

5 Limning the External Dimensions of Meaning¹

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Early on in the fervent, epochal debates prompted by the externalist arguments of Kripke (1972), Putnam (1975), and Burge (1979) (among others), Brian Loar (1976, 1981, 1982) draws some characteristic distinctions, upon which he continues to build throughout his career. Namely, (in broad strokes) Loar distinguishes between certain externalist theses about reference and truth conditions on the one hand, and on the other hand certain internalist theses about meaning and content. These distinctions were apt to seem idiosyncratic and obstinate, back when the loudest voices in the field were engaged in binary debate between monolithic versions of causal-externalism and descriptivist-internalism. However, to Loar's credit, they now seem fairly unassailable, and are linked to real significant progress in our understanding of reference, meaning, and surrounding issues.

In §1, I will discuss some motivations for externalism about reference, and consider the range of cases to which these motivations aptly apply. §2 is dedicated to exploring certain internalist theses about meaning. In §3, I turn to Loar's distinctions between "socially deferential" concepts and various others which lack that feature (such as "recognitional concepts" (1990, 1991), "subjective concepts" (1994, 1995), or "narrow concepts" (Loar 2003)). Finally, in §4 I summarize how these distinctions afford an insightful synthesis of the considerations raised in §§1–2.

1. Externalism About Reference

To be an externalist, in one pertinent sense of the term, is to reject a supervenience thesis. Internalists about some property Φ hold that intrinsic duplicates are equivalent with respect to Φ , while externalists about Φ hold that intrinsic duplicates might still differ in relevant respects. So, for example, Lewis (1983, p. 197) cites "shape" and "charge" as examples of properties about which internalism is uncontentious, and "being a sibling" and "being in debt" as examples of properties about which only externalism is viable.

Narrowing our focus to the case of semantic properties, the general idea motivating semantic externalism is that traditional approaches to language tended to mistakenly assume that all semantic properties are intrinsic properties, whereas it has become evident that at least some of them are to some extent relational. So far, that sentiment leaves open a wide variety of possible externalist theses.² One could be an externalist about reference, but not meaning, about truth conditions but not about all aspects of content. (Both “reference” and “meaning” are variously used. I will say more to sharpen my usage of both terms shortly.) Or, along a different dimension: one could be an externalist only about the semantic properties of socially deferential terms (such as “aluminum”, “arthritis”), but not about all terms.³

For another dimension along which varieties of semantic externalism could be plotted, note that no one is a complete, unqualified externalist (i.e., nobody holds that semantic properties are entirely constituted by external factors). For example, Davidson (1968, p. 136) discusses a sequence of sounds which would express distinct meanings in different languages. Surely such cases could be multiplied indefinitely, and could be instanced alike in writing (e.g., the word-form “formidable” corresponds to quite distinct words in French vs. English). This suggests that semantic properties are not purely constituted by material events or properties external to the agent.⁴ Or, again: “incomplete mastery” cases are an important part of the case for externalism (i.e., agents of whom there is considerable reason to count as competent with a term, but who nonetheless do not possess the criteria for its correct application—such as Putnam (1975) on “beech”/“elm”), but presumably all agree that someone who thinks that ketchup is a kind of marsupial should not be counted as competent with the term.⁵ If so, then all agree that there are internal aspects required for successful participation in the semantic enterprise, that semantic properties are not purely externally constituted. Refined externalists roll up their sleeves and work toward distinguishing the aspects and dimensions which supervene on the agent from those which do not.

Let us take “reference-externalism” to be the thesis that reference does not supervene on intrinsic properties of the agent.⁶ That is, reference-externalists hold that two different agents, or the same agent in different contexts, could—while tokening the same (non-indexical) term, and while being intrinsic duplicates—nonetheless refer to different things. (We set aside indexicality on the presumption that it is a distinctive, circumscribed sub-case wherein sameness of term is obviously compatible with a difference in reference.) The thesis is aptly called “externalism” because the upshot is that reference irreducibly depends on extrinsic factors. Prevalent candidates for external factors which play roles in the determination of reference include: (i) the causal-historical chain of transmission of the term tokened, (ii) facts about the actual nature of

the ambient environment which may be inaccessible to ordinary speakers (e.g., gold vs. iron pyrites, H₂O vs. XYZ), and (iii) the states and doings of certain specific sub-sets of the linguistic community in which the speaker is immersed (such as Putnam's (1975) "experts", or Evans' (1982) "producers").

The case for reference-externalism is especially strong when it comes to uses of proper names with whose referent the agent is unfamiliar (Donnellan 1970; Kripke 1972). Exactly who or what a name (as tokened in context) refers to need not, it seems, supervene on anything intrinsic to the agent. The general recognition of this externalist foothold comes in the wake of a battery of familiar lines of argument for distinguishing the semantic relation between a proper name and its referent from that between a compositionally structured noun phrase (including especially a definite description) and whatever might happen to satisfy it (Kripke 1972; Kaplan 1977).⁷ There are fairly strong grounds for holding that intrinsic duplicates, who happen to be in distinct possible worlds in respects which are not at all salient to them, might refer to different individuals with otherwise-as-similar-as-possible uses of "Homer", "Jonah", "Columbus", "Einstein", etc.

Attempts to extend reference-externalism to other elements of the category of singular terms raise other complications, and so are generally considered to be not as strong as the case for proper names (cf., e.g., Perry (2009), Bach (2012)). Natural kind terms, however, are very much amenable to this line of reference-externalist argument (Kripke 1972; Putnam 1975), as are certain other sorts of general terms (Putnam 1975; Burge 1979). Exactly to what a use in context of "beech", "arthritis", etc. refers need not, it seems, supervene on anything intrinsic to the speaker, and so intrinsic duplicates might be referring to different kinds. Given the actual availability of indiscernible (to non-experts) though semantically distinct "gold" vs. "iron pyrites" contexts, or "arthritis" vs. "tharthritis" contexts (Loar 1988, p. 100), the point can be made without even the cost of a trip to twin earth.

A crucial pillar of reference-externalism is an account of how reference is determined which does not rely on resources intrinsic to the agent. Thus consider Kaplan (1989, pp. 602–603):

[O]ne of the most important contributions of contemporary theory of reference . . . [is] the historical chain picture of the reference of names. . . . The notion of a historical chain . . . offer[s] an alternative explanation of how a name in local use can be connected with a remote referent, an explanation that does not require that the mechanism of reference is already in the head of the local user.

This helps to explain why incomplete mastery does not need to pose a debilitating barrier to successful reference by name. So, why would

certain general terms be relevantly similar? Well, notwithstanding many significant differences between them,⁸ more or less everything said above about the external “mechanisms of reference” for proper names can also be applied to the case of certain general terms. The explanation for the failure of the reference-internalist supervenience thesis is standardly taken to be very much parallel across the two cases. (There is some discussion of *Which general terms?* and *Why, exactly?* below in §3.)

Even given a persistent and unremitting commitment to a core strand of Fregeanism (more on which below in §2), and the increasing focus on certain first-person, subjective aspects of content in his later work (cf. §3), Loar is in this sense a reference-externalist. Explicit commitments to reference-externalism can be found throughout his corpus—e.g., (1981, p. 229, 1982, p. 274, 1987, p. 115, 1991, p. 222, 1994, p. 53, 2003, p. 229). Even further, reference-externalism is a *sine qua non* for some of Loar’s most famous contributions, such as the distinction between social and psychological content (1988), which itself paves the way for the phenomenological concept strategy for understanding the explanatory gap (1990, 1999). Endorsements along the following lines are ubiquitous throughout Loar’s works:

“the reference of our words is in part a social fact” (1981, p. 229); “reference derives . . . from the language I speak, from the social-semantic relations I draw on” (1991, p. 221); “reference is externally determined and not descriptively or satisfactionally determined” (1994, p. 57); “there are good reasons to count reference as constituted by externally determined relations” (1995, p. 62); “reference . . . [is] constituted by relations that, at least in part, are externally determined, whether socially or not” (2003, p. 235).

Loar (1995, p. 54) also holds that “socially deferential names (Julius Caesar, Richard Wagner)” and “socially deferential kind terms (aluminum, arthritis)” instance more or less the same “external reference relation”. Clearly, throughout his diverse career, Loar holds that counterexamples to the reference-internalists’ supervenience thesis abound.

Note, by way of segue, that there are at least two different things to which reference-externalism is opposed—there is internalism about reference (i.e., reference is determined by the intrinsic states and properties of language-users) and there is individualism about reference (i.e., the isolated individual agent is the autonomous determinant of reference). The two are commonly lumped together, for many traditional approaches to language contain elements of both internalism and individualism,⁹ and lots of contemporary theorists are indiscriminate in their rejection of both of them. However, they are not equivalent in general, or in Loar’s work in particular (cf., e.g., 1987, note 5). So, for example, an internalist could be an anti-individualist by accommodating reference-borrowing

(e.g., Strawson 1959, p. 182)). Kripke (1986) does a masterful job of exposing the instability of this kind of anti-individualist internalism,¹⁰ but still the two things are distinct. Going forward, it will be crucial to distinguish considerations which weigh against individualism (i.e., semantically relevant communal factors which are external to the agent's head) from considerations which weigh against internalism (i.e., semantically relevant environmental factors which are external to everybody's heads).

2. Internalism About Meaning

Even more than the case of “reference” (cf. note 6), technical usage of “meaning” varies considerably. Meanings are notoriously difficult to talk about in a non-contentious, non-tendentious way. There are influential skeptics about meaning (e.g., Quine 1960), (Chomsky 1993)), and there are lots of non-trivial differences between the non-skeptics, as to how the notion should be understood. For example, an illustrative but not exhaustive list of fundamental bases for meaning, according to distinct theoretical orientations, might include: ideas, sense, reference, truth conditions, use, intentions, causation, and teleology.

At the broadest limit, as it were, the meaning of an expression might be taken to include any and all of its semantically relevant properties (where of course “semantically relevant” is, as of yet, vague and diversely understood). So, for example, Frege's (1892, p. 60) “three levels of difference” between terms—i.e., idea/ sense/ reference—might be seen as three dimensions of meaning (perhaps even among some others). At the opposite, narrowest limit, there is the referentialist approach to meaning which just simply identifies the meaning with the reference. Problems for referentialism are familiar and easily multiplied—for example, in the form of cases wherein sameness of reference does not seem to suffice for synonymy (“renate”/“cordate”, “Hesperus”/“Phosphorus”), or cases wherein lack of reference does not seem to entail lack of meaning (“phlogiston”, “Vulcan”). The challenge for a discriminating notion of meaning is where to draw the line—i.e., Exactly which properties should be taken to constitute meaning? Differing conceptions of meaning correspond to differing conceptions of the scope of semantic theory itself—i.e., there are certain questions (some of which will come up below) which a broad conception of meaning would account for semantically, but which would not be counted as semantically relevant on a narrow conception of meaning (and so perhaps farmed out to syntax, pragmatics, or psychology for explanation).

A canonical Frege/Russell contrast is pertinent here. A Russellian approach to meaning is referentialist, individuating meaning as coarsely as truth conditions—“Mont Blanc itself is a component part of what is actually asserted in the proposition, Mont Blanc is more than 4000

meters high” (letter to Frege 12/12/1904); and so “. . . if one thing has two names, you make exactly the same assertion whichever of the two names you use . . .” (Russell 1918, p. 245). For Frege, in contrast, there is more to meaning than reference or truth conditions, and so interchanging co-referential parts can change the meaning. (Given that truth conditions are compositionally determined by the reference of the parts, the relation between reference and truth conditions parallels the relation between atomic terms and molecular sentences.)

The term “mode of presentation” is used to designate the dimension along which co-referential terms might differ in meaning. Accordingly, “*Hesperus is far from Missouri*” is arguably not synonymous with “*Phosphorus is far from Missouri*”, even though all corresponding parts are co-referential, because of the difference in mode of presentation. And I will call the doctrine that modes of presentation are semantically relevant “Frege’s constraint”. While all would agree that the belief that *Hesperus is larger than Phosphorus* involves a less serious error than the more drastically confused belief that *Hesperus is larger than Hesperus*, only proponents of Frege’s constraint distinguish between the operative meanings. There are lots of other (pre-, post-, or otherwise extra-semantic) attempts to account for this difference, which do not involve distinctions of meaning (cf. note 11).

As is well known, Russell’s position on Frege’s constraint is actually rather convoluted—for one thing, the above-cited (1918, p. 245) quote which transgresses it is explicitly limited to Russell’s infamous notion of a “logically proper name”. Relatedly, Russell often seems to completely agree with Frege’s criterion for the individuation of meanings, but to accommodate it with a heavy-handed approach to telling people what they really mean (i.e., some/ most/ all things that agents mistakenly take to be names, in their own thought and talk, are actually “disguised” or “truncated” descriptions). Another thing which is also clear from the historical record, and pertinent to present purposes, is that reference-externalism is often taken to fit with or suggest a narrow, Russellian conception of meaning (Kaplan 1977, 1989).¹¹ For if modes of presentation do not determine reference, then why keep them on the semantic payroll?

In work which spans decades, from at least (1976) to (2003), Loar swims against that tide. Not only is reference-externalism compatible with respecting Frege’s constraint, but further, a satisfactory notion of meaning must accord with Frege’s constraint¹²—otherwise it cannot respect, let alone illuminate, evident constitutive connections between linguistic meaning and the agent’s intentions and attitudes. This is a requirement in order to capture the causal-explanatory links between meaning and intentional action. A theory that identifies meanings which have different constitutive links to intentional action, or distinguishes meanings which have the same links to intentional action—for the case of a rational, non-culpable, though finite and fallible, agent—is thereby problematic.

Recent iterations of these debates over Frege's constraint may strike observers as litany, with opposing factions insisting on opposing tenets regarding synonymy and substitutivity, correlative to their contrastive stances on the semantic relevance of modes of presentation (cf., e.g., Schiffer [1987, 2006, 2016] vs. Salmon [1989, 2006, 2016]). However, Loar famously goes a distinctive step beyond that, introducing a case in which understanding the utterance requires recognition of the operative mode of presentation:

Suppose that Smith and Jones are unaware that the man being interviewed on television is someone they see on the train every morning and about whom, in that latter role, they have just been talking. Smith says "He is a stockbroker", intending to refer to the man on television; Jones takes Smith to be referring to the man on the train. Now Jones, as it happens, has correctly identified Smith's referent, since the man on television is the man on the train; but he has failed to understand Smith's utterance. It would seem that, as Frege held, some 'manner of presentation' of the referent is, even on referential uses, essential to what is being communicated.

(1976, p. 357)

Surely every case is potentially a "stockbroker" case—though Loar is ingenious in his isolation of variables, all the required ingredients are mundanely available. This suggests that, contra the referentialist—and independently of tendentious claims about synonymy or substitutivity—to characterize the truth conditions does not suffice to limn the meaning.

If we define "meaning-externalism" as the view that meaning supervenes on factors extrinsic to the agent, then above I have claimed that no one is a (complete, unqualified) meaning-externalist (i.e., recall the points above about "formidable", "Madagascar", and "ketchup").¹³ That does, though, allow for a sharp contrast with a bold Lockean meaning-internalism, which holds that meaning supervenes on intrinsic factors. We could then plot a continuum of views between these poles, on which the referentialist is decidedly more externalist than those who endorse Frege's constraint (at least on the standard assumption that modes of presentation supervene intrinsically, which is explicitly endorsed by Loar (1976, 1987, 1991, 2003, etc.)). One is a meaning-internalist, in this sense, to the extent that one countenances factors which are (i) intrinsic to the agent and (ii) semantically relevant.

Some respects have already emerged in which Loar's meaning-internalism, too, like his reference-externalism, play a major role in some of his distinctive philosophical contributions. Both are essential ingredients of the (1988) distinction between social and psychological content, for example, and Loar's (1987, 1990, 1991, 1994, 1995, 2003) attendant explorations of certain first-person, subjective aspects of ~~psychological~~ psychological content

are a center-piece of recent meaning-internalist theorizing. (“Our primitive notion of aboutness is subjective, and this is the foundation of the semantic” (1987, p. 116).) Marked internalist dimensions stretch back through Loar’s (1982) functionalist intentional realism—e.g., the express aim of countering the “enthusiasm for reference over meaning” (pp. 3–5), within a physicalist approach.

Next, we will dive into some of the nuances of Loar’s meaning-internalism—involving as it does fine distinctions between different kinds of concepts, contexts, and intentions, as well as attendant refinements when it comes to differences between anti-individualist and anti-internalist considerations.

3. Loar on Kinds of Terms

As understood here, reference-externalism and meaning-internalism are surely consistent. Absolutely and unequivocally, one could hold that what a token of “Wagner”, “water”, or “arthritis” refers to, in context, does not supervene on factors intrinsic to the agent, and yet there are aspects of their meaning which do so supervene. After all, to reason from “X is irrelevant to reference” to “X is irrelevant to meaning” is to expressly presuppose meaning-referentialism, and so would be a *non sequitur* on any broader conception of meaning. (That would be to capitulate to the “enthusiasm for reference over meaning” (1982, p. 3).) To the contrary, Loar’s considered aim is to “introduce a social element into determining reference and fixing belief contents, without implying that all meaning and content are socially constituted” (2006, p. 88).

Toward that end, let us next consider distinctions which Loar draws between different kinds of terms, along some relevant dimensions. (This parallels remarks from Kripke and Putnam mentioned in note 3; though Loar mines this vein more deeply.) There is a category of terms which Loar calls “socially deferential”, including some proper names¹⁴ and general terms. (For the latter case, Loar (2003, §3) gives a familiar representative list: “water”, “tiger”, “arthritis”.) This category is distinguished in a preliminary way by Loar (1988, p. 107) as the sort of case in which “conceptual roles are distinct from truth conditions”, and it plays a key role throughout Loar’s later works. Loar (2003, §14) says that socially deferential terms “involve conceptions of other speakers and of the shared language”, and (1988, p. 109) that their “fundamental usefulness” consists in the way in which they allow us “to impose a grid of socially regularized information on the vagaries of individual psychology”—i.e., to “describe people as conveyors of more or less determinate information, which remains constant even as the contents of their states vary”.

Socially deferential terms are of course (and not accidentally) the very cases for which the reference-externalist arguments are the strongest. While the semantic significance of deference is anticipated by, say,

Kripke's (1972, p. 94) stressing the importance of the agent's "connection with other speakers in the community", or by Putnam's (1975, p. 231) "division of linguistic labour"—or, less proximately, by the marked anti-individualist strands in Wittgenstein (1953)—Burge (1979) is often credited with articulating the general importance of semantic deference, and exploring its externalist consequences. As Burge (1979) stresses, a key indicator for the presence of deference is openness to correction: to the extent to which agents are open to changing their linguistic habits if they came to see themselves as deviating from the norm, social deference is at work. For example, alluding back to note 14, it would not take much to convince Loar that he had been mistaken about exactly to whom "Boltzman" or "Bukharin" refer, but it would be much harder to convince him that he was mistaken about the reference of what he had always taken to be the name for his brother, or for the street on which he grew up.

Regarding the scope or range of social deference in everyday language use, Burge's view is that the notion:

has extremely wide application . . . [beyond the signature case of] "arthritis" . . . We could have used an artifact term, an ordinary natural kind word, a color adjective, a social role term, a term for a historical style, an abstract noun, an action verb, a physical movement verb, or any of various other sorts of words. . . . The [externalist] argument can get under way in any case where it is intuitively possible to attribute a mental state or event whose content involves a notion that the subject incompletely understands. . . . [Incomplete mastery] is the key. . . . The phenomenon is rampant in our pluralistic age.

(1979, p. 80)

I am not so sure about "rampant", for its negative connotations. ("Rampant", related to "rampage", ≈ flourishing + lamentably so. For an opposite sentiment cf. Kaplan (1989, pp. 603–604) on "vocabulary power as epistemological enhancement".) Surely, social deference is ubiquitous and prevalent. No doubt, there are interesting stories to be told about why it might be more prevalent at some times and places than others, and the prevalence of social deference may be completely incompatible with some versions of internalism and/or individualism. However, I see no evident reason to lament the phenomenon *per se*. (How else am I supposed to ask questions about platypuses, neutrinos, or the House of Hapsburg?¹⁵)

Natural kind terms, in their standard usage by non-experts, are a paradigm case to illustrate the (non-contingent) overlap of reference-externalism and social deference (as are uses of proper names with whose referent the agent is unfamiliar). That is, on such uses, terms like "tiger" or "water" are used to refer to a mind- and language-independent kind of thing or

stuff, the precise criteria of identity for which is typically unknown to speakers who may nonetheless count as competent with the term. Typically, and tellingly, such non-expert speakers are relatively open to correction by experts, when it comes to the exact criteria for the term's correct application. Where there is social deference, there is purchase for the division of linguistic labour to kick in—for the external mechanisms of reference determination to play their role in affording determinate content to the thoughts and utterances of incompletely-mastering agents.

There are of course lots of non-typical uses of these terms, as of any others. (As Loar 1991, p. 120) observes: “Social meanings do not deprive me of autonomy when I insist on it.”) For one thing, there are water-experts, who know more about water than most anyone else (and know that they do so); they would likely react non-deferentially to the discovery that they deviate from any statistical norms of “water”-usage. For another, ordinary non-experts also exhibit myriad non-natural kind uses of natural kind terms—i.e., many uses of “water” are not deferential and essence-targeting, but rather relatively crude practical kind terms uses (i.e., water \approx whatever it is that flows out of this tap, or whatever I can use to do the laundry, or etc.) On a deferential, natural kind use of “tiger”, only the (normal) offspring of tigers could (clearly) count; on a looser usage, toys, statues, etc. can also perfectly well count as tigers.¹⁶

So, strictly speaking, there is no such thing as a socially deferential term, but rather “socially deferential” applies to usage, or tokens of terms. It is intentions in context, openness to correction, that matters. (This is perhaps clearest in the case of proper names—there is no such thing as a socially deferential proper name, but there are socially deferential uses of names. After all, whoever Bukharin was, if it weren't for “Bukharin”-producers, there would be no “Bukharin”-consumers (in something like Evans' (1982) sense of those terms).). “Socially deferential term” is then short-hand for: “a term which is typically or commonly used in a socially deferential way”, and “socially deferential proper name” is a short-hand way to designate terms which are almost entirely used in socially deferential ways, within a specific community.

Consider next now how social deference, on the one hand, relates to anti-individualism vs. anti-internalism, on the other. I take it that semantic deference is immediately and unequivocally anti-individualist. To the extent that anti-individualist internalism is a coherent option, then deference is not necessarily anti-internalist; however, if it is not (cf. note 10), then deference also turns out to have anti-internalist entailments. Kripke (1972), Putnam (1975), and Burge (1979) are all thoroughly anti-individualist (in keeping with the prevailing tides within post-Wittgensteinian philosophy of language), but only explicitly anti-internalist about certain sorts of usage, or specific sorts of term. (Remember note 3, and the pro-internalist remarks about “foolish”, “doctor”, “chair”, etc.) Clearly though, the two core semantic externalist cases of uses of proper names with whose referent

the agent is unfamiliar and deferential essence-targeting uses of natural kind terms by non-experts are both anti-individualist (involving deference to communal factors) and anti-internalist (involving deference to environmental factors).

We turn now to the sorts of usage of sorts of terms which, according to Loar, should not be thought of as “socially deferential”. To begin, consider Loar (2003, §3) on “narrow concepts”:

for which reference is context-independent, that is, independent of contexts that transcend “internal conceptual role” and the like. Paradigms are the logical connectives. If a connective has the conceptual role of “and” or “all” it eo ipso expresses conjunction or the universal quantifier. There are no twin-Earth reference-shifts for logical connectives. Presumably mathematical and modal concepts belong here as well. (It will be convenient, if somewhat inelegant, to include in this group indexicals that pick out internal states: “this sensation”, “this thought”; for their referring arguably does not consist in externally determined relations.)

Narrow concepts are meaning-internalist in our ongoing operative sense—there is no deference-induced gap between their conceptual role (for the agent) and what determines their reference (in the community). This is why they are twin-earth-proof—i.e., counterfactual variance of factors in the ambient environment which are inaccessible to ordinary speakers will not alter their reference. As Loar (1994, p. 73) says of such cases: “semantical-intentional fact and appearance are identical”. Narrow concepts are not as obviously or strongly individualistic—a child or a foreigner learning English could surely exhibit incomplete mastery of “and”. But still the relation between conceptual role and reference-determination is quite different from, say, a standard case of non-expert usage of a natural kind term, or an Intro to Classics student wondering who Homer was. Incomplete mastery of “and”—akin to “yellow”, “chair”, etc., and as distinct from “elm”—is tantamount to incompetence.¹⁷

So, these non-socially-deferential terms are internalist, in that their conceptual role does not diverge from what determines their reference. This renders them impervious to twin-earth shift. However, the relations between absence of deference and individualism are more complex. In socially deferential cases, incomplete mastery is compatible with competence; in non-socially-deferential cases this is less obviously so. These are of course shades of grey, not binary categories, and so for example perhaps Putnam’s (1962, 1975) “pencil” or Salmon’s (1989) “ketchup” illustrate the terrain near the middle of the range—i.e., they are considerably distant both from “and” on the one hand and from “aluminum” on the other, when it comes to relations between conceptual role and truth

conditions. (Here compare (Loar 1987, p. 111) on anti-individualism, competence, and “roast chicken”.)

Next up: Are there sub-varieties of non-socially-deferential usage or terms that ought to be distinguished? If so, along which dimensions? I will take as **NSD(i) logical terms** (e.g., “and”, “all”), described by Loar (above) as a paradigm case of narrow concepts. (Here, again, semantic-intentional appearance = semantic-intentional fact. If it licenses the characteristic inferences, then QED, it is “and”.) Loar (2003, §3) alludes to similarities exhibited by “mathematical and modal concepts”, but I will not work to define precise boundaries here (in some measure, because of skepticism as to whether “precise boundaries” would get much purchase in this terrain). Instead I will briefly describe a few other sub-varieties, to illustrate some other members of the non-socially-deferential species.

NSD(ii) recognitional terms:Loar (1988, p. 107) follows up an above-cited remark about certain (deferential) cases in which conceptual roles can be distinct from truth conditions by specifying as a sort of case in which that possibility does not seem to arise “certain demonstrative judgements involving perceptual discriminative concepts”. A little bit later, he (1990, §2) goes much deeper into:

a wide class of concepts that I will call recognitional concepts. They have the form “x is one of that kind”; they are type-demonstratives. These type-demonstratives are grounded in dispositions to classify, by way of perceptual discriminations, certain objects, events, situations. Suppose you go into the California desert and spot a succulent never seen before. You become adept at recognizing instances, and gain a recognitional command of their kind, without a name for it; you are disposed to identify positive and negative instances and thereby pick out a kind. These dispositions are typically linked with capacities to form images, whose conceptual role seems to be to focus thoughts about an identifiable kind in the absence of currently perceived instances. An image is presumably “of” a given kind by virtue of both past recognitions and current dispositions.

Recognitional concepts are generally formed against a further conceptual background. In identifying a thing as of a recognized kind, we almost always presuppose a more general type to which the kind belongs—four-legged animal, plant, physical thing, perceptible event. A recognitional concept will then have the form “physical thing of that (perceived) kind” or “internal state of that kind” etc.

Recognitional terms play some key roles in Loar’s later research projects. Rather than trace that trajectory, though—or delving into the nearby vein that demonstrative reference is “the fundamental case of reference” (Loar 1995, p. 55)—the present job is to explain why recognitional terms are illustrative of the non-deferential variety.

Well, first, no social or otherwise external relations need be relied on here, to secure a link between term and referent. No deference is appropriate, when one tokens a thought along the lines of “I think that is another instance of *that kind*”—where “*that kind*” is employed as a recognitional term. (Compare note 14 about what distinguishes the socially-deferential proper names from their complement.) The conceptual role determines the truth conditions, rendering recognitional terms also twin-earth proof (i.e., counterfactual variance of factors in the ambient environment which are inaccessible to ordinary speakers will not alter their reference). So, if “water” is used as a recognitional term and not as an essence-targeting natural kind term, then the content of “I think *that water* is Φ ” is indifferent to whether the stuff is in fact H₂O or XYZ.¹⁸

As for some differentia within the non-socially-deferential genus: Recognitional terms are not only internalist but also relatively individualist, for who is in a position to correct me about “*that kind*”, on this sort of recognitional usage? (Of course, such questions as whether my term “*that kind*” corresponds to a category countenanced by experts, and if so which expert category, are very different things, and much more straightforwardly linked to social deference.) As Loar (1990, §2) recognizes, this aspect gives rise to familiar worries within the philosophy of language (“... a red flag for many who are aware of the vexing... problems about referential scrutability, rule-following, naturalizing intentionality...”). However, while there is a relative sort of individualism here, it falls far short of any troubling kind of infallibility—surely, I could be just plain wrong to think that a new candidate instance should be counted as an instance of *that kind*, even despite a lack of social deference. (See Loar (1991, §VI, “False Ascriptions of Recognitional Concepts”) for detailed discussion.)

NSD(iii) subjective terms: Attendant upon the distinction between social and psychological content (1988) and the subsequent exploration of phenomenal concepts (1990), one of Loar’s (1994, 1995) next moves is to delve more deeply into the subjective, first-person perspective. Consider for example the following opening preamble:

In the first person, it is not easy to regard scepticism about reference seriously. Seeing a tree one thinks “that is an oak”; and it makes little apparent sense to wonder whether the trunk or the bark are equally as good candidates as the tree itself for being what one’s thought is about. There is a modern tradition of discounting the first-person perspective, and of counting it essential to a proper understanding of semantic properties and relations that they be seen from the third person, as objective. But the seeming security of the first-person perspective ought to raise the question whether it might not be the right perspective from which to think about semantic properties and relations... [R]eference, while externally determined, is also in a deep sense constituted from the first person perspective.

(1994, p. 51)

One element at play here is a wrestling match with the waning influence of behaviorism within the philosophy of language. A part of Loar's point here is that Quine's (1960) "gavagai" worries get no traction whatsoever from the subjective point of view. This suggests that perhaps the entire "inscrutability" problematic depends on the presumption that the third-person or objective point of view is semantically authoritative. Behaviorists had some manner of justification for that presumption, but since the days are long gone when that was the received paradigm in the philosophy of psychology, it is not clear what credentials remain for that purported justification.

The above excerpt also contains a characteristic Loarian distinction between "determining" and "constituting" reference. So, for example, the antics of botanical experts can play a role in *determining* the reference of a token of "oak", but they need not thereby play the same kind of role in *constituting* an instance of reference. Reference is constituted from the first person, subjective perspective (1994, p. 51, 1995, pp. 71–72); objective indeterminacy is compatible with subjective determinacy, and does nothing to undermine the constitution of reference (1995, p. 73). Again, though—rather than delving further into such historical veins or refined distinctions—the present order of business is: do subjective terms provide an example of the non-socially-deferential species?

Well, again, for a case like "that is an oak" (as described above), one may or may not be deferential about "oak" (cf. note 16), but not so for "that". There is no social deference to "that" experts, no gap between conceptual role and truth conditions, nothing much that could constitute incomplete mastery of "that". There are of course significant debates about what determines the referent of a token of "that" (see, e.g., Perry [2009] and Bach [2012]), but they are very different from the complications involved in determining the reference of "water", "tiger", "arthritis", or, in general, any term which targets and categorizes mind- and language-independent phenomena. It is hard to even begin to imagine how to convince someone that they were wrong about which object, among the available candidates, they intended to designate by "that"—that is up to the agent, and is not under the influence of other elements of their community.

Hence, as in the case of logical and recognitional terms, there are subjective usages (and sorts of terms which are particularly amenable to such) which do not exhibit social deference. There is no openness to correction, no incomplete mastery, no role to be played by external social relations in affording determinate content. Hence, such cases differ markedly from the semantic externalist paradigms (of uses of proper names with whose referent the agent is unfamiliar and essence-targeting uses of natural kind terms by non-experts) when it comes to questions about externalism and anti-individualism.

NSD(iv) common, non-technical terms: Loar's latest research did not delve much further into questions about externalism, reference, and

meaning *per se*, but rather moved on into some powerful and penetrating work on the metaphysics of mind (cf. Schiffer (2017)). I know of no other place (in addition to some already mentioned excerpts stretching from 1987, p. 111, to 1995, p. 73) where Loar explicitly addresses how these above considerations apply to ordinary non-technical terms—i.e., How do the externalist arguments apply, if at all, to “chair”, “yellow”, “happy”, “widow”, etc.? So the following is just brief speculation (though not without warrant) about Loar’s views on the on the kinds of question first broached in note 3. Within the ongoing general project of “introduc[ing] a social element into determining reference and fixing belief contents, without implying that all meaning and content are socially constituted” (2006, p. 88), which sorts of usage or terms are going to line up as more like the name of a recently met neighbor than like “Boltzman” or “Bukharin” (from note 14)?

Well, as for “all” or “and”, it would take some audacity to try to twin-earth up a reference shift for “chair”, “happy”, “grandmother”, “widow”, etc.—i.e., for a vast range of the common terms employed in everyday thought and talk.¹⁹ What makes them twin-earth-proof is the absence of deference. A non-deferential internalism about meaning (though not, thereby, individualism) seems rather plausible for such ubiquitous, mundane terms. (After all, in your house as in mine, there are a lot more chairs than tigers.) Incomplete mastery is compatible with competence only to the extent that the speaker is deferential; this will differ significantly (in degree) for distinct types of term, as well as for distinct types of usage for any given term. Incomplete mastery can still amount to semantic incompetence, in lots of mundane cases, wherein deference is absent, and the semantical-intentional appearances limn the semantical-intentional facts.

4. Conclusion

To sum up this study of Loar, externalism, and meaning:

First, many fine distinctions are drawn between meaning, reference, individualism, and internalism, in these urbane times, and on this front, we owe much to Loar’s careful digging and sorting. Second, reference externalism is compatible with meaning internalism; and once we distinguish between socially deferential terms and terms, usage, and contexts which lack that feature, then it becomes clear that the balance between these externalist/internalist factors can play out differentially, in different contexts, and across different sub-categories of the lexicon. Third, social deference opens the gap between conceptual role and truth conditions; where deference is absent, externalist arguments don’t get much traction. Incomplete mastery is compatible with semantic competence only where there is this deference-induced gap.

In general, social deference directly and immediately entails anti-individualism; the link to anti-internalism is more complex and mediate.

Deference only implies anti-internalism in specifically targeted respects or contexts (for the sorts of usage about which facts about the actual nature of the ambient environment, which may be inaccessible to ordinary speakers, are semantically relevant). The absence of deference entails internalism. Given all that, in non-deferential terrain, a significant degree of meaning-internalism is natural and fairly unassailable.

Notes

1. I had the enormous good fortune of studying with Brian Loar at Rutgers in the Fall terms of 1996 and 1997, as a visiting PhD student under his supervision. This was an amazing opportunity, and Brian remains to me a role model for mentorship in philosophy. He was unfailingly kind, generous, exacting, and demanding. I cherish memories of being struck as if by lightning, on the way home at the end of the day, with waves of recognition of the significance of what Brian had been saying to me earlier. (It was too much to digest, all at once.) This paper runs along the lines of our frequent discussions in those days—which continued, on an off, whenever the opportunity arose.
2. For general discussion of the many questions and issues which tend to be tangled up in the debates over semantic externalism, cf. Sawyer (2011) and Gertler (2012). Some paradigm cases of traditional semantic internalism include Plato (1928, pp. 324A–343A), Locke (1690, Bk III), Frege (1892), and Russell (1918).
3. For example, Kripke (1972, pp. 127–128) cites “foolish”, “fat”, and “yellow” as examples of terms to which the ongoing externalist considerations (specifically pertaining to natural kind terms) may not apply. Relatedly, Kripke (1979, p. 256) holds that there are kinds of terms which could not give rise to the puzzle about belief:

Not that the puzzle extends to all translations from English to French. [. . . It] seems to me that Pierre, if he learns French and English separately, without learning any translation manual between them, *must* conclude, if he reflects enough, that “doctor” and “medecin”, and “heureux” and “happy” are synonymous, or at any rate, coextensive; and potential paradox of the present kind for these word pairs is blocked.

So, Kripke might be an externalist about proper names and natural kind terms, but not about terms like “doctor”, “foolish”, “fat”, “happy”, or “yellow”. Similarly, Putnam (1975, p. 233) says that “some words do not exhibit any division of linguistic labour: ‘chair’, for example”. Further, he also concedes that the externalist case “. . . has more plausibility . . .” with respect to “cat” than to “pencil” (1975, p. 248). Finally, Burge (2007, pp. 160–161) also qualifies his commitment to externalism in a significant way.

4. Evans’ (1973) “Madagascar” example is a classic case which also suggests this conclusion. Cf. Loar (1987, p. 120): “the world contains no relations that are semantic just by virtue of their objective roles”.
5. Cf. Salmon’s (1989) attempt to run a Fregean “Hesperus”/“Phosphorus” case on “catsup”/“ketchup”. Salmon’s externalist claim is that one could be competent with both terms while believing that they differ in reference.
6. There are many significant dimensions along which technical usage of “reference” differs. For [1], some use it strictly to apply to the relation between singular terms and designata, while others use it more broadly, such that any independently meaningful expression *eo ipso* refers to a semantic value (and

so predicates refer to properties, logical connectives refer to truth-functions, etc.). For another, [2] some use “reference” exclusively to designate language-world relations, whereas others also apply it to intentional mental phenomena (e.g., concepts). Or again, [3] some treat reference as a two-place relation between a term and a referent, whereas others hold that it is a pernicious oversimplification to presume that referring is something that terms do—rather, reference is something that an agent in a context uses a term to do.

For present purposes, I will be quick with [1] and [3]—I’ll use “reference” broadly, such that reference applies to any independently meaningful term, and I will take it to be a four-place relation involving a term, an agent, a context, and a referent. [2] is harder, both in general due to the complexity of the impending questions about relations between language and thought, and in the particular case of Loar scholarship, since over the course of decades of work his focus and orientation evolved (cf. Schiffer (2017)). Herein, I will assume that terms involved in the reference relation can be either linguistic expressions or mental concepts. So, it is well-formed to ask what the reference is for tokens of the expressions “and”, “arthritis”, or “Arthur”; and it is well-formed to ask what the reference is for an agent’s “and”, “arthritis”, or “Arthur” concepts. I will not get into questions about relations between the two.

7. Dissenters exist (e.g., Hawthorne & Manley 2012) but I believe their arguments can and should be countered (cf. Sullivan 2013)). In Kaplan’s (1989, pp. 571–573) terms, the paradigm of the variable replaced the paradigm of the description in the theory of reference; in Bach’s (1987, Chpt 1) terms, there are significant differences between relational vs. satisfactoral intentional connections. According to Loar (2006, p. 79): “Russell’s distinction between reference and denotation is well-motivated; reference is a semantic primitive while denotation is not”.
8. For example, proper names refer to discrete particulars while the referents of kind terms are taken to be either repeatable (and hence abstract entities) or else discontinuous, scattered, inconstant aggregations. Relatedly, there are significant metasemantic differences between baptizing a child (I dub thee “Norbert”) and introducing a term for a kind (let’s use the term “tiger”/“gold” to designate the kind of thing of which this is an instance). For that matter, there are also serious differences between different sub-types of natural kind terms—for instance, biological species are distinct from chemical kinds in being subject to evolution over time. (“Was there a first tiger?” is a relevantly weirder question than “Was there a first hydrogen atom?”) And so on.
9. For example, the following passage from Locke (1690, Bk III, 2, ii) clearly endorses both internalism and individualism: “A man cannot make his words the signs either of qualities in things, or of conceptions in the mind of another, whereof he has none of his own. Til he has some ideas of his own, he cannot . . . use any signs for them: for thus they would be signs of he knows not what, which is in truth to be signs of nothing”.
10. Kripke’s (1986) case goes something like this: Suppose that, of the set of people who use the name “Peano”, almost all just (mistakenly) think of him as the founder of the Peano axioms. A small sub-set of experts know that Dedekind founded the Peano axioms, and have other means of singling out Peano. Now suppose all those experts are together at a conference, and the venue gets bombed, and they all perish. Anti-individualist internalism about reference has the unpalatable consequence that, at this moment of tragedy, “Peano” changes from a name of Peano to a name of Dedekind. Only on reference-externalism can the name still refer to Peano after the tragedy.

11. Here Kaplan (1978, p. 296) articulates the guiding idea, musing that perhaps modes of presentation “should not be considered part of the content of what is said, but should rather be thought of as contextual factors which help us interpret the actual physical utterance as having a certain content.” Approaches which reject or qualify Frege’s constraint include Salmon (1989), Millikan (1994), Devitt (1996), Soames (2002), and Williamson (2007). (Cf. note 13.)
12. For a typical flat-footed, unapologetic motivation of Frege’s constraint, see Loar (1987, p. 105). Others with whom Loar is in agreement here include Evans (1973, 1982), Schiffer (1987, 2006), Perry (1988, 2009), Recanati (1993, 2010). Note that Kripke, for one, is emphatically agnostic on Frege’s constraint—“no firm doctrine regarding the point should be read into my words” (Kripke 1980, pp. 20–21).
13. Examples in which extreme meaning-externalism is approached are provided by Soames (2002, pp. 70–71, 2011, pp. 92–93), Williamson (2007, pp. 66–67, 128–129), in which general unqualified claims about semantic competence are motivated only with quick remarks about how one could be competent with, say, “furze” and “gorse” without knowing that they are co-extensive. (Note that “furze” and “gorse” are externalist-friendly natural kind terms—much more on the relevance of this point in §3.) Soames (2011, p. 97) also discusses, as further motivation, Salmon’s (1989) aforementioned “ketchup”/“catsup” case, claiming that the agent in question “understands both words” even while thinking that they designate distinct condiments. Even if we were to grant that, surely we would need more than “furze” and “ketchup” to extend the scope of these externalist conclusions to “meaning” in general. It is a long way from this small hand-picked selection of cases to “and”, “all”, “yellow”, “happy”, “chair”, “grandmother”, etc.
14. Namely, those which are “reflexively constrained by a distinctive relation, a socially mediated relation between a token-use (by me) of a name *N* and an object *O*” (Loar 1994, p. 66). Illustrative examples given are “Boltzman”, “Sarah Bernhardt” and “Bukharin”. Loar’s example given of a non-socially deferential name is “the name of a recently met neighbor” which would involve “a complex memory demonstrative, along with some descriptive elements”. In the latter sort of case the link between *N* and *O* need not rely on social deference.
15. As Burge (1979, note 1) himself insists, “employ[ing] before mastery” is a crucial part of the “process of mastery”. Cf. Burge (1986) for more exploration into relations between competence, understanding, and openness to correction; and cf., e.g., Wikforss (2004), Sawyer (2011) for extended critical discussion.
16. To delve further into this issue, consider Putnam’s (1962) thought experiment which concerns the surprising discovery that cats are actually Martian robots. Putnam (1962, p. 661) points out that intuitions may be divided between two different reactions to this surprising discovery:
 - i. Wow! It’s turned out that cats are not animals after all!
 - ii. Wow! It’s turned out that there aren’t and never were any cats!

One fundamental difference between [i] and [ii] concerns exactly how the term ‘cat’ is used. [i] involves a deferential, essence-targeting use of the term; whereas [ii] involves a more autonomous, my-meaning-determines-my-extension, use of the term.

We need not even go to such far-fetched thought experiments to illustrate this point. For example, reactions [i] and [ii] might surely have applied to the scientific recognition that whales are mammals and not fish, or, more

- recently, to the de-classification of Pluto as a planet in 2006. (This is a nice recent illustrative example: media reports I encountered about the decision to de-classify Pluto from the ranks of the planets tended to include a stubborn person-on-the-street insisting “As far as I am concerned, Pluto will always be a planet!” This is an autonomous, non-deferential response.)
17. One of the critical factors at play here is that, at least in many cases, what these narrow concepts (as opposed to, say, natural kind terms) target, and intend to sort, is not purely mind- and language-independent; hence there is no determinate objective reference for the sense to fail to fit. They are constituent elements of a conceptual scheme, not targets to be sorted by a conceptual scheme. Cf. Sullivan (2018, Ch. 6) for further exploration of this point.
 18. Here compare Loar (1988, p. 105) on the indifference of the content of “No swimming today; the water is too rough” to whether it occurs in a H₂O or XYZ context. “It is not that we switch rapidly back and forth between two explanations . . .”.
 19. Williamson (2007, pp. 95–96) tries to come up with something akin to a twin-earth reference shift for the case of “and”; I discuss his attempt in Sullivan (2018, §6.2).

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