The Long Shadow of Semantic Platonism, Part III: Additional Illustrations, from a Collection of Classic Essays

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§1. Introduction

THIS ARTICLE IS THE THIRD PART of a three-part discussion, devoted to analysing the influence that semantic Platonism has had — and is still having — on contemporary philosophy of language. The discussion builds on the two previous parts, Part I (Picazo 2021) and Part II (Picazo 2021a). Part I, in particular, must be read in advance and closely kept in mind, in order to correctly understand the exposition of the present paper.

The present paper is entirely focused on the book *Modern Philosophy of Language*, edited by Maria Baghramian (Baghramian 1998). This book is a compilation of eighteen classic essays (articles and book excerpts) in philosophy of language, starting with Frege and ending with Ruth Garrett Millikan. However, the present paper is nowhere near to being a review or a critical notice of this book. The only purpose of the present paper is to provide additional illustrations of the sort of limitations of contemporary semantic theory that we studied in Parts I and II (i.e. those that are attributable to the influence of semantic Platonism). My aim is, thus, that this serves as a complement to those previous parts, helping to enhance and further clarify the argument put forward there.

The two final warnings of the Introduction to Part I (Picazo 2021, §1) must be particularly recollected here: I do not intend my study to be exhaustive or systematic in any manner, and I will not attempt to make an overall diagnosis of any of the authors or essays that we shall be discussing here. Moreover, I will not attempt to do justice to any work or anyone in relation to how much they may have contributed to the advancement of semantic theory, or even to the battle against semantic Platonism itself. I believe that the task of disclosing the influence of semantic Platonism on contemporary philosophy of language is so hard, and so urgent, that the subsidiary task of rendering her or his due to

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everyone on this respect can be made to wait. Until we have left the influence of semantic Platonism far behind (having placed ourselves completely 'out of its shadow', so to speak) we will not be in a position to make an orderly exposition of how that happened.

On similar counts, no conclusion must be drawn from the fact that a given author or excerpt in Baghramian's collection is not discussed here. I use Baghramian's book just as a source of piecemeal examples, picking out the ones that have struck me most. No implication is intended, therefore, about those parts of the book that I have decided not to include in the present discussion.

Having said that, I shall now provide a brief panoramic view of the topics that we shall touch upon in this paper. We shall begin our journey by pointing to places in Baghramian's collection in which the notions of 'sentence' and 'proposition' are confused or incorrectly handled, or related misunderstandings can be identified (cf. §§2–3, below). After that, we shall provide examples in which the typical 'avoidant attitude' that semantic Platonism brings about is manifested in various different respects (cf. §§4–5). Next, we shall illustrate the use — and occasionally, proud endorsement — of philosophical analysis as the prime methodology for semantic investigation, as well as a number of *a priori* distinctions that go hand in hand with this methodology (cf. §§6–7). Finally, we shall highlight a number of assertions and signals that point to a Platonic metaphysics of meanings in the background (cf. §§8–9).

Along the way, we will also find in Baghramian's collection one particular example of a semantic view that is under the influence of Platonism by opposition, i.e. by too strong a desire to oppose to it (cf. §5). And at the end of the paper, we shall examine a critical proposal contained in this book which bears important similarities — though also important differences — to the sort of criticism of semantic Platonism that we have been conducting in the present trilogy of papers (cf. §10).

§2. Platonism by confusion

As we have just said, we shall begin by identifying places, in Baghramian's collection, in which propositions and sentences are mixed up. Our first example is provided by Russell (1919, Essay 2 of Baghramian 1998).[1] Indeed, this paper is written mainly in terms of 'propositions', but the way in which Russell uses the term fluctuates between 'propositions as expressions' and 'propositions as meanings'. The following are examples of the first use ('propositions as expressions'):

> [P]ropositions in which phrases of that kind occur …
>
> the proposition 'Romulus did not exist' …
>
> Suppose you try to make out what you do mean by that proposition.
>
> (Russell 1919: 30–31).

Indeed, in order for 'a phrase to occur in a proposition', the proposition has to be taken as an expression, i.e. as a string of words. This is in consonance with referring to a proposition by putting it within quotations marks ('the proposition "Romulus did not exist"') rather than by pointing to its content ('the proposition *that* Romulus did not exist'). And it is also in consonance with talking about 'what you do mean by that proposition', a manner of speaking that implies that the proposition is taken to be an expression, (i.e. a signifier, something by which you mean something) rather than a meaning (i.e. a signified, something meant by something else). Indeed, the phrase 'what you do mean by that meaning', for instance, does not make sense.

In the same paper, however, just a few pages afterwards, we find the term 'proposition' used in a completely different way:

> [W]hen I say 'Scott is the author of *Waverley*' it is a wrong analysis of that to suppose that you have there three constituents, 'Scott', 'is', and 'the author of *Waverley*'.
>
> 'The author of *Waverley*' is not a constituent of the proposition at all.
>
> the constituents of propositions, of course, are the same as the constituents of the corresponding facts …
>
> (Russell 1919: 35–36).

Well, if the proposition that Scott is the author of *Waverley* is not made up by the

[1] On every occasion in which an essay of Baghramian's collection is mentioned for the first time, I shall indicate its chapter number within this collection.

constituents 'Scott', 'is', and 'the author of *Waverley*', then it must be that we are not talking about the expression 'Scott is the author of *Waverley*', but about something else. This is in consonance with stating that 'the author of *Waverley*' is not a constituent of that proposition, and it is also in consonance with saying that 'the constituents of propositions are the same as the constituents of the corresponding facts' (which, again, makes it impossible that propositions are regarded as mere expressions). All this indicates that propositions are being conceived of as meanings or denotations, by contrast with the use that Russell makes of the term 'proposition' in the former quotations.

We shall now turn our attention to Tarski (1944, Essay 3 of Baghramian 1998). In this paper, Tarski hastens to distinguish between 'sentences' and 'propositions', making it clear that he will be concerned with the former, not with the latter:

> By 'sentence' we understand here what is usually meant in grammar by 'declarative sentence'; as regards the term 'proposition', its meaning is notoriously a subject of lengthy disputations by various philosophers and logicians, and it seems never to have been made quite clear and unambiguous. For several reasons it appears most convenient to *apply the term 'true' to sentences*, and we shall follow this course' (Tarski 1944, §I.2).

Curiously, however, Tarski also points out that he will not pay attention to the (seemingly parallel) distinction between 'terms' and 'concepts':

> The words 'notion' and 'concept' are used in this paper with all of the vagueness and ambiguity with which they occur in philosophical literature. Thus, sometimes they refer simply to a term, sometimes to what is meant by a term, and in other cases to what is denoted by a term. Sometimes it is irrelevant which of these interpretations is meant; and in certain cases perhaps none of them applies adequately. While on principle I share the tendency to avoid these words in any exact discussion, I did not consider it necessary to do so in this informal presentation (Tarski 1944, §I.1, footnote 4).

In view of this, we have no reason to expect that Tarski will handle 'terms' (and the difference between 'terms' and 'concepts') rigorously in this paper. Only with respect to 'sentences' and the difference between 'sentences' and 'propositions' has he committed himself to be rigorous. However, the truth of the matter is that Tarski's use of 'sentences' in this paper does not stand up to scrutiny either.

Indeed, Tarski stresses, on the one hand, that

> [W]e must always relate the notion of truth, like that of a sentence, to a specific language; for it is obvious that the same expression which is a true sentence in one language can be false or meaningless in another (Tarski 1944, §I.2).

This means, again, that 'sentences' are taken to be meaningless expressions, i.e. expressions that only acquire meaning (and possibly, truth) relative to a language. The first flaw, then, comes from failing to realize that sentences can also be ambiguous and indexical, so that even within a given language, a sentence can come out true under one reading, or under one occasion of utterance, and false under another. Such a possibility is nowhere contemplated in this paper.

But more important than that, Tarski fatally mixes up sentences and sentence meanings, as can be seen by the way in which he declares his adhesion to the 'classical Aristotelian conception of truth':

> The truth of a sentence consists in its agreement with (or correspondence to) reality (Tarski 1944, §I.3).

This does not really make sense, indeed, if sentences are really regarded as meaningless expressions. How is a meaningless expression supposed to 'agree with' or 'correspond to' reality? How can a sheer string of symbols be said to 'agree with' anything, save perhaps another string of symbols of similar shape? Only the *meaning* (or the *use*) of a string of symbols may have the kind of agreement or correspondence with reality that Tarski has in mind. Only the meaning (or the use) of a sentence may agree with reality, not the sentence itself. We shall come go over this again in a moment (cf. §4, below).

§3. More confusions

Tarski's confusion is akin to the one we saw in Part I, in papers by Quine (1981) and Davidson (1967) (cf. Picazo 2021, §9). And a similar one appears in Davidson (1974, Essay 9 of Baghramian 1998):

> I want to consider a certain attitude towards expressions, an attitude that may or may not be evinced in actual utterances. The attitude is that of holding true, relativized to time … I hope it will be granted that it is plausible to say we can tell when a speaker holds a sentence to be true without knowing what he means by the sentence (Davidson 1974: 168).

The first thing to be noticed here is that, as it stands, the last claim of this citation is plainly false. Indeed, given a sentence which is ambiguous between two readings, we will not know which of these readings is the one that the speaker 'holds true' unless we know what she or he means by the sentence. Nothing prevents a speaker, for instance, from 'holding true' the sentence 'She played the piano' as referring to a musical ability (as in response to the question 'Did she know how to play any instrument?', 'Yes, she played the piano'), and false as referring to a piano-playing event (as in response to 'Did she actually play the piano that night?', 'No, she didn't') at the same time (cf. Part I, Picazo 2021, §9).

In this respect, it must also be pointed out that, contrary to what Davidson seems to think, the strategy of relativizing to time does not help to resolve ambiguities in relation to the 'holding true of sentences', as it does in the case of utterances and assents. The reason is that utterances and assents are public acts, linked to particular contexts (the context in which the utterance or the assent has taken place), and such contexts are normally enough to resolve the ambiguities at hand. However, 'holding true' is a silent act (or a silent state), and, as such, it is not normally linked to any particular context or time. This is why ambiguities in 'holding true' will not in general be resolved unless we know what the speaker means by the sentence in question.

Finally, and most important of all, it must be noticed that the phrase 'to hold a sentence true' does not really make sense when we take sentences as uninterpreted expressions. This is also in contrast to what happens with utterances and assents. Indeed, I can utter an uninterpreted expression (or even a meaningless expression), and I can make an assenting gesture to an uninterpreted expression (or even to a meaningless expression). But I cannot give my 'silent consent' to an uninterpreted expression, let alone to a meaningless one. The only way in which I can really 'hold true' a sentence is by taking it to be linked to a definite meaning (i.e. to a proposition, to a particular use of the sentence in question).

An additional confusion in this paper, somehow related to these previous ones, concerns the distinction between speaker-meaning and expression-meaning. Indeed, Davidson states on the one hand that:

> I use the expression 'says that' in the present context in such a way that a speaker says (on a particular occasion) that it is snowing if and only if he utters words that (on that occasion) mean that it is snowing. So a speaker may say that it is snowing without *his* meaning, or asserting, that it is snowing (Davidson 1974, footnote 1 [fn. to p. 165], his italics).

From this, it appears that 'saying that' is taken in terms of expression-meaning on a given occasion, and irrespective of speaker-meaning. However, three sentences after the sentence to which this quotation is a footnote, the speaker's intention becomes relevant:

> [I]n uttering 'Es schneit' under certain conditions *and with a certain intent*, Karl has said that it is snowing (Davidson 1974: 165, my italics).

This shows a gross confusion as to whether 'saying that', in the way Davidson intends to use the phrase in this paper, involves speaker-meaning or only expression-meaning.

Leaving now Davidson aside, we shall identify one more confusion between 'propositions' and 'sentences' within Baghramian's collection. It appears in the opening lines of Marcus (1990, Essay 14 of Baghramian 1998):

> [B]elieving is a relation between a subject, the believer, and an object or set of objects as given in the grammatical form of the sentence, '*x* believes that *S*' (Marcus 1990: 268).

According to this, then, the relation between the subject of the belief and the content of the belief is given in the 'grammatical form' of a certain 'sentence'. But how can this be so? The grammatical form of the sentence '*x* believes that *S*' will be given by something like 'subject + verb + subordinate that-clause', a structure that is shared by countless sentences with different verbs. Surely, this cannot be what Marcus has in mind. This cannot be what matters in order to analyse the believing relation. It appears, rather, that Marcus in this passage is not referring to the sentence's grammatical form, but to the *content* that we will be normally attached to the utterance of that sentence (i.e. the proposition conveyed).

§4. Platonism by avoidance

We shall now bring into consideration a question that is crucial for the theory of meaning, and yet has been systematically ignored by many proposals in the philosophy of language for the last one hundred and thirty years. The question is this: Where does the link between expressions and meanings lie? In other words: What has to be the case for an expression to have the meaning it has, as uttered by a given speaker in a given context of utterance? And what would have to be the case for an expression (as uttered by a speaker in a given context

of utterance) to have a meaning different from the one it actually has? What is, in sum, the *source* from which linguistic meaning emanates? A theory of meaning that does not address such questions is as misguided, I believe, as would be a theory of rivers that did not address the question of where river water comes from.

However, this is exactly what happens in a large part of contemporary philosophy of language, as can be illustrated by many of the essays in Baghramian (1998). In many of these essays, indeed, expressions are supposed to have the meaning they have, without seriously addressing the question of what has to be the case for them to do so. Relatedly, the question of the source of meaning (i.e. the question of what it is that *causes* or *brings it about* that the meanings of linguistic expressions are the ones they are) is systematically ignored. As we argued in Part I (cf. Picazo 2021, §4), this is just another symptom of the background influence of semantic Platonism.

A case in point in this respect is Frege (1892, Essay 1 of Baghramian 1998). In this essay, indeed, Frege points to a 'regular connection between a sign, its sense, and its reference' (Frege 1892: 7). But nowhere in this paper does he address, or even mention, the question of how this connection is brought about (i.e. the question of what has signs, senses and references, connected). Besides, the little that Frege says about the issue in this paper leads him into trouble, as we are just about to see.

Indeed, Frege states, on the one hand, that 'Nobody can be forbidden to use any arbitrarily producible event or object as a sign for something' (Frege 1892: 6). On the other hand, however, he also states that the connection between a sign, its sense and its reference 'is of such a kind that to the sign there corresponds a definite sense and to that in turn a definite reference' (Frege 1892: 7). According to these two statements, then, people are free to establish sign connections as they wish, but it so happens that, as matter of fact, the connections they establish are 'regular' and 'definite'. This is unrealistic: if people are allowed to establish sign connections as they wish, there is not much hope that the resulting connections will be always be definite and regular. Indeed, different people may (and often do) use the same sign for different objects, as well as different signs for the same object. Even a single person may (and often does) use a sign to refer to different objects at different times or in different contexts.

Aware of this difficulty, Frege rectifies:

> To every expression belonging to a complete totality of signs, there should certainly

> correspond a definite sense; *but natural languages often do not satisfy this condition* (Frege 1892: 7, my italics).

Far from clarifying the issue, however, this rectification raises more questions: What kind of language is it, if not natural language, the one that satisfies the sort of 'regular and definite' connections that Frege had just mentioned? Is it some kind of 'ideal language' such as that of formal logic? And, if this is so, what kind of phenomena should be made responsible for the fact that the language of logic satisfies such connections while natural language does not? These issues are seemingly relevant for the investigation at hand, yet are completely overlooked in Frege's essay.

Another particularly illuminating example of semantic avoidance in Baghramian's collection is provided, again, by Tarski (1944). Tarski defines 'semantics' in this article as:

> a discipline which, speaking loosely, *deals with certain relations between expressions of a language and the objects* (or 'states of affairs') *'referred to' by those expressions* (Tarski 1944, §5, his italics).

The nature of the 'referring relations', however, is taken for granted all along. Nowhere in the paper does Tarski feel the need to address the exact nature of these referring relations, neither the role that the community of speakers could have in fixing them, nor the general causal mechanism that may be behind them.

Tarski focuses, instead, on his celebrated 'equivalences of the form (T)', which are claims such as:

(1) The sentence 'snow is white' is true if and only if snow is white.

Regarding these claims, he writes:

> [E]very equivalence of the form (T) … may be considered a partial definition of truth, which explains wherein the truth of this one individual sentence consists. The general definition [of truth] has to be, in a certain sense, a logical conjunction of all these partial definitions (Tarski 1944, §4: 47–48).

The first thing to be noticed here is that when (T)-equivalences are applied to uninterpreted sentences (which is what Tarski has set himself to do, cf. §2

above), these claims are, strictly speaking, *false*. Indeed, if we take 'Snow is white' as an uninterpreted sentence, then it is not correct to say that such a sentence is true if and only if snow is white: such a sentence will be true if and only if snow is white *and* the sentence is taken to mean that snow is white.[2]

We could leave this difficulty aside by reformulating (1) in terms of 'interpreted sentences' or in terms of 'propositions'. However, a harder problem concerns the nature of the explanation that (1) is supposed to provide. Indeed, according to Tarski, (1) 'explains' what the truth of 'Snow is white' consists in. But what kind of explanation is that? Even if we take 'Snow is white' in (1) to be a proposition rather than an uninterpreted sentence, the fact remains that reporting

'Snow is white is true' if and only if snow is white

adds nothing to our understanding of the workings of world and language that bring the truth of 'Snow is white' about. Indeed, someone that is willing to take that as an explanation may just as well explain that opium puts people to sleep by saying that 'opium has a dormitive virtue', as in Molière's *The Imaginary Invalid*. These are just circular or avoidant explanations, i.e. no explanations at all. And naturally, the attempt to give a 'general definition of truth' by means of the 'logical conjunction of all these claims' will only make matters worse: a conjunction of empty explanations will be as empty an explanation as each of the explanations conjoined, if only more complex.

It is interesting to notice, finally, that Tarski's approach can be twisted into an even more avoidant semantic approach:

(2) 'Snow is white' means that snow is white.

(2) is, indeed, a true and formally correct statement about the meaning that 'Snow is white' normally conveys, and yet it spells out none of the relevant factors that take part in that meaning. That is why (2) is fatally defective as a

[2] 'Tarski's scheme, when applied to sentences (i.e., to sequences of words without a predetermined meaning), is simply false. It is false, moreover, in the two directions of the biconditional. Indeed, it would be enough that the sentence "Snow is white" meant that it is raining in London, to make it possible: (a) that the sentence "Snow is white" be true without snow being white (on condition of it being raining in London); and (b) that snow be white without the sentence "Snow is white" being true (on condition of the weather in London being clear)' (Picazo 2014: 724; cf. also Part I , Picazo 2021, §4).

semantic explanation: not so much because we already need to understand what 'Snow is white' means in order to understand (2), but because (2) does not help us to clarify the nature of such a meaning, or the nature of such an understanding, in any significant way. Indeed, (2) does not bring any light into the inner workings that make it possible for us to understand 'Snow is white', or for this expression to be used as a communication tool.

Something similar can be said about

(3) 'Snow is white' means what it means.

Or even, more generally:

(4) Everything means what it means.

Anybody who is prepared to accept (4) as a semantic explanation, indeed, might just give up philosophy of language altogether.

§5. Bringing about the relevant facts

A more subtle avoidant attitude is the one exemplified by the following words, taken from Dummett (ms1978, Essay 16 of Baghramian 1998):

> Suppose that I am walking along the street with my wife, and suddenly stop dead and say (in English), 'I have left the address behind'. What constitutes my having at that moment had the thought I expressed need be no more than just the fact that I know English and said those words (Dummett ms1978: 318).

By using the phrase 'no more than just the fact that', Dummett conveys the idea that we are before a very simple phenomenon, one that is easy to understand and be accounted for. This phrase is somewhat reminiscent of the ones we saw in Part I (Picazo 2021, §4), by which Quine and Strawson attempted to trivialise the relation of correspondence between propositions and facts.

However, the truth is that the fact to which Dummett is pointing here (i.e. the fact that he knew English and said those words) can hardly be more complex. Only for the English language to exist and for Michael Dummett to qualify as a competent speaker of it, a huge web of events have to take place, both inside and outside Michael Dummett's head, events of which Dummett's

easy-going comment does not give a glimpse. The fact that Dummett knew English and said those words is far more complex, hence, than it appears from Dummett's way of referring to it.

And yet, ironically, in spite of being much more complex than Dummett's comment suggests, such a fact is not sufficient to produce the effect that Dummett expects from it. Indeed, the fact that Dummett knew English and said 'I have left the address behind' is no guarantee that he was having the corresponding thought: he could have been lying, or repeating those words as a mantra, and that would have made it possible for him to pronounce such words without having the thought in question. Hence, it is not the case, contrary to what Dummett claims, that what constitutes his having the thought that he had left the address behind is *just* the fact that he knew English and said those words: it is necessary that he *meant* them.

Dummett makes this observation in the context of an explanation of Wittgenstein's semantic anti-mentalism, and his blunder seems to be directly inherited from such a view.[3] Indeed, it entirely parallels the weakness of Wittgenstein's radical semantic anti-mentalism that we pointed out in Part I (cf. Picazo 2021, §8). As I argued there, it is too radical a step to go from the premise that meanings cannot be *identified* with mental states to the conclusion that mental states do not have *any relevance* to linguistic meaning. Analogously, it is too radical a step to go from the premise that Dummett having had the thought in question does not reduce to his being in a particular mental state, to the conclusion that the mental state in which he was when he pronounced the above mentioned words is irrelevant to whether he had the thought or not.

Dummett is, therefore, committing two mistakes in this paragraph, both of which can be seen as traces — or shades — of semantic Platonism. On the one hand, by the way in which he talks about the fact that he knows English, he gives the impression that it is a simple fact, overlooking the complexity of the ongoing psychological and socio-environmental processes that have to be taking place in order for that fact to occur. By doing this, he is too heavily relying on the introspective perspective (a sin of Platonism by avoidance and a sin of Platonism by method). On the other hand, by disregarding mental processes as

[3] 'The observation that there is no such mental event as a concept's coming to mind is paralleled by Wittgenstein's remark that understanding is not a mental process' (Dummett ms1978: 318, shortly before the passage just quoted); 'Wittgenstein said, "To understand the sentence is to understand the language" … He meant … that, given you understand the *language*, that you are, as it were, in that *state* of understanding, nothing need happen, in which your understanding of the sentence consists, no *act* of understanding, other than your hearing that sentence' (318, Dummett's italics, shortly after that passage).

completely irrelevant with respect to linguistic thought, he is being carried away by his aversion to Platonic mentalism (a sin of Platonism 'by opposition').

Another case in point on this issue is provided by Putnam (1975, Essay 12 of Baghramian 1998). This paper contains many insights that have been of great significance in the battle against semantic Platonism in contemporary philosophy of language, and yet, in the way in which Putnam expresses himself about some of them, the influence of semantic Platonism can still be felt. This illustrates how hard the philosophical task of leaving semantic Platonism behind is.

I am going to focus on two of these insights, in particular. In the first place, we shall look at the way in which Putnam highlights the relevance of the environment in fixing linguistic meaning (a philosophical move by which he contributed to giving rise to what today is called 'semantic externalism'). In the second place, we shall look at the way in which Putnam highlights the cooperative nature of meaning, by means of his celebrated 'hypothesis of the division of linguistic labour'. As we are going to see, Putnam's approach is impregnated with semantic Platonism, to a certain extent, in both cases.

Let us begin by the first of these two points, Putnam's externalism. As is well-known, Putnam in this paper points out that natural kind terms (like 'water') have 'an unnoticed indexical component', arguing that they are linked in a particular way to the reality that surrounds the use of them:

> Our theory can be summarized as saying that words like 'water' have an unnoticed indexical component: 'water' is stuff that bears a certain similarity relation to the water *around here* (Putnam 1975: 243).

From the point of view of the socio-environmental conception of meaning, we cannot but welcome this proposal as a right step in the direction of leaving semantic Platonism behind. However, by the fact that Putnam applies this observation only to natural kinds and not to other linguistic categories, we can tell that he is still under the influence of Platonism to a certain extent. Indeed, had he adopted the socio-environmental conception of meaning, it would have been natural for him to assume that *most* of our language, if not all, is indexical in some way or another. And it would have been natural for him to assume that most, if not all, of our non-natural kind terms (including terms for technological devices, terms for every day objects etc.) are anchored in some way or another to the 'stuff around here'. Only from a very Platonic (or mentalist) semantics, indeed, can the meaning of non-natural kind words, such

as 'television' or 'traffic jam', be regarded as completely independent of our actual world.

On the other hand, when Putnam comes to describe the sort of linguistic cooperation procedure that he has in mind (i.e. the 'division of linguistic labour'), he does so in a naive way, and again without realizing the extent to which *every* linguistic meaning, not just that of natural kind terms, has to be cooperatively fixed in one way or another:

> The logic of natural kind terms like 'water' is a complicated matter, but the following is a sketch of an answer. Suppose I point to a glass of water and say 'This liquid is called water' … My 'ostensive definition' of water has the following empirical presupposition: that the body of liquid I am pointing to bears a certain sameness relation (say, *x is the same liquid as y,* or *x is the same*$_L$ *as y*) to most of the stuff I and other speakers in my linguistic community have on other occasions called 'water' … The key point is that the relation same$_L$ is a *theoretical* relation: whether something is or is not the same liquid as *this* may take an indeterminate amount of scientific investigation to determine (Putnam 1975: 234).

Notice, first of all, that this description as it stands is untenable: indeed, the liquid that Putnam has in front of him will probably not be pure water, but a solution containing salts and microorganisms, and the ostensive definition will not settle the question of whether these additional ingredients are relevant in order to have 'the same liquid'. Besides, according to this definition, neither frozen water nor water vapour would qualify as 'water', in consequence of not being liquid. It seems, hence, that the 'sameness relation' that Putnam is trying to get at presupposes our concept of water, rather than providing an independent definition for it.

We can overlook these difficulties, however, on the grounds that, as Putnam himself emphasises, he is just attempting to give a first 'sketch' of a 'complicated matter'. It would be reasonable to think, then, that the details of the procedure in question can be taken care of at a later stage. What really matters, according to this line of thinking, is the direction to which the sketch points, i.e. the need to study the ways in which the meanings of certain words are fixed by the community of speakers:

> It seems to me that this phenomenon of division of linguistic labor is one which it will be very important for sociolinguistics to investigate. In connection with it, I should like to propose the following hypothesis: HYPOTHESIS OF THE UNIVERSALITY OF THE DIVISION OF LINGUISTIC LABOR: Every linguistic community … possesses at least some

> terms whose associated 'criteria' are known only to a subset of the speakers who acquire the terms, and whose use by the other speakers depends upon a structured cooperation between them and the speakers in the relevant subsets (Putnam 1975: 238).

With respect to this, however, there are a couple of points to make. In the first place, it should be noticed, again, that Putnam invokes 'sociolinguistics' only for a fragment of language, the fragment relative to natural kind terms, rather than for the language as a whole. In the second place, it transpires from this paragraph that Putnam considers that his own status as a semanticist (or logician-philosopher) is different from that of sociologists or 'sociolinguists'. It does not occur to him, for example, that addressing the sociological source of meaning could be just one of the central tasks of semantic theory. In place of that, he draws an imaginary line between semantics proper and the sociology of natural language meaning, leaving the investigation of the 'structured cooperation' between different 'subsets of speakers' to the latter. The implication is that semantic theory can continue to be happily confined to logico-philosophical analysis, the methodological hallmark of Platonism.

Putnam comes then to the conclusion that

> there are tools like a hammer or a screwdriver which can be used by one person; and there are tools like a steamship which require the cooperative activity of a number of persons to use. Words have been thought of too much on the model of the first sort of tool (Putnam 1975: 238).

But notice, again, that he writes this as a conclusion of his discussion of the meanings of natural kind terms and how they are cooperatively fixed. And this shows, once again, the latent presence of semantic Platonism in the background. Were it not for this presence, indeed, it would have been natural to assume from the start that all linguistic meaning is fixed cooperatively, and that sociolinguistics is just a natural and proper part of semantic theory.

§6. Platonism by method

It is important to emphasise at this point that I am not objecting to the use of logical and conceptual analysis per se. Indeed, conceptual analysis is part of any significant scientific enterprise. My quarrel is with the *overuse* of logical and philosophical analysis at the expense of empirical research. Typical examples of the 'analytic method', in this sense, are the way in which some proposals (a) rely too heavily on imaginary scenarios; (b) endorse intuitive claims too quickly,

without further questioning; (c) adopt a normative rather than a descriptive stance; (d) opt for sharp-*a priori* distinctions over gradual-observational ones; (e) bluntly disregard, as irrelevant, empirical tools such as data collection, causal models or probabilistic models; (f) explicitly proclaim the virtues of conceptual reasoning over empirical observation in semantic theory. We shall be identifying each and every one of these traces of 'Platonism by method' in the pages of Baghramian's collection, in this and the following section.

To start with, Frege (1892) adopts a normative, rather than a descriptive stance, in the following passage concerning proper names:

> In the case of an actual proper name such as 'Aristotle' opinions as to the sense may differ. It might, for instance, be taken to be the following: the pupil of Plato and teacher of Alexander the Great. Anybody who does this will attach another sense to the sentence 'Aristotle was born in Stagira' than will a man who takes as the sense of the name: the teacher of Alexander the Great who was born in Stagira. So long as the reference remains the same, such variations of sense *may be tolerated*, although *they are to be avoided* in the theoretical structure of a demonstrative science and *ought not to occur* in a perfect language (Frege 1892, footnote 4 [fn. to p. 7], my italics).

Shortly afterwards, he puts a certain supposition ('the supposition that the truth value of a sentence is its reference') to various 'tests', but all of them turn out to be purely conceptual (Frege 1892: 10–13).

Russell (1919) concludes, from philosophical discussion alone, that 'any statement in which a description has a primary occurrence implies that the object described exists' (Russell 1919: 38). As is well-known, this intuitive conclusion was later to be rejected by Strawson (1950) and others.

Wittgenstein (1953a, Essay 5 of Baghramian 1998) is, as is well-known, overabundant in imaginary scenarios:

> [T]hink of the following use of language… Let us imagine a language for which… It is as if someone were to say… Imagine a script in which... We could imagine that… Let us now look at an expansion of… Imagine how one might perhaps… Etc. (Wittgenstein 1953a, §§1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, respectively).

Davidson (1974) describes his area of interest, the 'theory of interpretation', with the following words:

> Theory of interpretation is the business jointly of the linguist, psychologist and philosopher. Its subject matter is the behaviour of a speaker or speakers, and it tells

> what certain of their utterances mean. Finally, the theory can be used to describe what every interpreter knows, namely a specifiable infinite subset of the truths of the theory (Davidson 1974: 165).

Notice the two distinct tasks that are alluded to here: the task of describing 'linguistic behaviour', on the one hand, and the task of describing 'what utterances mean and what every interpreter knows', on the other. The first of these tasks is arguably an empirical one: it points to a realm of facts (linguistic behaviour), and demands a description or explanation of them. The second task, however, is of a quite different character: indeed, according to Davidson himself, this second task needs no empirical confirmation other than the approval of the very interpreters whose knowledge is being described:

> The theory is true if its empirical implications are true; we can test the theory by sampling its implications for truth. In the present case, this means noticing whether or not typical interpretations a theory yields for the utterances of a speaker are correct. We agreed that any competent interpreter knows whether the relevant implications are true; so any competent interpreter can test a theory in this way. This does not mean, of course, that finding a true theory is trivial; it does mean that given a theory, testing it may require nothing arcane (Davidson 1974: 166).

Davidson is, thus, aiming at a theory that, though not trivial to find, would be trivial to test. Purportedly, a simple inspection of its consequences by any competent interpreter would suffice. This points to a conceptual, introspective methodology, rather than an empirical one.

Dummett (ms1978) is even more explicit at placing reflexive methodology at the core of semantic theory, to the detriment of empirical observation:

> [A] theory of meaning for a language … is not open to assessment in the same way as an ordinary empirical theory; it is not to be judged correct merely on the ground that it tallies satisfactorily with observed linguistic behaviour. Rather, the only conclusive criterion for its correctness is that the speakers of the language are, upon reflection, prepared to acknowledge it as correct (Dummett ms1978: 324).

Finally, another example of a paper in Baghramian's collection that is wholly analytic in spirit is, again, Putnam (1975). The main arguments of this paper, indeed, are based on thought experiments (such as the twin Earth problem) as well as on rough assumptions that are put forward on the basis of intuition

alone, not after an empirical examination of the facts.[4]

§7. Platonic distinctions

We shall now turn to examples, in Baghramian's collection, of semantic distinctions that are introduced on purely reflexive grounds, and the sort of troubles they lead to. We shall begin with Donnellan (1966, Essay 10 of Baghramian 1998) and the distinction there introduced between two uses of definite descriptions, the 'attributive use' and the 'referential use':

> I will call the two uses of definite descriptions I have in mind the attributive and the referential use. A speaker who uses a definite description attributively in an assertion states something about whoever or whatever is the so-and-so. A speaker who uses a definite description referentially in an assertion, on the other hand, uses the description to enable his audience to pick out whom or what he is talking about and states something about that person or thing. In the first case the definite description might be said to occur essentially, for the speaker wishes to assert something about whatever or whoever fits that description; but in the referential use the definite description is merely one tool for doing a certain job — calling attention to a person or thing — and in general any other device for doing the same job, another description or a name, would do as well (Donnellan 1966, §III: 184).

Notice that this is an *a priori*, rigid distinction, introduced on the basis of intuition alone. Not surprisingly, then, by the end of the paper this distinction leads to trouble:

> I am thus drawn to the conclusion that when a speaker uses a definite description referentially he may have stated something true or false even if nothing fits the description, and that there is not a clear sense in which he has made a statement which is neither true nor false (Donnellan 1966, §VIII: 197).

Another interesting distinction within Baghramian's collection is the one made in Kripke (1972a, Essay 11 of Baghramian 1998) between 'rigid' and 'nonrigid' designators. Kripke's basic insight for this distinction (inspired as a matter of

[4] E.g.: 'If a spaceship from Earth ever visits Twin Earth, then the supposition at first will be that "water" has the same meaning on Earth and on Twin Earth. This supposition will be corrected when it is discovered that "water" on Twin Earth is XYZ' (Putnam 1975: 233); '[T]he extension of the term "water" was just as much H_2O on Earth in 1750 as in 1950' (234); 'Suppose you are like me and cannot tell an elm from a beech tree. We still say that the extension of "elm" in my idiolect is the same as the extension of "elm" in anyone else's, viz., the set of all elm trees' (236).

fact in Donnellan's, cf. Kripke 1977: 255ff.) is the observation that

> There is no reason why we cannot *stipulate* that, in talking about what would have happened to Nixon in a certain counterfactual situation, we are talking about what would have happened to *him* (Kripke 1972a: 214).

This is true enough: if we are 'talking about what would have happened to Nixon in a certain counterfactual situation', it follows that we are talking about Nixon, without the need to stipulate anything.

Next, Kripke prepares the way to transpose this insight into the jargon of possible worlds, and he does so by way of some precautionary qualifications:

> A possible world isn't a distant country that we are coming across, or viewing through a telescope… A possible world is *given by the descriptive conditions we associate with it* … 'Possible worlds' are *stipulated*, not *discovered* by powerful telescopes (Kripke 1972a: 214, his italics).
>
> Of course when we specify a counterfactual situation, we do not describe the whole possible world, but only the portion which interests us (footnote 11 [fn. to p. 217]).

Then, on the basis of all this, Kripke puts forward his distinction between 'rigid' and 'nonrigid' designators, as well as the associated hypothesis that proper names belong to the first kind:

> Let's call something a *rigid designator* if in every possible world it designates the same object, a *nonrigid* or *accidental designator* if that is not the case. Of course we don't require that the objects exist in all possible worlds. Certainly Nixon might not have existed if his parents had not gotten married, in the normal course of things (Kripke 1972a: 216, his italics).
>
> In these lectures, I will argue, intuitively, that proper names are rigid designators, for although the man (Nixon) might not have been the President, it is not the case that he might not have been Nixon (though he might not have been *called* 'Nixon') (217, his italics).

At first sight, this may seem convincing: there will be possible worlds in which Nixon exists, and there will be possible worlds in which Nixon does not exist. And in every possible world in which Nixon exists, he will definitely be Nixon, even if he is not the President, or he is not called 'Nixon', in that world.

The problem comes, however, with the implicit assumption that these two sets of possible worlds (the set of possible worlds in which Nixon exists and the

set of possible worlds in which Nixon does not exist) exhaust all possibilities. In other words, the problem comes with the assumption that, given any possible world, either Nixon exists or does not exist in that world. This assumption derives from Kripke's definition of rigid designators as terms that designate the same object in every possible world in which that object exist. Indeed, such a definition does not make sense unless we assume that, given any possible world and a particular object, either that object exists or does not exist in that world. As proper names (such as 'Nixon') are hypothesised to be rigid designators, it follows that given any possible world, the referent of 'Nixon' (i.e. Nixon) either exists or does not exist in that world.

The problem with this picture is that it goes directly against the proviso on possible worlds that Kripke himself has given. Indeed, if possible worlds are specified by giving 'the descriptive conditions that we associate with it', and in giving such a description 'we do not need to describe the whole possible world but only the portion which interests us', it follows that there will be possible worlds in which the question of whether Nixon exists or not will simply have no answer. In order to postulate one such world, it suffices to describe a counterfactual situation in which there is no mention of Nixon or anything that allows us to deduce whether Nixon exists or does not exists in that world ('the world in which Socrates did not take the hemlock', for example). Is the world in which Socrates did not take the hemlock a world in which Nixon exists or a world in which Nixon does not exist? We cannot say. The question has not an answer. Hence, the term 'Nixon' cannot be said to behave as a rigid designator with respect to that particular world, because it is neither true that it designates some object in that world nor that it does not.

It is precisely because possible worlds, as Kripke himself emphasizes, are not 'distant countries viewed through a telescope', but descriptions of specific counterfactual situations, that the question of whether the referent of a proper name belongs or does not belong to a possible world does not always have an answer. Absorbed by analytic thinking, Kripke has jumped from the innocent and common-sense premise that, when talking of a counterfactual situation about Nixon, we are talking about Nixon, to the absurd conclusion that, whenever we are talking of a counterfactual situation, either Nixon exists or does not exist in that situation.

Our last example in this section will be the distinction introduced in Evans (1982, Essay 13 of Baghramian 1998) between two kinds of users of proper names, 'producers' and 'consumers':

> Let us consider an ordinary proper-name-using practice, in which the name 'NN' is used to refer to the person *x*. The distinctive mark of any such practice is the existence of a core group of speakers who have been introduced to the practice via their acquaintance with *x* … Members of this core group … I shall call 'producers' … Others, who are *not* acquainted with *x*, can be introduced into the practice, either by helpful explanations of the form 'NN is the ϕ', or just by hearing sentences in which the name is used. I shall call these members 'consumers', since on the whole they are not able to inject new information into the practice, but must rely upon the information-gathering transactions of the producers (Evans 1982: 250–251).

Like Putnam's hypothesis of the division of linguistic labour (which Evans actually recalls at this point, cf. 249ff.), this distinction is formulated from a purely conceptual basis. Unlike Putnam, however, Evans does not even suggest the possibility of conducting an empirical investigation about his distinction. He contents himself with introducing it and drawing conclusions from it by means of conceptual reasoning alone.

§8. Platonic assumptions about the existence of meanings

We shall now turn our attention to metaphysical semantic assumptions, which can be of two kinds, explicit or implicit. In some writings, indeed, we find an explicit endorsement of transcendent semantic theses (such as 'meanings are eternal', 'meanings are self-subsistent entities', etc.), whereas in others, Platonic background assumptions operate at a much more tacit level (for example, by avoiding the question of what meanings are, while treating them in practical terms as if they were self-subsistent entities). In Parts I and II, we gave a number of illustrations of the first type (cf. 2021, §6; 2021a, §2). The illustrations that we are going to pick up from Baghramian (1998), in this and the next section, are examples of the second type, i.e. examples of low-profile Platonic metaphysics in semantic theory.

To start with, Frege (1892) does not explicitly say what meanings are, though he insists that they are objective and intersubjective:

> The reference of a proper name is the object itself which we designate by its means; the idea, which we have in that case, is wholly subjective; in between lies the sense, which is indeed no longer subjective like the idea, but is yet not the object itself. The following analogy will perhaps clarify these relationships. Somebody observes the Moon through a telescope. I compare the Moon itself with the reference; it is the object of the observation, mediated by the real image projected by the object glass in the interior of the telescope, and by the retinal image of the observer. The former I compare to the sense, the latter is like the idea or experience. The optical image in

> the telescope is indeed one-sided and dependent upon the standpoint of observation; but it is still objective, inasmuch as it can be used by several observers (Frege 1892: 9).
>
> We now inquire concerning the sense and reference for an entire declarative sentence. Such a sentence contains a thought [*Footnote*: By a thought I understand not the subjective performance of thinking but its objective content, which is capable of being the common property of several thinkers] (10).

Two sorts of meaning are considered here, the sense of a proper name and the sense of a declarative sentence (which Frege calls 'a thought'). In both cases, Frege says that meaning is not subjective but objective. In both cases, Frege emphasises that it can be shared by different people. And in the telescope metaphor, Frege compares linguistic meaning with the optical image projected by the Moon into the telescope. All this tends to create a Platonic atmosphere, even if the question of what exactly meanings are and how they come into existence is never actually addressed in an explicit manner.

Our second example in this respect is Carnap (1950, Essay 4 of Baghramian 1998). In this paper, Carnap speaks of propositions, which he takes to be the designata of declarative sentences.[5] However, by the language he uses and the sorts of things he says, he conveys a Platonic view of propositions, even without endorsing semantic Platonism explicitly:

> Any further explanations as to the nature of the propositions (i.e., the elements of the system indicated, the values of the variables '*p*', '*q*', etc.) are theoretically unnecessary because, if correct, they follow from the rules. For example, … propositions are not mental entities… propositions are not linguistic entities … propositions (and their properties, like necessity, etc.) are not subjective. Although characterizations of these or similar kinds are, strictly speaking, unnecessary, they may nevertheless be practically useful. If they are given, they should be understood, not as ingredient parts of the system, but merely as marginal notes with the purpose of supplying to the reader helpful hints or convenient pictorial associations which may make this learning of the use of the expressions easier than the bare system of rules would do (Carnap 1950: 73–74).
>
> References to space-time points, the electromagnetic field, or electrons in physics, to real or complex numbers and their functions in mathematics, to the excitatory potential or unconscious complexes in psychology, to an inflationary trend in economics, and the like, do not imply the assertion that entities of these kinds occur as immediate data. And the same holds for references to abstract entities as designata in semantics (82).

[5] 'The System of Propositions: New variables, "*p*", "*q*", etc., are introduced with a rule to the effect that any (declarative) sentence may be substituted for a variable of this kind' (Carnap 1950: 72); 'The sentence "Chicago is large" designates a proposition' (78).

This way of addressing the nature of propositions is inconclusive. Carnap presents it, indeed, as mere 'hints' or 'marginal notes', avoiding making a definite pronouncement on what propositions are. Besides, he is more informative about what propositions are *not* than about what propositions *are*. Indeed, propositions are said not to be mental entities, they are said not to be linguistic entities, and they are said not to be subjective. But what options does that leave us, then? What could propositions actually be? Carnap suggests that they are 'abstract entities' and mentions electrons, real numbers and inflationary trends in economics, among others, as illustrative examples of abstract entities. But we are not told with which of these kinds of abstract entities should propositions be classified along. Are propositions abstract entities of a physical nature (like electrons), or of a mathematical nature (like real numbers), or of a social nature (like economic trends)? As these questions are left unanswered, we are left with the impression that meanings enjoy an objective but otherwise mysterious (hence, Platonic or pseudo-Platonic) existence.

§9. Psycho-biological semantic Platonism

Another disguised form of Platonic semantic metaphysics, finally, is what I shall call 'psycho-biological semantic Platonism'. By this label, I mean those semantic approaches in which linguistic meaning is said to be a psychological or biological phenomenon, but, as a matter of fact, is dealt with in purely analytic terms, without bringing about any relevant connection between it and the rest of psycho-biological categories. Semantic investigation is, thus, conducted in a purely formal setting, without leaning on psycho-biology for any specific explanatory or methodological purpose.

In such cases, the appeal to 'the realm of psychology' (or to 'the realm of biology', or both) acts as a mere smokescreen, overshadowing the question of what meanings are and how they come into existence. Accounts of this type can be considered as a form of 'disguised Platonism' (or 'de facto Platonism'), because the role that the appeal to the realm of psycho-biology plays in them, as a matter of fact, is very similar to the role that the Platonic realm plays in full-fledged semantic Platonism.

An example of this type of approach, in Baghramian's collection, is provided by Chomsky (1972, Essay 15 of Baghramian 1998):

> [L]inguistics is simply a part of human psychology: the field that seeks to determine the nature of human mental capacities and to study how these capacities are put to

> work. Many psychologists would reject a characterization of their discipline in these terms, but this reaction seems to me to indicate a serious inadequacy in their conception of psychology, rather than a defect in the formulation itself (Chomsky 1972: 297).
>
> A person who knows a language has mastered a system of rules that assigns sound and meaning in a definite way for an infinite class of possible sentences … [T]o discover these rules and principles is a typical problem of science. We have a collection of data regarding sound-meaning correspondence, the form and interpretation of linguistic expressions, in various languages. We try to determine, for each language, a system of rules that will account for such data. More deeply, we try to establish the principles that govern the formation of such systems of rules for any human language (297–298).
>
> [T]here is no hope in the study of the 'control' of human behavior by stimulus conditions, schedules of reinforcement, establishment of habit structures, patterns of behavior, and so on ... The essential properties of the human mind will always escape such investigation. And if I can be pardoned a final 'non-professional' comment, I am very happy with this outcome (307–308).

According to this, linguistics must be regarded as 'simply a part of human psychology', and psychologists are to blame if they do not perceive it so. However, when it comes to characterizing the goal and methods of this field of study, linguistics appears rather as a purely formal investigation, devoted to the study of 'systems of rules' and 'principles that govern them'. Besides, the typical research focal points in psychology (such as the study of stimulus conditions, habit structures, patterns of behaviour, etc.) are explicitly and proudly disregarded by Chomsky as irrelevant for linguistic investigation. Hence, the quest for the ultimate nature of the 'sound-meaning correspondence' (i.e. the investigation of where this correspondence comes from and what it depends on) is simply left out of the equation.

A similar charge, though to a much lesser extent, can be made to Burge (1989, Essay 17 of Baghramian 1998):

> [T]he study of language is a part of individual psychology (Burge 1989: 328).
>
> Unlike many philosophers, I do not find Chomsky's methodology misguided. His view that linguistic structures are real, that some of them are universal, and that they are mental structures seem to me substantially more plausible than alternatives. Arguments that … generate linguistics has no direct place in psychology, seem to me unconvincing and indicative of mistaken methodology (330).
>
> It is metaphysically possible for an individual to learn his idiolect in isolation from a community (341).

As we can see, Burge follows Chomsky in regarding the formal study of

language as part of human psychology. In fact, he actually goes one step further, by disregarding the social component of language as an essential ingredient for the acquisition of language, at least from the point of view of the 'metaphysically possible'. This leaves linguistic meanings, again, floating in a mentalistic (pseudo-Platonic) mist.

However, the truth is that Burge in this paper, unlike Chomsky (1972), does lean on proper cognitive and social psychology for explanatory purposes, and contains various references to proper psychological literature (see e.g. footnotes 6 and 9). In this context, Burge admits that social interaction is necessary for the acquisition of language after all, albeit from a 'psychological perspective':

> I think it plausible that some meanings of words are universal to the species in that if a person has the requisite perceptual experience and acquires language normally, the person will have words with those meanings. A likely source of such universality is perceptual experience itself (Burge 1989: 332).
>
> Language is social in that interaction with other persons is psychologically necessary to learn language (328).
>
> [I]diolects are social in two senses. First, in many cases we must, on cognitive grounds, defer to others in the explication of our words. Second, the individuation of our concepts and meanings is sometimes dependent on the activity of others from whom we learn our words and on whom we depend for access to the referents of our words (342).

§10. Afterword

This ends our journey through Baghramian's collection. We have, thus, compiled a bunch of examples, additional to those reviewed in the two previous parts of this discussion (Picazo 2021, 2021a), of authors that — at particular times, to a greater or lesser extent, directly or indirectly, willingly or unwillingly, advertently or inadvertently — fall victim to semantic Platonism. The fact that such cases crop up so often tells us how significant the influence of semantic Platonism has been on the philosophy of language of the twentieth century.

Incidentally, in one of the essays of Baghramian's collection, there is a critique of philosophy of language that bears many similarities to the one we are conducting in this trilogy of papers. It is Millikan's Epilogue to her book *Language, Thought, and Other Biological Categories* (Millikan 1984, Essay 18 of Baghramian 1998):

> This epilogue is headed with quotations from six meaning rationalists: Descartes, Hume, Husserl, [Tractarian] Wittgenstein, Quine, and Putnam … Why nearly every

> other philosopher who has ever written on language or on thought is not on the list is only that I didn't happen on a succinct quotation at the right time. Meaning rationalism has gone unquestioned to such a degree that, to my knowledge, no arguments have ever been advanced to support it (Millikan 1984: 351).
>
> Meaning rationalism is not a single doctrine but a syndrome. The paradigm meaning rationalist believes that intensions can't be wrong or mistaken and that … any lapses from sense into nonsense are entirely avoidable given enough patient and intelligent armchair work … He takes it that there is something called 'logical possibility' that is real, that is grasped by a priori reflection, and that is in no way rooted in how the world actually is (352).
>
> [Meaning rationalism] motivated Platonic realism; it motivated phenomenalism; it motivated verificationism. Indeed, it helped to motivate philosophical analysis in nearly all of its classical and modern forms … Compulsive searching for 'necessary and sufficient definitions' by which to define certain puzzling terms and engaging in the pastime of inventing fictitious 'counterexamples' to these definitions is one of the clearest symptoms of meaning rationalism (353).
>
> [M]eaning rationalism led to the conclusion that all our genuine concepts are of things that have a most peculiar ontological status. They are things that *are* and that can be *known* to be, yet that have no necessary relation to the actual would … They must be Platonic forms, or reified 'concepts' or reified 'meanings' (354).

As we can see, both Millikan's notion of 'meaning rationalism' and her aversion to it parallel our description and rejection of semantic Platonism in the present trilogy of papers.

However, there are also important differences. Indeed, she directs her accusation towards entire authors, rather than particular fragments of text, as we are doing here, and she has no qualms in placing Descartes, Tractarian Wittgenstein, Quine and Putnam (as well as 'nearly every other philosopher who has ever written on language or thought') in the same group, playing down the differences between them. I believe this is both unrealistic and disproportionate. The philosophical battle against semantic Platonism (or against 'meaning rationalism', as Millikan would term it) is so arduous and complex, that it cannot be reduced to a single step (one that, in Millikan's view, would be the step from nearly every philosopher of language before Millikan, to Millikan herself). There has been, rather, a philosophical evolution. And even in a trilogy of papers such as this, in which no attempt has been made to delve into the details of such an evolution, we cannot but admit that *there has been such an evolution*. The fact that Millikan refrains from doing so is, ironically, yet another overreaction to the background influence of Platonism (indeed, a sign of being under the Platonic influence indirectly, 'by way of opposition').

Besides, Millikan's approach, by contrast with mine, does not focus so much

on the social element of linguistic meaning as on the psycho-biological element. This can be judged from the title of her book, as well as from statements such as

> The position of this book has been that the relations between the head and the world that constitute reference and meaning are genuinely between the head and the world (Millikan 1984: 356)

that overlook the role that the linguistic community has in fixing natural language reference and meaning. (More about this author in Part II, Picazo 2021a, §9.)

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The Long Shadow of Semantic Platonism, Part III: Additional Illustrations, from a Collection of Classic Essays

The present article is the third part of a trilogy of papers, devoted to analysing the influence of semantic Platonism on contemporary philosophy of language. In Part I (Picazo 2021), the discussion was set out by examining a number of typical traces of Platonism in semantic theory since Frege. In Part II (Picazo 2021a), additional illustrations of such traces were provided, taken from a collection of recent commissioned essays on the philosophy of language (Schantz 2012). The present part is devoted to providing yet additional illustrations of such traces, taken from a collection of classic essays on the subject: the book *Modern Philosophy of Language*, edited by Maria Baghramian in 1998. We shall, thus, describe a number of examples in which the influence of semantic Platonism on these essays can be felt. Prominent among these examples are the confusion between sentences and propositions (and related confusions), the avoidant attitude with respect to basic aspects of linguistic meaning, the overuse of analytic methodology for semantic research, the adoption of a background Platonic metaphysics of meanings and the overreaction against semantic Platonism and germane views, witnessing an inverse influence ('by opposition') from these views.

Keywords: K Modern philosophy of language · Platonism by avoidance · Platonism by confusion · Platonism by method · Platonism by opposition.

La larga sombra del platonismo semántico, Parte III: Ilustraciones adicionales, tomadas de una colección de ensayos clásicos

El presente artículo es la tercera parte de una trilogía dedicada a analizar la influencia del platonismo semántico en la filosofía del lenguaje contemporánea. En la Parte I (Picazo 2021) se ponen las bases de esta discusión, examinando una variedad de rastros típicos del platoniso en la teoría semántica desde Frege. En la Parte II (Picazo 2021a) se aportan ilustraciones adicionales de tales rastros, a partir de una colección de ensayos sobre filosofía del lenguaje encargados recientemente para un volumen recopilatorio (Schantz 2012). Esta tercera parte está dedicada a recopilar más ilustraciones de dichos rastros, tomadas de una colección de ensayos clásicos sobre el tema: el libro *Modern Philosophy of Language*, editado por Maria Baghramian en 1998. Así, describiremos un manojo de ejemplos en los se palpa la influencia del platonismo semántico en estos ensayos. Entre ellos destacan la confusión entre oraciones y proposiciones (y confusiones similares), la actitud evitativa respecto a aspectos básicos del significado lingüístico, el uso desmesurado de la metodología analítica para la investigación semántica, la asunción de una metafísica

platónica de significados como telón de fondo, y la reacción excesiva contra el platonismo o concepciones cercanas, demostrando una influencia inversa («por oposición») de tales concepciones.
Palabras Clave: Moderna filosofía del lenguaje · Platonismo por evitación · Platonismo por confusión · Platonismo por método · Platonismo por oposición.

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