

23 Phenomenality and Reference: Reply to Loar

Brian Loar's complex, interesting essay develops a view very different from mine. I will concentrate on disagreement, but later I will explore a substantial area of agreement as a way of isolating differences.

I

Loar's initial statement of his motivation for an internalist view, in terms of what is in the head, seems to me to be flawed. If I were a materialist, I would maintain both that anti-individualism is true and that conceivings are in the head.

I think that a conceiving's intentional properties are essential to it. I think that holding this view in unqualified form helps engender problems for a materialist. But combining it with anti-individualism does not, without addition of further premises, defeat materialism. At most, the combination defeats type and token *identity* forms of materialism.¹

Some materialists support only a dilute cousin of this essentialist claim. They hold that a conceiving's intentional properties are intrinsic to it *qua* *conceiving*: Nothing could be the same conceiving and either lack intentionality or have different intentional properties or content. I cannot tell exactly what Loar intends by his essentialist claim. But the view just formulated is *prima facie* compatible with his words, "the conceiving cannot be pulled apart from the intentional properties." I intend the essentialist claim to mean: For any event that is a conceiving, the intentional properties of the conceiving are essential to that event. If Loar holds the unqualified essentialist position that applies not only to the event *qua* conceiving, but to the event that is the conceiving regardless of how it is designated, then all the better.

The facts (a) that the intentional content of a mental event is essential to the event and (b) the intentional content of a mental event is necessarily and constitutively dependent on relations to an environment, simply do not by themselves logically entail that the event, or its intentional character, is not in the head, much less that it is in the environment. A heart can be individuated essentially in terms of its relations to other body parts outside it. It may be that it cannot be identified with the tissue that makes it up. But it is a material object. And it is where the tissue is.² Conceivings and their intentional content are constitutively dependent on relations to an environment without themselves being relations, and without themselves being in the environment.

I am doubly unmoved by Loar's motivation because I believe that spatial location is not the central issue. This is one reason why I prefer the term 'anti-individualism' to the term 'externalism'. The latter invites a conflation of the locus and properties of the mental states and events with the locus and character of the environmental relations on which they are constitutively dependent. I believe that the congenitally loose talk, which derives

from Putnam's original paper, about what is and what is not in the head should be laid aside.

Loar discusses the relation between oblique occurrences in that-clauses and mental content. This is an area in which I have been misinterpreted, although my own early overemphasis on linguistic considerations in "Individualism and the Mental" encouraged misinterpretation. Nothing in Loar's present discussion constitutes misinterpretation of my position. But an earlier article of his does involve misinterpretation. In "Social Content and Psychological Content," he wrote, "Behind the [anti-individualist] arguments . . . lies something like the following assumption: Sameness of *de dicto* or oblique ascription implies sameness of psychological content." Loar also claimed that the following assumption "seems to be required" by my argument: "Differences in *de dicto* or oblique ascription imply differences in psychological content" (Loar 1988).

In fact, one will look in vain for a statement of either principle in my work. I have never believed *either* principle. Nor has any argument I have given presupposed or relied on either principle. I think that the first principle, taken in the way Loar takes it, is obviously false. And except for an extremely idealized language whose purpose in describing psychological states is very strictly circumscribed, it is beyond help. I think that the second principle is of interest, but would need heavy qualification to approximate a truth.

My arguments are example-driven, not principle-dependent. So Loar's arguments against these principles do not touch the arguments I actually gave. I have always considered the defeasible, open-ended principles that my arguments have suggested as subject to sharpening (or to countercases) through reflection on further cases, or through further theoretical considerations.³ I believe that certain deep but complex principles do underlie the thought experiments. But they are to be found by reflecting on our intuitive judgments in a variety of such thought experiments. The conclusions of the thought experiments are not, and are not presented as, derived from any such principles. They derive from our judgments about the cases. It is a further matter to try to find the principles that underlie and generalize the judgments.

Although I believe that oblique positions in that-clauses of true propositional attitude ascriptions almost always indicate *something* about a person's mental content, and often characterize it accurately, I have never thought that oblique positions in that-clauses of true propositional attitude ascriptions always "capture" mental content or "define precisely the individuating conditions of psychological states," or even co-vary exactly with the individual's intentional content.⁴

I agree with Loar that in most cases of perceptual content, and of conceptual content that is "perceptually nuanced," that-clauses of ordinary speech give only a crude indication of the nature of the content. I also agree that there is scope for individual variation in mental content associated with a single publicly used word. I do not, however, agree

with Loar that oblique occurrences always fail to specify mental content. And I do not accept some of his specific arguments for differences between linguistic “oblique” content and the content of mental states.

The Paderewski example is a case in point. I believe that Loar’s arguments regarding the Paderewski example depend on an insufficiently refined conception of oblique linguistic content. I think it clear that the expression ‘Paderewski’ is understood differently in the relevant two that-clauses. That is, suppose Stanislaus knows Paderewski under that name as the famous pianist from newspaper clippings and knows the same Paderewski, under the same name-form, as a drinking buddy, not realizing that the drinking buddy is the pianist—thus not realizing that there is only one relevant Paderewski. When we say both “Stanislaus believes that Paderewski is a pianist” and “Stanislaus believes that Paderewski is not a pianist,” we understand a shift in context in the understanding of ‘Paderewski’ in the two oblique occurrences. We understand the name to be associated with different construals on the part of Stanislaus in the two attributions. Whether or not something “semantic” (other than negation) distinguishes the *ordinary meanings* of those that-clauses, it is clear that the language, contextually used, is properly interpreted as requiring a shift in the understanding of the oblique occurrence. That shift is marked or expressed *in the use of the language*. Interpreting the language, in context, as expressing nothing more than a pair of mutually contradictory ascriptions would be a mistake. The logical form of the language, as used in the context, must be marked as indicating a distinction in the two occurrences of ‘Paderewski’. The difference is in something other than reference; and the appropriate marking of the shift would, of course, involve an expression that would not allow of substitution of coreferentials. This is a shift in linguistic oblique content.

One can argue over whether the linguistic difference “captures” Stanislaus’s mental content. I think that a proper understanding of the contextual difference, in the case of *names*, does adequately characterize the mental content specific to his belief, although of course he will inevitably associate more with the name than its content.⁵ But what I want to emphasize is that the mental content is often tracked, and indeed expressed, more closely in language than Loar’s arguments indicate.

No argument that I have given for anti-individualism rests on a general view about the exact relation between mental content and the linguistic content of oblique occurrences in that-clauses. The arguments center on examples. They suggest open-ended, somewhat schematic, defeasible principles that need filling in through reflection on a variety of cases. It is enough for the relevant argument that in the cited case it be possible that differences in oblique occurrences in that-clauses signal differences in mental content.

The argument that makes reference to oblique occurrences does not have a premise like “a person’s mental content is in general captured by oblique occurrences in true propositional attitude attributions”; or even a premise like “differences in oblique occurrences in

true propositional attitude attributions to a person always correlate with differences in the person's intentional mental content."

I did assume—and still believe—that differences in oblique occurrences in true propositional attitude attributions *prima facie* signal differences in mental content. *One* argument I gave for anti-individualism relies on this assumption. In specific Twin Earth cases I argued that differences in the mental content of the twins is signaled or indicated by differences in oblique occurrences in normal, true propositional attitude attributions. This argument was, and was intended to be, case-based and *prima facie*. In fact, I spent the bulk of "Individualism and the Mental," and some subsequent articles, arguing against putative defeaters of such *prima facie* arguments. The force of my arguments lies in their tending to show that there is no compulsory, or even plausible, contextual interpretation of the differences in ordinary linguistic ascription that indicates the twins' mental content—in *natural elaborations of the particular cases discussed*—to be the same.

I believe that these linguistic arguments, though example-driven and resolutely open-ended, are strong and undefeated. But I want to emphasize that the main case for anti-individualism does not, and never did, go through considerations of linguistic ascription. The main case invites one simply to consider mental states and intentional mental content directly. The statement of the examples focuses on the attitudes themselves, not on how we attribute them. The emphasis on oblique occurrences in linguistic ascriptions was primarily intended to prevent misinterpretations of the point of the examples, and to provide supplementary support.

The main case is a set of thought experiments that show that a given person can, under certain circumstances, have a given thought or attitude; but if certain environmental conditions were different or lacking, a counterpart person could not, as a matter of metaphysical necessity, have that same thought or attitude. The point can be seen in terms of concept possession: Given certain background conditions, the individual on earth can have a concept *aluminum* or *arthritis* (or one of a number of concepts of aluminum or arthritis), and the relevant individual on Twin Earth cannot. Even the Twin Earth methodology is not essential to the main case. That methodology helps show specifically how the environment can matter. The primary form of argument appeals directly to *particular* types of thoughts and argues that given certain normal background conditions, the absence of a certain range of relations between the individual and the individual's environment, whether physical or social, renders having those types of thoughts impossible.

II

I am uncomfortable with Loar's discussion of "the externalist reasoning" in section 1. There are various types of "externalism" and various arguments for them. But the argu-

ment that he concentrates on is not mine. The argument he discusses is as follows: Thoughts can be intentional or “directed,” can “purport to refer,” only by presupposing actual references. Referring to external properties consists in externally determined relations between concepts and properties, at least for concepts that purport to be outwardly directed. So outwardly directed thoughts depend on externally determined relations between concepts and properties.

Loar accepts the second premise, but rejects the first. Although I am not confident how to interpret Loar’s intended reading of the first premise he states, I think that there is an interpretation of it that would make the argument sound. I will discuss Loar’s attempts to defeat it. But I reemphasize that the main case for anti-individualism does not rest on general theoretical principles, but on reflections on possibilities elicited by particular cases. Relevant principles get their plausibility from reflection on cases. Such principles are almost always messier and more qualified than one initially thinks.

The point in “the externalist” reasoning that Loar rejects is the connection between having particular intentional thought contents and those contents’ having specific success conditions—broadly, conditions for intentional or referential success. In his arguments he also appears to reject, perhaps in an *ad hominem* mode, the idea that any such specific success conditions constitutively and necessarily depend for their having those conditions on a pattern of successful reference.

I think that both of these rejections are mistaken. I will start with the first. Propositional intentional thought content bears essential relations to specific truth conditions. I do not claim that all such content is constituted by truth conditions. Having a thought entails being situated in a system whose essential core components are evaluable for both rationality and for truth or other sorts of intentional success. Evaluation for truth or intentional success requires that intentional contents be referentially committed to specific referents. “Outwardly directed” intentional contents must be committed to there being specific “outer” referents. This is the point of contention in Loar’s paper. I think that disputing it leaves Loar with either an incoherent or an empty conception of outwardly directed intentionality.

Before examining Loar’s central case for his conception (in his section 9), I will discuss some points in his preliminary case. I am in agreement with much of what he says about perception. Clarifying the agreement will sharpen what is in dispute.

I agree with Loar that there are demonstrative, “singularly directed” concepts. A complex concept associated by some person with ‘that lemon’ on a particular occasion and applied in conjunction with a perception as of a lemon would usually be such a concept. (I see such complexes as having a nonconceptual element in applications on particular occasions—an element corresponding to the token event that is the application of the demonstrative-like element.) I agree that such concepts are essentially associated with phenomenal aspects of

perceptual experience. The intentional application of the concepts depends partly on the phenomenal quality of a perceptual or imagined image. The perception also has intentional, including demonstrative-like, aspects. The singular demonstrative application is not reducible to the associated intentional concepts or perceptual types.⁶

Given the right associated conceptual equipment, we can identify the directedness in experience. We can be aware of the singularity of the purported reference to a lemon—whether or not a lemon is actually present. The directedness is phenomenal in that limited and, I think, somewhat artificial sense.⁷

I agree that *visual* qualia, at least those functioning visually as opposed to being noise or blur in the visual field, do have representational or intentional characteristics. Normally functioning qualitative aspects of the visual field are all co-opted for representational purposes. This is not to say that all the characteristics or properties of the visual field are intentional properties. It is just that all normal elements of a visual field function intentionally—function visually!—and have intentional properties.

I also agree that there is such a thing as “how” one’s perceptions and concepts phenomenally represent things. This is at least in some respects distinct from the intentional content of the actual representation, as well as whether they have a referent. I applaud Loar’s criticisms, in sections 5 and 6, of any representationism that tries to appeal only to the referents of intentional contents or that invokes intentional object theory. I believe that his discussion of the how and the what of pictures in section 7 is imaginative, insightful, and illuminating.

But I find much of what Loar writes, especially in sections 4 and 5, hard to understand. I am not always sure what he thinks he has supported at given stages of his discussion. This may be my fault. But I want to enter some caveats about passages in these sections. I do not think that these sections—or any points argued prior to section 9—are even relevant to supporting the idea that singular directedness is an “internally constituted property” in a sense that supports “internalism” against my sort of “externalism,” or anti-individualism.

All purported singular reference must be guided by purported reference—whether perceptual or conceptual—to a relation, property, or kind type. Purported reference to a type may occur through predication of concepts or through perceptual type-presentations. Singular purported “outer” reference to individual objects can, of course, sometimes fail to secure an actual reference. Even concepts and percepts with purported “outer” reference to properties or relations can fail to secure a reference to actual property- or relation-types (or, on a more platonic view of kinds or types, can at least fail to have actual instances of the types)—although this failure is less common. That is, particular instances of intentional states can be “nonrelationally” intentional in that they lack actual referents, types or individuals. But that point is granted by anti-individualism from the beginning.

What I think has not been made persuasive is that nonrelational “outer” intentionality in this weak sense can be present in an individual’s mental states without being connected in various ways with *some* successful “outer” reference—by other states—whose intentionality is essentially connected to actual outer objects and properties.

Loar never explicitly explains what he means by ‘outer’. I think he associates it with some sort of objectivity, and perhaps even with purported reference to spatially located entities outside the individual’s mind. I will assume that he has some sort of objective reference in mind. We can identify singular and nonsingular “outer” intentionality—purported reference—in experience only if it is there to be identified. And it can be there only if the relevant successful references and supporting nonintentional relations between the individual and the entities referred to are in place.

I want also to enter a caveat about the term ‘phenomenal intentionality’ as applied to the irreducibly singular elements in intentionality. If the term applies strictly, as Loar says it does, to an intentionality that one can be aware of as being present in experience, then as I have said I have no objections to it. I think though that the relevant awareness is really a range of awarenesses, varying in richness and sophistication. They require a variety of background abilities. For example, being *aware* of—and even more, being able to *identify*—the singularity and outerness of singular intentionality *as such* requires tracking abilities and certain relatively sophisticated concepts of objectivity, as well as certain perceptual and conceptual abilities that connect one to purported types. These abilities in turn presuppose relations to an objective subject matter. If the concepts and perceptions are spatial objects and properties, then the relations must be to some of those objects and properties. As far as I can see, nothing that Loar says in this section supports any doubts about this anti-individualist conception of phenomenal intentionality—or even comes to grips with it.

If the term ‘phenomenal intentionality’ is meant to suggest a phenomenon of singular intentionality that is itself qualitative (has a specific “what it is like” quality—something like what Loar calls ‘mental paint’), I am doubtful about how much weight it can bear. (See note 7.) I think that singular intentionality in thought resides in intellectual agency—in the application of concepts. Such intentionality essentially involves mental activity—use. It cannot reside simply in phenomenality, which in the ordinary sense is passive. Awareness of such intentionality is an intellectual reflexive awareness, not merely a matter of phenomenal awareness. At a lower level, singular intentionality is also involved in the functional commitments of a perceptual system. Perhaps there is an even lower level singular intentionality in the mere feeling of sensations. No outer singular intentionality—singular intentionality directed at spatial items—can be derived from the phenomenality of sensation alone.

Regardless of the outcome of these differences, I see nothing in Loar’s discussion in these passages that casts doubt on anti-individualism about “outer-directed” intentional

states or abilities. I see nothing in these sections that even tends to suggest that singular intentionality in perception is individualistically constituted, or resides purely in the phenomenal quality of the perception. I do not think that we have any coherent understanding of such intentionality or any coherent account of how it would be possible.

Whether the singularity of phenomenal intentionality can be separated from purported outerness, or from objectivity, is a difficult and complex question that I will not discuss here. What I am firm about is that any purported “outer” reference—whether singular or otherwise—necessarily presupposes relations to “outer” entities.

One further group of caveats concerns the discussion of the what/how distinction in section 5. I agree that what an intentional content refers to is different from how it refers. I agree that the directness of visual demonstrative concepts goes beyond predication. I even believe—although I doubt that Loar agrees—that the mode of presentation involved in some intentional contents involves phenomenal properties that are not intrinsically intentional. But all visual demonstrative concepts are applied by way of phenomenal characteristics that involve predication—presenting something as *F* in a way that has a propositional form. The singularity of the application depends on the function of the visual system and attendant tracking abilities with respect to definite particulars, and in the agency of singular demonstrative application of concepts of properties of those particulars. I see no reason to believe that singular outer purported reference is intrinsic to the quality of the phenomenal presentations. I do not know how to even understand such a notion.

Although I find Loar’s discussion of singular reference as a matter of style in section 5 uncomfortably vague, most of the argumentation in the section seems to be successful against crude conceptions of intentionality that would explain each instance of intentionality as a matter of actual reference to some object, including an intentional object. Those conceptions are not mine. I think that they should have been abandoned after one reading of Frege.

III

Loar’s main case for his position is laid out in his sections 9–11. His position is that “one can hold constant phenomenologically accessible intentional visual qualia while varying *all* the properties that they represent things as having.”

This formulation is not incompatible with my anti-individualism, for various reasons. One could maintain that our actual perceptual and propositional states are constitutively dependent on relations to the environment. Yet one could simultaneously allow that our visual qualia, which are in fact intentional, could be held constant while varying their spe-

cific intentional characters by varying the properties they represent things as having. One could also accept that some of the intentional aspects of the visual qualia could remain the same as the qualia remained the same, while maintaining that the intentional content of many of our perceptual states—what the states represent as being visible properties—would vary with the systematic variation of the objects and properties that the visual system is related to. Evidently Loar does not intend either of these interpretations.

Loar apparently intends by the quoted sentence that all the *intentional* aspects of the visual qualitative representations can remain constant while all the properties that those representations represent things as having vary. Loar thinks that the concept *that kind*, where a visual qualia provides a recognitional basis for identifying the kind, is a paradigm of singular perceptual reference. Which kind the concept refers to depends on what environment the individual is in.

Loar rests his case on intuitions about brains in vats. I think that his discussion is hampered by underdescription of the example he uses. I think that it is also hampered by overlooking fundamental elements in the anti-individualist position—at least in my position. He writes:

I could have a mental twin whose brain is a molecule for molecule duplicate of me; and I can conceive that twin as having the same visual experiences that I have, even though its brain is isolated from all the normal causal relations to the world that give my visual experiences their actual references. The point is that when I imagine *how* the brain's visual experiences represent their (merely intentional) objects, I apparently imagine those experiences as in some sense intentional, despite its difference from me in all its references.

'Same visual experience' here must be understood to mean 'visual experience with *exactly* the same intentional content'. If the sameness of visual experience consisted only in the twin's having the same phenomenal qualia, even with *some* of the same intentional properties, that would not suffice to provide opposition to anti-individualism. Moreover, a twin's varying in all its references while having experiences that are "in some sense intentional" (or even "intentional and outer-directed") is not in itself individualist or internalist. The view must be that the whole of the twin's visual intentional content is the same as mine, but there is no commonality of actual reference.

Loar's assumption that the twin has a brain creates a simple incoherence from the beginning. Most of our most basic visual categories are innate. The references of these categories are set through the evolution of the brain and its visual system. Given any surface stimulation that produces relevant patterns in the visual system, the visual system of a creature with a brain will refer in vision to types of surfaces, edges, textures, spatial relations, probably colors. Although there may be no successful reference to particulars by my twin, we will share a large range of references to property types. The references are

innate in the sense that given the appropriate stimulation—regardless of the individual’s particular learning history—the visual system will make reference to these properties. The properties, much less objects with them, need not be the causes of the *individual’s* stimulation. The individual need not interact with the relevant properties in a patterned, systematic way at all. The relevant interactions with the environment occurred in the evolution of the visual system that I and my twin share. The twin inherits these interactions with instances of the represented types, even if he does not add any new ones. Thus insofar as an envatted brain has any visual intentionality, its intentionality will involve reference to many of the same properties that structures associated with our brains do. The brain and its visual system evolved to represent and respond to certain stimuli because those stimuli provided systematic access to visible aspects of the environment. And representing and responding to basic visible features of the environment had survival value.

Suppose that we waive the appeal to brains and imagine a system that is molecule for molecule homologous to our brains, but came together as a cosmic accident. I have little confidence about how to imagine such a being from the inside or outside. At least in its first moments, it would seem to lack most of the cognitive and perceptual systems that I have. I am inclined to think that it would have similar qualitative, phenomenal “feels,” since I conjecture that certain qualitative aspects of the mind depend purely on the underlying chemistry. But at least until it has interacted with its world, I do not think that it has any “outer-directed” intentionality. I think that it does not even have a visual system until it has interacted with its world.

One can be easily confused in phenomenal exercises. One can imagine that things would “look” just the same to the homologous accident. Such an imagining would be corrupt. The notion of “look” already depends on presumptions of perceptual and conceptual content that I believe are illegitimately imported into the envatted accident. The processes in this thing at first lack meaning and function. At most the individual would have similar phenomenal features.

Suppose that we waive the appeal to a cosmic accident and imagine some natural entity that is chemically homologous to our brains. Suppose that it is not a human brain. Suppose it is in the vat. Then we need to know how it evolved, or better, what its functions are and what its relevant relations are to whatever it has conceptions of. When we fill out the story, we might conclude that it has some sort of intentionality. If it is a sort of thing that is always developed in vats, that is one story. If it evolved or was created somewhere else and got plunked into the vat, those are other stories. But if it purports to refer to mind-independent objects with empirical concepts, what its intentional content is will depend on more than whatever is supervenient on its chemical structure. If the content has a function in purporting to refer to things beyond the system, it will have to be supported by systematic interaction between the system and things beyond the system. This interaction

could occur in the evolution of the system or in the learning history of the individual. I do not believe that one can coherently imagine that such a being would have the *same* intentional content as ours unless it had some of the same references, at least to perceptual and conceptual kinds. And such references will depend on some sort of interaction with appropriate referents. So I see no intuitive support for Loar's internalist view in the brain-in-vat scenarios.

Much of Loar's strategy is to build on cases of nonreference. We can imagine purporting to refer to a lemon that is not in fact there. We can imagine all its purported "recognitional" applications to have been hallucinatory. This may be true of the concept *witch*. We can imagine it to be true of some sort of nonexistent fruit all of whose "recognitions" have been caused by induced hallucination. Loar takes such cases to illustrate "object-independent intentionality." But these cases in themselves present no difficulty to anti-individualism. They are not cases in which intentionality is independent of all reference to objects and properties, but cases where the intentionality of a specific concept or perception, or a particular demonstrative singular application of a concept or perception, lacks a reference.

Intentionality, since Frege, has been distinguished from actual successful reference. We can imagine most concepts in other possible worlds failing to apply to the properties they actually apply to—because the properties are lacking in that world. Contrary to some enthusiastic externalists, I believe that we can imagine any given singular application of perceptions and perceptual concepts as lacking singular reference: An individual object might be absent while the perception and conception has the same intentional type-content. And of course, we *actually* fail to secure a reference with some singular applications, in perception or otherwise, and a few concepts and perceptions of purported types. But none of this is new. Anti-individualism claims that our actual concepts, perceptions, and singular applications are dependent for their intentionality on some of them succeeding, and on that success being supported by nonintentional individual-object or individual-property relations.

In my view, all of Loar's examples depend on these facts. We can imagine failing with a purported singular reference to a lemon. But our purported reference commonly depends on our—or other relevant individuals'—having interacted with lemons on other occasions. Or we can imagine not interacting with lemons, and not interacting with anyone who has interacted with them, if we have a correct theory of lemon structure and perhaps an ability to imagine what lemons would look like. Or we can imagine a recognitional concept of a fruit failing to refer to an actual fruit-kind, but only because we have concepts and/or perceptions of fruit, color, surface texture, shape, and so on that hold the nonreferring concept in place. Some of these other concepts must succeed in applying to types. Similarly, with our imaginative capacities.

Loar acknowledges this reply. But he says nothing in response to it except that it appears to him “quite coherent to ascribe object-independent intentional directedness to recognitional concepts *all at once*, including basic spatial concepts.” I think that he has done literally nothing to show this view coherent beyond the flawed brain-in-vat scenario. Simply asserting its coherence begs the question. We have anti-individualistic individuating explications of empirical intentionality. These explications accord with, and explain, common intuition and the practice of the sciences. I think we have no idea what intentionality would look like if it were deprived of specific intentional contents (*edge, rectangular, spotted, fruit, physical object*, and so on) that have definite referents. It would certainly not remain the same as our actual intentional contents.

As I mentioned earlier, I think that “outer,” objective, purported singular reference is necessarily dependent on being guided by the purported type-references of perceptions and concepts. And for outer attempted singular reference to be possible, it must rest on concepts that have been applied successfully to outer objects—if not applied successfully by the individual, then by his fellows or by ancestors who shared some of his cognitive systems. Demonstratives like ‘that’ are directed by the specific abilities of perception and tracking, and the particular functions that these abilities have for the individual.

I do not find at all intuitive the idea that purported singular “outer” reference is intrinsic in having some phenomenal presentation, even supplemented with the tendency to react similarly to phenomenal presentations of the same type. Singular directedness in “outer” perception is a phenomenal notion in the sense that we are aware of it in reflecting on experience. But the awareness of such directedness, as well as the directedness itself, depends on having conceptions or at least perceptions that have a function ultimately grounded in successful attributions (and in the case of perceptions, also successful references) to particular objects. The successful attributions can be by other individuals that bear appropriate relations, perhaps evolutionary or communicational relations, to the given individual. I see no reason and no intuition favoring the idea that “outer directedness is a phenomenal notion” in the stronger sense that it is constituted purely internally, for example, by qualia (understood individualistically) or by the chemical processes of the brain. (See Loar’s section 12.) Singularity *when applied empirically beyond the phenomenal properties themselves* must be associated with abilities to track an individual and discriminate it from other individuals of the same type. I do not see how such tracking can yield intentionality without yielding intentionality that is individuated ultimately through particular individuals that are tracked and discriminated, by means of the particular types that concepts and perceptions use to discriminate them. The most obvious sorts of individuals that could be individuated and tracked in order to yield outer singular representation in intentional content are spatially located particulars. I believe that for outer reference, reference to such particulars is necessary.

Perhaps mental items—images or sensations, for example—can be tracked as well, so as to provide a basis for singular reference. And perhaps successful reference to the numbers can yield a different kind of ground for singular reference. What seems to me impossible is for a mind to have singular intentionality without having intentionality that is individuated ultimately in terms of use that interacts with and successfully refers—both singularly and in the attributive way—to specific particulars or specific types. Singular directedness is not a notion that derives from the what-it-is-likeness of phenomenal characteristics of experiences. *Outer* singular directedness must be individually grounded in relations to outer particulars and types.

To think otherwise is, I think, to imagine untenably that we have a concept of a transcendental object = x that is not an abstraction from more specific concepts and perceptions of objects and properties and from applications of those specific concepts and properties. Loar's view bears some comparison to the metaphysics that Kant criticized for imagining it could obtain objective reference without being schematized to the ability to perceive particular object- and property-kinds.

IV

I come back to the central force behind the anti-individualist view, as I conceive it. That force does not lie in general principles about intentionality and reference. It lies in reflection on particular thoughts that we know we have. The central implausibility of Loar's particular form of internalism seems to me to derive from our knowledge of the fact that our thoughts are not inspecific in their intentional type-content in the way that his theory requires. We do not merely think inspecific thoughts like *that kind of individual is that way*, where we carry phenomenal icons along to give color to the intentional content *that kind* and *that way*. On Loar's view, the intentional type-content of a recognition judgment is inspecific in that it is open to an enormous variety of possible property referents—which bear no natural relation to one another. Any number of properties in different possible worlds—not all of which properties need be spatially located—could, given Loar's picture, be signaled by the phenomenal icon, which we think of as normally applied to the objects in our environment.

Since Loar does not say what it is that secures reference to actual "outer" individuals, I can only speculate. But if it is what causes the phenomenal icon, the point would be that the variety of things that, under varying environmental conditions, metaphysically could cause the relevant icons to occur would bear no further natural relation to one another. In fact, the variety is nearly limitless.

Even in our given world, the representation *that kind*, backed merely by phenomenal presentation, will not have a definite referent unless the icon is related to a specific kind

through functionally significant interactions with the relevant kinds. But there is no way to prevent abilities associated with such interactions from being codified in the intentional content of mental states. That is, once one engages in a pattern of interaction with kinds in one's actual environment, one's intentional type-content will take on a content specific to those kinds.

Loar's conception of our intentional content—even if it could get off the ground—is too indefinite to apply to the intentional content that we actually have. We think thoughts whose subjects and predicates have nonindexical contents that purport to apply to very specific objects and properties in our world. The intentional content provides a type- or kind-marking of cognitive abilities specific to representing such objects and properties. My concept of water applies to water and could not apply to anything else. Loar's view does not, I think, indicate any definite concept for us to be thinking. The transworld indexicality and inspecificity that Loar postulates for all our concepts is, I think, a radicalization of the mistake that Putnam made in describing his original thought experiment. It is the mistake of conflating kind concepts with indexicals. I believe that I have criticized that mistake decisively.⁸ But the mistake remains a recurrently tempting one for internalists, or individualists.

I believe that we can know on conceptual grounds that most, indeed almost all, of our intentional content—our concepts and perceptions—is not like that. When one further reflects on the conditions that allow us to have the sort of intentional content that we have, one realizes that the specific references that these concepts actually have—especially references in the physical world—are necessarily dependent on complex relations between the individual and the environment.

I would like to conclude with a loose end. For all my opposition to his theoretical position, I think that Loar is on to something that needs better understanding. It seems to me that phenomenality may be an essential element in intentionality. I think that it is not sufficient for conceptual or perceptual intentionality. But it may be necessary. There is a primitive analogue to conceptual and perceptual intentionality in the very feeling of a sensation. That involves a directedness between individual and sensation, or the phenomenal character of the sensation. Is there intentionality here? What role, if any, does such feeling play in making possible genuine perceptual and propositional intentionality about *objects*—entities actually and purportedly independent of a particular subject's phenomenal experience?

I do not know the answers to these questions, but I think that they should not be dismissed. Loar's taking phenomenal experience seriously may be fruitful for understanding intentionality—even that which is constitutively dependent on our relations to an environment.

Notes

1. See my (1979), pp. 109–113; (1993).
2. Robert Stalnaker (1989); also my (1979), which very carefully confines my criticism of materialisms to token and type identity theories. I was quite aware that my arguments did not defeat materialist views that took the relation between mental state/event and the neural substrate to be one of constitution rather than identity.
3. I do not deny that I am guilty of occasional misleading formulations. For example, in my (1982), p. 107, I wrote: “Propositional attitude attributions which put the terms in oblique occurrence will thus affect the content of the propositional attitudes.” The term ‘affect’ suggests a causal or constitutive relation between the attribution and the actual content. I never intended this suggestion, as a full reading of my early papers will indicate. ‘Signal’ or ‘bears on understanding’ would have been better phrases. I think that the intense focus on the philosophy of language as a key to understanding all matters, including the nature of the mind, led many of us in those days to be sometimes inattentive to keeping track of the distinction. The passages from “Individualism and the Mental” that Loar concentrates on (for example in note 3 of his “Social Content and Psychological Content”) are either part of passages that are attempting to insist on the *relevance* of oblique occurrences in belief attributions to understanding the nature of the beliefs, or they are part of a single, secondary argument that claims that differences in attributions in oblique content signal differences in belief states, in a sense of “belief state” that makes the argument more interesting than a mere appeal to environmental relations in *de re* beliefs would. In fact, on pp. 87–88 of “Individualism and the Mental”, I explicitly say that the relation between ordinary discourse and the nature of the mental states that are referred to is a complex one and that there is a *bias* in favor of taking ordinary discourse literally. I clearly indicate that there is no entailment or constitutive relation between the nature of the attributions in ordinary discourse and the nature of the states attributed.
4. Loar (1988). The quoted phrases come from the last page of the article.
5. See my (1973), (1977), and (1983). These papers give a partial account of the role and content of proper names in language and thought.
6. The perceptual image, the perceptual representation, may or may not be considered *part* of the perceptual concept. I am inclined to regard the relation as necessary to the concept, but not a part–whole relation. The singular direction involved in demonstrative application is an instance of the element of application that I appealed to in my (1977) and (1983). I also discuss the matter in (1997) note 12, (indirectly) in the last section of this essay, and in my reply to Normore, sections IV and V.
7. Perhaps there is another sense of phenomenal awareness of the singularity that would not require conceptual identification of that feature. Perhaps insofar as a singular usage involves consciousness, one might allow a phenomenal awareness of the singularity, even though one is not conceptually and identificationally aware of it. These matters are, of course, delicate, and invite more investigation.
8. See my (1982). Hilary Putnam (1996) has accepted the criticism in his introduction to *The Twin Earth Chronicles*.

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