Ideology and Its Role in Metaphysics

Blinded for Review

Abstract

Metaphysicians now typically distinguish between a theory's ontology and its ideology. But besides a few cursory efforts, no one has explained the role of ideology in theory choice. In this paper I develop a framework for discussing how differing approaches to ideology impact metaphysical disputes. I first provide an initial characterization of ideology and develop two contrasting types of criteria used to evaluate its quality. In using externalist criteria, we judge the quality of a theory's ideology by its relation to external features of the world. In contrast, in using internalist criteria, we judge the quality of a theory's ideology by features internal to the theory and the theorizer, e.g. the intelligibility of the terminology employed. In the second half of the paper, I argue for an unrestricted application of externalist criteria, what I call *maximal realism*. According to maximal realism, we ought to apply externalist criteria to the entirety of a theory's ideology – to not only predicates but also to quantifiers and logical operators. I defend maximal realism from what I take to be the best objection to it: that the view leads to bad questions. As part of my defense, I argue that those who would restrict their application of externalist criteria either adopt an unjustified partition of ideology or reject seemingly benign questions.

Keywords: Ideology, Metametaphysics, Methodology, Ontological Disagreement, Theory Choice

Introduction

In the not-too-distant past, the intractability of metaphysical disputes was traced to an underlying disagreement on meta-ontological issues. And so began a flurry of work in clarifying and arguing for competing meta-ontological positions.[1] For instance: when one metaphysician says, "Tables exist," and the other says, "Tables do not exist," do they disagree about what the world is like, or do their words simply differ in meaning? Even if we have not reached a consensus on how to answer this question, we have gained a better understanding of how an answer would impact the first-order dispute about tables. Metaphysics, as an endeavor, is better for having addressed the meta-ontological question.[2]

But a theory's ontology is no more important than its *ideology*, the terminology employed to state the theory (including predicates, quantifiers, and logical connectives). While some work has been done to clarify the notion of ideology and its role in theory choice, there has been nothing like the corresponding explosion for ontology.[3] Unfortunately, this negligence has prevented us from having a better understanding of what is at stake in metaphysical disputes. I think it is time to address the meta-ideological question: "What are we asking when we ask 'What ideology should a theory use?'?"

Many metaphysical disputes cannot be resolved until we address the meta-ideological question. To take just one illustrative example, consider the dispute over temporal passage. A-theorists (for the most part) agree that there is a changing privileged present. Yet they offer different formal machinery to express their views. The presentist uses a tense logic with sentential operators like 'P' ("It once was the case that...") and 'F' ("It will be the case that..."). The minimal A-theorist employs predicate modifiers – e.g. "was(is running)". And the presentist existential pluralist introduces distinct quantifiers with non-overlapping domains ('$\exists_{past}$' and '$\exists_{present}$'). Each of these A-theorists employs a distinct ideology. Are these distinct ideologies mere notational variants, or do their differences signify a substantive disagreement between the A-theorists? If there is a substantive disagreement, ought we to side with the theorist who uses predicate modifiers or with the theorist who uses sentential operators? How we answer these first-order questions depends on how we answer the more general meta-ideological question. (And we haven't even begun to ask about the ideological differences between A-theorists and B-theorists!)

To give substance to the meta-ideological question, I've set two goals for this paper. My first goal is to draw attention to some important choice points regarding how we might answer the meta-ideological question. In section 1, I give an initial characterization of ideology and discuss three accounts of what ideology *is*. Then, in section 2, I introduce two contrasting means of evaluating a theory's ideology. *Externalist criteria* are concerned with the relationship between a theory's ideology and the external world. *Internalist criteria* are not concerned with this relationship; rather, they evaluate a theory's ideology exclusively with reference to features internal to the theory, or with reference to the historical, sociological, and psychological relations that hold between the theory and the theorizer. In subsection 2.2 and subsection 2.3, I discuss prominent applications of both types of criteria. Finally, in subsection 2.4, I discuss the nuances available in our application of internalist and externalist criteria.

My second goal is to defend my preferred account of ideology, an application of externalist criteria that I call *maximal realism*. According to maximal realism, the quality of a theory's ideology

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[1]This meta-ontological turn is best exemplified by the contributions in Chalmers et al. (2009). Not only did distinct camps emerge (e.g., the "pessimists" and "optimists" as labeled by Wilson (2011), but these camps exhibited and continue to exhibit remarkable diversity.

[2]From van Inwagen (1998): "What are we asking when we ask 'What is there?'?"

[3]For recent sustained discussion of ideology, see Cowling (2013); Decock (2002, 2004); Fisher (2012); Sider (2011).

is determined by the extent to which each of its elements corresponds to the world – names and predicates as well as quantifiers and logical connectives. Maximal realism is a methodologically powerful theory. But maximal realism also provokes the following anxiety: that it opens the door to especially bad questions.

In section 3, I develop this anxiety into what I call the *bad questions objection*. I distinguish between three versions of the objection and respond to each in turn. Unlike others who defend maximal realism (like Sider), I do not attempt to defend the view from those who are strongly inclined to apply internalist criteria to the exclusion of externalist criteria. Reasonable people can disagree about what criteria to apply. For this reason, it is more effective to address those who want to apply externalist criteria but restrict their application – those, for example, who are comfortable discussing the naturalness of predicates but not the naturalness of logical operators.

My defense of maximal realism is also my bid to start an important conversation. The differences in how metaphysicians understand ideology sometimes generate confusion. For example, how we judge the quality of a theory that uses tense operators depends on what meta-ideological criteria we choose to apply. Unsurprisingly, then, many arguments for and against presentism rely on unarticulated meta-ideological premises. We cannot determine how presentism compares to its rivals until we uncover and motivate these assumptions.

1   Ideology Initially Characterized

If someone were to look upon metaphysical disputes from the right distance, she would see certain dialectical moves repeat themselves. Here, a presentist attempts to avoid an ontological commitment to past and future entities by introducing irreducible tense operators. There, a nominalist attempts to avoid an ontological commitment to abstract entities by introducing a variety of primitive predicates. And over yonder a modal fictionalist attempts to avoid an ontological commitment to possible worlds by introducing an "According to the fiction..." locution.

What do the presentist, nominalist, and fictionalist have in common? Each attempts to improve her theory's ontology by modifying its ideology. According to the Quinean criterion of ontological commitment, a theory is ontologically committed to the values of the bound variables of its regimented quantificational statements.[4] For example, if a theory contains the sentence "There exists a unicorn," and it is regimented into '$\exists x(x$ is a unicorn)', then anyone who endorses that theory and that regimentation is ontologically committed to unicorns. Take the sentence "Three is a prime number." A straightforward regimentation of this sentence would be '$\exists x(x = 3$ and x is a prime number)'. A nominalist who accepts the Quinean criterion of ontological commitment cannot endorse such a regimentation since she would thereby be ontologically committed to numbers. The nominalist accordingly attempts to offer a complete and nominalistically acceptable regimentation of the mathematical theories indispensable for a complete understanding of the world.[5] This project is often advanced by the introduction of undefined terminology that would not otherwise be included in the mathematical theory's ideology (e.g. Field (1980)). Thus, the nominalist attempts to improve her ontology by modifying (some might say bloating) her ideology.

But the converse move – reasoning from ideological considerations to ontological commitments – is sometimes just as powerful. David Lewis' endorsement of modal realism is a good example

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[4]The Quinean approach to ontology is of course controversial. I assume it in this paper, however, because I do not have the space to fully discuss how different meta-ontological positions influence our answer to the meta-ideological question. For more, see van Inwagen (1998).

[5]She might instead claim that mathematics is dispensable.

of such a move. He discusses many reasons to favor his theory of modal realism. Prominent among them is its reduction of modality. On his theory, claims about necessity and possibility amount to purely extensional claims about worlds, individuals, and counterpart relations. All rival theories of modality, Lewis argues, must take some modal notion as primitive. Thus, they are more ideologically complex than modal realism. Despite his view's seemingly high ontological costs, Lewis is willing to pay the price for the ideological simplicity it delivers:

> Hilbert called the set-theoretical universe a paradise for mathematicians. And he was right... We have only to believe in the vast hierarchy of sets, and there we find entities suited to meet the needs of all the branches of mathematics; and we find that the very meagre primitive vocabulary of set theory, definitionally extended, suffices to meet our needs for mathematical predicates; and we find that the meagre axioms of set theory are first principles enough to yield the theorems that are the content of the subject. Set theory offers the mathematician great economy of primitives and premises, in return for accepting rather a lot of entities unknown to Homo javanensis. *It offers an improvement in what Quine calls ideology, paid for in the coin of ontology.* It's an offer you can't refuse. The price is right; the benefits in theoretical unity and economy are well worth the entities.
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> As the realm of sets is for mathematicians, so logical space is a paradise for philosophers. We have only to believe in the vast realm of possibilia, and there we find what we need to advance our endeavours. We find the wherewithal to reduce the diversity of notions we must accept as primitive, and thereby to improve the unity and economy of the theory that is our professional concern – total theory, the whole of what we take to be true... *It is my view that the price is right, if less spectacularly so than in the mathematical parallel. The benefits are worth their ontological cost* (Lewis (1986): 3–4, emphasis mine).

While metaphysicians do sometimes consider the ideological aspects of their theories, they rarely make explicit just what these considerations amounts to – Lewis being no exception. In what follows I hope to change that.

First, though, an aside about terminology. In practice we have a theory of physics, a theory of mathematics, and so on. Following Lewis, I will often simplify and talk about *total theory*, which subsumes all theories required for a complete understanding of the world. To *endorse* a theory is to be disposed to affirm the sentences contained in it.

A total theory has two features of particular interest to metaphysicians: its *ontology* and its *ideology*. Endorsing a theory entails endorsing both its ontology and its ideology. But so much for ontology. Our concern lies with ideology and its role in theory choice. Following standard usage, call any potential element of an ideology a *bit of ideology*. To endorse a bit of ideology is to accept that any total theory you might endorse (given your current epistemic state) will contain that bit of ideology. To endorse one bit of ideology over another is to include the former in any total theory you might endorse at the exclusion of the latter.

I think that there are several aspects of meta-ideology that are under-developed in the use of ideology in the literature. My focus here is on answers to the following two questions: (1) What is a theory's ideology? (2) What are the relevant features of ideology for theory choice? Call these, respectively, the *identity question* and *criterion question*.

The identity question is more technical than substantive. Really, 'ideology' is a term of art, an expression used to employ a useful philosophical concept. In answering the identity question it is

not important to provide an answer that matches some pre-theoretic understanding of ideology. It is important, though, to provide an answer that is useful for metaphysical theorizing.

There are in the current literature three prevalent and inconsistent answers to the identity question. First, there is the *linguistic* answer.[6] According to the linguistic answer, the ideology of a theory is identical to a collection of linguistic items, most commonly the undefined terminology used to state the theory.[7] Second, there is the *semantic* answer.[8] On the semantic answer, the ideology of a theory is identical to a collection of intensional entities – e.g. the meanings of the theory's terms, or the concepts employed in stating the theory. Finally, there is the *worldly* answer.[9] According to the worldly answer, the ideology of a theory is identical to some immanent feature or features of the world. Compare the worldly answer to its counterpart in ontology. It is often assumed that a theory's ontology is literally the things out there in the world that the theory says exists. Similarly, someone who gives the worldly answer to the identity question thinks that a theory's ideology is literally the features of the world that the theory characterizes.

A term of art that is inconsistently applied is a term of art that could be more useful. That is reason enough to attend to the differences between these three answers to the identity question. But this inconsistent application of 'ideology' also leads to substantive confusions. For example, how we identify bits of ideology will shape how we ought to identify the ideological kinds constituted by those bits. In turn, how we identify ideological kinds will shape how we ought to evaluate arguments that target a theory's ideological parsimony. Consequently, metaphysicians who answer the identity question differently might (and I suspect already have) talk past one another when evaluating a theory's overall theoretical virtue.

We should therefore try to come to a consensus on the identity question. I favor a linguistic answer where a theory's ideology is identified with the stock of primitive expressions used to state the theory.[10] This answer to the identity question provides a neutral framework for discussing the ideology of a theory. Identifying ideology with meanings excludes those who are skeptical of meanings. (This includes, as we will see shortly, the very person who introduced the term 'ideology'!) Similar points apply to identifying ideology with propositions, or the structure of the world, or anything else metaphysically substantial. Wherever there's a commitment, there's someone who wants to avoid it. An account of ideology should not make such desires unsatisfiable – especially if the goal of such an account is to provide a framework within which these kinds of disputes can run. I take the neutrality of my framework to be a serious advantage.

Let's set aside the identity question and address the more substantive criterion question.

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[6]Examples of the linguistic answer: Bennett (2009); Bricker (2008); Dasgupta (2009); Hawthorne (2009); Pickel and Mantegani (2012); Turner (2016); van Inwagen (2008). Melia (2000) doesn't say enough to easily classify him but does strike me as endorsing the linguistic answer. McDaniel (2010a) half-heartedly endorses the linguistic answer and attributes it to Quine (631). A.R.J. Fisher at times explicitly gives a semantic answer, but lately seems to prefer a linguistic answer (e.g. Fisher (2016)).

[7]It might be useful to understand these as *interpreted* items. On this approach, a bit of ideology is an ordered pair of a "purely" syntactic element and an interpretation of that syntax.

[8]Examples of the semantic answer: Burgess and Rosen (1997); Cowling (2013); Schaffer (2014). Oliver (1996) says that "the ideology [of a theory] consists in the ideas which are expressed within the theory using predicates" (2). Cameron (2012) refers to bits of ideology as "notions" (17–19). Though it's less than clear, I think Cameron means to provide a semantic answer. He talks of reducing *possibility* and *tense*, as opposed to '◊' and 'It was the case that...'

[9]Examples of the worldly answer: Torrengo (2014), who seems to identify ideology with fundamental properties and Krämer (2010), who seems to identify ideology with facts.

[10]An expression is primitive relative to a theory just in case that theory does not define the expression. Thus my notion of primitiveness is theory relative. Sometimes 'primitive' is used to denote some sort of psychological relationship between an expression and a theorizer – see, e.g., Shapiro (1993). These two notions of primitiveness are importantly different.

2   Externalist and Internalist Criteria

The criterion question permits two contrasting means of evaluation. I call them *externalist criteria* and *internalist criteria* because of their similarities to other so-called externalist and internalist notions in philosophy. In using externalist criteria, we judge the quality of a theory's ideology by its relation to external features of the world. As I show below, there are options as to what this relation can look like. In using internalist criteria, we evaluate a theory's ideology by its internal features or by what historical, sociological, and psychological relations hold between it and those who might endorse it. Again, there are options as to which features and relations are relevant. Some internalist criteria consider only features of the particular theorizer. Other internalist criteria consider features of entire communities.

2.1   A First Pass at the Distinction

The distinction between externalist and internalist criteria is hard to pin down. To illustrate this point, here's an intuitive way to make the distinction that should ultimately be rejected. *Prima facie*, it's plausible to suppose that the satisfaction of internalist criteria supervenes on the internal relations between theories, individuals, and communities and that the satisfaction of externalist criteria does not supervene on such relations. That is, the satisfaction of internalist criteria will be fixed once what is internal to the theoretic practice is fixed. But the same does not hold for externalist criteria; their satisfaction will vary across worlds that are otherwise identical from the theoretical perspective.

This proposed supervenience characterization is too cumbersome to accurately characterize the distinction between the two types of criteria. First, the supervenience characterization entails a certain humility with respect to the satisfaction of externalist criteria. The characterization is likely incompatible with reference magnetism – roughly, the view that our language tends to "latch onto" certain features of the world in a way that goes beyond our intentions. Reference magnetism attempts to rule out many scenarios where identical referential input sometimes leads to success and other times leads to failure. These differences are precisely what the supervenience characterization demands. That is, no matter how strong my reasons are for believing my theory, this characterization entails I am one among many duplicate theorizers whose ideology fails to satisfy externalist criteria.

The supervenience characterization also fails to distinguish between internal features as such and so-to-speak accidentally internal features. But that distinction is important to make insofar as we need to distinguish features *qua* part of the theoretical process from features *qua* subject matter. Take psychology. Plausibly, psychologists want a theory with ideology that matches the objective features of human mental life (their motivations, capacities, etc.). But clearly the accuracy of any such psychological theory will depend on the mental lives and social context of humans. As a result, the satisfaction of the criteria that determine the choice of psychological ideology will supervene on these mental and social features. On the supervenience characterization this means that the criteria are internalist, which seems contrary to what was intended.

Some more nuanced supervenience-based characterization might be able to avoid these two problems. I don't see what it would be, though I do not offer an argument that it cannot be done. Nevertheless, it seems to me a mistake to use supervenience to characterize the distinction between externalist and internalist criteria. The distinction isn't one of modal dependence. Externalist criteria show that some ideologies are better than others in virtue of how the world is. Likewise, internalist criteria show that some ideologies are better than others in virtue of our relationship to the ideology. I suggest, then, that the distinction be characterized as a disagreement about the

explanation we use to justify our choice of ideology.

Explanation and justification are, perhaps, underdeveloped in this context. Yet I think there is something deeply intuitive behind the distinction between the two types of criteria, even if it is difficult to state the distinction precisely. Furthermore, in practice a precise distinction at this level of abstraction isn't necessary. More specific accounts of ideology will clearly explain in what scenarios their criteria are satisfied. These details will help show in what sense some criterion is externalist or internalist.

Let's turn to one of these accounts.

2.2 Sider and the Correspondence Criterion

One of the most prominent applications of externalist criteria is that of Sider (2011). Sider's meta-ideological position turns on structure and its role in metaphysics. Structure is an objective, mind-independent feature of the world. According to Sider, structure is also the unifying feature of myriad disputes in metaphysics. As he sees it, the A-theorist thinks the world exhibits temporal structure beyond that granted by the B-theorist; the primitivist about lawhood thinks that the world has lawlike causal structure that cannot be reduced to its occurrent features; and disputes about the substantivity of disputes in metaphysics (meta-disputes, or metametaphysics) are disputes about how influential of a role structure can play in metaphysical inquiry.

So what role does ideology play in Sider's conception of metaphysics? Sider thinks that our primary objective as metaphysicians is to discern the structure of the world. But our doing so is mediated by theory. That is, the goal is not to directly perceive the structure of the world but instead to develop a theory that correctly characterizes it.

Sider uses several different locutions to describe the relationship between ideology and structure. Most prominent among them is the expression that ideology "carves nature" and that good ideology "carves nature at its joints". Sider introduces an operator, '$\mathscr{S}$', as a means to formulate the intent behind the carving locution. This operator attaches to any expression of arbitrary grammatical category. To say '$\mathscr{S}(\alpha)$' is to say that the world has α-structure. But Sider is explicit that such expressions do not have objects, linguistic or otherwise, as their content. To say that '$\mathscr{S}(\Box)$' is true is not to say anything about the linguistic item '$\Box$', our concept of modality, or some ineffable object NECESSITY. $\mathscr{S}$-sentences need not be about things; they can be non-ontic.

That's all well and good. But in justifying our choice of ideology Sider appeals to a connection between language and world, even if that connection is not properly understood as a relation between two things. Here, I leave its exact nature underspecified and reserve the word 'correspondence' to denote that connection between ideology and world, whatever it may be. Some metaphysicians might choose to analyze this ideological correspondence into some more familiar notion. Others might take it as primitive.

The ideology of a metaphysical theory, according to Sider, is what is intended to correspond to the structure of the world. A completely successful metaphysical theory will contain only undefined terminology that perfectly corresponds to the structure of the world – that perfectly carves nature at its joints. From this we can extract a more general methodological principle: when evaluating a theory, endorse it only if you have reason to believe that its ideology corresponds to the objective features of the world. Call this principle the *correspondence criterion*.

In practice, ideological correspondence comes in degrees. The end goal of metaphysics is to have a theory whose ideology perfectly corresponds to the objective features of the world. But perfect correspondence is too demanding as a standard at this stage of metaphysical investigation; many of our ideological resources are quite likely impoverished in some way. The limits of knowledge being what they are, then, we simply try to improve the ideology of our theories. As a result, ideological

modifications are judged relatively. If one theory's ideology more accurately corresponds to the structure of the world compared to another, then we have reason to choose that theory over its competitor.

2.3 Quine and the Intelligibility Criterion

Sider often bemoans how Quine introduced ideology because Quine's choice of words encourages "an unfortunate tendency... to psychologize Quine's notion of ideology: to regard a theory's choice of primitive notions – its ideology – as a merely psychological or linguistic or conventional matter..." (Sider (2011): i). This tendency leads us to believe that a theory's ideology is "a purely arbitrary, conceptual matter" and not, as Sider would have it, a matter of "ontology-free but nevertheless worldly metaphysics" (112).

Unfortunately Quine's treatment of ideology *is* quite different from Sider's. The two of them appeal to importantly different types of meta-ideological criteria when choosing metaphysical theories. Here I discuss Quine's intelligibility criterion as a paradigm example of an internalist criterion. Quine's criterion does not entail that ideological decisions are "purely arbitrary" but it does suggest that ideological decisions are independent of how the world is. Thus, Quine's criterion is a particularly stark illustration of how internalist criteria shape our choice of theory.

In order to grasp Quine's internalist criterion, it will be helpful to start where he puts it to work. In Quine (1951b), he argues that the analytic/synthetic distinction is untenable.[11] The argument, in short, is that the term 'analytic' is insufficiently clear on its own – that it is an "un-understood word" (32). But every relevant means of clarifying 'analytic' employs notions equally (or more) unclear. Indeed, 'analytic' forms something of a definitional circle with 'definition', 'synonymous', 'meaning', *et al.* Because all of these notions are irreparably "un-understood", we must reject them.

But it's not as if Quine is engaged in the childhood pasttime of incessant interrogation. He accepts that some concepts are unproblematically acquired and some expressions are legitimately taken as primitive. 'Red', for instance, does not require a definition. Why, then, does Quine deny that 'analytic' is among the unproblematic notions? Because – unlike 'red' – there is nothing underpinning our understanding of 'analytic' besides metaphors, vague characterizations, and appeals to equally opaque terminology. Quine thinks that 'analytic' fails to meet some minimum threshold of intelligibility to be taken as primitive. From this we can extract the following internalist criterion: a bit of ideology ought to be endorsed only if it is understandable or intelligible. Call this the *intelligibility criterion*.

Quine seems to have solidified his commitment to intelligibility, or *Verständlichkeit*, as a result of extensive conversations with Carnap, Tarski, and others during the 1940–1941 academic year.[12] But he is unfortunately never fully explicit about what intelligibility amounts to. Expressions can gain intelligibility by being defined in terms of expressions already found intelligible. Yet some definitions are better than others in virtue of how well understood the *definiens* is. Furthermore, as noted with the term 'red', some expressions may be "primitively understood" without definition. Perhaps there is a story to tell that links the intelligibility of terminology to a naturalistic account of concept acquisition. But that is beyond what I can explore here.

While I am not committed to any particular interpretation of Quine, I do think that the intelligibility criterion provides a useful exegetical lens. In Quine (1951a), where the distinction between

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[11]I hope I can extract the exegetical material I want without having to engage in this dispute, let alone resolve it. Perhaps my interpretation of Quine's argument is misguided. Even so, the argument I present is one that would be available to him.

[12] '*Verständlichkeit*' is perhaps better translated as 'understanding'. Yet 'understanding' and 'intelligibility' are in this context interchangeable. For more historical detail, see Frost-Arnold (2013), especially 34–37.

ontology and ideology is first explicitly introduced, Quine builds an analogy between ideological questions and the theory of meaning in semantics, claiming that "[the former] is heir to the miserable conditions, the virtual lack of scientific conceptualization, which characterizes [the latter]" (15). Nevertheless, once Quine commits himself to the intelligibility criterion, he appears to use it again and again. In Quine (1956), he considers a solution to the problem of quantifying into propositional attitudes that appeals to reified intensions. But he says that "there are good reasons for being discontent with an analysis that leaves us with... intensions" because, among other reasons, "the principle of their individuation is obscure" (184). He then develops a workaround that appeals directly to the sentences speakers hold to be true. This creates obvious difficulties, as when a mouse's fear of a cat is explained as its fearing true the English sentence "That is a cat." Nevertheless, Quine is resigned to "adding obscurity to obscurity" (187) because an appeal to intensions is *too* obscure. That is, while obscurity is sometimes unavoidable, there is a certain limit of obscurity beyond which notions are duly disqualified. Similarly, Quine's commitment to the intelligibility criterion can explain why in Quine (1953) he disparages the metaphysical jungle of Aristotelian essentialism. Quine seems to think that there is a strong connection between extensionality and intelligibility. He therefore views all intensional language with suspicion – quantified modal logic included. Finally, many of Quine's other projects, both big and small, are explicitly efforts of ideological modification (e.g. Goodman and Quine (1947); Quine (1960)).

Intelligibility, for Quine, is a necessary condition on choice of ideology. No bit of ideology should be endorsed unless the individual finds it intelligible. Importantly, Quine places no further constraints on choice of ideology. Suppose two bits of ideology ϕ and ψ are interdefinable and intelligible to Leigh-Cheri. Suppose, further, that either ϕ or ψ needs to be primitive in Leigh-Cheri's total theory and there are no non-ideological considerations that favor one over the other. So far as Quine's meta-ideology goes, Leigh-Cheri is free to choose between ϕ and ψ by taking one as primitive and using it to define the other. For example, when developing a mereological system, Leigh-Cheri is free to choose either 'proper part' or 'overlap' as her mereological primitive.

2.4 A Second Pass at the Distinction

In subsection 2.2 and subsection 2.3, I examined two approaches to ideology, one that employed an externalist criterion and one that employed an internalist criterion. What makes these two approaches importantly different is *not* that for Sider good ideology successfully corresponds to the structure of the world whereas for Quine good ideology is intelligible. A successful theory's ideology could in principle both correspond to the structure of the world and be perfectly intelligible. For all I've said there might even be a necessary connection between ideological correspondence and intelligibility!

Rather, these two approaches are importantly different because of how they determine that one ideology is better than another. According to Sider, 'green' is superior to 'grue' *because* 'green' better corresponds to the structure of the world. According to Quine, an ideology that includes 'analyticity' is unacceptable *because* it is unintelligible.

Yet Sider and Quine are near the two extremes of the meta-ideological spectrum. I will now discuss some of the choice points for a metaphysician who wants to develop her own meta-ideological position.

It will be helpful to start with the absolute extremes. Define *extreme externalism* as the meta-ideological position according to which *only* external criteria are relevant for endorsing an ideology. An extreme externalist thinks we should endorse the available ideology that best matches the structure of the world and that *nothing else* matters. Intelligibility, for instance, is for the extreme externalist completely irrelevant. So long as we have reason to believe the ideology is joint-carving,

the extreme externalist does not care if it is literally unintelligible. For this and similar reasons few might be inclined toward extreme externalism.[13] On the other end of the spectrum is *extreme internalism*, according to which *only* internal criteria are relevant for endorsing an ideology. I've suggested that Quine is an extreme internalist because he thinks that once the intelligibility criterion is satisfied there are no further constraints on theory choice so far as ideology goes.

Of course, a metaphysician can adopt internalist criteria other than Quine's (i.e. what the individual finds intelligible). One expanded version of Quine's criterion ranks competing ideologies by their overall clarity and recommends choosing the clearest one. Other internalist criteria might consider features external to the individual. The notion of entrenchment in Goodman (1955) can be used to develop a criterion of ideological evaluation that considers the history of the entire scientific community. This Goodmanian approach to ideology holds that a theory should employ predicates that have a history of predictive success.

Note, also, that externalist criteria are not tied to any particular kind of ideological correspondence. On one interpretation, David Lewis employs an externalist criterion based on natural properties (see e.g. Lewis (1983)). More specifically, Lewis holds that a theory's ideology is judged by the extent to which its predicates correspond to natural properties. Since predicates can be understood as expressing properties, for Lewis ideological correspondence is just the everyday relation of meaning.

The metaphysician must also decide what the appropriate methodology is for determining the satisfaction of meta-ideological criteria. This methodology-decision is strictly speaking independent of the criteria-decision. Consider the analogous point in ontology. There is on the one hand the question of what a theory's ontology should do. Some say that a theory's ontology should identify that which the theory says exists. Others say that it should identify that which the theory says is fundamental. And so on. There is also a question about the proper methodology for deciding which among rival ontologies gets it right. This second question is, strictly speaking, independent of the first question. Likewise, the criteria a metaphysician adopts need not by themselves recommend a particular methodology. Two metaphysicians might employ the same methodology even when they disagree on what that methodology is supposed to accomplish. Quine and Sider, for instance, disagree about the nature of the relationship between ideology and world. But they agree that, as a matter of methodology, we should endorse the ideologies of our most theoretically virtuous theories.

The metaphysician is free to mix and match externalist and internalist criteria. She might (quite reasonably) prefer an ideology that is both joint-carving and intelligible. Or she might prefer joint-carving terminology with a proven track record in the natural sciences. If these criteria pull in opposite directions she might prioritize one over the other, or she treat them equally. The logical space here is quite large.

That being said, there are two ill-defined but heuristically useful meta-ideological positions worth considering. Call those who favor externalist criteria the *ideological externalists*. Among the externalists are figures like Lewis and Sider. Ideological externalists tend to employ predominately externalist criteria and also tend to prioritize externalist criteria over internalist criteria. Call those who similarly favor internalist criteria *ideological internalists*. Arguably, the internalist camp includes Quine and Goodman as well as Eli Hirsch and Amie Thomasson.

One final choice point concerns the range over which the metaphysician applies her criteria. For any given criterion, a metaphysician can choose to apply it to the whole of a theory's ideology or

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[13]It's unclear if even Sider would endorse extreme externalism. But for what it's worth I find it to be the superior position. Arguably, there is historical precedent for endorsing unintelligible ideology. 'Extended simple' and 'metaphysical structure' come to mind.

to only a subset. For example, she might think that our choice of predicates should be sensitive to the satisfaction of externalist criteria but our choice of logical operators should not. Or she might think that different classes of predicates ought to be evaluated by different criteria; she might think, for example, that predicates used in the natural sciences must pick out natural properties but deny that predicates used in ethics face any such constraint.

This last choice point highlights an important aspect of new metaphysical projects like Sider's. Projects that apply externalist criteria to predicates (like Lewis') have been around for some time. What is novel, however, is "going beyond the predicate." According to Sider, all of theory's ideology should carve nature at its joints. Just as the predicates of a theory's ideology should correspond to the world's natural properties, so too should its quantifiers and logical operators correspond to the world's quantificational and logical structure. Call this view *maximal realism*. More precisely, maximal realism is the view that there ought to be no restriction in the application of externalist criteria.

Maximal realism secures many of the objectives that originally motivated the more moderate Lewisian realism.[14] But, as I will discuss in the next section, it seems to face some obvious problems.

3 Maximal Realism and the Bad Questions Objection

In this section, I address three connected objections to maximal realism. They are connected in that they are all rooted in the following sentiment. Relative to the goals of metaphysics, there are good questions to ask and there are bad questions to ask. A good metametaphysical position will help us answer the good questions. A bad one, though, permits bad questions. If our metametaphysics allows us to ask bad questions, then it's a bad metametaphysics – even if it helps us answer the good questions.[15]

Many have expressed this sentiment, or something like it, in reaction to maximal realism. They think we should ask if a theory's *predicates* pick out natural properties but they do not think that we should ask if a theory's *quantifiers* are joint-carving. Even Sider feels this sentiment at times, as when he says, "*which* logical concepts carve at the joints?...Similarly, which quantifier carves at the joints, ∀ or ∃? You don't have to be a logical positivist to feel that something is wrong with these questions" (Sider (2011): 257).

In what follows, I connect this sentiment to three challenges to maximal realism. More specifically, I develop three distinct senses in which a question might be bad. I then suggest how, on each sense, maximal realism permits bad questions. Since views that permit bad questions should be rejected, maximal realism should be rejected. Call an argument of this form a *bad questions objection*.

After developing the three bad questions objections, I respond to each. Underlying each response is a commitment to a view sometimes called *knee-jerk realism*.

Knee-jerk realism, as I define it, is the conjunction of three (perhaps vague) claims: (i) the world is a certain way, (ii) in principle, we can know that some descriptions of the world are better than others, and (iii) it is primarily in virtue of how the world is that these descriptions are better.[16] Knee-jerk realism is both a metaphysical and a linguistic claim. In my terminology, someone who endorses knee-jerk realism – that is, a knee-jerk realist – thinks that external criteria play a

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[14]Obviously much more than what I can say here is needed to justify this claim. See Sider (2011): 6.1 for more.

[15]Rayo (2013): 1.3.1. See, also 1.2.1 and 1.3.2. Robert Stalnaker raised a similar point at the 2014 Central APA book symposium of Williamson's *Modal Logic as Metaphysics*, though I am unable to find written documentation of this.

[16]See Sider (2011): 19–20, Turner (2016): 7–8, Tahko (2016): 67. There may be some disagreement about precisely what knee-jerk realism amounts to, but I hope that my characterization is fairly accommodating.

substantive role in theory choice. I take it that most contemporary metaphysicians are knee-jerk realists even if there is widespread disagreement on how these three claims come out true.[17]

I want to address the knee-jerk realist who worries that there is something distinctively problematic about the sorts of questions allowed by maximal realism. This doubting knee-jerk realist is in general okay with questions of correspondence when the correspondence is between predicates and the world. "Does the predicate 'green' express a more natural property than the predicate 'grue'?" is by her lights a perfectly fine question. But maximal realism also allows us to ask: "Does the logical operator '∨' better correspond to the structure of the world than '∧'?" This is the sort of question that the "hypothetical" knee-jerk realist thinks is bad. In other words, the doubting realist thinks that extending the application of externalist criteria to the whole of a theory's ideology leads to bad questions.

I will discuss three different senses in which a question might be bad, each of which can be used to develop a distinct bad questions objection. Though by no means exhaustive, these three objections are fairly diverse and interesting applications of the bad-questions sentiment. First, such questions might be *meaningless*. Second, they might be *unanswerable*. Third, the questions might be *unproductive*. In what follows, I develop and respond to each of these charges in turn.

Others have offered their own responses to some version of the bad questions objection. Sider offers two. First, he says that questions concerning non-predicate ideology seem bad in part because we assume an answer must draw problematic metaphysical distinctions. But in fact we can give an egalitarian answer to such questions: '∨' and '∧' are equally joint-carving. We thereby avoid drawing any problematic distinctions. Sider also says that we should examine why we find such questions bad. The fact that they involve interdefinable terminology is not by itself enough to explain their badness. 'Grue' and 'bleen' are interdefinable with 'green' and 'blue'. Yet we consider questions about the comparative joint-carvingness of these predicates perfectly acceptable.

Both of Sider's responses are largely defensive in nature. I think there is an offensive strategy we maximal realists should pursue. This strategy shows that the doubting realist's position is unstable. It is unstable because the doubting realist lacks a principled reason to apply externalist criteria to only a subset of a theory's ideology. Consequently, for any given externalist criterion we ought to apply it to every undefined term or to none at all.

Of course, this strategy says nothing about what criteria we should use in the first place. It is thus not likely to persuade an ideological internalist to find these questions any less bad. I'm okay with that. In fact, I take that to be another reason to favor my response. Some people just don't like the taste of externalism and any effort to mask its flavor is bound to fail. Better to let them have what they want and demonstrate that those who do like the flavor are mistaken to hold back. Externalist criteria ought to be applied to the whole of a theory's ideology or not at all.

3.1 Are These Questions Meaningless?

Perhaps questions of correspondence between non-predicate ideology and the world are meaningless. This semantic version of the bad questions objection is inspired by Rudolph Carnap. As he understands it, all inquiry occurs within a linguistic framework. He distinguishes between two types of questions concerning existence. *Internal questions* are formulated with help from the linguistic framework. *External questions* attempt to "escape" the framework and ask about the system itself.

Carnap applied this distinction to matters of ontology. But he could have just as well applied it to ideology. All questions are raised within a linguistic framework. But the framework itself

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[17]I've defined knee-jerk realism generically to allow for disagreement among realists on what features the world has. A modal anti-realist and a moral anti-realist can both still be knee-jerk realists, assuming the rest of their beliefs are sufficiently in line with (i)–(iii).

is a feature of any theory it generates. This is because the theory will be cast in the language introduced by the framework – the framework partially constitutes the theory's ideology. Choosing one framework over another involves choosing one ideology over another.

Carnap does consider criteria for adopting one framework over another that allows for deliberation between competing ideologies. But his criteria are entirely pragmatic, and therefore internal. Carnap does not recognize any sort of correspondence between ideology and the world that might play a role in the deliberation.[18]

Because questions of correspondence between non-predicate ideology and the world are external in this sense, they are meaningless. Thus there is a strong parallel between external ontological questions and what we can call external ideological questions. Both attempt to ask about the system itself. In the ontological case the form is something like "We talk as if there are numbers. But are there *really* numbers?" The answer to this question cannot be satisfied by looking around, or by reviewing our language. It is a question peculiar to speculative metaphysics. Likewise, an external ideological question – e.g. "Does the world *really* have logical structure?" – cannot be answered by non-philosophical means. It is intended to test the legitimacy of a framework. But, as Carnap would tell us, that makes the questions meaningless. There is nothing tethering them to language. Both the external ontological question and the external ideological question are "pseudo-statements without cognitive content" (26).

Obviously, meaningless questions are bad and a theory that raises them is also bad. But is the doubting realist right to think that questions of correspondence between non-predicate ideology and world are meaningless? It's hard to see how she could be. A strict Carnapian view, one that declares all external questions to be meaningless, is difficult to defend. And it is a view that no knee-jerk realist would be inclined to endorse. The realist thinks that external questions concerning predicates are meaningful – that it makes sense to ask if there is something mind-independent which makes 'green' better than 'grue' for describing the world. But there is no principled way to distinguish between these reasonable questions about predicates and more controversial questions about non-predicate ideology with respect to their meaningfulness.

One way the doubting realist might try to make the distinction is by appealing to the notion of a *logical constant*. According to this strategy, a question that asks about the external constraints on logical constants is meaningless. At first glance, this produces the right results. The logical connective '∨' is a paradigmatic logical constant, and so any external question about it is meaningless. In contrast, the predicates 'green' and 'grue' are not logical constants and so external questions about them are meaningful. Because a maximal realist counts both as meaningful, we should reject her account of ideology.

There are at least three problems with this strategy. First, it is notoriously difficult to properly define which expressions are logical constants and which are not. Insofar as the distinction is supposed to help explain why the questions are meaningless, the lack of an adequate definition is problematic. Second, the strategy seems *ad hoc* without some further explanation for why the distinction matters. What difference does it make if an expression is a logical constant or not? Finally, and most importantly, any distinction based on logical constants is unlikely to partition the questions in the way the doubting realist wants. Consider the dispute concerning modality. One central benefit of Lewisian modal realism is its reductive nature. A modal realist analyzes modal claims as quantification over *possibilia* and is therefore able to eliminate modal operators from her ideology. An actualist, in contrast, denies the existence of mere *possibilia* and is thereby forced to include some modal notion or other in her ideology. One plausible version of actualism

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[18]See Carnap (1950). He talks of the decision as "practical, not theoretical." One evaluates the extent to which the language is "expedient, fruitful, [and] conducive to the aim for which [it] is intended" (31).

refuses to analyze the modal operators '□' and '◊' (e.g. Prior and Fine (1977)). Others claim they and other modal notions (e.g. 'makes true') are interdefinable. Many realists, I suspect, find this dispute meaningful. But then the doubting realist must explain why logical connectives and quantifiers are logical constants yet modal operators are not. I don't see how this can be done in a principled manner.

3.2 Are These Questions Unanswerable?

Perhaps there are facts of the matter about how non-predicate ideology maps onto the world, but such facts are unknowable. An ideology that includes the Sheffer stroke might better correspond to the features of the world than an ideology that includes negation and disjunction. But we can never know if that is the case. Nothing could justify such a belief. We should therefore reject maximal realism because it permits questions that are in principle unanswerable.[19]

What might explain why some questions concerning ideological correspondence are answerable and others are not? Maybe there is a causal connection between the world and our minds when it comes to some ideology but not others. We literally causally interact with some of the world's structure and it is this connection that brings about the possibility of an answer. In more detail: empirical observations of the world, in particular those related to scientific practice, are in part interactions with structure. We use language to represent said structure, casting our theories in a particular ideology – e.g. 'green' instead of 'grue'. This poses no epistemological problem because we causally interact with the property *greenness* but not the property *grueness*. But, so the objection goes, not all structure is causally accessible. Questions concerning causally isolated structure cannot be justifiably answered.

The epistemological bad questions objection shows too much. First, it is vulnerable to the third response I gave to the semantic objection. If questions concerning causally inaccessible structure are unanswerable, then many disputes ordinarily respected among metaphysicians ought to be placed under scrutiny. The Lewisian modal realist holds that possible worlds are causally isolated from one another. Modal structure, for her, is by definition causally isolated from us. The actualist also holds that modal structure (however that might look) is causally isolated. So questions about modality cannot be justifiably answered. But this is not what metaphysicians typically think. As before, the questions permitted by maximal realism are no more suspicious than some of those already permitted by the doubting realist.

Perhaps the realist who is motivated by these epistemic worries is less moderate than expected. Perhaps she is happy to dismiss theories in metaphysics that posit things that are causally removed from us. Is she happy to dismiss all such theories? Many scientific theories posit causally isolated things, like numbers and event horizons. Some of these might be justified through alternative means. But can all of them? Unless the realist is prepared to reject physics she owes us an explanation for the double standard.

The doubting realist cannot plausibly maintain that causal connection is a prerequisite for justifiable belief. The methodology of most metaphysicians includes inference to the best explanation. Indeed, it is hard to see how any substantive metaphysical theory could be defended without abductive reasoning. But then why would there be an epistemic problem in cases concerning something causally isolated from us? Abduction might face problems on its own, but those are not made worse by switching from causally linked inferences to causally isolated inferences, or from questions

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[19]Some of what I say here is in line with Michaela McSweeney's work on logical realism. I take my response to be not that far away from McSweeney's own conclusions. I'm inclined to think that the perfectly correct logical ideology is as of now unfamiliar. But this happens all the time, e.g. previously unfamiliar scientific predicates used to characterize quarks.

about predicate structure to questions about logical structure. The doubting realist must provide some other means to make the epistemological distinction.

3.3 Are These Questions Unproductive?

Separating the good questions from the bad on principled semantic or epistemic grounds in a way that matches the intuitive division of the two is more challenging than it initially seems. Grant that there is no such division. Might there nonetheless be a pragmatic difference between the two sorts of questions? (While there is no shortage of philosophers who say that metaphysics is a waste of time, I am not interested, here, in addressing that larger issue.) Are there pragmatic challenges for those who ask questions of correspondence between non-predicate ideology and the world?

Suppose our doubting realist is concerned about the upshots of metaphysical theories.[20] She would admit that it's not always obvious how metaphysical disputes are relevant to other intellectual pursuits. But they are. The A-theory/B-theory dispute, for instance, directly interfaces with the physics of space and time. While some of the questions raised by maximal realism are well-connected to these other pursuits, many others are not. It makes no difference whether we use '$\wedge$' or '$\vee$' in our theorizing. The matter is trivial; either is just as fine for our purposes. The maximal realist project is for this reason unproductive and should be replaced by something that doesn't permit such pointless questions.

Let's be forthright about the pragmatic role of philosophical projects. Not every question the project might permit need be seriously discussed. According to utilitarianism, there is a legitimate question about how good my breakfast was this morning. But there is no reason for ethicists to spend any amount of time answering that question. So it is no knock against maximal realism that *some* of its questions are unproductive. Indeed, even if most of its questions were, the few that were not might be worthwhile enough to redeem the whole endeavor.

Furthermore, a question can be productive even if there is no substantial shift in what is believed. Imagine a community of metaphysicians who not only agree that x is essentially F just in case x is necessarily F but could see no way for that bi-conditional to fail. This community is then confronted with a case from Fine (1994): Socrates is necessarily a member of his singleton set, but is he essentially a member of his singleton set? The community enters a period of crisis. After several years it comes to a consensus: essentiality is what they thought it was, though the answer is less obvious than they first thought. During the crisis, however, many alternative accounts of essentiality were proposed and their relative merits are discussed. Clearly, the question posed by Fine's case was productive because the community's beliefs, even if not substantially changed, were enriched.

Many of the questions raised by maximal realism are productive in at least this sense. The green/grue issue is a classic example of this, although there are others. 'Grue' was first introduced to demonstrate a puzzle about confirmation in science, what Goodman (1955) called the new riddle of induction. This riddle is not some abstract and largely irrelevant puzzle of metaphysics. Rather, it plays a role in the foundations of an epistemology of science. By offering a solution to the riddle, maximal realism begins to provide an epistemology of confirmation. This epistemology enriches our account even if it does not substantially change it.

Furthermore, some of the questions unique to maximal realism are actually productive. Questions about the correspondence between quantifiers and the world open the door to the theory of *quantifier pluralism*. Quantifier pluralism is proving to be a fruitful theory.[21] McDaniel (2009) uses it to make sense of Heidegger's project in *Being and Time*, where his interpretation turns

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[20]See, e.g., Haslanger (2000): 35.

[21]For simplicity, I am ignoring the difference between quantifier pluralism and ontological pluralism.

on a question about the relationship between a language's quantifiers and the way the world is. Quantifier pluralism has also been useful in resolving tensions in the classical doctrine of divine simplicity (McDaniel (2010b): 693). More pragmatically, quantifier pluralism can illuminate the role and value of human beings in the world. The theory suggests the following question: do the quantifiers of our final theory range over human beings? If not, does this mean we have no value?[22] It also makes sense of the predominant undergraduate sentiment that there are numbers and there are chairs but that numbers and chairs do not exist in the same way (see Turner (2010): 5). Even if quantifier pluralism is wrong, our beliefs are enriched by entertaining its possibility.

Maximal realism also raises questions that promise to generate new research programs. Here's a line of thought I find especially promising. For any bit of ideology, we can ask what feature of the world that bit corresponds to. In some cases it's hard to see what these features could be. This is because we often ontologize features of the world. That is, we take features to be *things*. But the structure of the world need not be a thing. Just like predicates are suited to correspond to properties, there is a special class of expressions that are suited to correspond to non-ontic features. Call this the class of *non-ontic ideology*. I suggest that this class of expressions includes the truth-functional connectives, quantifiers, and modal operators – more or less the ideology that the doubting realist finds problematic. Metaphysicians have worked extensively with non-ontic ideology. Outside of the paradigm of maximal realism we are led to believe, falsely, that such ideology does not pick out features of the world. But non-ontic ideology does in fact have realist implications, implications that suggest an underexplored category of the world.[23]

Conclusion

In this paper I have developed a useful framework for discussing the role of ideology in theory choice. In particular, I have distinguished between two importantly different types of criteria on which we judge the quality of a theory's ideology. Internalist criteria evaluate an ideology as it relates to features internal to the theory or to the historical, sociological, and psychological relations that hold between the theory and the theorizer. Externalist critera, in contrast, evaluate an ideology based on how it relates to external features of the world.

I have also defended an application of externalist criteria, maximal realism, from three different bad questions objections. There are, I am sure, many more objections out there. But I hope to have shown that the maximal realist and the doubting knee-jerk realist are not that different. For those who are inclined toward externalist criteria, there is much to be gained and little to be lost by adopting maximal realism.

Bennett (2009) and others have persuasively argued that many metaphysical disputes have reached an epistemic impasse. To adopt her metaphor, at this stage they are nothing more than squabbles over where to leave the bump in the carpet of theoretical costs. I maintain that this impasse is in large part the result of metaphysicians vacillating between incompatible meta-ideological positions. Now is the time to explore the different ways ideology might be used to push the bump.

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[22]This point, and many more, are developed in McDaniel (2017).

[23]For related discussion, see Finocchiaro (forthcoming).

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