

Dispositions and Twin Earth

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Abstract: There have been intense discussions of the metaphysics of dispositions in the last few decades. In their endeavour to provide a better understanding of semantics of dispositional predicates, Bird and Lipton make the critical surmise that there is a remarkable similarity between natural kind terms and dispositional terms. The chief goal of this paper is to give substantive content to their surmise with the help of two-dimensional semantics of the kind proposed by Chalmers and Jackson. In so doing, I will put forward the externalist thesis that the prevalent feature of the ascriber's environment makes difference to the overall semantic content of the dispositional ascription. To justify this thesis, I will bring into focus the issue of how dispositional concepts are used for a variety of classificatory and inferential purposes in everyday or scientific practices, which will provide a theoretical basis for turning down what I call the no interference reasoning, a line of reasoning that I think has been at least implicitly endorsed by a number of metaphysicians of dispositions. I indeed maintain that the neglect of this practical dimension of our use of dispositional concepts is largely responsible for the failure of some prominent proposals on the semantics of dispositional predicates. I will close by explaining the lessons on dispositions and other related concepts we can draw from the externalist thesis advanced in this paper.