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978-1-107-02827-2 - Pretense and Pathology: Philosophical Fictionalism and its Applications
Bradley Armour-Garb and James A. Woodbridge
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Pretense and Pathology

In this book, Bradley Armour-Garb and James A. Woodbridge distinguish various species of fictionalism, locating and defending their own version of philosophical fictionalism. Addressing semantic and philosophical puzzles that arise from ordinary language, they consider such issues as the problem of non-being, plural identity claims, mental-attitude ascriptions, meaning attributions, and truth-talk. They consider "deflationism about truth," explaining why deflationists should be fictionalists, and show how their philosophical fictionalist account of truth-talk underwrites a dissolution of the Liar Paradox and its kin. They further explore the semantic notions of reference and predicate-satisfaction, showing how philosophical fictionalism can also resolve puzzles that these notions appear to present. Their critical examination of fictionalist approaches in philosophy, together with the development and application of their own brand of philosophical fictionalism, will be of great interest to scholars and upper-level students of philosophy of language, metaphysics, philosophical logic, philosophy of mind, epistemology, and linguistics.

BRADLEY ARMOUR-GARB is Associate Professor of Philosophy at the University at Albany-SUNY and a Fellow of Wolfson College at the University of Oxford. He is co-editor of and a contributor to several books, including *The Law of Non-Contradiction: New Philosophical Essays* (2004), *Deflationism and Paradox* (2005), and *Deflationary Truth* (2005). He is also the editor of and a contributor to *The Relevance of the Liar* (forthcoming).

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An entire mythology is stored within our language.
—Ludwig Wittgenstein, "Remarks on Frazer's *Golden Bough*"

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Preface

For the last twenty-five years, a number of philosophers have made increasing use of the notion of *fiction* as a means for dealing with, or attempting to resolve, certain philosophical puzzles or problems. As a result, there are a number of philosophical accounts that fall under the 'fictionalism' banner. Although we applaud this use of the notion of fiction as a sort of philosophical tool, it is important to understand the classification itself. Our aim in this book is both to clarify what we see as the most promising sort of fictionalist account and to employ it as a means for resolving certain puzzles, problems, and paradoxes that are familiar from metaphysics, epistemology, and the philosophies of language and mind.

We began discussing many of the issues we take up here sixteen ago in New York City, when a just-post-PhD Armour-Garb was investigating the relationships between deflationism about truth, semantic paradox, and dialetheism, and Woodbridge was finishing his dissertation on a pretense-based version of deflationism about truth-talk. Our conversations about truth and deflationism proved so edifying and enjoyable to both of us that they led to a continuing and extensive collaboration. Despite the geographical separation that ensued, our work together remained an utterly shared enterprise, often involving line-by-line joint writing over the phone. This process generated a number of co-authored journal articles and anthology chapters that seemed to separate into two streams that rarely crossed: one applying the notion of pretense in philosophical theorizing, the other investigating the dimensions and unrecognized extent of semantic pathology. This book is where we merge the two streams and explain the connections between pretense and pathology. The general outline of the book is as follows.

In Chapter 1, we distinguish *philosophical fictionalism* from a more common fictionalist approach, *comparative fictionalism*. We then consider some reasons for favoring accounts that are members of the former species rather than the latter. In addition, we discuss some of the other distinctions one can draw within fictionalism in philosophy. In Chapter 2, we explain the central ideas behind, and the general framework for, our preferred variety of

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philosophical fictionalism – semantic pretense-involving fictionalism, or *SPIF* – using existence-talk as our example. We then explain how our SPIF account of existence-talk (along with the other SPIF accounts we develop in subsequent chapters) skirts various challenges that confront certain rival fictionalist approaches.

In Chapter 3, we investigate *proposition-talk*. We begin by considering some of the motivations that theorists offer for endorsing propositional realism along with what we take to be some compelling arguments for rejecting that view. We then motivate and provide our SPIF account of proposition-talk, highlighting the expressive role that this way of talking incorporates into our language via the pretense of talking *as if* there were propositions.

In Chapter 4, after explaining deflationism about truth (what we call *T-deflationism*), we argue that T-deflationists should be SPIF theorists about truth-talk and go on to present our SPIF account of that fragment of discourse. Having done so, in Chapter 5, we provide both a diagnosis and a treatment of the putative semantic pathology that the Liar Paradox (and a wide range of cases of its apparently pathological kin) appears to reveal.

In Chapter 6, we take up reference- and predicate-satisfaction-talk. After motivating and presenting our SPIF accounts of these fragments of discourse, we diagnose and treat the apparent semantic pathology that these further traditional semantic notions appear to manifest. In Chapter 7, we tie up some loose ends, beginning with motivating and setting out our SPIF account of plural identity-talk. We then address some issues touched on in previous chapters, regarding a way of talking that we have employed in explaining certain general aspects of pretense-involving discourse, providing the details of our particular SPIF accounts, and resolving apparent semantic pathology. Finally, we consider, and put to rest, two further putative challenges to our project, thereby demonstrating the resourcefulness of our SPIF approach for dealing with a broad range of philosophical problems.

We received (either jointly or individually) helpful comments, criticisms, and suggestions from a number of people at the following conferences: Sellars Centenary Conference and Workshop (Dublin, Ireland, June 2012); Trends in Logic XI: Advances in Philosophical Logic (Bochum, Germany, June 2012); Truth at Work Conference (Paris, France, June 2011); BW7, Seventh Barcelona Workshop on Issues in the Theory of Reference: Paradoxes of Truth and Denotation (Barcelona, Spain, June 2011); Normativity of Meaning: Sellarsian Perspectives (Prague, Czech Republic, May 2011); Society for Exact Philosophy (Kansas City, MO, March 2010 and Toronto, ON, Canada, May 2005); Meaning, Understanding and Knowledge: 5th International Symposium for Cognition, Logic and Communication (Riga, Latvia, August 2009); Joint Session of The Aristotelian Society and The Mind Association (Bristol, England, July 2007); Mimesis, Metaphysics, and Make-Believe: A Conference in

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Honour of Kendall Walton (Leeds, England, June 2007); Young Scholars Summer Institute, Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin (Berlin, Germany, August 2004); 18th International Symposium Logica (Hejnice Monastery, Czech Republic, June 2004); and 17th International Symposium Logica (Kravsko Chateau, Czech Republic, June 2003). In addition, we received helpful feedback from colloquia audiences at University of Amsterdam, University of Groningen, Georgia State University, University of Connecticut, Northern Arizona University, University of Nevada Las Vegas, State University of Kaliningrad, Russia, The College of William and Mary, Williams College, Bard College, University of Rochester, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, University at Albany-SUNY, CUNY Graduate Center, and Yale University.

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Earlier versions of some of the views and arguments we develop and present in this book have appeared in several of our prior individual and joint publications. We thank the publishers of the following articles and book chapters for their kind permission to reexpress here certain material first presented in them. By B. Armour-Garb: "Challenges to Deflationary Theories of Truth," *Philosophy Compass* 7: 256–266; "Deflationism (about Theories of Truth)," *Philosophy Compass* 7: 267–277; "The Monotonicity of 'No' and the No-Proposition View," *American Philosophical Quarterly* 49: 1–14; "New Problems for Modal Fictionalism," *Philosophical Studies* (forthcoming). By J. Woodbridge: "Truth as a Pretense," in Kalderon, M. (ed.), *Fictionalism in Metaphysics*, Oxford University Press, pp. 134–177; "Propositions as Semantic Pretense," *Language & Communication* 26: 343–355. By B. Armour-Garb and J. Woodbridge: "Dialetheism, Semantic Pathology and the Open Pair," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 84: 395–416; "Why Deflationists Should be Pretense Theorists (and Perhaps Already are)," in Pedersen, N. and Wright, C. (eds.), *New Waves in Truth*, Basingstoke/New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 59–77; "The Story about Propositions," *Noûs* 46: 635–674; "Liars, Truthtellers, and Naysayers: A Broader View of Semantic Pathology I," *Language & Communication* 32: 293–311; "Sellars and Pretense

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on 'Truth & "Correspondence"' (with a Detour through Meaning Attribution)," *Discusiones Filosóficas* 13(21), pp. 33–63; "Semantic Defectiveness and the Liar," *Philosophical Studies* 164: 845–863; "From Mathematical Fictionalism to Truth-Theoretic Fictionalism," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 88: 93–118; "Semantic Defectiveness: A Dissolution of Semantic Pathology," in Ciuni, R., Wansing, H., and Willkommen, C. (eds.), *Recent Trends in Philosophical Logic (Trends in Logic, Vol. 41)*, Cham: Springer International Publishing Switzerland, pp. 1–12. By J. Woodbridge and B. Armour-Garb: "Semantic Pathology and the Open Pair," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 71: 695–703; "The Pathology of Validity," *Synthese* 160: 63–74; "Linguistic Puzzles and Semantic Pretense," in Sawyer, S. (ed.), *New Waves in Philosophy of Language*, Basingstoke/New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 250–284.

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