

THE METHOD OF PARAPHRASE

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1 INTRODUCTION

Sometimes the truth can be misleading. According to (Roser 2014),

(A) The average mother has 2.4 kids.

Even if that's true, it's misleading insofar as it suggests that there's such a thing as the average mother or that anyone has 2.4 kids. A less misleading statement of that fact is

(A*) The number of children divided by the number of mothers is 2.4.

According to (Thomasson 1999), fictional characters such as Sherlock Holmes are (existing) abstract entities. If that's right, then

(E) Sherlock Holmes exists

is true. Even so, it's misleading insofar as it suggests that there is or was a detective named 'Sherlock Holmes' that lived in London at 221B Baker Street with his friend Watson. A less misleading statement of that truth is

(E*) There is a fictional character named 'Sherlock Holmes'.

Such "less misleading statements" are often called **paraphrases**.

Paraphrase is relevant to the existence of properties because there are apparently true claims that apparently entail the existence of properties. This gives us good reason to think there are properties, unless it can be plausibly argued that at least one of those appearances is misleading. In typical (perhaps all) cases, this will involve giving a paraphrase of the apparently true claims—a less misleading restatement—that plausibly doesn't entail the existence of properties (see, e.g., Jackson 1977 and Hoffman and Rosenkrantz 2005).¹

2 A QUINEAN ARGUMENT

Metaphysics was viewed with suspicion from the time Immanuel Kant awoke from his dogmatic

¹ Paraphrase is relevant to other debates in philosophy for similar reasons: (Hawley 2001: 54) gives paraphrases of "historical" and "lingering" predicates in defense of stage theory; (Lewis 1986) shows how to paraphrase away (primitive) modal operators in favor of quantification over worlds; etc.

slumbers in the mid-18th Century through the heyday of positivism in the mid-20th. W.V. Quine rehabilitated the reputation of metaphysics by arguing that more well-regarded areas of inquiry are inextricably tied to it: that metaphysics cannot be isolated from the pursuit of truth in other domains (Quine 1948). Quine’s argument for the unavoidability of metaphysics hinged on the fact that many of our non-metaphysical theories have ontological implications, what Quine called *ontological commitments*.²

But Quine didn’t just note that our non-metaphysical theories have ontological commitments: he incorporated that insight into a methodology for ontology. His most important observation was that we can leverage the evidence we have for our non-metaphysical theories to reach conclusions about ontology. Since Quine took there to be a paucity of evidence bearing directly on ontological theses, he maintained that this indirect leveraging strategy—Quinean meta-ontology as it is often called—is the best and perhaps only legitimate method for ontological inquiry.

Quine’s method—or at least the neo-Quinean method utilized by contemporary Quinean metaontologists (e.g., Lewis 1999, Burgess and Rosen 2005, and van Inwagen 2023)—is illustrated by the following argument:

The Quinean Argument

(1) Our best scientific and mathematical theories include or entail claims that apparently entail the existence of properties. E.g.:

(S) Elements in the same column of the Periodic Table often share chemical properties.

(M) Addition and multiplication share important mathematical properties.

(2) We are justified in believing our best scientific and mathematical theories, including claims like (S) and (M).

(3) Claims like (S) and (M) *do* entail the existence of properties.

So, (4) We are justified in believing that there are properties.

(5) If we are justified in believing there are properties, we are justified in rejecting nominalism.

So, (6) We are justified in rejecting nominalism.³

(1) refers to our best scientific and mathematical theories. Here, “our best theories” refers to our *epistemically* best theories—our most warranted or belief-worthy theories—as opposed to our “best theories” in some other sense. (Crucially, it doesn’t mean our best theory in each domain: our most belief-worthy theories about some scientific domains aren’t, in fact, worthy of belief. For example,

² According to Quine, only quantifiers have ontological implications; others have held that denoting phrases and even predicates are committing. See Ch. 1, this volume, for discussion.

³ Terminological note: I take ‘nominalism’ to be the thesis that there are no abstract entities. Unfortunately, I have no definition of ‘abstract entity’ to offer: see Chs. 5 and 6, this volume, for discussion.

there are no theories worthy of belief about the origins of life, a famously unsettled question. (1) refers to our most belief-worthy scientific and mathematical theories overall.)

(2) says that we are justified in believing our best theories. It doesn't say that we are rationally *required* to accept our best theories. Just so, The Quinean Argument concludes that we are justified in rejecting nominalism, not that we are rationally required to reject nominalism. Perhaps agnosticism about or even acceptance if nominalism are also justified. That depends on how "permissive" rationality is (Schoenfield 2019).

Of course, we are not all justified in accepting the same things. (2) shouldn't be read as claiming that it would be rational for *every* person to accept our best theories. Many people don't have evidence, even testimonial evidence, for those theories. It's nonetheless rational for many philosophers, including many anti-nominalists, to accept them. Many philosophers are scientifically informed, and are justified in accepting our best scientific and mathematical theories, even if only on the basis of scientific and mathematical testimony. That's all that's required for The Quinean Argument. Of course, some philosophers are anti-realists about even our best scientific and mathematical theories. I'll say more about anti-realism below, but the mere fact that some people, even rational and informed people, reject the premises of an argument does not render the argument unsuccessful (Keller 2017a).

(3) says, roughly, that (S) and (M) have the "logical forms" that they appear to have: that they are not misleading as to their logical or metaphysical implications, and so entail the existence of properties. This is the premise to which paraphrase can most obviously be used to object, but, as we'll see, it isn't the only one.

Sub-conclusion (4) only follows from (1)-(3) given a closure principle that says we are justified in believing the consequences (perhaps of some restricted kind *K*) of things we are justified in believing. It is, however, notoriously difficult to formulate substantive closure principles that are not subject to counterexample (see, e.g., Hawthorne 2005). If we had a compelling argument that (4) was false, that would undermine this step of The Quinean Argument: instead of justifying anti-nominalism, it would cast doubt on (1)-(3). I don't think the arguments for nominalism are strong enough to turn The Quinean Argument on its head, but some nominalists may disagree (see Burgess and Rosen 2005 and Liggins 2007 for related discussion).

3 REJECTING (1)

How might a nominalist object to The Quinean Argument? While (1) seems difficult to deny, some philosophers take delight in denying that which is difficult to deny. However, (1) really is undeniable. If our best scientific and mathematical theories had non-transparent contents—if, say, mathematical sentences expressed propositions that would be more perspicuously expressed by sentences prefaced with "if there were abstracta" or "it's possible that" (compare Dorr 2008 and Hellman 1994)—that would undermine (3), not (1). For example, if (M) expressed the conditional proposition *if there were abstracta, addition and multiplication would share important mathematical properties*, that wouldn't cast doubt on (1), precisely because "if there were abstracta" is unarticulated in (M): (M) isn't a conditional *sentence*. The only way for (1) to be undermined is if it were obvious that scientific and mathematical claims like (S) and (M) have nominalistically-friendly contents. That is empirically false.

4 TYPES OF PARAPHRASE

While (1) is undeniable, (2), (3), and (5) clearly aren't. Paraphrase plays a role in most if not all objections to those premises. But to understand the role of paraphrase in rejecting (2), (3), and (5), it is important to distinguish between two importantly different types of paraphrase. A paraphrase is a reformulation, a new sentence that is (intended to be) less misleading than the original. But there are two types of reformulation, corresponding to two ways in which something can be misleading. Some apparently true things are *false*, or at least inconsistent with one's other views. Such cases call for **revising paraphrases**: *revisions* to what is said. Revising paraphrases are sentences that (are intended to) have different and presumably better contents than the originals (i.e., true ones). In general, revising paraphrases are given when one takes some apparently true (or otherwise attractive) sentence to be false, as is the case with those that deny (2), and hence (S) and (M). A paraphrase, in this sense, is a replacement sentence that expresses a similar claim as the original, has many or all of the original's attractive features, and is true. Revising paraphrases are (intended to be) less misleading by being *more accurate*: by revising what is said so that it is "strictly and literally true".

Revising paraphrases should be distinguished from **reconciling paraphrases**. While revising paraphrases (are intended to) *replace* what was originally said, reconciling paraphrases (are intended to) *preserve* what was originally said. Their purpose is to clarify the contents (and especially the implications) of the originals, so as to show that the original claims do not need to be revised. Reconciling paraphrases are given when one takes some sentence to be true, but misleading as to its implications. The paraphrase is intended to clarify those implications. (Recall (A) and (A*.) Reconciling paraphrases are given by those that reject (3): those who *accept* (S) and (M) but don't think that they entail the existence of properties. Reconciling paraphrases are (intended to be) less misleading in the sense of being *more perspicuous* than the originals: by being more transparent *vis-à-vis* their implications.

To illustrate this distinction, consider a contemporary classic of the "nominalistic paraphrase" genera, Cian Dorr's (2008) proposal that claims apparently referring to abstract entities like (S) and (M) should be paraphrased as

(S*) If there were abstracta, elements in the same column of the Periodic Table would often share chemical properties.

(M*) If there were abstracta, addition and multiplication would share important mathematical properties.

One might propose (S*) and (M*) as *revising* paraphrases of (S) and (M): as replacement sentences expressing nominalistically-acceptable claims. Dorr's proposal is sometimes viewed in this light (see, e.g., Himelright 2020).⁴ However, it's not clear that that was Dorr's intention. He says,

The superficial way of talking about numbers, properties, relations and sets is very useful...sentences get to be true or false taken superficially in virtue of what there is in the fundamental sense, and what it is like. Thus, each English sentence must have a "paraphrase": a sentence that, when taken in the fundamental sense, says how things

⁴ Himelright, like many others, seems to assume that *all* paraphrases are revising.

would have to be for the original sentence to be true in the superficial sense. (Dorr 2008: 36)

On the one hand, Dorr talks about sentences like (S) and (M) being “useful”. Since useful claims are often contrasted with true ones, that might suggest that his paraphrases are revising. On the other hand, Dorr talks about such sentences being “true or false taken superficially”. If “superficial truth” is a kind of *truth*, that suggests that statements like (S*) and (M*) are reconciling paraphrases: statements that, if not synonymous with (S) and (M), are true in the same worlds as (S) and (M).⁵ If that’s correct, they show that (S) and (M) are consistent with nominalism, given that (S*) and (M*) are. (If A is consistent with B, and C is true in the same worlds as A, then C is consistent with B.) Of course, there’s no oracle that tells us when sentences express claims that are true in the same worlds. But if, for all we know, (S*) and (M*) are true in the same worlds as (S) and (M), and if, for all we know, (S*) and (M*) are more perspicuous than (S) and (M), then, for all we know, premise (3) of The Quinean Argument is false. (Two sentences true in the same worlds are unequally perspicuous if the membership conditions for the set of worlds where they are true is better reflected by the structure of one than of the other: e.g., (A*) is more perspicuous than (A).)

Such ambiguity about how to interpret paraphrase proposals is commonplace: the distinction between revising and reconciling paraphrases is often neglected. But the “success conditions” for paraphrases of different kinds are different, and so it’s important to keep them distinct. For revising paraphrases to be successful, whoever offers them must take them to be adequate replacements of the originals, an inherently subjective matter that depends on one’s other views. For example, if the truth or falsity of nominalism is non-contingent, Dorr’s paraphrases will be inadequate given the orthodox account of counterfactual conditionals, according to which any conditional with an impossible antecedent is true. That account would render ‘if there were abstracta, $2+2=5$ ’ true, making it a manifestly inadequate replacement for ‘ $2+2=5$ ’. Various authors have attempted to remedy this problem (e.g., Woodward 2010 and Himelright 2020), but Dorr rejects the orthodox account of counterfactuals, and so doesn’t recognize the problem to begin with.

But while adequacy judgements depend on one’s other commitments, there is a widely if not universally shared commitment: that the paraphrases do the “doxastic work” of the originals. “Doing the doxastic work” is fundamentally a matter of preserving the uncontroversially good inferences in which the originals figure. In the case of abstracta, there are many clearly “good” arguments about the concrete world in which claims (apparently) about abstracta seem to play an essential role: e.g., mathematics is useful for all sorts of practical purposes, and any nominalistic revision of mathematics must be able to preserve its usefulness in the practical domain. A successful nominalistic revising paraphrase must vindicate the calculations of bridge builders, bankers, and bakers. While this might seem to be a daunting requirement, recent work suggests that it isn’t insurmountable.⁶ The remaining challenge is an epistemological one: establishing that one is justified in rejecting the original theory and replacing it with the paraphrase. David Lewis said that “Mathematics is an established, going concern. Philosophy is as shaky as can be. To reject mathematics for philosophical reasons would be absurd” (1990: 58). That’s too strong: some mathematical claims might be rationally rejected on the

⁵ Actually, other parts of the essay indicate that Dorr takes ‘superficial’ to modify, not ‘true’, but ‘exists’: that his view is that abstracta superficially exist, but don’t fundamentally exist. See section 7. Dorr’s view was anticipated by (Putnam 1967).

⁶ There are two main ways this requirement has been instrumentalized in the literature: as a conservativeness requirement, and as a safety requirement. See (Field 1980), (Dorr 2008), (Woodward 2010), and (Skiba 2019) for discussion.

basis of very well supported philosophical claims. But it is—how should I put this?—*unclear* that nominalism is a “very well supported philosophical claim”.

Reconciling paraphrases face a different set of constraints. Successful reconciling paraphrases of (S) and (M) must show or at least make it reasonable to believe that those claims are consistent with nominalism: that they don’t actually entail the existence of properties. If there sentences (S*) and (M*) that appeared both synonymous with (S) and (M) and consistent with nominalism, that would do the trick. (In the way that (A) and (A*) appear to be synonymous, but the latter appears consistent with the claim that nobody has 2.4 kids.) But synonymy is not required for a reconciling paraphrase to be successful: as we saw above, to argue that A is consistent with B (for all we know), all that is required is some C that is (for all we know) true in the same worlds as A and that is (for all we know) consistent with B.

5 REJECTING (2)

Let us return to The Quinean Argument. The two main ways in which a nominalist might object to (2) involve revising paraphrase. To deny (2) is to deny that we are justified in believing our best scientific and mathematical theories. But the claim that there is *nothing* right about such sentences beggars belief. (S) is clearly “more right” than falsehoods like

(S2) Elements with English names that begin with the same letter often share chemical properties.

Or, to consider a more prosaic example,

(O) Orange is a property

is clearly more right than

(O2) Obama is a property.

Even if we shouldn’t *believe* (S) and (O), there is *something* right about them, unlike (S2) and (O2). One natural thought is that the difference is that there are relevant truths in the neighborhood of (S) and (O), but not (S2) and (O2). To state those important truths would be to give revising paraphrases of (S) and (O): true replacements for truth-adjacent falsehoods.

A superficially different strategy for denying (2) involves giving “correctness conditions” for (S) and (M)—conditions under which (S) and (M) are correct (as opposed to true)—, rather than trying to identify substitute replacement truths (see, e.g., Båve 2015 and Schindler 2021). One might question whether the correctness conditions approach involves paraphrase, but the two strategies are interchangeable. To illustrate this, consider (O) and (O2). Nominalists who deny (2) will likely think (O) entails the existence of properties, and is therefore false. Such nominalists will still want to say that (O) is better than (O2): (O2) has *nothing* going for it, while (O) is good enough to be assertible in most contexts: intelligent and informed people often say things like (O), and almost never say things like (O2). A nominalist might try to explain the differential goodness of (what she takes to be) falsehoods like (O) and (O2) by appeal to *proximity to truth*, arguing that (O), but not (O2), is close to being true. For example, she might say that there is a nearby replacement truth (revising paraphrase) for (O), but not (O2), since (perhaps)

(O*) ‘Orange’ is a predicate

is true but

(O2*) ‘Obama’ is a predicate

is false. Hence, what makes (O) false but good is its proximity to the (true) revising paraphrase (O*).

That is the “revising paraphrase” approach. On a “correctness conditions” approach to explaining the differential goodness of (O) and (O2), one might argue that what makes (O) better than (O2) is that (O)’s correctness conditions are satisfied whereas (O2)’s aren’t. Perhaps the correctness conditions for sentences like (O) and (O2) are something like:

(CC_x) ‘x is a property’ is correct iff ‘x’ is a predicate

Then (O) is false but correct (since ‘Orange’ is a predicate), whereas (O2) is false and incorrect (since ‘Obama’ is not a predicate). Despite the superficial differences between these approaches to explaining the differential goodness of (O) and (O2), it seems clear that they are fundamentally equivalent: the satisfaction of (O)’s correctness condition is just the truth of the revising paraphrase (O*). Revising paraphrases thus generate correctness conditions: if (O*) is a plausible revising paraphrase of (O), (O) is correct iff (O*) is true. Conversely, correctness conditions generate revising paraphrases: if (CC_O) is the correctness condition for (O), then a relevant truth in the neighborhood of (O) is that (CC_O) obtains.

6 REJECTING (3)

While some nominalists reject our best scientific and mathematical theories in favor of nominalistically-friendly replacements, others argue that our best theories do not have the anti-nominalistic entailments they appear to have, thus denying (3) rather than (2). Any such denial will involve reconciling paraphrase, implicitly if not explicitly. For example, rather than claiming that (O*) is a truth in the neighborhood of (O), one might instead claim that (O) and (O*) express the same fact, or are true in the same worlds, and hence that (O) plausibly doesn’t entail the existence of properties after all. (If (O) and (O*) express the same fact, that leaves open whether the “logical form” of the fact they express is mirrored by (O) or (O*), or neither. But that means we don’t—absent further considerations—know whether The Quinean Argument is sound.⁷)

This strategy appears to let the nominalist have her cake and eat it too, and has thus drawn biting criticism. Consider, first, **the symmetry objection**:

For instance, it might be maintained that

(A) “There exist prime numbers greater than a thousand”

is innocent because all it really means is

⁷ I take this to be a serious objection. Compare: Mind is irreducible to matter; minds exist; *therefore* materialism is false. Even if this argument is sound, a good objection to it is that we don’t *know* that it’s sound, since we don’t know whether its first premise is true. See (Keller 2017a) for discussion.

(A*) There could exist a prime numeral greater than a thousand.

or something of the sort.

There are, however, two serious difficulties with such a view. For one thing, such a nominalistic translation seems to work too well. If (A) is nominalistically acceptable because “deep down” all it means is (A*), then it would seem that

(B) “There exist numbers”

must be acceptable, too, because all it means is

(B*) There could have been numerals.

But to concede (B) (and the corresponding statement about other kinds of mathematical objects) is to concede all the antinomialist maintains. (Burgess and Rosen 2005: 524)

The symmetry objection was made most famously in (Alston: 1958), but the worry is widespread:

The notion of paraphrase has always been caught between an aspiration to symmetry—paraphrases are supposed to *match* their originals along some semantic dimension—and an aspiration to the opposite—paraphrases are supposed to *improve* on their originals by shedding unwanted ontological commitments. (Yablo 1998: fn.47)

If paraphrase is licensed by a symmetric notion like synonymy...there will be at least some opportunities for [paraphrases to undermine themselves]. (Schaffer 2009: 370)

The word ‘paraphrase’ is misleading. Intuitively, *P* is a paraphrase of *Q* if *P* means the same as *Q*. But paraphrases in this sense are useless for our purposes. How can *P* and *Q* have the same meaning whilst only one of them is committed to a certain type of entity? (Melia 1995: fn.1)

But the notion of perspicuity—of some sentences being less misleading than others—breaks the symmetry objection (Keller 2017b). A paraphrase *P* and an original sentence *O* can both express claim *C*, but *P* can be better than *O* by being more *perspicuous*: by being such that its *formal* implications (or the formal implications of a straightforward regimentation of it) correspond more closely to *C*’s *actual* implications than the formal implications of *O*. (E.g., (A*) is more perspicuous than (A).⁸) Paraphrases that are symmetric or equal in meaning need not be symmetric or equal with respect to the perspicuity of their implications. And of course, as stressed above, reconciling paraphrases don’t need to be synonymous (“symmetric in meaning”) to begin with, as long as they are modally equivalent. This point is even more important when it comes to **the lack of scientific evidence objection**:

⁸ Why think that the less committal sentence is the more perspicuous? Why think paraphrase *subtracts* commitments rather than *adding* them? The short answer is that while there’s no guarantee that the less committal sentence is the more perspicuous one, we sometimes know that it is (e.g., (A*) is more perspicuous than (A)), and even if we *don’t* know that it is, paraphrase can subtract *rational* commitments as long as we don’t know that it *isn’t*. See (Keller 2017b) for discussion.

...there is a total lack of scientific evidence in favor of any such nominalistic reconstrual as a theory of what ordinary mathematical assertions mean. Or at least, no nominalists favoring such a reconstrual have ever published their suggestions in a linguistics journal with evidence such as a linguist without ulterior ontological motives might accept. (Burgess and Rosen 2005: 525)

This worry is also widespread (see, e.g., Kripke 1982: 65 and Korman 2007: 332). The most important response to it is to reiterate that reconciling paraphrasts aren't, or don't need to be, making claims about synonymy. That, by itself, explains why their arguments wouldn't generally pass muster in a linguistics journal. Of course, some reconciling paraphrasts *do* make claims about synonymy. Perhaps they don't really mean to or need to, or perhaps they are thinking of content as coarse grained, such that modally equivalent propositions are synonymous. But even in cases where a paraphrast intends, upon reflection, to make claims about sameness of fine-grained content, it's false that "ulterior ontological motives" are out of bounds when it comes to linguistics. What things mean is metaphysically constrained by what there is for things to mean: no matter what Millians say, the semantic value of "Zeus" can't be *Zeus if there's no such thing*. Linguistic theories that ignore metaphysical constraints are based on a nonrepresentative subset of our total evidence and may need to be rejected. If we discovered that nominalism was true, nominalistic "reconstruals" of what things mean would become more linguistically plausible. We certainly wouldn't just throw out our scientific and mathematical theories that are *prima facie* nominalistically unacceptable. Rather, we'd conclude that those theories should be interpreted, *ultima facie*, in a nominalistically acceptable manner. The truth about linguistics depends, in part, on the truth about metaphysics (see Keller 2015).

Finally, consider **the conflicting projects objection**:

There seem in fact to be two sorts of paraphrase projects that analytic philosophers have engaged in. The first is to paraphrase English sentences in such a way that *intuitively valid* inferences come out, on the paraphrase, *formally valid*. The second is to paraphrase English sentences in such a way as to *represent* the truths that they express more *perspicuously*. How do these two sorts of projects relate to one another? The first point to note is that some sentences that tend to be viewed as harmless from the point of view of the first project are not so viewed from the second—e.g., the English sentence 'Everyone in the room casts at least one shadow.' Secondly, it may be that pursuing the first project will be to the detriment of the second...what *a priori* reason is there to expect that the first project will lend itself to the second? (Hawthorne and Cortens 1995: 151-2)

There is much to agree with here. It's true that making intuitively valid inferences come out formally valid isn't *guaranteed* to deliver the correct "logical form" of the statement: as always, theories are underdetermined by evidence. Still, the procedure is a *good guide* to logical form, perhaps the best guide we have. It's also true that logic and ontology don't *necessarily* march hand in hand. But all The Quinean Argument assumes is that if a statement S implies that there are Xs, then S's truth requires the existence of Xs. That seems pretty unobjectionable. Logic, Quineans say, is an *incomplete* guide to ontology. That's controversial, but not unreasonable.

The conflicting projects objection assumes that logical and metaphysical perspicuity can come apart: that the project of giving logically perspicuous paraphrases can conflict with the project of giving metaphysically perspicuous ones. But why think that? Consider 'Everyone in the room casts at least

one shadow'. Assume that's true. Now, either shadows exist or they don't. If they do, there is no conflict between the projects: the intuitive paraphrase will quantify over shadows, but shadows exist so there's no problem. On the other hand, if shadows don't exist, there's no conflict either: the intuitive paraphrase formally entails that there are shadows, and that's false. But since truths can't entail falsehoods, this shows that the intuitive paraphrase is inadequate. Once again, there's no conflict between the projects.

7 REJECTING (5)

I defined 'nominalism' as the thesis that there are no abstract entities, and properties are widely taken to be paradigmatic abstracta. Hence, (5). Of course, not everything that is widely taken to be paradigmatically X actually is: peas are widely taken to be paradigmatic vegetables, but really they're fruits. Likewise, some nominalists argue that properties are not abstracta after all. Such objections also involve paraphrase, at least implicitly.

Some nominalists argue that properties are concrete objects of some special and abundant type, such as spacetime points. Such nominalists will plausibly have to engage in paraphrase projects that mirror those of the nominalists who deny (2) or (3). Views of this kind can be worked out in different ways, but apparent truths like 'Orange is a color' will need to be paraphrased as (perhaps) something like 'the orange spacetime region is a subset of the colored spacetime region'. As above, this could be offered as either a revising or reconciling paraphrase (see Chs. XX[Effingham], XX[Cowling], and XX[Giberman], this volume, for further discussion).

Alternatively, some nominalists argue that nominalism isn't the thesis that properties don't exist, but the thesis that properties aren't fundamental (Dorr 2008 is the locus classicus for this view; see Chs. XX[Rettler] and XX[Imaguire], this volume, for discussion). Since the historical debate about nominalism wasn't explicitly framed in terms of fundamentality, such nominalists will essentially be offering 'properties aren't fundamental' as a revising or reconciling paraphrase of 'there are no properties': a reconciling paraphrase if she takes herself to be participating in that historical debate, and a revising paraphrase if she doesn't.

A related approach distinguishes senses of existence (e.g., existence₁ and existence₂), and holds that while properties exist₁, nominalism is or should be defined as the thesis that they don't exist₂. (This will be roughly equivalent to the previous option if existence₂ is "fundamental existence" and existence₁ is "superficial existence".) As above, since the historical debate about nominalism wasn't formulated in terms of existence₁ and existence₂, such nominalists will have to offer 'properties don't exist₂' as a revising or reconciling paraphrase of 'there are no properties'.

8 CONCLUSION

While there is more to be said about paraphrase than fits in a short handbook entry, I hope a few key points have come through here. First, it's important to be explicit about what sort of paraphrase one is offering: what goal one is trying to accomplish with it. Is the goal to *preserve* the original theory with a reconciling paraphrase, or to *replace* the original theory with a revising paraphrase? Second, paraphrase of some kind or another plays a central and plausibly unavoidable role in resisting arguments like The Quinean Argument. Finally, many of the popular objections to paraphrase fall flat.

The legitimacy of paraphrase gives us an additional tool for philosophical theorizing. That's the good news. The bad news is that it's tool for reducing "friction": a tool for resisting conclusions, not reaching them. Without that friction, it's difficult to have much confidence in our ontological verdicts. But we should be used to that. So it has been, is, and ever shall be.⁹

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