

Internalism/externalism jargon

February 3, 2004

One of the hardest parts of understanding the literature in this field is mastering the terminology. What follows is a short guide to some of the relevant terms and distinctions; you may also want to see the entry for 'Narrow content' in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (online, and accessible from the teaching portion of my web page) which makes some very useful distinctions.

Minimal Externalism: the view the the meanings of expressions as used by an agents and the contents of the beliefs and other mental states of agents are not fully determined by the intrinsic properties of that agent.

Radical Internalism: the view the the meanings of expressions as used by an agents and the contents of the beliefs and other mental states of agents are fully determined by the intrinsic properties of that agent.

Moderate Internalism: a view which concedes externalism about the meanings of some or all linguistic expressions and the contents of some or all beliefs or mental states, but also holds either that (i) there is another class of mental states, distinct from but related to beliefs, for which externalism is false, or (ii) that linguistic expressions and beliefs have, in addition to a broad or externalist content, a narrow or internalist content. (We will be considering the view mostly in form (ii); by 'internalism' we will usually mean 'moderate internalism.')

Radical Externalism: minimal externalism + the denial of moderate internalism. (By 'externalism' we will usually mean 'radical externalism.')

In general: moderate internalists think that internal states have two kinds of contents, broad and narrow; radical internalists think that these states have only one kind of content, which is narrow; radical externalists think that these states have only one kind of content, which is broad.

Broad content: a state or expression has broad content just in case intrinsic duplicates of the agent in the state or using the expression are not in a state/using an expression with that content. Moderate internalists think that this one of the kinds of contents that states/expressions have; radical externalists think that it is the only kind.

Narrow content: a state or expression has narrow content just in case every intrinsic duplicate of the agent in the state or using the expression are in a state/using an expression with that content. Moderate internalists think that this is one of the kinds of contents that states/expressions have; radical internalists think that it is the only kind; radical externalists deny its existence.

Epistemic possibility: on one interpretation, a notion which is defined relative to a proposition or set of propositions. (Often, the set of propositions in question is the set of beliefs of some agent.) A world w is epistemically possible relative to a set of propositions $p_1 \dots p_n$ iff no proposition false in w is a priori deducible from $p_1 \dots p_n$.