content-determining role

² Or, at the very least, by a process of continual analysis we arrive at a mental state that is not broad.

EF's position:

- the content of some non-factive, *purely* mental states is determined by the environment
 - so, some broad mental states are purely mental/ are not metaphysical hybrids
 - so, Externalism is true
- BUT, *factive* mental states are at best *impurely* mental
 - each factive mental state is a metaphysical hybrid of an environmental condition (the truth-maker) together with a purely mental state
 - that purely mental state might itself be broad but non-factive

EF: Williamson's arguments against weak internalism are sound, so externalism is true.

But that doesn't imply KSM, since EF's position is externalist, yet implies that KSM is false.

So EF is an externalist: she denies that *all* broad mental states are impurely mental, but she holds that all *factive* mental states are impurely mental. A kind of *weak externalism*, in contrast to TW's *strong externalism*.³

³ My terms, not EF's.