

New Waves in Truth

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13. On the part/whole relation, see Lewis (1997: 338 fn 21). On conjunction, see Maudlin (2004).
14. Russell (1912/1946: 47) endorsed Revelation for colors. The name for the principle is from Johnston (1992).
15. That said, a primitivism only committed to truth's unanalyzability in non-circular terms, like Patterson (this volume) is consistent with new wave deflationism.
16. Lynch (2001: 4) and Vision (2004: 8) portrayed deflationists as denying truth has a nature and Engel (2002: 12) said deflationists deny that truth is a genuine property.
17. See Horwich (1990/1998: 36–8) for the most prominent admission that deflationism is consistent with truth being a property. See Lynch (2009: 106) for a recent reaffirmation by a critic. Field (2001: 29), Horwich (1990/1998: 38), and Devitt (2001) argue that deflationism is committed to denying that truth is a causal-explanatory property.
18. For this reason, we should not accept Soames's recent formulation of deflationism as a commitment to the views '(i) that p and the proposition that p is true are trivial, necessary, and a priori consequences of one another, and (ii) that any warrant for asserting, believing [...] (or taking any of a variety of related attitudes) toward one of those propositions is a warrant for asserting, believing [...] (or taking the relevant related attitude) toward the other' (2003: 372).
19. Perhaps the first person to raise the problem was Dummett (1959). See also Boghossian (1990).
20. Horwich (1990/1998) made the restriction to non-pathological instances, and Field (1994a) restricted the claim to those instances we understand.
21. Contra McGee: 'For the disquotationalist repudiating bivalence is not an option, for the principle is built into the very meaning of the word 'true'. [(T)-sentences are ...] on the disquotational account, not merely true, but, if I may use the word, analytic' (2005a: 77–8).
22. As Gupta (1993: 297–98; see also Künne 2003: 324) pointed out, if we needed to believe all instances of (PT) in order to grasp the concept of truth, we couldn't grasp the concept of truth until we had grasped all other possible concepts.
23. For discussion, see Bar-On et al. (2000). For criticism of the circularity charge, see Gupta (1993), Lance (1997), Williams (1999), and Horisk (2008).
24. Eklund (this volume) distinguishes the question of the compatibility of deflationism with certain theories of meaning from the question concerning the compatibility of rejectionism with those theories, where rejectionism is the view that 'true' is merely an expressive device. I think new wave deflationism is closer to rejectionism than the position Eklund calls *deflationism*.

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Why Deflationists Should be Pretense Theorists (and Perhaps Already are)

Bradley Armour-Garb & James A. Woodbridge

1 Introduction

In this chapter, we do two things. First, we clarify the notion of *deflationism*, with special attention to deflationary accounts of truth; and, second, we argue that one who endorses a deflationary account of truth (or of semantic notions, generally) should be, or perhaps already is, a pretense theorist regarding 'truth'-talk. The plan is as follows. In §2 we discuss mathematical fictionalism, where we focus on Yablo's pretense account of mathematical discourse. §3 briefly introduces the key elements of deflationism and explains deflationism about truth in particular. §4 discusses why deflationary accounts of truth should be construed as pretense accounts and gives a preliminary sketch of a particular pretense account of 'truth'-talk. §5 addresses a main objection to a pretense account; and §6 concludes.

2 Mathematical fictionalism: Yablo versus Field

Yablo (2005) argues for a pretense account of mathematical discourse—one that, if correct, would improve upon Field's (1980, 1989) brand of fictionalism, given certain reasons for worrying about Field's own account (see, *inter alia*, Shapiro 1983; Yablo 2005). Field's account of mathematical discourse is an example of what we will call *error-theoretic fictionalism* (henceforth, *ETF*). On Field's account, mathematical statements (at least the interesting 'non-negated' ones with existential implications) are, strictly speaking, all false (in which case the standard Putnam-Quine indispensability argument loses its force).¹ Central to his account, however, is the thesis that mathematics does not have to be true to be good, so the falsity of some mathematical statements does not undermine the importance of the application of mathematics in the sciences. Thus, Field aims to allow that mathematics is useful in natural sciences, in spite of the fact that its statements are not true.

Yablo (2005) is unconvinced that Field has succeeded in motivating his particular fictionalist view. Instead of embracing Field's ETF account of

mathematical discourse, Yablo offers an instance of what we call *pretense-involving fictionalism* (henceforth, *PIF*)—a kind of fictionalism that is non-error-theoretic and allows that utterances can be true even if their operation involves fiction (i.e., it explains how speakers can use pretense-involving utterances to make serious and genuinely true assertions about the world).² One of the virtues of Yablo's PIF account of mathematical discourse is that, if successful, it dispenses with the Quine-Putnam indispensability argument, while also explaining the serious, veridical content of mathematical statements (e.g., statements that appear to make essential reference to numbers).³

2.1 Yablo's figurative fictionalism

On Yablo's PIF account, number terms function centrally as representational aids, playing a purely—indeed, an exclusively—expressive role—one that, he contends, could not be performed without having available something like 'number'-talk. According to Yablo (2005), the importance of 'number'-talk can be wholly explained by reference to the expressive feature that such talk provides. He calls his particular pretense view 'Figuralism'. Yablo takes it to be a pressing question 'whether functioning in this way as a representational aid is a privilege reserved to existing things' (2005: 95). His answer is that it is not. As he notes, 'How the real existence of numbers could help is difficult to imagine' (2005: 95). Indeed, on a Yablo-style pretense account, 'they' do not even have to exist to make mathematical statements come out genuinely true, given the special kind of pretense involved: make-believe.

The operation of make-believe is most familiar from children's games. Games of make-believe establish systematic dependencies between part of what is to be pretended in a game, and real-world conditions holding outside of that game (Walton 1990: 37–8).⁴ For example, we might consider some children's game of mud pies to be governed by rules that include the follow stipulations:

- (MP1) Globs of mud count as pies.
- (MP2) The orange crate counts as an oven.

These stipulated pretenses generate further pretenses, depending on what the children actually do. So (MP1) and (MP2) make it to be pretended that a child has put a pie in the oven just in case he has put a glob of mud into the orange crate. In this way, games of make-believe provide a mechanism through which a speaker can make indirectly a serious claim about the world—i.e., she can say something by seeming to say something else (e.g., 'Corey stole Isabel's pie out of the oven'). An appeal to make-believe can thus allow for, rather than undermine, the serious purposes a 'way of talking' serves. And if a way of talking is problematic when taken at face value, an appeal to pretense might explain how it serves any serious purposes at

all. We might therefore solve certain philosophical problems by recognizing make-believe at work in ways of talking where we have not noticed it before.⁵

One of the chief premises of Yablo's PIF account of 'number'-talk is a thesis that we will call *the thesis of expressive indispensability* (henceforth, *EI*), viz.,

- (EI) We need to enlist certain aspects of X-talk, as a means for expressing certain claims that we could not otherwise express.

In the case specifically of 'number'-talk, Yablo contends that we need to enlist number terms, which appears to commit us to a view of numbers as objects, as a means for expressing certain claims (to be discussed below) that we could not—or, at least, could not so easily—express. But what we are trying to say, or convey, does not have anything to do with numbers per se and, in fact, but for certain expressive limitations, could be expressed without appeal to numbers at all. Moreover, such expressive needs have nothing to say about numbers—their nature or even their existence—or about whether there need be any, in order to express what we want, or, perhaps, what we need, to convey. So, while 'number'-talk may be expressively indispensable, numbers, qua objects, may well be theoretically dispensable.

Yablo claims that 'number'-talk, where we appear to bring in numbers, serves as a representational aid, facilitating the expression of certain facts which, themselves, have nothing to do with—that is, which are in no sense about—numbers. To make the point, he considers a case in which a physicist who is studying escape velocity wants to formulate a statement about escape velocity that covers an infinity of particular facts about the trajectories of objects in particular gravitational fields (2005: 94). In order to be able to express the infinitely many facts in finite fashion, the physicist quantifies over numbers to produce:

- (B) For all positive real numbers m and r , the escape velocity from a sphere of mass m and a diameter $2r$ is the square root of $2gm/r$, where g is the gravitational constant.

What (B) does is gather together into a single statement uncountably many facts, the expression of which would otherwise require an infinity of substitution instances of a schematic statement form (Yablo calls it '(A)'). Since we cannot write down or assert the uncountably many sentences that we would need to, if we want to express certain physical laws or regularities, we need to be able to quantify over real numbers. As Yablo points out, in this example we appear to invoke numbers for expressive reasons only, given that what we are trying to convey has nothing to do with numbers and could have been expressed without them, were it not for certain (contingent) facts about finite nature of the language in use.⁶

Yablo notes that we can express the infinitely many facts without recourse to sentences of infinite length, by enlisting number terms, but to do this they only need to serve as aids in representing something that neither involves, nor presupposes, the existence of numbers. He argues for this point by noting

- (i) What we are trying to express has nothing to do with numbers, and
- (ii) The real existence of numbers would neither help, nor hinder, understanding of what we are trying to get across, from which it follows that
- (iii) We have no reason to go on to conclude that numbers exist.

Yablo (2005: 98) goes on to say that

numbers [...] are *creatures of existential metaphor*. They are part of a realm that we play along with because the pretense affords a desirable—sometimes irreplaceable—mode of access to certain real world conditions, viz., the conditions that make a pretense like that appropriate in the relevant game.

Quantifying over numbers plays an expressive role, but this role does not require us to be committed to numbers. How so? Yablo (2005: 98) continues

we make as if pluralities have associated with them things called ‘numbers’, so as to be able to express an (otherwise hard to express because) infinitely disjunctive fact about relative cardinalities like so: The number of Fs is divisible by the number of Gs.

According to Yablo, putative mathematical entities such as numbers, functions, and the like start off life as representational aids in articulating certain first-order logical truths. He describes this as a kind of *Kantian logicism*—‘*Kantian*’, in virtue of the fact that it grounds the necessity of arithmetic in the representational character of numbers (where the number terms serve as representational aids); and ‘*logicist*’, in virtue of the fact that every truth of pure arithmetic has a logical truth as its serious (and, thus, as its asserted) content. A mathematical theory will not therefore be true in the sense of describing a physical realm of mind- and language-independent entities called ‘numbers’. But, unlike on Field’s ETF account of them, some existentially implicating mathematical statements still make genuinely true (logical) claims about the world.

Put very briefly, the idea is that every true mathematical statement like ‘ $3 + 5 = 8$ ’ expresses a first-order logical truth and, hence, is knowable a priori if the first-order logical truth is. So, these statements have serious content that is expressed in first-order logic and which, although true, does not require mathematical statements taken at face-value to be true outside of

the fiction. The serious content of ‘ $3 + 5 = 8$ ’ is that if there are three Ss and five Ts distinct from the Ss then there are eight ($S \vee T$)s. Or, differently put, the pretenses displayed in an utterance of ‘ $3 + 5 = 8$ ’ are to be pretended, because of the logical truth of its serious content, what can be expressed directly by

$$(1) \quad \forall S \forall T \forall z ((Sz \leftrightarrow \sim Tz) \rightarrow \exists x \exists y ((Sx \& Ty) \rightarrow \exists w (Sw \vee Tw))).$$

In this way, we have a pretense that involves apparent reference to numbers, the serious content of which expresses a logical truth involving numerical quantification.

Yablo sees, in the expressive role that ‘number’-talk affords (to be discussed, below), an analogy with a deflationist’s claim about ‘truth’-talk. He notes, on the assumption that truth plays a merely expressive role—as a device that facilitates the expression of blind endorsement of statements, to which we cannot express our commitment directly (say, by just asserting them)—there is ‘[n]o need then to take the truth predicate ontologically seriously; its place in the language is secured by a role it can fill quite regardless of whether it picks out a property’ (2005: 95). And, making the connection between a deflationary view of truth and his own view regarding the expressive role of ‘number’-talk, he suggests, albeit tentatively, that ‘[j]ust as truth is an essential aid in the expression of facts not about truth (there is no such property) [according to the deflationist], perhaps numbers are an essential aid in the expression of facts not about numbers (there are no such things)’ (2005: 95).

Yablo is suggesting that, given Field’s various commitments, he might have endorsed a PIF account of ‘number’-talk of the sort that Yablo has developed, instead of an ETF account. More carefully put, Yablo (2005: 95) is arguing that, given that a deflationist like Field concludes that there is no reason to take the truth predicate ontologically seriously because he sees ‘true’ as a device that exists purely ‘to serve a certain logical need’ whose ‘place in the language is secured by a role it can fill quite regardless of whether it picks out a property’, perhaps Field might have allowed that the same is true of number terms, if, as Yablo maintained, ‘number’-talk likewise serves an expressive role it could fill, regardless of whether number terms pick out any objects. Field might thus have concluded that while (EI) holds of ‘number’-talk of it can fill that role quite regardless of whether number terms pick out any objects at all (let alone numbers!).

While we are inclined to accept Yablo’s point, it bears noting something that Yablo did not consider: that the very factors that appear to motivate a fictionalist account of mathematics, if plausible, might likewise motivate a fictionalist account of truth. That is, rather than (or along with) seeing Field’s allegiance to the exhaustively expressive role of the truth predicate as suggesting a Yablo-style pretense account of mathematical discourse, we

might see Yablo's PIF account of the expressively exhaustive role of 'number'-talk as suggesting that deflationists endorse a pretense account of 'truth'-talk. This is what we shall argue for, in what follows.

Our claim will be that deflationists should be—and, more importantly, should take themselves already to be—fictionalists—in particular, pretense theorists—about truth, claiming that 'truth'-talk involves making as if there is a property of truth, even if there is not (because there need not be) any such property to which the predicate actually answers. Thus, if Yablo is right about 'number'-talk and the impetus for adopting a pretense account of some way of talking turns on a sort of expressive stance on some feature of the discourse, then deflationists about truth should be—or, perhaps, already are—pretense theorists about truth (and its talk).

2.2 From 'number'-talk to 'truth'-talk

The purpose of the last section was to introduce mathematical fictionalism, with a focus on Yablo's figuralist PIF about 'number'-talk. In the next section, we turn from 'number'-talk to 'truth'-talk. Recall that we are taking for granted that the truth predicate is expressively indispensable, in the sense that we need something like the truth predicate in order to fill an expressive need. But recognition of the expressive role of the truth predicate does not—certainly need not—support an ontological commitment to a property of truth, anymore than the expressive role of 'number'-talk supports an ontological commitment to numbers. It does, however, serve as a litmus test for proposed theories of truth. Such approaches—proposed theories of truth—must enable the truth predicate to play the role for which it appears to be expressively indispensable.

In the next section, we turn to deflationism about truth and 'truth'-talk. After setting it out, we argue that once we see how the deflationist understands truth (or, more accurately: 'true'), we will find that, akin to Yablo on 'number'-talk, such a philosopher need not believe in any property of truth (or falsity), in order for her to capitalize on the expressive advantage that 'truth'-talk (and 'falsity'-talk) affords. Before getting there, however, we set out what we take to be the core commitment of deflationism.

3 Deflationism in general

We begin with a word about the 'heart' of deflationism in general. Deflationary approaches (or accounts, views, etc.) to anything are usually presented negatively, by specifying features a given expression lacks. More generally, a deflationary approach accepts some discourse or concept without granting the metaphysical or epistemological presuppositions that are commonly associated with it. Such an approach accepts and explains the relevant discourse, while obviating the need for postulating a theory

(e.g., of truth, of what mathematical knowledge consists in) that requires special epistemic access or a putatively dubious metaphysics. Thus, to be a deflationist is to be an anti-realist of a particular sort, while still granting that there is a role or function for the relevant fragment of discourse.

As we see it, a deflationary view of truth (henceforth, *deflationism*) comprises three features, the conjunction of which we will call the *core commitment* of deflationism.⁷ One who does not endorse deflationism (e.g., an inflationist, though, of course, not all non-deflationists must be inflationists) denies at least one of the features of the core commitment (henceforth, we call such features *theses*). They are as follows: the property thesis, the concept thesis, and the term thesis.⁸

The property thesis holds that there is no genuinely substantive property of truth (if there is a property of truth at all). The concept thesis holds that there are no conceptual connections that would, or, indeed, could, serve to elucidate the concept of truth. On this view, there is no 'deep' connection between the concept of truth and other concepts such that the latter would shed light on the former. According to the term thesis, the expressions 'true' and 'false' serve simply as linguistic devices that are crucial for performing certain logical expressive tasks.

We have said that any theory of truth that subscribes to the three aforementioned features shall count as a deflationary view. But how are we to understand the relationship between a deflationary view of truth and a particular deflationary theory (or account) of truth (e.g., prosententialism)?⁹ And what are the important distinctions between, e.g., disquotationalism and inference-rule deflationism?

We claim that the relationship between a deflationary view about truth and a given deflationary theory of truth is that between genus and species. This enables us to see the differences between disquotationalism and inference-rule deflationism (or minimalism, prosententialism, etc.) as, in effect, differences between distinct and possibly competing species that, at least prima facie, are of the same genus. We find that it is useful to distinguish a deflationary view, qua genus, from theories of truth, qua species, as it allows us to focus our attention on the genus.

3.1 Deflationism about truth

We have explained how, when we talk about a deflationary view about truth, we do not have in mind any particular deflationary theory. Disquotationalists, who take as theoretically basic the instances of the T-schema

(T) 'P' is true iff P,

are properly characterized as deflationists, though not all deflationists are, or need be, disquotationalists.

Minimalists, who advocate a minimalist theory of truth, endorse the deflationary view, taking each instance of the Equivalence Schema,

(ES) (p) is true iff p,

to be conceptually, explanatorily, and logically fundamental (Horwich 1990/1998: 121, 126–8, 138). But the same is true of advocates of inference-rule deflationists, whose theory of truth comprises the inference-rules, 'True'-In and 'True'-Out, viz.,

(TI) from p \Rightarrow T((p)),

(TO) from T((p)) \Rightarrow p,

where ' \Rightarrow ' can be understood as representing an inference rule, or even as capturing a substitution rule to the effect that, in all extensional (or 'transparent') contexts, one can intersubstitute '(p) is true' and 'p,' where again, 'p' serves as a sentential variable that can be replaced by any declarative sentence, and '' and '' serve as angle quotes that nominalize any sentence that goes in for 'p' (Scharp 2008).

As a number of philosophers have pointed out, there are certain cases in which the truth (or falsity) predicate, like 'number'-talk, seems to be expressively indispensable. But many deflationists have gone further, claiming—incorrectly as we see it—that the truth (or falsity) predicate is a device of opaque endorsement (denial), or, sometimes, that it is a device of generalization. A related claim sometimes made is that the truth predicate is a device of infinite conjunction and disjunction (Field 1994a: 264).

But the truth predicate is not a device of opaque endorsement, nor is it a device of generalization, or of infinite conjunction and disjunction. Rather, together with other machinery (notably, quantifiers and variables), the truth (or falsity) predicate can serve as a device for expressing opaque endorsement (indeed, for expressing blind endorsement) and it, together with a quantifier, can serve as a device for expressing generalizations or infinite conjunctions and disjunctions.¹⁰ But if the deflationist should not identify the truth predicate with these particular roles, how should deflationists think about the truth predicate?

We think that we can say something about what kind of device 'true' is if we consider what the truth predicate has to be like, in order for it to perform the aforementioned roles. Here we endorse a slightly generalized version of the account that Quine (1970/1986) offers. In laying out his specifically

disquotational view, Quine discusses the role of the truth predicate in canceling out the semantic ascent achieved by forming the quotation name of a sentence. More generally, what the truth predicate does is undo some nominalization of a content-vehicle, where this nominalization can occur in a number of ways. In addition to forming the quotation name of a sentence, some of the more familiar ways include: forming some structural description of a sentence uttered; forming a 'that'-clause of a sentence that is/could be uttered or that expresses the content of a (possible) mental state, offering a definite description of a (possible) mental state or utterance; etc. These operations all result in ascent from the use of a content-vehicle to express that content, to a kind of mention of the vehicle. The truth predicate undoes this ascent to provide something equivalent to the direct presentation of the content that attaches to the content-vehicle.

We will use the familiar expression 'semantic descent' to capture this operation of the truth predicate in general. Now, being a device of semantic descent is part of what allows the truth predicate so to serve the useful functions that it does. It is a device of semantic descent which, when coupled with other resources (e.g., quantifiers, descriptions), can be employed to express opaque endorsement, enabling its users to express agreement, or disagreement, with a certain body of claims. In addition, the truth predicate's function as a device of semantic descent also allows it to serve in the expression of infinite conjunctions and disjunctions, in the performance of a kind of 'generalizing role'. It is important to note that this role is, in important ways, different from serving as a device for expressing opaque endorsement. It is a mistake to conflate the two, for sometimes the truth predicate, while it aids in the expression of a generalization or infinite conjunction, does not serve as a device for facilitating the expression of opaque endorsement. Indeed, the reason for distinguishing the two is relevant, when we consider that, when a truth predicate appears in the antecedent of a conditional, it is not serving as a device for any sort of endorsement at all, though it does enable the language-user to express certain generalizations.

To see this, consider

- (2) If everything the weatherman said is true, then you should bring an umbrella.

In (2), the truth predicate is not serving as a device for facilitating opaque endorsement (at least, it is not doing that directly). Rather, it is playing the role of a device for expressing infinite conjunctions and disjunctions.¹¹ Moreover, letting S_1, S_2, \dots, S_n be the sentences that the weatherman said, we want (2) to be equivalent to

- (3) If S_1 and S_2 and \dots , and S_n , then you should bring an umbrella.¹²

Hence, not only is it a mistake to claim that the truth predicate is a device of opaque endorsement, it is also a mistake to assume that it always serves as a device for expressing opaque endorsement, as examples like (2) make clear.

In keeping with the distinction between a deflationary view of truth and one of the myriad available deflationary theories of truth, as one of genus to species, we see the former holding that the truth predicate functions as a device of semantic descent (in our broader sense), with each member of the latter set further clarifying just how the truth predicate manages so to function. Saying that it is a device of semantic descent—that it is *just* such a device—implies that it is not *also* an important, directly informative predicate.¹³ Thus, it's not a predicate that attributes a (substantive) property to sentences-under-an-interpretation (or to propositions, or what have you) to which it is applied; this is in line with the deflationary view of truth.

3.2 From a pretense account of 'number'-talk to a pretense account of 'truth'-talk

Having laid out the basic features of a deflationary view of truth, in this section, we draw the link from Yablo's pretense account of 'number'-talk to our proposed pretense-theoretic understanding of deflationism. After doing so, we sketch one possible PIF account of 'truth'-talk.

In order to begin, we return briefly to Yablo (2005). Yablo's argument for a pretense account of 'number'-talk proceeds by noting the expressive advantages of 'number'-talk.

To express the infinitely many facts in finite compass, we bring in numbers as representational aids. We do this despite the fact that what we are trying to get across has nothing to do with numbers, and could be expressed without them were it nor for the requirement of a finitely based notation.

(2005: 94–5)

Now, in order to forge a link between Yablo's argument for a pretense account of 'number'-talk and a related one in favor of a pretense account of 'truth'-talk (again, modulo, the assumption of deflationism), it bears noting that the very thing that Yablo presses, with respect to 'number'-talk, can also be said about the expressive advantages of 'truth'-talk. Indeed, we might ape his claim as follows:

To express the infinitely many conjuncts (or disjuncts) in a finite compass, we bring in the truth and falsity predicates to serve as representational aids. We do this despite the fact that what we are trying to get across has nothing to do with truth or falsity, and could be expressed without either predicate, were it nor for the requirement of a finitely based notation.

Yablo privileges the expressive role that 'number'-talk performs, claiming that once we see how it functions as a means for facilitating the expression of facts that we cannot practically (or actually, given our finitude) express, we will see that there is no reason to grant the real existence of numbers. He further claims that what it takes to understand 'number-involving' statements does not require that we accept the real existence of numbers. Moreover, given the expressive tasks that 'number'-talk facilitates, there is no need to take it ontologically seriously, since what enables a 'number-involving' statement to express what it does in no way requires the real existence of numbers.

But the deflationist, of any stripe, says basically the same thing about 'truth'-talk. Once we see how 'truth'-talk functions, as a means for facilitating the expression of facts (which, in turn, facilitates the expression of our commitment to those facts), which have nothing to do with truth, we will see that there is no reason to grant that 'true' expresses a (substantive) property. It's striking that one can have the ability to employ 'truth'-talk for the one reason for which it is essential (according to the deflationist), without accepting that there is a substantive property of truth or, really, that there is any property of truth at all.¹⁴

3.3 A comparison of two things

Let us turn now to a further consideration. Yablo (2005) claims that one of the reasons for endorsing a pretense account of 'number'-talk is this. First, say that we can explain the expressive advantage of appealing to 'number'-talk, viz., to 'bring in numbers as representational aids', and suppose, further, that these expressive purposes exhaust our use of 'number'-talk. Suppose, finally, that what we are trying to get across, through our use of 'number'-talk, is not about numbers, in the sense that what we aim to convey itself has nothing to do with numbers. In that case, because number-terms—in 'number'-talk—serve essentially in the indirect expression of facts that are not about numbers, we should recognize that the talk functions in this way through the operation of pretense. To resist this line of thought, the burden is on the realist, who must deliver at least one statement in which number terms serve essentially in the expression of facts that are really about numbers. If none is forthcoming, we have a reason for endorsing an anti-realist—indeed, Yablo suggests, a pretense-theoretic—account of 'number'-talk.

Notice that we can make a parallel argument, when we contrast deflationism with inflationism (or, more specifically, substantivism) about truth. First, say that we can explain the expressive advantages of appealing to 'truth'-talk, and suppose, further, that these expressive purposes exhaust our use of 'truth'-talk. And suppose, finally, that what we are trying to get across, through our use of 'truth'-talk, is not about any property of truth, in the sense that what we aim to convey itself has nothing to do with any such

property. In that case, because truth—the notion as it occurs in ‘truth’-talk—serves essentially as a representational aid in the expression of facts that are not about being true, we have a reason for endorsing an anti-realist—in fact, a pretense-theoretic—account of ‘truth’-talk, recognizing that the talk is a pretense-involving fragment of discourse. To resist this line of thought, the burden of proof is on the realist; he must deliver at least one instance of ‘truth’-talk in which the truth predicate serves as an essential aid in the expression of facts that really involve truth. Moreover, in order to ensure that the property of truth is substantive (not etiolated, as some deflationists’ ‘thin’ notion of the property is), there must be a ‘true’-involving sentence *S*, whose truth value turns on whether ‘true’, as it appears in *S*, expresses an interesting property possessed by the object that *S*’s referring expression denotes. That is, substantivists must deliver at least one statement in which ‘true’ appears and in which the use of ‘true’—and, thus, a property it expresses, rather than just the term—serves essentially in the expression of facts that really involve a property of truth.

But this is the very situation in which the deflationist finds herself. She acknowledges the expressive indispensability of having a truth predicate in the language, but she doesn’t then go on to conclude that the truth predicate is ‘ontologically serious’. Rather, she holds that the truth predicate, like number terms on Yablo’s view, begins as a representational aid, as a device that enables speakers to talk indirectly about something else. For the deflationist, the truth predicate always seems to serve as a representational aid, as a device that enables speakers to say something that’s not truth-involving about something, rather than something about what is putatively characterized as true. The truth predicate’s expressive role owes nothing at all to any property of truth. As such, if deflationism is correct, then, akin to Yablo’s reading of ‘number’-talk, we should see the truth predicate as serving as a representational aid, employing pretense to facilitate the expression of facts that are not about truth.

4 Truth as a pretense

According to deflationists, we need the truth (falsity) predicates for certain expressive needs; we don’t need them for any others (e.g., directly descriptive needs). Hence, while our discourse may appear to commit us to there being a property of truth (falsity), a proper understanding of the details behind deflationism will serve to explain why the (surface) appearance is potentially misleading (‘potentially’ because it depends on what’s meant by ‘property’).¹⁵

Our claim is that, on a deflationary theory of truth, ‘true’-involving discourse only makes as if the truth predicate functions as a full-blown predicate in the performance of the internal speech-act of predication, to describe or characterize what is picked out by the term expression with which it is combined.¹⁶ The truth predicate does not really function to describe or

characterize anything, but rather serves in the indirect expression of other facts. ‘True’ thus appears to express a substantive property, when in reality there is no such property and, a fortiori, no such property for the truth predicate to express.

We link a deflationary view of truth with a pretense approach as follows (the presentation is rough, though, we hope, informative): Modulo a deflationary conception of truth, we make as if the truth (falsity) predicate functions as a descriptive predicate, serving to express a property, which applies to some things (most basically, to some propositions) but not to others. However, the actual (i.e., serious) assertion made with ‘true’-involving utterances always just affirms (denies) the content of that which is being said to have the property. Thus, ‘true’-involving utterances will have as their serious content (viz., what they seriously express) the content of whatever content-vehicle the alethic predicate appears to describe. In non-pathological (e.g., non-liar-like), truth ascriptions, the actual (i.e., serious) content will always (eventually) be free of ‘truth’-talk. In this sense, while it is as if ‘true’ expresses a property that is part of the content of ‘true’-involving claims, in fact, it does not, as there is no such property whose expression factors into the serious content expressed.

We provide an account of ‘truth’-talk that understands it in the way just described, viz., as an explicit PIF account that explains this fragment of discourse in terms of semantic pretense. Central to this PIF account is that ‘truth’-talk functions in virtue of a make-believe governed by a set of rules, the so-called ‘principles of generation’. The approach’s appeal to the notion of make-believe—specifically, the way that make-believe establishes a systematic dependency between some of what is to be pretended and certain real-world conditions outside of the game—explains how speakers can use what can be interpreted as pretense-involving utterances, in order to make serious and genuinely true assertions about the world.¹⁷

Due to space considerations, we won’t develop our pretense account of ‘truth’-talk in much detail here.¹⁸ Rather, to get a sense for how it works, we provide our proffered set of principles of generation, together with brief comments that serve to explain them.

- (I) It is to be pretended that expressions like ‘is true’ and ‘is false’ function predicatively to describe objects as having or lacking certain properties (called ‘truth’ and ‘falsity’).
- (II) The pretenses displayed in an utterance of ‘(p) is true’ are prescribed iff *p*.
- (III) The pretenses displayed in an utterance of ‘(p) is false’ are prescribed iff $\sim p$.¹⁹
- (IV) If *S*₁ and *S*₂ are sentences that are alike except (in some transparent context), one has a subsentence ‘*p*’ where the other has ‘(p) is true’ then one can directly infer *S*₁ from *S*₂ and *S*₂ from *S*₁.

(I) states one of the stipulated, expressly made-believe, background pretenses for the relevant game of make-believe. It specifies certain linguistic expressions as the props for the game and explains what is to be pretended about them. One thing the rule shows is that uses of 'true' and 'false' involve pretense intrinsically; there are no pretense-free uses of truth-locutions because pretense is invoked in their basic functioning. So, the only content that an instance of 'truth'-talk has directly or immediately is the pretend content it seems to have on face-value reading—namely, that a certain object has a particular property. The only serious content (about the real world) that an instance of 'truth'-talk has must come from the operation of the make-believe's principles of generation, rules (II) and (III).

(II) and (III) cover what are arguably the most basic cases of 'truth'-talk, so an account of them provides a core for a more general account. They determine the serious content of these instances of 'truth'-talk. Since this serious content makes it possible for instances of 'truth'-talk to make genuinely true claims, (II) and (III) are also what distinguish this PIF account of 'truth'-talk from a potentially problematic ETF account.

(IV) satisfies an important condition of adequacy for any deflationary theory of 'truth'-talk, as it provides a version of a rule of intersubstitution. Such a rule captures the sense in which the serious content of a putative ascription of truth to some content-vehicle is just the content of the content-vehicle itself. Since intersubstitution seems to be a fairly a central aspect of an adequate deflationary theory, (IV) is crucial for our pretense account to yield the right serious content for the assertion of 'true'-involving generalizations.²⁰

Before closing this section, we should note that the rules that we've set out constitute a start on an account of how 'true' and 'false' function as representational aids, but it's possible that other rules, different from (I)–(IV), could also serve the same purpose. Such an account must explain what serious content is expressed by the instances of 'truth'-talk, and it must explain how that serious content gets expressed. We see the different species of deflationism as providing different attempts at fleshing out the rules (in particular, the principles of generation) for a pretense behind 'truth'-talk, and as explaining the role of its central locutions as representational aids. On this view, we can see the different species within the genus of deflationism as providing different attempts at accounting for this.

5 The engagement problem

Unsurprisingly, our contention—that deflationary theories should be understood as pretense theories of 'truth'-talk—faces a number of worries. We have the space here only to consider the most pressing challenge, as it applies directly to our pretense account of 'truth'-talk.

A central concern for a PIF account of any fragment of discourse regards the degree to which a speaker, who is employing a pretense-involving

discourse, would have to be engaged with, or, at least, aware of, the pretense that the discourse putatively involves. The first point of a reply is that even speakers employing figurative language, such as metaphor (e.g., 'Zev is a wolf'), or exploiting a game of make-believe in an utterance to make some serious point (e.g., 'Corey stole Isabel's pie out of the oven', said about children playing the mud pies game) do not need to be engaged in any active imaginative play to employ talk that invokes pretense, in order to say something serious indirectly. They can simply allude to the make-believe without actually actively participating in it (Walton 1990: 406–11). Still, even in these sorts of cases, the speaker seems to be aware of the pretense in alluding to it, and this still poses a problem for analyses that propose a PIF account for a fragment of discourse not standardly considered figurative.

Here is why. The key idea behind a hermeneutic fictionalism for mathematical discourse, such as Yablo's, is that this talk—as speakers already employ it—does not actually involve us in any 'unwanted' ontological commitments to numbers because either (i) the sentences of mathematics do not really mean what they appear to mean, or (ii) we do not really believe what they mean. Now, while this could be understood as a normative claim (as per a revolutionary fictionalism, such as Field's), it's best seen as a purported description of what actually goes on when we engage in 'number'-talk in the way that we normally (and actually) do.²¹ Thus, one obvious challenge for the hermeneutic fictionalist (about any discourse) is to give a plausible account of how these appearances can be deceiving, viz., to answer the question: how is it possible that practically no one knows what our X-talk utterances are really about, or that so many people go around thinking that they believe something without really believing it?²²

This challenge takes us to our main challenge—what we call the *engagement problem* (alt., *engagement complaint*). The objection raised is that people don't actually appear to be pretending—or even aware of any pretense—when they use the relevant fragment of discourse, in the way that hermeneutic fictionalism seems to require them to be (cf. Richard 2000; Stanley 2001). Now, since, to a greater or lesser degree, all pretense theorists are advocates of (some form of) hermeneutic fictionalism, it follows that all of them are stuck with exactly this challenge, viz., the engagement problem.

Although some pretense theorists are thwarted by the engagement problem (e.g., Kroon 2004), our account avoids the objection because the kind of PIF account that we link deflationism with is a version of what we might call *weak hermeneutic fictionalism* about 'truth'-talk. Weak hermeneutic fictionalism differs from the standard varieties of fictionalism in three ways. First, in contrast with certain other hermeneutic fictionalists, we do not claim, and our understanding of the approach does not require, that ordinary speakers are, or need be, actually engaged in—or even aware of—any pretense.²³ Second, as we have noted, our understanding of fictionalism is not error-theoretic, since we do not contend that the putatively problematic sentences

given a PIF account are actually false. Third and relatedly, we take no stand on whether ordinary speakers do or don't (or would or wouldn't) believe in that to which the discourse appears to commit them.²⁴

There's also an important difference between our version of weak hermeneutic fictionalism and Yablo's brand of hermeneutic fictionalism. The latter attempts to resolve the engagement problem by noting that, while ordinary speakers do not take direct attitudes toward supposedly pretense-involving discourse, they are, in a particular sense, simulating belief in the surface commitments of their claims, without actually taking on any of them. It is only as if they believe it, except, perhaps, per accidens (i.e., if they believe it, the reasons are independent of their 'as if' beliefs (cf. Yablo 2001: 24)).

By contrast, our response to the engagement problem is not to propose that speakers are disposed against taking the pretense-involving discourse literally. Again, we take no stand on whether ordinary speakers would, if queried, agree or refuse to endorse the surface commitments of the sentences they utter. More likely, most speakers take no attitude toward their talk. They simply use it to say what they want to say. If queried, they would likely profess agnosticism about what commitments they embraced.

Now, while we do not think that ordinary speakers are (or, if queried, would acknowledge) pretending, an awareness of the pretense at some level is part of our account. We locate that awareness at the level of the *theorist*, when she aims to set out the serious content of the instances of certain fragments of discourse.²⁵ Indeed, we think that this theorist-level pretense-awareness is present, whenever philosophers attempt to regiment some fragment of the discourse, although we shall not try to establish that point here.²⁶

6 Concluding remarks

We have argued that we should understand the different species of deflationism about 'truth'-talk as different variations on a pretense account of 'truth'-talk. Our starting point was Yablo's contention that there do not need to be any numbers for 'number'-talk to serve useful, if not crucial, expressive purposes. He explains number terms as expressions that function centrally as representational aids, providing speakers with a way to talk indirectly about facts that have nothing to do with numbers. The explanation of this sort of role originates from a form of (hermeneutic) PIF account of the relevant expressions, and concludes that we should adopt a pretense account of 'number'-talk.

Extending Yablo's own recognition of the similarities between his take on 'number'-talk and what Field (and other deflationists) claims about 'truth'-talk, we re-directed that observation at deflationism, in order to link that general conception of 'truth'-talk to a pretense-theoretic account. In singling

out the expressive roles of 'truth'-talk, deflationists don't require any property of truth (or falsity) for the talk to serve useful, if not crucial, expressive purposes. The 'truth'-locutions can be explained as representational aids that serve to allow speakers to talk indirectly about facts that have nothing to do with truth. The explanation of how the central expressions of 'truth'-talk fulfill this function comes in the form of a pretense account of the discourse, in particular, in the provision of a make-believe's principles of generation, the rules that establish systematic dependencies between which pretenses are prescribed and the obtaining of certain real-world conditions outside of the pretense. With this connection drawn, different species of deflationism emerge as different attempts to develop principles of generation that connect the instances of 'truth'-talk with appropriate ('true'-free) serious content.

To conclude, one basic merit of a pretense account of 'truth'-talk is that the account provides an explanation for why 'truth'-talk comes in the (surface) form that it does, even though it is said to fulfill rather different sorts of linguistic and logical tasks. The recognition of pretense at work in 'truth'-talk also helps explain certain inflationary intuitions we might have (e.g., correspondence intuitions, property intuitions, etc.), even if we focus on the expressive functions the talk fulfills. And it does all of this without saddling deflationism with new problems peculiar to a pretense account. We therefore maintain that much light is shed on the nature of deflationary theories of 'truth'-talk, and on the debate about the adequacy of deflationism, by recognizing that deflationists should be, and perhaps already are, pretense theorists.

Notes

1. Field's fictionalism does not claim that the language of mathematics is fictionally construed. Rather, his point is that the account is *fictional* because it is a fiction that there are numbers. In fact, there are no numbers, which is why mathematical statements with existential implications are all, uniformly, false.
2. See Woodbridge & Armour-Garb (2009) for more on the difference between ETF and PIF.
3. The serious content of a pretense-involving utterance is to be contrasted with the pretend content. The former is what the utterance manages to say or convey about the real world outside of the pretense that is invoked by the utterance; the latter is what the utterance seems to say on a face-value reading.
4. While the pretense view of truth can account for Walton's talk of what is 'true in the make-believe', we have replaced it with talk of what is to be pretended in order to avoid confused circularity worries when we turn to our pretense account of 'truth'-talk.
5. See Evans (1982: ch. 10); Walton (1990: ch. 11, 1993); Yablo (1996); Kroon (2004); Crimmins (1998).
6. In particular, 'number'-talk is invoked since the facts, if fully expressed without appeal to numbers, would require the introduction—as well as the

- employment—of uncountably many predicates, together with an uncountable number of sentences of, to make things worse, infinite length.
7. Our claim is that these commitments are sufficient, though not necessary, for one to count as a deflationist.
 8. We should say now that much of what we have to say carries over directly to talk about falsity. Hence, deflationists typically accept similar property, concept, and term theses for falsity and 'Falsity'-talk as well.
 9. For what follows, we shall stick with 'theories', rather than 'accounts', though the reader is encouraged to use whichever sense suits.
 10. As Quine (1970/1986) notes, all we need is the truth predicate and suitable quantifiers, which will allow us to generalize over a body of claims. Thanks to Jody Azzouni for helpful (and enjoyable) discussion on this point.
 11. As is familiar from the Frege-Geach problem, where an expression functions as the antecedent of a conditional, it is not asserted (though the conditional may be) and, hence, it does not have the force that it may have if, say, it were baldly asserted (or straight out uttered).
 12. Field (2008) makes a similar point but does not go on to argue against the claim that the truth predicate is always performing its expressive role, as a device for facilitating opaque endorsement.
 13. While all truth theorists accept that the truth predicate functions as a device of semantic descent, the deflationary theorists go one step further, maintaining that this is the only—i.e., the sole—function of the truth predicate.
 14. Again, for the inflationist to succeed in undermining the deflationist, she would have to do so by claiming that there is such a property, which cannot be explained away via appeal to the truth predicate's expressive roles.
 15. The argument for maintaining that 'true' expresses a property goes by way of the following sort of (second-order-logic-assuming) inference: Sam's theory is true; therefore, there is some feature that Sam's theory possesses. Which feature? When one reflects on the likely candidates, following Schiffer (2003; see also Yablo 2000), one might conclude that it will be a property. The pressing question is then how we're to understand talk about these creatures.
 16. There's a question in truth-theory about the status of 'true'—specifically, about whether it functions logically as a predicate, given that it is a predicate, grammatically speaking (Brandom 1994: ch. 5). While we take the question to be (at least in principle) important, it has no role for what follows, since everyone should acknowledge that, on the surface of 'truth'-talk's instances, it appears that objects are being picked out and then described with the word 'true'. Whether one wishes to deny this is what is really going on even at the level of logic (as opposed to denying it just at the level of speech acts) it is still as if it is going on at the surface, and thus some account is needed to connect the surface appearances of the discourse with the actual linguistic tasks one takes it to perform. We therefore safely ignore here the issue of whether 'true' functions logically as a predicate.
 17. To skirt a potential confusion here we should note that the pretense view of 'truth'-talk fully explains the notion of genuine truth just attributed to pretense-involving assertions. The role that 'truth'-talk plays in this attribution is just the generalizing role deflationists emphasize. While the present view explains the performance of this role in terms of pretense, the claim made by means of it is not something being pretended. On the pretense view, to make a truth attribution is not to pretend that something is true. The latter involves an additional

- level of pretense applied to what some instance of 'truth'-talk says indirectly, via the pretense already at work there.
18. See Woodbridge (2005) for detailed discussion of an early version of a pretense-account of 'truth'-talk.
 19. (II) and (III) as presented are actually schematic principles of generation, each providing every instance that results when we fill the schematic variable 'p' in the given schema with a declarative (ex hypothesi) meaningful expression, viz., a sentence-under-an-interpretation. As before, '(' and ')' serve as angle quotes and 'p' serves as a sentential variable that can be replaced by a sentence and '(p)' is a nominalization of such a sentence.
 20. Armour-Garb & Woodbridge (2009) contains a detailed discussion of the importance of intersubstitution.
 21. See Stanley (2001) for more on the distinction between hermeneutic and revolutionary fictionalism.
 22. A version of this objection also arises for any error theory. There, the question is whether it's plausible to assume that so many competent language users freely, and unknowingly, fall victim to semantic- or metaphysical-error.
 23. Contrast this with the situation for the view developed by Kroon (2004), where awareness of the pretense is required on the part of both speakers and hearers. This is a consequence of Kroon's location of pretense in the pragmatics of the discourse, in contrast with a specifically semantic pretense account of the sort we endorse. See Armour-Garb & Woodbridge (2010) and Woodbridge & Armour-Garb (2009) for criticisms of Kroon's views.
 24. To return to a theme of Yablo's, although 'number'-talk may appear to be ontologically committing, we contend that ordinary competent speakers take no attitude toward (or against) many such apparently ontic commitments. In a certain sense, they may take grammatical form to track 'ontic' form, in the sense that if a given expression functions nominally, grammatically speaking, then it will pick out an object, and if an expression functions predicatively, grammatically speaking, then it will attribute a quality. But ordinary speakers need not have a conception of such things, in order to use the language, just as they need not have a conception as to how a computer works, in order for them to be competent computer-users. Perhaps the folk will grant that (meaningful) grammatical nominal expressions refer and that (meaningful) grammatical predicates predicate. But they take no attitude toward the question of what reference or predication amount to. As such, they are ontologico-semantic agnostics.
 25. For more on our response to the Engagement Problem, see Armour-Garb & Woodbridge (2009, 2010) and Woodbridge & Armour-Garb (2009).
 26. Lest one worry that we are committed to the claim that such theorists are actually engaged in pretense-building, we note that it's *as if* they are engaged in pretense building: i.e., although theorists need not be thinking about the way in which they are presenting or proposing a given rule or principle (viz., as governing the game of make-believe), we, as, in effect, meta-theorists, can describe the rules or principles that they propose as 'pretense-like'.