December 1, 1996

The Deflation of Belief Contents

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THE DEFLATION OF BELIEF CONTENTS*

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> I spoke of dodges whereby philosophers
> have thought to enjoy the systematic bene-
> fits of abstract objects without suffering the
> objects. There is one more such dodge in
> what I have been inveighing against in these
> last pages: the suggestion that the accep-
> tance of such objects is a linguistic conven-
> tion distinct somehow from serious views
> about reality.
>
> W.V.O. Quine, *Word and Object*, p. 275.

Deflationary theories are *de rigueur* these days —most no-
tably, deflationary theories of truth.[1] Recently, moves have

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[1] See for example Ramsey 1927, Tarski 1944 and Horwich 1990.
The sense of deflation I will shortly discuss may not be (in fact proba-
bly isn't) precisely the one applicable to theories of truth. To mark this

been made to "deflate" belief as well: to deflate *belief contents* (i.e. concepts and the like) on the one hand, and the *state of believing* (i.e. the neurological, or computational, or ___ state which *has* content) on the other. In what follows, I present and criticize a theory owing to Alex Barber (forthcoming), which deflates concepts, i.e. *objects of belief*. My critique will not, sad to say, be followed by a positive theory of belief-contents. Nor will I directly oppose belief deflation, broadly construed. Instead, I will simply show that this particular attempt fails.

I. *The General Idea*

Consider a proposal developed by Stephen Schiffer (1994, 1996, 1997). It goes like this: belief-contents are basically linguistic posits; they enter into our language via grammatical "something-from-nothing" transformations. Such transformations take a sentence which doesn't explicitly refer to the posit, and furnish a sentence that does. To give a few examples: 'Anita lives in Ottawa' becomes 'The proposition that Anita lives in Ottawa is true'; or again, 'Anita believes that Chrétien smokes' yields the more verbose 'Anita believes the proposition that Chrétien smokes'. Furthermore, runs the proposal, both propositions *and their constituents* (i.e. concepts) are introduced in this way, essentially by pleonastic talk. Finally, "[t]here is nothing more to the *nature* of linguistic posits than is determined by the hypostatizing linguistic practices by which linguistic posits are introduced" (Schiffer 1997, p. 12. See also his 1996 and 1994, pp. 304–305). Call this the deflationary approach to belief-contents.

difference, I will typically speak of deflationary *strategies* or *approaches*. I will allow myself also to talk of deflated *things* —e.g. deflated concepts and deflated states— and not just deflationary *accounts*.

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One central advantage of this kind of deflationism is that it affords a middle ground between eliminating belief contents, and granting them equal ontological standing with chairs, molecules, and so on. Because propositions (and concepts) are so easily introduced into our ontology; and because, once introduced, their individuation conditions are far from transparent, one doesn't want to take them wholly seriously; what's more, being abstract entities, it's quite unclear how propositions can be causally relevant —which suggests that they are, to a large extent, explanatorily otiose. And yet, expressions like 'The proposition that John defended' appear to refer, nor is such reference always eliminable by paraphrase; furthermore, certain inferences seem to demand the existence of propositions: e.g. (1) and (2) surely entail (3), and they appear to do so because 'that Montevideo is a capital city' is a singular term, referring to a proposition. Finally, (3) more or less explicitly quantifies over propositions.

1. John believes that Montevideo is a capital city

2. Susan believes that Montevideo is a capital city

3. There is something which John and Susan both believe

So, there are reasons for wanting belief contents; but there are also reasons for excluding them from our ontology. Happily, the deflationary approach to belief contents gets to have it both ways. Propositions, and belief-contents generally, exist all right. But, says the deflationist, they are less ontologically robust than chairs and such —in the sense that their nature is wholly determined by a certain linguistic practice: transforming sentences that do *not* have singular terms (and quantificational expressions) referring to them, into sentences that do.

II. *Barber's Specific Proposal*

The central idea behind the deflation of belief-contents is simple enough. However explaining this idea, in the abstract, is difficult. To mention but a few complications: how can there be an "intermediate" mode of existence —the realm of good health, lengths and propositions— between what there really is, and what there really isn't? Or again, what exactly does it mean for concepts and propositions to be "mere linguistic posits"? Rather than exploring the proposal in the abstract, thus having to address such questions directly, I propose to look at a specific implementation of the deflationary strategy. In particular, I will present and discuss Alex Barber's views, from "The Pleonasticity of Talk about Concepts" (forthcoming in *Philosophical Studies*). I will then note several problems with Barber's proposal. Whether an alternative deflationary story can be told, which avoids these criticisms, I leave as an open question.

Barber begins by asking, and answering, three questions:

4. *Barber's Questions*

a. What is it for someone to *possess* a particular concept?

b. What is it for a belief or desire they may have to *involve* that concept?

c. What *are* concepts?

Here are his answers:

5. *Concept Possession*: A possesses the concept c iff$_{\text{Def}}$ there is at least one proposition p that involves the concept c, and some attitude ϕ, such that A ϕs that p.

6. *Concept Involvement*: The proposition expressed by s (if any) involves the concept expressed by n (if any) iff$_{\text{Defn}}$ n appears in s.

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7. *Concepts*: The concept c is that thing possessed by any-one (actual or counterfactual) who possesses the concept c, in virtue of possessing which they possess the concept c.

Informally: to possess a concept is to have a proposition-al attitude towards a proposition involving that concept.[2] And, for a proposition to involve a concept is a matter of "a name for it" appearing in the sentence that expresses the proposition. Finally, a concept is that thing (whatever it is) which makes it the case that the agent has some propo-sitional attitude towards a proposition involving that con-cept. (This explicitly leaves open the possibility that there is no unique thing; in which case, there would be no con-cept!)

This last move, of individuating concepts in terms of concept possession, could use some explaining. The basic idea is this: there are two ways of conceiving the priority of *concepts* on the one hand, and *concept possession* on the other. One may take concepts to be prior, and explain concept possession in terms of *having one of those*; or, one may treat concept possession as logically (or metaphysical-ly?) anterior, describe a possession condition for a concept, and then say: "The concept c is that thing, whatever it is, which is shared by everyone who meets *this* possession con-dition." For example, Peacocke (1992) gives a possession condition for CONJUNCTION: to possess the concept CONJUNC-TION is, among other things, to find inferences of the form $\ulcorner pCq$, therefore $p \urcorner$ "primitively compelling". And, adds Pea-cocke, the concept CONJUNCTION is that y, whatever it is, which is shared by all people who meet this possession

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[2] Stephen Schiffer also takes propositional attitude *ascriptions* to be more basic than either propositions or concepts. He writes: "crite-ria for ascribing beliefs come first, and from them we cull our ways of individuating propositions, and from them we cull our ways of in-dividuating concepts" (1997, p. 14).

condition. Barber takes a similar course, with respect to concepts generally.[3]

The possession-first strategy may initially seem odd. But consider a comparison: in saying what it is to have a certain length, it would be inappropriate to begin by saying what length is, and then saying: possessing a length is possessing *that*. On the contrary, one ought first say what it is to "possess a certain length", and then one may, if one wishes, go on to say what length *is*. The point is: Barber takes concepts to be like length —or again, like stocky builds and good health— in that concept possession antecedes concept individuation.[4]

That being said, consider now Barber's clauses (5)-(7), taken together. Clause (5) makes concept possession parasitic upon attitudes to propositions. This is the first deflationary move. Clause (6) then makes the constitution of such propositions parasitic upon a linguistic practice (that is, "involvement" in a proposition is nothing more than

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[3] Fodor, in his 1993 "Concepts: A Tutorial Essay", maintains that concepts come first. Thus, to take an example, Fodor would have us first *isolate* the concept DOORKNOB, only later saying what it is to *possess* the concept DOORKNOB. Peacocke (1992), in contrast, suggests giving the possession conditions for a concept first, and then saying something like: the concept is that thing, whatever it is, shared by all and only people who meet the possession condition. Speaking of Fodor, it may be useful to note that, whereas Fodor takes thoughts, and the concepts that constitute them, to be *mental representations*, Peacocke, Barber and Schiffer take thoughts and concepts to be the *contents* of mental representations.

[4] To my mind, whether you like the concepts-first, or the possession-first approach depends upon whether you want to ground concepts in capacities, or whether you prefer to ground capacities in concepts. And too, possession-firsters are often moved by Peacocke's (vaguely verificationist) *Principle of Dependence*: "There can be nothing more to the nature of a concept than is determined by a correct account of the capacity of a thinker who has mastered the concept. . . " (Peacocke 1992, p. 5). One way to ensure satisfying this Principle is, of course, to delineate concepts entirely in terms of capacities.

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"appearance" in a sentence). This is the second deflationary move. Finally, Barber uses (7) to define concepts in terms of the doubly deflated notion of concept possession. (It's worth noting, by the way, that clause (7) isn't inherently deflationary. Indeed, Peacocke (1992) holds an *inflated* Fregean theory of concepts, though he is the paradigm "possession-firster".) Taken together, we get the conclusion that there is no need for a substantial theory of concepts.[5]

To understand Barber's proposal, it may be useful to work through an example. So, take his preferred case of the concept CAT. Using (5), we see that Maite possesses the concept if she has at least one belief/desire (or whatever) to at least one proposition involving CAT. Which leaves the question: when does a proposition involve the concept CAT? Barber's answer is, a proposition *p* involves CAT if the sentence *s* which expresses *p* has the word 'cat' appearing in it. Thus Maite has the concept CAT if, for example, she believes the proposition ROB'S CAT IS CUTE. For this proposition involves CAT —simply because the sentence which expresses it (namely, 'Rob's cat is cute') has the word 'cat' in it. Finally, what is the concept CAT? Well, according to (7), it is that unique thing (if any) in virtue of which Maite has her attitudes to CAT-involving propositions. Period. The example drives home the deflationary character of the proposal. CAT being a propositional constituent is parasitic upon linguistic practice; CAT-possession, in turn, is parasitic upon having an attitude to a CAT-involving proposition; finally, the concept CAT is individuated solely and completely in terms of CAT-possession.

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[5] Taking a leaf from Schiffer, one can go a step further and deflate *relations to propositions* in terms of the linguistic practice of belief-desire *attribution*. This deflates not just concepts, but propositions as well. Though Barber does not do this explicitly, it's consonant with his overall approach. Which is why I label his view belief-content deflationism, rather than (merely) concept deflationism.

What's important about the deflationary approach? In addition to what I noted before, namely that it provides a *via media* between outright elimination of belief-contents and full-fledged ontological commitment, the possibility of such a deflationary account makes it incumbent upon traditional concept theorists (e.g. Peacocke and Fodor) to say why they think a robust theory of concepts is necessary. Furthermore, as Barber rightly notes, a certain sort of inference is ruled out by (5), the concept possession clause:

8. *The "Lacks the Concept" Inference*

A does not possess the concept *c*

To ϕ that *p*, a subject must possess the concept *c*

Therefore,

A does not ("really") ϕ that *p*

If Barber is correct, this argument form can play no part in a dispute between someone who asserts, and someone who denies, e.g., that my cat Weeble believes there is a squirrel in our yard. Think how the argument would go. *A* says: Weeble lacks the concept SQUIRREL, so she can't have this belief. *B* replies: if Weeble has the belief, then she has the concept (by (5)); hence it begs the question to suppose that Weeble lacks the concept SQUIRREL. In which case, to generalize, one cannot argue from the paucity of animal concepts to the barrenness of their beliefs: that gets the order of explanation precisely backwards, if Barber's view is correct. Similarly, to take another of Barber's examples, it begs the question against linguistic theorists to say that ordinary speakers lack concepts like C-COMMAND, EMPTY CATEGORY and INFLECTION, etc., and hence cannot know the propositions they are said to know. For, if they do know such propositions, then (*ipso facto*) they have the concepts —according to Barber.

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Having introduced Barber's deflationary strategy, I want now to present two criticisms of it. The first may be overcome. The second strikes me as a real problem, because it gets at the heart of the deflationary project —i.e. making concepts parasitic upon language. This second criticism will, I believe, apply to deflationary approaches generally: if I am right, such approaches get the priority of language and belief-contents precisely backwards —language introduces talk of concepts (and propositions) because these exist, and not vice versa.

III. *Mastery and Deployment*

Barber doesn't sufficiently account for the distinction between merely deploying a concept and mastering a concept, in the sense of fully grasping it. Deploying a concept requires only minimal knowledge of what kind of concept it is, and —most importantly— deferring to members of one's community about the details of its use. But mastery demands more. My worry is: even granting that Barber's definition of concept possession captures deployment, as it stands it hasn't the resources to distinguish concept deployment from concept mastery. (See Higginbotham (1994) on Fodor (1993), and Peacocke (1992, pp. 29ff), for extended discussion.)

This distinction between deployment and mastery is important. It helps to make sense of attributions like:

9. John isn't sure whether podiatrists are medical doctors

This sentence attributes an attitude to a proposition —a proposition which undoubtedly involves the concept PODIATRIST. Therefore, by Barber's lights, if the attribution is true John must possess this concept. And yet there's a clear sense in which this is an unsatisfying conclusion, precisely where (9) is true. What one wants to say —or anyway, what *I* want to say— is that precisely when (9) is true, John

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doesn't fully and completely have the concept PODIATRIST. Or better: John *deploys* the concept PODIATRIST, but he has not *mastered* it. Put in a nutshell, Barber's present proposal makes concept possession a matter of all or nothing —like being pregnant! Whereas it seems to me that, in some sense, concept possession is a matter of degrees: of more or less, better or worse.

Now, Barber considers just this kind of worry.[6] (See his Reply to Objection VI.) What he says is: if mastering the concept BUTTERFLY requires knowing things about DNA and evolutionary history, and hence requires one to distinguish butterflies from perceptually identical creatures that have different "underlying structures", then most ordinary speakers have not mastered the concept BUTTERFLY. In which case, if mastery is required for full-fledged beliefs, then "it looks as though most of us do not have conceptual (i.e. 'real') beliefs" about butterflies (Barber forthcoming). Nor, one might add, would ordinary speakers have robust beliefs about most anything else. This serves as a reductio either of the very idea of mastery, or of the claim that believing requires mastery, or both.

Of course what I want to say in response is that mastering BUTTERFLY does *not* require having knowledge about DNA and such. This is what complete understanding of butterflies (the insects themselves) requires; but it's not what complete understanding of the concept BUTTERFLY demands. There must be a difference between learning all there is to know about butterflies (the things) and having a

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[6] Some history. Barber first presented his deflationary (i.e. "pleonastic") approach at the 1995 meeting of the Canadian Philosophical Association. I was invited to give a commentary. In that commentary I pressed, among other things, the two problems which I introduce here. Barber then revised his paper —in light of my comments, and those of several other people— and submitted it to *Philosophical Studies.* In the present paper, I rehearse my original criticisms, along with elaborations prompted by Barber's replies to those original criticisms.

complete grasp of the concept BUTTERFLY, where the former far outstrips the latter. True enough, in the case of natural kind concepts (of which BUTTERFLY is an example) it is hard to draw this line. But we needn't conclude that there is no real divide here; especially because, in the case of concepts which *aren't* natural kind concepts, it is significantly easier to see the distinction. (That, of course, is why my preferred example is PODIATRIST.) In the end, I don't need to say precisely what mastery is, in order to make my point. My point is: there is a crucial difference between me and a person who has an attitude to a single proposition (or even a few propositions) involving PODIATRIST, if that proposition is something vague like PODIATRISTS AREN'T DENTISTS. The fact is, I know what it is to be a podiatrist. But John, in example (9), doesn't. Yet Barber's concept possession clause makes us equally in possession of the concept PODIATRIST.

One way to explain the difference between me and John, which Barber himself considers, is to reduce concept mastery to knowing the meaning of words. Thus to master the concept BUTTERFLY or PODIATRIST requires understanding the English words 'butterfly' and 'podiatrist'. Importantly, there is on this proposal only one kind of propositional attitude; and having such an attitude to a proposition involving a concept c doesn't require mastery of c.[7] Thus there are not pale cat beliefs, versus robust human beliefs. And yet we can say that cats have not mastered SQUIRREL, because they don't understand the word 'squirrel'. Indeed,

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[7] This is important because Barber doesn't want to re-introduce the very distinction between full-blooded and sub-doxastic attitudes. Remember, he wants to block the following sort of argument: my cat Weeble may *deploy* the concept SQUIRREL, but she hasn't *mastered* it. We humans, on the other hand, have mastered SQUIRREL. So —and here's the crucial step— Weeble's beliefs involving SQUIRREL are a pale and faint version of our human SQUIRREL-involving beliefs.

it will turn out that non-linguistic beings, and pre-linguistic humans, do not have mastery of *any* concept.

Initially, this seems odd. But upon reflection it may be okay, because the distinction between mere deployment and real mastery —and hence the original problem, i.e. that Barber's account leaves out the latter— doesn't seem to arise for the sorts of concepts that non-speakers have. (E.g. is it plausible that Weeble already possesses the concept FOOD, but is merely on the way to mastering it?) So we get: for certain beings, there is a difference between mastery and deployment; where there is such a difference, it can be cashed in terms of knowing the meaning of the words which encode these concepts. For certain other beings, there is no such distinction.

I pause to note two obvious worries about this approach. The first worry is that, like all meta-linguistic proposals, it will founder on cross linguistic cases. Thus it certainly seems that Maria and Alex can both have mastered the very same concept COMPUTER, even if Maria doesn't understand the word 'computer' and Alex doesn't understand the word 'computadora'. Or again, one can say, speaking truly, in English:

10. Maria, a monolingual speaker of Spanish, has mastered the concept PODIATRIST

How are we to construe this? Not, surely, as the statement that Maria understands the English word 'podiatrist'. She does not. On the other hand, it's bizarre to suppose that this sentence is really about Maria's relationship to some Spanish word —for a speaker of (10) may have no idea what Spanish word encodes PODIATRIST.

The second worry is this: that the theory of concepts now on offer, because of this account of concept mastery, is no longer truly deflationary. Remember, the deflationist wants concepts to be merely linguistic posits: an epiphe-

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nomenon of reificatory talk. But if concepts end up being word meanings —which fits well with the idea that mastery is explained in terms of *knowing* word meanings— then concepts essentially become Fregean senses, or Russellian meaning-relata, and hence are not "deflated". Barber is well aware of the danger here. He writes: "To know the meaning of a word cannot be to know which concept it express-es [...]" (Barber forthcoming) But it's an open question whether this danger can be overcome.

In sum, I doubt Barber's deflationary approach to concepts can provide a satisfactory account of concept mastery. Or anyway, I doubt it can do so while simultaneously (a) blocking the lacks-the-concept inference in (8); and (b) remaining truly deflationary. I do not claim to have demonstrated this, for I have by no means canvassed all the possible accounts of concept mastery. But I hope to have successfully raised some concerns.

IV. *Appearance: Syntactic Constituency*

I turn to a second difficulty, this one more worrisome. As Barber notes, there is a complication facing his definition of "appears in", repeated below, which makes the account of involvement too broad.

6. *Concept Involvement*: The proposition expressed by s (if any) involves the concept expressed by n (if any) iff$_{\text{Defn}}$ n appears in s.

As the definition stands, the concept BLOOD SAMPLE should be involved in the proposition expressed by (11), because the expression "blood sample" seems to appear in this sentence (said of the assassins in a cocain ring):

11. The people who spill the blood sample all the goods

Barber hopes this difficulty can be overcome by appealing to the relation "is a syntactic constituent of". This is

undoubtedly a helpful step. But there are obstacles to be dealt with.

To begin with, what exactly is syntactic constituency? Here is a quite general answer, in terms of X-bar: an item is a constituent at a level of representation R iff it is dominated by a single node at R.[8] I want to emphasize something about this definition which will be important in what follows: there is constituency at each level of representation. And, if current linguistics is anywhere near right, there are several such levels. Now, X-bar certainly does provide syntactic tests for constituency. For instance: only constituents may be pre-posed (compare (12a) and (12b)); only constituents may be post-posed (hence (13a) versus (13b)); only constituents may serve as sentence fragments (contrast (14a) with (14b)); and so on.

12. I can't stand your elder sister $\Rightarrow$

   a. [Your elder sister]$_1$ I can't stand t$_1$

   b. *[Your elder]$_1$ I can't stand t$_1$ sister

13. He explained all the terrible problems that he had encountered to her $\Rightarrow$

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[8] X-bar recognizes three kinds of constituents: lexical items (level X^0), phrases (level XP), and intermediate constituents (level X'). According to X-bar theory, these various constituents are related as follows:
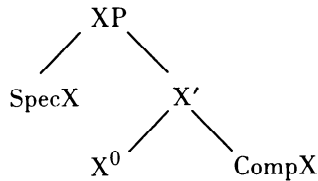
I omit many details. For more, see Jackendoff (1977), and Chomsky (1970, 1986a).

a. He explained t$_1$ to her [all the terrible problems that he had encountered]$_1$

b. *He explained t$_1$ had encountered to her [all the terrible problems that he]$_1$

14. I would like [seven hot dogs][with ketchup] ⇒

a. With ketchup. Seven hot dogs

b. *Dogs with. *Seven hot

However, these are tests for constituency *at surface structure*. If I'm right, however, surface structure isn't the level at which constituency can adequately cash concept involvement.

For example: I take it that the concepts BELIEVED A MAN, BUILT UP, and HAS DRIVEN respectively are involved in the contents which the following three sentences express.

15. A man was believed by the villagers

16. The press built him up

17. Has Alice driven the tractor?

I don't know how to prove this, but consider: if an agent lacks the concept BUILD UP, she surely cannot have the belief expressed by (16). Put otherwise, having the belief expressed by (16) is sufficient for having the concept BUILD UP. More generally, if attitudes to these contents can be truthfully attributed to an agent *A*, then there will also be true attitude attributions of the form (17) through (19) respectively.

18. $\ulcorner A$ ϕs that [... believed a man...]$\urcorner$

19. $\ulcorner A$ ϕs that [... built up...]$\urcorner$

20. $\ulcorner A$ ϕs that [... has driven...]$\urcorner$

So, by Barber's (5), having attitudes to the contents expressed by (15) through (17) is a sufficient condition for

possessing the concepts in question. Now, why might this be? Surely it's because these concepts are involved in (15) through (17).

I conclude, then, that the contents expressed by (15) through (17) involve the concepts BELIEVED A MAN, BUILT UP, and HAS DRIVEN respectively. But —here's the obstacle— these sentences do not have 'believed a man', 'built up' or 'has driven' as *surface structure constituents*: they're not dominated by a single node at this level of representation. Apparently, surface structure isn't the level at which constituency can adequately cash concept involvement.

Can Barber adequately define 'appears in' by appealing to constituency at some other level? Maybe, maybe not. So far as I know, there are no syntactic criteria for deeper-than-surface constituency. The tests given above are all syntactic, but —I repeat— they are tests for surface structure constituency. And that's no accident. To take Government and Binding Theory's D-structure as an example: by definition, D-structure "encodes the predicate-argument relations and the thematic properties of the sentence" (Haegeman 1991, p. 273); it expresses "semantically relevant grammatical functions and relations". (Chomsky 1986b, p. 67)[9] Thus whether an element is a D-structure constituent depends, in essence, upon *whether it encodes a concept*!

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[9] D-structure encodes part of the semantic interpretation of a sentence. Not all of it. As Chomsky (1986b, p. 67) says: "Specifically, the D-structures serve as an abstract representation of semantically relevant grammatical relations such as subject-verb, verb-object and so on, one crucial element that enters into semantic interpretation of sentences. It has, however, become clear that other features of semantic interpretation having to do with anaphora, scope and the like are not represented at the level of D-structure but rather at some level closer to surface structure, perhaps S-structure or a level of representation derived directly from it —a level sometimes called 'LF' [...]"

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If this is right, then the order of explanation would be precisely the reverse of that just offered: 'believed a man', 'built up' and 'has driven' are deeper-than-surface constituents of (15) through (17) because BELIEVED A MAN, BUILT UP, and HAS DRIVEN are involved in the contents which these sentences express. In sum: what items occur under single nodes in "deep syntax" depends precisely upon meaning; in particular upon what concepts the sentence expresses and how these concepts are related. So, it seems to me, you cannot *without circularity* define concept involvement by appeal to underlying constituency. And you cannot *accurately* define concept involvement by appeal to surface structure constituency —because of examples like (15) through (17). Which suggests to me that Barber lacks an account of "appearing in" which can, accurately and without circularity, buttress (6), his deflationary clause for concept involvement. And without that, his deflationary accounts of concept possession, and concepts themselves, fail.[10]

V. *Summary*

To sum up: I began by presenting the overall deflationary approach, due to Stephen Schiffer. I then introduced one implementation of this idea: Alex Barber's. Finally, I drew attention to two specific concerns with Barber's proposal. The first worry: as it stands, Barber's account is

[10] Barber notes, in passing, several different strategies for addressing this kind of worry. For instance: he wonders whether linguist's self-reports —to the effect that they understand deeper-than-surface constituency in terms of concept involvement— are reliable; he suggests that "claims about how syntax relates to the intentional sphere are sufficiently speculative" that they needn't concern us too much; and, he questions whether "folk linguistics", rather than formal syntax, might not provide the desired notion of "appearance". Such vague hopes may, in the long run, be developed into promising replies. But I leave that work to Barber himself.

unable adequately to distinguish concept deployment from full-blooded concept mastery. The second worry: Barber's clause (6) presupposes a notion of "appereance" which, properly construed, is seen to be parasitic upon concept involvement —that is, conceptual structure governs appearance, and not vice versa. This second worry runs deep. It applies, I think, not just to Barber's specific proposal, but to the deflationary project generally: deflationism says, in effect, that the nature of belief-contents depends upon linguistic practice; to the contrary, I say: language reflects the character of belief-contents.

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RESUMEN

Recientemente, Stephen Schiffer ha propuesto una explicación "deflacionaria" de los contenidos de creencias. En un artículo por aparecer, Alex Barber presenta una implementación específica de las ideas de Schiffer. En este artículo expongo la posición de Barber y presento dos problemas: el primero, que no puede dar cuenta del 'dominio' que un sujeto puede tener sobre un concepto (en oposición a 'poseerlo' meramente); y el segundo de que, 'pace' Barber, su estrategia deflacionaria específica requiere en última instancia una noción bastante robusta de los constituyentes de una proposición.

[*Traducción: Maite Ezcurdia*]