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1. Introduction

- 1 Hilary Putnam and Robert B. Brandom are renowned figures of contemporary American philosophy of language with neopragmatic grounding and either developed original semantics. Their theories of meaning and reference, i.e., *externalist semantics* worked out by Putnam and *semantic inferentialism* as advanced by Brandom, seem to be apparently different from each other, especially when the concept of reference is at stake. In the following considerations we pose the question whether that is really the case and whether they might have something in common instead. As a result, we come to the conclusion that despite their different theoretical backgrounds and contrasting starting assumptions, their views on observational reports and meaning of terms are for the most part convergent. We also analyse the advantages and disadvantages of their theories and assess them in favour of Brandom's.
- 2 Accordingly, the goal of this article – that is, analysing and comparing Putnam's and Brandom's theories – will be carried out following this structure: in Section 2, the Putnamian theory of reference of natural-kind terms is worked out, in Section 3, the Brandomian view on reference and inference is set out, while in Section 4 the juxtaposition of Putnam's theory of reference of natural-kind terms and Brandom's semantic inferentialism is scrutinised.

2. Putnam on Reference of Natural-Kind Terms

- 3 The main focus of Putnam's philosophical inquiries was one of building plausible and convincing theories of meaning and reference. The texts devoted to these problems, such as "The Analytic and the Synthetic" (1962), "Explanation and Reference" (1973) or "The Meaning of 'Meaning'" (1975a), nowadays belong to the cannon of analytic philosophy of language.

- 4 The Putnamian externalist semantics (2013) is based on, and conjoined with, his realism, on the one hand, and his pragmatism, on the other one (Conant & Żegleń 2002; see also Kublikowski 2018). According to this view, our cognition of reality requires our usage of a language – new aspects of the world are designated by means of new expressions which we introduce into a language.
- 5 Putnam emphasises that the meaning of a name, strictly speaking, of a natural-kind term (e.g. “water,” “lemon” or “tiger”), can be fixed mainly by using such methods as an ostensive definition – this liquid is water etc. where liquid is a marker – and a standardised description (stereotype) of features of the kind that are “normal” or typical (Putnam 1975b: 229-30).
- 6 In order to illustrate the issue of meaning of natural-kind terms, it will be useful to analyse the following case: let us imagine that a botanist notices a plant and classifies it as a newly discovered species, let us say, a species of a walnut, obviously at the time when it is unknown. He or she points this plant out and designates (baptises) it by a Latin name *Juglans regia*, in other words, the Persian or English walnut. Such an act of indication of an object and use of a name is called an ostensive definition. It plays a profound role of introducing new expressions into a natural language. This definition “consists in pointing with a suitable gesture at a single designatum of the term which is being defined and in making at the same time a statement of the type ‘This is N,’ where ‘N’ stands for the term being defined” (Kotarbińska 1977: 234; see also LaPorte 2004: 12-3).
- 7 An ostensive definition introduces a name for designating objects by indicating specially chosen and representative (typical, normal) examples of the defined objects (Putnam 1975b: 229-51). It is crucial to choose a typical – and not an untypical, corrupted – example of the pointed object since otherwise such a procedure can mislead the language users.
- 8 An interesting problem is how a term can get a determinate reference (or any gesture, such as pointing). Of course, the “reference” of gestures is also problematic (Putnam 1983: 17). A name refers to an object which is pointed out by someone’s finger. The object is the first one which crosses the straight line fixed by the finger (McGinn 1981: 163). However, the question arises what in fact is pointed out: The surface of an object? Its colour? Shape? Interior? The set of objects etc.? It is so-called *qua problem*.
- 9 The intention of the botanist is to use the linguistic “label” not only as a name of the observed plant. The botanist extends its intention also to the rest of the same plants. So he or she conceives the introduced name as a natural-kind term, in other words, as a name of a species – a set of objects which exist in nature. Putnam addresses this issue using the example of “water”:
- [...] it has long been our *intention* that a liquid should *count* as “water” only if it has the same composition as the paradigm examples of water (or as the majority of them). I claim that this was our intention even before we *knew* the ultimate composition of water. If I am right then, *given those referential intentions*, it was always impossible for a liquid other than H₂O to be water, even if it took empirical investigation to find it out. But the “essence” of water in *this sense* is the product of our use of the word, the kind of referential intentions we have. (Putnam 1983: 220-1; see also Ellis 2001)
- 10 Having published the results of his work, the botanist informs the public about the introduced name and inserts a picture of the new plant. He also delivers a description

of the discovered object. Therefore, what determines the meaning of a natural-kind term? It seems that one can use, for example, the term “lemon,” which designates the natural kind lemon, if:

(1) He has implicit knowledge of such facts as the fact that “lemon” is a concrete noun, that it is the “name of a fruit,” etc. – information given by classifying the word under certain natural syntactic and semantic “markers.” [...] (2) He associates the word with a certain “stereotype” – yellow color, tart taste, thick peel, etc. (3) He uses the word to *refer* to a certain natural kind – say, a natural kind of fruit whose most essential feature, from a biologist’s point of view, might be a certain kind of DNA. (Putnam 1975b: 204)

- 11 The meaning of a natural-kind term is characterised by syntactic markers (a concrete noun, etc.), semantic markers (a natural kind, etc.), a stereotype (a standardised description – an intension) and a reference (an extension).
- 12 The causal chain started in the introductory event and continued till the present use of a term constitutes a condition of the fixing of reference of the term which is introduced into a language (Putnam 1975b: 204). Yet, the description is not a full description but only a partial one because empirical knowledge is constantly subject to revision (control) and to change (correction and growth): “As long as one is in a position to give a definite description (or even a misdescription), one is in a position to introduce the term; and the chain from there on is something about which much more definite statements can be made” (*ibid.*).
- 13 The description is successively developed: “once the referent is fixed, one can use the word to formulate any number of theories about that referent (and even to formulate theoretical definitions of that referent which may be correct or incorrect scientific characterisations of that referent)” (*ibid.*: 202). This is why the definition of walnut is a synthetic sentence and not an analytic one in which a meaning equivalence occurs between an introduced *definiendum* and a *definiens*. In the case of natural-kind terms, the *definiendum* and the *definiens* are not synonymous (see Kublikowski 2016). In other words, the intension of an applied natural-kind term does not fix its extension (as the Twin-Earth argument proves).
- 14 We do not know the laws of nature in an exact way. This is why we have to leave the extension of the classes somewhat open, rather than fixing it exactly by making the terms synonymous with the sets of necessary and sufficient conditions (Putnam 1983: 71, see also 199-200). Putnam emphasises that “scientists use terms as if the associated criteria were not *necessary and sufficient conditions*, but rather *approximately correct characterizations* of some world of theory-independent entities, and that they talk as if later theories in a mature science were, in general, *better descriptions* of the *same* entities that earlier theories referred to” (1975b: 237).
- 15 A description of a natural-kind term is not fixed once and for all, it is not something that absolutely captures the meaning of the term (Putnam 1988: 9). No statement should be held immune from revision (Putnam 1975b: 54). A natural-kind term still refers to the same natural kind, nevertheless its meaning changes because of some future new scientific discoveries (*ibid.*: 197; see Putnam 1981: 29 et passim).
- 16 According to epistemological fallibilism (Putnam 1983: 136, 205-28), scientific practice is an on-going revision and change of beliefs or theories caused by a permanent actualisation of empirical knowledge, on the one hand, and by a cultural, social, historical context, on the other one.

- 17 Putnam's externalist semantics and fallibilistic epistemology are combined with his realism: "what counts as the structure of something is relative to the ways in which we interact with it. Intentionality and the structure of the world and the structure of language are all intimately related" (Putnam 1994: 78-9). Accepted conceptual systems do not reflect in an absolutely adequate way a real structure of the world which is independent from human cognitive capacities (e.g. Putnam 1983: 205-28). Putnam emphasises the impact of the environment (the reality), on the one hand, and the impact of a linguistic-cognitive community – with its holistic approach – on the other hand: "linguistic competence is a matter of knowledge plus causal connection to introducing events (and ultimately to members of the natural kind itself). [...] [T]he use of a natural kind word involves in many cases membership in a 'collective' which has contact with the natural kind, which knows of tests for membership in the natural kind, etc. only as a collective" (Putnam 1975b: 205).
- 18 The botanist rightly expects that once his or her discovery and the information about it spreads out, a linguistic obligation of a certain usage of the chosen linguistic "label" as a name of the new species has also been introduced. Other people – if they refer to the English walnut, for example, and if they have at least elementary biological education – make a commitment to use an introduced name in a fixed way. Putnam – using the example of a tiger – expresses this normative aspect in the following way: "it is *obligatory* to acquire the information that stereotypical tigers are striped if one acquires 'tiger'" (*ibid.*: 251). Everybody who uses a certain term is obliged to use it in accordance with the first intention of somebody who introduced such a term:
- Kripke and I argued that the intention to preserve reference through a historical chain of uses and the intention to cooperate socially in the fixing of reference make it possible to use terms successfully to refer although no one definite description is associated with any term by all speakers who use that term. These theories assume that individuals can be singled out for the purpose of a "naming ceremony" and that inferences to the existence of definite theoretical entities (to which names can then be attached) can be successfully made. (Putnam 1983: 17)
- 19 When specialists and non-specialists use a name, then they form a causal chain of its usage (a history of a usage). Specialists deliver some competent knowledge about newly discovered species, and the rest of a linguistic society has an access to this professional knowledge. Moreover, if non-specialists have doubts about it, they may consult the experts. It is a so-called socio-linguistic hypothesis of "division of linguistic labor" (Putnam 1975b: 227-9).

3. Brandom on Reference and Inference

- 20 Robert B. Brandom has systematically set out his idea of inferentialism primarily in *Making It Explicit* (1994), *Articulating Reasons* (2000) and *Between Saying and Doing* (2008), while in a historical perspective he has presented it mainly in *Tales of the Mighty Dead* (2002), *Reason in Philosophy* (2009) and *A Spirit of Trust* (2019). According to Brandom, in the most general terms, meaning is constituted within a linguistic, discursive practice, which is itself *normative* in its character. When addressing each other by issuing or receiving claims, we attribute some deontic status and take deontic attitudes, i.e., by saying something the speaker commits himself or herself to the content issued, while the hearer ascribes him or her the *commitment* to that claim. By saying something we take *responsibility* for what has been said in terms of showing a relevant *entitlement* to it

or, in case of some *incompatibilities* between my commitments (or in case of my not possessing sufficient entitlement), in terms of withdrawing from some earlier undertaken commitments in order to avoid incompatibilities – so that my set of commitments (beliefs) can be consistent (Brandom 1994: 7-46). More precisely, the responsibility consists in rationally integrating a commitment into a set of commitments (Brandom 2009: 27-51). In such a practice, sayable commitments and entitlements count as *assertions*: statements that certain things are ones which can be justified as plausible and trustworthy (true in an ordinary, not a technical semantic sense). The assertions, in turn, since they are exemplarily expressed as declarative sentences, play the roles of either *reasons* or *conclusions* in *inferences* (Brandom 1994: 167-80). Thus the crux of discursive practice is inference, hence the name *inferentialism* (Brandom 2000: 17).

- 21 The inferential, linguistic activity of giving, exchanging, changing, expecting or relying on claims as assertions is called by Brandom – following Wilfrid Sellars – “the game of giving and asking for reasons” (Brandom 1994: xiv, 20), which can be regarded as the essence of language (see Zarębski 2019), since it is the practice that is constitutive for meaning. The variety of many other language games and speech acts are in this sense dependent on, and derivative from, this fundamental practice, which is theoretically – though probably not empirically or historically – prior to others. The partakers of “the game of giving and asking for reasons” are, at the same time, *scorekeepers*, who basically remember – keep – the commitments and entitlements – scores – of both themselves and of other players (Brandom 1994: 180-98). Through this game, they foster, develop and change, when faced with strong reasons, both the conceptual content of particular concepts and, as a result, the overall network of commitments and beliefs counted as their knowledge.
- 22 In this context, the importance of *the practice* of inferential moves, understood as *pragmatics*, comes to the fore. Since conceptual content is produced along with, or by, such pragmatic, inferential movements, the *priority of pragmatics over semantics* is one of Brandom’s principal convictions (Brandom 1994: xiii-xv, 85-6). Yet, accepting that view is a portentous point which decisively affects the mere understanding of semantics (cf. Szubka 2012).
- 23 First of all, if priority is given to pragmatics, and particularly to inferences and assertions, then the elementary bearer of meaning is not a term or name, but rather whole declarative sentences, as they are “fit to serve both as a premise and as a conclusion in inferences” (Brandom 2000: 17). Therefore, content of a *proposition* is instituted in the game of giving and asking for reasons. And that content is both formed and revealed in the possible inferences in which it is employed (Brandom 1994: 79-85), which stance can be called *propositionalism* (Brandom 2000: 13).
- 24 Secondly, for a whole content of a sentence to be captured when saying a proposition, a conceptual *holism* has to be accepted. As Brandom writes: “On an inferentialist account of conceptual content, one cannot have *any* concepts unless one has *many* concepts. For the content of each concept is articulated by its inferential relations to *other* concepts. Concepts, then, must come in packages (though it does not yet follow that they must come in just one great big one)” (Brandom 2000: 15-6). This holistic assumption betokens that the meaning, or content, of a name cannot be, and have been, instituted separately, in isolation from other concepts. If this is correct, for example, the *quasi-Augustinian* account of meaning-formation from the opening section of Wittgenstein’s

Philosophical Investigations (2009) is radically irrelevant (as a matter of fact both for Brandom and Wittgenstein). Moreover, the mere idea of *representation* and semantic *atomism* seems to be out of place when thinking about the establishing of conceptual content.

- 25 Brandom accepts such a consequence. For him “the utterance of an essentially subsentential expression, such as a singular term, [...] does not by itself make a move in the language game, does not alter the score of commitments and attitudes that it is appropriate for an audience to attribute to the speaker” (Brandom 2000: 126). Thus, although not able to play a direct inferential role as premises or conclusions in inferences, they – the subsentential expressions – yet can play an indirect inferential role (*ibid.*: 123-55). This means that one can “notice which substitutions of subsentential expressions do, and which do not, preserve the correctness of inferences in which the sentences they occur in play the role of premise or conclusion” (*ibid.*: 40).
- 26 Then, the core idea that underlies the project of inferentialism is the claim about the primacy of inference over reference, which seems to constitute an assumption which the other elements of this conception are hinged on. Essential though this idea may be, it is far from being intuitively agreeable, not only on an ordinary, commonsensical level, but also on a theoretical one. As such it has provoked various interpretations, some extremely critical (e.g., Fodor & Lepore 2010), some approvingly moderate (e.g., Kremer 2010; Kublikowski 2019: 89 et passim), and more favourable (e.g., Lance 1998; Stekeler-Weithofer 2005; Kukla & Lance 2009). Moreover, some of Brandom’s own statements, in his texts, are seemingly contradictory. On the one hand, he insists on “[t]he idea of privileging *inference* over *reference* in the order of semantic explanation” (Brandom 2000: 1), and claims that “the rationalistic semantic theory introduced here is unusual in not taking *representation* as its fundamental concept” (*ibid.*: 28) – thus contrasting inferentialism and representationalism and privileging the former. On the other hand, he also underscores that *non-inferential* elements “enter” language through perception as well as they “exit” language through action. Likewise, in the paper “Inferentialism and Some of Its Challenges” he explicitly says that: “There is no inference without reference” (Brandom 2010: 166). The exploring and explicating of this apparent, in our view, inconsistency will both shed some light on Brandom’s view and show a point of convergence between him and Putnam.
- 27 Then, in Brandom’s view, given that we as language users naturally employ typically semantic terms – such as “refer to” – on the ordinary level, we as philosophers of language, on the theoretical level, need a theory explicating how it is possible for a term to refer to a world’s item. Here, Brandom moves away from any externalism in favour of a Heideggerian view that what is prior, primary in the order of explanation is the natural, primordial unity of language and the world (Brandom 2002: 312-23; 1994: 330-3); we learn both a language and the world simultaneously and through our practice. From such a perspective, one of the problems that appears is not how to make words “hook on” to the world, but rather in what way to explain the role of semantic vocabulary, like “refer to.”
- 28 For Brandom, the problem of perception – including perception of particular things – boils down to the issue of the authority of non-inferential, or observational, reports. Drawing on Wilfrid Sellars’ considerations from *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* (1997), and in accordance with his propositionalism, he first implies that an observational report is a statement of a state of affairs that expresses some knowledge,

or belief (Sellars 1997: §6), rather than one's perceiving a particular thing and saying its name, which is embedded in the very meaning of "Konstatierungen" (*ibid.*: §33) or reports (Brandom 1994: 215-7; 2002: 349).

- 29 According to Brandom reading Sellars (see also Brandom 2015), the latter treats perceptual judgments as "the product of two distinguishable sorts of abilities: the capacity reliably to discriminate behaviorally between different sorts of stimuli, and the capacity to take up a position in the game of giving and asking for reasons" (Brandom 2002: 249), which both constitute "Two-ply account of observation" (*ibid.*: 248).
- 30 The first and basic ply is encapsulated by Brandom in the technical term RDRD: *Reliable Differential Responsive Dispositions* (*ibid.*: 250), which is the ability to credibly answer in a specific way to particular environmental circumstances and stimuli from the world. Such a reliabilism is in fact declared by Sellars in § 35 of *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*: "An overt or covert token of 'This is green' in the presence of a green item is a *Konstatierung* and expresses observational knowledge if and only if it is a manifestation of a tendency to produce overt or covert tokens of 'This is green' – given a certain set – if and only if a green object is being looked at in standard conditions" (Sellars 1997: 73-4). What Brandom adjoins to this claim is the remark that RDRD is neither an exclusive attribute of humans nor a typical feature of rational, even living beings; instead, it may be as well found, and manifested by, artifacts. The concept of an RDRD, which knowers *sensu stricto* share with sentient creatures (e.g., parrots) and objects (devices, apparatus, gauges or appliances) is thought to be a precondition of empirical knowledge (Brandom 2002: 250).
- 31 Despite RDRD being a necessary condition of empirical knowledge, however, such a disposition is not a sufficient one, since a sole RDRD does not constitute the conceptual. A parrot is able to react to certain visual stimuli, e.g., recognise red or green colour, and even to articulate it with sounds: "This is red" or "This is green." A thermostat can signal a fall of temperature in a room by a special sign on a screen and then turn on the furnace. Both the parrot and the thermostat display RDRD, but they cannot be ascribed knowledge in a stricter sense nor a command of the concept that they seem to deal with. Then, following Brandom, one can ask a question:
- What is the knower able to *do* that the parrot and the thermostat cannot? After all, they may respond differentially to *just* the same range of stimuli. The knower is able to *use* the differentially elicited response in *inference*. The knower has the practical know-how to situate that response in a network of inferential relations – to tell what follows from something being red or cold, what would be evidence for it, what would be incompatible with it, and so on. For the knower, taking something to be red or cold is making a move in the game of giving and asking for reasons – a move that can justify other moves, be justified by still other moves, and that closes off or precludes still further moves. The parrot and the thermostat lack the concepts in spite of their mastery of the corresponding noninferential differential responsive dispositions, precisely because they lack the practical mastery of the inferential articulation in which grasp of conceptual content consists. (Brandom 2000: 162)
- 32 Accordingly, the possibility of a sentence being placed within a network of inferences, a structure of reasons and conclusions, commitments and entitlements is the next precondition of the conceptual and thus constitutes the second ply in the account of observation: "Noninferential beliefs do not form an autonomous discursive stratum: there could be no language game consisting entirely of noninferential reports [...]. For

any sentence to have noninferential uses, some sentences must have inferential ones. For the conceptual content expressed by a sentence (what is believed) essentially involves its potential as a premise and as a conclusion of inferences” (Brandom 1997: 153-4).

- 33 Therefore, Brandom’s view on observational reports comprises of both RDRD – in the first ply – and the game of giving and asking for reasons – in the second ply. What follows from that is the claim that a genuine language user is not only the one that is trained and accustomed to differentially and reliably react to distinct circumstances, but he or she is also trained to use concepts and capable of applying them. And being able to apply concepts in claims is for language users to be able to draw the consequences that follow from them as well as to know which claims are incompatible with them and which ones are their support.
- 34 It is worth emphasising that empirical reports assuredly belong to a wider social activity of concept-mongering and exchanging reasons. Reports, also observational and non-inferential, are made principally before someone else being able to use them in their further discourse and practice.
- 35 In this mould, a scientist that makes a discovery and introduces a concept first into a scientific community, then to a wider discourse, offers not an isolated item of knowledge, but a concept that is tied with many other concepts and takes a place in an inferential network accepted and being in use within a particular field. In the same way, a botanist who found and described a new organism, locates it – when describing his or her discovery – within a taxonomical, hence inferential, background of botanical knowledge. In some cases, like in contemporary physics, the inferences play even more dominant role, for the entities that are said to be discovered are hardly observable – like photons, μ -mesons or some subatomic phenomena, the existence of which can be inferred from bubble chamber records, which is a rather specialistic skill (see Apel *et al.* 2008). Nonetheless, the circumstances of a reliable concept application are, for Brandom, as crucial as its inferential consequences (Brandom 2000: 97-122).
- 36 Both RDRD – leading to observational reports – and our capability of making use of a concepts’ inferential roles in the game of giving and asking for reasons make up a stance that Brandom keeps calling “*strong inferentialism*” (*ibid.*: 28). This is the stance in which empirical context of application, which comprises circumstances of noninferential reporting, as well as consequences of application, which concerns actions, are taken as co-determinators of meaning (*ibid.*: 28; for a wider account of inferentialism and contextualism, see Kaluziński 2020).

4. Putnam and Brandom at Odds?

- 37 The analysed philosophers acknowledged that ostensive definitions play an important role in acquiring empirical knowledge. However Putnam (1983: 17) – as it was quoted earlier – and Brandom were also aware of some problems concerning such definitions. The act of indicating – in a standard way – is understood as pointing out with an index finger which fixes a line crossing with an indicated object (for example, a walnut, etc.).
- 38 However, an act of indicating – as Brandom claims – misleadingly seems to be a plainly an uncomplicated physical gesture. In such an act, an indication (deixis) presupposes an anaphora: demonstratives (paradigmatically “this,” “that,” “these,” “those,” etc.)

initiate relations in a normative, anaphoric chain of subsequent applications of the term that has been introduced. Expressions cannot play a demonstrative role unless they remain in some anaphoric relations. A deictic, unique using of an expression is closely connected with its anaphoric and repeatable using. It was traditionally maintained that deictic, often causal, mechanisms were important because they established a direct reference of an expression, in which case a reference was understood as a word-world relation. Contrary to this belief, according to the anaphoric theory, an expression indicates its referent, but such an indication is caused by the fact that an expression begins an anaphoric chain of relations which establish the meaning of this expression (Brandom 1994: 458 et passim).

- 39 Brandom does not actually deny the importance of deictic relations. The starting point – when we get to know various causal relations in the real world – is a perceptual, empirical, noninferential description. Such a description – expressed in a judgement – is asserted on the edge of the whole chain of causal relations which connect events in the world (Brandom 2000: 206, note 7). Brandom, however, emphasises that if somebody – for example, the afore-considered botanist – in certain circumstances, introduces a new expression, which refers to an object, and if he or she, at the same time, delivers a description of this object – then such a botanist in fact begins an anaphoric and inferential network (e.g., based on a plant taxonomy). The new expression starts to play its role when it is placed in a social, linguistic, cognitive, normative, holistic, discursive, inferential context:

Anaphoric chains running through bits of discourse are not naturalistic features of them like which organism produces the tokening, or when or where it is produced. They are *normative* features attributed to the discourse by deontic scorekeepers, matters of conditional commitment or commitment inheritance – of the obligation that the significance assigned to, or score kept on, one part of the discourse answer in systematic ways to the significance assigned to, or score kept on, another. (Brandom 1994: 460)

- 40 Brandom – having taken from Dummett (1973: 453) the categories of “circumstances” and the “consequences” of using expressions – puts stress on the importance of “inferential relations between noninferential circumstances of appropriate application and noninferential appropriate consequences of application” (Brandom 2010: 164). For example, somebody in fact sees a walnut and claims: “This is a walnut” (circumstances). With an elementary biological knowledge concerning a walnut’s features and cuisine, he or she infers: if it is a walnut, then it is suitable for preparing an ingredient of a sauce, etc. (consequences).
- 41 A reference (representation) of an expression is related to inference. Moreover, a stronger claim may be advanced that reference (representation) depends on inference. In other words, a network consisting of some following inferences (both actual and possible) determines a reference of the expression.
- 42 According to Brandom’s rationalistic, normative, discursive, inferential semantics, “[a] methodological commitment to beginning an account of concept use (and so, eventually, of conceptual content) with reasoning rather than representing does not require denying that there is an important representational dimension to concept use” (Brandom 2000: 28). Brandom does not claim that reference or representation are unimportant. However, they are not any starting point, nor they play a crucial role in his theory, which aims to explain what the meaning of an expression is or how an expression acquires its meaning. The inferentialist order of explanation offers:

an account of referential relations to objects in terms ultimately of inferential relations among claims. Of course, noninferential language entry moves in perception and language exit moves in action play a crucial role in the story too. But the specifically inferential articulation of the acknowledgments of propositional commitments that result from observation and result in intentional performances are to the fore in understanding the cognitive and practical normative significance of the reliable differential responsive capacities exercised in those processes. (*Ibid.*)

- 43 It might be implied that Putnam's realistic, externalist and referential semantics has been replaced, in Brandom, with reliabilism, inferentialism and theory of anaphora. However, save for the mere concept of reference, which is present in Putnam, the consequences of either of the theories seem to significantly overlap. Firstly, for both philosophers, the bare act of indicating does not play any semantically constitutive role unless it has some conceptual load and it is used in a sentence, at least such as "This is a walnut," etc. Secondly, both Putnam and Brandom, in point of fact, accept semantic holism, especially when someone, particularly a scientist, introduces a new term into his or her language. In doing this, the scientist necessarily draws on an extant systematic knowledge and concepts that allow him or her to provide a complex description of a newly discovered phenomenon. He or she approaches it with an account that is thoroughly inspected and related to other distinctive phenomena. For Putnam, it is so construed holism that enables ostensive definitions and descriptions. For Brandom, it is also holism so construed that both presupposes and implies inferentialism that enables placing concepts in different contexts, operating them in a variety of propositions, and drawing a wide range of inferences. Likewise, for Brandom descriptions go along with inferences, since the former can be used in the latter.
- 44 Thirdly, the common feature of Putnam and Brandom is the social aspect of referring and concept mongering. For Putnam, concepts are used in a wider social context, both by virtue of the fact that they are put to use in language, which itself is a social device and phenomenon, and by virtue of the common practice of either scientists of a certain field or a wider "laymen's" linguistic community – in accordance with "the division of linguistic labor." Routinely, a scientist, prior to introducing a term to a language, puts it forward before his or her colleagues and raises it for discussion and consultation. The effect resulting in increasing our knowledge about the world by means of a new concept as well as in enriching our language concerning perceptual knowledge stems, then, from common discursive practice held mainly within a scientific community. By the same token, Brandom's observational, noninferential reports are made by someone (in some special cases by an animal or an artifact, e.g., a parrot or a thermostat) to someone else. The precondition for them to have some meaning – or to acquire conceptual content – is for them to be possibly used in inferences, which can be done by a competent language user. The latter may be as well divided – though Brandom does not attach much weight to this division – into scientists and ordinary users. Nevertheless, either group takes part in an exchange of reasons. The determination and the introduction of a new technical term is launched by scientists normally after a thorough discussion and criticism, held on conferences, journals etc. This process proceeds in the way mostly analogical to Putnam's account of scientists' introducing a new term into language.

5. Conclusion

- 45 Putnam and Brandom – outstanding philosophers of language and neopragmatists – formulated original theories of meaning. Having investigated the categories of sense (intension, description), reference (extension), or usage of expressions, Putnam – in his externalist semantics – appreciated demonstratives, ostensive definitions, direct references and chains fixed by them; whereas Brandom – in his semantic inferentialism – though not denying that demonstratives and ostensive definitions play their roles in inferential semantics, emphasised anaphoric references and chains.
- 46 Putnam was more interested in the meaning of natural-kind terms, while Brandom emphasised the meaning of sentences, due to the fact that they are premises and conclusions in inferences.
- 47 Both philosophers valued assertions, justifications of claims, inferences, and linguistic obligations. However, Brandom paid more attention to the normative domain, which is explicated in a social, linguistic, and cognitive practice. The novelty of the Brandomian theory is that he connected meaning with a discursive inferential practice, which is the main category in his semantics.
- 48 The analysis of Putnam’s and Brandom’s conceptions of meaning and reference – with a focus on the concepts of deixis and ostensive definition in Putnam and on the concepts of observational, noninferential reports and of anaphoric reference and their roles within a broader inferential practice in Brandom – shows that despite the differences in philosophical background and terminology, Putnam’s and Brandom’s considerations largely overlap, especially in the context of introducing a novel term into a language by a scientist. The two philosophers agree, first, that the act of indicating does not play any semantically constitutive role unless it has some conceptual load; second, in their accepting semantic holism; third, in their admitting the social aspect of meaning-formation, along with their approving that the constituting of meaning of perceptual, observational terms proceeds in close contact of the language with reality. Besides, both Putnam and Brandom acknowledged revisionability and fallibility as symptoms of limitations of a human, social, linguistic, cognitive and holistic practice, which depends in part on our conceptual apparatus and in part on reality (an external environment).

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ABSTRACTS

The article raises the issue of the relationship between Hilary Putnam's *externalist semantics*, with a focus on the concepts of deixis and deictic (ostensive) definition, and Robert B. Brandom's *semantic inferentialism*, with a focus on the concepts of observational, noninferential reports and of anaphoric reference and their roles in a broader inferential practice. The analysis of the two respective conceptions shows that despite the differences in philosophical background and terminology, Putnam's and Brandom's considerations largely overlap as to their views on reference and ostensive definition, especially in the context of introducing a novel term into a language by a scientist. Either philosopher agrees, first, that the bare act of indicating does not

play any semantically constitutive role unless it has some conceptual load and it is used in a sentence, at least such as “This is X”; second, in their accepting semantic holism; third, in their admitting the social aspect of meaning-formation, along with their approving that the constituting of meaning of perceptual, observational terms proceeds in close contact of the language with reality.

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