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From the Editorial Board

Dear Readers,

We proudly present here the inaugural issue of *Simpliciter*, the undergraduate philosophy journal at Brandeis University. About a year ago, the idea of starting Brandeis's own undergraduate philosophy journal was still in its early conception. Now we have come to a full actualization of the idea that effectively transcends its original form, and which would not be possible without the strenuous, concerted, and only sometimes gratifying efforts of all the editors and e-board members.

This year, we received over 50 submissions from undergraduate institutions all around the world, of which five were invited to our affiliated conference and three were accepted for publication in this issue. Each decision was made based on the evaluations of at least four editors, following a double-blind review process. We would like to thank all the authors who put their trust in us and submitted to this new-born journal. It was a great pleasure for us to review and discuss each one of your submissions. In addition to the three undergraduate philosophy papers, this issue of the journal concludes with an interview of Eli Hirsch, the Charles Goldman Professor of Philosophy at Brandeis University.

There are many who we are indebted to in the process of bringing this journal to fruition. We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to the Brandeis Philosophy Department for its support and encouragement. Special thanks go to Professor Jordan Kokot for his consistently pivotal counsel as our faculty advisor and Professor Katrina Elliott for her fascinating presentation at our mini-conference held on April 13. We are also immensely grateful to our Graduate Student Advisor Stewart Huang and Philosophy Department Academic Administrator Julie Seeger for their extensive support. Lastly, we express our deepest gratitude to the fellow undergraduate journals—*Aporia*, *Arché*, *Epistemai*, *Logos* and *Prometheus*—who provided us with invaluable information and advice at an early stage which profoundly influenced our vision for the journal.

Enjoy reading!

Simpliciter Editorial Board

Summons of the Face: Morality Before the State in Emmanuel Levinas's Ethics as First Philosophy

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In social contract theory, the state, or sovereign, is positioned as the enforcer of ethical rules which have been agreed upon to ensure that self-interested individuals can live peacefully alongside one another. In this paper, I will explore the challenge that Emmanuel Levinas's work poses to this model of ethics. I will begin by outlining core aspects of David Gauthier's neo-Hobbesian account of social contract theory. I argue that this theory follows a model of knowledge where the thinking subject is uninvolved with the external world. I go on to explore the challenge that Levinas poses to this form of knowledge, which takes the form of a direct encounter with another person. For Levinas, this encounter provides the basis for ethical action. By providing an account of ethics that emerges from a direct, pre-political encounter with another person, Levinas challenges the connection between ethics and politics that is central to social contract theory. Ultimately, I argue that Levinas's theory challenges a connection between ethics and politics by providing an account of a pre-political origin of ethics through a direct encounter with another person, in which the self is drawn into an inescapable ethical relationship with the Other.

I. Introduction

In social contract theory, the state or sovereign is positioned as an enforcer of ethical rules which self-interested individuals have agreed to follow in order to live peacefully alongside one another. According to these accounts of morality, ethical obligations are imposed on individuals as a form of external constraint. The thought of Emmanuel Levinas poses a radically different theory of the origins of ethics. In contrast to dominant political theories, Levinas proposes an account of ethical obligation that originates from a precognitive encounter with another person, which exists before and beyond the state. In this essay, I will discuss the ways in which Levinas's thought challenges a model in which morality is imposed on people through politics by putting Levinas's essay "Ethics as First Philosophy" in dialogue with contemporary work on social contract theory. Ultimately, I

argue that Levinas's theory challenges a connection between ethics and politics by providing an account of a pre-political origin of ethics through a direct encounter with another person, in which the self is drawn into an inescapable ethical relationship with the Other.

II. Social Contract Theory

Social contract theory proposes that morality is the result of self-interested individuals agreeing to follow rules of conduct in order to improve their own lives. Neo-Hobbesian philosopher David Gauthier outlines the ideological underpinnings of this. He argues that social contract theory begins with the premise that human beings exist as individuals, prior to society, and that their motivations are "presocial, nonsocial, and fixed" ("The Social Contract as Ideology" 332). Without a system of social order, each person will act to fulfill their own self-interested goals. This will inevitably lead to conflict, because it is assumed that each person's goals are "distinct from and… opposed to" the goals of others (338). As each person attempts to pursue their own self-interest, they will come into conflict with others who are doing the same. This state of perpetual conflict is not ideal, so individuals will agree to give up some of their liberties in order to exist peacefully, which provides the basis for society's moral order. For Gauthier, moral rules are agreed upon because it is rational for self-interested individuals to agree to them ("Introduction" 2). Rationality and self-interest therefore precede ethics and provide the foundations of a moral order.

While a moral order is agreed upon by a community of individuals, it needs a sovereign authority to uphold it. Human beings are self-interested, and are therefore not naturally compelled to give up their own interests for the sake of others. To establish order, therefore , a form of "external constraint"—a "coercive authority"—must be put in place in order to ensure that people follow the rules set down ("The Social Contract as Ideology" 337). Drawing from Hobbes, Gaulthier argues that the sovereign acts as the coercive authority needed to uphold society's moral order. To live with one another, individual citizens give up some of their freedoms for the sake of following rules that will benefit them. These freedoms are transferred to a sovereign, who is authorized to do whatever is necessary to uphold the order of the community ("Hobbes on Sovereign Authority: How the Right of Nature Becomes a Sovereign Right" 107). This implies that a justice system which threatens people with punishment for their failure to abide by society's

moral code is therefore necessary (Nolan 231). According to this account, moral order is the result of a rational agreement, but it is upheld by external coercive authority.

This account of the origins of morality understands human relationships through the logic of the political. In his paper "Toward a Political Theology of the Neighbor," Kenneth Reinhard argues that politics is "a relationship among equals" (48), where each citizen's responsibilities can be substituted by another. This substitution is possible because the political order relies on general rules of obligation that each person must follow. These rules come from rational deliberation and agreement, and they are enforced by sovereign authority. Political order, then, is an arrangement where individuals in a group of equals follow certain rules under the external coercion of the sovereign. Social contract theory explains morality through this logic: it is both rationally agreed to and externally enforced.

III. Sovereignty as Knowledge as Appropriation

The political logic of social contract theory presents a form of knowledge that reflects upon the world, and those within the world, without directly engaging with it. Levinas argues that Western thought has been dominated by a conception of knowledge as appropriation, where the world and beings in the world become objects that are grasped and reflected upon by a knowing subject. The external world is thus separate from the interior world of consciousness. This gap between the external and the internal is bridged through the activity of thought. In reflecting on something, beings—people and things that exist in the world outside the world of consciousness—are brought into one's inner world and thus become objects of thought. A being, which exists in the world as separate from knowledge, is "appropriated" by knowledge and "freed of its otherness" (Levinas 407). A being thus becomes an object of thought. Levinas defines this as a process of "seizing something and making it one's own" (407). Knowledge makes the object of thought its own, and in doing so "appropriates and grasps the otherness of the known" (407). As an "other" to thought, a being cannot exist on its own terms, and can only exist in relation to thought. Once a being is comprehended, it becomes an object of knowledge—a representation that exists within knowledge and belongs to it.

If knowledge is an act of appropriation, then thinking is a sovereign activity. Here, a sovereign activity is something done alone and without reference to the external world. Through thought, the external world is reduced to an object that exists within the realm of knowledge. Levinas argues that thought is "an activity which is disinterested and self-sufficient" (408). This is because the thinking subject is sovereign and does not rely on anything but itself to define it. It can thus affirm itself through its own will, without engaging with being. In this way, the thinking self exists on its own, without interest in or engagement with the external world.

This account of thinking as a solitary, disinterested activity lends itself to a notion of thinking as freedom. Levinas uses the term freedom in contrast to responsibility. A free being determines his own goals. Thought becomes a source of freedom when it reduces the experience of relationships to objects of knowledge. When human lived experiences become objects of thought, they are "converted into accepted doctrine, teaching, and science" (408). This means that experiences are replaced by representations and schematizations of that experience. Levinas states that this happens with "relationships with neighbours" and "with social groups" (408). Through replacing experience with a representation, relationships are grasped and appropriated by thought. Relational experiences are thus translated into a solitary, sovereign activity. This leads to a notion of knowing as a free activity, alienated from any goal beyond comprehension. Levinas states that "any goal alien to the disinterested acquisition of knowledge has been subordinated to the freedom of knowledge" (409). Considerations that are not compatible with knowing as a free activity are done away with. This asserts the sovereignty of the knower. Without any external goals, the thinker becomes "a sovereign who is merely concerned to maintain the powers of his sovereignty" (409). Levinas's account of knowledge as appropriation thus leads to an ideology of freedom and sovereignty, in which people are unbound by any goal beyond asserting the self's existence.

Social contract theory reflects this form of knowledge as appropriation. This conception of knowledge connects thought with freedom, and makes ethics a secondary consideration. The sovereign knower is disinterested in the well-being of others, and is primarily concerned with pursuing his own goals. The sovereign knower is free from all ethical responsibility, but human beings cannot exist alongside one another without observing moral rules. If human beings are inherently free (i.e., unbound by internal moral rules), then these rules must be

imposed externally. The state, which creates and enforces moral rules through the coercive power of the law, is therefore necessary for people to act morally. Since a conception of knowledge as appropriation lends itself to a vision of human beings as sovereign knowers who are not constrained by internal ethical rules, the state becomes necessary as a force which creates and enforces morality externally.

IV. Levinas's Challenge to Social Contract Theory: Self-Justification Through the Ethical Encounter

Levinas challenges the above account of the knowledge as appropriation by showing that the sovereign self is always implicated by the world around it. The concept of thought as a free and sovereign activity, which is both removed from the world and reduces the world to its own internal object, is called into question when the sovereign self interacts with the world around it. In the physical world, the Self "comes up against a sphere in which it is by its very flesh implicated" (410). Levinas reminds the reader that the self is "present in the world and present in its own body" (410). In contrast to an understanding of knowledge as appropriation, where the self is disconnected from the external world, Levinas argues here that the self is always implicated in the world through the fact of its embodied existence. Through experience, the Self becomes implicated and involved in a world that exists outside of it. This calls the sovereignty of the Self into question. This is significant because Levinas's ethical theory stems from a phenomenological experience with the Other,[1] meaning another person, which disinterested knowing cannot account for.

Levinas begins an account of meaning beyond appropriation by proposing that a non-intentional consciousness which demands self-justification operates alongside intentional consciousness that affirms the Self. Levinas defines non-intentional consciousness as "a non-objectivizing knowledge" (410). This can be contrasted with intentional consciousness, which is consciousness that directs itself towards particular beings and reflects on them as objects. Intentional consciousness operates with the goal of objectivizing everything external to it, to affirm its own existence (409). Non-intentional consciousness operates alongside intentional consciousness. As intentional consciousness affirms itself, through the act of objectivization, non-intentional consciousness operates as "pure passivity"

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[1] *Autrui*

(411). Non-intentional consciousness is unable to affirm itself in the same way that intentional consciousness does. Here, is it important to note that affirmation refers to an assertion of existence or presence. Intentional consciousness asserts itself through appropriation. While intentional consciousness is concerned with self-affirmation, non-intentional consciousness is concerned with justifying itself. Rather than asserting its presence, passive non-intentional consciousness must justify its presence. When non-intentional consciousness has not justified itself, and its existence is "called into question" (412). Levinas argues that the central question of human existence is "how being justifies itself," rather than "why being rather than nothing?" (416). This marks a shift from the self-affirming nature of intentional consciousness, which must assert its existence, to non-intentional consciousness, which looks for a justification for its existence. Attempts to assert oneself fail because non-intentional consciousness is always operating alongside intentionality, which demands justification.

Consciousness must justify itself because, when a person encounters another person, they are reminded the Self is in debt to the Other for its existence. Levinas proposes that the Self's being in the world is a result of the "usurpation of spaces belonging to the other man" (413). The Self only exists in the world because it has "oppressed or starved, or driven out" (413) the Other. Just from being, the Self has participated in violence towards the Other which it must account for. When the Self encounters the Other, it is reminded that its presence involves a violence to the Other. This reminder comes from an encounter with the face of the Other, in which they see "extreme exposure, defencelessness, vulnerability itself" (413). Here, Levinas uses the face to signify the depth of the Other's being, which cannot be fully grasped by the Self but which makes a claim on the Self all the same. An encounter with another person makes their mortality and vulnerability clear. An encounter with the Other's face "summons me, calls for me, begs for me, and in doing so recalls my responsibility and calls me into question" (414). When confronted with the face of the Other, the Self becomes implicated in their death. The Self is reminded of the power it holds over the Other, and that the Self's being in the world is made possible through taking the place of someone else. The question of self-justification is thus raised by a phenomenological encounter with the vulnerability and morality of the Other, which the Self is called to account for.

The Self is indebted to the Other for their existence, and must justify this existence or repay this debt through ethical responsibility. When a person

confronts the Other, they are "inescapably responsible" for him and are thus "the unique and chosen one" (414). Witnessing the Other's vulnerability is the source of responsibility. Through an encounter with the Other, the Self is called on to "answer for the Other's death" (414). The Self is accused by the vulnerability of the Other, and nothing can allow the Self to escape this accusation. The accusation that comes from the Other's face, and the responsibility that accompanies it is non-transferrable. Because the burden of responsibility for the Other falls on the Self, the Self becomes "non-interchangeable" (414). This is because the Self's encounter with the Other takes place between two particular people. There is no person who can account for the Other's vulnerability in this encounter, except for the Self. Nobody substitutes the Self in its experience of the encounter with the Other, and thus nobody can take on the responsibility that this encounter creates. In this way, the self is both individuated and justified through responsibility and devotion to the Other. This is the justification that non-intentional consciousness seeks. This contrasts to a view of human existence where the Self is affirmed through its sovereignty. Instead, the Self's inescapable responsibility to the Other justifies its existence.

Levinas's thought poses a challenge to social contract theory by arguing that ethical obligations are inherent, rather than agreed to or imposed. For Levinas, obligation to another comes before anything else. Ethical responsibility is generated directly from an encounter with the Other, and it is this responsibility that defines the Self. This encounter establishes an ethical relationship that comes before all else (414). Responsibility is primary and inherent. We are responsible for one another "before any present," that is before we exist in any sort of ordered community. Responsibility for the Other is not imposed externally. Instead, responsibility is pre-cognitive and necessary to define the individual. A theory that connects morality with the state poses fully formed, sovereign individuals before all else. The state forms from these individuals, and morality is enforced by this state. In contrast, Levinas's ethical encounter comes before individuals become themselves. Levinas's account thus proposes that ethical obligations exist inherently, before the sovereign self, rather than from an outside coercive authority.

Levinas's thought places pressure on a connection between ethics and politics that extends beyond social contract theory. Reinhard argues that Levinas's thought contradicts the logic of the political, which is a relationship of equals. In this formulation, the self is obliged to others in the same ways that others are

obliged to the self. In contrast, Levinas argues that ethics is "based on my radically asymmetrical and non-reciprocal relationship to the Other" (Reinhard 48). The responsibility created through the ethical encounter cannot be substituted by another person. The self is uniquely responsible for the Other. Ethical obligations fall to the Self, while political obligations fall to the community. It is for this reason that Reinhard argues that there is an "unbridgeable gap between ethics and politics" (Reinhard 49). In Levinas's thought, ethics and politics follow irreconcilable logics.

Simon Critchley provides a more radical account of the relationship between ethics and politics in Levinas's thought, arguing that ethics can act as a disturbance to political order. Politics essentially follows some form of order that "presupposes and initiates a sovereign political subject capable of self-government and the government of others" (Critchley 182). As a form of order, politics places subjects into roles that serve particular social functions. It also implies a distinction between those inside and outside of a political community and understands subjects through this ordering. Levinas's ethical thought prioritizes an encounter with the Other that extends beyond the Other's place within the political order. Ethics comes from a direct encounter with the being of the Other, that cannot be reduced to their social location. It is for this reason that Critchley argues that Levinas's ethics should be understood as "an anarchic, metapolitical disturbance" of the political order. Direct encounter with the Other that extends beyond the political order not only follows a different logic than that order but, by shifting the ways that subjects relate to one another, it poses a challenge to the existence of that order itself.

V. Conclusion

Social contract theory poses human beings as self-interested, sovereign individuals who must consent to giving up their freedom to gain the benefits of living peacefully alongside one another. Such is the origin of ethics. Levinas provides a radically different account by arguing that ethics exists prior to all other considerations. His account of ethics challenges a concept of morality that relies on the state and punishment, by showing that people are compelled to be responsible to one another through their encounters with each other. In this way, Levinas creates a sharp distinction between ethics and politics. This challenge should be taken seriously for two reasons. First, the idea that politics and morality are

intrinsically linked raises concerns when states commit acts of violence. Secondly, this vision of ethics takes our social reality seriously. As embodied people, we rely on others and others rely on us. Recognizing this gives an urgency to ethics that is lost if morality is a disinterested choice made by sovereign individuals who can exist on their own. Levinas shows that ethics is not something to contemplate without engagement, but is instead a vital aspect of our existence which gives our lives meaning.

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Some Properties are More Essential Than Others: How the Meaning of Kind Terms Changes in Scientific Discourse

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I argue that a modified version of Thomas Kuhn's philosophy of language can accommodate scientific realism and the changes in the meaning of scientific kind terms. Kuhn's philosophy of language draws upon the work of Ludwig Wittgenstein so as to bolster his magnum opus, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (SSR) (Pirozelli 345). The basic Wittgensteinian structure of Kuhn's account of kind terms is correct: scientific kind terms correspond to family resemblance concepts, and family resemblance concepts must hang together within a taxonomy. Kuhn hastily concludes from this that it is impossible to compare one taxonomy to another because kind terms cannot be translated from one taxonomy to another. I agree with Sankey that once we make a distinction between sense and reference, Kuhn's semantic theory does not imply antirealism. Kuhn focuses too narrowly on physics and chemistry (Mayr 333) and Sankey's critique inherits this myopia ("Incommensurability" 11). The goal of scientific kind terms is to correspond to natural kinds as closely as possible, as opposed to role-bearers within natural laws. I introduce a concept of natural kinds where objects are grouped according to their fundamental resemblances. To make sense of this in terms of the philosophy of language, I suggest that the relevance of a property for the purposes of classifying an object in a taxonomy comes in degrees.

I. Introduction

The philosopher Thomas Kuhn spent the latter portion of his career outlining a philosophy of language that clarifies and undergirds his magnum opus, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (SSR). In SSR, Kuhn argues that scientific revolutions are paradigm shifts—a shift from an earlier paradigm, corresponding to a vocabulary that makes contextual sense of scientific terms, to an entirely new paradigm with an entirely new vocabulary. Even if some terms survive the paradigm shift, the understanding and concepts behind them change (Pirozelli 368). The result is Kuhn's "incommensurability thesis": two theories or paradigms are incompatible if and only if

1. "The meaning of the vocabulary employed by theories varies between theories.

2. Translation is impossible from the vocabulary of one theory into the vocabulary of another.

3. As a result of (1) and (2), the content of such theories may not be compared" (Sankey, "language of science" 127).

The incommensurability thesis challenges a key common assumption about scientific terms: that the meanings of scientific terms are "theory-neutral" as opposed to "theory-laden" (Sankey, "language of science" 126).

I agree with Kuhn that family resemblance concepts undergird the meaning of scientific kind terms, and that the meaning of scientific terms depend on their taxonomy; however, I disagree with Kuhn that a change of taxonomy, or corresponding paradigm, must be arbitrary. I agree with Sankey that once we make a distinction between sense and reference, there will be a non-arbitrary way of comparing and selecting taxonomies ("Incommensurability" 12). I offer some critiques of Sankey and conclude that we can select a taxonomy based on the fundamentality of members' properties so as to more closely cut nature at its joints. An important consequence of my thesis is that Kuhnian semantic theory does not entail scientific anti-realism.

II. Overview of Kuhn's Semantic Theory

To understand how Kuhn arrives at the incommensurability thesis, we need to understand his semantic theory. A kind term refers to a family resemblance concept. Two things resemble each other if and only if they share at least one property. A family resemblance concept, by extension, is a loose collection of things, or members, that resemble each other and whose resemblance relations often overlap (Pirozelli 352). Kuhn recognized, however, that a concept is only coherent if it is closed, that is, if it has definite boundaries. On their own, family resemblance concepts are open by the very nature of the resemblance relation: only *one* shared property with *any* existing member of a family is necessary for a new member to join a resemblance family. If this were the end of the story, then family resemblance concepts would result in nothing more than nominalism,

i.e., the claim that the meaning of kind terms is just arbitrary (351). According to Kuhn, the boundaries of a family resemblance concept are defined by other surrounding family resemblance concepts in the same taxonomy. So, a taxonomy is a collection of family resemblance concepts whose boundaries are mutually defining (352).

Taxonomies, according to Kuhn, follow the "no-overlap principle"; that is, there are no intermediate members that could be placed in more than one family within a given taxonomy (356). So, although the concepts in a taxonomy cannot stand on their own, each taxonomy is perfectly self-consistent and independent. For any given taxonomy, therefore, there is a fact of the matter as to which kind the member belongs in the taxonomy. However, there is no fact of the matter as to which taxonomy is the most appropriate or true according to Kuhn. This has the immediate consequence that scientific kind terms only have meaning in the context of specifiable taxonomies, respectively, each taxonomy corresponding to a paradigm. Statements that use kind terms are only true or false with respect to a certain taxonomy. Because taxonomies do not have truth values, scientific discourse does not refer to the external world according to Kuhn (361).

I find Kuhn's analysis compelling up to a point: there is good reason to believe that the concepts corresponding to scientific kind terms are family resemblances, and there is good reason to believe that these family resemblances delimit each other within a taxonomy. However, the incommensurability thesis and the resulting anti-realism are hastily drawn inferences.

III. Mechanics of Kuhn's Semantic Theory

Andersen gives an example of the set theory behind Kuhn's family resemblance concepts and taxonomies (qtd. in Pirozelli 351). Suppose we have some taxonomy with families K, J, and Q.[1] We use these families to categorize members that may have any number of properties. We call the relevant Properties $\alpha, \beta, \gamma, \delta, \varepsilon, \zeta, \eta, \theta, \lambda$, and μ, respectively. Table 1 catalogs and compares the properties of six different objects, and based on that comparison, Table 1 categorizes the objects.

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[1] I have adapted this example from Pirozelli (2020) and only made changes for the sake of better clarity and for the sake of illustrating my particular argument.

Resemblance is a binary reflexive relation between two objects: two objects either resemble each other or they do not; they either share at least one property or they share no properties. It's intuitive to think, however, that resemblance comes in degrees rather than in binaries: that is, even though j_1 and k_2 resemble each other in the binary sense because they share Property ζ, one could not place k_2 in J because it has more properties in common with k_1 and presumably with the other members of K not listed in Table 1. This is how K and J define each other's boundaries and how the no-overlap principle is preserved (351).

There is another way in which the binary, mathematical resemblance relation may be too primitive for scientific kinds: the relevance of properties need not be binary. We can filter which properties of objects are of interest based on our taxonomy. For example, the property 'weighs on average 1,000 pounds' is not relevant for placing the tiger in the category 'mammal.' In Table 1, the Properties θ, λ, and μ must be, likewise, considered totally irrelevant properties. If we considered Properties θ, λ, and μ relevant, then q_2 would be an intermediate member; that is, we could reasonably place q_2 in J or Q, and so there would be no way to determine the boundary between J and Q.

Suppose, however, that relevance itself was not binary as I suspect is the case in real scientific taxonomies. Instead, the relevance of a property could have some score between 0 (completely irrelevant) and 1 (completely relevant). For example, the luminosity and relatively large size of a star are relevant properties for classifying that star as a red giant, but the age and mass of the star are even more relevant for classifying the star as a red giant. Both propositions are still true: (1) the approximate age and mass of a star are *more relevant* for taxonomizing it with other stars than luminosity and size and (2) the luminosity and size are still relevant in the grouping process.[2]

IV. Blocking Kuhn's Inference to Anti-Realism

My intention is to block the Kuhnian argument for anti-realism. We can express Kuhn's argument as a syllogism:

> P1: There is no epistemically objective way to select one taxonomy over another.

[2] E.g., See Ciardi et a

P2: If scientific realism is true, there is an epistemically objective way to select one taxonomy over another.

C: Therefore, scientific realism is not true.

I have assented to P2 and the conclusion. So we must dissect P1, which is itself a conclusion of the incommensurability thesis. Recall that the incommensurability thesis states the following:

P1.1) "The meaning of the vocabulary employed by theories varies between theories.

P1.2) Translation is impossible from the vocabulary of one theory into the vocabulary of the other.

P1) As a result of (P1.1) and (P1.2), the content of such theories may not be compared" (Sankey, "language of science" 127).

This argument, however, is invalid; P1 does not follow conclusively from P1.1 and P1.2. Sankey argues that it does not matter whether one taxonomy can be translated to another because we can compare how many true statements can be formulated within each taxonomy and select the taxonomy that allows us to make more true statements. To justify how a statement can be true independent of its taxonomy, Sankey draws a sharp distinction between sense and reference, and he states that truth depends on reference alone. According to Sankey, sense is roughly whatever associations are in the head of a scientist when she utters a particular term whereas reference is the external thing or set of things to which the term refers. Although changes in taxonomy alter the senses of scientific kind terms, the things to which the taxonomy refers remain the same (Sankey, "Incommensurability" 12).

V. Critique of Sankey

So far, I agree with Sankey's reply to Kuhn; however, Sankey does not flesh out his account enough. Take the following example: with respect to Taxonomy A, "The duck-billed platypus is a mammal" is true, and with respect to Taxonomy B, "The duck-billed platypus is a reptile" is true. Both Taxonomy A and

Taxonomy B contain the kind terms "mammal" and "reptile." Sankey would say that if Taxonomy A allows us to make more true generalizations about animals, we should conclude that Taxonomy A is more likely to be True (with a capital 'T') and therefore, duck-billed platypus is more likely a mammal species. But if the real test of a taxonomy were just that one could assert more true statements about the objects themselves, the best taxonomy would be the one where every object occupies its own kind. The duck-billed platypus, for example, is such a unique creature that there are many generalizations about reptiles and mammals that do not apply to it. Consequently, if we follow Sankey's advice, the duck-billed platypus should really occupy its own animal group. I doubt that biologists will take this advice, however, because the very purpose of grouping animals is to make *interesting* generalizations about multiple species. Therefore, the real test of a taxonomy is *both* to maximize the number of true generalizations one can make and to make the most interesting generalizations.

Furthermore, interesting generalizations must be relevant for the purposes of the taxonomy. Sankey agrees with Kuhn that the purpose of scientific taxonomies is to delimit groups of objects following different natural laws such that the natural laws are built into the meaning of the kind terms ("Incommensurability" 11). This has the peculiar consequence that a statement like "Planets revolve around the Sun" is an *a priori* statement under the Copernican taxonomy because when we analyze Copernicus' concept 'planet,' we will find that 'revolving around the Sun' is just part of what it means to be a planet (Sankey, "Incommensurability" 11; Pirozelli 366). Peculiar though it may seem, Kuhn is not far from the truth. To bring Sankey's commentary closer to the truth, however, we should make three critiques: first, the emphasis on *natural laws* unduly privileges sciences like chemistry and physics where the concept of *natural law* is most applicable (Carroll, under "Physics and the Special Sciences); second, natural laws are distinct from true generalizations (under "The Basic Question: What is it to be a Law?"); and third, different natural kinds may follow the same regularities or laws. If we are to make Kuhn's semantic theory compatible with scientific realism, we have to move away from Kuhn's obsession with natural laws. As Mayr points out, Kuhn focuses almost exclusively on the history of physics where nearly exceptionless generalizations are possible (333). But philosophers have long questioned whether there are natural laws at all in the *special sciences*—branches of science besides physics (Carroll, under "Physics and the Special Sciences).

Sankey commits himself to two distinct ideas that are in tension: that we should select one taxonomy over another by comparing the number of assertable true generalizations and that the better taxonomy latches onto the natural laws more accurately. Carroll notes that natural laws, in addition to being true generalizations, have an element of necessity to them. So, although the statement "All gold spheres are less than a mile in diameter" may in fact be true, there is no fact about the universe that makes it necessarily true (under "Necessity"). The statement "All uranium spheres are less than a mile in diameter," by contrast, is necessarily true due to the critical mass of uranium (under "The Basic Question: What is it to be a Law?").

It's clear why Sankey prefers the criterion of assertable true generalizations over natural laws: metaphysical necessity, a necessary and missing ingredient in natural laws, is difficult to detect. We only have straightforward epistemic access to true generalizations; however, for Sankey's account to work, we would really need epistemic access to the much more elusive natural laws.

Finally, being classified in a certain kind in a special science taxonomy does not entail following a set of laws unique to that kind. For example, the differences between mammals' and reptiles' behaviors and looks are not a result of their different roles in natural laws. Reptiles and mammals follow the same fundamental Darwinian and genetic regularities.

VI. Fundamentality and Natural Kinds

What realists expect of scientific taxonomies is not only that they make more true statements assertable than their predecessor taxonomies, but also that the kind terms themselves refer more accurately to *natural kinds*. Consider the difference between statements like "This bear is a mammal" and "Mammals are furry or hairy." The latter statement is a true generalization, the type of statement that Sankey and Kuhn overly fixate on. The former statement, however, implies that mammal is a natural kind because the statement employs the ontological form of the verb "to be." Therefore, because realists should say that both statements are approximately True (with a capital 'T'), the realist goal of scientific taxonomies is not only to make true generalizations but also to arrive at the natural kinds. Without affirming statements within scientific taxonomies that employ the

ontological form of the verb "to be," a realist's ontology cannot be constituted by scientific taxonomies.

We want to choose the taxonomy that allows us to make more interesting and true generalizations. For a claim to be interesting, it has to make claims about multiple members and to fulfill the purposes of the taxonomy. Although Kuhn and Sankey think that the purposes of the taxonomy are to describe the workings of natural laws, we have shown that this is not necessarily applicable to special sciences or readily accessible epistemically. Instead, we can arrive at a natural kind by way of the fundamentality measure, as a family resemblance within a Kuhnian taxonomy where the objects *fundamentally* resemble each other.

VII. Fundamentality as A Measure of Relevance

The more fundamental a property is, the more relevant it is in the taxonomy. An understandable worry may arise at this suggestion. We are trying to demonstrate how Kuhn's semantic theory is compatible with scientific realism, and so we cannot subtly assume scientific realism in our discussion of the fundamentality of properties.

We have to provide an *epistemic* account of how scientists access the relative fundamentality of properties. Once scientists come to form justified beliefs about the relative fundamentality of properties, they can weigh those properties accordingly when building a taxonomy. A justified attribution of fundamentality does not have to be necessarily true. This preserves the meaning of scientific kind terms of an outmoded paradigm or taxonomy. Although propositions that include categories of an outmoded paradigm are presumably not true (to the scientific realist according to whom truth is a concern of science), they still retain meaning within their historical context or paradigm. So by providing an epistemic account of fundamentality as a measure of relevance, we leave space for false but meaningful scientific statements, an important implication of scientific realism.

Bradley argues that given a "sufficiently rich description of the world," we can tell whether one property is more fundamental than another property *a priori* (55). This is not to say that we can know what fundamental reality is *a priori*; rather, we can infer from our prior knowledge which properties are fundamental

and which are derivative (55). Bradley imagines a bookshelf of physics textbooks, each containing just as much information on the laws of physics in one unique possible universe as all the others. From this bookshelf, we cannot infer *a priori* which book describes the *actual laws* of physics, but we can infer for each possible universe which properties are fundamental as opposed to derivative (56). The claim that we can tell which properties are fundamental a priori is crucial for my thesis because as we noted earlier, scientific realists are implicitly committed to the idea that there are meaningful but false statements in science. So we can say of each physics textbook on Bradley's imaginary bookshelf that it is meaningful and coherent precisely because the fundamentality of properties in each textbook does not rely on that textbook's correspondence with the actual world.

Bradley states that fundamentality has three qualifications that can be evaluated *a priori*: (i) "similarity," (ii) "causality," and (iii) "minimality" (51). We observe objective (i) similarities across objects, and we rightly infer that a more fundamental property probably explains these similarities. We observe that (ii) objects have similar causal powers, and we rightly infer that a more fundamental property probably explains these causal powers. And finally, (iii) the minimality qualification consists in not positing more fundamental properties than are necessary. An account of fundamental properties is more likely to be correct if it minimizes fundamental ontological commitments and maximizes explanatory power (52-53).

One might worry that we are subtly begging the question by including in that *sufficiently rich description of the world* the very taxonomies whose meaning we are trying to explain. In other words, one might worry that fundamentality is not *paradigm-independent*. But we must show fundamentality to be paradigm-independent if we want to make Kuhn's semantic theory (along with my modification) compatible with scientific realism. Thanks to Bradley, we can see that a property's fundamentality can indeed be determined independent of any paradigm or taxonomy (55–56). None of the three qualifications of fundamentality—similarity, causality, or minimality—requires the kind terms whose meaning we are trying to tether to the real world.

Bradley notes that we have to assume that there is an "ontological base" in order to use (iii) minimality as a criterion for fundamentality (54). Bradley admits that we must assume that there are *rock-bottom fundamental properties* before using the minimality criterion, although metaphysicians like Schaffer have

controverted that claim (qtd. in Bradley 54). For my purposes though, it is enough to clarify three things: (1) there are good *a priori* reasons to think that there are *rock-bottom fundamental properties* though I won't explore those here, (2) by assuming that objects have fundamental properties, I am not assuming scientific realism, and (3) were we to reject *rock-bottom fundamental properties* and (iii) the minimality criterion, that would not call into question the (i) similarity and (ii) causality criteria. Scientists don't need to know the rock-bottom fundamental properties in order to discern that some properties are more fundamental than others (what I call relative fundamentality). And the justified belief of relative fundamentality is all that I need to make Kuhn's semantic theory compatible with Darwinian epistemology and scientific realism. The (i) similarity and (ii) causality criteria alone provide us with such justifications. So, while I am confident in (iii) the minimality criterion and the existence of rock-bottom fundamental properties, that's not a hill that I have to die on.

Lastly, I should note a limitation that my thesis inherits from Bradley's, that his account strictly applies to *properties of objects*. It does not attempt to explain how we can know that some objects themselves, for example, are more fundamental than others. Bradley talks of "objects" and "properties" in the strict metaphysical sense (63-64), but Kuhn talks of "objects" and "properties" in the more expanded linguistic sense such that "object" is synonymous with "member (Pirozelli 349)." Kuhn, for example, might call a supernova an object in the sense that it is something that scientists taxonomize. But, in fact, a supernova is not an object *but an event* in the strict metaphysical sense. Nonetheless, my modified version of Kuhn's semantic theory will apply to most scientific taxonomies: those that concern metaphysical objects with metaphysical properties. I can easily imagine that my modified version of Kuhn's semantic theory could in principle expand to include events and other referents of scientific taxonomies. Bradley has opened the floodgates for philosophers in the future to offer accounts of how we can justify a belief in the fundamentality of other referents besides objects (64–65). These future accounts will be compatible with my thesis so long as those accounts are likewise *a priori*, those accounts don't require the taxonomies in question to get off the ground, and they don't assume scientific realism.

VIII. Conclusion: Consequences for epistemic objectivism and the notion of fundamentality

Although Kuhn is essentially correct in his formulation of family resemblance concepts and taxonomies, Kuhn's fundamental error is in assuming that sense determines reference. Sankey's error is in conceding to Kuhn's analysis that kinds necessarily play a role in natural laws. The purpose of scientific taxonomies is not necessarily to delimit the objects that play certain roles in natural laws, but rather, the purpose of scientific taxonomies is to pick out natural kinds.

We can get closer to natural kinds by selecting the taxonomy that groups objects by the most fundamental class of properties of which we are aware. Other less fundamental properties may still be relevant because relevance is not binary. Our epistemic access to the relative fundamentality of these properties does not depend on the taxonomy in question. Hence, we can objectively select one taxonomy over another. Therefore, scientific realism is preserved even as we embrace this modified Wittgensteinian view of the meaning of kind terms.

As for the implications in the philosophy of language, the relationship between this modified Wittgensteinian view and essentialism is intriguing and worthwhile to assess in future research. At first glance, essentialism and Wittgensteinianism share this assumption that properties are either completely relevant or irrelevant, and as I have argued, this assumption does not hold up for scientific kind terms.

Suppose for a moment that essentialism were true. All the relevant properties for an essentialist taxonomy would be the union of the sets of essential properties (where each kind has one set of essential properties). So, a property is essential if and only if it is relevant. So, were I to explain my modified Wittgensteinian view to an essentialist (e.g., a layperson), I would say, "*Some properties are more essential than others.*"

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Tables

Table 1

Members (k_1–q_2) and their Properties (α–μ) in a Generic Taxonomy

Member	Property α	Property β	Property γ	Property δ	Property ε	Property ζ	Property η	Property θ	Property λ	Property μ
k_1	✕	✕	✕	✕						
k_2		✕	✕	✕		✕				
j_1					✕	✕	✕			
j_2					✕		✕	✕		
q_1			✕	✕						
q_2				✕				✕	✕	✕

Note: This table is based on figures and examples from Pirozelli (2020). The table represents a single taxonomy with three kinds, or categories: *K*, *J*, and *Q*. The six objects in the first column are named according to the kind by which they are classified. (Objects k_1 and k_2 belong to *K*; Objects j_1 and j_2 belong to *J*; and Objects q_1 and q_2 belong to *Q*.) A checkmark indicates that the object corresponding to that row possesses the property corresponding to that column. For example, the checkmark on Row "j_1" Column "Property ε" indicates that Object j_1 possesses Property ε. With this table format, two objects resemble each other if and only if their rows have checkmarks in at least one and the same column.

The Duty of Justice in the Modern Ghetto

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The modern ghetto, understood as severely impoverished urban neighborhoods with majority black citizens, is rampant with unlawful behavior, ranging in severity from petty theft to organized crime. Many citizens criticize the ghetto poor for failure to obey the law; however, from the standpoint of Rawlsian justice, such criticisms are often invalid. In this paper, I first reconstruct Tommie Shelby's argument that the ghetto poor cannot be criticized for failure to respect the law since civic obligations are grounded in a reciprocal relationship between the citizen and the basic structure of society. Then, I discuss the case of kingpins, who profit unreasonably from injustice among the ghetto poor. Though, as members of the ghetto poor, they cannot be criticized for being unlawful, I argue that their actions are nonetheless impermissible because they violate the Rawlsian natural duty of justice, which states that citizens are required to uphold just institutions that exist and assist in bringing about just institutions that do not. After explicating the duty of justice in the context of the modern ghetto, I also argue for the Solidarity Presumption, which claims that an unlawful act that harms a fellow member of the ghetto poor violates the duty of justice and thus is morally impermissible. To address dilemmas that challenge the Solidarity Presumption, I rely on Kant's universalizability principle, which I argue provides support for the Solidarity Presumption.

I. Introduction

The modern ghetto, understood as severely impoverished urban neighborhoods with majority black citizens, is rampant with unlawful behavior, ranging in severity from petty theft to organized crime. Many citizens are quick to condemn these actions, arguing that unlawful behavior by the ghetto poor only worsens preconceived stereotypes and inhibits the passage of assistive legislation. Progressive advocates, on the other hand, argue that what must be changed first is the fact that the modern ghetto is subject to a myriad of deep racial, political, and economic injustices.

In "Justice, Deviance, and the Dark Ghetto," Tommie Shelby argues that certain reasons for criticizing deviant actions by the ghetto poor are unjustified. Drawing on a Rawlsian notion of justice, he claims that they are not required to "respect the authority of the law qua law" because the basic structure of society in the United States is intolerably unjust toward the ghetto poor (151). Thus, while many Americans believe that all citizens, regardless of class, race, or status, should obey the law, Shelby claims that when the ghetto poor engage in deviant acts such as "crime, refusing to work in legitimate jobs, and having contempt for authority," they cannot be criticized specifically for failure to respect the law (128).

However, Shelby leaves open whether these deviant acts could be criticized for other reasons. Indeed, it is certainly the case that there are members of the ghetto poor who not only perpetuate the injustice unfolding in dark ghettos but also profit handsomely from it, something that seems strikingly unjust. A prominent example is drug kingpins, who exploit the need for a sense of belonging among younger members of the ghetto poor and advocate for violent crime to fuel their drug profits.

In order to address this objection, I will introduce Rawlsian natural duties, which, unlike laws, are binding upon all people due to their status as moral agents. I will specifically discuss the natural duty of justice, which states that citizens are required to uphold just institutions that exist and assist in bringing about just institutions that do not yet exist, at least when this can be done without placing a significant burden on the agents in question. I will argue that, when applied to the ghetto poor, the duty of justice condemns the criminal actions of kingpins as morally impermissible.

From the duty of justice, I will draw what I call the Solidarity Presumption, which states that an unlawful act that harms a fellow member of the ghetto poor violates the duty of justice and thus is morally impermissible. I will then address the difficult tension that arises when the Solidarity Presumption is applied to specific cases of crime where members of the ghetto poor harm each other in order to survive. On the one hand, citizens harming each other often prevents just institutions from taking hold, for reasons that I will discuss in greater detail later. Yet on the other hand, in many cases, such criminal acts are done solely to survive, which would seem to be sufficient grounds for their moral permissibility.

This tension is made even more difficult because Shelby and Rawls both refrain from commenting on the permissibility of acts in specific cases, as this lies outside of the scope of their respective projects. As such, I will turn to Immanuel Kant's moral philosophy, which provides us with a framework of ethical action. In particular, I will argue that many of the cases that violate the Solidarity Presumption also violate Kant's universalizability principle. Thus, I will argue that the duty of justice, alongside the universalizability principle, provides adequate justification for the Solidarity Presumption.

II. The Ghetto Poor and the Law

Shelby's core thesis is that while many law-abiding citizens denounce the ghetto poor for their failure to obey the law, they are, in fact, exempt from obeying their "civic obligations." He writes: "Civic obligations are owed to those whom one is cooperating with to maintain a fair basic structure" (144). Thus, he conceives of social justice in a society as "a matter of reciprocity": citizens who benefit from a basic structure must also do their part in upholding it (129). It is in this sense that civic obligations are grounded in a reciprocal relationship between the society and the citizen. As a corollary, then, it is unreasonable to expect citizens who do not benefit from or are even harmed by the basic structure of society to be required to uphold it.

To be precise, however, it is important to distinguish between a basic structure of society that is unjust and one that is *intolerably* unjust, as only in the latter are citizens exempt from fulfilling their civic obligations. For Shelby, the necessary and sufficient condition for a livable basic structure of society is that the "constitutional essentials" are secure. Enumerating these, he writes:

> ...[T]hese essentials are the familiar basic rights of a liberal democratic regime—such as freedom of speech, conscience, assembly, and association; the right to vote and run for office; the right to due process and judicial fairness—and the political procedures that ensure democratic rule. The constitutional essentials also include freedom of movement, free choice of occupation, formal justice, and a social minimum that secures the basic material needs of all citizens. (145)

Even a cursory understanding of black ghettos, however, would show that they lack these constitutional essentials. Shelby defines a black ghetto as having three core characteristics: "(1) predominantly black, (2) urban neighborhoods, (3) with high concentrations of poverty" (134). Shelby also claims that "the impact of institutional racism is deepest in dark ghettos," precisely because those ghettos feature a combination of both unlivable poverty and extreme racism (139). For instance, those who live in dark ghettos are disadvantaged when it comes to employment, given that employers "expect blacks from the ghetto to be generally violent, dishonest, unreliable, and ignorant" (140). Thus, the vices of racism and poverty are together manifested in dark ghettos, and this, along with the fact that the ghetto poor have very little power to influence policy changes, prevents constitutional essentials from taking root.

This leads to Shelby's ultimate claim, which is that "the deviant conduct and attitudes prevalent in the ghetto" are not "unreasonable" (143). That is, given that the relationship between the basic structure of society and the ghetto poor is broken, unlawful actions by the ghetto poor cannot be criticized solely for the reason that they are unlawful.

III. Kingpins and Natural Duties

There is, however, a sort of crime which is pernicious in a different way and ought to be denounced—namely, organized crime. While petty crimes committed by the ghetto poor, such as tax evasion and shoplifting, are often done out of necessity, gang leaders among the ghetto poor perpetuate injustice in order to generate lucrative profits, such as through operating the drug trade. For example, knowing that many of the youth in ghettos lack basic human essentials, such as a feeling of belonging and a livable income, these kingpins (as I call them) entice the youth to join their cause while promising to provide for them. Left with seemingly no other choice, the impressionable youth gradually gravitate toward gang activity, further increasing the leaders' profits by perpetuating injustice in the ghetto.

Now, on Shelby's view, because kingpins are also members of the ghetto poor, they cannot be criticized solely for being unlawful. The basic structure of society, namely the political and social institutions of the country, are intolerably unjust toward them just as they are toward other members of the ghetto poor;

the only difference is that kingpins use this to their advantage. However, they can, and should, be criticized for disobeying their *natural duties*, a Rawlsian concept that Shelby also employs heavily in his writing. These natural duties, in contrast with civic obligations, are binding upon humans because we are all moral agents. Thus, they hold irrespective of any citizen's relationship with the basic structure of society. This motivates Shelby's assertion that "even if a society is fundamentally unjust ... it does not follow that the ghetto poor have no moral duties to one another or to others" (151).

In many ways, the enumeration of the natural duties ought to strike all reasonable thinkers as plainly intuitive. For instance, the duties that Rawls lists include the duty to not harm others, the duty to not cause unnecessary suffering, and the duty to have mutual respect for one's fellow moral agents (*A Theory: Revised* 98). This list alone would be sufficient to explain why the actions of kingpins are morally impermissible for reasons other than their deviance. However, the duty that kingpins violate most egregiously is the duty of justice, which Rawls also calls "the most important natural duty" (*A Theory: Revised* 293). As such, the next section explicates the duty of justice in detail.

IV. The Duty of Justice in the Modern Ghetto

The duty of justice is defined by Rawls in the following passage:

From the standpoint of the theory of justice, the most important natural duty is that to support and to further just institutions. This duty has two parts: first, we are to comply with and to do our share in just institutions when they exist and apply to us; and second, we are to assist in the establishment of just arrangements when they do not exist, at least when this can be done with little cost to ourselves. (*A Theory: Revised* 293–294)

Thus, Rawls divides the duty of justice into two necessary conditions, both of which must be met in order for the duty of justice to be upheld. The unlawful actions of kingpins, however, are not only inimical to the attainment of just institutions, but they blatantly perpetuate injustice in dark ghettos. As such, they are to be criticized for not upholding the second condition of the duty of justice.

This criticism is still valid despite the massive profits generated from organized crime and the accordingly large cost the kingpins would incur should they act to establish just institutions among the ghetto poor. To see why, what must be made clear is that "cost," as used by Rawls in his formulation of the duty of justice, should be understood as *moralized cost*, and thus should include some notion of justice alongside the economic sense of the word.

To better understand moralized cost, consider the following hypothetical. Suppose we have a despot ruling over a society of people who routinely suffer from injustice and deprivation under his reign. The realization of just institutions in this society can only occur if the despot's pernicious grip on this society is weakened, and thus justice in this society comes at a cost to the despot. This, however, cannot possibly justify the despot's refusal to assist in the establishment of just institutions, for then the conclusion would be that anyone who benefits from unjust institutions is exempt from assisting in the realization of just institutions, which would be absurd as a principle of justice. Thus, the clause "at least when this can be done with little cost to ourselves" ought to be clarified to be: "at least when this can be done with little cost to ourselves, *given that the people in question aren't unjustly benefitted by existing unjust institutions*." Call this expanded clause the Cost Clause.

Clearly, the leaders of organized crime in the ghetto are profiting unreasonably from injustice in the ghetto, and thus the exemption provided by the Cost Clause does not apply to them. They are akin to the despot in my previous hypothetical scenario, which means that though assisting in the realization of just institutions would invariably come as a cost to them in the economic sense, they are not exempt from this duty. Indeed, it is unequivocally true that organized crime must first be dismantled before justice can manifest in the modern ghetto.

V. The Cost Clause Applied

Now, beyond kingpins, the Cost Clause explains why other members of the ghetto poor could be exempt from assisting in the realization of just institutions. As I have discussed, the injustices that plague the ghetto poor preclude them from pursuing employment opportunities that pay livable wages. Instead, the ghetto poor are required to "work for poverty wages" that generally don't secure them an income sufficient to meet their basic needs (Shelby 150). And without the

prospect of better employment or educational opportunities, it is reasonable for them to turn to petty crime to supplement their sparse income. Because of this, members of the ghetto poor do not violate the duty of justice when they refuse to work menial jobs for poverty wages and instead turn toward deviant acts to generate a livable income.

But what of actions that prey on other members of the ghetto poor? Note that we're no longer focused on kingpins, but rather on ordinary members of the ghetto poor who are oftentimes shoplifting or mugging in order to survive. The Cost Clause would seem to exempt them from criticism for these actions because of the plain fact that their survival could depend on these acts of petty crime. However, the fact that these acts of petty crime are detrimental toward the establishment of just institutions further complicates the issue.

Indeed, when the ghetto poor prey upon each other, they often do so at the expense of sympathetic public sentiment and progressive legislation. Not only are these acts of crime seen by the general public as inherently problematic, but they also perpetuate a culture of violence and distrust in these ghettos. In his article, Shelby writes that there are two "criminal ethics" that emerge in dark ghettos: gangsters, who use violence to extract goods from others, and hustlers, who use deception to extract goods from others (137). Those of the ghetto poor who wish to benefit from petty crime generally adopt one or both of these identities, for each has its own advantages.

What is most salient to our discussion, however, is that even if a member of the ghetto poor refuses to commit to a life of street crime, he still must mold his behavior in order to survive in an environment riddled with crime. This requirement generally results in the development of traits reminiscent of the gangster or hustler ethic, despite the fact that the member of the ghetto poor in question has no involvement in petty crime. Along these lines, Shelby writes:

> Residents are always on guard and view strangers with suspicion, for one can never be sure that others are not looking to take advantage of you. In adapting to these conditions, many residents not directly involved in crime develop survival strategies that are similar to or mimic the strategies of gangsters and hustlers. To avoid being victimized one must appear shrewd and capable of defending oneself, with deadly violence if necessary. Here the familiar male adolescent desire to appear "tough" can take on lethal

dimensions, with frightening consequences for those who live in urban communities. (139)

Thus, the culture of crime in dark ghettos is highly pervasive, for even those who abstain from crime must develop personas that are unwelcoming, thereby contributing to a culture of hostility among the ghetto poor.

So, when it comes to committing acts of crime between members of the ghetto poor, the result is the reinforcement of a culture of hostility in dark ghettos. Such acts are likely to lead to increased racial prejudices as well as negative public sentiment toward the ghetto poor. Because of these consequences, the prospect of just institutions becomes increasingly unlikely in the modern ghetto.

VI. The Solidarity Presumption and the Universalizability Principle

To make things clear, I will call the claim that is causing the present tension the Solidarity Presumption, which states that unlawful acts that harm others among the ghetto poor, such as stealing from or taking advantage of a weaker member in the ghetto, are morally impermissible. To recapitulate, the Solidarity Presumption is not so straightforward because of the Cost Clause. That is: oftentimes these unlawful and predatory acts among the ghetto poor, though contributing to a culture of hostility, are done out of survival, and thus refraining from them would impose a huge, if not life-threatening, cost on the perpetrator in question.

What makes things more difficult is that both Shelby and Rawls refrain from commenting on how to evaluate the morality of individual actions. Shelby writes: "My goal is not to draw the precise line between permissible crimes and impermissible ones but only to offer reasons for thinking that the former set is not empty" (152). Similarly, Rawls does not provide us with a framework for evaluating actions, which is far too granular for his project in *A Theory of Justice*. Indeed, Rawls is more concerned with how the basic structure of society ought to be constructed; all other relationships, such as the relationship between two agents within a society, are handled by his natural duties, which are themselves unfortunately abstract.

What is missing here, then, is a true theory of moral action. Indeed, our present resources don't provide us with much insight into how one ought to act in specific scenarios. As such, I will draw on Immanuel Kant's moral philosophy to help guide us in our quandary. Through explaining it in the context of the ghetto poor, I hope to show why his moral philosophy would support the Solidarity Presumption.

Kant's moral philosophy is fitting for our current application for two reasons. Firstly, Rawlsian justice is largely built upon Kant's ethical theory. Indeed, in the preface to the original edition of *A Theory of Justice*, Rawls writes: "The theory that results is highly Kantian in nature. Indeed, I must disclaim any originality for the views I put forward. The leading ideas are classical and well known" (*A Theory: Original* viii). Given that Shelby relies on Rawlsian justice, it would seem appropriate to apply Kant's thinking to Shelby's philosophy. The second reason is that Kant's moral philosophy, particularly the universalizability principle, provides us with a clear framework for evaluating the moral permissibility of particular actions. The universalizability principle is as follows: "act only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law," where a maxim for Kant is understood as some action-guiding principle of this form: in order to generate some end B, I will perform some action A (31).

To will that a maxim become a universal law involves clearing two tests: the contradiction in conception and the contradiction in will. For our purposes, discussing the contradiction in conception is sufficient. Given some maxim that has become a universal law, a contradiction in conception arises when the given end E couldn't possibly be attained through your action A. The example that Kant gives in his *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* is the following maxim: in order to get out of some difficulty, I will make a lying promise (15). To make this example even more concrete, suppose our maxim is: in order to make some money, I will make a lying promise. Thus, the universalization of this maxim would entail two consequences. First, any time anyone needs to make some money, they will make a lying promise. Second, everyone knows that this maxim applies to all agents. This maxim, however, cannot be rationally universalized. If everyone were to know that people will make lying promises in order to make some money, then, as Kant says, "there would properly be no promises at all" (15). That is, the universalization of this maxim would mean that no one would

accept any promises, and so the plan of action set out by the maxim could never be fulfilled. Thus, we arrive at a contradiction in conception.

Similar contradictions in conception can be found in what I call "predatory maxims," which are more related to our discussion of deviant acts. These are maxims that include lying, stealing, and threatening. Because of the plethora of existing resources that discuss Kant's universalizability principle, I will not go into it further here. However, what I want to emphasize is that Kant's framework stands as a valid measure of the morality of actions.

Moreover, Kant's framework, specifically the universalizability principle, is especially salient for the Solidarity Presumption because many of the injustices present in the ghetto persist as a result of predatory maxims that have been largely universalized. That is, due to the fact that most members of the ghetto poor know that any stranger approaching them could be seeking to lie to or take advantage of them, a culture of distrust and hostility emerges.

This is exactly what Shelby means when he refers to criminal ethics that emerge in the ghetto in spite of the many members who do not wish to be involved in crime. Specifically, it is because innocent members know that it is often the case that their fellow members could be looking to take advantage of them that they develop a hardened personality. Such a reality does indeed make it hard for those with predatory maxims to realize their ends. Yet it also prevents a culture of trust and friendship from forming, which is necessary for just institutions to take root. Thus, Shelby writes: "Under these conditions a ghetto subculture emerges, where the traits of the gangster and hustler, usually condemned in mainstream society, are sometimes viewed as virtues" (139).

As such, the universalizability principle is especially important in the ghetto, owing to the fact that injustice is perpetuated by the reality that predatory maxims have been promoted to be universal, unspoken rules. Because of this, I find that an adherence to the universalizability principle would be a beneficial step toward the arrival of just institutions in the ghetto community. What this would entail is a collective rejection of predatory maxims and a subsequent loosening of the gangster and hustler ethics among the ghetto poor. In conclusion, from Kant's moral philosophy, I find adequate support for the Solidarity Presumption.

VII. Conclusion

In this paper, I have articulated Shelby's views on deviance in the ghetto poor in detail. I addressed the case of kingpins by arguing that the Rawlsian duty of justice makes many of their unlawful acts morally impermissible. I then introduced the Cost Clause, the Solidarity Presumption, and the subsequent dilemma that arises. Namely, though harming other members of the ghetto poor would seem to hinder the prospect of just institutions, doing so is oftentimes the only way for the agent in question to survive. To help find a way to resolve this tension, I turned to Kant's universalizability principle, which, I ultimately conclude, agrees with the Solidarity Presumption.

However, with all that being said, I will not be so hasty as to conclude that this quandary is now resolved. Indeed, as mentioned previously, the costs of refraining from predatory crime among the ghetto poor are high, particularly for those who depend on these specific acts for survival. As has been discussed above and by Shelby, the basic structure of society, including our public institutions and policies, must be radically shifted in light of this fact. But that being said, there are still fundamental natural and moral duties that all members of society are bound by. Kant's ethical theory introduces the notion that we are all bound under the same moral laws, and I find that this is sufficient justification for the Solidarity Presumption.

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An Interview with Professor Eli Hirsch

Eli Hirsch is the Charles Goldman Professor of Philosophy at Brandeis University and is known for his influential work in metaontology, particularly his support of quantifier variance and commonsense ontology. *Simpliciter* spoke with Hirsch about a number of topics including challenges to his views, his major influences, and philosophical progress.

Over your career, you've argued for a metaontological thesis called quantifier variance. Could you explain what quantifier variance is and how it relates to diagnosing ontological disputes as merely verbal?

Maybe it's most natural to start with the ontological disputes themselves. There are different ontological views in the literature. Mereological essentialists say that an object cannot persist with a change of parts. So if you take a twig off a tree, you end up having destroyed that tree and replaced it with another tree. At the other extreme, there are four-dimensionalists, who say that objects are made up of temporal parts, and any two objects make up an object, so there exists some object made up of Socrates's nose and the Eiffel tower. And there are a number of other ontological views as well.

Now, one thought that I have applies to a certain range of ontological positions—positions about visible objects, or something like that—where for each position, you can describe an "ontological language," such that the speakers of that ontological language will assert the same sentences that the ontologist is asserting. Note that a sentence is an utterance, not a proposition. So, for example, we can describe ME-English, which is a language just like English except that the speakers all assert sentences that the mereological essentialist would assert. For example, speakers of this language would say things like "If you break a twig off that tree, you're going to destroy it." But the semantics of ME-English are stipulated such that the speakers are speaking the truth when they make those assertions—the truth conditions of that sentence make it true that the tree would go out of existence. And we can do the same thing for the other positions. For example, we can describe 4D-English, which is a language just like English except that the speakers all assert sentences that the four-dimensionalist would assert. And so on.

These different ontological languages will assign certain sentences different truth conditions, and some of these sentences will involve existence. So, for example, the sentence "there exists some object made up of Socrates's nose and the Eiffel tower" will be true in 4D-English and false in ME-English. The conclusion of all this is that the meaning of the term "existence"—the concept of existence—has to vary across languages. And that's what quantifier variance is: it's the thesis that the meaning of the existential quantifier can vary across languages.

So there are these different ontological languages corresponding to the different ontological "positions," and the speakers of each of these languages speak the truth in their respective languages, even though they appear to utter contradictory sentences. The next step is to say that what's really going on is that these ontologists aren't really engaged in a genuine dispute. It's just that they're hooking on to one ontological language or another. The four-dimensionalist ontologist is speaking 4D-English while the mereological essentialist ontologist is speaking ME-English, so they're not really disagreeing with each other and their dispute is empty.

You often defend your view using the notion of charity. Can you explain what charity is and how it might lead one to adopt views similar to yours?

Here, the background assumption is about how we interpret languages. It seems that coming to understand a language involves interpretive charity, which was discussed by Quine and Davidson, among others, and basically means interpreting people so that their assertions generally come out true. And I don't know how else we could interpret a language. We just have to watch people playing the game and ask ourselves what the rules of the game are. And we're going to describe the rules in a way that makes the most sense of what these people are doing. I mean, if it looks like they're playing chess, you're not gonna say they're really playing dominoes. So if I come across a community of speakers who say the sorts of things that four-dimensionalists say, then the charitable interpretation is that they are speaking the truth, insofar as you can assign intelligible truth conditions to their sentences, which I think you can do. So then the charitable interpretation is that they are using those sentences to describe the truth in their words.

Now, I emphasize three modes of charity, though there are others. One mode that's particularly important is what I call charity to understanding, which says

that there's a defeasible but very strong assumption that speakers of a language are not making *a priori* mistakes about relatively simple sentences. Consider van Inwagen's view, organicism, which says that there are no composite objects except for living things. Van Inwagen says that the statement "there is a table" is false. And it's not just false, it's *a priori false*. So there's a very simple sentence, which you'd have to say everybody who speaks English, except for a few very weird philosophers, are making *a priori* mistakes about. But that violates charity to understanding. And I think it's an enormously powerful consideration that people are not making a mistake when they say "there is a table." Because that will mean that they don't even understand what they're talking about, in some sense. Another mode of charity is charity to perception, which says that we should assume that people don't make mistakes about what's going on right in front of their eyes. Van Inwagen thinks people *do* make mistakes about what's going on right in front of their eyes. And then there's charity to retraction. If people change their minds, if they retract what they had previously said, then there's a charitable assumption that what they're saying *now* is right, and that what they said earlier was wrong. In these ontological disputes, ordinary people do not retract their views on the basis of hearing these strange things.

So charity to understanding, perception, and retraction all add up to a case that speakers of plain English are not speaking 4D-English, they're not speaking organicism-English, they're not speaking ME-English, but they're speaking a perfectly good language in which what they say is true.

You've previously cited Putnam and Carnap as important influences, and Quine has also made some remarks reminiscent of your own. What sort of influence have these philosophers had on your view, and how do you see your view as different?

I used to think of my view as just coming out of Putnam's, but the more I developed my own view and emphasized my opposition to anti-realism, the more I felt distanced from him. One of Putnam's most central ideas is some kind of Kantianism/pragmatism/anti-realism. And I think of that as a real mouthful, a really hard and obscure view. I don't think of my own view as anything like that. I believe that there is an objective reality which is being described in different words and quantifiers by these different languages. So that's how I think of my

relationship to Putnam. Carnap is different. I never really understood what he means by the distinction between internal and external questions, but his basic idea of choosing a language is certainly very, very close to what I'm saying. So it's possible that at bottom, my view is very much like Carnap's. But even in Carnap, there's definitely some kind of anti-realism going on there. So I would say that the main difference is that in both Putnam and Carnap, and most clearly in Putnam, there's a kind of anti-realism that I'm very anxious to distinguish myself from.

My relationship to Quine is less clear. I think that my formulations skirt issues about inscrutability of reference. I'm very interested in that issue, but it doesn't really become central to my formulations. And it's very central to Quine's ontology and to his ontological relativity, which I think of as a more extreme view than quantifier variance. It's again some kind of a relativist or anti-realist view. My view has never gone into issues about the inscrutability of reference or radical translation. So I guess I just skirt those Quinean questions.

You mentioned that quantifier variance doesn't lead to any kind of anti-realism. What might motivate people to think that quantifier variance leads to anti-realism, and why in fact doesn't it? Is this a genuine challenge to your view?

To put the most negative spin on my critics—and this is an exaggeration—but it's like that joke: how many tails would a dog have if the word "tail" referred to legs? Almost everybody agrees that the correct answer to that question is "one." Even if the word "tail" referred to legs, dogs would still have one tail, though the speakers of that language would correctly assert the sentence "dogs have four tails." The change of language doesn't change the reality. And it's almost as if people make the mistake in that joke. If we spoke 4D-English, the sentence, "There exists something composed of Socrates's nose and the Eiffel tower," would be a true sentence. And even so, there would *not* have existed something composed of Socrates's nose and the Eiffel Tower. So I think that some people somehow just don't get this point. They somehow think that, according to Hirsch, we could change our language in such a way that there would exist something composed of Socrates's nose and the Eiffel Tower. But no, we couldn't.

So one should not make that mistake. But more seriously, there is some kind of intuition here which I myself am not invulnerable to, and which I think Ted Sider has expressed in the question, "So according to Hirsch, what's the world really like?" And my official answer to that question is, "Choose the language and I'll tell you what the world is really like. I could talk to you in ordinary English, in 4D-English or ME-English; tell me what language you want, and I'll tell you what the world is really like." But I appreciate that there is a sense of perplexity here. In my writings, I say that I don't need to get involved in stuff like facts and states of affairs, and how you individuate or identify facts and states of affairs. But I think that there is certainly an impulse to ask, "So according to Hirsch, what's the state of affairs?" In English, you say "there isn't something like that." And then in this other language, you say the words "there is something like that." So do those words express the same state of affairs? Are there different states of affairs for these different languages? If you ask me what I think is the sore spot for my view, it has to do with those kinds of questions.

All I keep saying is that each sentence in one language is truth-conditionally equivalent to a sentence in the other language. But there's some notion of a fine-grained fact, which is not just given by truth conditions, but something more fine-grained than that. There's a view that you find in lots of people like Kaplan and Salmon which says that in order for two sentences to express the same fine-grained fact, they have to have the same syntactic structure and corresponding words have to have the same intension. I'm bothered by the whole notion of fine-grained facts, and in a couple of places I say that if you're a quantifier variantist, you ought to get rid of fine-grained facts. But maybe they're not so easy to get rid of. And the question which has been raised, especially by John Hawthorne, for years, is "Do we have the same fine-grained facts from one language to another?" And I think there are ways to answer that. But I think that is the main source of discomfort with quantifier variance. Sometimes you can get the feeling, as Sider says, "So what's the world like?" Again, my official answer is "Choose the language and I'll tell you what." But something does bother me about that question.

You mentioned Ted Sider's response to your views, which makes use of a special concept of "heavyweight existence," sometimes rendered as EXISTENCE. Roughly speaking, EXISTENCE is supposed to most accurately track how the world really is, and carve up reality "at the joints."

Sider has argued that disputing ontologists are in fact all using the concept of EXISTENCE, rather than each using their own distinct concepts like ME-existence, 4D-existence, and so on. He has argued that our existence claims are "magnetically pulled" to carve at the joints of reality, and that such pressure trumps considerations of interpretive charity. So, despite the fact that it would make many assertions come out false, we should still interpret ontologists as employing the concept of EXISTENCE.

But Gerald Marsh has actually argued that this debate between you and Sider is *itself* a verbal dispute. Just as you try to deflate disputes in first-order ontology, he tries to deflate this metaontological dispute. What do you make of Marsh's attempt?

In certain cases, I don't see any way to translate one view into the other in terms of truth-conditional equivalence. For example, I say that the dispute between Platonism and nominalism in the philosophy of mathematics is not verbal for this reason: I don't see how the nominalist can give truth conditions to what Platonists say. And similarly I just don't see any way that I can interpret Sider's view as being true, or how he can interpret my view as being true. I mean, it has to be worked out—it's not just a matter of saying "hey, we have this disagreement, let's just say charitably that each side is right." There's got to be some way of explaining how the sentences asserted by each side are truth-conditionally equivalent to sentences asserted by the other side. I don't know how to do that with respect to my disagreement with Sider. Maybe it can be done, but I don't know how to do it.

At one point Marsh suggests that maybe we can focus on how you and Sider each use the term "interpretation." Marsh suggests that on a Hirsch-interpretation, charity trumps naturalness, while on a Sider-interpretation, naturalness trumps charity. Is that a viable way to do it?

I mean it's a nice idea. When I think about the dispute between the four-dimensionalists and mereological essentialists, I'm thinking that for any sentence asserted on one side, I can produce a truth-conditionally equivalent sentence on the other side. Here, you may have given me some kind of sketch about how that can be done. But what if Hirsch says to Sider, "There is no such thing as

EXISTENCE." Give me a sentence in Sider-English which is truth conditionally equivalent at that point. I don't know if Marsh has done that. I see the kind of move he's trying to make. But I need a sentence that is truth-conditionally equivalent, in my language, to Sider's sentence "The table doesn't EXIST."

To the extent that I can make sense of this concept of EXISTENCE, I'm not disagreeing. But really, in other works of mine I have said, and am saying now, that I'm very skeptical of EXISTENCE. And at this point, I think Sider pretty much agrees with me that ordinary people are not making mistakes in what they say. But I basically do reject that notion of EXISTENCE. And that's not a disagreement that I know how to charitably eliminate.

We also wanted to ask about ethics. What do you make of the following (oversimplified) argument? It tries to adopt your techniques to deflate a moral dispute:

> **The Kantian, speaking K-English, says "killing one person to save five is wrong," while the utilitarian, speaking U-English, asserts the negation of this sentence. On considerations of charity, we should interpret each person as speaking the truth in their respective languages. So it's a verbal dispute.**

On certain meta-ethical views, when you say "abortion is wrong," you're just expressing some attitude. And disagreements about whether abortion is right or wrong are just disagreements of attitude—something comparable to a disagreement about what TV show to watch. A disagreement of attitude cannot be eliminated by translation: if you have a pro-attitude, and I have a con-attitude, that remains, and there's no way of deflating that. Naturalists think that the statement "abortion is is wrong" is simply equivalent to some ordinary biological facts. If we are two naturalists, arguing with each other, I think we should dismiss it as a verbal disagreement. I'm describing some biological facts, you're describing some biological facts, and we don't disagree about biology. So we're just using the words "good" and "bad" to describe different biological facts. But I can't take naturalism seriously. What I can take seriously is non-naturalism—the view held by G.E. Moore, and nowadays held by Parfit and by Scanlon—which says that the property of being right or wrong doesn't just express a feeling and can't just be translated into some biological or physical facts. Why would that turn

into a verbal disagreement? Give me the equivalences! If you and I are both non-naturalists, we both believe there is this property of rightness. And I say that abortion lacks that property, and you say abortion has that property. Give me the truth-conditional equivalences here. It's not obvious that it's going to work.

Couldn't we do this by specifying the features of an act that would lead a Kantian to call it "right," and the features of an act that would lead a utilitarian to call it "right"?

Right away, that just doesn't seem to be plausible. How are you going to make that fit into the idea that there's this irreducible property of rightness?

I was taking this to be an argument that there is no such irreducible property—each party is employing their own concept of rightness, and thus the despite is verbal.

I don't know about that. Because it seems to be when you talk about Kant-rightness and utilitarian-rightness, you're already rejecting non-naturalism. Because otherwise, what do you mean by Kant-rightness? By Kant-rightness you're going to mean those physical, biological properties with respect to which Kant would have said "that's right." So I think you're already introducing the apparatus for making it into a verbal dispute. You're getting rid of the irreducible non-natural property. I'm not saying that that's at all an easy idea, that irreducible non-natural property. But I don't think you can deflate this dispute easily.

But if this argument presupposes that non-naturalism is false by presupposing different notions of rightness, then analogously wouldn't the kinds of arguments you give in metaontology presuppose that there are different concepts of existence?

The stuff about charity is not an argument against EXISTENCE. It's an argument about what ordinary people are saying. EXISTENCE is a different issue. This was Sider's move—to say that ontologists are speaking their own language of

Ontologese, about EXISTENCE. I wasn't taking it that way to begin with. And, you know, van Inwagen didn't say that, and David Lewis didn't say that — they seemed to be taking themselves to just be speaking English. And I was making some responses at that level. When Sider came along and said "no, really, our discussions are about EXISTENCE, a heavyweight concept of existence," then yeah, stuff about charity doesn't obviously work for that. It might, but it doesn't *obviously* work for it. And I never intended it to work for that. My objection to EXISTENCE has always been, as I've said, it's just too obscure for me.

On a more general note, many philosophers do take these ontological debates very seriously and believe that they're substantive and important. Why do you think that is?

I suggested earlier why some people might reject quantifier variance. If you can't say what I say, which is that you can shift from one concept of existence to another, and if you think there's only one legitimate concept of existence, then you may have to take these debates seriously. But the more serious possibility to me is that these ontological languages that I describe are not possible languages. I've always considered that to be a very interesting view, and I haven't seen it defended except in some of my own work. In the last chapters of my book, *Dividing Reality*, I try to argue for it, but then I admit that I can't make the argument work. On the other hand, it is a remarkable fact that when teaching students, especially beginning philosophy students, you can so easily lead them into—well, from my point of view, as a common sense, ordinary language philosopher—craziness. It's like in two seconds you can get everybody in the class to say, "Yeah, we are one person. We are really just one person, we're one with the absolute," and all kinds of crazy stuff. Although obviously, many people don't regard it as crazy.

So I think it's partly a rejection of quantifier variance, for reasons that I regard as not good reasons. But I don't know if that's the whole answer. I don't know if I can say this seriously, but there's just a real hunger for what I regard as obscurantism. One might more generously say there is a hunger for depth. So you get people thinking deeply, and ask them, "If you take a twig off a tree, do you still have the same tree?" And I would love it if people said "What are you talking about, are you crazy?" But they don't react that way, at least not in a philosophy classroom. When one of my daughters was about five or six, I was

in the park with her, thinking about some of this stuff. And I basically described mereological essentialism to her. And she, as a five-year-old, said, "Oh, so they must mean something different than what we mean by 'one object.'" So maybe it's in the genes. But I guess there's a real hunger for depth, and I think it leads to this kind of heavyweight ontology.

Were you ever attracted to these kinds of heavyweight ontological realist views, or have you always thought they are suspect?

I remember sitting with some friends in a coffee house on the East Side of New York when I was maybe 17. We were all taking an intro to philosophy course, and these two guys were carrying on a debate about if you have a brick wall, and you start replacing the bricks, do you end up with the same wall or not? And they were going on and on. And I said to them, "These are just words! These are just different words you're using." So the answer to your question is no, I was never attracted to it. I understand now, more than I did then, the attraction to heavyweight ontology, especially given Sider's question, "So what's the world really like?" You know, I get more of a feeling for it now than I had for years and years. But I went directly into ordinary language philosophy, influenced by people like Strawson and Austin, and this heavyweight stuff was foreign to them. In fact, it took me years to catch on that something new was happening here. Van Inwagen thinks that there are no composite things except for living things. He was kind of a friend of mine, and I remember telling my wife, "I have this friend who's gonna be laughed out of the profession, he's just saying crazy, crazy things." And on the contrary, this whole crowd of guys thought that this was great stuff! And I was just left dizzy, I didn't know what was going on. It took me years to catch on that there had been some real shift into some different way of thinking about these things. So you might think that would be a difficult question, but the answer is no, I was never attracted to it from the beginning.

How do you see the future of metaontology evolving?

In philosophy I think things shift in ways that are just not predictable. As I say, there was this shift from Strawson and Austin to guys like van Inwagen. And there may be a shift back. When I was a graduate student, perception was the thing. And then that dropped out of sight and philosophy of science became the thing. And now, my sense—for Brandeis students, at least—is that perception is back in and philosophy of science is in the background.

If I want to make an optimistic prediction, it's that this kind of heavyweight EXISTENCE stuff will disappear. Lewis and van Inwagen never talked about it. I think it was mainly Sider, to his great credit, who said "look, we need to have this notion of EXISTENCE." Maybe this is just a hopeful prediction, but I think that it's going to disappear. It's just too obscure of a notion. And Sider himself, I have a feeling, may not be that enthusiastic about it anymore. That doesn't mean that ontological debates are going to disappear because, as I said, Lewis thinks he's got very good arguments as to why regular people are wrong in terms of the ordinary notion of existence. That can continue.

Do you have a pessimistic view of philosophical progress generally?

Well, I don't know if you've ever heard my views about Plato, but I certainly think there's been some progress since then. You know, I'm generally pessimistic about everything. And philosophy is one area where you shouldn't expect a tremendous amount of progress. Parfit has claimed that "in ethics, we are at the beginning," just like when Euclid was doing geometry. He's very optimistic about how we're just going to work it out. I don't think that's going to happen exactly. But I think there is progress. I mean, I think Kripke's stuff is progress. Maybe it'll be watered-down progress, in some ways, but I think there's progress in philosophy.

You've mentioned that you're in the process of writing a new book. Could you give us an overview of what it's about, and how it relates to some of the metaontological issues we've been discussing?

The book is actually finished, and hopefully will be in press soon. The name of the book is *Selves in Doubt*, and it's not a book about ontology, although it has a chapter dealing with the question of whether or not some languages are better than others. The main topic is the first-person pronoun: what is meant by the word "I" and the implications of the semantics of the word "I." I start off with some notion of what I call "'I'-blindness,": trying to imagine a creature like us, except it doesn't have a first-person perspective. The book also has a chapter—and people have given me a lot of trouble about this—called "The Impossibility of Doubting the Existence of Other Selves." So there I have an argument that it's *a priori* impossible to be "sane," in some sense of the word, without the existence of other selves. On the other hand, I have another chapter which is titled "Reasons for Doubting the Existence of Other Selves," because I am also, in some sense, a skeptic. And the final chapter is called "Reflections on Facing Skepticism When Facing Death." I think it turns out that there are some very deep connections between thinking about skepticism and thinking about death. So it's, you know, sort of new stuff for me.