Force Fictionalism - Morals from Speech Act Theory

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In what follows I will try to zoom in to a particular type of force fictionalism, which I will call Standalone Force Fictionalism. This version of fictionalism seems interesting due to the fact that it escapes all the objections directed at various kinds of content fictionalism. I will try to argue, in addition, that the phenomenological objection which could still apply to Standalone Force Fictionalism is not very strong against such a view, if the view in case is seen as a conceptual proposal, on the background of an anti-psychologist theory of intentions like the one provided by Elizabeth Anscombe[1]. My aim, however, is not to support Standalone Force Fictionalism but to show that it is untenable, using some morals from the speech act theory. A few more general considerations about fictionalism will be made at the end of my talk.

Fictional objects and characters do not exist. There are also things the existence of which is disputable or already rejected: abstract objects, moral facts, possible worlds, theoretical entities and others. Yet we appear to be speaking about such things. I take it that the fictionalist believes that although what we say should not be dismissed, we are not really speaking about abstract objects, moral facts, possible worlds and so on.

A question can be immediately raised: "What are we in fact doing in these cases?" To this the fictionalist would reply that we pretend to be speaking about nonexistents[2]. In accordance with this general view, a particular form of fictionalism would claim that some discourse (let us call it D) about one or another kind of nonexistents is to be regarded as fictional. In what follows, however, I am not going to talk about any particular type of fictionalism.

Two forms of fictionalism are usually distinguished[3]: hermeneutic fictionalism (HF), which says that D is fictional and revolutionary fictionalism (RF), saying that D should be used as fictional.

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[1]   See Anscombe, G. E. M. (1963) *Intention*, second edition, (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press).

[2]   I borrow this word from Rescher, N. (2003) "Nonexistents then and now", *Review of Metaphysics* 57 (2), pp. 359-381, although I do not endorse Rescher's view.

[3]   See Stanley, J. (2001) "Hermeneutic Fictionalism", in French, P. and H. Wettstein, (eds.), 2001, *Midwest Studies in Philosophy Volume XXV: Figurative Language*, Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 36–71.

However, one might view fictionalism as a conceptual proposal, namely the proposal that D should be conceived as fictional. One way to distinguish HF from RF, then, would be to say that both are proposals that D should be conceived as fictional, with the notable difference that RF is a proposal focusing mainly on future utterances from D, while HF extends the proposal to past utterances from D as well. In what follows I will consider fictionalism as such a conceptual proposal, without talking about the extent to which the proposal should be applied.

To take an example, let us consider the following episode. I am in my office, looking for my cup of coffee. On finding it I exclaim: "Here you are!" Being inclined to reflect on my actions, I wonder what was I just doing. To this, the fictionalist conceptual proposal would be to describe my exclamation as belonging to a fiction producing practice. The fiction, in this case, would be that of an audience. In short, the fictionalist might tell me that I was pretending to talk to the cup, in a similar way, perhaps, to the one in which we pretend to talk to small babies or to our pets. The fact that I did not have access by introspection to the intention to get involved into any kind of fiction will be discarded as irrelevant if I accept the fictionalist proposal.

I think both the hermeneutic fictionalist and the revolutionary fictionalist could adhere to such a proposal, but while the hermeneutic fictionalist would insist that all the past cases of similar practices have to be described according to the fiction-of-audience interpretation, the revolutionary fictionalist would be content with my acceptance of such a description for similar future situations.

Nevertheless, my understanding of the HF / RF distinction could be mistaken. If this is the case, then one could perhaps say that fictionalism as a conceptual proposal fails into the same category with RF. In any case, it is this kind of fictionalism that I am interested in right now, no matter the tag.

One simple question can be raised at this point. How can we pretend to speak about nonexistents? After all, we do utter words and sentences. In this sense, we really speak and not only pretend to be speaking. So what do we pretend to do?

According to content fictionalism, when talking about nonexistents we pretend to refer to such entities (and perhaps we also pretend that what we are saying is true). The next question to be answered by a content fictionalist would then be: "What are we actually saying?"

Different versions of content fictionalism provide different answers to this second question[4]:

> a) Metafictionalism claims that we are actually talking about fictions (so all our utterances are or should be prefixed by "according to fiction X,...", were fiction X is characterized in

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[4]   See Yablo, S. (2001) "Go Figure: A Path Through Fictionalism", in French, P. and H. Wettstein, (eds.), 2001, Midwest Studies in Philosophy Volume XXV: Figurative Language, Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 72–102.

terms of D's domain). Leaving aside the distinction between engaging in a fictional discourse and reporting on a fictional discourse, fictions are as ontologically problematic as some of our initial nonexistents (possible worlds, say), so this view might not be very helpful.

b) Object-fictionalism claims that we pretend to refer to non-existents in order to talk about existing objects (let us mark the discourse about existing objects by D*), offering different ways in which utterances in D can be related to utterances in D*. It is, however, difficult to say what distinguishes this sort of fictionalism from older attempts to paraphrase ontologically problematic talk into ontologically acceptable talk, apart from the suggestion that the first should be taken as fictional.

c) Figuralism answers the same question by claiming that we basically speak in metaphors in order to talk about existing objects and makes the fictional character of D an essential trait of the functioning of our metaphors.

Several interesting objections have been raised against content fictionalism in the existing literature. Perhaps, instead of trying to device systematic (and composable) meaning relations between D and D* within a representationalist semantic framework, the content fictionalist would have better chances if she was working in a different semantic framework, like the one provided by inferentialism. However, I do not want to insist on such matters now, since the topic of my talk is not content fictionalism, but force fictionalism.

Now, force fictionalism provides a different answer to the first question considered here (i.e., "What do we pretend to do, since we do not pretend to speak?"). Instead of saying that we pretend to refer to nonexistents or to say something true about them, force fictionalism answers that we pretend to assert something about nonexistents. Things are somehow similar in this case. When asked about what do we actually do when we pretend to assert something, force fictionalists could also take different positions.

It should be noted that not all answers to the question "What do we do when we engage into fiction?" are based on speech act theory. Kendall Walton explicitly rejects the idea that a proper answer

to this can be offered by speech act theory[5]. According to him, engaging into fiction amounts to using some objects as props in some games of make-believe. Walton believes this is the mark of any pretended action and not only of the sort of pretense one might enter into when communicating with other persons. So according to this view it should be irrelevant for a fictional discourse D that when uttering some sentences belonging to D we pretend to assert them.

To this one could answer that if none of a person's actions is pretended, it is hard to see what would be a criterion for calling what one was doing a pretense. A painter does not pretend to assert anything and does not pretend to paint, but could produce a work of fiction only by pretending to depict some objects, facts or events (by pretending to make the portrait of a person, for instance). If she did not pretend to be doing something at any point in the production of her work, why should one call it a fictional work? The simple use of props in some make-believe situations does not seem sufficient. Mockups, wireframes and some prototypes may all be considered props used in make-believe, but a webdesigner and a client who have a discussion based on a mockup website do not seem to be engaged in any fiction[6].

I believe, then, that something cannot be fictional unless it is the product of some pretended action. Whether or not the use of props or the involvement in a game of make-believe are necessary is a matter of debate, of course[7], but the necessity of at least a pretended action for the production of a fictional work seems unproblematic to me. One could, for sure, try to find counterexamples to this claim. Such a counterexample would be, perhaps, the case of a person who would pretend that a natural phenomenon is occurring ("It is hot in here") by performing non-pretended actions (turning on the ceiling fan etc.). Nevertheless, the same situation could be also described as one in which the person was pretending to be affected by or to interfere with the effects of that natural phenomenon ("she was pretending to cool the room" or "she was pretending to cool herself"). The main point that could be noted here, in short, is that everything described in terms of "pretending that..." could be also described in terms of "pretending to...".

Now, if the work in case is a fictional discourse, at least some of the speech acts performed must be pretended. So now we return to our question: "What is it to pretend to assert something?". Three answers inspired by the speech act theory will be mentioned here.

According to the first, for which I believe John Searle can be credited[8], to pretend to assert

[5]   See Walton, Kendall (1990) *Mimesis as Make-Believe: On the Foundations of the Representational Arts*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
[6]   As a side note, Walton seems to shift pretension from the point of producing a fiction to the point of engaging into fiction.
[7]   In order to pretend to dig a hole in the ground I could use an actual shovel or nothing at all, for instance.
[8]   See Searle, John R. (1975) "The Logical Status of Fictional Discourse", *New Literary History*, 6: 2, pp. 319-332.

something is to pretend to perform the illocutionary act of assertion without performing any particular illocutionary act. According to the second, belonging to Gregory Currie[9], to pretend to assert something is to perform a different kind of speech act, a "sui-generis speech act", identified by the utterer's intention that the audience engage in a make-believe attitude towards the uttered content. The third answer, which is due to Aloysius Martinich, is that to pretend to assert something is to assert that same thing, only in a conversational context in which one does not have to observe a Supermaxim of Quality (derived from Grice's theory of conversation[10]): "Do not participate in a speech act unless you can satisfy all the conditions for its nondefective performance"[11].

Let us start with the second proposal. This seems to be the view that non-deceptive pretension is what we can abstract from different cases of pretended assertions, pretended promises, pretended requests, pretended declarations of war, pretended congratulations etc. and also (perhaps) from pretended non-communicative actions. We are doing different things in each case, but all the things we are doing might have something in common, namely our intention that some audience or someone witnessing our actions makes-believe that we are doing what we appear to be doing.

This can be, of course, criticized[12], but the point is that this reply leaves the problem of content open. So you cannot be a force fictionalist if you analyze fictional acts in this way without also being a content fictionalist.

The same observation seems to be true for the third proposal. Leaving that aside, the suggestion that at least some of the conditions for performing an illocutionary act are suspended when one engages into a fictional discourse can be accepted even if we adopt a different view about what it is to engage into a fictional discourse.

The first proposal claims that we pretend to perform some illocutionary act, although we perform none. The point of whether what we were saying was true cannot apply here (for instance, there is no point to ask who won a pretended game of chess[13]). The content of a pretended illocutionary act is not asserted at all[14]. There is no point in asking what do the referring terms which figure within

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[9]   See Currie, Gregory (1985) "What is Fiction?", *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 43, pp. 385-92. and Currie, Gregory (1986) "Works of Fiction and Illocutionary Acts", *Philosophy and Literature* 10:2, pp. 304-308.
[10]   Grice, H. P. (1989) "Logic and Conversation", in Grice, H. P. (1989) *Studies in the Way of Words*, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, pp. 22-40.
[11]   See Martinich, Aloysius P. (2001) "A theory of fiction", *Philosophy and Literature*, 25:1, p. 96.
[12]   Compare, for instance, pretending to promise with taking back a promise. The second could be considered a meta-illocutionary act, since it acts on other illocutionary acts, while the first has nothing specific to do with the acts we perform by uttering sentences.
[13]   Here I have in mind the example given in Urmson, J. O. (1976) "Fiction", *American Philosophical Quaterly*, 13: 2, p. 155-156.
[14]   See Balaguer, Mark (2009) "Fictionalism, Theft, and the Story of Mathematics", *Philosophia Mathematica*, (III) 17, pp. 157-159 for the suggestion of such a view, which Balaguer calls *hermeneutic non-assertivism* (although he does not support it).

that content actually refer to. They do not refer. Here the relation between the content which we pretend to assert and some ontologically acceptable description of the world is more like the relation between a fictional story and its moral (what we can learn from it).

There is one previsible reply: "Right, but what about the case when the content *is* actually asserted?" One could, of course, block this question by saying that if the content which we pretend to assert was actually asserted it would be meaningless[15].

In order to see this better, let us consider the following two fictions:

(i) We pretend to play a game of chess by reenacting a game we have learned by heart (Urmson's example); the wooden pieces have the same rules for their use as in a regular play.

(ii) We pretend to play a game of chess by using rocks which we move on a checkerboard as if they were chess pieces. From some point onward we are unable to say what rock stands for what piece in the game of chess, but we continue to pretend, until we end the game with one of us saying "Checkmate!".

Now, it is clear that while the game of chess played at (i) could be played as a real, non-fictional game of chess, the game played at (ii) could not be actually played, since it would not be a game at all.

So, according to this type of force fictionalism, which I will call "standalone force fictionalism" (or SFF, for short) in producing S as a sentence of D we pretend to assert the content p, but we do not really assert it. If we were to actually assert p, we would be saying something meaningless. Therefore, we do not need content fictionalism. All the objections against content fictionalism, according to this view, do not apply to force fictionalism.

There still are some objections against fictionalism which could be directed against SFF, the most notable of which seems to be the phenomenological objection developed by Jason Stanley[16]. According to him: "If the hermeneutic fictionalist is correct, then x can bear the propositional attitude

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[15]   See Eklund, Matti, "Fictionalism", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2011 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2011/entries/fictionalism/: "one can imagine a fictionalist about some discourse who denies that the relevant sentences even can be meaningfully used outside the pretense; who holds that the sentences only have pretense-uses."
[16]   See Stanley, J. (2001) "Hermeneutic Fictionalism", in French, P. and H. Wettstein, (eds.), 2001, *Midwest Studies in Philosophy Volume XXV: Figurative Language*, Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 36–71.

of pretense toward a proposition, without it being in principle accessible to x that x bears the propositional attitude of pretense towards that proposition. But this introduces a novel and quite drastic form of failure of first-person authority over one's own mental states".

Now, what if one is convinced by Wittgenstein's and Elizabeth Anscombe's arguments[17] that intentions, roughly speaking, should not be conceived as psychological states, but as depending on the way in which we describe (that is, conceptualize) our actions? A variation of that view might also apply here. In short, the fictionalist could say that what matters is not to empirically establish whether a mathematician, say, has this or that intention when uttering "4 is even", but whether it should be acceptable for the mathematician to describe her utterance as a non-deceptive pretension.

I must confess that my view of fictionalism as a conceptual proposal might be influenced by such a refusal to consider intentions as psychological attitudes. On this view, pretense is not a propositional attitude one could know she has by introspection. The previous example with my cup of coffee did perhaps already display such a perspective[18]. However, a few other things could be added now.

We can, for sure, distinguish between deceptive pretense and non-deceptive pretense. I suppose that we would agree that one can be involved in a self-deceptive pretense without knowing it[19]. Now, the fictionalist does not have to claim that in uttering sentences from an alleged fictional discourse D the speaker is self-deceiving herself. It would be enough to note that there are at least some cases in which first-person authority does not help one distinguish between deceptive and non-deceptive pretense.

Suppose I was saying that Santa lives at the North Pole in a discussion with a kid. No amount of introspection would help me establish whether I was involved in a deceptive or a non-deceptive pretense. What would matter, in such a case, would be to know whether the kid still believes that Santa does exist or not[20].

Moreover, the fictionalist could distinguish between the case in which one expresses an intention and the case in which one attributes an intention to oneself[21]. According to this distinction, what the fictionalist claims is only that the speaker should attribute to herself the intention that she (or

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[17]   See Wittgenstein, L. (1953) *Philosophische Untersuchungen* (Oxford: Blackwell) and Anscombe, G. E. M. (1963) *Intention*, second edition, (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press).
[18]   Also, if you believe that my fictionalism as a conceptual proposal is a form of (RF), you will perhaps directly say that it escapes Stanley's phenomenological objection, which is only directed at (HF).
[19]   At least Jason Stanley would accept this.
[20]   Similarly, with respect to the fiction-of-audience case, introspection cannot help me establish whether I am still pretending to talk to my baby or I am not involved into a fiction anymore, since the baby started to understand me.
[21]   See Ştefanov, G. (2011), "What is it for someone to have unconscious opinions", *Analele Universitatii din Bucuresti – Filosofie*, 60(2), pp. 81-86, where the distinction was used to analyze the case of an unconscious opinion as a case in which a person attributes an opinion to herself for the past without having expressed it in the past.

her audience) engages into fiction by a certain way in which she describes her performance, and not that the speaker expresses any such intentions.

It is for such reasons that I believe the phenomenological objection is not a very strong one against SFF, if we consider SFF as a conceptual proposal, at least. However, I think one could still argue SFF is untenable, so this is what I am trying to do in what follows. For this I want to use an obvious principle, which I will call "the Principle of Pretending" and some morals from the speech act theory.

A first formulation of the Principle of Pretending goes like this:

(PP1) In order to pretend to be doing A one must not be doing A[22].

Applied to the case of assertion, (PP1) says that in order to pretend to assert that p, you must not be asserting that p. (PP1) states a necessary condition for pretending to do something, although the condition is not sufficient by itself. One cannot pretend to assert that Santa lives at the North Pole by denying that Santa lives at the North Pole. Performing a different illocutionary act with the content that p makes it clear that you are not asserting that p, but by doing this you cannot pretend to assert that p. So perhaps (PP1) could be expanded into:

(PP2) Given the purpose X of an action A, in order to pretend to be doing A one must not achieve X, but appear to pursue X.

This analysis could be further detailed, but we need not do that here. We can already note that in order to pretend to assert something a person must not achieve the illocutionary point of assertion, but appear to pursue the illocutionary point of assertion.

It could be said, then, that in order to pretend to assert something one must: (a) on one hand break some of the rules for the successful and nondefective performance of the assertive illocutionary act, but also (b) respect (or appear to respect) just enough rules of the same illocutionary act such that her utterance is similar to an assertion.

Now, according to the speech act theory, the general structure of the rules for the successful and nondefective performance of an illocutionary act is as follows:

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[22]   See Card, Orson Scott (1985) Ender's Game, New York: Tor Books, for instance. You cannot say that Ender was pretending to be fighting the aliens' fleet or that he was pretending to destroy their planet. This is what he believed, of course. He believed that he was pretending to do those things, but he was actually doing them, so he could not be pretending to do them. A version of (PP1) could also apply to the cases described by the "pretending that..." phrase (as opposed to "pretending to..."): One cannot pretend that X is the case unless X is not the case.

"Assuming that all the conditions necessary and sufficient for hearer understanding are satisfied when the utterance is made, an illocutionary act of the form F(P) is successfully and nondefectively performed in a context of utterance iff:

(1) The speaker succeeds in achieving in that context the illocutionary point of F on the proposition P with the required characteristic mode of achievement and degree of strength of illocutionary point of F.

(2) He expresses the proposition P, and that proposition satisfies the propositional content conditions imposed by F.

(3) The preparatory conditions of the illocution and the propositional presuppositions obtain in the world of the utterance, and the speaker presupposes that they obtain.

(4) The speaker expresses and possesses the psychological state determined by F with the characteristic degree of strength of the sincerity conditions of F."[23]

How do we apply this structure to assertions, then? Here is a suggestion:

"By definition, the primitive assertive illocutionary force has the assertive illocutionary point; it has no special mode of achievement of illocutionary point, and no propositional content conditions; its preparatory conditions are simply that the speaker has reasons for accepting or evidence supporting the truth of the propositional content and its only psychological state is belief; it has medium degrees of strength of illocutionary point and of sincerity conditions."[24]

What is the illocutionary point of assertion? In short, it is to say how things are. So what we are interested in, right now, is to understand how one could fail to assert something but appear to attempt to say how things are. I take it that in order to fail to assert that p, one has to break some of the necessary conditions for asserting that p. It is disputable, for instance, that the sincerity condition is a necessary condition for the successful performance of an illocutionary act. In the case of promising, for instance, it could be said that a person promising to do A without intending to do A has succeeded to promise, but made a defective promise. In a similar way, it could be said that a person who asserted that p without believing that p could assert that p, but in a defective way. So a weaker version of the sincerity

[23]   See Searle, John R. and Vanderveken, Daniel (1985) *Foundations of illocutionary logic*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 21-22.
[24]   See Searle, John R. and Vanderveken, Daniel (1985) *Foundations of illocutionary logic*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 59-60.

condition might be a better candidate for a necessary condition in the case of assertion:

(SINC) The speaker intends that her utterance of S will make her responsible for believing that p[25].

Stronger necessary conditions for asserting that p have been proposed[26], but while they are disputable, I think we can say that (SINC) is a suitable candidate. It seems impossible to claim that one could assert that p by uttering S without at least intending that her utterance of S makes her responsible for believing that p. We could also notice at this point that one who engages in a non-deceptive fictional discourse does not intend that her utterances make her responsible for believing something.

Also, since the preparatory conditions are necessary conditions in the case of any illocutionary act[27], we could add the following to (SINC):

(RE) The speaker has reasons for accepting or evidence supporting the truth of p.

Now, it is also clear that (RE) is a necessary condition. We regularly distinguish between assertions and guesses or unfounded claims. The person engaging in a literary fictional discourse also appears to disregard (RE), although we could talk about reasons for accepting that p within a fictional discourse (also, this seems to be easier if we distinguish between believing that p and accepting that p, as some fictionalists do). The SFF approach we have been considering here, however, would reject such an idea. There can be no reasons for accepting p when p cannot be properly asserted. So it would appear that to request that the speaker fails to assert that p (in order to pretend to assert that p) produces at least the conclusions that the speaker breaks both (SINC) and (RE).

The second part of our requirement is more difficult. In fact, I want to show that if one accepts SFF, she cannot fulfill it. To remind you, the requirement is that the speaker should appear to say how things are.

Suppose that I believe that Vlad Dracul was also a fictional character and I say "Vlad Dracul lived in Romania" in the same way in which I would say "Dracula lived in Romania". I did not succeed

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[25]   This is inspired by Searle, John R. (1965) "What Is a Speech Act?", from Black, Max (ed.), *Philosophy in America*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
[26]   See, for instance, Williamson, Timothy (1996) "Knowing and Asserting", *Philosophical Review* 105, pp. 489–523.
[27]   See Searle, John R. and Vanderveken, Daniel (1985) *Foundations of illocutionary logic*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 17: "Such conditions which are necessary for the successful and nondefective performance of an illocutionary act we call preparatory conditions. In the performance of a speech act the speaker presupposes the satisfaction of all the preparatory conditions."

to pretend to assert that Vlad Dracul lived in Romania because it is true that Vlad Dracul lived in Romania. The illocutionary point of my "pretended assertion" was in fact achieved, so my utterance cannot be fictional anymore.

Nevertheless, in order to make sure that the illocutionary point of assertion is not achieved, one should be at least able to recognize that the illocutionary point of my utterance was supposed to be that of an assertion and not that of another illocutionary act. Intonation and context are not always enough to distinguish the illocutionary point of assertives from the illocutionary point of commissives, directives, declaratives or expressives. One could, of course, make the illocutionary point explicit by uttering the illocutionary preface "I assert that...". However, for several kinds of alleged fictional discourses, we do not need such an illocutionary preface in order to say that they contain assertions. So this is why to appear to say how things are leads to uttering a sentence with some locutionary content which could have been true, although it is not.

If my argument is correct, then the content in case can, in principle, be asserted, although the assertion would be false. But then we must speak of the content of our sentences belonging to a fictional discourse, so now we must add some version of content fictionalism to our force fictionalism. So it seems to follow from this that SFF is untenable.

In fact, if we provisionally accept the previous analysis of "pretending to assert that p", and give up SFF we could replace the observations that the speaker breaks (SINC) and (RE) with something a bit more informative, along the following lines:

Z pretends to assert that p in uttering S iff:

> (SINC*) Z intends that her utterance of S will make her responsible for making-believe that p (i. e. Z would accept a description of what Z was doing according to which Z should accept responsibility for making-believe that p).
>
> (RE*) Z's acceptance of p as part of discourse D does not make D incoherent (if the whole discourse consists only in p, p must not be contradictory).
>
> (NT) p is not true (although it could in principle be true).

It can be clearly noted, now, that this Revised Force Fictionalism still needs some type of content fictionalism to talk about the way in which p (from D) stands for p* (from D*), which is, in fact true.

What can we make of the chess analogy used earlier to introduce SFF, then? The case (ii) of "fictional chess" still contained enough elements to be recognized as simulated chess. By contrast, it seems that if no content is asserted, an utterance does not contain enough elements to be recognized as a simulation of an assertion.

Another example might help us here. Consider counting as a practice. A child would learn to count particular things. At first, the child will count only one set of things. If she learned to count the stairs of a particular staircase, she would only count a few of those stairs and nothing else. As the next step, the child will learn to count different sets of particular things. Finally, the child will learn to count without looking at any particular set of things (I call this "counting as if one was in an arithmetic class").

At this point one might wonder how can the child speak as if she was referring to numbers when there are no such things. The fictionalist would perhaps propose that we conceptualize this last activity ("counting as if one was in an arithmetic class") by saying that the child engages into some sort of fiction. The problem for the standalone force fictionalist is that she says that the child engages into such a fiction in the same in which one could engage into the case (ii) of fictional chess mentioned before. The ability to play chess is not necessary for that case. We think, however, that a child could not properly count as if she was in an arithmetic class without being able to count particular sets of objects, since we would not call learning numerals by heart and reciting them in a certain order "counting". The ability gained in the practice which the fiction simulates must be used when engaging into a simulation of that practice. So the fictionalist should at least concede that the child is pretending to count some undetermined particulars, but this means that she is not a standalone force fictionalist anymore.

A few more general remarks might be in place at this point. Speech act theory did introduce a notion of illocutionary commitment which could help us to better understand the fictionalist proposal[28]. If I order you to close the door, for instance, I am also committed to allowing you to close the door (an illocutionary act with the same content and illocutionary point, but a different degree of strength). One way in which one could cancel such a commitment would be to pretend to give somebody the order to do A while forbidding the same person to do A. In a similar way, if by asserting that 4 is even I am committed to the assertion that 4 does exist, by pretending to assert that 4 is even I could cancel the respective commitment. Fictionalism, in this respect, could be seen as an attempt to conceptualize our talk such that we disengage from its ontological commitments.

To return to our previous example, the purpose of the fictionalist proposal was to accept counting as if in an arithmetic class as a practice without the ontological commitment of that practice. But the cut between counting and some ontological commitment towards numbers could be due to a more pervasive practice than that of engaging into fiction.

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[28] See, for instance, Searle, John R. and Vanderveken, Daniel (1985) *Foundations of illocutionary logic*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 24.

One possible development of this idea is to deny that the child is engaging into any sort of fiction while distinguishing between "talking" and "thinking-out-loud", like Sellars does[29]. Illocutionary commitment comes only with talking, with being involved in communication, one might say, while thinking-out-loud is not even the pretense of communication. If we agree with Sellars, by thinking-out-loud one does not talk and does not even pretend to talk. The child who has learned to count as if she was in an arithmetic class has also learned to think-out-loud, according to this view, and it is only now that she is going to learn to think to herself.

I do not support this view, but presented it here only as an example of an alternative way in which we could cut the link between our commitment towards the content of what we say and the ontological commitment coming from the presuppositions of what we say. Perhaps better alternatives could be devised to save our common sense intuition that deciding whether something is fictional or not and deciding whether to keep track of the ontological commitments of a discourse or not are two different practices, but that is besides the scope of my talk.

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[29]   See Sellars, W. (1969) "Language as Thought and as Communication", *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 29(4) pp. 506-527.