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Platonic Semantics

If anything is taken for granted in contemporary metaphysics, it is that platonism with respect to a discourse of metaphysical interest, such as fictional or mathematical discourse, affords a better account of the semantic appearances than nominalism, other things being equal. This belief is typically motivated by the intuitively stronger one that the platonist can take the semantic appearances "at face-value" while the nominalist must resort to apparently *ad hoc* and technically problematic machinery in order to explain those appearances away.[1]

In this paper, I argue that, on any natural construal of "face-value", the platonist, like the nominalist, does not in general seem to be able to take the semantic appearances at face-value. And insofar as the nominalist is forced to resort to apparently *ad hoc* and technically problematic machinery in order to explain those appearances away, the platonist is generally forced to resort to machinery which is at least *prima facie ad hoc* and technically problematic too. One moral of the story is that the thesis that platonism affords a better account of the semantic appearances than nominalism, other things being equal, is not trivial. Another is that we should rethink our methodology in metaphysics.

1. Platonism and Nominalism

[1] See, for example, Benacerraf [1973], Rosen and Burgess [1997], Thomasson [1999], Shapiro [2000], or Loux [2006].

Consider the following two discourses:

(1) Fictional Discourse

(2) Mathematical Discourse

(1) and (2) have at least two features in common. First, (1) and (2) contain numerous sentences which *prima facie* seem to be true.[2] For example, the following two sentences, corresponding to (1) and (2), respectively, *prima facie* seem to be true.

(1a) Sherlock Holmes smokes a pipe.

(2a) 2 is prime.

The second thing that (1) and (2) have in common is that the truth of many sentences from those discourses seems to presuppose the existence of objects which are commonly thought by philosophers to be abstract. For example, (1a) seems to be such that it could only be true if there were a fictional object, Sherlock Holmes – and fictional objects are commonly thought by philosophers to be abstract. Similarly, (2a) seems to be such that it could only be true if there were a mathematical object, the number 2 – and mathematical objects are commonly thought by philosophers to be abstract.

[2] Philosophers responding each of the relevant literatures have been quick to grant the corresponding point. For example, with respect to fictional discourse Robert Howell writes in his [1998] "Taken at face value, 'Anna Karenina is a woman' seems true.", and with respect to mathematical discourse, Chris Swoyer writes in his [2000] "Many sentences of arithmetic, e.g., "7 + 5 = 12" certainly seem to be true…".

Let's call a discourse that shares the two aforementioned features a *discourse of metaphysical interest*.[3] And let's call the following view with respect to a discourse of metaphysical interest, D, *platonism* with respect to D.

> The objects that seem to be referred to or quantified over in apparently true sentences from D exist.

Then platonism with respect to fictional discourse is the view that there exist fictional characters, fictional houses, fictional countries, and so on.[4] And platonism with respect to mathematical discourse, say, is the view that there exist numbers, (pure) sets, tensors, and so on.[5]

Nominalism with respect to a discourse of metaphysical interest, D, is the view that the objects that platonism with respect to D entails exist do not. That is, nominalism with respect to D is the following view.

> It is not the case that the objects that seem to be referred to or quantified over in apparently true sentences from D exist.[6]

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[3] This name is far from perfect (mereological discourse, for example, is clearly a discourse "of metaphysical interest" in some natural sense, but not in the relevant one). I invoke the name for lack of a better alternative.

[4] For discussions of platonism with respect to fictional discourse, and the thesis that sentences from that discourse have the logical forms and truth-values that they seem to, see Kripke [1973], Van Inwagen [1977], Wolterstorff [1980], Salmon [1998], Thomasson [1999], or perhaps Schiffer [2003].

[5] For discussions of platonism with respect to mathematical discourse, and the thesis that sentences from that discourse have the logical forms and truth-values that they seem to, see Quine [1948], Godel [1964], Putnam [1972], Maddy [1990], or Shapiro [1997].

[6] Depending on how discourses are individuated, there will be discourses of metaphysical interest with respect to which apparently true sentences seem to involve reference to, or quantification over, both objects

Hence, nominalism with respect to fictional discourse is the view that there do not exist fictional characters, fictional houses, fictional countries, and so on. And nominalism with respect to mathematical discourse is the view that there do not exist numbers, (pure) sets, spaces, and so on.

2. A Weakness of Nominalism

It is widely believed to be a major weakness of nominalism with respect to a discourse of metaphysical interest that the nominalist cannot take the semantic appearances "at face-value". Thus, while it certainly *seems* that, say, (2a) is both of the logical form "a is F", and also true, nominalism with respect to (2) entails that this is not so. Nominalism entails that, contrary to appearance, (2a) is either *false*, or such that it is *not* actually of the logical form "a is F".[7]

Nominalists have a number of strategies for motivating either of the relevant possibilities. For example, *error-theoretic nominalists* with respect to mathematical discourse, or those who deny that mathematical sentences are really true, usually contend that it is nevertheless *as though* mathematical sentences were true in some relevant respect. For example, they might say that mathematical sentences are conservative over non-mathematical theories;[8] or that they pragmatically convey non-mathematical propositions

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that have commonly been thought by philosophers to be abstract, and those that haven't. In that case, understand my definitions of platonism and nominalism to concern the former sorts of objects alone.

[7] An analogous point holds if one thinks that (1a) seems rather to have the logical form "there exists an x such that x is F".

[8] See Field [1980] and [1989].

which really are true;[9] or, finally, that it is appropriate to call mathematical sentences "true" in the "game of mathematics", even though they are not true in fact.[10]

Similarly, *paraphrase nominalists* with respect to mathematical discourse, or those who deny that mathematical sentences have the logical forms that they seem to, usually contend that mathematical sentences are relevantly like "The average American lives to be 75 years old" – which, while appearing to presuppose the existence of a controversial object, the average American, does not in fact. They may say that (2a) is true, for example, just in case, according to some relevant mathematical theory, 2 is prime;[11] or that it is true just in case some condition holds of concrete particular collections of two things;[12] or, finally, that it is true just in case it is somehow possible that 2 is prime.[13]

There are two longstanding criticisms of such nominalist explanations of the apparent truth and logical form of sentences from a discourse of metaphysical interest. The first is that they are *ad hoc*.[14] What reason, it is rhetorically asked, do we have for thinking that (2a) seems to be true merely because it is *as though* it were true in some respect (other than truth) *that is independent of nominalism with respect to (2)?* Or, again, what reason do we have for thinking that (2a) is of the logical form "a is F" because it is relevantly like "The average American lives to be 75 years old" *that is independent of the view that there are no numbers?* A widespread philosophical view is that we have no such reason.

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[9] See Edidin [1994].
[10] See perhaps Hilbert [1925] or von Neumann [1931].
[11] See Szabo [2003]. This view is also suggested by what Field says in his [1980].
[12] For something like this view, see Cameron [2000], Lowe [1993], or the nominalist strategies that Jubien considers in his [1997].
[13] See, for example, Hellman [1989] or Chihara [1990].
[14] See, for instance, Loux [2006].

The second longstanding criticism of the relevant nominalist explanations is that they face *technical problems*.[15] For example, the paraphrase nominalist with respect to mathematical discourse who claims that a mathematical sentence, s, is true just in case, according to some relevant mathematical theory, A, s is true, will presumably want to allow that there are true mathematical sentences which are *undecidable* with respect to A. In particular, when A is a theory capable of representing a weak fragment of arithmetic, the paraphrase nominalist will presumably wish to concede that "Con(A)" -- the arithmetization of a sentence that intuitively expresses the consistency of A -- is also true. And, yet, it is *prima facie* unclear how she might do so given that she takes an arbitrary mathematical sentence, s, to be true just in case, according to A, s is true.

3. A Virtue of Platonism?

Unlike nominalism, it is almost uniformly agreed that a major *virtue* of platonism with respect to a discourse of metaphysical interest, D, is that it *can* take the semantic appearances "at face-value".[16] After all, platonism with respect to D is consistent with the proposition that sentences of D have the logical forms and truth-values that they seem to. And given that there are no *additional* semantic appearances that are *inconsistent* with platonism, it seems thus to afford a better account of the semantic appearances than nominalism, other things being equal.

[15] See, for instance, Hoffman and Rosenkrantz [2003].
[16] See, for example, Benacerraf [1973], Jubien [1997], Rosen and Burgess [1997], Thomasson [1999], Shapiro [2000], Loux [2006], or Hale [2007].

But on any natural construal of “semantic appearances”, there are many additional semantic appearances with respect to any discourse of metaphysical interest, D, besides the apparent truth-values and logical forms of sentences from D. For example, there are the apparent *properties predicated* in sentences from D. Thus, besides appearing to be true and of the logical form “a is F”, “George Bush is president” appears to predicate George Bush the property that is commonly expressed by the relevant predicate (i.e. the property of being president), rather than the property of being made of wood, or being 10 feet tall, or being a senator. But while platonists have long emphasized that they can take the first two sorts of semantic appearance “at face-value”, they have rarely gone on to show that they can take other sorts of semantic appearance, like this last one, that way too.

4. A Problem for Platonism

In fact, there is a very simple argument to show that it is not the case that, for an arbitrary discourse, D, the platonist with respect to D, can take sentences from D to predicate the properties that they seem to -- at least insofar as the platonist also takes them to have the truth-values and logical forms that they seem to. To see this, consider first the following sentence from (1).

(1b) Sherlock Holmes lives in London, England.

Two of the “semantic appearances” with respect to (1b) are, like (1a), that it is true, and, also like (1a), that it is of the logical form “a is F”. But another is that the logical predicate “lives in London, England”, as it occurs in (1b), expresses the property that is

commonly expressed by that predicate – namely, the property of *living in London, England* -- rather than the property of being red, being of finite duration, or living in Los Angeles, California. *Prima facie*, (1b) predicates the same property of Sherlock Holmes as "Conan Doyle lives in London, England" does of Conan Doyle.[17]

And, yet, if "lives in London, England", as it occurs there, expresses the property of *living in London, England*, then absurdity seems to follow from the aforementioned appearances. For given that (1b) is true, and of the logical form "a is F", it follows that there exists an object, referred to by "Sherlock Holmes", which satisfies the predicate "lives in London, England." And if "lives in London, England" as it occurs there expresses the property of *living in London, England*, then *Sherlock Holmes* exists has the *property* of *living in London, England*. And that's preposterous. Anyone who sincerely went looking for Sherlock Holmes in London, England would be out of her mind.

Thus, the platonist with respect to (1) cannot take (1b) to predicate the property that it seems to, at least insofar as she takes it to have the truth-value and logical form that it seems to.

5. The Generality of the Problem

Still, it might be thought that the relevant difficulty is peculiar to platonism with respect to (1) fictional discourse. In fact, the problem is considerably more general than is

[17] See Zemach [1993].

commonly appreciated.[18] *When taken at face-value, apparently true sentences from many varieties of discourse of metaphysical interest seem to involve the predication of properties to objects that cannot seriously be thought to instantiate them.* Consider the following sentences, corresponding to (2) mathematical, (3) natural kind, (4) "nonexistent" object, (5) musical work, and (6) type discourses, in turn:

(2b) Every regular decagon has 10 sides of equal length.

(3b) The Polar Bear lives in the Arctic.[19]

(4b) Vulcan is a planet between the Sun and Mercury.[20]

(5b) Mozart's *Requiem* is in the key of D minor.[21]

(6b) The letter 'O' is oval in shape.[22]

(2) – (6) each constitutes a discourse of metaphysical interest. And each of (2b) – (6b) seems to afford an example from (2) – (6), respectively, of a sentence that is both true, and such that it could only be true if there existed an object that is commonly thought by philosophers to be abstract. But each of (2b) – (6b) *also* seems to involve the predication

[18] That something like the relevant difficulty arises for platonists with respect to fictional discourse is recognized in the literature. See, for example, Zalta [1983], Zemach [1993], Howell [1998], or Thomasson [1999].
[19] For a defense of platonism with respect to natural kind discourse, and the view that sentences from that discourse have the truth-values and logical forms that they seem to, see Wolterstorff [1970] or Lowe [1989].
[20] For a defense of platonism with respect to "nonexistent" object discourse, and the view that sentences from that discourse have the logical forms and truth-values that they seem to, see Salmon [1998] or [2002] or Caplan [2004].
[21] For a defense of platonism with respect to musical work discourse, and the view that sentences from that discourse have the truth-values and logical forms that they seem to, see Wolheim [1968], Wolterstorff [1975] and [1980], Levinson [1980], Kivy [1983], or Dodd [2007].
[22] For a defense of platonism with respect to type discourse, and the view that sentences from that discourse have the truth-values and logical forms that they seem to, see Cameron [2000], Broomberger [1992a], or Wetzel [2002] and [2006].

of a property of its respective object that no object of the relevant sort could seriously be thought to have.

If the objects peculiar to (2) – (6) really are abstract, as they are commonly thought by philosophers to be, then it seems obvious that (2b) – (6b) are not true when interpreted "at face-value". Abstract objects are standardly taken to be a-spatiotemporal. How could a-spatiotemporal objects have sides or shape, be living on a certain continent or orbiting the Sun, or have tonal qualities? Such features seem to metaphysically entail spatial or temporal features.[23] In the absence of any remotely intelligible story as to how a-spatiotemporal objects could *themselves* have certain shapes, be in certain parts of the solar system, or be in certain keys, the view that they could be seems untenable.

But even if one were to allow that the objects peculiar to (2) – (6) were capable of having spatial or temporal properties, many of (2b) – (6b) would still seem obviously false when interpreted "at face-value". *No matter what* The Polar Bear is, it cannot be seriously thought to live in the Arctic along with its instances. Similarly, *no matter what* Vulcan is, it cannot be seriously thought to be located between the Sun and Mercury. Even (6b) remains hard to take seriously, when interpreted "at face-value". To hold that letter-types literally have shapes would be to revert to a historically Platonic metaphysic, according to which corresponding to any concrete particular letter 'O' is the *archetype* 'O' which actually resembles its instances with respect to shape.[24] Similar points apply to (2b).[25]

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[23] See Balaguer [2004].

[24] Clearly similar points apply to (1b). *No matter what* Sherlock Holmes is, it cannot be seriously maintained that he literally lives in London, England. Whether (5b) would remain obviously false when interpreted "at face-value" on the assumption that the corresponding objects are capable of having spatial or

6. A Weakness of Platonism

There seems, then, to be a clear sense in which the platonist with respect to a wide array of discourses of metaphysical interest cannot in general take the semantic appearances "at face-value" either. In particular, she cannot plausibly understand sentences from those discourses to, in general, *predicate the properties that they seem to* – at least insofar as she understands those sentences to have the truth-values and logical forms that they do.

Of course, there are a variety of ways that the platonist might try to *explain away* the relevant appearances, just as there are a variety of ways that the nominalist tries to explain away the apparent truth-values and logical forms of certain sentences. The most natural way to do this would be to claim that logical predicates are systematically ambiguous – they express certain properties when predicated to the likes of mountains, people, and atoms, and distinct, but related, properties when predicated to the likes of numbers, fictional characters, and natural kinds.[26] For example, the platonist with

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temporal properties harder to discern. Part of the problem is that it is unclear what spatiotemporally extended things musical works -- as opposed to their concrete soundings -- could conceivably be.

[25] It might be wondered whether the problem as it arises for platonism with respect mathematical discourse generalizes beyond elementary geometric discourse. It does, in two ways. First, analogous points to those that were made with respect to (2b) can be made with respect to sentences in topology and analysis. Consider, for instance, the sentence "any neighborhood on a 2-manifold is homomorphic to an open region on a plane which is Euclidean". Interpreted "at face-value", the predicate "is Euclidean" seems to expresses a spatial property (though it is often defined in terms of a metric tensor) – so if this feature of "has four sides of equal length" compels the platonist to interpret (2b) at other than face-value, then it will compel her to interpret this sentence that way too. Second, *no matter how limited* the class of mathematical sentences that cannot be taken "at face-value" may be, that class will give rise to a wholly general semantic problem for the platonist. Either the platonist interprets the remaining portion of mathematics "at face-value" or she does not. In the first case, she sacrifices a uniform semantics for mathematical discourse, and with it various apparent connections between its branches. In the second case, she interprets all of mathematics at other than "face-value", giving up the claim to be able to take even portions of mathematics "at face-value".

[26] There are also more radical ways of seeking to explain away the relevant appearances. For example, Zalta [1983] denies that there is only one way of "having" a property. Sherlock Holmes has the property of living in London in such a way that we run no risk of running into him on vacation, while Tony Blair has

respect to fictional discourse might propose that an arbitrary logical predicate, 'p', when predicated to a fictional object, expresses the property of being such that, according to the pertinent fiction, it has the property commonly expressed by 'p' (where there is presumably no difficulty arising from a fictional character's having *this* property).[27]

There are two things to note about such a proposal. The first is that it is at least *prima facie* vulnerable to the charge of being *ad hoc*, like corresponding nominalist ones.

Just as it is hard to think of a reason to deny that the sentence "Sherlock Holmes lives in London" has the logical form or truth-value that it seems to which is independent of nominalism with respect to fictional discourse, so too is it hard to think of a reason to deny that that sentence predicates the property that it seems to which is independent of platonism. Both of the relevant proposals seem unnatural in some respect or another. Indeed, the platonist interpretation is a near *mirror image* of a simple paraphrase nominalist interpretation in particular. Where the platonist with respect to fictional discourse tells us, roughly, that "Sherlock Holmes lives in London" is true just in case Sherlock Holmes is such that according to the Holmes fiction, he lives in London, the

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that property in a more potent sort of way. This proposal faces analogs of the sorts of problems that I'm about to illustrate. See Thomasson [1999], p. 103 and 105. (Parsons [1980] does not count as a platonist proposal under the present understanding. According to this view, there do not exist any objects of metaphysical interest. Parsons argues that when sentence of the surface form "a is F" is from a discourse of metaphysical interest, that sentence can be true despite there not *existing* an object that satisfies the relevant predicate. What is required is that there *is* such an object -- where there can *be* objects that do not *exist*.)

[27] For discussions of something like this proposal, see Kripke [1973], Van Inwagen [1977], Salmon [1998], Thomasson [1999], or Caplan [2004].

paraphrase nominalist with respect to fictional discourse tells us, roughly, that it is true just in case according to the Holmes fiction, Sherlock Holmes lives in London.[28]

The second thing to note about the relevant proposal is that it is at least *prima facie* vulnerable to the charge of being *technically problematic*, again like corresponding nominalist ones. In particular, it seems to inherit at least many of the salient technical problems of the aforementioned corresponding *paraphrase nominalist* proposal.

For example, the paraphrase nominalist with respect to fictional discourse notoriously cannot understand *all* sentences apparently about fictional objects on the model just proposed, because it is just trivially false that, say, according to the Holmes fiction, Sherlock Holmes is more famous than any real life detective (and, yet, *prima facie* "Sherlock Holmes is more famous than any real life detective" expresses a truth).[29] Hence, she will presumably need to distinguish between sentences apparently about fictional objects that occur "in" a story, and those that do not, and will need to propose that we only understand sentences that occur "in" a story on the aforementioned model. She might then have us understand other apparently true sentences *counterfactually* (if there were fictional characters, Sherlock Holmes would be more famous than any real life detective), or perhaps according to *another* fiction (i.e. the fiction of literary criticism).[30]

[28] There are differences between the readings. The platonist's preserves the apparent *logical form* of the relevant sentence, while the paraphrase nominalist's does not. But it's hard to see why this should make that reading appear less *ad hoc* than the paraphrase nominalist's. After all, the paraphrase nominalist's reading preserves the apparent *property predicated* by the relevant sentence, while the platonist's does not.
[29] See, again, Van Inwagen [1977].
[30] See, for example, Brock [2002].

Just so, the platonist with respect to fictional discourse will have to distinguish between "internal" and "external" predications. She will then have to understand "internal" predications according to the aforementioned model, while understanding "external" predications differently. And while it might be thought that the platonist can just take external predications "at face-value", unlike the paraphrase nominalist, this is not at all obvious. For example, outside the fiction we might say that Conan Doyle *created* Sherlock Holmes. But, again, as standardly conceived of by the platonist, at least, Holmes is an a-spatiotemporal object, not admitting of literal creation or destruction.

7. The Generality of the Weakness

As before, it might be thought that there is something special about fictional discourse such that platonist proposals with respect to it alone seem vulnerable to the relevant difficulties. In fact, the aforementioned points seem, on the face of it, to generalize to the other discourses considered earlier.

In particular, platonists with respect to discourses which are intuitively about "non-repeatables" quite generally, such as "nonexistent" or mathematical objects, will presumably want to adopt readings of the corresponding sentences that are relevantly like the ones just mentioned. For example, the platonist with respect to "nonexistent" object discourse, will presumably want to understand (4b) as, roughly, ascribing Vulcan the property of being such that, according to a certain false physical theory, it is between Mercury and Venus.[31] And the platonist with respect to mathematical discourse will presumably want to understand (2b) as ascribing every regular decagon the property of

[31] For examples of this approach, see Salmon [1998] and [2000], or Caplan [2004].

being such that according to a certain geometric theory, it has 10 sides of equal length. Just like the aforementioned platonist readings of fictional sentences, such readings would seem *prima facie* to inherit at least many of the salient technical problems, and perhaps even apparent *ad hocness*, of corresponding nominalist ones.[32]

Similarly, natural platonist proposals with respect to discourses which are intuitively about "repeatables", such as natural kinds, types, or musical works, will face like difficulties. At first approximation, the platonist with respect to these discourses will want to claim that an arbitrary logical predicate, 'p', when predicated to a repeatable expresses the property of being such as to only be instanced by concrete particulars which have the property commonly expressed by 'p'.[33] For example, the platonist with respect to natural kind discourse will presumably want to understand (3b) as ascribing The Polar Bear the property of being such as to only be instanced by concrete particulars which live in the Arctic. And the platonist with respect to musical work discourse will presumably want to understand (5b) as ascribing Mozart's *Requiem* the property of being such as to only be instanced (sounded) by concrete particulars which are in the key of D minor.

Again, such proposals seem *prima facie* vulnerable to the charge of being *ad hoc*, like corresponding nominalist ones. Just as it is hard to think of a reason to deny that the sentence "The Polar Bear lives in the Artic" has the logical form or truth-value that it seems to which is independent of nominalism with respect to natural kind discourse, so

[32] For example, the "problem of undecidables" for the paraphrase nominalist with respect to mathematical discourse that was mentioned at the outset would seem to reappear in virtually identical fashion for the platonist who pursues the said reading of (geometric) mathematical sentences.
[33] For something like this proposal, see Wolterstorff [1970], Lowe [1989] and [1993], or Cameron [2000].

too is it hard to think of a reason to deny that that sentence predicates the property that it seems to which is independent of platonism. Both of the relevant proposals seem unnatural in some respect or another. Indeed, the relevant proposal is a near *mirror image* of a simple paraphrase nominalist one in particular. Where the platonist with respect to natural kind discourse tells us, roughly, that "The Polar Bear lives in the Artic" is true just in case The Polar Bear is such as to only be instanced by concrete particulars that live in the Artic, the paraphrase nominalist with respect to natural kind discourse tells us, roughly, that it is true just in case (concrete particular) polar bears live in the Artic.

Likewise, such proposals seem, again, to inherit at least many of the salient technical problems of corresponding paraphrase nominalist ones. For example, the paraphrase nominalist with respect to natural kind discourse notoriously cannot understand *all* sentences apparently about natural kinds on the model just proposed, because while it is true that The Polar Bear lives in the Arctic, it is also true that some polar bears do not. Hence, she will need to introduce a notion along the lines of that of *proper-formedness* (or *normality*) into her analysis, and understand "The Polar Bear lives in the Arctic" as expressing, roughly, the proposition that properly-formed polar bears live in the Arctic.

Again, the platonist with respect to natural kind discourse will have to loosen her analysis correspondingly. Rather than understanding the relevant sentence as ascribing the property of being such as to only be instanced by concrete particulars which live in the Artic, she will need to understand it, roughly, as ascribing the property of being such as

to only be *properly* instanced that way.[34] And to whatever extent the introduction of this new normative notion will cause problems for the paraphrase nominalist, it will presumably cause like problems for the platonist.[35]

8. Platonism, Nominalism, and Methodology

I have raised doubts for the familiar view that the platonist can, in general, take the semantic appearances "at face-value", and have suggested that the platonist will require comparably *ad hoc* and technically problematic machinery in order to explain those semantic appearances away. These arguments have at least three consequences for the platonism-nominalism debate, and its proper methodology.

First, the thesis that platonism in general affords a better account of the semantic appearances than nominalism, other things being equal, is *not* trivial. In light of what has been said, it is highly substantive and deserves careful and extended scrutiny on a case-by-case basis. It *certainly* does not deserve the place in metaphysics that it seems to enjoy – that of a practically universally granted background assumption.[36]

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[34] See Wolterstorff [1970] and [1980].

[35] In fact, there is an additional salient technical problem that faces the platonist with respect to natural kind discourse, which does not seem to face the paraphrase nominalist with respect to that discourse. In particular, the platonist alone will need to partition predications of natural kinds much like she did predications of fictional characters. For when the metaphysician says that The Polar Bear is an abstract and multiply-instantiatable entity, she does not thereby predicate it the properties of being such as to only be properly instanced by concrete particulars that are abstract and multiply-instantiatable. The proposition expressed by the latter ascription is trivially false, while the proposition expressed by the former is arguably true. Wolterstorff [1970], [1975], and [1980] recognize something like this problem, as does Zalta [1983].

[36] Of course, nothing that has been said here *refutes* the relevant thesis. Perhaps further investigation would reveal that the aforementioned worries are actually less compelling with respect to platonism than they are with respect to nominalism. Alternatively, perhaps there are *other* less celebrated worries that arise with respect to nominalism alone. Finally, maybe there are some very different proposals from the ones that were made above that only the platonist could make which would seem much more promising than the ones that were recently rehearsed. The point is that it is hardly *obvious* that this is so in light of the fact that neither the nominalist nor the platonist can "take the semantic appearances at face-value".

For example, we cannot reasonably *assume as a background principle* that while platonism may come at the "cost" of a plausible epistemology, or ontology, nominalism comes at the "cost" of a plausible semantics.[37] In light of what has been said, there is no obvious sense in which nominalism generally comes at the "cost" of a plausible semantics – at least as compared with platonism. Such a principle is in need of careful and detailed defense, just like the claims that it might be invoked to defend.

Second, we should be wary of "semantic appearances" (or even more wary than we already are). The arguments offered here suggest that they are inconsistent on a systematic scale, given practically universally accepted background assumptions. In particular, the following three appearances with respect to a discourse of metaphysical interest, D, seem to be inconsistent, given practically universally accepted background assumptions:

1. The apparent truth-values of sentences from D.
2. The apparent logical forms of sentences from D.
3. The apparent properties predicated in sentences from D.[38]

[37] The slogan that platonism comes at the cost of a plausible epistemology, while nominalism comes at the cost of a plausible semantics, is normally traced back to Benacerraf [1973]. The view that platonism comes at the cost of plausible ontology instead (while nominalism comes at the cost of a plausible semantics), can be found in, for instance, Loux [2006].

[38] Indeed, the point could be made even more dramatic with reference to other semantic appearances in addition to 1. – 3. For example, with respect to mathematical discourse, besides appearing to be true, to be of the logical form "R(a, b, c)", and to predicate the plus relation, "2 + 2 = 4", seems to *entail* certain familiar truths about collections of things. For example, "2 + 2 = 4" seems to entail "the union of a collection of two apples with another collection of two apples is a collection of four apples". And, yet, this appearance seems to be inconsistent with the first three. In particular, it seems to be inconsistent with the second. Hence, the platonist with respect to mathematical discourse normally supplements her view with

Finally, we should get out of the market for a theory that can "save" the semantic appearances quite generally. *No* theory can do that.[39] In particular, with respect to the views and semantic appearances that I've considered here, the situation seems to be roughly as follows:

- The *paraphrase nominalist* can "save" 1. and 3. at the expense of 2.
- The *error-theoretic nominalist* can "save" 2. and 3. at the expense of 1.
- The *platonist* can "save" 1. and 2. at the expense of 3.

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certain *bridge laws* that logically connect the likes of "1 + 1 = 2" with the relevant truths about collections of things (see, for example, Benacerraf [1965]). But she might equally have "saved" this last appearance, like (one version of) the paraphrase nominalist, and rejected the appearance that the relevant sentence is of the logical form that it seems to be. (There are analogous points to be made, I think, with respect to discourses that are apparently about "repeatables", such as properties. For instance, "red is lighter than black" arguably seems to *entail* that red things are lighter than black things. And, yet, on a platonist construal -- as opposed to familiar paraphrase nominalist ones -- it is hard to see how this could be.)

[39] Of course, this is not to say that we should get out of the market for the theory that does the *best job* of "saving" the semantic appearances.

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