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ONTOLOGICAL SUPERPLURALISM*

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DADE: You're pretty good. You're elite.

KATE: Yeah? You know, if you would have said so in the beginning, you would have saved yourself a whole lot of trouble.

— *Hackers* (1995)

1. Introduction

According to *ontological pluralism*, there are different ways (or kinds) of being.[1] Nowadays, ontological pluralism is a minority view, although it has recently been defended by Kris McDaniel (2009, 2010a, 2010b) and Jason Turner (2010, forthcoming).[2] Historically, however, ontological pluralism has been a popular view. Gottlob Frege (1891, 1892b, 1893), Bertrand Russell (1903), Alexius Meinong (1904a), and Martin Heidegger (1953), among others, were all ontological pluralists; they all believed in different ways of being.[3] But they believed in different ways of being in different ways. Just as those who accept ontological pluralism think that there are different ways of being, those who accept *ontological superpluralism* think that there are different ways of being an ontological pluralist.[4]

These slogans — 'there are different ways of being' and 'there are different ways of being an ontological pluralist' — are at best rough, initial characterizations of the views. More careful characterizations of the views are considered below (especially in Sections 4, 6, and 7); these characterizations are less catchy but, I hope, make the views sound more substantial. To anticipate, ontological pluralism is more like the claim that ways of being enjoy a certain advantage over being itself, and ontological superpluralism is more like the claim that Frege's, Russell's, Meinong's, and Heidegger's views enjoy that advantage over ontological pluralism itself. Saying more about what this advantage amounts to is one of the

tasks of Section 4. But the rough idea, which will do for now, is that enjoying that advantage is tied in some way to lack of disjunctiveness.

I don't know of anyone who has explicitly denied ontological superpluralism; but then I don't know of anyone who has explicitly asserted, or even considered, it either.[5] My main aim in this paper is thus relatively modest: I want to get ontological superpluralism on the table and sketch some reasons that might lead one to accept it. But I also have two ancillary aims. First, I want to describe some of the richness of ontological pluralist views in the history of analytic metaphysics from 1891 to 1904: from Frege's "Function and Concept" (1891), "On Concept and Object" (1892b), and the first volume of his *Basic Laws of Arithmetic* (1893), through Russell's *Principles of Mathematics* (1903), to Meinong's "Theory of Objects" (1904a). And, second, I want — admittedly indirectly — to explore the limits of a familiar Quinean meta-ontology, one that takes quantification to be central to ontology. As I argue in Section 6, it is not obvious how to come up with an adequate quantifier-based characterization of ontological pluralism that fits both Frege's and Russell's views. (There is a lot more to say later about what adequacy amounts to; it is tied to the advantage that, according to ontological superpluralism, Frege's, Russell's, Meinong's, and Heidegger's views enjoy over ontological pluralism itself and thence to lack of disjunctiveness.) This, I think, provides some reason to accept ontological superpluralism; but it might also suggest that quantification doesn't get at the ontological heart of their pluralist views.

I begin, in the next section, by presenting Frege's, Russell's, Meinong's, and Heidegger's views.

2. Several ontological pluralists

2.1. Frege

On Frege's (1891, 1892b, 1893) view, there are infinitely many ontological categories.[6] We can start with a relatively easy one, the ontological category *object*. Frege (1891: 6,7) distinguishes objects and functions: an object is a "whole complete in itself," whereas a function is "incomplete, in need of supplementation, unsaturated."[7] The distinction between objects and functions is fundamental. Frege (1891: 26) says, "functions are fundamentally different [*grundverschieden*] from objects."[8] The ontological category *object* is also fundamental, at least logically. Frege (1891: 18) says

> The question arises what it is that we are here calling an object. I regard a regular definition as impossible, since we have here something too simple to admit of logical analysis. It is only possible to indicate what is meant. Here I can only say briefly: an object is anything that is not a function.

Numbers, truth-values, spatiotemporal locations, people, and names are objects.[9] Successor (which maps every number n to the number $n + 1$), addition (which maps any numbers m and n to the number $m + n$), and quaddition (which maps any numbers m and n to the number $m + n$ if m and n are both less than 57 and which maps m and n to 5 otherwise) are all functions.[10] So is Kripkification, which maps addition to quaddition, quaddition to addition, and other functions to themselves.[11] Concepts (one-place functions whose values are always truth-values) and relations (many-place functions whose values are always truth-values) are also functions.[12] So, for example, the concept *being an object*, which maps every object to the truth-value True, is a function, as is the relation *having kicked*, which maps any objects x and y, in that order, to the truth-value True if and only if x kicked y.

Objects form an ontological category, and (as Frege suggests at the end of the quotation displayed in the previous paragraph) everything that is not an object is a function.[13] But functions don't form an ontological category. Rather, functions form infinitely many disjoint ontological categories. Frege (1893: §23, 40) speaks of "the great multiplicity of functions" and says that "there are fundamentally different [*grundverschiedene*] types of functions."[14] For one thing, functions are divided up by their *adicity*: one-place functions, two-place functions, three-place functions, and so on are not in the same ontological category. So, for example the successor function (which is a one-place function) and the addition function (which is a two-place function) are not in the same ontological category. Frege (1893: §21, 37) says, "Functions of two arguments are just as fundamentally different [*grundverschieden*] from functions of one argument as the latter are from objects."[15]

For another, functions are also divided up by their *level*: first-level functions (whose arguments are all objects), second-level functions (whose arguments are all first-level functions), third-level functions (whose arguments are all second-level functions), and so on are not in the same ontological category. Frege (1891: 26–27) says, "functions whose arguments are and must be functions are fundamentally different [*grundverschieden*] from functions whose arguments are objects and cannot be anything else"; this distinction, he adds, "is not made arbitrarily, but founded deep in the nature of things."[16] So, for example, the successor function (which is a first-level function) and the Kripkification function (which is a second-level function) are not in the same ontological category.

Divisions of adicity and level cross-cut to generate a bewildering array of ontological categories. (Recall Frege's (1893: §23, 40) remark about "the great multiplicity of functions.") For example, one-place first-level functions form an ontological category, but one-place second-level functions do not, since they are divided by the adicity of their arguments: one-place second-level functions whose arguments are one-place first-level functions,[17] one-place second-level functions whose arguments are two-place first-level functions,[18] one-place second-level functions whose arguments are three-place first-level functions, and so on are not in the same ontological category. Frege (1891: 29) says, "a function of one

argument is essentially so different [*so wesentlich verschieden*] from one with two arguments that the one function cannot occur as an argument in the same place as the other"; so the one-place second-level functions that take one-place first-level functions as arguments are "sharply divided" from the one-place second-level functions that take two-place first-level functions as arguments. And then there are the "unequal-levelled" functions that take arguments from different levels in different argument places . . . [19]

Now consider the following sentences.

(1) There are objects.
(2) There are first-level concepts.
(3) There are second-level concepts whose arguments are one-place first-level functions.

(A first-level concept is a function that maps objects to truth-values; a second-level concept is a function that maps first-level functions to truth-values.[20]) On Frege's view, 'there are' in (1), (2), and (3) picks out different concepts. Let's start with (1). In (1), 'objects' picks out the first-level concept *being an object*, which maps some object (for example, Saul Kripke) to the truth-value True; and 'there are' picks out a second-level concept (one whose arguments are one-place first-level functions), which maps the concept *being an object* to the truth-value True.[21] We might call that second-level concept 'the concept *being a first-level concept C such that there is an object o such that C maps o to the truth-value True*'.

In (2), 'first-level concepts' picks out the second-level concept *being a first-level concept* (a concept whose arguments are one-place first-level functions), which maps some first-level concept (for example, the concept *being an object*) to the truth-value True; and 'there are' picks out a third-level concept (one whose arguments are one-place second-level functions whose arguments are one-place first-level functions), which maps the second-level concept *being a first-level concept* to the truth-value True. We might call that third-level concept 'the concept *being a second-level concept C such that there is a first-level concept C* such that C maps C* to the truth-value True*'.

And, in (3), 'second-level concepts whose arguments are one-place first-level functions' picks out the third-level concept *being a second-level concept whose arguments are one-place first-level functions*; and 'there are' picks out a fourth-level concept.[22] The different concepts that 'there are' picks out in (1), (2), and (3) are different existence concepts.

On Frege's view, no one-place function has in its domain entities from more than one ontological category. To be in the domain of a one-place function, an entity must fit the argument place of the function; and entities from different ontological categories can't all fit the same argument place.[23] As we have seen, Frege (1891: 29) makes the point in the case where the entities belong to different ontological categories because one is a one-place function and the other is a two-place function: "the one function cannot occur as an argument in the same place as the other." So, for example, there is no one-place function that has both

first-level concepts and second-level concepts in its domain. As a result, there is no concept *being a concept*: there is no concept that maps first-level concepts, second-level concepts, third-level concepts, and so on to the truth-value True. For the same reason, there is no concept *being a function*. Nor is there a concept *being an object or a function*. More to the point, there isn't any single concept for 'there are' in (1), (2), and (3) to pick out. There is no concept that maps the first-level concept *being an object*, the second-level concept *being a first-level concept*, and the third-level concept *being a second-level concept whose arguments are one-place first-level functions* to the truth-value True, because there is no one-place function that has all of those concepts in its domain. It's not that

(4) There are objects, first-level concepts, and second-level concepts whose arguments are one-place first-level functions.

is false on Frege's view; rather, it's that (4) is "impossible, senseless."[24]

As far as I know, Frege doesn't explicitly discuss, or endorse, the view that there are many different existence concepts, one for each ontological category, and no overarching existence concept. But it does seem to be a consequence of his view. And he does explicitly discuss, and endorse, parallel views about instantiation and identity. On his view, there are different instantiation relations for different ontological categories. He mentions three of them: the two-place *falling under* relation, which maps an object and a one-place first-level concept to a truth-value;[25] the three-place *standing in* relation, which maps two objects and a two-place first-level relation to a truth-value;[26] and the two-place *falling within* relation, which maps a first-level concept and a second-level concept whose arguments are one-place first-level functions to a truth-value.[27] And he doesn't seem to think that there is a single, overarching instantiation relation. Similarly, on his view, there are different identity relations for different ontological categories. He mentions two of them: the familiar first-level *is identical with* relation, which maps objects to truth-values;[28] and an "analogous" second-level relation, which maps first-level concepts to truth-values.[29] And he doesn't seem to think that there is a single, overarching identity relation.

To put it picturesquely, Frege's view is that there are many different ontological boxes; no two boxes overlap; and there is no universal box that contains all the smaller boxes. Let's call this view *Fregean ontological pluralism*.

2.2. Russell

On Russell's (1903) view, every object has being (or subsistence), but only some objects — those that are located in space-time—have existence. For example, the number 17, the property *reading "Function and Concept" while taking a bath*, and the proposition that more than seventeen polar bears enjoy reading "Function and Concept" while taking a bath have being but don't have

existence; whereas polar bears, mountains, and armchairs have being and also have existence. Russell (1903: 449) says

> *Being* is that which belongs to every conceivable term, to every possible object of thought — in short to everything that can possibly occur in any proposition, true or false, and to all such propositions themselves. Being belongs to whatever can be counted. If *A* be any term that can be counted as one, it is plain that *A* is something, and therefore that *A* is . . . . Whatever *A* may be, it certainly is. Numbers, the Homeric gods, relations, chimeras and four-dimensional spaces all have being, for if they were not entities of a kind, we could make no propositions about them. Thus being is a general attribute of everything, and to mention anything is to show that it is.
>
> *Existence*, on the contrary, is the prerogative of some only amongst beings. To exist is to have a specific relation to existence — a relation, by the way, which existence itself does not have.[30]

To put it picturesquely, Russell's view is that there are two ontological boxes; one is nested inside the other; and the second is a universal box. Let's call this view *Russellian ontological pluralism*.

2.3. Meinong

On Meinong's (1904a) view, there are two kinds of being: existence and subsistence.[31] Some objects have subsistence, and other objects have existence, but no object has both. For example, the number 17, the property *reading "Function and Concept" while taking a bath*, a square, a circle, and the true proposition that most polar bears can't read have subsistence but don't have existence; whereas polar bears, mountains, and armchairs have existence but don't have subsistence.[32] In addition, some objects have neither subsistence nor existence; and these objects don't have any other kind of being either. Some of these objects — for example, the golden mountain — would have existence if they had being. And some of these objects — for example, the round square and the false proposition that more than seventeen polar bears enjoy reading "Function and Concept" while taking a bath — would have subsistence if they had being.[33]

To put it picturesquely, Meinong's view is that there are two small ontological boxes; they don't overlap; they're both contained in a larger box; but the larger box isn't a universal box, because some things aren't in it. Let's call this view *Meinongian ontological pluralism*.

2.4. Heidegger

On Heidegger's (1953) view — or at least on Heidegger's (1953) view according to McDaniel (2009, 2010b) — different things have different kinds

of being: creatures like us have *Existenz*; tools have readiness-to-hand; material objects have presence-at-hand; living things have life; and abstract objects have subsistence. Creatures like us, tools, material objects, living things, and abstract objects all share being; but the more specific kinds of being are more important. And Heidegger doesn't think that kinds of being are themselves beings.

To put it picturesquely, Heidegger's view is that there are a few small ontological boxes; they don't overlap;[34] they're all contained in a universal box; and the universal box is somehow less important. Oh, and the boxes aren't things. Let's call this view *Heideggerian ontological pluralism*.

3. The view and a quick argument against it

3.1. The view

Let's call Fregean ontological pluralism, Russellian ontological pluralism, Meinongian ontological pluralism, and Heideggerian ontological pluralism *the several pluralisms*. And let's call ontological pluralism itself — whatever it turns out to be exactly — *the general pluralism*.[35] According to ontological superpluralism, the several pluralisms enjoy a certain advantage over the general pluralism. It will be useful to have a way of saying that some things enjoy this advantage over other things without saying what this advantage is exactly. Let's say that some things are *more privileged than* others.

(5) Ontological superpluralism is the view that the several pluralisms are **more privileged than** the general pluralism.[36]

It will also be useful to have a way of saying that some things are as privileged as can be. Let's say that they're *elite*.

We need to say more about what privilege is. That requires some ideological machinery; and, as we will see in the next section, there are several options.[37] But, in the meantime, we can say what the main idea is: whatever privilege is exactly, it is tied in some way to lack of disjunctiveness. Here's an analogy. Let *0 additionism* be the claim that $2 + 2 = 0$; let *1 additionism* be the claim that $2 + 2 = 1$; let *2 additionism* be the claim that $2 + 2 = 2$; and so on. Call these claims *the several additionisms*. Consider the claim that either 0 additionism is true, or 1 additionism is true, or 2 additionism is true, or.... Call this claim *the general additionism*. Just as someone might want to say that the general additionism is more disjunctive, and hence in some sense less privileged, than the several additionisms, so the ontological superpluralist says that the general pluralism is more disjunctive, and hence in some sense less privileged, than the several pluralisms. According to ontological superpluralism, then, the general pluralism is something like a disjunctive proposition: either Fregean ontological pluralism is true, or Russellian ontological pluralism is true, or Meinongian ontological

pluralism is true, or Heideggerian ontological pluralism is true (or perhaps other views are true).

According to ontological superpluralism, the general pluralism is *something* like a disjunctive proposition, but ontological superpluralism doesn't require that the general pluralism be *exactly* like that. In particular, ontological superpluralism doesn't preclude the possibility that there is something more or less unified about the several pluralisms in virtue of which they are recognizably instances of the general pluralism; they needn't be as motley a collection of propositions as, say, the proposition that more than seventeen polar bears enjoy reading "Function and Concept" while taking a bath, the proposition that the Sedin twins disappeared in the spring of 2011, and Gödel's second incompleteness theorem. All that is required for ontological superpluralism to be true is that the general pluralism be *more* disjunctive, and hence less privileged, than the several pluralisms.[38]

3.2. A quick argument against it

One might think that ontological superpluralism is obviously false.[39] After all, there is a characterization that fits all the several pluralisms. This is the initial characterization that McDaniel and Turner offer: ontological pluralism — the general pluralism — is the view that there are multiple ways of being.

> I discuss the doctrine that there are ways of being.[40]
>
> I am attracted to *ontological pluralism*, the doctrine that some things exist in a different way than other things.[41]
>
> I briefly explain my interpretation of *ontological pluralism*, the doctrine that there are ways of being.[42]
>
> According to *ontological pluralism*, there are different ways, kinds, or modes of being.[43]
>
> According to *ontological pluralism*, there are different modes of being—different ways to exist.[44]

And the several pluralisms are all views according to which there are multiple ways of being.

But the issue isn't whether there is a characterization of the general pluralism that fits all the several pluralisms; rather, the issue is whether there is a characterization of the general pluralism that fits all the several pluralisms *and* is one on which the general pluralism is at least as privileged as they are. It is consistent with ontological superpluralism that there is a characterization of the general pluralism that fits all the several pluralisms, provided that it is one on which the general pluralism is less privileged than they are.

The situation is much the same with a characterization of the general pluralism that appeals to ontological boxes. The several pluralisms all have something important in common: they all posit multiple ontological boxes. Perhaps there

is a universal box (Russell, Heidegger); perhaps not (Frege, Meinong). Perhaps there are disjoint non-universal boxes (Frege, Meinong, Heidegger); perhaps not (Russell). But all agree that there are multiple ontological boxes. So we have another characterization of the general pluralism that fits all the several pluralisms: there are multiple ontological boxes. But, again, this doesn't entail that ontological superpluralism is false, unless on this characterization the general pluralism is at least as privileged as the several pluralisms. It seems, then, that we're going to need to start thinking outside of the box metaphor.[45]

4. Several ideologies

4.1. Lewis and Sider

Let's start with David Lewis's (1983, 1984, 1986) notion of a natural property. In *On the Plurality of Worlds*, Lewis distinguishes *sparse* and *abundant* properties. Speaking of sparse properties, he says

> Sharing of them makes for qualitative similarity, they carve at the joints, they are intrinsic, they are highly specific, the sets of their instances are *ipso facto* not entirely miscellaneous, and there are only just enough of them to characterize things completely and without redundancy. . . . the sparse properties are just some — a very small minority — of the abundant properties. . . . When a property belongs to the small minority, I call it a *natural* property.[46]

On this view, the property *being a strange quark* might be natural, but the property *fearing strange quarks* is not.

Lewis's original notion of naturalness is absolute rather than relative: either a property is natural (as in the case of the property *being a strange quark*, say), or it's not (as in the case of the property *fearing strange quarks*, say). But he introduces a relative notion: some properties are more natural than others. In *On the Plurality of Worlds*, Lewis (1986: 61) says,

> Probably it would be best to say that the distinction between natural properties and others admits of degree. Some few properties are *perfectly* natural. Others, even though they may be somewhat disjunctive or extrinsic, are at least somewhat natural in a derivative way, to the extent that they can be reached by not-too-complicated chains of definability from the perfectly natural properties.[47]

On this view, although neither the property *being an ytterbium atom* nor the property *fearing strange quarks* is perfectly natural (both are less natural than the property *being a strange quark*), the property *being an ytterbium atom* is nonetheless more natural than the property *fearing strange quarks*.

So far we have been talking about the naturalness, or the relative naturalness, of properties: it is properties that are natural, or more or less natural. But Lewis

extends naturalness to objects, too. Sometimes he speaks of "an élite minority of special properties"; but sometimes he speaks, more generally, of "elite things and classes."[48] On this view, some objects are more natural than others. Speaking of eligibility (which is determined by naturalness), Lewis (1984: 65) says

> I would prefer to make it a matter of degree. The mereological sum of the coffee in my cup, the ink in this sentence, a nearby sparrow, and my left shoe is a miscellaneous mess of an object, yet its boundaries are by no means unrelated to the joints in nature. It is an eligible referent, but less eligible than some others.

Sometimes it is in virtue of instantiating natural properties that natural objects are natural (and hence eligible to be referents). Lewis (1983: 48) says, "Naturalness of properties makes for differences of eligibility not only among the properties themselves, but also among things." But sometimes (at least when we're not dealing with properties that are perfectly natural) it is in virtue of being instantiated by natural (or "well-demarcated") objects that natural properties are natural. Lewis (1983: 49) says, "one thing that makes for naturalness of a property is that it is a property belonging exclusively to well-demarcated things."

On Lewis's (1986: 50–55) view, propositions are properties: propositions are sets of possible worlds; and properties are sets of possible individuals; so propositions are properties of possible worlds. If naturalness applies to properties in general, then it applies to propositions in particular, too. On this view, some propositions are more natural than others. Perhaps this is what Lewis (1986: 105) has in mind when he says that only a special few propositions — only a special few sets of possible worlds — are eligible to be the contents of our thought and talk:

> Most sets of worlds, in fact all but an infinitesimal minority of them, are not eligible contents of thought. It is absolutely impossible that anybody should think a thought with content given by one of these ineligible sets of worlds.[49]

But, whether or not Lewis had it in mind, it is a consequence of his other views that naturalness applies to propositions. For example, the proposition expressed by

(6) Something is a strange quark.

is more natural than the proposition expressed by

(7) Something is a strange quark or everything is a positron.

In general, disjunctive propositions — like the proposition expressed by (7) — are less natural than their disjuncts: like the propositions expressed by (6) and

(8) Everything is a positron.

To say that the proposition expressed by (7) is less natural than either of the propositions expressed by (6) and (8) is in effect to say that the property *being a*

possible world in which either something is a strange quark or everything is a positron is less natural than either the property *being a possible world in which something is a strange quark* or the property *being a possible world in which everything is a positron*.[50] (In general, disjunctive properties are less natural than their disjuncts. Recall Lewis's remark above that, unlike perfectly natural properties, less natural properties might be "somewhat disjunctive."[51])

On Lewis's official view, necessarily coextensive properties — for example, the properties *being pursued by a triangular figure* and *being pursued by a trilateral figure* — are identical: they're the same set of possible individuals. But, Lewis (1986: 56) says, there are other conceptions of properties, and "there's no point in insisting that this one is the only rightful conception of the properties." In particular, if we want to distinguish necessarily coextensive properties, then we can do so by identifying them with structured properties.[52] Similarly, on Lewis's official view, necessarily equivalent propositions — for example, the proposition that I am being pursued by a triangular figure and the proposition that I am being pursued by a trilateral figure or, less fancifully, the proposition that, if numbers exist, then $2 + 2 = 4$ and the proposition that either the law of the excluded middle is true or it's not — are identical: they're the same set of possible worlds. But, again, there is no point in insisting that this is the only rightful conception of propositions. (There are many versions of the proposition role; and, Lewis (1986: 58) says, no propositions occupy "the one and only rightful version, because nothing in our tangled and variable usage suffices to settle which version that would be.") In particular, if we want to distinguish necessarily equivalent propositions, then we can do so, too, by identifying them with structured propositions.[53]

Lewis doesn't say whether naturalness applies to structured properties and hence to structured propositions; so he doesn't say whether necessarily coextensive properties in general, or necessarily equivalent propositions in particular, can differ in naturalness. But we might want to say that the structured properties *being a triangle* and *being a triangle and having either no sides or one side or two sides or three sides or* ... are necessarily coextensive but nonetheless differ in naturalness: the property *being a triangle* carves at the joints in a way that the property *being a triangle and having either no sides or one side or two sides or three sides or* ... does not. Similarly, in the case of propositions, we might want to say that

(9) That is a triangle.

and

(10) That is a triangle that has either no sides or one side or two sides or three sides or ....

express necessarily equivalent but distinct structured propositions that differ in naturalness: the proposition expressed by (9) carves at the joints in a way that

the proposition expressed by (10) does not. Or, to return to an example from the previous section, we might want to say that

(11) $2 + 2 = 4$.

and

(12) Either $2 + 2 = 0$, or $2 + 2 = 1$, or $2 + 2 = 2$, or ....

also express necessarily equivalent but distinct structured propositions that differ in naturalness.

In a similar vein, Theodore Sider (2009, 2011) argues that we should extend naturalness from the semantic values of predicates — properties — to the semantic values of expressions of other grammatical categories.[54] He says

> Structure ... is not to be restricted to any particular grammatical category. Just as Lewis and Armstrong ask which predicates get at the world's structure, we can also ask which function symbols, predicate modifiers, sentence operators, variable binders, and so on, get at the world's structure.[55]

(What goes for function symbols, predicate modifiers, sentence operators, and variable-binding expressions goes for sentences, too; the "and so on," I think, includes sentences.) Sider (2009: 404–409) is particularly concerned to extend the notion of naturalness to the semantic values of quantifier expressions: some quantifiers are more natural than others.[56] For example, the existential quantifier is more natural than a quantifier that has in its domain all and only objects that a left-handed Canadian has thought about while playing hockey on a Tuesday night in Ohio. To give himself the resources to say that some quantifiers are more natural than others, Sider (2009: 403) introduces a two-place sentential operator, *N*, that says, roughly, that the meaning of one sentence is more natural than the meaning of another sentence.[57] And, if we can say that the meaning of one sentence is more natural than the meaning of another sentence, then we can in effect say that one proposition is more natural than another.

According to ontological superpluralism, the several pluralisms are more privileged than the general pluralism. We now have a Lewis or Sider way of saying what that privilege is: it's naturalness.

(13) Ontological superpluralism is the view that the several pluralisms are **more natural than** the general pluralism.

This will need some revision, but it's a good place to start.

4.2. Schaffer and Hawthorne

Lewis's notion of naturalness has been modified in the work of Jonathan Schaffer (2004) and John Hawthorne (2005, 2006b, 2006c, 2006d, 2007). Schaffer (2004: 92–93) distinguishes two conceptions of sparse properties: according to *the scientific conception*, sparse properties are those properties that carve at the joints (as Lewis says in one of the passages quoted in the previous subsection, "Sharing of them makes for qualitative similarity, they carve at the joints, they are intrinsic, they are highly specific, the sets of their instances are *ipso facto* not entirely miscellaneous");[58] whereas, according to *the fundamental conception*, sparse properties are those properties whose distribution provides a minimal supervenience base (as Lewis also says in the same passage, "there are only just enough of them to characterize things completely and without redundancy").[59] Schaffer (2004: 94–100) usually calls the sparse properties that satisfy the scientific conception the *scientific* properties and the sparse properties that satisfy the fundamental conception the *fundamental* properties. But he occasionally also calls the sparse properties that satisfy the scientific conception the *natural* properties, and I propose to follow him in that here.[60]

This use of 'natural' is thus more restricted than Lewis's. This makes talking about Lewis's view a bit tricky. I suggest using 'natural or fundamental' where Lewis would use 'natural'.[61] With this new terminology in hand, we can go back and restate (13).

(13*) Ontological superpluralism is the view that the several pluralisms are **more natural or fundamental than** the general pluralism.

This is one way of characterizing ontological superpluralism; but, as we'll see, it is not the only way.

Schaffer (2004: 94–95) and Hawthorne (2005: 205–206) argue that natural properties need not be fundamental.[62] Perhaps some properties that are drawn from physics — for example, the properties *being a strange quark* and *being a positron* — are both fundamental and natural.[63] But some properties that are drawn from chemistry, biology, and psychology — for example, the properties *being an ytterbium atom*, *being a polar bear*, and *fearing strange quarks* — might be natural even if they're not fundamental. On this view, two properties that are equally far from the microphysical need not be equally natural. For example, the properties *fearing strange quarks* and *fearing strange quarks or desiring ytterbium or believing in polar bears* might be equally far from the microphysical — the chains of definitions connecting them to microphysical properties would both be very, very long — even if the property *fearing strange quarks* is more natural. As Hawthorne (2007: 434) puts it, "We should … be willing to give relative naturalness a life of its own, one that allows properties that are of equal definitional length from the microphysical ground floor to be of radically unequal naturalness."

Perhaps relative naturalness can be extended from properties to propositions. For example, Schaffer (2004: 99) speaks of "a robust distinction to be drawn between the relatively sparse contingent truths at each level, and the uncountable horde of abundant contingent truths." If so, then we now have a Schaffer or Hawthorne way of saying what privilege is: it's naturalness as opposed to fundamentality.

(14) Ontological superpluralism is the view that the several pluralisms are **more natural than — as opposed to more fundamental than —** the general pluralism.

This is another way of characterizing ontological superpluralism; but we're not done quite yet.

4.3. Fine and Rosen

Schaffer and Hawthorne argue that we should not equate (decreasing) *naturalness* with (increasing) distance from the microphysical. This leaves open the possibility that we should equate (decreasing) *fundamentality* with (increasing) distance from the microphysical. But we shouldn't do that either.[64] Two propositions that are drawn from the same level and hence are equally far from the microphysical need not be equally fundamental. Consider, for example, the propositions expressed by the following sentences.

(15) I fear strange quarks.

(16) I fear strange quarks or desire ytterbium or believe in polar bears.

Suppose that these propositions are both true. According to Kit Fine (2001: 14–16) and Gideon Rosen (2010), these propositions might stand in an asymmetric metaphysical dependence relation: the proposition expressed by (16) might depend on the proposition expressed by (15) in a way that the proposition expressed by (15) does not depend on the proposition expressed by (16).[65] We might put this point by saying that the proposition expressed by (16) is true *in virtue of* the truth of the proposition expressed by (15) or that the truth of the proposition expressed by (15) *grounds* the truth of the proposition expressed by (16). Or, although Fine and Rosen might not put the point this way, we could also say that the proposition expressed by (15) is more fundamental than the proposition expressed by (16).[66] We might think that, in general, a disjunction is less fundamental than its disjuncts.

What goes for psychology goes for metaphysics and meta-metaphysics, too: two metaphysical claims need not be equally fundamental, nor do two meta-metaphysical claims. So we have a Fine or Rosen way of saying what privilege is: it's fundamentality rather than naturalness.

(17) Ontological superpluralism is the view that the several pluralisms are **more fundamental than — as opposed to more natural than —** the general pluralism.

There might be other ways of characterizing ontological superpluralism; but three is more than enough.

5. The view again and another quick argument

5.1. The view again

Ontological superpluralism is the view that the several pluralisms are more privileged than the general pluralism (where privilege might be naturalness, or fundamentality, or their disjunction). For ontological superpluralism to make sense, privilege definitely has to be propositional and probably has to be relative. Privilege has to be propositional rather than merely sub-propositional; otherwise, it would make no sense to apply privilege to the general pluralism or the several pluralisms. And privilege probably has to be relative rather than absolute; otherwise, it might be difficult to say that the several pluralisms are *more* privileged than the general pluralism.[67]

If you don't like this notion of privilege, or you think that privilege doesn't apply to propositions (perhaps in part because you think that propositions are not properties), or you think that it is absolute rather than relative, then you're not going to like the characterizations of ontological superpluralism. But then, as we'll see in the next sections, you're not going to like the characterizations of ontological pluralism offered in the literature either: they, too, rely on a notion of privilege that is relative rather than absolute; and most of them rely on a notion of privilege that can be applied, not just to properties, but also to quantifiers. All that is needed, in addition, to characterize ontological superpluralism is either the assimilation of propositions to properties or the extension of relative privilege from properties and quantifiers to propositions.

5.2. A quick argument for the view

In addition to the characterization of ontological pluralism as the claim that there are ways of being, there are two further kinds of characterizations in the literature.[68] The first characterization, which comes from McDaniel and Turner, has to do with quantifier expressions.

> one believes in ways of being just in case one believes that there is more than one fundamental quantifier expression.[69]

> ontological pluralism is the doctrine that there are possible semantically primitive restricted quantifiers that are *at least as* natural as the unrestricted quantifier.[70]

> I formulate the doctrine that there are ways of being as the doctrine that there are possible languages with semantically primitive restricted quantifiers that are at least as natural as the existential quantifier in ordinary English.[71]

> To put ontological pluralism in a nutshell: *the true fundamental theory uses multiple existential quantifiers*.[72]

> the ontological pluralist … thinks that the language which uses multiple quantifiers is *metaphysically better* than the language which uses just one.[73]

Heidegger is an ontological pluralist in something like this sense. On Heidegger's view, for each ontological category there is a semantically primitive restricted quantifier expression whose domain is that ontological category. So there is the *Existenz* quantifier expression, the readiness-to-hand quantifier expression, the presence-at-hand quantifier expression, the life quantifier expression, and the subsistence quantifier expression. These quantifier expressions are *restricted*: each of them has in its domain the things in only some of the ontological categories. For example, you are not in the domain of the subsistence quantifier expression, and the number 17 is not in the domain of the *Existenz* quantifier expression. And these quantifier expressions are *semantically primitive*: they are not defined up from an unrestricted quantifier expression and a restricting predicate. So, for example, the subsistence quantifier expression is not defined up from 'there is (unrestrictedly)' and 'is an abstract object'. On Heidegger's view, there is an unrestricted quantifier expression, but it's not semantically primitive. Rather, it's defined up from the other quantifier expressions.[74]

The second characterization, which comes from McDaniel, has to do with properties.

> One way to believe in ways of being is to hold that existence is *not* a natural property. Instead, there are various natural … properties for which existence is (something like) the mere disjunction.[75]

Except for the difference between existence and being, Meinong might be an ontological pluralist in something like this sense. On his view, existence is an elite property, as is subsistence. But perhaps being is not. Rather, perhaps being is something like the mere disjunction of existence and subsistence.

One might think that ontological superpluralism is obviously true. The second kind of characterization doesn't fit Heidegger's view, since he doesn't think that ways of being are beings. So they're not properties and hence they're definitely not maximally privileged — elite — properties.[76] And the first kind of characterization doesn't fit Meinong's view, since he doesn't think that quantification has anything to do with ontology. After all, he freely quantifies, not only over objects that exist and objects that subsist, but also over objects that lack being altogether: for example, the golden mountain and the round square. So he could have just one semantically primitive quantifier expression.

We could come up with a single characterization that fits both Heidegger's and Meinong's view — someone is an ontological pluralist if and only if *either* they believe something about quantifiers *or* they believe something about properties — but that characterization would be one on which ontological pluralism is more disjunctive, and hence less privileged, than either of their views. So ontological superpluralism is true.

One might divorce Meinongian ontological pluralism from Meinong's views about quantification.[77] Perhaps it is no part of Meinongian ontological pluralism that one can quantify over objects that lack being. In that case, one might think that the first kind of characterization — the one that has to do with quantifier expressions — would suffice after all. But, although that characterization would correctly count a Meinongian ontological pluralist who rejects Meinong's views about quantification as an ontological pluralist, it would incorrectly fail to count a Meinongian ontological pluralist who accepts Meinong's views about quantification — notably, Meinong — as an ontological pluralist.

But perhaps we shouldn't take Meinong's views about quantification seriously. Perhaps they're incoherent.[78] Or perhaps Heidegger and Meinong are outliers that don't need to be taken seriously for other reasons. In that case, the existing characterizations might suffice. As it happens, I think that Meinong's views about quantification are coherent, and I don't think that Heidegger and Meinong should be dismissed. But, still, it might be nice to have an argument for ontological superpluralism that doesn't rely on the coherence of Meinong's views about quantification or, indeed, on Meinong's and Heidegger's views at all.

So, in the rest of the paper, I focus on Frege and Russell. I argue that the existing characterizations of ontological pluralism don't fit both Fregean ontological pluralism and Russellian ontological pluralism, and minor amendments to those characterizations won't fix the problem. In fact, the kinds of modifications that are required to come up with a characterization that fits both Fregean ontological pluralism and Russellian ontological pluralism result in a characterization on which ontological pluralism is more disjunctive, and hence less privileged, than either of their views.

6. They do it with quantifiers

6.1. Existential and universal, singular and plural

Let's start with McDaniel's (2009: 314) first substantive characterization of ontological pluralism: "there is more than one fundamental quantifier expression." A fundamental quantifier expression — or, more neutrally, an *elite* quantifier expression — is one whose meaning is elite.[79]

(18) Someone is an ontological pluralist if and only if they believe that there is more than one **elite quantifier expression**.

But (18) is too broad. Even if you're not an ontological pluralist, you might believe that there are distinct elite existential and universal quantifier expressions (like 'there is' and 'for all').[80]

Turner's (2010: 9) characterization of ontological pluralism — "*the true fundamental theory uses multiple existential quantifiers*" — fares better, since it appeals to existential quantifier expressions in particular.[81] A fundamental theory is a theory that is stated in a language whose simple expressions (and, so, presumably its quantifier expressions) are all elite.[82]

(19) Someone is an ontological pluralist if and only if they believe that there is more than one **elite existential quantifier expression**.

According to (19), someone who believes that there are distinct elite existential and universal quantifier expressions need not be an ontological pluralist, since they need not believe that there is more than one elite existential quantifier expression. But (19) is still too broad. Even if you're not an ontological pluralist, you might believe that there are multiple elite existential quantifier expressions: for example, you might believe that, in addition to an elite singular existential quantifier expression (like 'there is an x such that'), there is an elite plural existential quantifier expression (like 'there are some xx such that').[83]

We could try restricting (19) to singular quantifier expressions in particular.

(20) Someone is an ontological pluralist if and only if they believe that there is more than one **elite singular existential quantifier expression**.

But (20) is too narrow. Why privilege the singular over the plural? An ontological pluralist might believe that no singular existential quantifier expression is elite, but several plural existential quantifier expressions are. We could add a clause to cover this case.

(21) Someone is an ontological pluralist if and only if they believe either (*i*) that there is more than one **elite singular existential quantifier expression** or (*ii*) that there is more than one **elite plural existential quantifier expression**.

But why privilege the singular and the plural over the superplural? A superplural quantifier expression (something like 'there are some pluralities such that') is said to stand to a plural quantifier expression in much the same way as a plural quantifier expression is said to stand to a singular quantifier expression.[84] An ontological pluralist might believe that no singular or plural existential quantifier expression is elite, but several superplural quantifier expressions are. But why stop there? There might be super-superplural quantifier expressions (something like 'there are some superpluralities such that'), and super-super-superplural quantifier expressions (something like 'there are some super-superpluralities such

that'), and so on. One could, I suppose, keep adding disjuncts. But the resulting characterization of ontological pluralism would be one on which the view is likely to be, well, highly disjunctive and hence not particularly privileged.[85]

McDaniel and Turner suggest that there is a reason that someone who believes that there are elite existential and universal, or singular and plural, quantifier expressions need not be an ontological pluralist: the quantifier expressions that they think are elite all have the same domain. McDaniel (2010b: 713) says, "the *plural and singular quantifiers range over exactly the same things*."[86] And Turner (2010: 10) says, "those quantifiers are used to talk about the same things … in different (general versus particular, or plural versus singular) ways."[87]

McDaniel's and Turner's remarks suggest the following reformulation.

(22) Someone is an ontological pluralist if and only if they believe that there are at least two **elite quantifier expressions whose domains are distinct**.

(22) handles all of the problems we've seen so far.[88] Even if you believe that there are elite existential and universal, or singular and plural, quantifier expressions, you needn't be an ontological pluralist, since you might believe that those quantifier expressionsall have the same domain.

6.2. Frege and Russell

According to (22), Frege might not be an ontological pluralist. On Frege's 1891–1893 view, 'there is' picks out different concepts in different linguistic contexts; but there needn't be different quantifier expressions for each of those concepts. Still, we could shift from talking about quantifier expressions to talking about their meanings and so talk about multiple *quantifiers* rather than multiple *quantifier expressions*.

(23) Someone is an ontological pluralist if and only if they believe that are at least two **elite quantifiers whose domains are distinct**.

According to (23), Frege is an ontological pluralist. For, on Frege's view, 'there is' picks out different quantifiers — different concepts — in different linguistic contexts; those quantifiers are elite; and their domains are distinct. For example, the concept *being an object* is in the domain of the second-level quantifier picked out by 'there are' in 'There are objects', but it is not in the domain of the third-level quantifier picked out by 'there are' in 'There are first-level concepts'.

And, according to (23), Russell might be an ontological pluralist as well. For, on Russell's 1903 view, perhaps 'there is' and 'there exists' pick out different quantifiers — a subsistential quantifier and an existential quantifier, if you will — that are both elite; and their domains are distinct. For example, numbers,

properties, and propositions are in the domain of the subsistential quantifier, but they are not in the domain of the existential quantifier.

Although the actual historical Russell might be an ontological pluralist according to (23), perhaps not every Russellian ontological pluralist would. In particular, Russell could have remained a Russellian ontological pluralist without being an ontological pluralist according to (23). As it happens, Russell believes that the subsistential and existential quantifiers have distinct domains, because some objects — chief among them numbers, properties, and propositions — have being but don't exist. But this need not be built into Russellian ontological pluralism. Russell might cease to believe that some objects have being but don't exist. He might shrink his ontology: he might cease to believe in numbers, properties, and propositions. Or he might expand his world of space-time: he might come to believe that numbers, properties, and propositions are all located in space-time and hence exist. (Perhaps numbers, properties, and propositions are built into space-time itself.[89]) If that were to happen, he might become an ontological monist: he might believe that everything exists, and there is no other kind of being. (Or, less plausibly, he might believe that everything has being but there is no such thing as existence.) But, it seems, he might remain an ontological pluralist. By shrinking his ontology or expanding his world of space-time, he needn't deprive polar bears, mountains, and armchairs of either of the two kinds of being that they already enjoy.

On the resulting view, there are two kinds of being, and everything has both. If one were so inclined, one might speak of "the fundamental duality of being." This seems like a view that Russell might have held. The point isn't that, if Russell were to shrink his ontology or expand his world of space-time, then it's *obvious* that he would still be an ontological pluralist. Rather, the point is that, if Russell were to shrink his ontology or expand his world of space-time, then it's *not obvious* that he would cease to be an ontological pluralist and become an ontological monist instead. (23) rules out the possibility of Russell's remaining an ontological pluralist. If you think that's still a possibility, then you have reason to doubt (23).[90]

Is there any reason, other than stubbornness, why Russell might have remained an ontological pluralist after shrinking his ontology or expanding his world of space-time?[91] McDaniel and Turner allow that some things could have more than one kind of being. McDaniel (2009: 313) considers the possibility that "the domains of the fundamental quantifiers overlap," as a result of which "there is an x such that x exists in more than one way."[92] Turner (2010: 30 n. 55) says, "it is no part of ontological pluralism writ large that things not have multiple kinds of being"; elsewhere, he adds, "I doubt that there is anything inherent in the idea that there are multiple modes of being which forbids these modes to overlap."[93] The limit case would be two elite quantifiers with the same domain, two kinds of being that are coextensive. Here's a quick argument for this possibility. McDaniel and Turner say that it's possible to have overlapping but not coextensive kinds of being. If so, then it should be possible to have

non-empty kinds of being K and K^* such that every object that has K has K^* — for example, the object o has K and K^* — and there is only one object, o^*, that has K^* but that doesn't have K. o has both K and K^*. Removing o^* from one's ontology or extending K to o^* shouldn't prevent o from having K and K^*. Otherwise, the number of kinds of being that o has would be seriously extrinsic. (The number of kinds of being that o has, one might think, is intrinsic; it is solely a matter of o and its being.) And, if we remove o^* from our ontology or extend K to o^*, but K and K^* remain distinct, then K and K^* would be distinct but coextensive kinds of being.[94]

Turner (2010: 6–7) uses the metaphor of pegboards: an ontological pluralist is someone who believes that there are multiple pegboards. Sometimes Turner (2010: 10) says that an ontological pluralist must believe in different quantifiers (or quantifier expressions) that range over different pegs: it is not enough to have different quantifiers if they "are used to talk about the same things — the same pegs, as it were — in different … ways." And sometimes he says that an ontological pluralist must believe in different quantifiers (or quantifier expressions) that range over different pegboards: an ontological pluralist must believe in different quantifiers that "cannot each be understood as ranging over the same pegboard in different ways but must instead be understood as ranging over different pegboards."[95] The difference between pegs and pegboards is crucial here. If Russell were to come to believe that everything exists and has being, he would not believe that there are two elite quantifiers that range over different *pegs*; both quantifiers would range over exactly the same pegs. But, if he were to come to believe that everything exists and has being, he might believe that there are two elite quantifiers that range over different *pegboards*; it's just that the two boards have exactly the same pegs. (This is admittedly a little bit fanciful, but there are different ways this might come about. Perhaps the two boards overlap but are not identical; perhaps one extends to the left, and the other extends to the right. If the pegs are all in the middle, then the pegboards might have exactly the same pegs. Or perhaps two pegboards of the same size are laid one on top of the other, and the pegs are long enough to be lodged in both of them.[96])

To revert to the metaphor of ontological boxes, Russellian ontological pluralism is the view that there are two ontological boxes; one is nested inside the other; and the second is a universal box. It's no part of Russellian ontological pluralism writ large that the second box contains something that the first box doesn't; perhaps both boxes are universal.[97] In that case, not every Russellian ontological pluralist would be an ontological pluralist according to (23).[98]

Things are no better for McDaniel's (2010a: 632, 2010b: 692) related characterizations of ontological pluralism: "there are possible semantically primitive restricted quantifiers that are *at least as* natural as the unrestricted quantifier" and "there are possible languages with semantically primitive restricted quantifiers that are at least as natural as the existential quantifier in ordinary English."[99]

(24) Someone is an ontological pluralist if and only if they believe that there could be multiple semantically primitive restricted quantifier expressions whose meanings are at least as privileged as the meaning of an unrestricted quantifier expression or of the existential quantifier expression in ordinary English.

(24) is too narrow. A Russellian ontological pluralist might believe that the existential and subsistential quantifiers are the only possible ones and that they're both necessarily unrestricted. In that case, they wouldn't believe that there could be *any* elite restricted quantifier expressions: that is, any quantifier expressions with elite restricted quantifiers as their meanings.

This is not to deny that there is a characterization of ontological pluralism that fits both Fregean ontological pluralism and Russellian ontological pluralism. After all, one could say that someone is an ontological pluralist if and only if they believe either that there are infinitely many existence concepts, one for each ontological category, or that there are exactly two kinds of being, one for the things that happen to be located in space-time and one for absolutely everything. But that characterization of ontological pluralism is one on which it is more disjunctive, and hence less privileged, than either Fregean ontological pluralism or Russellian ontological pluralism.

7. They do it with properties

Elsewhere, McDaniel (2010b: 690) offers an alternative characterization of ontological pluralism: "existence is *not* a natural property" and instead "there are various natural . . . properties for which existence is (something like) the mere disjunction."[100]

(25) Someone is an ontological pluralist if and only if they believe that (*i*) existence is not an elite property and (*ii*) existence is (something like) the mere disjunction of various elite properties

According to (25), Frege is not an ontological pluralist. Either 'existence' picks out, say, a second-level concept (one whose arguments are one-place first-level functions), in which case (*i*) is false, since "existence is an elite property" is true; or 'existence' is supposed to pick out a universal concept, in which case 'existence' doesn't pick out anything at all, in which case (*ii*) is not true, since any sentence of the form "existence is (something like) the mere disjunction of . . . " is not true.

And, according to (25), Russell isn't an ontological pluralist either. On his view, existence is an elite property and there aren't various elite properties that existence is something like the mere disjunction of. It's just that, on his view, being

is also an elite property. (So replacing 'existence' with 'being' in (25) wouldn't help, either.)

We could try replacing (25) with the following.

(26) Someone is an ontological pluralist if and only if they believe that there is more than one elite being-related property.

According to (26), Frege and Russell are both ontological pluralists. On Frege's view, there are infinitely many being-related properties (or concepts), which are picked out by 'there is' in different linguistic contexts. And each of them is elite. And, on Russell's view, there are two being-related properties — being and existence — and both of them are elite.

But suppose Russell came to reject ontological pluralism in favor of ontological monism. On his new view, there is only one kind of being — namely, being! — and everything has it. In addition, some things have the property *being located in space-time*. It's an elite property, but it's not being-related. According to (26), Russell would not be an ontological pluralist. This is the right result, but it turns on the distinction between properties that are being-related, like existence, and properties that are not, like *being located in space-time*.[101]

What is it for a property to be being-related? What do the infinitely many existence concepts posited by Fregean ontological pluralism, the existence posited by Russellian ontological pluralism, and the being posited by Russellian ontological pluralism all have in common with each other that they don't have in common with the property *being located in space-time*? Perhaps there is some characterization of what it is for a property to be being-related; perhaps there is something that all of these properties have in common with each other but that they don't have in common with the property *being located in space-time*. For example, perhaps being-related properties play some role R in various theories that the property *being located in space-time* doesn't.

But, even if we could specify what R is, there is no guarantee that R would be elite. Perhaps the different roles $R_1, \ldots, R_n, \ldots$ that being-related properties play in different theories are less disjunctive, and hence more privileged, than the one role, R, that they all play. In that case, the properties *being an existence concept of kind GF* and *being a being property or an existence property of kind BR*, which track the roles that being-related properties play in Frege's and Russell's theories, respectively, might be less disjunctive, and hence more privileged, than the property *being a being-related property*, which tracks the one role, R, that all being-related properties play. And, in that case, Fregean ontological pluralism, according to which there are infinitely many elite properties that have the property *being an existence concept of kind GF*, and Russellian ontological pluralism, according to which there are two elite properties that have the property *being a being property or an existence property of kind BR*, might be less disjunctive, and hence more privileged, than ontological pluralism, according to which there are multiple elite properties that have the property *being a being-related property*.

Again, this is not to deny that there is a characterization of ontological pluralism that fits both Fregean ontological pluralism and Russellian ontological pluralism. After all, one could endorse (26). But that leaves open the possibility that ontological pluralism, which is a view about the property *being a being-related property*, is more disjunctive than, and hence less privileged, than either Fregean ontological pluralism, which is a view about the property *being an existence concept of kind GF*, or Russellian ontological pluralism, which is a view about the property *being a being property or an existence property of kind BR*. If so, then ontological superpluralism is true.

To return to the metaphor of boxes one last time, the several pluralisms all posit multiple ontological boxes, and perhaps what distinguishes them from the view that *being located in space-time* is an elite property is that the boxes they posit are all *ontological*.[102] But that doesn't settle the truth of ontological superpluralism. The truth of ontological superpluralism depends on the relation between the property *being ontological* (which is picked out by 'ontological' in 'ontological boxes' and is shared by the boxes posited by Fregean ontological pluralism and Russellian ontological pluralism), on the one hand, and two further properties, on the other: *being Frege-ontological* (which is shared by all the ontological boxes posited by Fregean ontological pluralism but not by the ontological boxes posited by Russellian ontological pluralism) and *being Russell-ontological* (which is shared by all the ontological boxes posited by Russellian ontological pluralism but not by the ontological boxes posited by Fregean ontological pluralism). If the properties *being Frege-ontological* and *being Russell-ontological* are less disjunctive, and hence more privileged, than the property *being ontological*, then (for the same reasons as above) ontological superpluralism is true.

Notes

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1. The term 'ontological pluralism' comes from Turner 2010. I slide between 'ways' and 'kinds' throughout the paper.
2. See also Parfit 2011: 719–749. But even Turner isn't an ontological pluralist; rather, he counts himself among the "foes of pluralism." See Turner 2010: 6.

3. McDaniel (2009: 290) attributes ontological pluralism to Russell, Meinong, and Heidegger (and also to Aristotle, Aquinas, Descartes, Husserl, and Moore). McDaniel (2010b: 689–691) argues that ontological pluralism is consistent with Frege's (1892b: 199) view that existence is a higher-level concept, but he doesn't explicitly attribute ontological pluralism to Frege. Turner (2010: 5, 12) lists Frege, Russell, and Heidegger (and also Aristotle, Aquinas, Descartes, and Moore) among those suspected of holding the view. (Turner (forthcoming: p. 10) also mentions Descartes as a suspect.) It was Paul Hovda who first suggested to me, after McDaniel's presentation of McDaniel 2009 at the 2007 Inland Northwest Philosophy Conference, that Frege is an ontological pluralist.
4. Ontological superpluralism is named after superplural expressions, which are said to stand to plural expressions as plural expressions stand to singular expressions; by rough analogy, ontological superpluralism is meant to stand to ontological pluralism as ontological pluralism stands to ontological monism. (On superplural expressions, see, for example, Uzquiano 2004, Rayo 2006, Linnebo and Nicolas 2008, and Florio 2010. The term 'ontological monism' comes from Turner forthcoming: p. 1.) 'Ontological superpluralism' is misleading, however, because the move from singulars to plurals and thence to superplurals is often said to be ontologically innocent (see, for example, Boolos 1984); whereas the move from ontological monism to ontological pluralism and thence to ontological superpluralism is supposed to be anything but.
5. In a section entitled "Ways of Believing in Ways of Being," McDaniel (2009: 312–314) considers several ways of being an ontological pluralist, but he suggests that one characterization fits all of them. (He says, "one believes in ways of being just in case one believes that there is more than one fundamental quantifier expression. This is what … all the views elucidated here have in common." See McDaniel 2009: 314.) By itself, this does not count as ontological superpluralism. See Sections 3 and 6.
6. In stating Frege's views, I will be helping myself to a single unrestricted quantifier, expressed by 'there is', which has in its domain entities from every ontological category. But, on Frege's view, there is no such quantifier. (See below in the text.) So I will be attributing to Frege views that, strictly speaking, he does not accept — including when I say that, on Frege's view, *there is* no such quantifier. Like Frege (1892b: 204), "all that I wish or am able to do here is to give hints"; I am "relying on a reader who would be ready to meet me halfway — who does not begrudge a pinch of salt." Thanks to Brad Rettler for raising this difficulty.
7. See also Frege 1893: §1, 5–6; §2, 7.
8. See also Frege 1891: 6; 1893: §21, 37.
9. On numbers, see Frege 1891: 17; 1893: §2, 7. On truth-values, see Frege 1893: §2, 7. On spatiotemporal locations, see Frege 1892a: 42. On people, see Frege 1891: 17. On names, see Frege 1892a: 26.
10. On quaddition, see Kripke 1982. I am here ignoring the question of what successor, addition, and quaddition map objects that are not numbers to. They must map such objects to values; but which values they map such objects to is, Frege (1891: 19–20) says, "a matter of comparative indifference."
11. For reasons to be discussed below in the text, Kripkification maps only *two-place first-level* functions to themselves.

12. See Frege 1891: 15, 27–28; 1893: §3, 8.
13. See also Frege 1893: §2, 7.
14. See also Frege 1891: 28. In Frege 1964: 77, '*grundverschiedene*' is translated as 'basically different' rather than as 'fundamentally different'. I have altered the translation here, since '*grundverschieden*' and its cognates are translated as 'fundamentally different' elsewhere.
15. I have removed italics from the translation in Frege 1964: 73, since they do not occur in the original. On the fundamental difference between one-place and two-place functions, see also the passage from Frege 1891: 29 quoted two paragraphs down in the text.
16. Frege 1891: 31. See also Frege 1892b: 201 on the special case in which the functions are concepts. In the first passage quoted above in the text Frege is distinguishing only between first- and higher-level functions; but elsewhere he distinguishes between second- and third-level functions. See Frege 1893: §23, 41. (He doesn't say there, though, that the distinction is fundamental.) On the distinction between first- and second-level functions, see also Frege 1893: §21, 37.
17. Frege (1893: §23, 41) calls these "second-level functions of one argument of type 2." (I have removed italics from the translation in Frege 1964: 78, since they do not occur in the original.) Arguments of type 1 are objects. See Frege 1893: §23, 40.
18. Frege (1893: §23, 41) calls these "second-level functions of one argument of type 3." (Again, I have removed italics from the translation in Frege 1964: 78, since they do not occur in the original.)
19. Frege 1891: 28–29; 1893: §22, 39.
20. See Frege 1893: §21, 37–38.
21. See Frege 1892b: 199.
22. For the record, *being a second-level concept whose arguments are one-place first-level functions* is a third-level concept whose arguments are one-place second-level functions (specifically, those whose arguments are one-place first-level functions); it maps some second-level concept whose arguments are one-place first-level functions (for example, the concept *being a first-level concept*) to the truth-value True. And the fourth-level concept that 'there are' picks out in (3) is one whose arguments are one-place third-level functions whose arguments are one-place second-level functions (specifically, those whose arguments in turn are one-place first-level functions); it maps the third-level concept *being a second-level concept whose arguments are one-place first-level functions* to the truth-value True. We might call that fourth-level concept 'the concept *being a third-level concept C such that there is a second-level concept C* (whose arguments are one-place first-level functions) such that C maps C* to the truth-value True*'.
23. See Frege 1893: §21, 36–37; §23, 40–41. The language that Frege employs is thus "multi-sorted" rather than "single-sorted." See Turner 2010: 11–13. (Elsewhere, Turner (forthcoming: p. 11) distinguishes "sorted" and "unsorted" languages.)
24. Frege 1892b: 200. See also Frege 1892–1895: 130.
25. See Frege 1892b: 201; 1893: §4, 8.
26. See Frege 1893: §4, 8.
27. See Frege 1892b: 201.

28. In the famous passage that opens "On Sense and Reference," Frege (1892a: 25–26) calls it "a relation between objects [*Gegenständen*]," "one in which each thing [*Ding*] stands to itself but to no other thing [*Ding*]."
29. Frege 1892–1895: 130–131. See also Frege 1894: 320 n. 2.
30. Italics in original. Between 1899 and 1907, Russell wrote several reviews of, and essays on, Meinong's work. In these reviews and essays, Russell seems to have held the following five views.

    (*i*) Being is subsistence.

    (See Russell 1904a: 208, 217; 1904b: 345; 1904c: 513; 1905a: 485, 485 n. 1; 1905b: 531 n. 1.)

    (*ii*) Being (or subsistence) is distinct from existence.

    (See Russell 1904a: 204, 210–211, 213, 217, 218; 1904b: 344, 345, 353; 1904c: 513, 523; 1905a: 485; 1905b: 531, 532, 537. See also Russell 1912: 99–100.)

    (*iii*) Everything has being (or subsistence).

    (See Russell 1904a: 204; 1904b: 345, 353; 1904c: 509. But elsewhere Russell (1904c: 513) says that being and existence are "alternatives." And he later says that being and existence are "opposed." See Russell 1912: 100.)

    (*iv*) Some things lack existence.

    (See Russell 1899: 255; 1904a: 204, 205, 207, 210, 212, 213, 217, 218; 1904b: 346; 1904c: 509, 513; 1905b: 530, 531, 537; 1906: 413; 1907: 436. See also Russell 1912: 99–100.)

    (*v*) Things exist if and only if they're located in space-time.

    (See Russell 1904a: 211. See also Russell 1912: 99–100.)
31. Perhaps Meinong doesn't think that there are two kinds of being. Perhaps the term 'being' doesn't pick out something that includes existence and subsistence; rather, perhaps 'being' is ambiguous between existence and subsistence, in something like the way that 'bank' is ambiguous between sides of rivers and financial institutions. Meinong (1904a: 84) says, "being, as we have seen, can sometimes be understood as existence, sometimes as subsistence." This might explain why he gives a geometrical example to illustrate the principle of independence: the principle that objects that lack being can have properties. This seems misguided, because geometrical figures have being; it's just that they have subsistence rather than existence. But perhaps 'the principle of independence' is ambiguous between two principles, one of which is that objects that lack existence can have properties; and Meinong is using geometrical figures to illustrate that principle. He uses the golden mountain and the round square to illustrate the other principle, the principle that objects that lack subsistence can have properties (although, if 'being' is indeed ambiguous in this way, he could have used existing objects to illustrate that second principle). See Meinong 1904a: 82. I ignore this highly speculative interpretation in the text.
32. See Meinong 1904a: 78–81.

33. See Meinong 1904a: 81–83. Curiously, Meinong thus seems to believe in ways of nonbeing, too: there is the way in which the golden mountain lacks being, a way that is opposed to existence; and there is the way in which the round square lacks being, a way that is opposed to subsistence. See Meinong 1904a: 84, where he speaks of a nonbeing "of the same type" opposing a kind of being.
34. McDaniel (2009: 314–315) says some things that suggest that he thinks that, according to Heidegger, nothing has more than one of the non-universal kinds of being. But, as Tor Sandqvist pointed out in conversation, it's not clear why a Heideggerian ontological pluralist couldn't allow that, when you use a material object as a tool, say, you are thereby bestowing a new kind of being on it (without depriving it of the non-universal kind of being it already had). I ignore this complication in the text.
35. In what follows, I switch between 'ontological pluralism' and 'the general pluralism'. I use the latter especially to contrast ontological pluralism with the several pluralisms.
36. As stated, ontological superpluralism has nothing to say about ontological pluralist views other than Frege's, Russell's, Meinong's, and Heidegger's. This is probably a defect. I am not sure how to fix it other than in a piecemeal way, by enumerating additional ontological pluralist views and redefining 'the several pluralisms'.
37. Is there more than one way of being an ontological superpluralist? Maybe. It would be nice if the madness stopped somewhere, but not everything nice is true.
38. Thanks to Hans Fink and Jonathan Schaffer for forcing me to think about how much unity is compatible with ontological superpluralism.
39. This subsection was a lot more muddled before I talked to Jonathan Schaffer.
40. McDaniel 2009: 291. McDaniel there also asks whether ontological pluralism is true by asking "do some objects *exist in different ways*?" (2009: 290; italics in original) and characterizes ontological pluralism as follows: "there are many ways to be" (2009: 291); "there are different ways in which things exist" (2009: 291); "different kinds of beings can enjoy different ways of being" (2009: 291); "things ... exist in different ways" (2009: 291); "there are different ways of being" (2009: 291); "there are ways of existence" (2009: 290 n.1); and "existing things can exist in different ways or enjoy different modes of being" (2009: 291 n. 6).
41. McDaniel 2010a: 628; italics in original.
42. McDaniel 2010b: 688; italics in original. McDaniel there also characterizes ontological pluralism as follows: "fundamentally different sorts of things *exist* in fundamentally different ways" (2010b: 688; italics in original); "things can exist in different ways" (2010b: 689); "things exist in fundamentally different ways" (2010b: 691); "things exist in different ways" (2010b: 692); and "there are different ways of existing" (2010b: 710).
43. Turner 2010: 5; italics in original.
44. Turner forthcoming: p. 1; italics in original. Turner there also characterizes ontological pluralism as follows: "there are different ways or modes of being" (forthcoming: p. 1); "there are different *ways to exist*" (forthcoming: p. 3; italics in original); there are "multiple ways of being, or kinds of existence"

(forthcoming: p. 3); and "there are different ways in which a thing might exist" (forthcoming: p. 13).

45. One could also characterize ontological pluralism as the negation of ontological monism. (I owe this suggestion to Chris Tillman.) But negation is tied to lack of naturalness in much the same way as disjunction is. (See, for example, Weatherson 2001: 379, Lewis 2009: 204.) So this characterization is one on which ontological pluralism — the general pluralism — is not particularly privileged and hence there is no reason to think that it is one on which the general pluralism is at least as privileged as the several pluralisms.
46. Lewis 1986: 60; italics in original. See also Lewis 1983: 13–14, 1984: 64–65. Lewis's distinction between natural and unnatural properties is probably a descendant, via Armstrong 1978: 38–41, of Quinton's (1957–1958) distinction between natural and arbitrary classes. (A natural class, for Quinton, is one that collects together the entities that instantiate a property that, for Lewis, is natural.)
47. Italics in original. See also Lewis 1983: 13–14, 48; 1984: 65–66.
48. Lewis 1983: 13, 1984: 65. On Lewis's view, properties are among the classes (or sets); see below in the text.
49. Thanks to David Sanson for drawing my attention to this passage.
50. Bricker (2006: 271) makes a similar distinction between classes of propositions that are perfectly natural and classes of propositions that are not. His distinction is absolute rather than relative; and, strictly speaking, it applies to classes of propositions rather than to propositions themselves. But it allows him to say, in effect, that general propositions are less natural than their instances (since the class of certain general propositions is not perfectly natural, whereas the class of certain atomic propositions is), which is very much in the spirit of the claim in the text. See Bricker 2006: 272. Thanks to Einar Duenger Bøhn for drawing my attention to Bricker's views here.
51. Lewis (2009: 204) also says that perfectly natural properties are "not at all disjunctive." See note 58.
52. See Lewis 1986: 56–57.
53. See Lewis 1986: 57.
54. To avoid commitment to properties and other semantic values, Sider focuses on the expressions themselves. I am happy to incur such a commitment here. (Talking about semantic values rather than the expressions that have them does make it difficult, if not impossible, to come up with a characterization of ontological pluralism that fits Heideggerian ontological pluralism. See McDaniel 2009, 2010b: 691. But this will turn out not to matter to the eventual argument for ontological superpluralism, since what I argue is that — setting Meinongian ontological pluralism and Heideggerian ontological pluralism aside — any characterization of ontological pluralism that fits both Fregean ontological pluralism and Russellian ontological pluralism is one on which ontological pluralism is less privileged than they are. See Sections 6 and 7.)
55. Sider 2011: 85.
56. See also Sider 2011: 85–104.
57. Sider (2011: 91–94) replaces the two-place sentential operator N with a one-place operator J that can take expressions from any grammatical category—

including sentences. Sider's new notion is still propositional (rather than merely sub-propositional); but it's no longer relative.

58. Elsewhere, Lewis (2009: 204) says of the perfectly natural properties, "They are not at all disjunctive, or determinable, or negative. They render their instances perfectly similar in some respect. They are intrinsic."
59. Elsewhere, Lewis (2009: 204, 205) says of the perfectly natural properties, "all other intrinsic properties supervene on them"; they "figure in a minimal supervenience basis on which all else supervenes."
60. See Schaffer 2004: 97. The contrastive use of 'natural' and 'fundamental' can also be found in Hawthorne 2007: 435, for example.
61. Elsewhere, Lewis (2009: 204–205) calls the perfectly natural properties 'fundamental'.
62. See also Hawthorne 2006a: viii-ix; 2006b: 107–109; 2006c: 142; 2006d: 234–237; 2007: 433–434, 435.
63. I am here assuming that the microphysical is the fundamental. Let's call this *micro-fundamentalism*. (Compare Hawthorne 2006a: viii-ix on *micro-naturalism*.) Schaffer (2010) rejects micro-fundamentalism; on his view, it is the whole cosmos itself that is fundamental. The assumption of micro-fundamentalism simplifies the discussion but doesn't alter the main point, since the rejection of micro-fundamentalism is orthogonal to the distinction between natural and fundamental properties discussed in the text; one could just as well say that properties that are of equal distance from the *cosmic* ground floor are of radically unequal naturalness.
64. Again, I am assuming micro-fundamentalism here. (See note 63.) And, again, the assumption simplifies the discussion but doesn't alter the main point, since the rejection of micro-fundamentalism is orthogonal to the Fine-Rosen view; one could just as well say that propositions that are about the same level (e.g. psychology) and hence are of equal distance from the *cosmic* ground floor are of unequal fundamentality. Thanks to David Sanson for helping me sort these issues out.
65. Rosen's notion applies primarily to facts, but he is happy to take them to be true propositions. See Rosen 2010: 114, 114 n. 3. Schaffer's (2009) notion of grounding is similar, but it applies primarily to objects rather than to facts or propositions. The notion of dependence or grounding at work here is much more fine-grained than the notion of supervenience that was originally at issue, at least for Lewis, in the fundamental conception of sparse properties. (Thanks to Tor Sandqvist for bringing this up.) For one thing, dependence is anti-symmetric, whereas supervenience is not. (See Rosen 2010: 115–117.) And it is dependence, rather than supervenience, that is probably needed to make sense of ontological superpluralism. For, if the general pluralism and the several pluralisms are not contingent (as they might well not be), then the general pluralism would trivially supervene on the several pluralisms and vice versa. But the need for dependence rather than supervenience here is okay, because supervenience was always just a proxy for dependence anyway.
66. This notion of fundamentality is relative rather than absolute: some propositions are more fundamental than others. But Fine and Rosen both take fundamentality to be absolute. Fine (2001: 25–26) distinguishes a relative notion of ground from an absolute notion of fundamentality, which he might identify

with reality. (But see Fine 2009: 174–175.) And Rosen (2010: 112) suggests that we should understand fundamentality as lack of groundedness, which is absolute. (But Rosen does sometimes talk, in an explicitly loose way, about one proposition or fact being more fundamental than another. See, for example, Rosen 2010: 116.)

67. Difficult, but not impossible. We can make crude comparisons of privilege with an absolute notion: something that is privileged is more privileged than something that is not privileged at all. (Bricker, for example, uses an absolute notion of naturalness to make such comparative claims. See note 50.) But ontological superpluralism might require more fine-grained comparisons. So I am happy to assume that it requires a relative notion of privilege.
68. This subsection was also a lot more muddled before I talked to Jonathan Schaffer.
69. McDaniel 2009: 314.
70. McDaniel 2010a: 632; italics in original.
71. McDaniel 2010b: 692.
72. Turner 2010: 9; italics in original.
73. Turner forthcoming: p. 4; italics in original. Turner there also characterizes ontological pluralism as follows: "a logically perspicuous description of reality will use multiple quantifiers which cannot be thought of as ranging over a single domain" (forthcoming: p. 1); and "the fundamental language uses multiple existential quantifiers" (forthcoming: p. 11).
74. One needn't believe in absolutely unrestricted quantification to be an ontological pluralist. See McDaniel 2009: 313. On absolutely unrestricted quantification, see Rayo and Uzquiano, eds. 2006.
75. McDaniel 2010b: 690; italics in original.
76. See McDaniel 2010b: 691.
77. Thanks to Mikkel Gerken and Jonathan Schaffer for forcing me to make this distinction.
78. See Lewis 1990.
79. See McDaniel 2009: 305–306.
80. Sider (2011: 217–219) raises the possibility that existential and universal quantifier expressions are equally elite. But he is not considering becoming an ontological pluralist. See also Turner 2010: 10.
81. Italics in original.
82. See Turner 2010: 9.
83. It is not clear who, if anyone, holds this view. For example, although McKay (2006) introduces singular and plural quantifier expressions separately, he later suggests reducing the singular to the plural. (See McKay 2006: 58–60, 120–121. Thanks to Tom McKay and Chris Tillman for clearing this up.) Still, one could imagine someone like McKay holding the view discussed in the text. (On plural quantification, see also Turner 2010: 10, McDaniel 2010b: 712–713.) And, in any case, (19) is too broad for another reason: even if you're not an ontological pluralist, you might believe that, in addition to an elite *first-order* existential quantifier expression, there is an elite *second-order* existential quantifier expression. See, for example, Shapiro 1991. (I owe this point to Nikolaj Pedersen.) Whether this is also a problem for (22) below in the text depends on whether the first- and second-order quantifier expressions have the

same domain. On some semantics, they do; on others, they don't. See Shapiro 1991: 70–76. In addition, (19) is too narrow. Why privilege the existential over the universal? An ontological pluralist might believe that no existential quantifier expression is elite, but several universal quantifier expressions are. We could add a disjunct to cover this case. Nothing particularly hangs on this (other than the multiplication of disjunctiveness), so I ignore it in the text.

84. On superplural quantifier expressions, see the works cited in note 4.
85. On a reason to multiply disjunctiveness even further, see note 83.
86. Italics in original.
87. See also the remark in Turner forthcoming: p. 1 quoted in n. 73.
88. But see note 83. A further difference between (22) and (21) is that someone who believes that there is a unique elite singular quantifier expression and a unique elite plural quantifier expression and that their domains are distinct counts as an ontological pluralist according to (22) but not according to (21). I'm not sure whether this counts against (21), or (22), or neither. Thanks to Tor Sandqvist for raising this possibility.
89. For this view about properties, see Armstrong 1989: 98–99.
90. Thanks to Mikkel Gerken for pressing me here.
91. Thanks to Mikkel Gerken for pressing me here, too.
92. McDaniel (2009: 313) calls the view "strange" and says, "I know of no historical figure who has clearly embraced such a view." But, I think, Russell clearly embraced such a view. Turner (forthcoming: p. 10) suggests that Descartes might have held such a view.
93. Turner forthcoming: p. 10. See also Turner forthcoming: p. 11.
94. And, if we think that which kinds of being there are doesn't depend on which beings there are, then, by a kind of subtraction argument, we get the possibility that there are distinct, coextensive, and empty kinds of being. This possibility was raised by Salvatore Florio.
95. Turner 2010: 10.
96. Or, more simply, perhaps the pegs are multiply located. Thanks to David Sanson for the suggestion.
97. But (switching the order of the boxes now), if one box contains the other, doesn't the first (outer) box contain something that the second (inner) box doesn't contain: namely, the second box? (Thanks to Brad Rettler for raising this question. Recall Russell's remark that existence itself has being but doesn't exist.) Merely saying that the second box contains itself won't help; for, if every box contains itself, then the first box still contains something that the second box doesn't: namely, the first box. We might construct co-located boxes that contain each other. Or we might construct boxes such that neither of them contains the other but that nonetheless contain the same things. (Perhaps they share a bottom and most of two sides; but the third side of the first box is *outside* the third side of the second box, whereas the fourth side of the first box is *inside* the fourth side of the second box.) Or we might agree with Frege (1897: 149) that "all metaphors go lame at some point."
98. What about the following?

    (23*) Someone is an ontological pluralist if and only if they believe that there are at least two elite quantifiers whose domains **are possibly distinct**.

But perhaps Russell could remain an ontological pluralist even if he accepted necessitarianism (according to which everything is necessary). And what about this?

(23**) Someone is an ontological pluralist if and only if they believe that there are at least two elite quantifiers whose domains **are not *apriori* identical**.

But perhaps Russell could remain an ontological pluralist even if he accepted necessitarianism and modal rationalism (according to which every necessary truth is *a priori*). Or what about this?

(23***) Someone is an ontological pluralist if and only if they believe that there are at least two elite quantifiers whose domains **are such that it is not analytic that they are identical**.

But, if Russell rejected the analytic–synthetic distinction, then we couldn't distinguish the case in which he remains an ontological pluralist from the case in which he rejects ontological pluralism.

99. Italics in original.
100. Italics in original.
101. McDaniel (2009: 307–308) considers elite properties that are coextensive with kinds of being. To make the relevant distinction — between ontological pluralists, who believe in kinds of being, and their ontological monist counterparts, who believe in elite properties that are not being-related but that are coextensive with kinds of being — he appeals to quantifier expressions whose meanings are elite. But, as we saw in Section 6, there are problems with quantifier-based characterizations of ontological pluralism.
102. Thanks to David Sanson for this suggestion.

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