THE TWO WORLDS OF DEFLATIONISM*

Here is how Paul Horwich describes the philosophy behind deflationism (what he calls “minimalism”) about truth:

One may or not propose an account which inextricably links truth with other matters: for example, assertion, verification, reference, meaning, success, or logical entailment. Minimalism involves the contention that truth has a certain purity—that our understanding of it is independent of other ideas.¹

The view that our understanding of truth is independent of these other ideas leaves open the question of upon what our understanding is dependent. The deflationary view is that the concept of truth is completely exhausted by something like that the entailment of which Tarski used to constrain an adequate definition of truth—either the disquotation schema, or the equivalence schema, or, to use the term associated with Tarski, the T-schema. At this general level, deflationism consists of the following two tenets: that our understanding of truth

(1) involves the (nonparadoxical instances of) the T-schema; and
(2) does not involve anything besides this; in particular it does not involve connections between truth and other ideas.

(1) expresses the positive account of our understanding of truth;
(2) expresses what is deflationary about the view.

I want to argue that this philosophy is incoherent. The argument proceeds in three stages.

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The first stage consists of a discussion of what might seem a distant topic: of a semantically excessive interpretation of certain phenomena of interest to cognitive science (henceforth the semantically excessive interpretation). The semantic excess of the semantically excessive interpretation consists in the two-worlds structure it imposes on the understanding of representation (section ii). The lesson for semantics is that there is to be a fundamental separation between the theory of representation and the theory of truth. I argue that this separation has grave philosophical consequences, pushing the semantically excessive interpretation to what I call quasi-technically "the worst possible theory of truth" (section iii).

The semantically excessive interpretation ceases to look like a distant topic when it is recognized that the philosophy behind deflationism also insists on a separation of our understanding of truth from—what is already prominent in Horwich's list—ideas from the theory of representation. The second stage of the argument explains and defends this connection between the views with the aim of showing, through the same considerations and argument, that deflationism, too, is committed to the worst possible theory of truth (section iv). I also consider and reply to some objections to this stage of argument (section v).

Being committed to the worst possible theory of truth is not the worst thing in the world. But things get worse for deflationism. In the third and concluding stage of argument, I note two differences between the semantically excessive interpretation and deflationism, and argue that those differences further entrench the case against deflationism. The semantically excessive interpretation is merely committed to the worst possible theory of truth. Deflationism is, in addition, subject to a charge of internal inconsistency or incoherence. Its positive commitment to understanding truth in terms of the T-schema cannot be combined with its deflationary commitment to purity and independence from other ideas (section vii).

I begin with some introductory and absolutely basic remarks on the concept of truth. These remarks follow up, and expand upon, the positive deflationist commitment embodied in (1). The philosophical annotations that I append to the positive commitment of deflationism—embodied in the commitment to (1)—already contain the incoherence in deflationism; but I leave the final unpacking of the charge of incoherence to section iv.

I. A PLATITUDE ABOUT TRUTH

It should be agreed that any plausible account of truth begins with, even if it does not end with, something like Alfred Tarski's criterion of

(T) $s$ is true-in-$L$ if and only if $p$,

instances of which are

(TI) ‘snow is white’ is true-in-English iff snow is white

and

(TIF) ‘la neige est blanche’ is true-in-French iff snow is white.

The $T$-schema is meant to provide at least a partial characterization of the concept truth—an elucidation of our understanding of truth. It is worth being explicit how it is intended to do so, and from where the plausibility that it *can* do so is supposed to derive.

Consider again (TI) (and (TIF)). The mentioned sentence on the left-hand side (LHS) means something in English, namely that snow is white. The sentence on the right-hand side (RHS), in virtue of being a used version of the very same sentence (or a translation of that sentence), is a way of saying what the mentioned sentence says, namely, that snow is white. Now, if things are as a use of the mentioned sentence (or a translation of it), says they are, that is, if snow is white, then the mentioned sentence is true; and, if things are not as a use of the mentioned sentence (or a translation of it), says they are, that is, if snow is not white, the mentioned sentence is false. In other words,

(TI) ‘snow is white’ is true-in-English iff snow is white.

What we have done here is derived an instance of the $T$-schema from a more general, underlying, indeed platitudinous idea: the idea, namely, that a mentioned sentence is true iff things are as a use of it (or a translation of it), says they are; in this case, iff, snow is white.\footnote{For related discussion, cf. §3 of John McDowell, “Anti-Realism and the Epistemology of Understanding” (1981), and §2 of his “In Defence of Modesty” (1987), both reprinted in his *Meaning, Knowledge, and Reality* (Cambridge: Harvard, 1998), pp. 314–44 and 87–108, respectively. Cf. also the introduction of Crispin Wright, *Realism, Meaning, and Truth* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1993, 2nd ed.), pp. 1–43, at p. 18; and the more opaque...}

The $T$-schema characterizes the concept of truth because the instances that comprise it conform to this platitudinous thought that
connects the concepts of truth and meaning or what a sentence says. We can put the platitude underlying the T-schema in another, slightly more formal way: namely, with

(Plat) if $s$ means-in-L that $p$, then $s$ is true-in-L iff $p$.

Since instances of the T-schema are such that the used sentence $[p]$ is constrained to mean what the mentioned sentence $[s]$ means, the instances of the T-schema conform to the platitude. The force of the idea that an adequate definition of truth should entail the instances of (T) comes from the fact that the instances of (T), like (TI) and (TIF), conform to and, when deployed in a characterizing role for the concept of truth, express a commitment to this fundamental platitude.

These points are of general significance and bearing, and hold despite differences at lower levels of generality. More specifically, these points need not be substantially affected either by differences in what are taken to be the bearers of truth—propositions, thoughts, mental attitudes, utterances, and so on—or by different accounts of the logical form of truth ascriptions. Consider first the issues of the bearers of truth. For bearers of truth different from sentences, platitudes analogous to (Plat) can be constructed to connect the truth of the bearer to what the bearer represents. For example, in the case of propositions, we have (TP):

(1) the proposition that $p$ is true iff $p$,

with an instance of (TP) being

(1') the proposition that snow is white is true iff snow is white.

The underlying platitude here is just

(Plat*) if the proposition that $p$ represents (the state of affairs) that $p$, then the proposition that $p$ is true iff $p$.4

4 Hartry Field writes “on most conceptions of proposition, the question of what it is for a proposition to be true is of little interest” (Field, “Critical Notice: Paul Horwich’s Truth,” Philosophy of Science, 1 lx (1992): 321–30), because propositions are, on these conceptions, individuated by their truth conditions. Field goes on to suggest that what is wanted by the propositional deflationist is a notion of proposition that can rekindle the interest in deflationism by making it a controversial doctrine, and this, Field thinks, will send the propositional deflationist back to a concern for, broadly speaking, linguistic deflationism (Field prefers utterance and mental attitude defla-
Perhaps similar (although perhaps more complicated) things can be said for the other candidate truth bearers. If that is correct, it does no harm to stick to the linguistic version; and I do so, for ease of exposition, among other reasons.  

Consider, second, a view that involves a different account of the logical form of truth ascriptions. I have presupposed that truth ascriptions take the form of a predication of truth to bearers, but ‘is true’ may be construed, for example, as a prosentence forming operator that produces special types of sentences that are dependent on anaphoric connections to secure their content. Deflationism can and has been put in this way, with analogues (differing in logical form) of (T) and (TI) functioning to characterize the concept of truth. But they can function this way only because these analogues to (T) and (TI) conform to something like (Plat). The prosentence formed by appending ‘is true’ to a referring term t that refers, say, to the sentence ‘snow is white’, inherits its content anaphorically from the content of the sentence to which t refers, that is, from the content of ‘snow is white’. So the prosentential analogue to (TI) will be such that the sentence on which the prosentence forming operator ‘is true’ operates will have the same content as the sentence used on the RHS of a prosentential analogue of (TI), namely the content that snow is white. So the prosentential analogue to (TI) will conform to (Plat).  


tionism). My proposal is different but similar in spirit. It also relies on not thinking of propositions as, by definition, individuated by their truth conditions, but instead of thinking of them, by definition, as representing things essentially representing what they do. The connection between representation and truth conditions in (Plat*) then makes the connection between propositions and truth conditions that traditional accounts of propositions take as definitional. I do not claim that this sounds very natural. But I do want to suggest that (TP), (TPI), and (Plat*) can rekindle the interest in propositional deflationism. If that is right, then it can be said that (Plat) and (Plat*) ground the truth of (TI) and (TPI), which in turn play identical theoretical roles for the different kinds of deflatonists—once one has chosen sides about what the primary bearers of truth are, (TI) and (TPI) will partially define what it is for a bearer to be true. The focus here is on these roles assigned by deflationism despitie the connections made explicit in (Plat) and (Plat*).  

5 The focus on sentences seems especially appropriate in the discussion of the semantically excessive interpretation given the background assumption that thought is carried out in some symbolic system of representation. Also, this is an appropriate place to make clear that I am using the expressions ‘meaning’, ‘content’, and ‘representation’ (when it does not mean representational vehicle) pretty much interchangeably.  


So the argument of this paper is intended to operate at a high level of generality, in which the philosophy behind deflationism is challenged in the light of the role of the family of platitudes of which (Plat) is our representative member. The arguments of sections III and IV trace out the consequences with which this family of platitudes about representation and truth is pregnant. But before moving on to that, I introduce and discuss the semantically excessive interpretation.

II. THE TWO-WORLDS STRUCTURE IN COGNITIVE SCIENCE (AND BEYOND)

I want to discuss a natural, influential, and in some inchoate way, perhaps even intuitive, interpretation of certain phenomena of interest to cognitive science. I will argue that the interpretation is semantically excessive in its understanding of representation. In motivating the semantically excessive interpretation, I will use an argument reconstructed from Ray Jackendoff’s critique of the “naïve (and nearly universally accepted) [idea] that the information language conveys is about the real world.” The semantically excessive interpretation is both philosophically familiar, and familiar from the work of other linguists, psychologists, and cognitive scientists, but I think that Jackendoff’s view is especially interesting in its particular, and quite explicit, blending of psychological, linguistic, and metaphysical considerations.

According to Jackendoff, phenomena of interest in the cognitive science of perception reveal the extent to which the general principles of our visual system shape, or structure, or somehow enter, the content of perceptual experience. For example, a consideration of the Rubin Vase/Face illusion, in which the imposition of figure and ground relations allows one to see a two-dimensional figure as a vase with a black background or as two faces with a white background, but not both, shows that

what one sees cannot be solely environmental in origin, since the figures are imbued with organization that is not there in any physical sense, that is by no means logically necessary, and [which may be] inconsistent with the physical facts.

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10 *Semantics and Cognition*, p. 25.
Jackendoff supports the point through a consideration of related visual phenomena, such as other perceptual illusions (like the Hering-Helmholtz illusion in which parallel lines appear differently bowed when contrasted against "concave" and "convex" patterns of straight lines), and perceptual ambiguity, in which a figure can be seen as, say, a duck or a rabbit, but not both at once. In each case, Jackendoff’s contention is that there is a shaping of the content of perceptual experience that comes from the mind and not from reality. Call this thesis, applied generally to cognitive systems, the Principle-Ladenness of Content.

These issues from the cognitive science of perception lead Jackendoff to his first point: that the cognitive principles of the perceptual system shape the content of perceptual experience. But the main point is not confined to the content of perceptual experience. Jackendoff contends as well that these kinds of considerations have repercussions for thought and natural language. The connection to thought and natural language are made through Jackendoff’s Cognitive Constraint:

There must be levels of mental representation at which information conveyed by language is compatible with information from other peripheral systems such as vision, nonverbal audition, smell, kinesthesia, and so forth. If there were no such levels, it would be impossible to use language to report sensory input.

The Cognitive Constraint requires compatibility across linguistic, thought, and peripheral system contents, so as to allow language to be able to be used to report the contents of peripheral systems. One might find the idea of a compatibility of contents across systems attractive without thinking that that compatibility is demanded by facts about reportability. I think that is right, but for our purposes, it is only the compatibility, and not its precise basis, that matters.

One bold way to meet the Cognitive Constraint is to simply identify the kind of information conveyed by language with the kind of information conveyed by the peripheral systems. Jackendoff calls this identification the Conceptual Structure Hypothesis:

There is a single level of mental representation, conceptual structure, at which linguistic, sensory, and motor information are compatible (ibid., p. 17).

This view makes compatible linguistic, thought, and peripheral systems content by invoking conceptual structure as a shared level of mental representation.

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13 *Semantics and Cognition*, p. 16.
14 Jackendoff intends a syntactic characterization of the idea of a shared level of mental representation; what is required is compatibility in kinds mental representa-
Although controversial, none of this seems theoretically excessive or heavy-handed. But Jackendoff takes the claim that the cognitive principles of the visual system shape the content of perceptual experience to contain radical consequences for our understanding of representation. In particular, the role the cognitive principles of the visual system play in shaping the content of perceptual experience prevents the content of perceptual experience from being about the real world; rather, the content of perceptual experience is about a world that is the product of a causal interaction between the real world and the cognitive principles of the visual (and other) systems—it is about what Jackendoff calls the projected world. This claim, together with the Conceptual Structure Hypothesis, entails that language, thought, and perception carry content only about the projected world. Jackendoff explicitly draws the conclusion:

It should now be clear why we must take issue with the naive position that the information conveyed by language is about the real world. We have conscious access only to the projected world—the world as unconsciously organized by the mind; and we can talk about things only insofar as they have achieved mental representation through these processes of organization. Hence the information conveyed by language must be about the projected world.\(^\text{15}\)

So Jackendoff’s argument runs as follows, with P3 or Semantic Excess being the objectionable premise:

(P1) The cognitive principles of systems shape the contents of the representations used in those systems. For example, the cognitive principles of the visual system shape the content of the perceptual representations tokened in perceptual experience. (Principle-Ladenness of Content)

\(^\text{15}\) Semantics and Cognition, p. 29; emphasis in original. This understanding of representation survives into Jackendoff’s later work, where representation is again concerned with ‘the ‘reality’ that is constructed by our perceptual systems in response to whatever is ‘really out there’…the perceptual world is reality for us’ (Foundations of Language, p. 308; emphasis in original).
(P2) Compatibility amongst linguistic, thought, and peripheral system contents is required (Cognitive Constraint); assume this compatibility to consist in the fact that linguistic, thought, and peripheral system contents involve a shared level of mental representation, conceptual structure. (Conceptual Structure Hypothesis)

(P3) If the cognitive principles of a system shape the content of representations used by that system, then those contents are of a projected world rather than of the real world. (Semantic Excess)

(C) The contents of the representations used in linguistic, thought, and peripheral systems are of a projected world rather than of the real world.

Our concern will be to understand and evaluate Semantic Excess.

Simplifying, but not too much, Jackendoff’s understanding of representation is as follows:

![Diagram](image)

Figure 1: Representation and reality in Jackendoff’s cognitive science.

Figure 1 highlights two absolutely crucial commitments of the view. The commitments are also crucial to the arguments to follow against the semantically excessive view and against deflationism, in the sense that the applicability of the arguments requires an understanding of the views as involving precisely these commitments (I discuss views to which the argument does not apply below). The first commitment is the following. Jackendoff has no intention of falling into an idealism according to which all that there is are the entities of the projected world (‘#entities#’ in Jackendoff’s terminology—more on this in a moment). He is not taking what he calls a “solipsist position”; it is not
being claimed “there is no real world”; rather, it is being claimed “only that [the real world] is not what we see.”16 This is reflected in Figure 1, which shows the real world as a separate realm.17 Second, and, crucially, therefore, we cannot, construe our representations as being semantically related to the real world, but only to the projected world. This is reflected in Figure 1 in the reference relation. More generally, semantic relations do not hold between representations and the real world; they hold, instead, between representations and the projected world.

What this shows is that “we must question the centrality to natural language semantics of the notions of truth and reference as traditionally conceived.”18 In understanding this we must keep Jackendoff’s anti-idealism firmly in mind. Jackendoff is not arguing that the traditional notion of truth, for example, is a semantic notion but that it is misunderstood, and that the entire world is a projection. His point, rather, is that there is a traditional notion of truth, of how things are in the real world, and that this traditional notion does not play a role in semantic theory. The lesson for semantics is that it is truth-in-the-projection, and not truth, that is the central notion of a semantic theory. This separation of representation from truth, and its attachment to some notion explicitly contrasted with truth, is the imposition of the two-worlds structure on our understanding of representation.

In any event, the charge of semantic excess is directed against views that have, and substantially exploit, this kind of two-worlds structure in understanding representation.

I said that Jackendoff’s view is interesting in the way that it blends a wide range of considerations; but it is also interesting in how obviously it parallels some fundamental problems in the history of philosophy. Insofar as there are genuine parallels here, the argument of this paper—which is directed against deflationism—can be extended to and run off of one of the historical cases I consider briefly below. I will also indicate the kinds of view to which the argument does not apply.

A more comprehensive understanding and argument against deflationism would see it, I think, against the background of a problematic history of two-worlds responses to skepticism. In our example, the

16 Semantics and Cognition, p. 29.
17 Although there are causal relations that obtain between the real world and an individual’s body and sensory mechanisms, these relations are left unspecified in Figure 1 because they are not semantically relevant—they have nothing to do constitutively on Jackendoff’s view, as far as I can see, with the representational properties of mind and language. Cf. Jackendoff, The Architecture of the Language Faculty (Cambridge: MIT, 1997), chapter 8 (especially p. 191).
18 Semantics and Cognition, p. 29.
skepticism lies in the background of, and motivates, Semantic Excess; for if the cognitive principles of the visual system shape the content of perceptual experience, how can perceptual experience furnish us with knowledge of a mind-independent world? The two-world structure response is also clear: it cannot. We have access only to the projected world, and our claims are semantically related to this projected world. This rehearses the kind of dialectic that leads to an interpretation of Kant’s transcendental idealism that is two-worlds in structure, with our representations making reference to the phenomenal world rather than to the noumenal world. Both the two-worlds structure, as well as the skepticism to which it is a response, are at least in broad outline philosophically familiar. I contend that this two-worlds interpretation of transcendental idealism is subject to an argument exactly parallel to that which is to follow.

A subtler and less well-known case involves a change in the logical positivist theory of meaning—the theory according to which, in the slogan, meaning is method of verification. The change concerns the understanding of verification as conclusive verification, which is supposed to be a factive notion, to an understanding of verification as confirmation, which is not factive. The move from factive conclusive verification to nonfactive confirmation, where confirmation is explicitly contrasted with conclusive verification, together with the idea that meaning is method of verification, again sets up the two-worlds structure.\(^{10}\) In this case, I think the presence of the two-worlds structure is a response, ultimately, to skeptical problems posed by a factualist or cognitive understanding of philosophical discourse and disagreement. The view is subject to an argument exactly parallel to that which is to follow.

The argument to follow does not, however, apply to more radical forms of idealism. The view, does not apply, for example, to a Berkeleyan idealism in which the world represented is the world as conceived in the mind of God. The argument will also not apply to contemporary views which demand the “unboundedness of the conceptual”\(^{20}\) or demand that the “world is the world as it figures in our world view,”\(^{21}\) or that construe the central notion of a theory of representation as “truth as conceived by the agent.”\(^{22}\) These views are,

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\(^{19}\) For this kind of move, see Rudolf Carnap, “Testability and Meaning,” *Philosophy of Science*, 13 (1936): 419–71, §1.


\(^{22}\) Akeel Bilgrami, *Belief and Meaning* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1992), for example, at pp. 139–40.
or seem, idealist in character, but they do not impose the two-worlds structure on the understanding of representation. From the point of view of the argument to be given here, these views are on par with a naïve realism, in which thought is straightforwardly and unproblematically about the world.

Again, the argument to be given here does not apply to a view of the nature of semantics that one can cull from Chomsky and some of those who follow him. For example, Paul Pietrosi argues that an understanding of semantics according to which semantics is truth conditional is inconsistent with an understanding of semantics according to which semantic values are determined compositionally.23 Pietrosi argues that semantic values should not be construed as real-world objects and truth values (or truth conditions), but rather as whatever values can figure in a compositional account of the language. The key difference between this view and Jackendoff’s is that speakers are still able to refer to real-world objects, and to say that things that are true or false; it is just that words themselves do not have semantic values so as to be able to do this. Again there is no two-worlds structure: what a speaker says is about, ultimately the one and only world that there is.

To take another example, Peter Ludlow argues that semantics and metaphysics can mutually benefit by seeing through to the possibility of a referential semantics for Chomskyan I-languages.24 I-languages are in the first instance not conceived referentially or truth conditionally, but instead conceived roughly as cognitive principles of the language faculty (like the cognitive principles of the visual faculty). A referential semantics for I-languages incorporates I-substances—substances to which we can refer only because we have an I-language of a certain kind—as referents. But it may also incorporate P-substances—substances that are referred to but to which reference can be made without having an I-language of a certain kind. This view does not involve detaching the reference relation for any expression from P-substances, and re-attaching them to I-substance correlates, with truth being a matter of how things are with the no-longer-referred-to P-substance and I-truth being a matter of how things are with the referred to I-substance correlate. On Ludlow’s view, different referents have different ontological statuses, but the truth of a representation is just a matter of how things are with referents, whatever their individual ontological statuses. This view

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does not separate representation from truth. So there is no two-worlds structure in this view.

Let me summarize. Jackendoff offers an interpretation of certain cognitive scientific phenomena that is two-worlds in structure, and in which the fundamental semantic notions of reference and truth are to be replaced by their -in-the-projection counterparts. The problem with the view, from the point of view of the argument to be given here, is not that that the interpretation has idealist tendencies, nor even that it offers an alternative to truth conditional semantics. It is the specific way that it expresses its idealist tendencies, and it is the kind of alternative to truth conditional semantics that it offers. The problem is that the semantically excessive view separates representation and truth to produce a two-worlds structure in the understanding of representation. This view has grave philosophical consequences.

III. SEMANTIC EXCESS

I want now to explain and defend the charge of semantic excess against the semantically excessive interpretation.

Tarski notes, in considering an objection to his semantic conception of truth, that

[w]e may accept the semantic conception of truth without giving up any epistemological attitude that we may have had; we may remain naïve realists, critical realists or idealists, empiricists, or metaphysicians—whatever we were before. The semantic conception of truth is completely neutral toward all these issues.25

One way to read Tarski here is as saying that the semantic conception of truth is meant to be compatible with a wide range of further commitments about truth. Many different theories of truth are compatible with the requirement that a theory of truth entail instances of the T-schema. Perhaps it is too much to ask that every theory of truth entail the instances of the T-schema.26 It will, nevertheless, still be requirement on any theory of truth that it be capable of recovering an interpretation of the instances of the T-schema in such a way that they come out as true, and obviously so. If this is right, any theory of truth that cannot interpret the instances of the T-schema as true, and obviously so, will be a very bad theory; in fact, such theories are so bad that I will say that they commit themselves to the worst possible theory of truth. The worst possible theory

26 See Patterson, §2.
of truth is that equivalence class of theories that cannot interpret the instances of the T-schema as true, and obviously so.

What can Jackendoff say about the instances of the T-schema? Well a quick argument shows that he cannot interpret them in such a way that they are true and obviously so. Remember the two absolutely crucial commitments of Jackendoff’s view, as I am interpreting it: to distinguish between the notions of truth and truth-in-the-projection, and to press for the semantic relevance of the latter as opposed to the former (cf. Figure 1). But in that case, the use of a mentioned sentence does not specify a truth condition for a sentence, but rather a truth-in-the-projection condition for a sentence. So, for example, although it may be true, it is not obviously true, that

(TI) ‘snow is white’ is true iff snow is white

but only that

(TIJJ) ‘snow is white’ is true-in-the-projection iff snow is white.

So it looks like the theory is committed, in our technical sense, to the worst possible theory of truth. Of course, the idea behind my obviously tendentious terminology—‘the worst possible theory of truth’—is that a failure to interpret the instances of (T) as true and obviously so, renders a theory absurd as a theory of truth. I will elaborate and defend this quick argument in a moment; but first I want to introduce one more element of Jackendoff’s position.

It is extremely revealing that Jackendoff introduces a special notation for referring to elements of the projected world: reference is made to elements of the projected world by enclosing expressions in #-marks; for example, ‘#snow#’ refers to snow in the projection (or, better: snow-in-the-projection). But Jackendoff, as theorist, also wishes to make reference to elements of the real world; and for that the words are simply used, unadorned, without any distinguishing marks. #less expressions can be used in the language of the theorist, then, to refer to the real world. Jackendoff makes the following remarks about his proposal:

The procedure may at first seem paradoxical: having just denied the possibility of referring to the real world, I am nonetheless introducing a metalanguage that purports to do so. To be clear about what is going on, however, we must keep in mind that, like most theories, the present theory is stated from the point of view of a hypothetical omniscient

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27 To keep things manageable, from here on in, I suppress the reference to English in the truth predicate.
observer.... The theory claims that [speakers] can speak only of the projected world—but it can only do so only by assuming tacitly that we, as hypothetically omniscient observers, are not so limited.  

So the hypothetically omniscient can refer, in thought and language, to the real world; but real thinkers and speakers can refer only to the projected world.

Significantly, Jackendoff allows that for some expressions, both #-ed and #-less versions refer; for example he says:

...consider the theory of light and color. In our present terms, physics...can be seen as an attempt to develop #theoretical entities# and #relations# whose structure is isomorphic to that of entities and relations in the real world. If physics is right, for instance, the real world contains, among other things, electromagnetic radiation of various wavelengths...; the properties of electromagnetic radiation are isomorphic to the #properties# of the theoretical construct #electromagnetic radiation#.

Cases in which both #-ed and #-less versions of expressions refer are extremely important in sustaining the two-worlds charge. In such cases, reference is made to both (continuing with Jackendoff’s example) electromagnetic radiation, in the theory of the hypothetical omniscient observer, and to electromagnetic-radiation-in-the-projection—that is #electro-magnetic radiation#—in the thinking of everyday thinkers. These cases emphasize that our inability to achieve reference to the real world is a result of pervasive cognitive

28 Semantics and Cognition, pp. 31–32. Even if, as Jackendoff suggests, the semantics of the theoretical language of psychology, and of science more generally—of Jackendoff’s “metalanguage”—can be provided, it is problematic to hold that its semantics can be construed truth conditionally, given the spirit of Jackendoff’s overall position. Presumably the cognitive principles of our “science-forming faculty” (see numerous discussions in Chomsky, New Horizons in the Study of Language and Mind (New York: Cambridge, 2000)) will shape the content of our scientific language and judgments in the same way that the principles of the perceptual system shape the content of perceptual experience. But this initiates the move from truth to truth-in-the-projection for scientific language and judgments.

29 Semantics and Cognition, p. 32.

These cases are also important in clarifying the semantics of ‘#’. Cases in which #less expressions do not refer, because there are no real world entities to refer to, are cases in which there are no real world correlates to projected entities (for example, the putative property of being red, on the assumption that there are no such things as colors, and thus no property of being red). These cases suggest that #-ed expressions are not semantically structured; for there may be no semantic values for #-less expressions from which to construct that semantics. But cases where both a #-ed and its #-less counterpart expression refer show that that cannot be exactly right, for the unstructured semantics fails to capture the idea that the semantic value of a #-ed expression is the in-the-projection correlate, in some sense, of the semantic value of the #-less expression. So it seems that the semantics for ‘#’ has, somehow, to determine the value of the #-ed expression based on the value of the #-less expressions.
limitation, and not a result of limitations imposed by a world that does not cooperate by providing referents.

In any event, I will now use all the resources that Jackendoff has put on the table to see whether the problem of interpreting the instances of the T-schema can be overcome. It might be objected on Jackendoff’s behalf that he can interpret

(TI) ‘snow is white’ is true iff snow is white

in such a way that it is true, and obviously so; and further, that it is not (TI), but rather (TI#) that is the real target of the quick argument I gave three paragraphs back:

(TI#) ‘snow is white’ is true iff #snow is white#.

Here we utilize Jackendoff’s distinction between #ed and #less expressions, and the fact that such expressions refer to different entities, indeed worlds. (TI#), the objection continues, is no help with interpreting instances of the T-schema because (a) the expressions within the #marks refer to snow- and being white-in the projection, and (b) mentioning snow- and being white-in-the-projection is not a way to state the truth condition for ‘snow is white’, but rather a way to state only the truth-in-the-projection condition. More generally, using natural language sentences to provide the truth conditions for natural language sentences must fail, given that natural language sentences have at best truth-in-the-projection conditions. (TI), the objection concludes, is subject to no such problem because the #less expressions on the RHS do not refer to entities-in-the-projection and thus can serve to state genuine truth conditions.

But this attempted recovery will not work. The T-schema is not a claim about a form of words, orthographically typed:

(O) $[p]$ is true iff $p$,

where we have just to substitute for the $[p]$’s with the same words, orthographically-typed. That would allow as an instance of the T-schema the sentence

(OI) ‘snow is white’ is true iff snow is white,

where the metalanguage is English*, in which the sentence type ‘snow is white’ used on the RHS means that snow is black; and it would disallow

(TIF) ‘la neige est blanche’ is true-in-French iff snow is white

where the RHS is used with its usual sense. The problem with the objection being offered on Jackendoff’s behalf is that it construes
instances of (T), like (TI), on the analogy of (OI), where the RHS of
the biconditional is not the use of the sentence mentioned on the
LHS (or of a translation of it). This must be so, because it is precisely
Jackendoff’s view that the sentences of natural language do not have
truth conditions, and thus cannot be used to specify a truth condition.31
So if the RHS of a biconditional specifies a truth condition, it cannot
be a use of the sentence mentioned on the LHS. But that is just
the general model instance by (OI), where the mentioned sentence on the LHS and the used sentence on the RHS are orthographically
type-identical but semantically type-distinct. And, of course (OI) has absolutely nothing to do with the concept of truth.

More explicitly, Jackendoff’s view seems to be subject to the following dilemma: either the RHS specifies a truth condition, in
which case it does not involve a use of the appropriate sentence—of
the sentence mentioned on the LHS; or the sentence used on the
RHS is a use of the sentence mentioned on the LHS, in which case,
that sentence cannot be used to state the condition for the truth of the
sentence, but rather only a condition for the truth-in-the-projection of
the sentence. Either way, the theory fails to interpret instances of the
T-schema as true, and obviously so, for the T-schema is grounded in
the platitude that a sentence is true iff things are as a use of it, or a
translation of it, says they are.

I conclude that the semantically excessive interpretation is committed to the worst possible theory of truth.

IV. SEMANTIC EXCESS IN DEFLATIONISM

Deflationism generally construed involves two tenets: first, that
truth is to be understood through the T-schema, and second that
the T-schema is all that is involved in understanding truth. The first
tenet gives the positive account of truth; the second captures the
deflationary spirit of the view—the idea, in Horwich’s words, that
truth has a certain purity through its independence from other
ideas, in particular from its independence from ideas in the theory of
representation.

Now, it is a common thought that a semantic theory involves the
concept of truth—for example, in Davidson’s proposal for the form of
a semantic theory, where the theorems of the theory take the form

31 It might be objected here that since the expression mentioned on the LHS is #less,
it has truth conditions, and thus can be used to state its own truth condition. But, in the
argument the mentioned sentence on the LHS is a sentence of a language that people
actually speak; it is precisely these sentences to which Jackendoff’s theory is to apply.
The argument can be extended to scientific sentences, as long as the role and bearing
of principles of the “science-forming faculty” are kept in mind (see note 28).
of statements of truth conditions. These kinds of semantic theories are consistent with the thought that truth conditions do not exhaust meaning. When truth conditions do not exhaust meaning, the relation between truth and meaning cannot be expressed with the slogan that a semantic theory is a theory of truth, but must rather be expressed more carefully, as the thought that a semantic theory is constrained by a theory of truth, or more simply, as the thought that meanings are constrained by truth conditions. This is the traditional use of truth in a semantic theory (for example, in the Fregean slogan that sense determines reference), and it is thus plausible to think that this is what the deflationist must deny in order to preserve the purity of truth. More specifically, to accept the idea that truth is pure with respect to meaning seems to require denying both the stronger thesis that meanings are truth conditions and the weaker thesis that meanings are constrained by truth conditions. It is only on an understanding of deflationism in which both the stronger and weaker theses about the connections between truth and meaning are denied that deflationism emerges as an interesting and controversial doctrine. To allow that meanings are constrained by reference and truth conditions—that is, that meanings involve reference and truth conditions as a rule—is to link truth to meaning in an unacceptably strong way for one who wishes truth to be pure. It is hard to see how that kind of tight linking can have no inflationary effect on the concept of truth.

I think that this understanding of deflationism is common ground between me and at least one very influential and ambitious deflationist, namely Hartry Field. Field discusses what he calls “two traditions” of thinking about meaning: those in which meaning and content “encapsulate” truth conditions, and those that do not. Field

32 See Davidson (op. cit.).

33 Depending upon how inflated or deflated the account of meaning is. For a discussion of these themes that sets them in the contexts of some recent philosophical history and some basic questions in the foundations of semantics, see my “The Theory of Truth in the Theory of Meaning,” European Journal of Philosophy, xi (2004): 219–43, and “Davidson, Semantic Deflationism, and Dummett’s Dilemma,” ivian, liv (2005): 39–63, respectively. Some deflationists, like Horwich (op. cit.) and Williams (op. cit.), allow that deflationism about truth is consistent with accounts in which meaning is constrained by reference. I am for the most part not concerned with these weaker, less pure, versions of deflationism, although I briefly consider these views in reply to objection (iv) in section v below. (So, despite having initiated my discussion with Horwich’s pithy remark, I do not think that his view conforms to a standard of purity that makes deflationism a deeply controversial thesis—cf. Field, “Critical Notice: Paul Horwich’s Truth,” pp. 326–27.)

urges the deflationist about truth to be sure that the account of meaning that she will eventually need to provide does not “encapsulate” a reduction of truth conditions and reference:

If deflationism is to be at all interesting, it must claim not merely that what plays a central role in meaning and content not include truth conditions under that description, but that it not include anything that could plausibly constitute a reduction of truth conditions to more physicalist terms (ibid., p. 108).

Field’s entirely correct idea is that a deflationary account of meaning that serves to reduce or even partially reduce truth conditions would serve to produce a very inflationist view of truth. Meanings that determined reference and truth conditions would be at exactly such a risk of inflating truth. So, for deflationism about meaning to be an interesting doctrine, it must not allow that meanings are constrained by truth conditions. Holding truth and meaning apart like that will guard the purity of truth and ensure that that one’s account of meaning does not inflate one’s account of truth.

Field takes these points very seriously. Field’s view of meaning is that meaning facts are grounded in facts about the uses of expressions—in particular in facts about the conceptual role and indication relations of expressions. Following Field, I will call these properties of the uses of expressions their meaning characteristics. Field goes out of his way to show that meanings construed as such could not be taken to reduce, even partially, the notion of reference or truth conditions, for in many cases the meaning characteristics of sentences diverge from, and do not merely go beyond, the truth conditions of those sentences. Field approaches the point by saying that the role of meaning characteristics, and in particular indication relations

...might make one think that the deflationist is bound to recognize (a non-disquotational version of) the relation “S has truth conditions p” in fact if not in name, since these indication relations constitute the truth conditions relation. But this overlooks the fact that the project of giving anything close to a believable reduction of talk of truth conditions to talk of indication relations is at best a gleam in the eye of some theorists. A way to see the point is to notice that there are plenty of examples where the indication relations don’t reflect what we would intuitively regard as truth conditions (ibid., p. 110).

Talk of reduction may indeed be implausible, but Field’s real point here is to provide a response to the worry about whether meaning characteristics inflate truth. Meaning characteristics cannot inflate truth because the account of meaning in terms of meaning characteristics actually conflicts with accounts in terms of reference and truth
conditions. To use an example of Field’s, although the truth conditions of ‘In Bosnia, p’ have something to do with p-type states of affairs in Bosnia, the meaning characteristics and in particular the indication relations of the sentence may reflect only what is said in certain newspapers, where what is said in these newspapers indicates either nothing systematic or something other than what is happening in Bosnia. So the meaning characteristics make the sentence semantically connected to what is said in the newspapers, rather than about what is taking place in Bosnia.

In general, these extensional differences between meaning characteristics and reference and truth conditions shows that meaning characteristics cannot be a reductive specification of reference and truth conditions.

So far, I have been arguing that the only interesting form of truth-theoretic deflationism is one according to which the account of meanings is not constrained to determine truth conditions. But, to continue with the Bosnia example, that is emphatically not to say that there are no p-type states of affairs obtaining, or failing to obtain, in Bosnia. It is not to say that there is no Bosnia, and only newspapers. It is precisely these p-type states of affairs and Bosnia that are mentioned in a statement of the truth conditions for ‘In Bosnia, p’. The point is just that the meaning characteristics do not determine those p-type states of affairs obtaining in Bosnia, and do not determine Bosnia, as having any relevance, semantically, for ‘In Bosnia, p’. Only those things that are determined by the meaning characteristics of the sentence are semantically relevant to the sentence.

Let me regiment Field’s distinction between on the first hand, what is determined by the meaning characteristics of a sentence, and on the other, “what we would intuitively regard as truth conditions” for the sentence. Let us stipulate that propositions are those things that are

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35 That is, Field is not merely despairing over the possibility of providing a naturalistic reduction of reference and truth conditions, although that kind of despair probably does inaugurate his move from causal theorist of reference in “Tarski’s Theory of Truth” (reprinted in Field, op. cit., pp. 5–26) to deflationist in “Deflationist Views of Meaning and Content” (cf. the Preface of Truth and the Absence of Fact). The point is rather that if such a reduction were in the cards with the account of meaning characteristics, then the position would cease to be deflationary.

36 And these very well may be things, properties, and states of affairs in the world. So, the objection here will not be that the deflationary view of truth “cuts language off from the world” (“Deflationist Views of Meaning and Content,” p. 126). The objection recognizes that deflationism does make use of meaning characteristics, especially indication relations, to recover the connection between language and the world. That is not the objection that I will be pursuing. The objection that I will be pursuing revolves around the separation of representation from reference and truth conditions.
intuitively expressed by sentences, things that are individuated by “what we would intuitively regard as truth conditions.” So for example, ‘snow is white’ intuitively expresses the proposition that snow is white, and both the sentence and the proposition are true iff snow is white. In this terminology, we can now rephrase my, and Field’s, point about the only controversial and interesting form that the deflationary thesis can take, as follows: that the meaning characteristics of expressions, and sentences in particular, should not be constrained to determine propositions, in this stipulated sense. Whatever sentences intuitively express, this is not what they, as a semantic matter, express. So, in whatever sense of ‘meaning’ meaning characteristics metaphysically determine meanings—let us say they determine deflated meanings or deflated propositions—they cannot determine propositions; that is, they cannot determine those things that are intuitively expressed by sentences and are individuated by “what we would intuitively regard as truth conditions.”

So, on one hand we have propositions, and on the other, deflated propositions. The deflationist holds that our sentences express deflated propositions, and not propositions. This separation allows the deflationist theory of meaning in terms of meaning characteristics to be such as not to inflate truth.37

For reasons that should be starting to become apparent, I want to regiment this view further by using expressions surrounded by #-marks to intuitively express whatever is metaphysically determined by meaning characteristics. So, for example, ‘#snow is white#’ serves where ‘snow is white’ could not. ‘Snow is white’ does not intuitively express what is metaphysically determined by meaning characteristics, but intuitively expresses a proposition individuated by “what we would intuitively regard as truth conditions.” But ‘#snow is white#’ does intuitively express whatever is determined by meaning characteristics—that is, it expresses a deflated proposition, one that is distinct from propositions individuated by “what we would intuitively regard as truth conditions.”

The set-up has been (really!) long and laborious, but the argument against deflationism should now be clear: it is subject to an argument exactly parallel to that offered against the semantically excessive

37 I have some reservations about attributing this position to Field himself, although, as Field also reports (“Deflationist Views of Meaning and Content,” p. 111, note 9), it is a position that one often encounters from proponents of deflationism. Although I have recounted Field’s view in some detail here, I am unsure of what it looks like in its finest detail. See the responses to objections (iii) and (iv) in section v below for further relevant discussion. This is also a good place to reiterate that the focus of my critique is the philosophy behind deflationism, and not any deflationist in particular.
interpretation. What will the deflationist say about the instances of the T-schema? Once again, there seems to be no interpretation of a T-sentence in which it comes out as true and obviously so; neither

(TI) ‘snow is white’ is true iff snow is white

nor

(TI#) ‘snow is white’ is true iff #snow is white#

will do. Remember, that for the deflationist, the sentences mentioned on the LHS do not express propositions, but instead express deflated propositions, and these are by design distinct from propositions. Consider now (TI). In (TI) the RHS expresses “what we would intuitions regard as truth conditions” for the sentence ‘snow is white’, but by dint of precisely this fact, it cannot be a use of the sentence mentioned on the LHS. So (TI) does not conform to (Plat), according to which a sentence is true iff things are as a use of it, or a translation of it, says they are. What about (TI#)? By the deflationist lights, the RHS is a use of the sentence mentioned on the LHS (or better, a use of a translation of it), but, by now by dint of that very fact, it cannot be the use of a sentence that expresses “what we would intuitively regard as truth conditions” for the sentence mentioned on the LHS. So neither (TI) nor (TI#) interpret the instances of the T-schema in such a way that come out true, and obviously so.

I am about to go on and consider objections and offer replies, but one objection needs to be considered and responded to right away. It does the deflationist no good to say that unlike Jackendoff and the proponent of the semantically excessive interpretation, her sentences do speak of the world, but just not the bits of the world that, intuitively, the sentences to which truth is ascribed seem to speak about. Put another way, the deflationist may say that unlike the proponent of the semantically excessive view, her sentences do express truth conditions, just not “what we would intuitively regard as truth conditions.” But what does that mean? The deflationist cannot mean by this that her sentences express the real truth conditions for sentences, and that “what we would intuitively regard as truth conditions” are not the real truth conditions. For example, the deflationist cannot mean that the real truth conditions of ‘In Bosnia, p’ make mention of newspapers and the like, and not of p-type states of affairs in Bosnia. For that would just be a view in which meaning did determine truth conditions, and a view in which the meaning characteristics of sentences did not come apart from the truth conditions of sentences, and a view in which meaning characteristics may very well comprise the air that inflates the account of truth. If that were the view, then deflationism
would not be a controversial view of our understanding of truth and meaning, but a controversial view about what our words mean and the conditions under which sentences containing them are true, understood against the background of an uncontroversial view of our understanding of truth and meaning. What the deflationist must mean by saying that her sentence expresses a truth condition but not “what we would intuitively regard as truth conditions” for the sentence mentioned on the LHS is that it expresses a truth condition, but not the truth condition for the sentence, because whatever it is that ‘#snow is white’ expresses, it cannot be the truth condition for ‘snow is white’ because it was engineered by the deflationist to express, precisely, anything but that.\footnote{The two-worlds structure of the semantically excessive interpretation does not come from its commitments to a mental, projected world and the real world, but rather from its separation of representation from truth and attachment to some notion that is explicitly distinguished from truth. The problem is the distinction between a world of something-other-than-truth in representation and the world of truth that is disconnected from representation.}

Let me, in closing this section, state the objection to deflationism in a way that more clearly parallels that offered against the semantically excessive interpretation, but that also incorporates the points I have just made. If the sentence used on the RHS specifies “what we would intuitively regard as truth conditions” for the sentence mentioned on the LHS, it cannot be a use of the sentence mentioned on the LHS, for, according to the deflationist, that sentence does not have a meaning that determines “what we would intuitively regard as truth conditions” for the mentioned sentence. On the other hand, if the sentence used on the RHS is a use of the sentence mentioned on the LHS, it cannot be used to state the truth condition for the mentioned sentence even if it can be used to state a truth condition; for the meaning characteristics of the mentioned sentence, used on the RHS, do not determine the truth condition. Either way, the theory fails to interpret instances of the T-schema in such a way that they are true, and obviously so.

The two-worlds structure of a view consists of the separation of representation from truth in that view. A two-worlds structure is present in a relatively obvious way in the semantically excessive interpretation (section II). The presence of the two-worlds structure in a view leads proponents of that view to be committed to the worst possible theory of truth (section III). The two-worlds structure is also present in deflationism (section IV). I conclude that the deflationist, too, is committed to the worst possible theory of truth.
V. SOME OBJECTIONS AND REPLIES

At this point, one might think that either the characterisation of deflationism is unfair, or that the connection between the deflationary accounts of truth and meaning has been misconstrued. In particular, it may be objected that the characterisation and connection are not consistent with the following aspects of deflationism: (i) that the T-schema is stipulated to be true by convention and to fix the reference of ‘true’; (ii) that the cognitive rule that is to be followed to possess the concept of truth is the simple and underived one of having a disposition to judge the instances of the T-schema; (iii) that meaning characteristics are not part of an account of what meaning consists in; and (iv) that deflationism need not involve the radical disconnect between truth and meaning that I have arrived at in the discussion of Field. I will respond to these objections one at a time.

(i) First, consider the idea that the instances of the T-schema are stipulated to be true by convention. It may well be the case that the truth of an instance of the T-schema, at least for linguistic versions of the T-schema, is conventional. But this will be conventional truth only in the sense that the truth is a truth about certain (linguistic) conventions, not a truth by convention. But, as propositionalist versions of the T-schema show, the instances of the T-schema need not be conventional even in this weak sense of being truths about (linguistic) conventions. An alternative view is that the instances of the T-schema comprise conceptual knowledge about the property of being true. But this need not commit one to any kind of conventionalism. Consider in this regard W.V.O. Quine’s criticisms of a version of the analytic/synthetic distinction in which the analytic truths are made true by conventionally determined meanings and the synthetic truths by the world.\(^9\) What the criticisms show is that the distinction between analytic and synthetic is not a distinction in domains of truth makers. What makes analytic or conceptual truths conceptual is that standing in some relation to them, like judging or knowing them, is fundamental to answering the question of what it is to be able to think in a certain way about some aspect of the world. What makes them true is the world. Applied to the T-schema, the view is that the instances of the T-schema are such that standing in some relation to them, like judging or knowing them, is fundamental to the issue of what it is to be able to think in a certain way about the property of being true. On this view, the instances of the T-schema are made conceptual not by a special domain of conventionally determined truth

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mengers but by the role of the T-schema in answering the question of what it is to be able to think in a certain way about aspects of the world, in this case the property of being true. What makes the instances of the T-schema true are facts about the property of being true.

These considerations together with the myriad other problems that attend truth by convention suggest that deflationism would do well to distance itself from the very problematic idea of truth by convention.

(ii) A second, more important, objection criticizes the idea that the deflationist theory of meaning or content for ‘snow’ or snow has any impact or consequences for the deflationist account of truth. It cannot have any impact or consequences because there is no room for it to do so; and there is no room for it to do so because the possession conditions for the concept of truth are simple, and consist (roughly) in having a disposition to accept or judge the instances of the T-schema. But, the objection continues, the view here distorts this idea by making possession of the concept of truth depend upon other concepts, and this makes the possession condition no longer simple.

The objection confuses the potentially correct idea that the possession conditions of the concept of truth are simple, with the incorrect idea that simple possession conditions can make no further demands on the conceptual repertoire of the thinker. But a more general consideration of implicit definitions, from which this account of possession of the concept of truth draws inspiration (where the instances of the T-schema implicitly define truth) shows that this idea is mistaken. An implicit definition gives the meaning of some expression by specifying its contribution to the truth conditions of canonical sentential contexts (or a canonical sentential context schema) in which the expression figures. But a canonical sentential context will mention other expressions, and accepting the truth of a canonical sentential context and determining the correct reference for the expression being implicitly defined will depend on the concepts expressed by and references of these other expressions. So although it may be the case that possessing the concept of truth requires accepting instances of the T-schema, all the expressions in an instance and their semantics are relevant to whether the reference being determined for the expression being defined—‘true’—is the correct one. The objection of this paper is that the deflationist account of meaning makes the canonical sentential contexts for ‘true’—the instances of the T-schema—useless for implicitly defining and determining the reference of ‘true’ because the instances will not conform to (Plat). As an analogy, consider a view according to which the truth values of sentences that express numerical identities between Fs and Gs (the number of Fs = the number of Gs) are determined by the condition that the Fs and Gs can be put into
one-to-one correspondence, but which is then followed by an account of one-to-one correspondence in which it is not an equivalence relation. No one would be inclined to say that this version of Hume’s Principle plays a role in our understanding of number.

(iii) The third objection criticizes the idea, implicit in my presentation, that the account in terms of meaning characteristics is an account of what meaning consists in for the deflationist. That is, it might be objected that meaning characteristics are not to be understood as contributing to an account of what meaning consists in. Perhaps Field’s point in emphasizing how it is that the meaning characteristics of a sentence can conflict with its intuitive truth conditions is that the meaning characteristics cannot be an account of what meaning facts consist in. Moreover, Field holds that whether a sentence is true or not is a use-independent fact about the sentence; and it would be odd, then, to hold that the meaning of sentences is a use-dependent property of the sentence. The only appropriate theory of meaning would mimic the deflationary theory of truth in structure, and hold the meanings of sentences to be determined by a schema like

(M) \([S]\) means that \(S\)

and not by anything more substantive. But, the objection continues, since the arguments offered here work by highlighting a tension between the deflationist theory of truth and the deflationist theory of meaning, these objections will get no traction if the account in terms of meaning characteristics is not an account of meaning for the deflationist.

I am happy to admit that the objections of this paper do not apply if the account in terms of meaning characteristics is not an account of meaning for the deflationist. I can only offer the following comments about the proposal. First, it is not clear at all what meaning characteristics are if not the characteristics that determine the facts about meaning. Second, even if an account in terms of meaning characteristics is not supposed to be an account of meaning for the deflationist, there remains the question of what the deflationist account of meaning is to be. Finally, if the account of meaning is not provided by meaning characteristics, but is instead provided by the extremely deflated schema (M) and its instances, it will be subject to numerous problems of its own, including one that requires an answer.

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40 This is not an objection somebody like Horwich could avail himself. It is very clear that his use theory of meaning is an account of what constitutes meaning.

41 See my “Davidson, Semantic Deflationism, and Dummett’s Dilemma,” §5.
to the motivational question of why we should rest content with such a modest account of meaning.\textsuperscript{42}

(iv) The fourth objection says that although the argument of this paper may be cogent against the very radical kind of deflationism that I have arrived at in the discussion of Field, it does nothing to harm less radical versions. Does truth really need to be \textit{that} pure with respect to meaning in order to be deflated? The idea here is that truth can play a role in the theory of meaning—in particular, the role of constraining meanings, without compromising a deflationary account of truth.\textsuperscript{43} Suppose that truth is understood through the instances of the T-schema, and that truth plays a role in constraining meaning, and in this sense, meaning is truth conditional. Would that not be deflated enough?

This is not the place to pursue the issue in any significant detail. Others have argued that deflationism is not consistent with a truth conditional account of meaning, because the combination involves a vicious circularity.\textsuperscript{44} My own view is that the problem is not exactly circularity, but rather that the proximity into which a truth conditional account of meaning brings the concepts of meaning and truth is such as to inflate truth to the same extent that the account of meaning is inflated (see note 33). But for current purposes, I am inclined just to turn this objection on its head. My main concern is to argue against deflationism as a philosophy of how to understand truth, meaning, and their interrelations. The kind of deflationism that I have arrived at in the discussion of Field is a radical philosophy of truth, meaning, and their interrelations. Deflationist views that are consistent with truth-conditional accounts of meaning do not have the kinds of radical repercussions for our understanding of truth, meaning, and their interrelations that is the focus of my interest (this is not to say that they have no repercussions). Paraphrasing Davidson

\textsuperscript{42} Here the considerations do not parallel matters in the theory of truth. We may, perhaps, answer the motivational question for deflationism about truth by showing how deflated truth can do the work we want—say, logical work—of substantial truth. But we do not want an account of meaning because of the work it can do for us; we want it because we want to know \textit{what meaning is}. Motivating deflationism about meaning is hard. McDowell, for example, favors a deflated account of meaning—what he calls a \textit{modest} account of meaning—and goes to great lengths to justify the idea that an account of meaning should not be anything more than modest; see "In Defence of Modesty"; and also "Another Plea for Modesty" (1997), reprinted in his \textit{Meaning, Knowledge, and Reality}, pp. 108–31. For criticism, see my "The Theory of Truth in the Theory of Meaning."

\textsuperscript{43} Horwich, \textit{op. cit.}; Williams, \textit{op. cit.}

from a not unrelated context, such views may improve intelligibility, but not while retaining the excitement.\textsuperscript{45}

VI. ON THE VERY IDEA OF THE T-SCHEMA

My strategy of argument against deflationism has been to associate deflationism with the semantically excessive interpretation, and in particular to reveal its common commitment to a semantically excessive understanding of representation. This leads both the semantically excessive interpretation and deflationism to the worst possible theory of truth. However, I think that there are at least two interrelated points of disanalogy between the semantically excessive interpretation and deflationism. Although I doubt it, these disanalogies may hold out further hope for the semantically excessive interpretation, but they further cement the case against the deflationist.

The first disanalogy is the following. My argument charges the semantically excessive interpretation of failing to provide an account of meaning that is in conformity with a fundamental platitude that links the concepts of meaning and truth. It might be replied that my argument cannot harm the kind of scientific project that Jackendoff is engaged in, or the conclusions that he arrives at, because scientific projects do not deploy common sense concepts, but rather technical concepts, and these technical concepts are not constrained by the intuitive platitudes conformity with which partially characterizes the commonsense concepts.\textsuperscript{46} I think the objection is mistaken, because the argument does not intend to put the scientific project, but only the interpretive gloss that that scientific project is given, into jeopardy—this is why the problem concerns not cognitive science, but a semantically excessive interpretation of it. Be that as it may, I want to note now that this kind of response is simply not open to the

\textsuperscript{45} Davidson, “On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme” (1974), reprinted in his \textit{Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation}, pp. 183–98, at p. 183. The ideas of this paragraph can also be used to understand a progression in Davidson’s thought, from the view that a deflated concept of truth functions as a theoretical primitive in the theory of meaning to the view that the concept of truth is substantially explicated by the theory of meaning. This movement away from deflationism in Davidson is not based in the objection, criticized by Kirk Ludwig (“Davidson’s Objection to Horwich’s Minimalism about Truth,” this \textit{Journal}, \textbf{c}i, 8 (August 2004): 429–37), that no compositional sense can be made, within the confines of deflationism, of the semantics of “the proposition that $P$” (see Davidson, “The Folly of Trying to Define Truth,” this \textit{Journal}, \textbf{xclii}, 6 (June 1996): 263–78). Rather, the movement away from deflationism conforms to the general idea, in Ludwig’s words, that “[o]bjections to minimalism must rest...on establishing important connection between the concept of truth and other concepts” (p. 437).

\textsuperscript{46} An argument against referential or truth conditional semantics explicitly along these lines can be recovered from Chomsky, \textit{New Horizons in the Study of Language and Mind}, chapter 2.
deflationist. The deflationist is staking out a position on the concepts of truth and meaning that is meant to quiet the debates about concepts that are, and have forever been, a central concern of philosophy. Those debates surely do not concern technical concepts of recent vintage. It concerns our folk understanding of a concept that is central to our dealings with the world and with others.47

The second, related, disanalogy is that it might be replied on Jackendoff’s behalf, but not the deflationist’s, that it is precisely his view that sentences do not have truth conditions—they have only truth-in-the-projection conditions—and thus, to say that the position is unable to recover the connection between meaning and truth that is embodied in (Plat) is simply to make explicit a central feature of the intended, technical, replacement that is being offered. The criticisms offered here, continues the objection, simply beg the question. I think that this objection mistakes the character of the argument given here. The argument does not simply confront a non-truth conditional account of meaning with a truth conditional one; as I said earlier, my objections do not apply to other criticisms of truth conditional semantics. Rather, the structure of the argument is to note that Jackendoff’s form of commitment to a non-truth conditional theory of meaning entails absurdity in one’s theory of truth; it entails that the instances of the T-schema cannot be interpreted in any way in which they come out true, and obviously so. In any event, whatever the merits of this objection, it should be noted that it is available to the deflationist only on pain of incoherence. We have just pointed out that deflationism is not concerned with technical replacements for certain central folk concepts, but with those central folk concepts themselves. But the account that deflationism provides for our folk concept of truth is precisely that which is embodied in the list of instances of the T-schema; and this list serves to characterize truth only in virtue of the conformity of the instances to (Plat). But the fact that deflationary meaning characteristics do not determine truth conditions means that the deflationary view of truth—the entire positive dimension of the deflationist position—itself has been undercut; it cannot understand the instances of the T-schema as instances of a schema that conforms to the platitude about truth and meaning that a mentioned sentence is true iff things are as a use of it say they are.

47 For an illuminating discussion of whether Field’s deflationary accounts of meaning and truth can serve as either an analysis of our ordinary notions, or as a technical replacement, see Ray Buchanan, “Are Truth and Reference Quasi-Disquotational?,” Philosophical Studies, cxiii (2003): 43–75.
To put the point explicitly: the argument against Jackendoff has the structure of a reductio; but in addition to being subject to an exactly parallel argument, the deflationist is also subject to a charge of internal inconsistency or incoherence.\footnote{I think that this point is missed in Dorit Bar-On, Horisk, and William Lycan, "Deflationism, Meaning, and Truth Conditions," Philosophical Studies, 71 (1999): 1–28, in their interesting account of the problems that deflationism faces when it comes to providing an account of meaning. They aim to establish in their paper that the demands placed on truth by meaning entail that "either deflationism about truth is false or the received view that deflationism about truth is incompatible with a truth conditional account of view of meaning must be rejected." (p. 1). But, on my view, the demands placed on truth by meaning render deflationism incoherent: if meaning is not truth conditional, then the deflationist both accepts and denies the instances of the T-schema; and if meaning is truth conditional, then the deflationist both accepts and denies that there is more to say about truth than that which is captured in the instances of the T-schema.}  

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