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Individualism and Co-Operation in Thought:
Co-Cognitivism as a Defence of Anti-Individualism

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The way to language: it sounds as though language lay far afield, at some place toward which we would first of all have to set out on our way. However, do we really need a way *to* language? According to an ancient pronouncement, we ourselves are those creatures who can speak and who thus already possess language. Nor is the capacity to speak merely *one* capability of human beings, on a par with the remaining ones. The capacity to speak distinguishes the human being as a human being. Such a distinguishing mark bears in itself the very design of the human essence. Man would not be man if it was denied him to speak—ceaselessly, ubiquitously, with respect to all things, in manifold variations, yet for the most part tacitly—by the way of an *‘It is’*. Inasmuch as language grants this very thing, the essence of man consists in language.ⁱ

ⁱ Heidegger, ‘The Way to Language’, 397–98.

ABSTRACT

Social anti-individualists suggest that the social environment enters into the individuation of psychological contents. This is defended by the now-famous arthritis thought experiment. Nevertheless, counterarguments have been proposed that aim to undermine the thought experiment. We identify two intuitions that underlie the thought experiment and evaluate five counterarguments in relation to these. It is argued that reflection on our shared mental deliberation can help us construct a theoretical framework that defends the thought experiment. One such framework, co-cognition, is presented and utilised to defeat the objections.

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I INTRODUCTION

The role of the language community in determining the meaning of our words has long been debated. Recently, this question arose anew among analytic philosophers with the works of Hilary Putnam and Tyler Burge¹. The so-called Twin-Earth thought experiments seem to show that meaning is determined not only by our internal states, but also by our external environment. These conclusions are a significant break from individualism, the common position in contemporary philosophy. It is no surprise then that many objections have been raised against anti-individualism, the position advanced by Burge. In this thesis, we shall argue that this thought experiment can be defended by adopting a fuller view of the nature of human co-operation and language.

The now common theory of language is what Charles Taylor calls the designative theory of meaning². It goes something like this: the world is an objective process from which we generate abstract ideas. These ideas are designated by words that represent the aspects of reality encompassed by the ideas. If the link between word and reality is incorrect, we will be deluding ourselves. Thus, Locke requires that we make explicit links between our words and those (clear and distinct) ideas they refer to³. There is a general sense that our thoughts and mental contents are in some sense *ours*, that they are essentially dependent on our internal goings-on and nothing else—that our mental content is *individualistic*. This notion of a private mind is generally amenable to viewing contents as internal and can be traced through the British Empiricists on to early Analytic philosophy and Behaviourism in its cruder forms⁴. This is the individualist position.

Individualism is amenable to take an Enlightenment view of language as essentially designative, something which should not surprise us given the naturalistic outlook common in contemporary philosophy. Two assumptions are taken over from Enlightenment theory of language⁵:

1. Meaning is representation; by re-presenting reality, words have their meaning.
2. A theory of meaning is third-personal; there must be *a* meaning, not *our* meaning.

If meaning is determined by external factors, there is a sense in which we do not know what we mean, what our words represent. We can see how individualism is a likely result of the designative view. Yet, there has been a resurgence of opposition to this view among analytic philosophers, variously called anti-individualism or externalism, we shall use both without distinction. To this position we must now turn.

Anti-individualism views language and thought as public phenomena. It claims that there are *some* extrinsic conditions on mental content. In other words, it is the contradictory of individualism, claiming that not all conditions on mental contents are individualistic. What motivates this position is the intuition that we are in some sense speaking a *shared* language. We are brought up into a language that predates and postdates us. Of course, one can recant these connections and make up one's own language, but there is a sense that something is lost when making such a radical break. There are three kinds of argument in favour of such a position. Firstly, there are thought

¹ Putnam, 'The Meaning of "Meaning"'; Burge, 'Individualism and the Mental'.

² Taylor, 'Language and Human Nature'. Taylor is not alone in making these remarks. We adopt his terminology and will consequently be speaking of the designative and expressive theories of language.

³ Cameron, *Sourcebook in the History of Philosophy of Language*, 583.

⁴ Hacking, 'How, Why, When, and Where Did Language Go Public?'

⁵ Both assumptions as noted in Taylor, 'Theories of Meaning'.

experiments, as with Putnam and Burge. Much attention has been given to the so-called Twin-Earth experiments. Secondly, there have recently emerged in debates about intersubjectivity views about the nature of human communication generally in line with anti-individualism. One such position is that of co-cognition, taking human concept possession to be bound up in our shared social life⁶. Thirdly, recent reflection on romantic philosophy of language has revealed a historical anti-individualism⁷.

Arguments from Twin-Earth thought experiments have come under attack. Some have argued that externalism can be avoided by considering the nature of the mind, others by reinterpreting the concepts used. We argue that co-cognition enables us to put Twin-Earth experiments on a theoretical footing that undergirds the intuitions. Furthermore, we tentatively explore some of the relations between co-cognition and research on intersubjectivity and historical anti-individualism.

The structure of the argument is as follows: section 2 considers the positions of Putnam and Burge in favour of anti-individualism. We find that the arthritis thought experiment relies on two intuitively accepted premises: (1) that psychological contents are individuated in line with ordinary content attributions and (2) that a person incompletely mastering a concept may still be ordinarily attributed contents in line with the community concept if he is minimally competent and rational, and defers to the community. Section 3 explores some objections to the thought experiments and finds that upholding (1) and (2) allows one to defeat the objections. In section 4, co-cognitivism is introduced and its import for anti-individualism is evaluated. Co-cognitivism argues that psychological concepts such as 'thinking' and the associated contents in propositional attitudes are shaped by our joint activities. Thinking is something we do together. Thus, the contents of our thoughts are shaped by our joint community and this makes (1) reasonable as an assumption. Furthermore, the fact that thinking is a collective enterprise makes (2) justifiable. Finally, section 5 preliminarily explores the plausibility of co-cognitivism in light of cognitive science and historical anti-individualism.

⁶ Heal, 'Social Anti-Individualism, Co-Cognitivism, and Second Person Authority'.

⁷ Taylor, 'Language and Human Nature'.

2 SOCIAL ANTI-INDIVIDUALISM

In contemporary analytic philosophy, two externalist positions have been proposed⁸: physical and social externalism. Physical externalism springs forth from the work of Kripke on rigid designators and is further developed by Putnam. What Putnam suggests is that variations in our physical environment, such as different substances being called ‘water’, forces a difference in meaning, since what we mean by ‘water’ is *this* particular substance. On a Twin-Earth, with different substances, they are not using ‘water’ as we are, for they are referring to something else. The other kind of externalism, and the one we are primarily interested in, is social externalism, which holds that the features of our social environment play a part in determining meaning. Considering situations in which social usage of terms differs between Twin-Earths, it is concluded that there must be a difference in meaning between the worlds.

2.1 *Elms and beeches*

The *locus classicus* for discussion of anti-individualism is Putnam’s now-famous Twin-Earth experiment⁹. Putnam considers the common definition of ‘meaning’ to be deficient, it being cartesian in denying the link between psychological concepts and other individuals. Instead, he maintains that we must distinguish between wide psychological concepts that presuppose some individual outside the subject, and narrow psychological concepts which do not¹⁰. According to Putnam, two assumptions have been made historically:

- I. ‘knowing the meaning of a term is just a matter of being in a certain psychological state’, and
- II. ‘the meaning of a term (in the sense of “intension”) determines its extension’¹¹.

When taken together, I and II show that the psychological state of a person determines the extension of his terms. However, we can suppose that there is a Twin-Earth where all H₂O is replaced by XYZ and everything else is the same. In this case, a physically identical twin would have a different intension, by II and *modus tollens*, from his real counterpart, because the extension is H₂O in one case and XYZ in the other. However, the psychological state is the same, for they are physically identical. Therefore, I cannot be true. This is the now-famous Twin-Earth thought experiment.

For our purposes, however, another of Putnam’s thought experiments is more relevant; suppose that a person cannot tell the difference between an elm and a beech—we would still say that the extension of the ‘elm’ and ‘beech’ is, respectively, the set of all elms and beeches. But this cannot be reduced to a difference in the psychological states, for those psychological states are precisely the same. To Putnam, this shows that it is not necessary to be able to recognise elms and beeches in order to possess the concepts of ‘elm’ and ‘beech’, one may outsource this to the social community, where experts can make the discriminations. He calls this the division of linguistic labour. A normal speaker needs only acquire the term, whilst the fixing of its extension is left to the sociolinguistic

⁸ Further kinds of externalism do exist, such as Davidson’s or the more modern Active kinds of externalism. We shall limit ourselves to the traditional kinds, and among these ignore the parallel position of McDowell and Evans. For further discussion of the various kinds of externalism, see Lau and Deutsch, ‘Externalism About Mental Content’.

⁹ Putnam, ‘The Meaning of “Meaning”’.

¹⁰ Putnam, 220.

¹¹ Both quotes taken from Putnam, 219.

community¹². There are particular experts, specialised in some way, that are able to determine the extension of a term¹³, perhaps an arborist in our present case. Nevertheless, in cases of division of linguistic labour we find social factors entering into the individuation of meanings. Thus, the extension of a term is determined socially at least in part, and consequently the psychological states do not exclusively determine meaning. I and II cannot hold, we must relinquish I according to Putnam.

So far, Putnam has established that the meaning of terms is partially socially determined, but how should we construe of this ‘division of labour’? To Putnam, we only assign the standard extension of words to users who have some competence and knowledge in relation to the terms at hand. Others have to be willing to conclude that the person in question actually has some minimal knowledge of the concepts he uses¹⁴. Putnam summarises the social nature of language in the *Principle of Reasonable Ignorance*, which is to say that a person may have and use a word without knowing its mechanism of reference, leaving that to the linguistic community¹⁵—he may be reasonably ignorant of the conditions of its application. This is a central principle for Twin-Earth experiments.

2.2 *The case of arthritis*

As we have seen, Putnam did in fact discuss social externalism in his work on meaning. Nevertheless, the physical externalist Twin-Earth experiment has become standard for discussing Putnam’s views. Instead it is Tyler Burge’s well-known arthritis thought experiment that has become the focal point of discussions on social externalism. It extends to all mental attitudes that are intentional in character. To Burge, not only is there a difference in the extension of the terms, giving them different meanings, but furthermore the occurrence¹⁶ of the terms in ordinary content attributions indicates a difference in content of the mental states¹⁷. Thus, for Burge there is a difference between the content of ‘elm’ and ‘beech’ because there is a difference in ordinary attributions of contents, even if the person cannot tell the difference between elms and beeches.

Burge asks us to imagine a person, call him Athanasius, who is generally competent in English and has a number of beliefs about arthritis, including ‘I have arthritis in my thigh’¹⁸. This, however, is false. Arthritis is specifically a disease of the joints. Suppose that Athanasius reports to his doctor that he fears he has arthritis in his thigh. The doctor then explains that this cannot be so, to have arthritis is to have a rheumatoid ailment in the joints, and Athanasius stands corrected. Moreover, suppose that counterfactually Athanasius might have had the same dispositions and physical

¹² The argument here presented is similar to that in Putnam, 227–29.

¹³ Putnam, ‘Language and Reality’, 274.

¹⁴ Putnam considers English speakers to be an example of a linguistic community. Putnam, ‘The Meaning of “Meaning”’, 249.

¹⁵ Putnam, ‘Language and Reality’, 278.

¹⁶ Occurrences in ordinary content attributions are normally taken to be oblique. We will limit ourselves to such cases. An oblique occurrence of a term is not interchangeable with co-extensional ones *salva veritate*. See Burge, ‘Other Bodies’, 82n. This is to say that in such an occurrence one cannot exchange ‘elm’ with ‘tree of the genus *Ulmus*’ even if the extensions are the same because this might alter the truth value. If the man in our thought experiment says ‘I believe the morning star is the same star as the evening star’, we could not swap ‘morning star’ for ‘Venus’ and be certain that the truth-value is the same, for he does not have to believe this. In transparent cases, such a swap is possible without altering the truth-value. ‘I believe that *this* water is poisonous’, where ‘*this* water’ picks out some water in the world, is transparent, for we can insert ‘H₂O’ in the place of water and maintain the truth value.

¹⁷ Burge, 91.

¹⁸ Burge, ‘Individualism and the Mental’, 104.

history, but lived in a community where what is meant by ‘arthritis’ is instead some ailment *tarthritis*, which is not specific to the joints (it includes other rheumatoid ailments, some of which occur in the thigh). In this case the belief ‘I have arthritis in my thigh’ is true, for what is meant by ‘arthritis’ *is tarthritis*.

To Burge, this is to be interpreted as counterfactual Athanasius lacking those contents ordinarily attributed in sentences containing the communal concept arthritis, such as ‘Athanasius believes he has arthritis in his elbow’, or ‘he believes surgical treatments of arthritis are not always efficacious’. One cannot attribute contents containing ‘arthritis’ to counterfactual Athanasius—this word does not mean arthritis in the community, but rather *tarthritis*. In the actual community, where ‘arthritis’ *does* mean arthritis, we say that Athanasius has the relevant contents even if he does not understand the words he uses completely. The fact that Athanasius is willing to relinquish his idiosyncratic notion when corrected by the doctor reveals that he intends his words to be interpreted by communal standards. It seems that differences in linguistic community matter in individuating mental content, and not only in the case of partial or erroneous understanding, but also in cases of complete understanding, for it is possible to reverse the thought experiment so that incomplete understanding occurs in the counterfactual case, one *could* have understood a word less fully than the linguistic community. The thought experiment proceeds in three steps. Each step contains a conclusion about the nature of mental content, supported by certain premises. It proceeds as follows:

1. In cases of partially incomplete or incorrect understanding, we ordinarily attribute contents using the same communal concepts as in cases of full understanding. Athanasius can be said to have the content arthritis, although he does not fully master the concept.
2. In the counterfactual case, Athanasius fully masters the concept referred to by ‘arthritis’ even though his physical history and dispositions remain unchanged. The differences between communal definitions are conceptual. ‘Arthritis’ means *tarthritis* in the counterfactual community.
3. We ordinarily attribute different contents to Athanasius in actual and counterfactual cases. The concepts associated with ‘arthritis’ in the actual and counterfactual cases are not extensionally equivalent due to differences in social environment.

A few points are warranted here. Firstly, the argument relies on intuitively accepting that (1) ordinary content attributions are in line with mental contents, that concepts occurring in ordinary content attributions can serve to individuate mental contents. This is the link between concepts and contents in the thought experiment. If we attribute content using communal concepts, Athanasius’ content in some way matches so that we may individuate his contents according to communal concepts. Furthermore, it relies on us accepting intuitively that (2) we may ordinarily attribute contents using communal concepts when Athanasius misunderstands them, so long as he willingly defers to the community and is minimally competent and rational.

Secondly, Burge intends his argument to apply not only to those intentional mental states that are veridical¹⁹—‘I *know* that there are doves on the roof’, something that may be correct or not depending on whether there are doves on the roof—but also those that are not, such as ‘I *believe*

¹⁹ Burge, 114.

that there are doves on the roof', something one can do irrespective of the objective being or non-being of doves-on-the-roof. Most kinds of intentional states described as having a psychological component are susceptible to the thought-experiment. Nevertheless, discussions usually centre on clear cases such as believing or thinking, clearly psychological in nature. We shall henceforth use the term psychological content to refer to the contents of such intentional states with a psychological concept such as 'thinks', 'believes', 'intends', 'desires', *et cetera*.

What then are the requirements for social convention entering into the individuation of psychological content? Burge argues that there are both casual and intentional components to such a judgement²⁰, one may be ignorant to the word 'elm', having never heard nor learnt it, nor seen any such tree. It is then hard to see how one may have the content elm. There must be some first-order dispositions to use a term to have it. A generally competent speaker of English relies on others for acquiring 'elm', and for using it correctly, and it is by a commitment to the community's usage that he has a causal connection to the referent²¹. On the other hand, one can *choose* to mean something entirely different by this word, perhaps sticking with an idiosyncratic notion for secret communications, or simply out of stubbornness. It seems that the attitude towards communal conventions plays a part in determining the content. There must be a second-order disposition to accommodate the usage of the community. Thus, there are both first and second-order dispositions relevant to the individuation of contents. One explanation Burge gives for the importance of the social dimension of language is the fact that information about the psychological contents of others is vital for both prediction and cooperation. It is simply better to assume that other people use words in the public and communal ways that are established, rather than reinterpreting what they say. To Burge, reinterpretations are only warranted when there is some serious error or malfunctioning. In most cases, individuals rely on others for acquisition of words and causal relations to their referents.

There has been much debate concerning this thought experiment, and many have attempted to refute or weaken it by undermining the driving intuitions. In the following sections, we shall consider some objections and how one might counteract them. In so doing, we find that the thought experiment needs a theoretical underpinning to defeat attempts at reinterpretation.

²⁰ Burge, 148.

²¹ Burge, 'Postscript to "Individualism and the Mental"', 169.

3 ANTI-EXTERNALISM

Anti-individualism as conceived by Burge and Putnam is primarily based on intuitions elicited through thought experiments. Yet, the results contradicted many theories of the time, and to this day there are significant tensions in the debate. Those who defend internalist theories have felt themselves compelled to somehow block the implications of the arthritis thought experiment. We will consider some arguments against social externalism, and in so doing find some plausible ways to defend it. Any such defence, however, will be dependent on a broader theoretical framework that can resist objections to the intuitions elicited in the thought experiment.

3.1 *Objections from the nature of mind*

Some objections to the arthritis experiment rely on pointing to some premise of the experiments that conflicts with a certain view of the mind. Thus, Crane²² argues that we have no reason to conclude that Athanasius has different contents in the actual and counterfactual conditions, for there is no evidence to indicate that there is a difference in contents between them. He maintains that in Burge's thought experiment, Athanasius 'has a true belief, *I have tarthritis in my thigh*, a false belief to the effect that "*I have arthritis in my thigh*" is the right sentence to express this belief, and thus makes a false statement, "I have arthritis in my thigh"²³. Whereas Burge maintains that we ordinarily attribute different contents in the actual and counterfactual cases, Crane thinks that Athanasius has the content tarthritis in both cases. In order to understand Crane's argument, we shall have to consider two presuppositions:

1. Intentional states are individuated by their role in a science of the mental concerned with intrinsic causal powers²⁴. Crane maintains that 'our concern is with what happens and why', and thus 'we should look for causal powers'²⁵ when picking out our content.
2. The 'expression of beliefs in language is mediated by beliefs about which words to use'²⁶

The second presupposition supports subscribing to the dual-belief model Crane presents, in which case the false statement 'I have arthritis in my thigh' cannot be used as evidence for Burge's position, for both the dual-belief theory and Burge's theory make this prediction. From the first presupposition and the fact that *ex hypothesi* there is no difference in non-linguistic behaviour or dispositions one may further conclude that the content individuated in the actual and counterfactual conditions is the same.

If 2 is false, the argument fails. To see why this is so, consider Athanasius uttering 'I have arthritis in my thigh' in the actual and counterfactual situations. In the actual situation this sentence is false whilst in the counterfactual situation it is true. What Crane argues it that this can be explained by considering the further implicit belief "I have arthritis in my thigh" is the right sentence to express this belief', and he assumes that there is such a belief as per presupposition 2. Burge does not accept the existence of metalinguistic beliefs and argues that this is not how we

²² Crane, 'All the Difference in the World'.

²³ Crane, 19.

²⁴ Crane, 5–9, 16–17.

²⁵ Both citations from Crane, 17.

²⁶ Crane, 19.

attribute beliefs ordinarily²⁷. If there are no metalinguistic beliefs, we have linguistic evidence for a difference in meaning, namely that Athanasius expresses a true belief in one case and a false one in another. To this, Crane responds that in fact we rarely attribute beliefs in the unproblematic manner that Burge suggests, by taking people for their word. Rather, we are often forced to interpret their words and to reformulate our belief attributions with increasing evidence. Why are we not entitled to take the speaker's words at face value? Consider here premise 1 above. To Crane, contents are individuated by intrinsic causal powers, and there is no guarantee that these correspond to the sentences a speaker utters. We are therefore predisposed to some form of scepticism about naïvely attributing contents on the basis of the communal meaning of words. If, however, we adopted individuation conditions that were in some sense systematically related to the language community, there would be no reason to suppose that belief attribution is as complex as Crane makes it out to be, for the beliefs are then in a certain sense public. We thus find that assumption 2 is dependent on 1, or at least some version of 1 that maintains the individuation conditions for intentional states as intrinsic properties of the person to be interpreted.

What about premise 1? Were we to assume individuation conditions that are not dependent of the causal powers of intrinsic properties, Crane's argument would not succeed, as we could not infer from the fact that Athanasius has the same first-order dispositions in both actual and counterfactual conditions that there is sameness in content. But Crane is dependent on this move to enable us to attribute tarthritis to actual Athanasius. Furthermore, the fact that premise 2 is dependent on some weak version of 1 makes the move of rejecting a science of the mind as providing the correct individuation conditions for intentional states doubly problematic for Crane. We found in section 2 that Burge did in fact assume that contents are individuated in line with ordinary content attributions using communal concepts. Crane's attempt at reinterpretation amounts to rejecting this assumption and arguing instead that the content is individuated by its role in a science of the mental. We have found that a defence of Burge's assumption enables us to defeat Crane's objection, because without a science of the mind individuating psychological contents his reinterpretation fails. But such a defence is precisely what we seek to provide.

There are further arguments presented against social externalism on similar grounds. Another strategy for diffusing the thought experiment is to introduce a dualism about content, accepting wide contents dependent on social factors but nevertheless maintaining that narrow content not so dependent is what we are concerned with in the individuation of mental states. One such argument comes courtesy of Loar²⁸, who argues that there is a difference between social, or wide, and psychological, or narrow, contents. He argues against two assumptions that underlie the thought experiment:

- A. Sameness of ordinary content attribution implies sameness of psychological content: $Ac_1 \equiv Ac_2 \rightarrow Pc_1 \equiv Pc_2$, where $X \equiv Y$ denotes sameness of X and Y, and Ac and Pc are ordinarily attributed and propositional contents respectively, and the converse
- B. Difference of ordinary content attribution implies difference of psychological content: $Pc_1 \equiv Pc_2 \rightarrow Ac_1 \equiv Ac_2$, by contraposition.

²⁷ Burge, 'Belief and Synonymy'.

²⁸ Loar, 'Social Content and Psychological Content'.

Thus, we arrive at an equivalence between sameness of ordinary content attributions and sameness of propositional contents, $Ac_1 \equiv Ac_2 \leftrightarrow Pc_1 \equiv Pc_2$. Loar argues against this by considering some cases closely related to Kripke's puzzle about belief. Suppose that Athanasius knows the names for London in both French and English, but not that they refer to the same place. Athanasius believes that 'Londres est jolie' because he has been told this in France. When Athanasius visits London, which he does not know is Londres, he forms the belief 'London is pretty'. The ordinary attributions of content are the same: 'Athanasius believes that London is pretty'. Is the psychological content the same? Loar thinks not, for the French and the English belief have distinct roles in psychological explanation, they are individuated differently. Suppose that Athanasius is aware of a disease called 'arthritis' and further that 'l'arthrite affecte seulement les articulations', but not that it is arthritis. Should he then believe 'I have arthritis in my knee' and 'J'ai de l'arthrite au genou'²⁹ it seems that he believes two *different* things, for the belief 'I do not have arthritis in my knee' is consistent with the French but not the English belief. Both the French and the English sentence, however, have the same ordinary content attribution, 'Athanasius believes that he has arthritis in the knee', and therefore A cannot be true because the antecedent is true and the consequent false.

So far, Loar has attempted to undermine the first step of the thought experiment by arguing that Athanasius and the doctor who corrects him have the same ordinarily attributed content, but different psychological content. He is committed to explanatory role as the individuating condition for psychological content. Loar also rejects the third step of the thought experiment as it assumes B, that sameness of psychological content implies sameness of ordinarily attributed content. Just like Athanasius' beliefs about London and Londres are different psychological concepts because they play distinct parts in explanatory interactions with other beliefs, so arthritis and tarthritis play the same role in the different cases and are therefore the same psychological content, whilst differing in ordinary content attributions. For the purpose of explaining psychological states, 'arthritis' as used by Athanasius in the actual case invokes a concept identical to that in the counterfactual case because they both play the same role in our explanations of relations to other beliefs³⁰. Burge need not be committed to the nonexistence of some form of narrow content, only that there are in fact wide contents, and further that psychological contents of the kind considered in the thought experiment are in fact wide. Loar and Crane both question whether we are justified in individuating contents in line with ordinary content attributions using communal concepts. Loar argues that this assumption is faulty by providing counterexamples to A and B. Our task is then to show that there are reasons to believe that these assumptions are correct, and that reflection on these can resolve the counterexamples.

Consider the case of London above. Are we obliged to consider the French and English sentences as expressing different psychological contents? On an account of psychological contents that individuates them by the roles they play in explanation we find that they do indeed carry different contents. Believing that 'Londres est jolie' disposes one to respond 'Tout a fait !' to 'Voulez-vous visiter Londres?' but not to the corresponding sentence in English, provided one is ignorant of the identity of Londres and London. Suppose now that we alter the individuation conditions for

²⁹ My explanation partly differs from Loar's; I take the differences to be insubstantial.

³⁰ Loar, 'Social Content and Psychological Content', 153.

psychological contents to the roles they play in the concerns of the linguistic community. By virtue of the fact that Londres *is* London, the two play the same role in their respective communities, and thus have the same contents. When Frenchmen think about Londres, they are engaged in thinking about that very city. Had Athanasius been told that ‘London est l’anglaise pour Londres – c’est la même ville !’, he would have deferred away from his idiosyncratic mistranslation, given appropriate conditions for deferral. A has not been refuted. As for B, Loar must find some case where there is sameness of psychological contents but difference of ordinary content attribution. He considers the case of Athanasius and finds that the psychological contents are the same in actual and counterfactual cases, for there is sameness of explanatory role. If we drop this assumption in favour of individuation by the role contents play in the community, we find that the psychological contents are different, for community usage differs *ex hypothesi*.

Both Crane and Loar attempt to refute the thought experiment by in effect assuming that psychological contents are individuated by their roles in explanation and prediction. From this they argue that one can reinterpret the thought experiment so that externalist intuitions are blocked. However, the assumption of explanation as an individuating condition for psychological content need not be accepted; an appreciation of the role of the community in our thinking gives us reason to suppose that ordinary content attributions are in line with the individuation of psychological contents. Now, it might be argued that all we have done here is begged the question, for it was precisely whether the individualist could block the experiments from going though that was at issue. It is not illegitimate to make use of individualist presuppositions in making such a reinterpretation. This response somewhat misses the point. The individualist is of course free to adopt whatever individuation conditions he likes, but this is a further commitment beyond individualism *simpliciter*, and should it turn out to be false for whatever reason this upsets the individualist’s case. We shall return to explanation and prediction as individuation conditions for psychological contents in section 4 below.

3.2 *The role of concepts*

If the previous objections relied on a certain view of the nature of mind, the following ones rely on questioning the ordinary attribution of contents based on communal concepts. Wikforss argues that we cannot be sure that there is a conceptual difference between Athanasius’ use and that of his community. Davidson, on the other hand argues that ordinary content attributions based on conceptual misunderstandings are incorrect.

Wikforss argues against social externalism by considering the role that conceptual errors play in Burge’s thought experiment³¹. In the thought experiment, Burge relies on two assumptions for saying that Athanasius has a non-standard concept. Firstly, that the error in applying ‘arthritis’ is of a conceptual kind, and secondly that it is not radical enough to reinterpret the Athanasius’ words. The second assumption is defended by deference to community usage and a minimal standard of competence and rationality. What Wikforss seeks to challenge is the first assumption, that the error is conceptual. Instead, Wikforss maintains that Athanasius’ misunderstanding is empirical in nature. If this is the case, we cannot be sure that the communal concepts in the actual and counterfactual cases are different, for it may simply be attributed to a difference in empirical theory.

³¹ Wikforss, ‘Social Externalism and Conceptual Errors’.

We may fall back on a notion of weak analyticity, such as taking the meaning of arthritis to be determined by ‘a standard, non-technical dictionary definition’³². This, however, is problematic, for it is not clear how this allows us to say that the counterfactual community has a different concept, ‘since the broader use in the counterfactual community may be attributable simply to a difference in theory’³³. A difference in theory does not support the thought experiment, for the concept arthritis would be the same even if there were differences in empirical understanding. In general, we ought not claim willingly that different empirical theories carry different meanings, for in such a case ‘atom’ as used today would mean something different to what physicists before J. J. Thomson³⁴ meant. But this is absurd, for we say quite sincerely that ‘before Thomson they incorrectly believed that atoms were indivisible’, ordinarily attributing the same concept. This is one horn of the dilemma facing the anti-individualist, the other being recourse to some strong notion of analyticity, as critiqued by Quine. But this is not satisfactory either, for supposing that arthritis analytically contains some limitation to the joints, it is hard to see why there would not be a massive expansion of analytical truths, generally considered unappealing. Furthermore, Wikforss argues that we should be sceptical of claims to strong analyticity of terms bound up in theoretical usage, such as ‘arthritis’, since it is conceivable that they may change as medical science advances.

Is it really true that there is no principled way to distinguish conceptual errors from empirical ones? As was noted by Putnam, Quine’s critique of analyticity may be divided into two parts³⁵. As it pertains to the question of empirical and conceptual facts, what Quine argued against was that there is a principled way to distinguish those revisable in light of evidence from those not so dependent on the world. Quine writes: ‘[a] recalcitrant experience can, I have urged, be accommodated by any of various alternative reevaluations in various alternative quarters of the total system’³⁶. From this it follows that we cannot argue from the difference in understanding of arthritis to there being a difference in concepts. The argument goes roughly like this: because we cannot say which part of a theory is subject to revision, we cannot posit that ‘pertaining to the joints only’ is an integral part of the medical theory of arthritis. It is not true simply by virtue of meanings. However, we take Putnam to be largely correct in arguing that Quine’s attack is primarily on apriority. Thus, the question we are interested in may be reformulated: can we say *a priori* that arthritis applies to the joints only? However, as Putnam notes, statements (and thereby concepts involved) can still be *contextually a priori* as far as they are not open to revision without a new theory. Suppose that in the future, medical experts find that there can be no distinction made between ailments of the joints presenting the symptoms of what we call arthritis and similar cases occurring in non-joints. It is not clear that there is a difference in the concept of arthritis between the cases. However, if we suppose that Athanasius tells his doctor ‘I fear my arthritis has spread to my thigh’ in both cases,

³² Burge, ‘Individualism and the Mental’, 105. What Burge intends to say by this is that the notion of weak analyticity is bound up with the communal usage. The dictionary acts as a proxy for the communal usage of words. Burge does not put the cart before the horse, as would be the case when using the dictionary as *the* definition of a word. See Quine, ‘Two Dogmas of Empiricism’. We would like to thank Martin Jönsson for bringing up Quine’s anti-dictionary argument.

³³ Wikforss, ‘Social Externalism and Conceptual Errors’, 222.

³⁴ J. J. Thomson discovered the electron, thus disproving the indivisibility of atoms accepted since Democritus.

³⁵ Putnam, ‘“Two Dogmas” Revisited’.

³⁶ Quine, ‘Two Dogmas of Empiricism’, 466.

we should intuitively attribute a true belief in the future case and a false one in the present one. This is because the statement ‘arthritis is a disease of the joints only’ is a contextually *a priori* truth or falsehood in the respective communities. This should not be understood as there being no conceivable alternative theory, but rather that when pursuing joint projects, we are obliged to attribute contents based on communal conventions. When engaging with others we commit ourselves to be held accountable for our language use. This includes how we use technical words such as ‘arthritis’—we must say that it applies *a priori* to the joints only. Likewise, in the future scenario, we must say that it does not apply *a priori* to the joints only. Of course, not all words hold such a central place in the web of theory that they are contextually *a priori*. Nevertheless, some do, and this is all that is needed for anti-individualism. In light of this, we are now in a position to understand in what sense Athanasius’ misunderstanding must be conceptual—his usage of ‘arthritis’ must accord with the way it is used in the community, including contextually *a priori* medical theory, so that the counterfactual community does not use ‘arthritis’ as we understand it but rather mean something else by it. Quinean holism has no place for purely conceptual errors, but neither does it allow purely empirical ones. We defer to others for our concepts, and in so doing, we limit possible revisions in light of empirical fact. So, we can say that there is a difference in concepts between Athanasius in the actual and counterfactual conditions.

One further worry about conceptual errors is of interest: why should we take ordinary content attributions as authoritative? Davidson has presented an argument to this effect³⁷. Burge recommends ordinarily attributing content along the lines of incompletely understood communal concepts. Davidson’s strategy is to argue that ordinary attributions do not support Burge’s premise. Suppose that Athanasius and Basil (who, in contrast to Athanasius, knows that arthritis is a disease of the joints) tell Cyril ‘I believe that Dionysius has arthritis’. Burge would see this as them having the same psychological contents. To Davidson, however, there are ‘vast and vague assumptions about what is and is not shared’³⁸ in everyday content attributions. In most cases we choose to attribute contents on the basis of public meaning, but we are not forced to do this. Suppose that Cyril says to a doctor ‘Athanasius and Basil believe that Dionysius has arthritis’. This would not be quite right for Athanasius has an odd concept of arthritis. Therefore, Cyril must add ‘but Athanasius thinks arthritis can occur outside the joints’. Davidson takes this to show that the original attribution using communal concepts was not correct, that there was in fact a difference in the thoughts of Athanasius and Basil. Furthermore, Davidson critiques Burge’s notion of commitment to community use as an argument in favour of ordinary content attributions according to community usage. To this, Davidson responds (1) that whilst it is rational to hold people to account for knowing the words they use, this does not reveal their content, (2) that we encourage literal interpretation to improve the likelihood of successful communication, and (3) to understand a speaker the hearer must interpret him as he wished (*mutatis mutandis* the same is true for a speaker who wants to be understood).

Nordby has argued that this extended version of the thought experiment cannot do the work that Davidson wants it to³⁹, since the further ordinary content attribution simply indicates that

³⁷ Davidson, ‘Knowing One’s Own Mind’.

³⁸ Davidson, 27.

³⁹ Nordby, ‘Davidson on Social Externalism’.

Athanasius has a false belief about arthritis. The further information is epistemically relevant but does not imply differences in content. But is this enough to dispel Davidson's argument? It might be argued that Cyril instead attributes content to Athanasius using some deviant concept when providing further information. If Athanasius is committed to community usage, it is plausible to interpret the further statement as Cyril simply informing others that Athanasius does not live up to this commitment. If, however, such a commitment is ultimately inconsequential for ordinary content attribution, if all Cyril has to base his attributions on is the words and behaviour of Athanasius (the first-order dispositions), then it is not clear that he should attribute a false belief to Athanasius. Unless one can give a positive account defending (1)-(3) above, it is unclear whether we may assume, as Nordby does, that Cyril intends to attribute a false belief. The general point here is that, for Davidson, meaning is not dependent on the social community because deference to the community is secondary to successful communication, which Davidson takes to be the primary purpose of language⁴⁰. Can we mount a defence of community commitments? Davidson argues that the norm against which all speech must be evaluated is whether it is successful or not in communicating what was intended; he maintains that we understand speakers best when we interpret them as they intend to be interpreted. To Davidson, if one wants to be understood, one must speak in such a way as to make it possible for one's listeners to interpret one's words correctly⁴¹. We do not think this is as obvious as Davidson suggests, for it ignores the fact that human communication is normative not because it can succeed or fail, but because human beings, as rational agents, can be held accountable for their contributions to social life. If we take normativity to stem from our shared social life, then we are in a certain sense committed to adopt the concepts of the community, and those others with whom we are communicating are justified to assume that we intend our words to be interpreted according to communal conventions. On this assumption, we may say that (1) being rational requires that we are accountable for our words to those with whom we are engaged, (2) we willingly adopt public concepts as a prerequisite for cooperation, and (3) the demands of social projects are incompatible with idiosyncratic notions. Thus, the norms imposed on language by the shared social life of rational agents provide reasons for taking a speaker to mean by his words what the community does. This is not because it helps get *his* point across, but because it advances *our* shared life⁴².

In our response to Wikforss, we found that theories are not in themselves purely empirical in nature. As Quine maintains, 'our statements about the external world face the tribunal of sense experience not individually but only as a corporate body'⁴³. Such a body of statements is what we operate with when we speak. We are committed to using our words as our community uses them—in a sense Athanasius takes over the whole of medical theory as a commitment when speaking with

⁴⁰ Davidson, 'The Social Aspect of Language'.

⁴¹ Davidson, 'Knowing One's Own Mind', 28.

⁴² Davidson further argues that it is implausible that we should defer to some elite, thereby taking them to have priority in determining our concepts. Davidson, 'The Social Aspect of Language', 121. If we take the normative component of language to rest not in successful communication but rather in success of joint social life, then this is not implausible. Rather, it rests on the fact that if we want to partake of social life, we must defer to others who are more competent in the projects to be pursued. As part of collaborating, we enter into a relation of accountability with those others. On this relation, see note 45 below.

⁴³ Quine, 'Two Dogmas of Empiricism', 464.

his doctor. In the same vein, we find that Athanasius is committed to using his words as the community does, because his concepts are not determined by successful communication, but rather our shared life as rational beings. We have found that the assumption that we may ordinarily attribute contents on the basis of communal concepts holds even in cases of misunderstanding, because our thinking is bound up with that of the community, something that fixes our thoughts and theories.

3.3 *Social considerations*

Athanasius is dependent on the linguistic community for his concepts. One of the ways that such a dependence can be argued for is by considering the role of deference between the individual speaker and the community. Athanasius can be held responsible for his word-usage and stands corrected when he is found to have misapplied a term. But in the counterfactual case, it is hard to see how he can have the same concept, for there is no-one to whom he can defer for our concept arthritis. Nordby argues that the notion of deference used by Burge is too narrow: it is possible that Athanasius would defer to some understanding other than that of the community were he presented with it⁴⁴. One of the reasons Burge gives for maintaining that Athanasius has the content arthritis even when he misunderstands the concept is that he *would* defer to the communal concept were he aware of the discrepancy. But is it not possible that Athanasius would defer to some other concept more in line with his misunderstanding? This can be answered in several ways. One response is to say that we feel a greater responsibility to our actual community, and so defer to it for this reason. But this does not solve our problem, for Nordby retorts that it is hard to see how we have strong intuitions about those linguistic norms that affect technical words like ‘arthritis’. There are no strong intuitions about how we attach value to standard understandings.

Nordby argues that there is no intuitive reason to suppose that we would defer to our own linguistic community rather than some other community that expresses our actual usage. Yet there is an intuitive appeal to the idea that we have some kind of special ‘link’ to the actual community we find ourselves in. We are *part* of our community. This carries certain commitments—to stand accountable for our language use, to be open to correction. This is the proper role of deference, being called to account for one’s usage as a rational subject. On such a view, we cannot defer to a counterfactual community without abandoning our commitments to our own community⁴⁵. Thus, we find that there is an intuition that can be called upon to explain why deference across counterfactual situations is not possible. Because we are engaged in thinking with our actual community and no other, we are obliged to use our words as they do. Such a defence must explain in further detail how the notion of standing to account for one’s usage relates to ordinary content attribution.

⁴⁴ Nordby, ‘Mental Content Externalism and Social Understanding’.

⁴⁵ This explanation needs much further expansion. It is not entirely dissimilar from a broadly Hegelian model of social normativity, where reciprocal recognition of the subjects serves to hold others to account for their usage. There is a broader point here, as is noted in Brandom, ‘Some Hegelian Ideas of Note for Contemporary Analytic Philosophy’, 8–9. We take the deference relation to be reciprocal; for Athanasius to defer to his doctor, the doctor must hold him to account by correcting his usage. Likewise, Athanasius must acknowledge the authority of the doctor. This is all to say that we cannot defer to an authority that is not properly part of the social community, who has not properly entered into those relations of mutual recognition that enable us to hold others accountable. Likewise, we may say that the person who renounces such accountability is in a certain sense no longer a part of the community, he no longer acknowledges the authority, and thus cannot defer on a reciprocal understanding. This is why we are unwilling to ordinarily attribute the communal content to him.

3.4 *Lessons learned*

What shall we make of these objections? In the above, we have found ourselves articulating on those intuitions that drive the thought experiment (cf. section 2.2). Doing so has provided us with reasons for taking them to be defensible. Nevertheless, the lack of an anti-individualist theoretical framework is problematic for there is no coherent unity to the intuitions. This makes defending them more challenging.

In considering counterarguments of Crane and Loar, we found that there is an underlying difference in the view of psychological contents. For Burge, to be in an intentional state such as believing one has arthritis in one's thigh is already to be engaged in a social community. The concept arthritis is not solipsistic, we depend on others for acquiring it, and for determining which objects fall into its extension. As part of this, we may intuitively assume that the psychological contents of such intentional states are individuated along the lines of ordinary content attributions using communal concepts. Crane and Loar, however, rely on the role that contents play in explanation of thoughts and actions. We found defending this intuitive assumption requires articulating why we are entitled to use communal concepts in ordinary content attributions as a guide to the individuation of psychological contents. Furthermore, we concluded that such a defence is possible if we take the individuation of psychological contents to be dependent on their role in the language community. Such an account would then be able to articulate why wide contents are what we are concerned with, and why they are individuated as they are.

Furthermore, in considering the objections of Wikforss and Davidson, we found that the conditions for ordinary content attribution must be determined further. By paying attention to obligations incumbent on members of the linguistic community, we found that we could articulate why Athanasius could not make a purely empirical error, and why he had to be dependent on the community for his concept of arthritis. The same reflections then helped us to defend anti-individualism against Nordby, who argued that it was possible for Athanasius to defer counterfactually to some other concept more in line with his misunderstanding. Because the relationship one has to one's community includes a commitment to be responsible for using one's words the right way, one cannot defer to another such community without renouncing this relationship. The same applies in relation to Wikforss and Davidson. It is only insofar as we are users of *our* language that we are committed to using medical terms as doctors do, or ordinarily attribute contents based on community usage. But we are in fact committed to this usage, for we are often engaged in joint deliberation and action with others in our ordinary lives.

What we have found in formulating our response is that a defence of anti-individualism must undergird the two assumptions made by Burge: (1) that psychological contents are individuated in line with ordinary content attributions and (2) that a person incompletely mastering a concept may still be ordinarily attributed contents in line with the community concept if he is minimally competent and rational, and defers to the community. It will be argued that such a defence can be found in reflection on the nature of intersubjectivity. More precisely, we shall argue that co-cognition, in clarifying how we interact with others in joint projects of deliberation, allows us to defend the assumptions. To this we must now turn.

4 THINKING ABOUT OTHER MINDS

So far, we have found that Burge's thought experiment relies on two intuitions, both of which have been questioned. Furthermore, we have found that the conclusions Burge draws can be supported by affirming and undergirding the intuitions. In the present section, we argue that a theoretical framework for understanding those intuitions may be found by considering the role of co-operation in our shared mental life. In so doing, co-cognition will be evaluated as a theoretical framework for understanding the intuitions called on in the thought experiment.

Traditional theories of psychological knowledge—knowledge of the contents of statements containing psychological concepts such as 'know', 'believe', 'desire', *et cetera*—identify it with its role in explanation, prediction, and control⁴⁶. This may be expressed as:

EPC: The central aim of psychological knowledge is explanation, prediction, and control of others' behaviour, thoughts, and other intentional states.

On this view, to know that 'Athanasius believes he has arthritis in his thigh' is to be able to predict that Athanasius will be disposed to assent to certain statements, go to the doctor, *et cetera*. Nevertheless, this is not the only way to conceive of psychological knowledge. Indeed, Heal argues that psychological concepts are instead shaped by our social interests in co-operation, where thinking together is central⁴⁷. This is the position she calls co-cognitivism. Because our thinking is shaped by such collaborative projects, the contents of our thoughts are also affected by the interests of co-operation. This leads us to expect that ordinary content attributions have something to say about the psychological contents of others. Furthermore, reflection on the conditions of co-cognition reveals that if we are engaging in co-operative cognition, co-cognition, we are committed to using our words as the community does. These considerations allow us to understand why the intuitions called on in the thought experiment are reasonable, and in so doing defend the thought experiment and anti-individualism generally. In the following we consider co-cognitivism as described by Heal.

4.1 Co-cognition

As human beings we are brought up in a social environment, where we learn to co-operate with others⁴⁸. This co-operation is necessary for flourishing; there is too much to be done alone. This applies also to thinking. We are taught at an early age to not only communicate our propositional attitudes to others, but also to share with those others in ongoing deliberation on relevant subject matters, so as to further our joint projects and lives. This kind of co-operative deliberation in pursuit of our human flourishing is co-cognition and it is involved in not only analytic deliberation but also most of our shared life in the form of artistic expression, social engagement, and so forth.

Some of our concepts are aimed towards manipulating the world around us. These are shaped by interests in prediction and control. To this end, we create theories about nature, 'zebras migrate before the rain season', and 'heavy things fall when not adequately supported'. Such theories can be incorrect: 'the heavier something is the faster it falls', and when they are this reduces our ability to predict our environment. Concepts individuated in furtherance of such interests are aimed

⁴⁶ Spaulding, *How We Understand Others: Philosophy and Social Cognition*, 1–3, 7–9.

⁴⁷ Heal, 'Social Anti-Individualism, Co-Cognitivism, and Second Person Authority'.

⁴⁸ Heal.

towards EPC. However, to Heal, psychological concepts, such as thinking, are aimed towards co-cognition. Thinking is not aimed at predicting or explaining the thoughts or beliefs of ourselves or others, but rather it is aimed towards coming to hold true beliefs. Such psychological concepts are not determined by their causal relations to the world or the role they have in some folk-psychological theory of the mental, but rather by the roles they have in co-cognition. We differentiate between psychological concepts such as ‘guess’ and ‘know’ because they have distinct roles in cooperative thinking, indicating differing levels of certainty⁴⁹. Likewise, the determination of content entering into propositional attitudes involving psychological concepts is done with a view to co-cognising with it, to face it not as a clue to predicting the mental state of the other person, but to co-operate in thinking about the contents. To think of something as arthritis is to be in a position to co-cognise about this fact. But because co-cognition is aimed towards advancing our joint projects, our concepts, including thinking-of-something-as-arthritis are also aimed towards joint projects. We individuate psychological contents along social lines—and we do this because our thinking proceeds along social lines. If thinking is something done by *us*, then the contents of my thoughts are dependent on our joint activity. In an earlier paper, Heal suggests that co-cognitivism is the position that:

CC. ‘[T]hinking about others’ thoughts requires us, in usual and central cases, to think about the states of affairs which are the subject matter of those thoughts, namely to co-cognise with the person whose thoughts we seek to grasp⁵⁰.

In co-cognising, we are thinking about the same subject matter. This enables us to collaborate in our thinking. Moreover, psychological contents are determined by the social limitations imposed on them by the nature of our thinking. When Athanasius and Basil are thinking together, they are co-cognising to the extent they jointly deliberate on a subject matter. We do not always do this, and when we fail this may disrupt our thinking. A central part of joint thinking is adopting the others’ worldview. Nevertheless, we are in fact occasionally unable to understand others sufficiently. Any theory of joint thinking should be expected to result sometimes in failure to co-cognise, for this we often observe in our actual interactions. In the normal case, however, we are able to engage in co-cognition and we are often competent in eliminating issues that prevent smooth deliberation.

Because we share the same subject matter when engaging in co-cognition, we are able to grasp the contents of the other person’s thoughts, inasmuch as we share the same grasp of the subject matter of our joint thinking. Thinking about the contents of another’s thoughts involves thinking about the subject matter of those thoughts. When Basil is to attribute some content to Athanasius from the original arthritis case, because he is able to co-cognise with Athanasius on this matter, he is able to ordinarily attribute contents on the basis of their shared subject matter. Thinking about another’s thought involves co-cognising about the subject matter together with the other: the ordinary attribution of contents is parallel with the thinking of the other person. Therefore, we may expect that ordinary content attributions reflect the contents of our thoughts, *if* we are in a position to co-cognise about those contents.

⁴⁹ Heal, 341–47.

⁵⁰ Heal, ‘Co-Cognition and Off-Line Simulation: Two Ways of Understanding the Simulation Approach’, 99.

In the process of co-cognition, psychological concepts serve the role of *us* thinking about some topic collectively, with a view to further our intellectual projects in doing so⁵¹. Thus, we are committed to a view of the other as a rational subject with whom we can deliberate. Co-cognitivism ‘holds that to identify a being as a subject of psychological predicates is to identify it as a possible co-cognizer, a being with whom one might co-deliberate, were circumstances propitious’⁵². This co-deliberation extends to the role that psychological contents have in allowing *us* to think. Co-cognitive projects can advance without having to retrace another’s state of mind. In fact, this is only necessary when there is some hindrance to smooth deliberation, when one’s words are unclear, or the circumstances are unpropitious. We can now see how co-cognitivism enables us to defend anti-individualism.

4.2 *Anti-individualism*

One of the main difficulties of social anti-individualism as it was presented in the previous sections is that it fails to give an account of why we should suppose (1) that psychological contents are individuated in line with ordinary content attributions and (2) that a person incompletely mastering a concept may still be ordinarily attributed contents in line with the community concept if he is minimally competent and rational, and defers to the community. How then might co-cognition serve to buttress social anti-individualism? We briefly touch on Heal’s proposed argument for social anti-individualism, and then turn to consider how one may defeat the objections presented in section 3 by considering the role of psychological concepts in joint human life.

Heal asks us to suppose that there is an automaton with certain dispositions to perform actions such as uttering ‘I have arthritis in my thigh’, ‘arthritis requires treatment’ and so forth⁵³. What we are interested in is spelling out the relations between dispositions and environmental input, and how these two relate to outputs from the automaton; in short, creating a theory of the mind. These relations are individuated by being able to predict outputs on the basis of the inputs of the machine—the EPC claim. Now, we are in a bit of a bind in the case of anti-individualism, for externalist content cannot deliver detailed predictions of behaviour in the same way as individualist content can. This is not so for co-cognitivism, for it jettisons EPC and instead claims that the individuating principle for psychological contents is the role they play in joint projects—and does so in light of reflection on the nature of human interests in communication. In this case, we can take anti-individualist content to be of primary interest. What is central to joint projects of co-cognising is the orientation towards shared projects, culture, and life of those others with whom we co-cognise. In this way, Heal takes co-cognitivism to suggest anti-individualist notions of content⁵⁴. What is primary is not whether Athanasius (by force of first-order dispositions) acts in a way that leads us to predict that he conceives of ‘arthritis’ as including thigh-related illnesses, but rather what kinds of joint projects he enters, or is capable of entering into, with others. The role that ‘arthritis’ plays in the original thought experiment where the doctor corrects his usage is to refer roughly to ‘diseases of the joints’ or some such thing, covering the extension of the medical community’s usage (after all Athanasius and the doctor are engaged in a web of communal relations that binds them to the

⁵¹ Heal, ‘Social Anti-Individualism, Co-Cognitivism, and Second Person Authority’, 348.

⁵² Heal, 349.

⁵³ Heal, 356.

⁵⁴ See esp. Heal, 355–60.

usage of the broader community *and* to medical expertise⁵⁵). Thus, we should take Athanasius to express by ‘arthritis’ that which is called for by the canons of medical usage. The fact that he defers to such and understanding indicates his engagement in the joint project. Thus, co-cognitivism recommends an anti-individualist view of mental contents, for externalist contents are what we are primarily concerned about.

Co-cognitivism allows us to understand the role of the community in our thinking. Many concerns in our lives are such that we depend on others not only for whether they go well or ill, but also for deliberating on them. We are now in a position to see how the rejoinders from section 3 work in detail. We found that an anti-individualist theory needs to explain two things. Firstly, it must give an account of individuation conditions for psychological contents in line with ordinary content attributions. Co-cognition finds that psychological contents are determined with a view to shared thinking, so that our joint projects are advanced. To have a thought with the content X is to be in a position to co-cognise about X. Others who are co-cognising about X are then able to ordinarily attribute the content X on the basis of sharing the subject matter. Secondly, the relation of the individual speaker to the linguistic community must be detailed. For co-cognitivism, our flourishing is in a large part dependent on the community. This is to say that our interests are bound up with those around us. Furthering our lives requires co-operation, both practical and theoretical: co-action and co-cognition. Let us see how this enables us to defend anti-individualism.

In our discussion of objections from the nature of mind (cf. section 3.1) we found that both Crane and Loar were dependent on a peculiar model of the mind. They argue that psychological contents are individuated primarily by explanation and prediction, what has been called EPC above⁵⁶. Furthermore, we found that by rejecting EPC as the proper condition for individuation of psychological contents, we could reject the objections presented by both Crane and Loar. Once we give a plausible account of individuation of content by the role it plays in the community, namely our interest in the success of *our* thinking, we find that insofar as we are engaging in co-cognising, the contents of our thoughts are determined with a view to our ongoing deliberation. This allows us to ascribe contents on the basis of our communal conventions. We noted that Crane’s objection cannot stand without the assumption of EPC. In fact, Co-cognition can successfully deal with the objection of Crane, for if we maintain that psychological contents are individuated by the roles they play in joint projects, then we cannot reason from the fact that there are no ways to

⁵⁵ We are not only bound to the usage of the community as conceived by Putnam (cf. note 14)—i.e. English-speakers—but also to the community we are actually engaging in. Thus, what we mean by arthritis is determined partially by that usage of the medical community, they are generally considered experts on medical language. In another situation, say Athanasius asking his employer for leave to go to the doctor, the meaning of ‘arthritis’ may be less dependent on the doctor’s expertise. This does not detract from the thought experiment, for we know *ex hypothesi* that Athanasius is talking to the doctor. In short, we are engaged in our community at different levels, from the general English-community to specialist communities such as that of analytic philosophers.

⁵⁶ Crane is quite explicit about this, see his ‘All the Difference in the World’, 5–6. As for Loar, he argues that it is ‘common-sense psychological explanation’ that is the individuating condition for psychological contents, see his ‘Social Content and Psychological Content’, 153. We think it a fair interpretation to say that this is the kind of explanation that is sought after by what Heal calls Theory-Theory, that is the kind of explanation that answers questions such as ‘Why did Athanasius assent to Y’, where Y is a proposition. The answer would then be given in terms of intrinsic properties such as first-order dispositions to assent to propositions of certain kinds, such as Y, or some individualistic belief P that implies Y, and Athanasius seeing the connection. In this sense, both Crane and Loar are committed to EPC as a claim about individuation of psychological contents.

distinguish the causal dispositions of Athanasius in the actual and counterfactual conditions to the conclusion that they have the same psychological contents. In the case of Loar, an account of how psychological contents are individuated by their role in the community allows us to dissolve the modified version of Kripke's puzzle about belief. What is the meaning of 'London' and 'Londres', in their respective communities? Both enable thinking about London as a subject matter. Because Londres *is* London, they have the same role in our thinking. So, we have found that co-cognition can defeat those objections from the nature of mind that we have considered.

With regard to the role of conceptual errors, we found that deference played a central part in defending against both Wikforss and Davidson. On the co-cognitivist view, deference follows from being concerned with the thinking of the community. Our joint life is important to us, and as a prerequisite of pursuing it, we enter into relations of obligation. We stand responsible for what we say and intend it to be interpreted as the community understands it. This includes concepts both empirical and conceptual, all concepts to some degree if we take Quine's point seriously. So, we find that when Athanasius utters 'arthritis' this is to be understood as a commitment to the meaning as conceived by his community. He is not free to make up his own medical theory if he wishes to engage in co-cognition. But then the error must be one of understanding. And so Wikforss cannot reinterpret Athanasius as having a false empirical belief. As for Davidson, the fact that we are committed to the usage of our community as a central part of our lives allows us to reinterpret Cyril's statement 'but Athanasius thinks arthritis can occur outside the joints' as ordinarily attributing a false belief, not a difference in concepts. Furthermore, we can see why *pace* Nordby we cannot defer to a counterfactual community's usage instead of the actual one: we have an obligation of responsibility to the actual community, whose interests are bound up with our own. We are not free to defer to alternative understandings without disengaging from our co-cognitive projects.

From this we can conclude that adopting co-cognition as a framework for understanding anti-individualist thought experiments helps us to defend the thought experiment from objections levied at it. Moreover, in defending the thought experiment, we have elucidated some of the intuitions it is based on. The notion of the role that concepts play in the broader community is hinted at by Burge when he notes that '[t]he key to our attribution of mental contents in the face of incomplete mastery or misunderstanding lies largely in social functions associated with maintaining and applying the standard'⁵⁷. Co-cognition enables us to see why the intuitions behind the thought experiment are called for, in light of how we think *together*. Firstly, we find that ordinary content attributions are a good guide to psychological content because our thoughts are shaped by our joint projects. Having a thought with the content arthritis involves being in a position to co-cognise with it, but co-cognition is shaped by our joint interests. When ordinarily attributing a thought with the content arthritis, we are identifying someone as being in a position to co-cognise with this content. Therefore, ordinary belief attributions are a good guide to the individuation of psychological contents. Secondly, we are justified in ordinarily attributing communal concepts because co-cognition obliges us to use our words as the community does. We are dependent on our community for shared deliberation. When we enter into co-cognition, we must adapt our usage to that of the broader community. This involves among other things deferring to experts.

⁵⁷ Burge, 'Individualism and the Mental', 149.

5 THINKING TOGETHER

Our task has been to consider whether adopting co-cognitivism is a viable strategy for social anti-individualists to dissolve certain objections. It is beyond our scope of inquiry to consider the veracity of co-cognitivism at any greater depth. Still, we shall endeavour to consider briefly two possible reasons for adopting co-cognitivism, thereby finding two directions for further inquiry.

Modern theories of social cognition have given increasing attention to intersubjectivity in explanations of human behaviour. A promising area of research, social cognition may be able to provide theories on the implementation of co-cognition in empirical settings. Furthermore, the history of anti-individualism may be able to provide a background for understanding co-cognition.

5.1 *Social cognition*

Whilst co-cognition is an a priori theory about the nature of our social co-operation, it says nothing about how this is implemented in human psychology or social cognition. Yet, it is in large part compatible with some such theories, such as the Shared Intentionality Hypothesis (SIH) proposed by Tomasello. He adopts a Vygotskian model of human ontogeny that seeks to explain the development of the sociocultural environment⁵⁸. According to the SIH, joint attention and collective intentionality enable individuals to align their cognitive perspectives with others and to collaborate. To flout the collective norms and standards for thought and action is to renounce the notion of *us*⁵⁹. None of this is inimical to a theory of co-cognition, in fact, Heal has suggested that joint attention may be a precursor to co-cognition⁶⁰. This is in line with the SIH, where joint attention is a precursor to collective intentionality and reasoning. It might be that SIH identifies a viable candidate mechanism for co-cognition. This has been argued by Gallotti⁶¹.

Co-cognition is also compatible with other projects in the philosophy of mind that concern the vehicles of social thought. It is not opposed to viewing language as an intersubjectively mediated Durkheimian social fact⁶² or to entertaining thoughts about the extended mind. In fact, if we take the extended mind to be limited to a supervenience claim, then co-cognitivism is already extended in that the contents of propositional attitudes are in a certain sense supervenient on physiology and social environment⁶³.

⁵⁸ Tomasello, *Becoming Human*.

⁵⁹ Tomasello, 331.

⁶⁰ Heal, 'Joint Attention and Understanding the Mind'.

⁶¹ Gallotti, 'Shared and Social Discourse'.

⁶² Sinha and Rodríguez, 'Language and the Signifying Object'. Consider the following quote: 'Intersubjectivity is the essentially a matter of *co-participation* in joint action structures which, by virtue of their normative regulation, are conventionalized as *social and communicative practices*.' (p. 361). This is very much in line with the arguments presented in favour of co-cognitivism. As we saw in the case of SIH, the difference lies in the mode of explanation. Sinha and Rodríguez are interested in the nature of social communication as an a posteriori theory, whilst we are concerned with the a priori social grounds of communication and thought.

⁶³ Co-cognition makes a claim about the supervenience of propositional attitude contents on (amongst other things) the broader social environment. Extended mind theories make claims to about the constitutive nature of the mind; the mind 'just ain't in the head'. Strictly speaking, these are not the same questions. As has already been established, co-cognitivism does not adjudicate the nature of mental structure. Still, the account of ordinary attribution of psychological concepts such as beliefs, thoughts, intentions, and desires as given by pluralist theory of mindreading, especially in its enactive forms is amenable to the notion that we think *together* in joint activities and projects which in turn shape our psychological contents. Gallagher and Fiebich illustrate this by considering two men moving a

We have found no *prima facie* conflict between co-cognitivism and recent developments in social cognition because co-cognitivism makes no empirical claims as to the implementation of co-cognition in human social institutions or physiology. What then is the value added by adopting co-cognitivism? We suggest two things. Firstly, it provides a framework for understanding the place of social cognition in the broader field of cognition generally, and in human life as a whole. It places recent findings in their proper context. Secondly, co-cognitivism articulates the pre-theoretical nature of human social cognition and in doing so places explanatory constraints on the theories here discussed. If a theory is to explain the nature of human social cognition, it must account for our co-operative activities and the social nature of our psychological contents. This constraint militates against certain individualist theories and frames those intuitions called upon by extended and other externalist theories of mind. Co-cognitivism clearly has something to say about the nature of mind and communication, something valuable and interesting.

5.2 *Language as expressive*

Whilst much of analytic philosophy has been caught up in an individualistic conception of the mind, there exists a parallel anti-individualist tradition, carried forward by such figures as Wittgenstein and Heidegger⁶⁴. The revival of anti-individualism in analytic philosophy initiated by Putnam and Burge was independent of such historical anti-individualism. Yet, the intuitions that drove Burge's argument were not altogether alien to it. Recently, there has been revived interest in historical anti-individualism.

In Section 1 we introduced the designative theory of meaning. This theory takes meaning to be determined in terms of representation in such a manner that it is independent from the context of communication⁶⁵. In contrast to this, there are expressive theories of meaning. These theories posit that meaning is not reducible to reference⁶⁶. To expressivists language is '[a] pattern of activity, by which we express/realize a certain way of being in the world, that of reflective awareness, but a pattern which can only be deployed against a background which we can never fully dominate; and yet a background that we are never fully dominated by, because we are constantly reshaping it'⁶⁷.

This activity of reflection is primarily realised in conversation, in the life of the community⁶⁸. In recognising others as subjects, we acknowledge that they are capable of entering into reflection. The background that we interact with and are shaped by is *our* language, something familiar from co-cognition. In fact, co-cognition is compatible with all that has been said so far. What we are primarily concerned with when thinking together is furthering our joint projects. The role of language in this is the realisation of our reflective capacities. We express our thinking to those others with which we are engaged so that we may thereby advance our joint activities. Consider the case

bookcase through a doorframe. The various acts of counterbalancing, twisting and grip-changing are preformed simply by attending the joint action of moving the bookcase, without verbal communication. The beliefs, intentions and desires of the two men are co-ordinated by the actions they perform and the things they attend. See Gallagher and Fiebich, 'Being Pluralist About Understanding Others'. This is broadly compatible with co-cognition. Extended mind as a claim about the constitution of the mind is, like those other theories we have considered, a viable explanation of our vehicle for co-operative thinking and acting.

⁶⁴ Hacking, 'How, Why, When, and Where Did Language Go Public?'

⁶⁵ Cf. assumptions 1.-2. on page 1 above.

⁶⁶ Taylor, 'Language and Human Nature'.

⁶⁷ Taylor, 232.

⁶⁸ Taylor, 'Language and Human Nature'.

of Athanasius and the doctor again. They are engaged in reflection about arthritis, and Athanasius makes manifest his fear that he has arthritis in his thigh. But on the expressivist view, what is of interest is not whether Athanasius uses ‘arthritis’ to apply to diseases outside the joints, but whether *our* reflection is about diseases outside the joints. This can be made clear by considering three parts of language activity as suggested by Taylor⁶⁹. We will expound on each and relate it to co-cognition.

1. Part of linguistic activity is to articulate and so advance our thoughts. In co-cognition, we are concerned with this kind of reflective activity precisely. It is by our formulating and expressing our thoughts that we make them explicit. Since our interest in thinking is with getting things right, we need to make our thoughts clear. Doing this can, and often does, involve others.
2. By engaging in linguistic activity, we are constructing a public space. Communication does not only serve to inform, but also to collectively focus on the subject matter. Here, we find a direct connection between co-cognitivism and expressivist theories of language. In thinking, we are able to advance our shared life because it engages us in the kind of formulation of thoughts described above, sharing the burden of thinking.
3. It is through language that ‘some of our most important concerns, the characteristically human concerns, can impinge on us all’⁷⁰. Our flourishing is only possible through language, for it is only in its social setting that we are able to deliberate on these matters. Heal argues that co-cognition is important to us because it contributes to life going well. Language enables us to see what it is that concerns *us*.

What we have found on this brief overview is a compatibility between co-cognition and historical anti-individualism examined. Much more remains to be said than has been articulated here. We have ignored the Hegelian turn in contemporary analytic philosophy and compressed a century of thought on language into a few pages. Nevertheless, we have found that co-cognitivism can provide Burge’s thought experiment with the necessary theoretical framework to make it withstand criticism and furthermore that it aligns well with expressivist theories of language. It is our suggestion that co-cognition, like expressive theories, has an explanatory advantage in certain circumstances. What is the meaning of a play, say *The Tempest*? On the designative view, it is hard to conceive of an answer, for it is not clear that it designates something. For the expressivist, however, that is expressed is that which determines meaning. We can frame this in co-cognitivist terms—we are concerned with getting our lives right. Endeavouring to do so, we reflect on those central human concerns together, and by means of collective formulation and deliberation. What *The Tempest* does is enable us to deliberate on the central themes of that play: the nature of justice and power. The meaning of the play is partially constituted by the role it plays in our joint human life. Heal suggests that co-cognitivism is compatible with what has been called the *Verstehen* tradition⁷¹, more or less in line with what has been said here about expressive theories of language. Perhaps this is so, if it were the three forms of anti-individualism described in the introduction may be more intricately connected than we think. This is a promising area for further inquiry.

⁶⁹ Taylor, ‘Theories of Meaning’.

⁷⁰ Taylor, 260.

⁷¹ Heal, ‘Understanding Other Minds from the Inside’, 29.

6 CONCLUSION

We have found that there are two underlying intuitions behind Burge's thought experiment. Firstly, that psychological contents are individuated in line with ordinary content attributions, and secondly that a person incompletely mastering a concept may still be ordinarily attributed contents in line with the community concept if he is minimally competent and rational, and defers to the community. On the basis of these intuitions, we find that we ordinarily attribute different contents to persons when there are differences in communal usage. Furthermore, such differences have a direct bearing on the psychological contents of the persons, so that the social environment enters into the individuation of those contents. This is what Burge established in his Arthritis experiment.

Nevertheless, both of these underlying intuitions have been questioned. It has been argued that co-cognition can help us defend these intuitions. Co-cognitivism suggests that our central interest in thinking is furthering our interests. This involves thinking together because we are social animals. Part of thinking together is coming to share in joint deliberation on a subject matter. Thus, the content of our thoughts is shaped by our joint thinking. Furthermore, when ordinarily attributing contents we are engaging in the same kind of joint reflection thinking about the subject matter itself involves. Therefore, psychological contents are parallel with ordinary attributions of contents, and the first intuition in the thought experiment is well-founded. The joint projects in which we come to think together also enable us to ordinarily attribute contents using communal concepts because part of engaging in co-cognition is to present oneself as a responsible reasoner. Therefore, the second intuition is reasonable.

Some have argued that the proper conditions for the individuation of psychological contents are found in explanation, prediction, and control (EPC). If this is so, the thought experiment is threatened. Nevertheless, co-cognition enables us to see that there is in fact a good parallel between ordinary content attribution and psychological contents. By considering the role of co-cognition in thinking, we found that the objections presented could be defeated. Furthermore, it has been argued that we are not justified in ordinarily attributing contents using communal concepts in cases of misunderstanding, because the misunderstanding is theoretical, the ordinary attribution is incomplete, or else the deferral is not necessarily to the actual community. If this is the case, we are not entitled to say that there is a difference in ordinary content attributions based on communal conventions. These objections fail to consider our dependence on the community for enabling the advancement of our shared life. Such a dependence enables others to assume that our words are to be interpreted according to our community standards.

In addition, we have found that co-cognitivism is *prima facie* compatible with a broader historical anti-individualism that enables us to make sense of non-designative meaning—something standard theories cannot appreciate—and with theories in social cognition, giving a pre-theoretical framework to understand empirical theories. These are promising areas for further inquiry. In summary, then, co-cognition is a favourable position for anti-individualists as it can strengthen the intuitions behind the thought experiment and defend against objections to several parts of the thought experiment. Whilst it is possible to hold the discussed intuitions independently of co-cognitivism, co-cognitivism recommends anti-individualism and supports externalist intuitions.⁷²

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