Deferential concepts and opacity

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1 Introduction

Is there something deference cannot do in philosophy? When a philosopher worried about conceptual analysis asserts a causal relationship, feels free from any responsibility for an account of the nature of cause, and let a specialist takes charge, we say he is applying the analytic technique of "Gricean deference" (Cooper 1976, 91). We call a servile housewife a "deferential wife" (Friedman, 1983). We have vegetarian friends for dinner and we do not prepare any meat: we are acting deferentially (Soper 2002). Authority of the Law? Deference. Imperfect mastery? Deference. Opacity? Deference.

There are important theories concerning deference at least in four philosophical disciplines: Philosophy of Law, Ethics, Philosophy of Mind, and Philosophy of Language. In all four cases deference has to do with taking as ours some feature which does not belong to us. In Philosophy of Law and Ethics deference applies to actions. In Philosophy of Mind, we have deferential concepts, and consequently deferential thoughts. In Philosophy of Language some terms are said to be used deferentially.

At least in some discussions of Philosophy of Mind and Philosophy of Language, we think we can use the same notion deference. One of the most promissory accounts of the mechanism of deference has been provided by F. Recanati (Recanati 1997, Recanati 2000a. Recanati 2000b. Recanati 2001). Recanati thinks that all the cases of imperfect mastery can be analyzed using what

he calls the "deferential operator". He also maintains that deference is a pragmatic process responsible for opacity in meta-representations. In this paper we will analyze these two assertions.

The final point of this study will be the application of a refined deferential operator to the problem of imperfect mastery. First of all, we shall introduce some basic notions about Recanati's opacity theory. Then we will present the deferential operator and some of its applications at the level of thought. After that, we will explore more deeply the mechanism of deference by facing the deferential operator with opacity in meta-representations. Finally, we will apply the developed deference mechanism to the problem of imperfect mastery and unconsciously deferential thoughts.

2 Opacity

In order to understand the theory for the semantics of belief reports we will present in section 4, we should introduce some ideas about what it is for an utterance to be opaque in Recanati's framework.

Quine thought that substitutivity was a necessary and sufficient condition of pure referentiality. Pure referentiality was a necessary and sufficient condition for transparency. According to Recanati, however, referentiality does not imply substitutivity nor transparency. Nor even transparency implies substitutivity.

One of the sources of Quine's error lies in his treatment of quotation as a logical block. The typical example of a noun occurring in a non-purely referential position is:

i) "Rose" has four letters.

In cases like this it is clear that we are not interested in the reference of the proper noun, but in its form, the word. Still, there are cases in which we are interested both in the form of word and in its reference. Recanati borrows Quinean example to make his point:

ii) Giorgione was so called because of his size.

iii) Barbarelli was so called because of his size.

The truth of ii) does not imply the truth of iii), even though we have just substituted a proper noun for other proper noun with the

same reference. This could make us believe that the "Giorgione" occurrence in ii) is not purely referential. Still, are not i) and ii) different? In i) it is clear that "Rose" is contained in the sentence like "cat" is contained in "cattle". But this is not the case for "Giorgione" in ii). Giorgione in ii) is *used* and *mentioned* at the same time.

The singular term "Giorgione" makes its normal contribution to the proposition expressed by ii), that is, the individual it refers to (also called "Barbarelli"). It is another component of the expression, namely the adverb "so", which includes in its contribution to the proposition a reference to the word "Giorgione". We could rewrite ii) splitting in two the double function of the proper noun:

ii*) Barbarelli was so called, "Giorgione", because of his size.

These cases are the key to see the differences between referentiality, substitutivity and transparence.

A) *Referentiality does not imply substitutivity*. Substitutivity is not the criterion for referentiality. To know whether a singular term is directly referential, whether it is a *genuine* singular term, we should look at its semantic value, its contribution to the truth conditions expressed by the utterance. Sometimes substitutivity is not possible, even though we clearly got a genuine singular term.

iv) John, who always confuses me with my father, believes that I am an engineer.

v) John, who always confuses me with my father, believes that Neftalí Villanueva Fernández is an engineer.

According to Recanati, "I"'s contribution to the proposition is exclusively its reference. Thus, "I" behaves in iv) as a genuine singular term. In spite of this situation, the substitution of "I" for other singular term with the same reference could alter the truth conditions of the utterance. We just have to imagine that John is a blind man who perfectly knows my name and my father's name. Besides, he keeps confusing our walking sounds and always asks me questions about engineering.

B) *Referentiality does not imply transparency*. Recanati distinguishes two senses in which someone can talk about an expression's contribution to a proposition. The *narrow semantic contribution* of an expression is its content, the systematic contribution the expression makes to the propositions expressed by the utterances of the sentences that contain this expression. On the other hand, to the *broad semantic contribution* of an expression belongs all the information depending on that expression which alters the truth conditions of the proposition.

In ii), the narrow semantic contribution of the singular term Giorgione is just its reference, while its broad semantic contribution includes its *form*, "Giorgione". In fact, "Giorgione" is part of the narrow semantic contribution of the adverb "so".

Having in mind this distinction, Recanati defines referentiality and transparency:

> *Referentiality*: a singular term *t* has a purely referential occurrence iff the narrow semantic contribution of the singular term *t* is nothing but its reference.
>
> *Transparency*: An expression transparently contains a singular term *t* iff the broad semantic contribution of the singular term *t* is nothing but its reference. Otherwise, it opaquely contains the singular term.

Thus, in ii) the singular term Giorgione is directly referential, occurs in a purely referential position, while the global expression opaquely contains the singular term.

C) *Transparency does not imply substitutivity*. Belief operators can behave in a reflexive way or in a non-reflexive way. A belief operator behaves non-reflexively if the global meta-representation contains transparently all the expressions under the scope of the belief operator. Otherwise, it behaves reflexively. The reflexive character of the operator results from a pragmatic process of free enrichment, as we shall see in section 4. Being free enrichment a highly context sensitive process, it can happen that a change in the context, introduced by the replacement of a genuine singular term for other genuine singular term with the same reference, triggers the pragmatic process of free enrichment, even though the original belief operator behaved non-reflexively with the first singular term.

All this conceptual precisions will be necessary in section 4. There, we will try to discover some technical features of deference by putting together a few tools of Recanati's theory of meaning in the playground of belief reports. Before that, we should meet a main character of this paper: the "deferential operator".

3 Deference and mental content

A woman goes to the doctor and is told to suffer from arthritis. The lady comes back home while thinking about the diagnosis. In the lift of her building, she meets a neighbor and engages in this conversation:

> NEIGHBOR: How are you? What did the doctor say about your pain in the knee?
>
> LADY: Fine thanks. I happen to have arthritis in my knee.
>
> NEIGHBOR: I see.
>
> LADY: By the way, do you remember that pain your daughter said she had in her thigh? Arthritis, for sure.

In fact, arthritis can only affect joints, like the knee. Pains from muscles, like the thigh, cannot be caused by this illness. We can say then that this lady has a deficient concept of arthritis, or even that she lacks completely the concept ARTHRITIS, as some theories seem to defend. As we have seen, she is not able to use this concept properly, and that is plainly manifest in the conversation. What can we say about the walk back home? What are the thoughts she's thinking, including the symbol "arthritis", about? Which is the content of this kind of thoughts? What can be said to be in her "belief box"?

Recanati faces the problem of deference trying to answer the following question: Can we believe what we do not understand? In other words, can the arthritically affected concept-lacking lady believe that she has arthritis? This author supports the idea that the content of the lady's thought "I have arthritis", is the same one as the doctor's "You have arthritis" when "you" refers to the lady. The difference, Recant says, has to be found not at the level of content, but at that of character.

Recanati's main interlocutor on this topic is D. Sperber[1]. Sperber distinguishes between two modes of evaluating a sentence. There is a *descriptive* mode, in which we first determine the proposition the sentence expresses when uttered or thought, and then we evaluate the resulting proposition as true or false. But there is another mode, the *symbolic* one, in which evaluation precedes interpretation. This distinction corresponds to two modes of being "stored in the belief box". A representation can be directly inside the belief box as it is, or it can be embedded within a meta-representation, which itself figures in the belief box. Embedded representations cannot logically interact with the other representations in the belief box. For example, my belief that "My five years old cousin believes that cows lay eggs" does not imply I have in my belief box "Cows lay eggs", contradicting other beliefs of mine such as "Cows are mammals".

Nevertheless, an embedded representation can be emancipated if it is contained within a special kind of meta-representation, a *validating meta-representation*. Validating frames such as "It is true that...", allows the emancipation of the embedded representation. Someone who believes that it is true that cows lay eggs can be said to believe that cows lay eggs as well. If she has in her belief box the representation "It is true that cows lay eggs", she will have "Cows lay eggs" too.

Emancipation, however, is not always possible. Sometimes the process is blocked because some of the symbols that take part in the embedded representation are semantically ill formed. If we apply Sperber's view, this is what happens in cases like:

> (1) The doctor says I have arthritis in the knee. [As thought by the lady we have talked about before].
>
> (2) The teacher says Cicero's prose is full of synechdoches. [Thought by a pupil who doesn't know what a synechdoche is].
>
> (3) Lacan said that the unconscious is structured like a language. [Thought by a Lacanian].

The arthritic lady, the student and the Lacanian have a validating belief for the object representation, but their object representations cannot be emancipated because they contain some un-

[1] We reproduce this discussion sticking to Recanati's terminology.

interpreted symbols. In (1) the symbol "arthritis", as thought by the lady, is semantically defective. In (2), the pupil does not know what special figure is a "synecdoche". Finally, in (3), even Lacanians are unable to report what the complete object representation means. They just trust the primary source of these locutions. So, in their belief boxes they cannot have the emancipated representations. Their thoughts are not about arthritis, synecdoches and the unconscious structured like a language, but about some ailment called "arthritis", about some figure of speech called "synecdoche" and about whatever Lacan meant when he said, "the unconscious is structured like a language". Thus, as Sperber says, the lady has the *quasi-belief* that she has arthritis; the pupil has the *quasi-belief* that Cicero's prose is full of synecdoches and the Lacanian has the *quasi-belief* that the unconscious is structured like a language. It would be dangerous to have in our belief box a representation whose meaning we don't know.

Recanati maintains that mental representations (concepts) should be analyzed in terms of character and content. (1), (2), and (3) can be semantically indeterminate at the level of content or at the level of character, but it is necessary for a mental representation to have a character accessible to the subject in order to be entertained by that subject. Against Sperber, Recanati thinks that there is no difference at the level of content between plain belief and quasi-belief. The arthritic lady does not completely lack the concept ARTHRITIS. She lacks *the concept of* arthritis, but she posses *a concept of* arthritis, namely, a *deferential concept*.

Sperber only recognizes two possible candidates to go inside the belief box: the validating meta-representation and the object representation.

(1) The doctor says I have arthritis in the knee.

(4) I have arthritis in the knee.

Recanati, on the contrary admits three possible candidates:

(1) The doctor says I have arthritis in the knee.

(4) I have arthritis in the knee.

(5) I have "arthritis" in the knee.

As Sperber, Recanati thinks that (4) cannot go inside the belief box of the lady because she does not own the concept ARTHRITIS (the basic concept of arthritis nor the scientific one). For (5), however, his opinion is different. Recanati defends that the arthritic lady has in her belief box representations (1) and (5), the validating meta-belief and the deferential belief.

To see what the special characteristics of this "deferential" belief are we must pay attention to a special component: the *deferential operator*. In writing down thoughts like (5) we use quotes to mark the mental presence of a *deferential operator*.

> "The deferential operator R_x ( ) applies to a symbol $\square$ and yields a complex expression R_x ($\square$) whose character is distinct from that of $\square$ (if $\square$ has one). The character of R_x ($\square$) takes us from a context in which the speaker tacitly refers to a certain cognitive agent *x* (which can be an individual or a community of users) to certain content, namely the content which $\square$ has for *x*, given the character which *x* attaches to $\square$." (Recanati 1997, 91-92).

Before moving to the analysis of the cases of imperfect mastery we have dealt with, let's test the deferential operator in a case of conscious deference. Imagine we got a friend named Antonio who likes exotic travels and always confuses "Bahrain" with "Qatar". Our friend is actually in Qatar, but in our thinking about his coming back, we can entertain the following representation:

(6) Antonio has not come back from "Bahrain" yet.

Of course, when we entertain the symbol "Bahrain", we try to do it as *he* uses to do it, that is, instead of the symbol "Qatar". We *defer* to his use of the symbol. Using the deferential operator, we can rewrite (6) as (6').

(6') Antonio has not come back from $R_{Antonio}$ (Bahrain) yet.

The symbol " $R_{Antonio}$ (Bahrain)" has as character a function from the context in which the thinker refers to a certain cognitive agent, Antonio, to the content the symbol "Bahrain" has for this cogni-

tive agent. The content of $R_{Antonio}$ (Bahrain) is the content "Bahrain" has for Antonio namely the same content "Qatar" has for anyone.

Which is then the difference between entertaining a representation containing a deferential concept ($R_{Antonio}$ (Bahrain)) and entertaining a representation that has as constituent a concept whose content is the same as that of the deferential concept (QATAR) instead? Which is the difference between (6') and (7)?

(7) Antonio has not come back from Qatar yet.

According to Recanati's analysis, (6') and (7) have different characters – (6') has what we could call a "translinguistic character" -, but one and the same content.

Now is time for applying this framework to imperfect mastery. In cases of imperfect mastery the bearer of the thought does not posses the usual concept that appears in her belief. Long time ago, cases of imperfect mastery were called cases of deference. The thinker lets the semantically uninterpreted symbols of his thought rest on other people's epistemic capacities. Being cases of deference, we are allowed to rewrite them using Recanati's deferential operator.

(5) I have "arthritis" in the knee.

(8) Cicero's prose is full of "synecdoches".

(9) "The unconscious is structured like a language".

(5') I have R_{doctor} (arthritis) in the knee.

(8') Cicero's prose is full of $R_{teacher}$ (synecdoches).

(9') R_{Lacan} (The unconscious is structured like a language)

The Deferential operator alters the character of the expressions under its scope, and changes their contents for the contents the character of the person we defer to assigns to these expressions. In the thought (5') the expression "R_{doctor} (arthritis)" has as its character a function from the context in which the lady tacitly refers to the doctor to the content "arthritis" has for the person she defers to. In (8') the character of "$R_{teacher}$ (synecdoches)" is a

function from the context in which the pupil tacitly refers to the teacher to the content the teacher's character for "synecdoche" assigns to that expression. Finally, in (9') the character of "R_{Lacan} (The unconscious is structured like a language)" is a function from the context in which Lacan tacitly refers to Lacan to the content Lacan's character of the expression under the scope of the deferential operator would have assign to it. The contents of the expressions under the scope of the deferential operator are the same contents that the people we defer to assign to them. The contribution to the global content of the thought of the deferential concepts is the contribution that corresponding non-deferential concepts would have done. We find a difference only at the level of character.

To answer the question about believing what we do not understand, we should introduce Recanati's definition of what it is to believe something:

> "To believe that *p* is to accept a representation *r* which means that *p*" (Recanati 2000a, 267).

Consequently, the lady can be said to believe that she has arthritis in her knee, provided that she accepts a representation, (5) and (5'), which means that she has arthritis in her knee, which has that content. When she entertains that thought, she is thinking about her knee and about arthritis, and not just about some ailment called "arthritis". The student can be said to believe that Cicero's prose is full of synecdoches, even if he has a very limited idea of what a synecdoche is.

Both Sperber and Recanati think that nor even Lacan's character for that expression was able to determine certain content for it. So, Lacanian's belief has the same content that those words had for Lacan, that is none.

We can summarize Recanati's argument:

> (i) Cases of imperfect mastery should be analyzed as deference cases.
>
> (ii) Using the deferential operator is the best way to give an account of both the character and content of the deferential expressions.
>
> (iii) To believe that *p* is to accept a representation *r* which means that *p*.

(iv) Conclusion: we can believe what we do not understand.

In addition, Recanati has a response to Sperber's argument about the dangerous step of introducing in our belief box a representation whose meaning we do not know. Recanati accepts that the thinker does not know what her deferential beliefs mean, but he sees no problem on that.

> "There is a clear sense in which cognitive agents do not, in general, "know" the propositional contents of the representations they accept: that is the lesson of externalism. There is nothing exceptional about deferential representations, in that respect." (Recanati 1997, 94).

Cognitive agents, in general, do not "know" the contents of the representations they accept, and every time this happens, we have a new example of imperfect mastery. However, it seems that we will not detect a consciously deference process in all this examples of imperfect mastery. A year after her visit to the doctor, the lady hears the neighbor's daughter screaming from her pain in the thigh and thinks:

(10) She has arthritis in her thigh.

The lady has forgotten the doctor's diagnosis a year ago, but she still can think that her neighbor's daughter has arthritis in her thigh.

This is a usual example of imperfect mastery. The lady has not a conscious validating belief about the doctor. How can (10) be analyzed?. Recanati's answer is clear enough: just in the same way we analyzed the occurrence of "arthritis" considering (5), when she has a conscious validating meta-belief. The difference between (5) and (10) is syntactic, not semantic. In (10) the operator acts as if were articulated, it performs the same task it does in (5'), despite its being *syntactically unarticulated*. Thus, we can find a deferential operator in every case of imperfect mastery.

The difference between conscious and unconscious deferential beliefs will be the main topic of the last section of this paper.

4 Deference and opacity

In this section we will explore the mechanism of deference through its application to a classical problem of the philosophy of language: substitution failures in propositional attitudes. At the end of his most extensive work on this subject (Recanati 2000a, 315), Recanati maintains that deference is one of the two pragmatic processes that jointly or singly are responsible for opacity. In what follows, we will push this analysis a bit further, in order to display the internal mechanism of opacity. Although Recanati does not disclose the details, our treatment perfectly dovetails his main premises. We will put together different aspects of Recanati's theory of meaning to conform a complete picture of the semantics of belief reports. This task will permit us to expand the mechanism of deference we started out in the previous section.

Recanati, as Prior did, considers that the first element we should distinguish in a belief report is a circumstance-shifting operator of the form [*x* believes that] that takes a proposition as argument. This operator tells us we have to evaluate the proposition that falls under its scope not in the actual world, but in a particular circumstance, something like the "conceptual world" of *x*. Temporal operators, for example, function as circumstance-shifting operators as well.

(11) Ten years ago, the president of Spain was not as short as a bonsai.

(11') [Ten years ago] the president of Spain was not as short as a bonsai.

(12) My five years old cousin believes that cows lay eggs.

(12') [My five years old cousin believes that] cows lay eggs.

To know the truth-value of (11), we will not need to know whether the Spanish president is actually tall or short, but whether the president at that time, whoever he was, was tall or short. In fact, (11) is true while the proposition that falls under the scope of the temporal operator is false[2]. Correspondingly, the truth-value of

[2] Just two notes on this example. 1) The existential generalization contained in the analysis of the definite description "the president of Spain" is taken to fall *under* the scope of the temporal operator. 2) We consider the temporal mark of

(12) does not depend on the real existence of non-mammal cows, but on the contents of the representations, we could say, contained in the belief box of my five years old cousin.

Obviously, extensional substitution failures will be present in all sorts of contexts commanded by circumstance-shifting operators, since the extension of the expressions use to change with the shifts of circumstance.

There is however, a more specific phenomenon that we should mainly locate in meta-representations: intensional substitution failures. Sometimes we cannot interchange an expression embedded in a meta-representation for other expression with the same content without altering the truth conditions of the meta-representation. This phenomenon is called *opacity*, as we have seen before, and is the touchstone of every theory of the semantics of the belief reports. A classical example of intensional substitution failure is:

(13) Lois Lane believes that Superman can fly.

(14) Lois Lane believes that Clark Kent can fly.

We cannot substitute "Superman" for "Clark Kent" in (13) without altering the truth-value, even though "Superman" and "Clark Kent" are proper nouns with the same extension and, therefore, the same content. As far as Lois Lane does not know that his shy partner at work is the hero of Metropolis, we must say that (13) is true, while (14) is false. This is the phenomenon a semantics of belief reports should give an account for.

Recanati says that there are two pragmatics processes that are singly or jointly responsible for this phenomenon (Recanati 2000a, 315): free enrichment and deference. Free enrichment source has an equivalent theory in the philosophical market, the hidden indexical theory that appeals to an unarticulated constituent to explain the arousal of opacity. This unarticulated constituent enriches the truth conditions of the global utterance while preserves the contents of the expressions that fall under the scope of the circumstance-shifting meta-representational operator. Unarticulated constituents result from a pragmatic process of free enrichment. Free enrichment is a highly context sensitive process,

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the verbal form just a grammatical accident, being the predicate just "Being short like a bonsai".

and substituting an expression for another one with the same content changes the context of interpretation. This change of context can trigger the primary pragmatic process of free enrichment, affecting thus the truth conditions of the global utterance. Enriching unarticulated constituents act like the classical modes of presentation, but affect just to the truth conditions of the global utterance, and so allow to preserve direct reference and semantic innocence.

The second pragmatic process responsible for opacity is deference. When we defer to other people's use of some expression, we usually change the content of the expression and this, according to Recanati, causes opacity.

Now we are going to formally develop these "two sources of opacity". Both processes will be explained using Recanati's theory of unarticulated constituents (Recanati 2002).

In his defense of Truth Conditional Pragmatics against minimalism, Recanati needs to prove the presence of some pragmatic constituents of the proposition that are not linguistically mandated. These constituents are genuine unarticulated constituents, which are not syntactically articulated and yet can be disregarded without making the utterance semantically unevaluable. Thus, the criterion to identify one in a certain utterance will be to imagine a context in which the same words are used normally, and a truth-evaluable statement is made, but this constituent is not provided. If I cannot imagine such a context, the constituent will be articulated at some level of linguistic analysis.

Consider the following example:

(15) It is raining.

Some people would say that it is not possible to semantically evaluate an utterance like (13) without a place location. Recanati, however, thinks that the location provided in most of the utterances of (13) is a genuine unarticulated constituent. Applying his criterion, Recanati offers a context in which (13) is truth-evaluable without providing a location. We just reproduce his explanation, despite of its oddness:

> "I can imagine a situation in which rain has become extremely rare and important, and rain detectors have been

> disposed all over the territory (whatever the territory — possibly the whole Earth). In the imagined scenario, each detector triggers an alarm bell in the Monitoring Room when it detects rain. There is a single bell; the location of the triggering detector is indicated by a light on a board in the Monitoring Room. After weeks of total drought, the bell eventually rings in the Monitoring Room. Hearing it, the weatherman on duty in the adjacent room shouts: 'It's raining!' His utterance is true, iff it is raining (at the time of utterance) in some place or other." (Recanati 2002, 317).

We just need an example of the application of the criterion of optionality, jointly with a proper specification of how can we have an extra argument place for a function, in this case a location argument place. Recanati says that in cases like this free enrichment provides:

> 1) A *variadic function* that makes a predicate out of a predicate. They can provide an extra argument place for the input predicate or suppress it. In (13) the variadic function adds a new place of argument to a *zero-relation*, a place for a location.
>
> 2) The appropriate information to fulfill this new argument place.

Hence, the analysis of (13) when uttered meaning that it is raining in Paris will be:

(15') $\text{Circ}_{\text{location: Paris}}$ (It is raining (Paris))[3]

Where "$\text{Circ}_{\text{location: Paris}}$" is the representation of a variadic function that receives as input the predicate "raining" and provides as output a new predicate with a new place for argument, something like "raining in ____". Moreover, "$\text{Circ}_{\text{location: Paris}}$" includes the specifications to fulfill the new place for argument with the appropriate information, (Paris).

The context of interpretation triggers the inclusion in the proposition of an unarticulated component like this. Unarticulated

[3] This notation is slightly different from that of Recanati.

constituents are not articulated at any level of linguistic analysis. Their appearance is commanded by the context and depends on what those who fully understand the utterance believe that is being said. In that sense, speaker's intentions have the last word for the presence of unarticulated constituents. In successful communication cases, the speaker conveys some information using semantic and contextual resources. Semantically encoded information is modulated by pragmatic processes, which are triggered by the context. Unarticulated constituents result from a pragmatic process of free enrichment. Hence, their inclusion in the truth conditions of the utterance depends on what the speaker tries to communicate, on speaker's communicative intentions.

Let's go back to opacity. In (13), we said, we cannot substitute "Superman" for "Clark Kent" without altering the truth conditions of the utterance, provided that we know that Lois Lane does not know that his mate at the office is the famous hero. Dealing with belief reports, the optionality criterion is always satisfied, since we can always find a context in which the broad contribution to the proposition of every term in the belief report is just its content. For (13), we only need to consider what would happen if Lois Lane would be aware of the secret identity of Superman. In this new context, opacity will not appear, and we would give this utterance a transparent reading.

The variadic function in belief reports takes as input the metarepresentational operator [*x* believes that], which has only one place of argument, for a proposition, and yields a new operator [*x* so-believes that] with two places of argument, one for a proposition, and other one for the specific form of some of terms contained in the embedded sentence. Hence, the analysis of (13) in its opaque reading will be:

(13') $\text{Circ}_{\text{form: Superman}}$ ([Lois Lane believes that] ((Superman, can fly), ("Superman")).

When someone utters (13) intending some of the elements of the sentence to be non interchangeable for others with the same content, we must analyze his utterance using an unarticulated constituent like this of (13'), that introduces some "quotational information" in the truth conditions of the utterance, in the proposition expressed by the utterance of that sentence. The broad semantic contribution to the proposition of the singular term "Su-

perman" would include information about the very form of the word. Still, its narrow semantic contribution would be the individual the singular term refers to. Therefore, this proper noun would occur in a purely referential position.

The next step will be to apply the unarticulated constituents theory to deferential utterances. Provided that Recanati believes, with Kaplan, that there is no context-shifting operator in natural language, we have to think that the deferential operator, which performs a translinguistic change of context, is not syntactically articulated. The deferential operator changes the context of interpretation of the symbols under its scope, making the interpreter to pick the content of these symbols in a context such as the "language of the person we defer to".

As Recanati points out, deference is a matter of degree. Thus, in some cases the application of the optionality criterion is easier that in other ones. Take for example these two deferential utterances:

(16) Your friend Antonio has not come back from "Bahrain" yet.

(17) My grandmother always asked me what "philtosophy" was.

(16') Your friend Antonio has not come back from $R_{Antonio}$ (Bahrain) yet.

(17') My grandmother always asked me what $R_{grandmother}$ (philtosophy) was.

The degree of deference is contextually determined, but is easy to see that the degree involved in (17) where the speaker uses the non-word "philtosophy" deferring to the idiolect of his grandmother is greater than that involved in (16), where the speaker defers to Antonio, who always mixes up "Bahrain" and "Qatar". (16) can be semantically interpreted even if we subtract the deferential operator, leaving "Bahrain" with its normal content. If we remove the deferential operator from (17), on the other hand, we will not be able to provide a semantic interpretation for the utterance, since "philtosophy" is an uninterpreted symbol. In (17) is the deferential operator, which allows us to interpret the utterance, giving the non-word at least a character. Hence, we conclude that this kind of cases in which the deferential operator applies to a

non-word are cases with the highest level of deference. Except for these special examples of highest degree, the optionality criterion is satisfied by all occurrences of the deferential operator.

Again, the occurrence of a deferential operator depends on the intentions of the speaker. The speaker intends to defer to other person's use of a certain word, and that introduces certain factors in the context of interpretation (a special tone, for example), which trigger the occurrence of an unarticulated constituent in the interpretation of the utterance, a deferential operator, as a result of a pragmatic process of free enrichment. As said above, the content of the expressions within the scope of the deferential operator are the contents they would have for the people to whom the meaning is deferred.

Consider now a particular case of deference: deference under the scope of a circumstance-shifting meta-representational operator:

(18) Antonio believes that "Bahrain" is a great country.

Because of the change of context introduced by the deferential operator contained in this deferential utterance, one cannot substitute some expression of the embedded representation for other one with the same content in the current context *salva veritate*. We cannot substitute "Bahrain" for other expression with the same content as "Bahrain", because the content of "Bahrain" in (18) deferentially interpreted is no longer Bahrain, but Qatar. Thus, deference produces opacity.

We can find, however, some cases in which the deferential operator makes a trans-linguistic context shift with no results at the level of content. Suppose someone is making laugh from the fact that Lois Lane does not know Superman's secret identity even though she spends most of her time with the individual Superman/Clark Kent, properly disguised. In that conversational context, the man utters:

(19) Lois Lane believes that "Superman" is a very strong guy.

That man is obviously using a deferential expression "$R_{\text{Lois Lane}}$ (Superman)"which has the content the expression "Superman" has in Lois Lane idiolect, namely, the individual Clark

Kent/Superman. In cases like this, the context shift introduced by the deferential operator is vacuous at the level of content. The content of (19') is the same as the content of (19''). They just differ at the level of character.

(19') [Lois Lane believes that] $R_{\text{Lois Lane}}$ (Superman) is a very strong guy.

(19'') [Lois Lane believes that] Superman is a very strong guy.

The problem is that, under this analysis, substitution *salva veritate* of expressions with the same content in the current circumstance is possible in these cases. It seems, however, that when he utters (19) the man is trying to express a proposition in which the expression "Superman" plays some role. According to the intuitive truth conditions of (19), substitution doesn't seem to be possible.

To give an account of these intuitions, we should consider the introduction of the unarticulated constituent explained before, the variadic function which opens a place of argument for the form of some expressions. Thus, the analysis of (19) would be:

(19*) $\text{Circ}_{\text{form:Superman}}$([Lois Lane believes that] ($R_{\text{Lois Lane}}$ (Superman), being a very strong guy), "Superman")).

Recanati calls these opaque belief reports "cumulative", and they entail the transparent reading of the utterance. Being cumulative, (19*) entails (19''). An example of non-cumulative belief report is (18).

Finally, consider the first example we met:

(13) Lois Lane believes that Superman can fly.

Although the degree of deference is lower than that of (17), (18) and (19), it seems reasonable to provide this analysis for the opaque reading of this utterance:

(13*) $\text{Circ}_{\text{form:Superman}}$([Lois Lane believes that] ($R_{\text{Lois Lane}}$ (Superman), can fly), "Superman")).

(13), opaquely interpreted is a cumulative belief report (it entails (14)) and contains two different kinds of unarticulated constituents: a variadic function and a deferential operator.

This expansion of Recanati's framework, could be argued, accomplish the following desiderata:

i) It offers an explanation of intensional substitution failures.

ii) It retains the difference transparent/opaque.

iii) It fits direct reference requirements.

iv) It preserves semantic innocence, at least for the cumulative cases.

v) It keeps up compositionality.

In this expansion of Recanati's theory, the fulfillment of some of these desiderata is open to discussion. Nonetheless, we think it deserves to be considered as one of the best theories in the market for the semantics of the belief reports.

5 Deferential operators and unconscious deference

Deference is a very popular instrument when dealing with issues such as ethics, philosophy of law, epistemology, philosophy of mind and philosophy of language. The best description of the mechanism of deference is the one offered by Recanati in his discussion on externalism. Recanati says that deference plays a main role in explaining opacity too, though he does not give the technicalities of this claim. So far we have presented Recanati's deferential operator in the appropriate context. Then we have tested this instrument in the semantics playground. Our exploration of the semantics of the belief reports has significantly improved our understanding of the specific way in which deference works. From semantics of the belief reports we have learned that, when syntactically unarticulated, the deferential operator appears as a genuine unarticulated constituent.

To conclude this initial investigation on the nature of deference, we are going to test the unconscious imperfect mastery cases using the deferential operator, considered as a genuine unarticulated constituent.

Andrew Woodfield (Woodfield 2000) criticized Recanati's account of deference. Woodfield concedes that Recanati has put his finger on a phenomenon no one else has diagnosed before, that of mental "quasi-quoting". He thinks that Recanati's use of deferential operators explains a specialized range of phenomena, though denies that the theory has much wider application. In particular, Woodfield claims, is not true that the characters in Burge's thought experiments, the children, the language learners and other imperfect understanders normally bind these words inside deferential operators. Learning is a gradual process, and an operator cannot *disappear gradually*. There is a saltation between having a deferential concept and having just the concept that Recanati's theory cannot solve.

Moreover, Woodfield says, Recanati's theory misrepresent typical acts of deferring like this:

> i) Alf says: "Cicero's prose is full of synecdoches".
>
> ii) L replies: "No it is not. It's true that his prose is full of figures of speech. But very few of them are synecdoches".
>
> iii) Alf replies: "I accept what you say. Cicero's prose is not full of synecdoches". (Woodfield 2000, 448).

Alf is the student who hears the word "synecdoche" from his schoolteacher. L is a linguist who knows the definition of the word, and the schoolteacher misunderstood the word. If iii) is going to contradict i), then "synecdoche" should have the same content in both cases, and this is not the case provided that in i) the student defer to his schoolteacher and in iii) he defers to L. If we use the deferential operator this piece of conversation, according to Woodfield, does not make much sense.

The discussion of these criticisms (Recanati 2000b; Recanati 2000a, ch. 18) is not crucial for this paper. There are, however, some features of Woodfield's point that are relevant for our research. Deferring, he says, is not a relation of "content co-opting", but an intentional act done by a person for a reason.

> "If I defer to you, it is because I trust you as an interpreter of them [norms that determine objectively correct use] and I let their authority devolve to you. Under some circumstances I may revoke this permission and withdraw

> my trust. Where no independent standard of right and wrong exists, there is no deference, only subservience". (Woodfield 2000, 450).

This paragraph shows clear connections with the discourse about deference in ethics. Both Woodfield's deference and ethical deference have in common the idea that deferring is a conscious process, an action a subject consciously performs. As we pointed out before, Recanati thinks that there can be unconscious deference, deferential thoughts in which the deferential operator is "syntactically unarticulated".

With Woodfield, we consider that Recanati's theory of deference (at least in our developed version) faces some problems when we try to apply it to unconscious cases of imperfect mastery, but our reasons are completely different from those of Woodfield.

In the previous section, we maintained that we could join Recanati's deferential operator and unarticulated constituents in the same theory to explain certain features of the logical behavior of beliefs reports. Since there is no context-shifting operator in natural language, deferential operators should always be unarticulated. Genuine unarticulated constituents must pass the optionality test, and they appear in the interpretation of the utterances as the result of a process of free enrichment, contextually triggered. Whether an unarticulated constituent affects the proposition expressed by the utterance of a certain sentence depends on the intentions of the speaker. Intentions of the speaker are the final guide to include unarticulated constituents in our interpretations of the utterances. Since we have no direct access to the communicative intentions of our interlocutor, is the context that triggers the pragmatic process that results in the inclusion of unarticulated constituents in the interpretation of the utterance.

Considering deferential thoughts, however, the deferential operator can be syntactically articulated or syntactically unarticulated. Imperfect mastery cases always involve a deferential operator, even though the thinker does not defer consciously. In these cases, the deferential operator acts as if it were syntactically articulated. Consider again example (10):

(10) She has arthritis in her thigh.

The lady entertains this thought a year after her visit to the doctor, having forgotten everything about the source she consciously deferred to in the beginning of her use of "arthritis". This is an example of unconscious imperfect mastery. The content of the symbol "arthritis" as appears in her thought is still the same content that symbol has for the doctor. The deferential operator behaves as ever, as if it were articulated, consciously present in her thought.

So far, so good. Now let's apply the lesson we learned from opacity and deferential utterances. Being a genuine unarticulated constituent in (10), the deferential operator must accomplish the optionality criterion. And there is no possible doubt about that. The thought (10) is semantically determined even if we subtract the deferential operator of its interpretation. It is not a variadic function, it is another kind of function, a deferential operator. This is not a problem.

The question that should worry us in trying to apply the lessons of unarticulated constituents to the cases of unconscious imperfect mastery is this: what plays, at the level of thought, the role played by the intentions of the speaker at the linguistic level? The intentions of the speaker are the final criterion for what should or should not be included in the interpretation of an utterance. Hence, it seems that we need some sort of meta-level of thought to guide the inclusion of unarticulated constituents at the level of thought. It is not clear, however, what can play this role. Postulating such a meta-level of thought seems, to say the least, quite complicated. But complicated tasks could be worth enough to be considered. So, before concluding, we would hint at a possible way out for this problem within Recanati's framework:

> "I take it to be possible for an ill-understood, deferential representation to be stored in the belief box as a result of communication and to remain there, even though the subject has come to forget the communicational source of the belief and the justification she originally had for holding it. This does not mean that the belief is no longer justified: the fact that the subject *has* that belief (i. e. the fact that the representation is stored in her belief box) may be considered as sufficient justification for continuing to hold it, in the absence of appropriate counter evidence". (Recanati 1997, 99).

The inclusion of a deference effect, as if it were caused by a deferential operator, in the interpretation of an unconscious imperfect mastery case would be commanded by the presence in our belief box of some forgotten consciously deferential representations.

This possibility is legitimate. But it would require further explanation to be considered as a serious alternative. There seems to be a difference between the behavior of the deference operator in natural language and its behavior in the language of thought. Our explorations of the semantics of belief reports have added another piece to the mechanism of deference, namely that the deferential operator appears as an unarticulated constituent. This piece hardly fits an important desideratum of Recanati's theory of deferential concepts: every case of imperfect mastery involves a deferential concept. At this point, we might look for a proper meta-level of thought or else undermine the benefits of our semantic theory in order to preserve an unspecified notion of deference.

From a wider point of view, the lack of a proper meta-level of thought which guides the content of the expressions as used in language of thought will be a pervasive hindrance. But that story far exceeds the purpose of this paper.

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