FROM SEMANTIC RELATIVISM TO REALITY RELATIVISM

TOLGAHAN TOY

BOĞAZİÇİ UNIVERSITY

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FROM SEMANTIC RELATIVISM TO REALITY RELATIVISM

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Tolgahan Toy

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Thesis Abstract

Tolgahan Toy, "From Semantic Relativism to Reality Relativism"

This thesis is a defense of the view that reality is relative. First I start with semantic

relativism, then, I show that semantic relativism implies reality relativism. To argue for

semantic relativism, motivated by arguments by W.V. O. Quine and L. Wittgenstein, I

use two examples about personal identity. The first one is about abortion and the

second one is about brain transplantation cases. Next, I show that if meaning is relative

then whatever we call reality is also relative since our access to reality is through

language. After my arguments, I consider two objections. The first one is David Lewis'

objection. Lewis claims that due to the natural structure of the world words tend to

refer to some objects (or set of objects) as opposed to others. Hence, he argues against

the semantic relativity thesis. The second objection is that relativism is self-refuting

because it relativizes itself. I reply to both objections.

Tez Özeti

Tolgahan Toy, "Anlamsal Görecelilikten Gerçeğin Göreceliliğine"

Bu tez, gerçeğin göreceli olduğu fikrinin bir savunusudur. Savunuya, ilk olarak, anlamsal görecelilik tezi ile başlıyorum. Daha sonra, anlamsal göreceliliğin gerçeğin göreceliliğini ima ettiğini gösteriyorum. Anlamsal göreceliliğin savunusu için,W.V. O. Quine ve Ludwig Wittgenstein'ın belirli uslamlamalarının etkisi altında, kişisel kimilik tartışmalarıyla ilgili iki örnekten yararlanıyorum. Bunlardan ilki kürtaj, ikincisi beyin nakli ile ilgili. Bir sonraki bölümde, eğer anlam göreceli ise, gerçeğe erişimimiz dille olduğu için gerçeğin de göreceli olduğunu iddia ediyorum. Kendi iddiamı savunduktan sonra, iki olası itirazı değerlendiriyorum. Bunlardan ilki David Lewis'in itirazıdır. Lewis, dünyanın doğal yapısından dolayı bazı nesnelerin (nesne kümelerinin) gönderim yapılmaya daha fazla eğilimli olduğunu iddia eder. Dolayısıyla, anlamsal görecelilik tezine karşı çıkar. İkinci itiraz, göreceliliğin, kendisini de görecelileştireceği için, kendi kendini çürüten bir tez olduğu iddiasıdır. Her iki itirazı da cevaplandıracağım.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To my family,

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CHAPTER I

INTODUCTION

This thesis is a tiny part of a broader program called pragmatism. Here I will not

offer a historical introduction to or attempt a philosophical exegesis of

pragmatism. Instead, I will follow my own understanding of pragmatism as

follows: Philosophy in a broad sense is interested in the relation between reality

and us. Since the ancient Greeks, philosophers worked on a very broad concept

called "reality". This work concerns our access to reality and the nature of

reality. Philosophy comes up with some criteria about reality. Naturally, when

we have criteria we have the skeptic and the dogmatic. The skeptic refuses to

accept that the criteria are satisfied; the dogmatist is committed to the view that

the criteria are satisfied. Pragmatism, on the other hand, refuses such a search

for reality. Reality is not something to be searched. It is already here with us. So,

both skepticism and dogmatism are meaningless for the pragmatist.[3]

Of course there is a lot to say on pragmatism, both on its roots and its

advocates. However, as I said above, I am not intending this work to introduce

or discuss pragmatism. Rather, my project is an endeavor in this pragmatist

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[3] Christopher Hookway, "Pragmatism", *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, October 7, 2013,
http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/pragmatism.

spirit. William James presents us with a colorful picture of the world instead of

the classical black and white picture. He defines pragmatism as follows:

All these, you see, are *anti-intellectualist* tendencies. Against rationalism as a
pretension and a method pragmatism is fully armed and militant. But, at the
outset, at least, it stands for no particular results. It has no dogmas, and no
doctrines save its method. As the young Italian pragmatist Papini has well said,
it lies in the midst of our theories, like a corridor in a hotel. Innumerable
chambers open out of it. In one you may find a man writing an atheistic volume;
in the next some one on his knees praying for faith and strength; in a third a
chemist investigating a body's properties. In a fourth a system of idealistic
metaphysics is being excogitated; in a fifth the impossibility of metaphysics is
being shown. But they all own the corridor, and all must pass through it if they
want a practicable way of getting into or out of their respective rooms.
In James' picture all these different people equally exist in the same corridor.

Their beliefs' truth is all dependent on their goodness in practice. "If theological

ideas prove to have a value for concrete life, they will be true, for pragmatism,

in the sense of being good for so much. For how much more they are true, will

depend entirely on their relations to the other truths that also have to be

acknowledged." James follows Darwin but allows theological ideas to be true

when they are useful in practice. James actually goes one step further and claims

that not only different people or societies but also a certain individual can adopt

these beliefs in different times. "If I could restrict my notion of the Absolute to

its bare holiday-giving value, it wouldn't clash with my other truths."

Richard M. Gale says "that existence or reality is relative to a person at a

time is due to the fact that interests vary across persons and over time for a

single person."[4] James' pragmatism which stands against classical metaphysics, and correspondence theory motivates me to work on the notion of pluralistic worlds. But I will go further and try to argue for that everything from Gods to atoms is dependent on our cultures.

My thesis is this: The thing called "reality" is not independent of our culture, society, form of life, etc. To argue for it, I will first work on language from a methodologically naturalist perspective. I will try to show that what links our words to objects is not something beyond our culture. Ludwig Wittgenstein, Willard Van Orman Quine, Nelson Goodman, and Saul Kripke showed that what links our words to objects is our culture, society, etc. through giving examples about meaning where there is no problem in practice but only when trying to provide a meta-semantic justification of the meaning. For example, in practice we use "green", "rabbit", "+", "game" without having any problem. But these philosophers show that when it comes to justify their use we have problems. In the end they must appeal to internal stuff, like community, culture, society.[5][6][7][8] My example is different than their examples. The examples I

[4] Richard M. Gale, *The Philosophy of William James An Introduction*, (Cambridge University Press, 2005), pg: 136

[5] Nelson Goodman, *Fact Fiction Forecast*, (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1983), pg: 96,97;

[6] Saul Kripke, *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language,* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1982), pg: 96-113.

[7] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations,* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd., 1958), sections: 239-241.

[8] Quine, *Ontological Relativity*, (Columbia University Press, 1996), pg: 48.

give show that we have a problem not only at the level of providing meta-semantic justifications of meaning but also in practice. The first example is whether "person" applies to a fetus or not. The second example is what proper names refer to after brain transplantation surgery. I defend a relativistic position on the meaning of these words. To note, in both cases I am interested in the words but not in the concepts. When it comes to talk about concepts, one might not end up with relativism but instead might reject the concept altogether. For example, as we will see later, Derek Parfit rejects the concept of personhood because of the indeterminacy with that concept.[9][10] However, when it comes to talk about words to reject words does not make sense. It is simply meaningless to reject a word. Instead, indeterminacy at the words' level ends up with relativism.

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[9] Louis. P. Pojman ed., Introduction to Philosophy Classical and Contemporary Readings (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004)

[10] Derek Parfit, "Personal Identity", *Philosophical Review,* 80, January (1971)

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF RELATIVISM

CRITICISM OF CARTESIAN METHOD

<u>CARTESIAN METHOD</u>

Descartes' motivation for his philosophical writings is his search of certainty

that he finds in mathematics.

Above all I enjoyed mathematics, because of the certainty and self-evidence of
its reasonings, but I did not yet see its true use and, thinking that it was useful
only for the mechanical arts, I was astonished that on such firm and solid
foundations nothing more exalted had been built, while on the other hand I
compared the moral writings of the ancient pagans to the most proud and
magnificent palaces built on nothing but sand and mud.[11]

We should consider Descartes' philosophical project as a whole. As he says

above, he doesn't like "magnificent palaces built on nothing but sand and mud".

It is obvious that our arguments, principles, beliefs, customs all lack

foundations. However, whether we *need* any foundations is not obvious.

Descartes obviously thinks that we need such foundations. If I am right, we do

not need any foundation.

Especially when Descartes compares different cultures, his claim becomes

clearer. He is aware of that our customs, theories, and principles are all

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[11] Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1968), 31

constructed socially and culturally. However, for him this is something to me remedied. He must be free from any culture's constraint and should find the ultimate truth as he says below:

…while travelling having recognized that all those who hold opinions quite opposed to ours are not on that account barbarians or savages, but that many exercise as much reason as we do, or more; and having considered how a given man, with his given mind, being brought up from childhood among the French or Germans, becomes different from what he would be if he had always lived among the Chinese or among cannibals; and how, down to our very fashions in dress, what pleased us ten years ago and will perhaps please us again before another ten years are out, now seems to us extravagant and laughable. I was convinced that our beliefs are based much more on custom and example than on any certain knowledge, and, nevertheless that the assent of many voices is not a valid proof for truths which are rather difficult to discover, because they are much more likely to be found by one single man than by a whole people. Thus I could not choose anyone whose opinions it seemed to me I ought to prefer to those of others, and I found myself constrained, as it were, to undertake my own guidance.[12]

So we can summarize the Cartesian project in two parts.

I- Our beliefs are socially and culturally constructed which means they do

not have metaphysically firm foundations.

II- We should find the firm foundations through freeing ourselves from the

society and the culture. By following only reason, we can find out the

firm foundations.

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[12] Descartes, *Discourse*, 39

MIND BODY DUALISM AS AN OUTCOME OF THE CARTESIAN METHOD

The Cartesian project is not that different than today's many scientifized philosophical views. For example, behaviorism, functionalism, identity theory, neurophilosophy are all obeying these two principles. They assume that if a belief is culturally and socially conditioned then we should reject it and find the culture-transcendent truth of the matter.

Now, let's go on with the dualistic conclusion of the Cartesian project. Descartes, as we saw above, thinks that he will find out the ultimate truth which is independent of any culture or society. In later sections concerning existence he claims that he as a thinking being is distinct from the extended being he is. He comes to this conclusion through the method of doubt. "Doubt", here, is very important for his overall project. As we mentioned above he tries to free himself from everything that is socially or culturally constructed. He wants to get rid of his Frenchness, Europeanness as his other closer identities like his being educated in such and such schools. The only way to do this is to "doubt". He can't doubt that "he doubts." So, he can't doubt that there he is as a doubter. So he as a doubter and as an extended being is distinct from each other.[13]

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[13] Descartes, *Discourse*, 54

Descartes thinks that his conclusion is free from any culture. I will argue that it is certainly not. But, before, I will discuss his influence on contemporary philosophy of mind.

Peter Hacker, under the influence of Wittgenstein, makes this good connection between contemporary philosophy of mind and Cartesian tradition.[14][15] He claims that it is Cartesianism that constructs two distinct categories, one called mental and the other called physical. It is like a "virus"[16] that mutates and survives different forms. For example, our contemporary theories of mind materialize the Cartesian mind. These contemporary theories repudiate each other. Just as identity theory rejects behaviorism, functionalism rejects identity theorists' type identity; however "the fundamental philosophical (theoretical) picture of the "inner" and the "outer" is retained."[17] For example today neuroscientists are working on mental states empirically. They are trying to find out how we perceive objects around us. In other words, they are trying to explain our awareness of the objects we perceive. However, what they are doing is not different than the Cartesian philosophy in the sense that they are trying to find out a special cogitans. The only difference is that instead of the

[14] Gordon Baker and Peter Hacker, *Wittgenstein: Meaning and Mind, An Analytical Commentary on the Philosophical Investigations Volume 3*, (Malden: Basil Blackwell ltd., 2005), 15,16
[15] Peter Hacker, *Insight and Illusion*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 246
[16] Peter Hacker, *Human Nature The Categorical Framework, (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2007)*, 242
[17] Hacker, *An Analytical Commentary*, 27

Cartesian ghost, we now have the neurons. "Strikingly, neuroscience ascribes to the brain much the same range of properties that Cartesians ascribed to the mind. It thus operates with a conceptual scheme that is roughly isomorphic with – that is, has much the same form or structure as – Cartesian dualism, differing primarily with respect to the nature of the subject of psychological attributes. It replaces the immaterial Cartesian mind by the material brain. But it retains the fundamental logical structure of dualist psychology."[18]

To summarize, Cartesianism, through seeking the fundamental truth, concludes that there is a distinction between inner/outer; mental/physical; mind/body. Philosophers of mind, regardless of whether they think of the mind as a distinct substance or not, make the same mental/physical distinction. Contemporary theories of mind claim to explain *the mental* in terms of these familiar dichotomies.

<u>THE CULTURALNESS OF CARTESIANISM</u>

In this section I will show that the outcome of the Cartesian project, namely, the mental/physical distinction is nothing but cultural. I mean that I will show that classifying things into mental and physical is something cultural.

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[18] Peter Hacker, *Philosophical Foundations of Neuroscience*, (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 111

As I said above, Descartes' project of getting rid of all his cultural beliefs fails. We have summarized his project as his effort to free himself from all cultural, social customs and to find the objective; certain truth which is above all cultures, customs. To achieve this, he doubts everything to see what happens. Finally, he comes up with the existence of his mental being which is distinct from his physical being. Then, he builds (or, tries to build) everything on this conclusion. However, the structure that he built on his conclusion of mental existence as opposed to physical existence is not in the scope of my paper. So we will discuss whether such a mind/body distinction conclusion is what he aimed at or not. In other words, we will discuss whether the existence of "I" the mental as opposed to "I" the physical is culture-free or not.

Descartes is a great philosopher in the sense that he is aware that our theories, beliefs, truth are mostly cultural. He investigates all these cultural beliefs which *seem* objective. However, he is not aware that his investigation itself is cultural too. As we said above, he says, "Thus I could not choose anyone whose opinions it seemed to me I ought to prefer to those of others, and I found myself constrained, as it were, to undertake my own guidance" but his own guidance is not independent of the society and culture. Let's clarify how it is dependent on society and culture. When I say "I doubt that my body exists" my language already presupposes I/body distinction. Similarly if I can't say that "I

doubt that my mind exist", then it shows that the language I use already presupposes mind/I identity.

I mean that in these sentences I already make the mind/body distinction. I mean his use of "doubt" "I" "body" "mind" are all cultural. The world is not like a supermarket in which there are objects which are labeled as "mind"; "I"; "body"... etc. We use all these words in a lot of different contexts. Phrasal verbs, metaphorical usage, ordinary usage, and scientific usage of these words are highly complex. Through using these words in all these contexts we are highly affected by our society. If aliens come to visit our world, they most probably wouldn't understand what we mean by "mind", "I" "body".

So Descartes and contemporary Cartesians which call themselves anti-Cartesians should know that their use of these words is not free from our culture. To be more specific, let's illustrate the culturalness of mental/physical distinction. Let's start with the current mental/physical distinction.

Mental States	Physical States
Believing that p	Moving due to a physical cause
Knowing that p	Heart beat
Having pain	Blood circulation
To desire that p	

Cartesian philosophy supposes that this distinction is natural. It means that it is not a distinction we ascribe to a particular culture or society. Now, let's assume that a certain tribe has its own classification of actions as K and L as below.

K states	L states
Believing that P	Knowing that P
Having pain	To desire that P
Blood circulation	Moving due to a physical cause
Heart beat	

In this tribe, people do not find such a classification strange. They find it very familiar and natural. In this hypothetical situation, if they come to visit us they wouldn't understand the mental/physical distinction, as we can't really understand K/L distinction.

For the Cartesian the K/L distinction is not like the mental/physical distinction. The K/L distinction is cultural; whereas the mental/physical is free from cultural bias. However, we don't have any justification for this. We can't have any justification because any justification would fall into circularity, due to its use of a vocabulary that presupposes the distinction.

QUINE

The summary of this section is as follows. For Quine, the naturalistic method for philosophy is an undisputed matter; it is the starting point. It means that just like our work on electrons follows a naturalistic method, our work on our work on electrons must follow same method, too. Given this naturalism, we should take into consideration how people use language. The relation between the word and the object is not determinate for Quine. For example, what does "rabbit" refer to? The experience is not only comparable with rabbit but also with a rabbit part like its leg, or its temporal part like rabbit at 2 pm, 03/08/2014. So, whether "rabbit"[17] refers to a rabbit, or a rabbit stage or undetached rabbit parts is indeterminate. However, we will see that according to Quine, relative to a framework, "rabbit" refers to rabbits. He claims that we also have a problem with the words we used above ("rabbit stage" and "undetached rabbit part") in formulating the indeterminacy problem. So this, in theory, goes ad infinitum.

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[17] In "Ontological Relativity", after he introduced the problem with translating "gavagai", he turns back to home introduce same problem with "rabbit".

NATURALISTIC PHILOSOPHY

Quine considers philosophy as in the same boat with science.[18] So our approach

to meaning must be naturalistic. What I understand by naturalism is starting

from observations about how a term is used. For example, a physicist uses all

the relevant observations for his/her research. A social scientist observes a

society and derives conclusions from his/her observations. For Quine, a

philosopher should appeal to observations relevant to their subject. To

understand what meaning is, we have to make relevant observations. By

'observation' I do not mean just any observation. For example, observing the

street or observing the motion of a certain object is irrelevant when it comes to

understand meaning. Similarly, chemistry, physics, biology, sociology, and

psychology all have their own distinctive observations. To understand meaning

we should observe language. How can we observe language? We can observe

the behavior, sounds…etc. However, philosophers for two thousand years have

been working on more serious and theoretical issues instead of working on

practical issues. To understand the meaning of 'existence', 'truth', 'experience',

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[18] Quine, *Ontological Relativity*, 126-127

'mind' and many other fundamental items that philosophers have been working on; they are not interested in observing language. Of course, an exception to that has been the "ordinary language philosophers." But their influence is decreasing. Even today, many philosophers are following the classical tradition. For example, Sider claims that his metaphysics is "largely a priori."[19] However, Quine's naturalism wants not only science but also philosophy to appeal to observations.[20]

Let me elaborate this Quine-Sider comparison. First of all, I am aware that Sider is also a naturalist in one sense. He doesn't appeal to supernatural beings. He appeals to natural sciences. In this sense Sider is one of the most prominent naturalists. However, by naturalism what I mean is the methodology we follow when we do *our job.*

Naturalism as I understand it is about how we do our job, not about what we defend. For me, defending naturalism and being naturalist are quite different things, just like defending democracy and being a democrat are two different things. One might defend democracy in antidemocratic ways. In other words, what I mean by naturalism is not so-called ontological naturalism

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[19] Sider, *Four Dimensionalism*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), xiv.

[20] Quine, Ontological Relativity and other essays, pg: 26; "When a naturalistic philosopher addresses himself to the philosophy of mind, he is apt to talk of language"

according to which only physical objects exist. Instead, what is meant by naturalism is methodological naturalism. Quine' naturalism is not ontological naturalism[21] but methodological naturalism. Quine defines naturalism as "the recognition that it is within science itself, and not in some prior philosophy, that reality is to be identified and described."[22] So, Quine thinks that it is not up to some prior philosophy to give the picture of reality. It implies that even though the picture given by some prior philosophy defends science, it would still be anti-naturalist. However, the quotation above might seem too weak to ground such a claim. But later in the same book Quine provides us a better definition of naturalism: "abandonment of the goal of a first philosophy. It sees natural science as an inquiry into reality, fallible and corrigible but not answerable to any supra-scientific tribunal, and not in need of any justification beyond observation and the hypothetico-deductive method."[23]So, here, Quine's naturalism does not imply a metaphysical, armchair defense of science, instead it assimilates epistemology to "empirical psychology".[24] As "science itself tells us that our information about the world is limited to irritations of our surfaces", the naturalist philosopher (epistemologist) works on "the question how we

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[21] Gilbert Harman, Ernest LePore. Ed., *A Companion to W.V.O. Quine.* (Oxford, Wiley Blackwell) 114-147.
[22] Quine, *Theories and Things*, (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1982), pg: 21
[23] Quine, *Theories and Things*, pg: 72
[24] Quine, *Theories and Things*, pg: 72

human animals can have managed to arrive at science from such limited information."[25] Quine's naturalism does not rule out a scientific study of our evolution and the concept of reality. This is an important point because a metaphysical defense of physics and its posits might not allow us to study the relation between Homo sapiens and their sciences but methodological naturalism does allow us to do this. "Science tells us that our only source of information about the external world is through the impact of light rays and molecules upon our sensory surfaces. Stimulated in these ways, we somehow evolve an elaborate and useful science. How do we do this, and why does the resulting science work so well? These are genuine questions, no feigning of doubt is needed to appreciate them. They are scientific questions about a species of primates, and they are open to investigation in natural science, the very science whose acquisition is investigated."[26] There is a very important point in this quotation. What is most fundamental here is the scientific method; we can investigate or doubt science, but only by appeal to the scientific method.

On the other hand, Sider's philosophy is not compatible with the kind of naturalism I sketched above. As I said above, one might defend science but this doesn't mean that he is a methodological naturalist. Sider says "I am after the

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[25] Quine, *Theories and Things*, pg: 72
[26] Samuel D. Guttenplan, ed., *Mind and Language,* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), 258

truth about what there is, what the world is really like. So I do not want merely to describe anyone's conceptual scheme, not even if that scheme was thrust upon us by evolution. Nor am I trying to read off an ontology from the pages of the latest physics journals. Even the quickest scan through this book will make it clear that the reasons I provide for my conclusions are largely a priori. ... Let's not kid ourselves: metaphysics is highly speculative."[27]

So, Sider claims that he is working on reality through a priori reasoning. Besides, he accepts that he doesn't have any good answer when it is asked "why think that a priori reasoning about synthetic matters of fact is justified".[28] However, he claims that there is no problem with not providing an answer, because in mathematics or physics, justifications do not come first either. "Mathematics did not proceed foundations-first. Nor did physics. Nor has ethics, traditionally. It may well be that the epistemological foundations of speculative are particularly difficult to secure."[29] So, Sider commits himself to doing speculative metaphysics. However, as we have seen above, Quine refuses that.

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[27] Sider, *Four Dimensionalism*, xiv
[28] Sider, *Four Dimensionalism*, xiv
[29] Sider, Four Dimensionalism, xv

QUINE'S NEGATIVE THESIS

Observations alone do not give us determinate meaning. From one's behavior we cannot learn the determinate meanings of words. Suppose he/she points to an object while uttering "a". What does "a" mean? It means the object pointed to by the speaker. However, what is pointed out, exactly? What about the next example of "a"? Will we use "a" correctly then? Mere observation does not guarantee for us a determinate meaning. In his paper "Ontological Relativity" Quine gives several examples to show this indeterminacy.

The first example is about indeterminacy in translating the French phrase "ne….rien" which means "nothing" or "not anything". The problem is how to translate "rien" into English. Is it "nothing" or "anything"? The answer depends on how we translate "ne" into English. If we translate it as "not", then "rien" means "anything"; otherwise "rien" means "nothing". Which translation is absolutely correct? Indeterminate.

The second example is the "gavagai" example from *Word and Object*. A native speaker utters "gavagai" whenever a rabbit is on the scene. Through observation, "gavagai" could be translated as rabbit; undetached rabbit parts; or

a rabbit stage[30]. Observation is compatible with all three translations. Which translation is absolutely correct? Indeterminate.

Another example Quine gives is about color words. For example, "green" might be used as abstract singular term or concrete general term. One may point to a green object but attempt reference to the abstract object. Mere observation does not tell us which one is meant by "green". This case is, like the ones above, indeterminate.

<div align="center">QUINE'S POSITIVE THESIS</div>

Quine's solution for indeterminacy is relativity. Relative to a conceptual scheme we talk meaningfully. Only relative to a background language can we talk meaningfully. "It is meaningless to ask this absolutely; we can meaningfully ask it only relative to some background language."[31] Background language makes the reference determinate. For example, the link between "rabbit" and some rabbit as opposed to a rabbit stage is determined only relative to the background language.[32]

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[30] Rabbit stage means a rabbit in a certain time period like between t1 and t2. (or just at t1)
[31] Quine, *Ontological Relativity*, pg:48

SOME REMARKS ON SEMANTIC INDETERMINACY

Now, as a Quinean on the subject, I want to give my own argument for semantic

indeterminacy. Given naturalism, there are two steps in learning a word. The

first one is the phonetic part. The second one is the semantic part. To learn the

phonetic part we should first make an observation: The observation of how

those sounds are produced. Then we should imitate it. However, we can never

imitate the sounds perfectly. Even the speaker from whom we learned the word

cannot imitate himself/herself perfectly. This last point is highly analogous to a

problem about the semantic part of learning a word. To carry out the semantic

part we should do the same thing we do to carry out the phonetic part:

observation and imitation. For example, X's mother uttered the word "table"

and pointed out the table. The first thing X should do to learn the meaning of

"table" is to observe her mother. The second thing she should do is to imitate

her mother. However, it is not that easy, because X may not imitate her mother

perfectly for she may not point out exactly the same thing that her mother

points out when she says "table". This is a basic problem about how a child

learns a language. When she is asked next time to point out the table she may

point to a chair while uttering "table". It seems that observing her mother does

not guarantee that she learns the meaning of the word "table". For the "museum theorist" (mentalist; or maybe Platonist; or externalist) because of this problem, meaning is located somewhere other than in behavior. Something must fix the reference determinately. However, for a scientific philosopher like Quine, this problem does not entail that meaning is located somewhere other than in behavior. To turn back to the problem about the phonetic task, X can never imitate her mother's phonemes perfectly. Even her mother cannot imitate herself perfectly. However, this is not a real problem about the phonetic part. We don't have to imitate phonemes perfectly since exact phonemes are not relevant to learning a word. If her mother confirms her when X utters the word "table" with good pronunciation, then the phonetic part of the task is done. Similarly, in the semantic part, what object X's mother points out exactly is irrelevant to learning a word. If her mother approves her utterance "table" the next time, X has learned what the word "table" means.

1.1.1. Quine realism-pragmatism debate

There might be an objection to my interpretation of Quine. One might say that Quine's relativism is not about objects but only about language. Actually, the origin of the problem is about the seeming conflict between Quine's pragmatism and robust realism. On the one hand Quine avoids a metaphysical account of

the common sense or scientific realism and appeals to culture, or conceptual scheme.[33] On the other hand he claims that he is a robust realist about the objects that common sense and science present us.[34]

I will show that there is no contradiction between his pragmatism and his realism. Besides, his realism is not inconsistent with my interpretation of his work as a relativist. Quine claims that chairs, tables, electrons, atoms exist. I agree with this. I think that this paper or my supervisor Irem Kurtsal Steen exists. So I (or my interpretation of Quine) do not say that I am not sure of whether this paper lies in the category of those things that exist. My investigation is not about what is in reality and what is not in reality. Instead, I am working on a more fundamental subject. It is the nature of reality. It is more fundamental because when somebody discusses "what is in reality what is not in reality" they already committed to a certain notion of reality. However, I am investigating it at a meta level and coming up with the conclusion that reality itself is a relative notion even if all Homo Sapiens share the same notion. Quine's view is similar to this one as I will show.

As I said above, there seems to be an apparent contradiction between the claim that objects are posits and the claim of robust realism. There seems to be

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[33] Quine, *From the Logical Point of View*,, (Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1953), 44
[34] Quine, *Things and Theories*, 21

an apparent contradiction, because normally we choose one of the following

two options: a) There are objects fundamentally out there and science must be

consistent with their existence, and b) There are our scientific theories and the

existence of objects must be consistent with them. In the first one, objects are

independent of our theories but our theories depend on them. This is more like

correspondence theory. But in the second one, objects are dependent on the

theories. Which one does Quine follow? If atoms are just posits of physics they

seem less real or real in a very different sense. Normally, we would expect that

atoms are not just posits but discoveries of science. By saying that objects are

"cultural posits"[35] Quine makes many of us think that those objects are real in a

different sense, as though they are less real. Besides, not only the scientific

objects but also those ordinary, common sense, objects are posits. But he also

claims that these objects as posits are real.[36] So, is Quine a realist or a

pragmatist? The answer is this: Quine bridges pragmatism with realism through

introducing a non-orthodox account of reality. He is not part of the

metaphysical dispute between the realist and the anti-realist. The classical

dispute presupposes a distinction between reality and our talk (or beliefs) about

reality. In that dispute, it seems difficult to reconcile an object's being a posit

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[35] Quine, *Logical Point of View*, 44
[36] Quine, *Things and Theories*,1-2

and a discovery at the same time. However, for Quine being a posit is not a threat for realism. "To call a posit a posit is not to patronize it."[37] So, an object's being a posit doesn't make it less real or real in a different sense. "Everything to which we concede existence is a posit from the standpoint of a description of the theory-building process, and simultaneously real from the standpoint of the theory that is being built."[38] It means that Quine doesn't make a distinction between reality and our talk of reality. That is how he can avoid the never-ending metaphysical dispute between the realist and the anti-realist. In other words, the notion of reality is not thought of as something "beyond our ken".[39] This interpretation might seem far from Quine's robust realism. However, the following quotation affirms my interpretation. "Even the notion of a cat, let alone a class or number, is a human artifact, rooted in innate predisposition and cultural tradition. The very notion of object at all, concrete or abstract, is a human contribution, a feature of our inherited apparatus for organizing the amorphous welter of neural input."[40] Again, there is no problem with realism here because Quine has a different notion of reality. For him there is no reality from no one's standpoint.

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[37] Quine, *Word and Object*, (Massachussets, Harvard University Press, 1960), 22
[38] Quine, *Word and Object*, pg: 22
[39] Quine, "Naturalism; Living Within One's Means", *Dialectica,* 49, 2-4, (1995), 260
[40] Quine, "Structure and Nature", *The Journal of Philosophy,* 89, 1,(1992), 6

To conclude, one should not confuse Quine's realism with a metaphysical realism which he finds meaningless. "To ask what reality is *really* like, however, apart from human categories, is self-stultifying. It is like asking how long the Nile really is, apart from parochial matters of miles or meters. Positivists were right in branding such metaphysics as meaningless."[41] Therefore, we should investigate reality, but not apart from human categories.

<center>WITTGENSTEIN</center>

Here is a summary of the following section. Wittgenstein, in his later works, analyzes how to use language. He works on the so-called rules to use words. For example, what is the rule of using "+2"? To apply the rule correctly, starting from 1000, we should go, 1000-1002-1004. However, a rule needs to be interpreted. What justifies our interpreting the rule in this way? For Wittgenstein, it is the form of life, or shared culture that justifies our use of words. So, our actions do not follow external rules, but those so-called rules follow our actions.

In the opening part of *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein quotes from Augustine's *Confessions.* Wittgenstein's intention is not to do some work in history of philosophy. His intention is to criticize a popular view on language.

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[41] Quine, "Structure and Nature", 9

According to this view, words name objects and all of language is built on this word-object relation.[42] Wittgenstein criticizes this view and claims that the meaning of a word is its use.[43] He means that there is no absolute link between the word and the object, but only relative to a context is an object linked to a word. To argue for this, Wittgenstein first shows that there is no absolute link between the word and the object. Then he establishes the context - relative link between the word and the object.

"X" is a word. "X" refers to the object X. So, we can build many sentences with the word "X": "X is present between t1 and t3." "X is closer to Y than Z." "X is between a and b." "At time t2 X was in the location L." In all these sentences we have used the word "X" to refer to X. There might be incorrect sentences where we use "X". So, there is a rule to follow when we use "X". According to the rule, sentences with "X" can be tested for being correct or incorrect.

What is a rule? How can we follow a rule? When somebody makes a mistake about "X" by building an incorrect sentence with "X", we would tell him he is wrong. But what if he insists? Could we come up with a justification to

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[42] Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, section:1

[43] Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, section: 43

persuade him that he used "X" incorrectly? Wittgenstein appeals to an example from mathematics: to apply the rule of +2 starting from 1000. The answer is 1000; 1002; 1004; 1006…etc. However, a student might give an incorrect answer 1000; 1004; 1008; 1012.[44] We would say he is wrong. But what if he insists on his answer, what would we do? We would try to persuade him through giving an explanation of +2. However, what if he says that 1000; 1004; 1008; 1012 follows the explanation we give for +2. Are there such disagreements among mathematicians?

Similarly, what is the rule for using the word "red"? Just like "+2", "red" etc. However, how do we apply that definition to the objects? So, says Wittgenstein, we need consensus not only in the definition of words but also in the judgment how to apply it. However, the application of a rule is not given inside the language. Both in +2 and "red" the rule of application is not given. However, we apply words to objects within a "form of life". It is because of the form of life that mathematicians do not dispute the use of +2.[45]

Consensus on the application of a rule does not mean that we decide truth or falsity through consensus. The consensus is only on the form of life.[46]

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[44] Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, section: 185

[45] Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, section: 239-240

[46] Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, section: 241

For example, the height of a body is not due to consensus. However the measurement unit through which the body is measured is due to consensus.

Therefore, the link between a word and the object is due to our forms of life. There is no absolute link but there are links due to forms of life(s). That's why Wittgenstein says if a lion could talk, we wouldn't understand him. Since the lion has a different form of life we wouldn't understand what he means by his words.

CHAPTER III

FROM SEMANTIC RELATIVISM TO REALITY RELATIVISM

SEMANTIC RELATIVISM

According to semantic relativism, the link between reality and language is not absolute but relative to practical variables like culture, society, etc. What any given expression, for example A, refers to is not absolute but relative. In the framework F1, "A" refers to X; in the framework F2 "A" refers to Y[47]. For example, what "apple" refers to is relative to some variables. "Apple" might refer to apples or red apples only. When we teach a child what "apple" means, we point out an apple. Suppose that that apple is a red one. What did that child learn about "apple"? Does "apple" mean red objects, round objects, all fruits, red apples, any apple or that individual apple? How a child learns what "apple" means is the subject of child psychologists. Our subject is not restricted to children's language acquisition. An adult's learning language is also part of our inquiry. How can we teach an adult what "apple" means? We can translate it to his own language. Suppose that that adult is Turkish. So, our task is as easy as the following: We tell him that "apple" means what "elma" means in Turkish. But there might be some words that don't have exact translations in other languages. For example, "kızıl" in Turkish is translated as "red" to English even

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[47] Here, "A" is chosen represent any word; X and Y are any objects.

though "kızıl" and "red" don't have the same meaning. However, through giving an explanation, an English language speaker can learn what "kızıl" means.

However, these kinds of translations are already relative to some culture or some language. When we teach a word to an adult in this way we already take cultural relativity into account. I mean that when we translate one word to another word we take the rules of those languages into account. However, what about the natural ties between word and object? How can we establish the link between word and object? If we try to teach an adult a word through pointing out objects we would not be guaranteed to be successful at teaching. Samples do not guarantee for us to gather all apples under the set of apple. Similarly, samples of "kızıl" colored objects do not guarantee us to gather all those objects under that name.

If samples do not guarantee for us to decide what words refer to, then how do we know what "apple" or "red" refers to? But before giving an answer to this question, we should work on another question: Do we know what "apple" refers to? If somebody asks that question to me I would say certainly yes, I know what "apple" refers to. It means that I can show the objects that "apple" refers to. We can go to a market, and I can show what "apple" refers to and what "apple" doesn't refer to. However, for any word there are some cases

we are not sure about the reference. For example, suppose we went to an island that I've never even heard of and there is a rectangular black fruit that tastes exactly the same as apples. Does "apple" refer to that object? I am not sure whether "apple" would refer to that fruit or not. People, depending on their interests such as taste, smell, appearance, chemical structure, biological structure, or geographical status will decide whether that fruit is referred to by "apple" or not. For example, a gastronome would possibly say that "apple" refers to that object. An ordinary person might say "apple" doesn't refer to that object since he has not seen a rectangular apple yet. A biologist would decide it through working on its biological structure. How does a biologist decide whether that fruit is an apple or not? A biologist knows the biological structure of an apple, of the kind *malus domestica*. She knows the criteria of being an apple. How does she know those criteria? There is no holy book to check for the criteria for being an apple. Instead, she appeals to observations she made on *other* apples. But when she was making observations on those *other* apples, how did she know that they are apples? So the biologist's criteria come from her observation on those fruits that she used to call apples long before she was a biologist. So, a biologist decides whether that fruit is an apple or not through checking the knowledge she derived based on other apples.

The case about "apple" might seem far from the practical cases. My purpose in introducing this "apple" discussion is to just warm up. In the following sections I present two popular examples about disagreement over usage of words. Actually, to show such fundamental disagreement, for me, we don't need to give any examples other than just looking at the real never-ending disagreements in the world. Never-ending discussions over religion, politics, etc. must mean, at least something. However, for philosopher-minded people what is going on around does not mean so much. They overlook what is going on around since whatever is happening in the actual world is just something contingent. They are committed to the absolute truth. I mean that, in spite of ongoing disagreements, and cultural variation not only among our species but in animals in general, they hold firmly to their intuition against fundamental relativity. So, instead of simply pointing out the disagreements out there, I will analyze these two important examples of disagreement. However, I believe that these two examples are not enough to persuade many philosophers but I hope these two examples, at least, will help them to try to look at things from a different perspective. The first one of the examples is about the abortion debate; the second one is about brain transplantation surgery. After working on these two examples I will lay out my argument for semantic relativism in two different ways.

EXAMPLES FOR SEMANTIC INDETERMINACY

THE ABORTION DEBATE

We have here an actual example of a disagreement about what words refer to. The word "personhood" is one of them. There is a contemporary debate about abortion. Some people claim that abortion must be prohibited since it is murder. Their argument is that after a certain period of pregnancy a fetus has personhood and that therefore killing it is murder. On the other hand, others claim that at that period a fetus does not have personhood, and so killing it is not murder.

For Jane English, liberals claim that personhood starts at the birth while conservatives claim that personhood start at the conception.[48] As she says whether a fetus is a person or not does not solely determine the moral status of abortion. As she says, even if personhood starts at conception still abortion might be allowed. Similarly, even if personhood starts at birth, abortion might be wrong in some cases. Following English, I do not make any necessary relation between the definition of personhood and the abortion debate. My intention here is not to engage with the abortion debate. Instead, to illustrate semantic relativity with concrete popular examples, I will use the personhood debate which is a small part of abortion debate.

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[48] Jane English, "Abortion and the Concept of a Person", *Canadian Journal of Philosophy, 5, 2, (1975)*, 233

Who is right in the debate on the definition of personhood? To make us decide, each side gives an argument to support their claim. Furthermore, each side appeals to science to support their claims. For example, one side says according to such and such scientific facts the fetus at a certain stage of gestation has personhood while another side opposes it through appealing to other scientific facts. But what kind of science can decide it? For example, can biology decide it? Biology is the science of living beings. So, although personhood is not exactly a subject of biology, biology might help us to classify Homo Sapiens's life stages. If biology can do it, it will do it in the way of the apple example above. To decide whether a fruit is apple or not scientist appeals to his/her knowledge that he/she derived from her observations on *apples.* Similarly, if biologist will help us to decide whether a fetus has personhood or not, it will help us through appealing to his/her scientific knowledge that he/she derived from observations he/she made on the things that have personhood. Forget about the personhood case, even when it comes to talk about the biologist's main subject, "life", there is a role of the pre-existing use of "life". It means that when a biologist is asked to decide whether an object is a living being or not, he/she decided through appeal to his/her scientific knowledge about life which he/she derived from the observations made on *other* living beings. Can somebody ask how does a biologist knows that those *other* things were living

beings? Should a biologist check whether those *other* things are living beings or not to build scientific knowledge about living beings? But then a biologist would never be able start his research. When a biologist starts to make his/her research about his/her subject, what will be observed must already be established. For example, in order to make a research about "life" we should start to make observations about those things that people call "living beings". But if we say that our inquiry is independent of those people's non-scientific uses of words, then how will we start our research? What will we observe? The biologist does his job depending on the non-scientific uses of the word. Someone might object that sometimes scientists might revolt against these pre-existing uses. This might seem to support the idea that scientists do not depend on pre-existing uses but discover the true uses. For example, a scientist might start to make research on living beings through appealing to observations about some organisms including viruses. But, then, he/she might revolt against his/her pre-existing uses of "life" and claim that viruses are not living beings. However, such revolutions against the old uses of words are still tied to the old uses. Just as any outcome of his/her research on life is tied to the pre-existing use of "life", revolting against the pre-existing use as an outcome of research is also tied to the pre-existing use of "life" since all the subsequent revolutions also depend on the original observations. Anything that revolts against the past has ties to the

past. Any revolution is an outcome of the thing that it revolted against. Therefore, scientists might change their uses of concepts only through having ties to the old uses. Scientists might revolt against the pre-existing use of "living beings" but this would make sense only by appeal to the observations which were made through the old uses of "living beings". I can summarize this process in three stages. 1- Pre-existing uses help us to make observations. 2- Through observations we build science. 3- The scientific knowledge might force us to revolt against the pre-existing uses. Stage 3 is an outcome of Stage 1, not a refutation of it.

As I have stated in the first pages of this work, using global skepticism in order to reach certain truth is what pragmatism criticizes. I mean that, in any inquiry, in any attempt to find out truths we have concepts, we have prejudices, we have methods about which we do not have any doubts. For example, when a scientist works on giving the definition of personhood she is not starting her inquiry with no prejudice. Instead she is starting with prejudices. It is intuitive to say that when somebody seeks something she at least knows something that she is seeking.

What do we mean by "personhood"? There is a dispute about what "personhood" means, which means that we do not have consensus on what "personhood" means. We think that *we* do know what "personhood" means

until we encounter such borderline examples but after a while we realize that we don't know what "personhood" means since *we* do not have any consensus on what "personhood" means.

Could there be a solution for such a dispute? To provide a solution we should appeal to observation. For example, to solve whether smoking causes cancer, the scientist appeals to observations about smoking and cancer. However, in our case, what kind of observation should we appeal to? What kind of observation would help us to understand what "personhood" means? What kind of observation helps us to understand whether a fetus has personhood or not? Since the problem at the beginning is related with classifying the observations, we can't decide what kind of observation we need to solve what "personhood" *actually* means. For example, it wouldn't be plausible to say that I have observed the fetus and I saw something that is what "personhood" refers to. In order to make observation, first, you should know what to observe.

To understand it let's analyze some notable literature on the personhood debate within the abortion debate. To do this, I will introduce some philosophers' arguments on the definition of personhood.

Michael Tooley thinks that using physical appearance or genetic structure is not a good way to decide whether a fetus is a person or not. He holds that the motivation behind such ways of identifying a fetus as a person is anti-

abortionism.[49] Tooley doesn't eliminate the mistake with such anti-abortionist identifications of the fetus as a person. Neither does he agree with those who say that "the question of whether the fetus is a person is in principle unanswerable".[50] Instead, through considering the morality of the right to live, he proposes another definition of personhood to decide whether a fetus is a person or not. He claims that "to ascribe a right to an individual is to assert something about the prima facie obligations of other individuals to act, or to refrain from acting, in certain ways. However, the obligations in question are conditional ones, being dependent upon the existence of certain desires of the individual to whom the right is ascribed. Thus if an individual asks one to destroy something to which he has a right, one does not violate his right to that thing if one proceeds to destroy it."[51]

Since having the right to live requires a certain degree of self-consciousness; personhood requires self-consciousness. So anything that doesn't have self-consciousness cannot be considered a person.[52] Therefore, to understand whether the fetus is a person or not, mere analysis of physical appearance or genetic structure is not enough. Instead, to decide whether fetus is a person or not, we should see whether it has self-consciousness or not.

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[49] Michael Tooley, "Abortion and Infanticide", *Philosophy and Public Affairs,* 2, 1, (1972), 42
[50] Tooley, "Abortion and Infanticide", pg:43
[51] Tooley, "Abortion and Infanticide", pg: 44-45
[52] Tooley, "Abortion and Infanticide", pg: 49

Although, Tooley, himself, works on possible counterexamples to this definition throughout his paper, the definition of personhood above is the core claim of his paper. I think there are two problems with Tooley's definition of personhood to decide whether a fetus is a person or not. First of all, there are and might be many counterexamples to such a definition of personhood like the situation of the people who don't have the self-consciousness. However, this claim can be modified to be consistent with those "counterexamples". For example, we can say that a person is a *potentially* self-conscious being, instead of saying that a person a self-conscious being. That is how we can save the people who don't have self-consciousness from losing their rights to live. I mean we can adopt some ad hoc regulations to save the theory. However, there are still many problems. For example, what is meant by the term "potentially" is not clear to decide something is a person or not. For example it is not clear that whether a human being which never had self-consciousness in his life is a person or not. Should we use ad hoc devices for each problematic example? But then it would sound like we already know what a person is since instead of obeying a rule for deciding whether something is a person or not, rules "obey" us through ad hoc devices. If so, then we don't need a definition of person to decide whether a fetus is a person or not. Then what is a fetus? A person or not? But since there is a disagreement about the answer of this question, we are looking for a genuine

rule to decide whether a fetus is a person or not. However, as I said above, using ad hoc devices to make the rule consistent with the things that we classify as person seems weird.

Even if this seems weird only to me, there are still other problems with Tooley's account. How can we know that something has self-consciousness? We somehow know whether something has self-consciousness or not. But remember, my point, here, is to show that without depending on any cultural or linguistic framework there is no answer to the question whether fetus is a person or not. So, appealing to self-consciousness does not solve the problem because there is no justification of defining personhood with self-consciousness other than saying "we just define it that way". Besides, the problem with personhood applies to self-consciousness too. To decide what self-consciousness is we should work on the various examples of the self-conscious beings. Through making a scientific analysis on those examples, we can find a rule to help us to decide whether something is a self-conscious being. But in the first place, how do we know that those examples that we work on to find out what consciousness is are *really* self-conscious? We know which creatures are relevant because it is our starting point. So, it is the cultural point.

Furthermore, philosophers and cognitive scientists are working on the project called strong artificial intelligence that has a machine with self-

consciousness. Will that machine be considered as person? Will they have constitutional rights? Will we have emotional ties with those machines more than we have with an old computer? We don't know what purposes they will be used for--armies, entertainment, science? But I am sure that after the society *gets used to* the roles it gives them, society will have its own justification for its judgment on whether they are persons or not. However, again, I am sure that many people will think that their justification is independent of their *habits.* In fact, as Wittgenstein says, our actions do not follow rules but instead rules follow our actions.

Therefore, I think Tooley's identification of personhood with having self-consciousness fails because there are many counterexamples to people who don't have self-consciousness, including strong artificially intelligent robots.

Another philosopher that gives criteria to classify something as a person to show that the fetus is not a person is Mary Anne Warren. Before listing her criteria of being a person, I will state her method of finding out the criteria. "In searching for such criteria, it is useful to look beyond the set of people with whom we are acquainted, and ask how we would decide whether a totally alien being was a person or not."[53] A problem with this is that we need to work on the "set of people with whom we are acquainted" in order to decide whether "a

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[53] Mary Anne Warren, "Moral and Legal Status of Abortion", *The Monist,* 57, 4, (2009), 5

totally alien being" is a person or not. So, the "set of people with whom we are acquainted" is still our starting point. From my pragmatist point of view, there is no problem with such a start. The things that we are acquainted with are very important in our inquiries. However, for somebody who is aiming to start with a global skepticism to find out the ultimate truth, even those "set of people with whom we are acquainted" might be a source of worry. In that case we wouldn't have any starting point, and then we wouldn't start an inquiry.

However, for now, let's leave aside this metaphysical point about the nature of inquiries, and go on with the list of criteria of personhood that Warren lists. She claims that in order to be considered a person one should have the following characteristics:

- Consciousness

- Reasoning

- Self-motivated activity

- Communication

- Self-awareness[54]

Warren's list of characteristics of a person seems a very plausible one. I would personally look for such criteria to call somebody a person. However, this paper is placed at a more basic level. I am not working on whether we

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[54] Warren, "Moral and Legal Status of Abortion", 5

would follow any definition of personhood or not. Instead, I am working on

whether following any definition of personhood as opposed to another is

objectively justifiable or not. I don't know what Warren *really* has in mind when

she lists these examples, but it would be better to step away from any objectivity

claim at the meta-semantic level. I mean that we can use these criteria to reveal

how people like us conceive personhood, but we can't consider these criteria as

the key of ultimate truth about defining personhood. We can't do it, because

there is no argument to explain *why* a person is defined with self-awareness,

consciousness, self-motivated activity, reasoning, and communication. For

example, I personally define personhood with these characteristics but when it

is asked, I don't have any justification for my definition of personhood being

that way. Actually, Mary Anne Warren agrees with me. She says, "If the

opponents of abortion were to deny the appropriateness of these five criteria, I

do not know what further arguments would convince them. We would

probably have to admit that our conceptual schemes were indeed irreconcilably

different, and that our dispute could not be settled objectively."[55]

Even if this metaphysical objection of mine against Warren does not hold,

there are still many problems with Warren's account of personhood. To work on

self-awareness, consciousness, self-motivated activity, reasoning and

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[55] Warren, "Moral and Legal Status of Abortion", 32

communication is not better than working on personhood. The question of what kinds of beings have these characteristics is an "external problem" of philosophy. Let me explain what I mean by "external problem". Philosophers of mind, for example, are trying to give an account of the mind. Some claim that the mind is the body; others claim that the mind is the behaviors; some others claim that the mind is a higher-order functional organization of the body. Let's suppose that around a table a functionalist, a behaviorist, and an identity theorist are discussing which analysis is better in explaining the mind. Then, an alien from Jupiter joins their discussion as a judge. Each philosopher gives their own argument to explain the mind. Suppose the Jupiterian understands these explanations. But after hearing each argument he says this: "OK, I understand your arguments but I don't know the thing you are trying to explain with your arguments. I mean that I understand functional organization, behavioral organization, and neurological structure, but I don't know what "mind" is. So, since I don't know what "mind" means, I don't know which one of you explain mind better." Here the alien's question – what is a mind – is an external question. As opposed to the alien, philosophers around the table know what a mind is. What they disagree about is what explanation of mind is better. However, the alien doesn't even know what a mind is in the first place. However, some discussion in philosophy of mind shows that even philosophers

around the table sometimes do not agree on what a mind is in the first place. For example, some people think that only human beings have minds. Others think that animals also have minds. Some others imply that China has a mind too. The importance of the difference between chauvinist and extremely liberal accounts of mind is stated by Ned Block in his paper "Troubles with Functionalism."[56] It shows that sometimes these external problems affect the internal problem.

Let me now explain how the notion of an external problem is relevant to my objection to Warren's definition of personhood. When philosophers discuss self-awareness, self-motivated activity, consciousness, communication and reasoning, which Warren lists to define personhood, it is crucial to state what kinds of subjects have these properties. Otherwise, we would be in the alien's position who doesn't know what to search for. It is important to state our position on the chauvinist-liberal plane. It means that to analyze these characteristics we should first decide what kinds of beings have these characteristics. Who has these characteristics? Humans, persons, mammals, animals, Chinese nation? Therefore, it is not a good way to check these characteristics to understand what personhood is since this would be circular.

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[56] Wade Savage, *Perception and Cognition: Issues in the Foundations of Psychology,* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1978), 311-314

The reason for the circularity is that to understand these characteristics we first need to specify which beings have these characteristics.

Judith Jarvis Thomson, on the other hand, does not find a straight relation between the question of whether a fetus is a person or not and the question of whether abortion is permissible or not; but she is among those who claim that a fetus is a person. Her argument is as follows. The first premise is that there is no sharp personhood/non-personhood line in the development of a fetus. The second premise is that before the birth, a fetus is a person. The physical appearance of the fetus, for Thomson, shows how a fetus looks like a person.[57] She concludes her argument by saying that the fetus is a person.[58]

As I claim that whether a fetus is a person or not can be answered only relative to a certain culture or conceptual scheme, Thomson's claim is true only relative to a certain culture or conceptual scheme. Independent of any cultural framework, her claim is not true. Let me explain. Thomson claims that her argument that there is no sharp line for being a person does not imply that sperm-plus-egg is a person, since the absence of a sharp line between an acorn and an oak does not show that an acorn is an oak.[59] So, Thomson's position is consistent with my relativist-pragmatist position. The way we look at things, the

[57] Judith Jarves Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion", *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 1, 1, (1971), 47-48
[58] Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion", 47-48
[59] Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion", 47

way we deal with them in practice (e.g. whether we consider an acorn an oak) must be taken into account. Therefore, my objection here applies to the idea that Thomson's claim that a fetus is a person is culture-, and conceptual scheme-independent.

Thomson says, "by the tenth week, for example, it already has a face, arms and legs, fingers and toes; it has internal organs, and brain activity is detectable."[60] However, such similarity is based on how we define personhood. In other words it is based on what properties we derive from the organisms that we call person. There are counterexamples to all these characteristics Thomson lists. I mean that some Martian might find a similarity between a person and a car, but that doesn't make a car a person. Besides, will we consider anything that has these characteristics a person? For example, will we consider a biological machine with the same characteristics a person? Some, including me will consider them persons; others might not. However, there is no fact that can help us decide whether a robot that has these characteristics is a person.

Above I have tried to introduce some arguments on the question of whether a fetus is a person or not. Then, I have tried to show that independent of any culture or conceptual scheme they have no validity. They are true only relative to a certain cultural framework. Besides, we have seen that the

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[60] Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion", 48

arguments we considered above are also consistent with the relativity of the answer to the question whether the fetus is a person or not. Some of these philosophers admit this. For example, Jane English admits that whether the fetus is a person or not is related with our culture.[61] However, through using our common culture the two parties are trying to persuade us to look at things *this* or *that* way.

Now, I will try to give a more metaphysical argument rather than working on each definition of personhood. I will apply the Kripkenstein paradox to the fetus/person debate.

To decide whether a fetus is a person or not we should first decide what a person is. To decide what a person is, we should work on the objects called persons. Suppose that A, B, C, D, E are the only persons that we know. We are working on whether Z is a person or not. We have to observe A, B, C, D, and E and derive a rule from them. It is just like number series: To decide whether 256 is a member of the set whose members we know are 1, 2, 4, 8, 16, 32. To decide, we would work on these numbers and derive a rule. If 256 obey that rule then it is a member of that series; otherwise it is not. Similarly, the rule we derive from A, B, C, D and E will determine whether Z is a person or not. Suppose that A, B, C, D and E obeys the rule R1 but Z does not obey it. So, we would conclude that

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[61] English, "Abortion and the Concept of a Person", 234-236

Z is not a person. But if we knew A, B, C, and D as persons and we came up with the rule R2 which E does not obey, we would conclude that E is not a person. However, E is a person. Since we know that E is a person we try to derive the rule from A, B, C, D, and E instead of A, B, C, D only. Similarly, if we put Z into the set we would derive another rule R3 which Z obeys. Kripke says that the rule we derive from words is indeterminate at the metasemantic level as in the following argument: Given, P (1,1) = 2; P (2,3) = 5, P (1,5) = 6, what is P(80,90)? If P is plus the answer is 170. At the semantic level I don't see any problem. But when we try to justify this answer, we have a problem. What prevents us from saying that the answer is 5 through following the quus operator according to which Quus (x,y) = x+y if x,y < 70; otherwise 5? There is no answer other than just accepting that plus is better than quus *for us*. Similarly, A, B, C, D and E both obey the rules R1 and R3, however the rule R3 makes a fetus human; while the rule R1 doesn't.

Since, at the meta-semantic level, I don't have any *exact* proof for the claims "R3 is better than R1" or "R1 is better than R3" to decide whether fetus is a person or not, I limit any claims' truth to their cultural framework. For a shaman from Africa or central Asia, almost everything has personhood. A stone or the sea has personhood for them. For somebody who is culturally Abrahamic, personhood is closer to the angels and God. Contemporary science's approach is

relatively similar to the Abrahamic culture since it is culturally one of today's science's roots, along with ancient Greek and Roman cultures. I don't see any fact to favor any of them other than that my own culture is tied to contemporary science.

BRAIN TRANSPLANTATION CASE

There is another example to show semantic relativism. Suppose we have a friend named Kant. Kant will undergo a brain transplantation surgery. Kant and his friend Marx will exchange their brains. After the surgery, when I say "Kant", who do I refer to? We would probably answer that "Kant" refers to the person who has the brain of Kant. The reason is obvious. We go with our brains. I don't mean what the identity theorist says, namely that mental states are physical states. However, not only for an identity theorist but also for the Cartesian who says the mind and the body are distinct, and the functionalist who says that the mind is a function of the body, we are placed in our heads rather than in our feet. A Cartesian believes the existence of a "ghost" in the body and that ghost is placed in our heads, not in our foot. Similarly, the functionalist says that the mind is a higher-order function which is realized in our brains in the actual world.

Searching the mind in our head is a pre-scientific belief of us. Even centuries before today's neurological developments, many people thought that

the mind is somewhere in our head.[626364] Many of them did not work on our feet to understand our behavior. They worked on our brains, and they developed a very successful science. I am not writing this paragraph to show that scientific claims about the brain and personality are just an outcome of our culture. That claim could be a topic of a paper about philosophy of science not about semantic relativism. My intention here is to show the importance given to brains in our culture. So, most of us would definitely say that "Kant" refers to the person who has the brain of Kant.

However, we can think about some people who says that "Kant" refers to the person who has Kant's face. I think there are actual people who say so. I can easily imagine people who say "he changed his brain." It is not an unintelligible claim even though we might find it wrong. He/she might be interested in the faces of people to identify them. On the other hand, as I said above, most of us would say that "he changed his body", because most of us are interested in the brain to identify people. Who is right? I don't see any fact to decide who is right. I mean I am looking for a fact that helps me to decide whether "Kant" refers to *that* guy with Kant's brain or *this* guy with Kant's face, and in the end I don't find any fact to help me. What kind of fact could help me to decide what "Kant"

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[62] Although some people thought that mind is located somewhere other than brain; many of others thought that it is in the brain.

[63] http://www.columbia.edu/cu/psychology/courses/1010/mangels/neuro/history/history.html

[64] Charles Gross, "Aristotle on the brain", *The Neuroscientist,* 1, 4, (1995)

refers to? A fact can help a scientist to do his/her research. They test their theories through appealing to facts. How I can test the hypothesis that "Kant" refers to the person who has the brain of Kant? I don't know any fact to appeal to test the hypothesis that "Kant" refers to the person who has the brain of Kant.

Even for those of us who have a consensus on the claim that "Kant" refers to the person who has Kant's brain, there might be some further problems. For example, if we changed only the right part of the brain how would we describe the situation: "Kant has changed his brain" or "Kant has changed his body"? Our answers would depend on our theories about brain and personality. For example, some might look where memory is located. Others might be interested in the parts related with emotions. Whose theory is right? Does "Kant" refer to the person who has Kant's brains' *this* part or does "Kant" refers to the person who has Kant's brain's *that* part? In a scientific inquiry, coherence with observation makes the theories more plausible. However, in this case we are working on describing and classifying the observations. In other words, we are trying to find out which words refer to which observation. In such a situation how can we appeal to observation?

However, in practice we don't have such problems. When somebody named "Kant" undergoes a transplantation of any of his/her organs, we wouldn't make a scientific or never-ending philosophical research to decide

what "Kant" refers to. In a culture where brains are associated with people, "Kant" refers to the person who has Kant's brain. In another culture where faces are associated with people, "Kant" refers to the person who has Kant's face. Since there is no culture-transcendental facts to decide which cultural framework right, I think it is relative to our culture what "Kant" refers to after the brain transplantation surgery. In *this* culture "Kant" refers to the person who has Kant's brain; in *that* culture "Kant" refers to the person who has Kant's face; in another culture "Kant" refers to the person who has Kant's feet.

Joel Pust, in his "Intuitions" entry in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, gives the proposition "A person would survive having their brain transplanted into a new body"[65] as an example of intuition. Of course, this subject might be open to discussion. However, his being able to give this proposition as an example shows that after a brain transplantation surgery, without discussion, most of us would say that the person who has the brain of A would be called "A". If I underwent such a surgery, the body with my brain after the surgery would be called "Tolgahan".

Through this example, I am not discussing the personal identity problem. What I am discussing instead is how we use language; what words refer to. To

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[65] Joel Pust, "Intuition", *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, December 4, 2012,
http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/intuition/

show that both this discussion is not necessarily related with the personal identity question and also that our descriptions of the situation after the surgery is relative to how we use language, it would be useful to appeal to Derek Parfit's work on the subject.

In his paper, "Personal Identity", Derek Parfit claims that there is no fact to decide the personal identity problem. To support his claim he uses a thought experiment from David Wiggins. Suppose a person A has had transplanted half of his brain to a brainless body B; and the other half of his brain to another brainless body C. Now we have three options to describe the situation.

1. A does not survive

2. A survives as one of the two people

3. A survives as both.[66]

Parfit analyzes each of these descriptions. About the first one he says that people who had damage in their brains or had half of their brains transplanted survive. For example if I had transplanted some part of my brain, people still would call me "Tolgahan" after the surgery. So it seems absurd to describe "two successful surgeries" as a death. About the second one he asks, "if only one of them will survive, then which will be that one?" There is no answer for that

[66] Parfit, "Personal Identity", 5

question for him, because there is no difference between the two. About the third one he claims that people would say one person cannot survive as two. However, he says that there is nothing wrong with surviving as the two. For example logically there is no problem with saying I have two brains and two bodies. Each body might be unaware of the things the other body does. He gives examples about actual cases of people whose brains are divided.[67]

However, about the third one the problem is about identity. The identity relation is a one-one relation not a one-two relation. If we don't consider two organisms as one person the third option would seem problematic. The problem with one-two identity relation in personal identity case is this: Suppose that half of my brain is given to the brainless body A; and the other half is given to another brainless body B. Brainless body A went to the university to work with his Professor. Suppose A tell his teacher that he just underwent a surgery; that is why he looks different. He says that, in a way, the situation is not different than an ordinary plastic surgery operation. But then, B comes to the office to talk with his supervisor. These people realize the real situation that they each have half of my brain in their head. Although each of these two persons says that they are Tolgahan, they do not say that they are each other. I mean A is not B; but

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[67] Parfit, "Personal Identity", 6-7

both A and B are Tolgahan.[68] In this case, we have two options: The first option is that there is no more identity relation here. The second option is that A and B are not individually persons but that A+B is a person. The second option sounds crazy. I don't know any person who consists of two different organisms.

However, we can say these two people are both Tolgahan as they come to their professors' office to discuss relativism. If I commit a crime before the surgery, after the surgery both A and B will be responsible for that crime. If I had an emotional tie with a person then both A and B will have that emotional tie with that person. So, there is obviously a survival here. In that case I survive just as in plastic surgery. For Parfit, the mystery here is the identity problem. But there is no problem with the notion of survival which doesn't appeal to personal identity as a further fact.[69]

However, Parfit claims that the situation after the brain transplantation surgery can be described with different words. He claims that there is no mistake with all these different descriptions as follows: "I want to say that those two descriptions, "It's going to be me" and "It's going to be someone who is merely exactly like me", don't describe different outcomes, different courses of events, only one of which can happen. They are two ways of describing one and

[68] Parfit, *A dialogue*, 342
[69] Parfit, *A dialogue*, 343-244

the same course of events."[70] "When I say, "There is no person who we both are," I am only giving my decision. Another person could say, "It will be you," thus deciding differently. There is no question of either of these decisions being a mistake. Whether to say "I," or "one of my future selves," or "a descendant self" is entirely a matter of choice."[71]

Similarly, in the brain transplantation and abortion examples which I gave, my concern is not the question of personal identity. Rather my concern is that in such a marginal case we don't have any further fact to decide who is right or who is wrong. That's what I call relativism in my project of cultural relativism which is an objection against the Cartesian search of the culture independent reality.

The abortion and the brain transplantation surgery cases need more than a couple of pages to be analyzed. I used them to express a simple idea: Words refers to objects only relative to a culture. However, some philosophers might say that both of the examples given above are problematic when it comes to talk about metaphysical issues about language. They might say that "life", "fetus", "person", "personhood" are not good examples to argue for semantic relativity since these words are not scientific enough. They might say that, instead of

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[70] Parfit, *A dialogue*, 344
[71] Parfit, "Personal Identity", 25

working on whether "Kant" refers to the person who has Kant's brain or the person who has Kant's face, we should work on the description of reality through the language of physics. This means that the description of reality with a language other than physics' language is already eliminated. In other words, instead of describing the situation after the brain transplantation surgery as "he has changed his brain" or "he has changed his body" we should say "such and such space-time points are in such and such properties". So, some philosophers might say that the examples given above, brain transplantation and abortion cases, are not good ones to defend semantic relativism; that the problems with them are not due to the lack of semantic absoluteness but due to the lack of a proper scientific language.

There are problems with such an objection. First of all, I use those examples to show that *our* language works in that way. I mean that the way we use words to describe reality differs as the culture changes. I mean that the way we *actually* use language works in a relativistic way. Secondly, even if there is a good scientific language which is dominated by the expressions to refer to space-time points and the laws of physics, neither in courts nor in political arena is that language considered seriously. I mean in a court of justice we can't use this space-time points language. Instead we refer to the ordinary objects. Such a scientific language which is supposed to be far from relativism is far from our

actual cases. Thirdly and most importantly, the example given above can teach us something metaphysical about language. It means that there are actual cases where we use language without any strict foundation. In those cases, in practice there is no problem. Suppose that we are discussing the working principles of a television. Suppose the case about the working principles of the television seems unacceptable to our scientific knowledge. However, if the television works, we can't say "it doesn't work actually". Similarly, philosophers might claim that language needs a foundation; a further fact to be fixed: There is a further fact to decide what a word means. It implies that there is a further fact to decide what "Tolgahan" means or person means. However, just like the television example above, in practice we are using language without such strict facts. If what I said above is true, there is no higher fact to decide what any proper name or "person" means. Instead, the reference relation does not transcend a certain culture or a form of life. Therefore, there is no such a general principle about language that there is a higher fact to determine what words refer. These two cases are the examples of freedom from such a so-called determinant. So, without working on scientific words like "atom", "mass", "quark", just with the examples of proper names and the word "person" we can show that the so-called general foundation of language as a whole fails. This is enough to teach us that whether the scientific words like mass, electron, light refer non-relatively

or not cannot be decided through a metaphysical principle about language, since, if I was right above, we have seen that there is no such metaphysical principle about language as a whole. However, there might be a scientific consensus over scientific terms to determine what they refer to. I mean a scientific consensus might determine what "gene" means. But that is something I am not criticizing in this thesis.

ARGUMENTS FOR SEMANTIC RELATIVISM

FIRST ARGUMENT[72]

1- A given word W refers to one object as opposed to another absolutely (not relative to some SBL factors[73]) ➜ There is a fact in virtue of which that word absolutely (not relative to some SBL factors) refers to that object as opposed to another.

2- There is a fact in virtue of which a given word absolutely (not relative to some SBL factors) refers to one object as opposed to another ➜ There are empirical reasons to believe that there is such a fact **v** There are conceptual reasons to believe that there is such a fact.[74]

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[72] ➜: if…then; **v:** or; **MT**: modus tollens; **~:** not

[73] SBL factors: sociological, biological and linguistic factors

[74] I am not saying that a human being has ever had those reasons. He may never had it in the actual world, or even it might be impossible for a human being to have it due to cognitive

4- ~ There are conceptual reasons to believe that there is such a fact.[75]

5- There are empirical reasons to believe that there is such a fact ➔ No empirical researcher denies that there is such a fact **v** Empirical work will show that there is a set of objects O (as opposed to another set of objects O') that is referred to by the word W.

6- ~ No researcher on empirical stuff denies that there is such a fact.[76]

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limitations. However, if there is a fact in virtue of which a given word absolutely refers to one object as opposed to another then this fact would not be a primitive fact, and I believe that there must be some in principle discoverable reasons or evidence for the existence any non-primitive fact. This is an intuition for me.

[75] If there were, they would be obvious to us.

[76] Einstein and Darwin are good examples. "From these remarks it will be seen that I look at the term species, as one arbitrarily given for the sake of convenience to a set of individuals closely resembling each other, and that it does not essentially differ from the term variety, which is given to less distinct and more fluctuating forms. The term variety, again, in comparison with mere individual differences, is also applied arbitrarily, and for mere convenience' sake." (Darwin, Origin of Species, pg: 34). "Physical concepts are free creations of the human mind and are not, however it may seem, uniquely determined by the external world. In out endeavor to understand reality we are somewhat like a man trying to understand the mechanism of a closed watch. He sees the face and the moving hands, even hears its ticking, but he has no way of opening the case. If he is ingenious he may form some picture of a mechanism which could be responsible for all the things he observes, but he many never be quite sure his picture is the only

7- Empirical work will show that there is a set of objects O (as opposed to O') that is referred to by the word W ➜ Scientific classifications of objects are independent of our language.

8- ~ Scientific classifications are independent of our language.[77]

9- ~ Empirical work will show that there is a set of objects O (as opposed to O') that is referred to by the word W. Modus Tollens 7, 8.

10- ~ No researcher on empirical stuff denies that there is such a fact **v** Empirical work will show that there is a set of objects O (as opposed to O') that is referred to by the word W. Conjunction Introduction, De Morgan's 6, 9.

11- ~ There are empirical reasons to believe that there is such a fact. Modus Tollens 5, 10.

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one which could explain his observations. He will never be able to compare his picture with the real mechanism and he cannot even imagine the possibility or the meaning of such a comparison. But he certainly believes that, as his knowledge increases, his picture or reality will become simpler and simpler and will explain a wider range of his sensuous impressions. He may also believe in the existence of the ideal limit of knowledge and that it is approached by the human mind. He may call this ideal limit the objective truth."(Einstein, Evolution of Physics, 31) This is because scientific research starts with our ordinary language. As I explain in section 3.1.1 their research is dependent on the language they started with.

12- ~ There is empirical reasons to believe that there is such a fact **v** There are

conceptual reasons to believe that there is such a fact. Conjunction Introduction,

De Morgan's 4, 11

13- ~ A given word W refers to one object as opposed to another absolutely (not

relative to some SBL factors). Modus Tollens chain 1, 2, 12

There are weak sides of this argument. First of all, some might not admit

premise 4. They might claim it is not a good premise since we don't know that

there is no conceptual argument for fact that makes the link between word and

object absolute. Some might even say that there might be arguments between

conceptual and empirical ones. Secondly, premise 8 might be found flawed.

Actually, in that premise I am not trying to make a genuine point in the

philosophy of science. I am trying not to involve in any realist, anti-realist

discussion of philosophy of science in that part. All I am saying is that

regardless of whether scientific theories reflect reality or not, the classification of

the world made by science is dependent on the language of the scientist. Of

course, such a claim might have outcomes in the philosophy of science.

However, this is not a reason to force me to involve in the debates within the

philosophy of science more than I did above when I am talking about the apple

example. I mean the fact that the scientist who works on apples starts to do her

research through the pre-existing classification she made because of her language and culture, shows that scientific classifications are dependent on language. However, as I said, this might not seem persuasive to many philosophers. I mean some might think that a classification made by scientists is independent of an ordinary person's perspective or language. I simply don't see any substantial difference between our ordinary classification of things and scientists' classification of them. Neither does Quine. "Between an innate similarity notion or spacing of qualities and a scientifically sophisticated one, there are all gradations. Science, after all, differs from common sense only in degree of methodological sophistication. Our experiences from earliest infancy are bound to have overlaid our innate spacing of qualities by modifying and supplementing our grouping habits little by little, inclining us more and more to an appreciation of theoretical kinds and similarities, long before we reach the point of studying science systematically as such."[78]

SECOND ARGUMENT

In this section I will give a much easier argument for semantic relativism. In this part, my argument will not be involved with concepts. Rather, through following Quinean naturalism, I will work on what is empirically available to

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[78] Quine, *Ontological Relativity*, 129

us: The words. I mean without jumping to their meanings, related concepts, I will restrict my argument with those arbitrarily chosen signs and sounds.

D: The link between a word and an object is determinate, absolute, non-relative.

F: There is a fact according to which B is more eligible to be referred than C

"C" is a word coined to refer to a set of objects C which is not privileged. (For example, suppose a non-relativist on this subject intentionally uses a word to refer to a set of objects consisting of Socrates, apple, pie, etc to show that such a set, unlike the set of cows, is less natural.)

1- D ➔ "A" refers to B as opposed to C

2- "A" refers to B as opposed to C ➔ F

3- F ➔ "C" refers to B not C

4- ~ ("C" refers to B not C)

5- ~ (F). MT 3,4

6- ~ ("A" refers to B as opposed to C) MT 2,5

7- ~ (D) MT 1,7

Prima facie, step 3 might sound flawed since no one says that "quus" refers to plus. However, I claim that the argument that links "+" to plus implies such a weird conclusion. Still, what I am saying might sound strange since in the case of "+" we are looking for the natural relation between "+" and plus but

in the case of what "quus" refers to we should take the speaker's intention into the consideration. However, if both plus and quus are referable in different contexts, how do we know that speaker chooses "+" to refer to the quus? In other words, even if plus is more privileged to be referred, how do we know that our words refer to privileged set of objects plus but not to that unprivileged quus? Of course we can refer to quus as well. The problem is this: Without being aware of our intention how can people interpret the word quus I use. Suppose we went to an unknown country and we don't know their language. To refer to plus they use the word "zavagaii", to refer to quus they have the word "tavagaii". A member of this group uttered "tavagaii" in a context where both "tavagaii" and "zavagaii" fit well. Should we interpret "tavagaii" as plus? Then it would be wrong because "tavagaii" refers to quus. In this argument I am following a radical version of naturalism about our method and language. What is available is the words, sounds, vibration. I don't see any reason to put a constraint to link a vibration, sound to a set of object.

<div align="center">REALITY RELATIVISM</div>

Here is a summary of what I will show in this section. If "A" refers B relative to a framework, then "B" which we use to formulate semantic relativity thesis above refers to whatever it refers relative to a framework too. So it goes ad infinitum. So, semantic relativity implies reality relativism. An easy way to

understand is just look what semantic relativity says about the word "reality" and its referent.

Semantic relativism does not directly say that reality is relative even though this is implied by it if I am right. Its claim of relativity is restricted to the way words refer. For semantic relativity, the independent variable is the culture, conceptual scheme, and form of life; as the dependent variable is the reference relation. It means that relative to a certain culture words refer.

So, semantic relativism does not directly mean that the reality is relative to an independent variable. Leave alone whether semantic relativist claims that reality is relative, some philosophers might even say that semantic relativism opposes reality relativism. They might say so since semantic relativism pre-supposes an absolute reality out there. The reason for such a claim is that semantic relativist's claim that words refer to objects only relative to an independent variable presupposes absolute, non-relative objects out there. For example, in our example above, what "Kant" refers to after Kant underwent a brain transplantation surgery, we pre-suppose a non-relative object out there by saying that it is relative to a culture whether "Kant" refers to the person who has Kant's brain or Kant's face. The object with Kant's brain plus that other guy's body and the other object with Kant's body plus that other guy's brain are not relative to any independent variable.

However, in this paper, I will try to show that semantic relativism can be a step to reach reality relativism. To argue for it, my focus point will be the formulation of semantic relativity thesis through *language*. In other words, I will use semantic relativity thesis' self-applications. Without making any meta-language, object language distinction, semantic relativity applies to anything about language. According to semantic relativism any word refers relative to a framework like culture; conceptual scheme; form of life. So, words we use to formulate semantic relativism thesis even refer relatively. So, when we formulate semantic relativism as *this* word refers to *this* object or *that* object the words we use for *this* object and *that* object are not exempt from relativity. Let's clarify it with examples below.

Semantic relativism: "A" refers to B, C, or D

According to the frame FI: "A" refers to B

According to the frame F2: "A" refers to C

According to the frame F3: "A" refers to D

Implications: 1- The reference relations above are relative to the frames. It means that that there is no absolute reference relation.

2- There are B, C, and D out there independent of any frame.

My objection: "B" refers to B only relative to a frame. I mean that since we formulate the semantic relativity thesis through language, its claim about language applies to itself. For example, when we say ""A" refers to B relative to the frame FI" all those words in this sentence are subject to semantic relativism.

For example I am saying that "A" refers to B only relative to the frame FI. But what does "B" refer to? I mean I am asking in the sentence above ""A" refers to B only relative to the frame FI" what does "B" refer to? Without knowing what "B" refers to how can I write down the sentence ""A" refers to B only relative to the frame FI"? Does it refer to X or Y or Z? According to the frame FF1 it refers to X and according to the frame FF2 it refers to Y. But what does "Y" refers to? Does it mean that there is no exit from language? We might point out the object out there to show the exit from language as follows:

That's true, a hand with fingers is an object not language. Just like sound vibrations are material not linguistic. However, to mean an object with such material stuff is called language. So, just like written words and sounds, pointing out with a finger is language because with that hand we refer to an object. I mean when I point out my hand I am showing point out the object. But still we have same problem that we have with linguistic reference. What object am I pointing out? For example, I might say that relative to frame FI "A" refers

to *this* object. Suppose that that object is Quine's rabbit. Relative to the

framework FFI the hand points out the undetached rabbit part, relative

to the framework FFII same hand points out rabbit stage. So, pointing

out the objects does not solve the problem of relativity if the relativity applies to

the reference.

Can drawing a picture helps us to exit from language? For example, I am

asking what "apple" refers to. "Apple" refers to the round fruits that have red

and white colors and has such and such a taste. Let's say "apple" refers to Y. But

since what "Y" refers to is another problem, we can use to show what

"apple" refers to. However, as I said above this doesn't work too. So can I use a

picture of an apple to exit from language: "Apple" refers to ? But this

picture is just a representation of an apple. I can't eat this picture. It doesn't

represent the inner structure of apple. It means that a picture of apple cannot

refer to the apple non-relatively. For example, through picturing the reference a

child might be misinformed about the reference of "apple". He might say that a

toy apple is also reference of "apple". A picture of apple does not guarantee to

show what "apple" refers to.

Even if we put a real apple to refer to apple non-relatively, we would have similar problems. First of all, when we put the real apple into a sentence; it would have the function of representing something. But representing what? Representing itself? How will we establish the link between the apple as representer and the apple as represented? Does it guarantee us to separate a toy apple and a real apple? I don't think so because when we represent A through using B we focus only some properties of B but not everything about B. For example, when we represent apple with apple, we focus on its shape; color; solidity. But an apple which is to be represented has more than its shape, color and solidity. It has a complex inner structure that is waiting to be discovered by science. So, even if we put a real apple into a sentence, a strong reference relation cannot be established. Depending on their interests, people might mean different things through using a real apple in a sentence.

Therefore, there is no escape from language when we are working on the reference relation. Instead there are meta-languages. It means that when I say that "A" means B; there is no linguistic/non-linguistic difference but there is the difference about the level of language. In language L1 "A" means B; in language L0 "B" means C; in language L-1 "C" means D,…, so on. I mean when I ask what "apple" means, the answer is given with other words or maybe through

pointing out an apple. But when I ask what object is pointed out, we point out

the apple to show what it pointed out.

CHAPTER IV

IS ONTOLOGY TRIVIAL?

A summary of this section is as follows. Carnap claims that there are internal and external questions of systems. For Carnap, when ontological questions are asked as internal questions they are trivial, when they are asked as external questions they are meaningless. However, the thesis I defend here doesn't make ontological questions trivial or meaningless. Through following Quine's rejection of analytic/synthetic distinction, I claim that there is no such language world distinction. So, since scientific and philosophical questions are both about the world that is relative to certain culture, philosophical questions are non-trivial just as scientific questions.

Does my thesis that the world is dependent on form of life, conceptual scheme trivialize ontology? The question is crucial because there are two main camps concerning meta-ontology: Realist and Deflationist. Both share the idea that if the world is dependent on language, culture, form of life then to talk about existence is trivial. The former claims that the world is not dependent on a conceptual scheme; the latter says that it is dependent on a conceptual scheme. So the former says ontology is not trivial; the latter says ontology is trivial.

I have argued for a third thesis that ontology is dependent on our culture or form of life or conceptual scheme but ontology is not trivial since the world itself is dependent on form of life, conceptual scheme. If being dependent on culture or conceptual scheme makes something trivial then science is trivial too because science is about the world which is dependent on the conceptual scheme. However, science is not trivial. Therefore, being dependent on the culture doesn't make something trivial. To show this I will use Quine's criticism of Carnap's language world dichotomy.

CARNAP

For Carnap, to ask questions whose answers can be given empirically we have a language. Through a language we ask questions concerning facts: Is there a pencil on the table? How many natural numbers are there between 4 and 10? Are rainbows real or illusions? These questions are called internal question by Carnap. There are also questions concerning the language itself: Are there physical things? Do numbers exist? Carnap calls these questions external questions due to their externality to the framework in which we ask internal questions.

To ask whether numbers exist within the frame in which we assert there are 5 natural numbers between 4 and 10 has a trivial answer: Yes. To ask it outside the frame is meaningless. Carnap's position here is a watershed in the

history of philosophy. For two thousand years philosophy has been asking

certain questions without finding any good answers. On the other hand, science

has been very successful at getting answers. I can give a contemporary example

of the contrast between philosophy and science. Philosophers of mind ask what

pain is. We have no good answer. An identity theorist says it is C-fiber

stimulation; Cartesian theory says it is something that belongs to the ghost in

the machine; the functionalist says it is some kind of computation or function.

However, when you go to a doctor she doesn't investigate what pain is in the

first place. Her medical approach to the pain is already committed to some kind

of entities without investigating what they are. A poet, on the other hand, is

committed to something else when it comes to talk about pain. However, a

philosopher, as we see in Descartes' example, tries to get rid of all cultural and

social prejudices and find the reality. The scientist's theory is more humble

despite its great success. Carnap tries to get rid of such philosophical questions

by claiming that these external questions are meaningless. "From these

questions we must distinguish the external question of the reality of the thing

world itself. In contrast to the former questions, this question is raised neither

by the man in the street nor by scientists, but only by philosophers. Realists give

an affirmative answer, subjective idealists a negative one, and the controversy

goes on for centuries without ever being solved. And it cannot be solved

because it is framed in a wrong way. To be real in the scientific sense means to

be an element of the system; hence this concept cannot be meaningfully applied

to the system itself."[79]

If we ask such questions within the frame then their answer is either

analytical or contradictory. For example the assertion "there are numbers"

within the frame of mathematics is analytic. Similarly, "there are physical

things" within a relevant frame is analytic. However, philosophers who "offer

lengthy arguments on either side do not have in mind the internal questions."[80]

QUINE

Quine criticizes Carnap's elimination of those ontological questions on the basis

of the internal/external distinction. In other words, Quine objects to Carnap's

analytic/synthetic distinction. Analytic truths are true due to the meanings of

words; synthetic truths are true due to the facts. However, Quine shows that

such a distinction is untenable because the analytic synthetic distinction fails.

When Quine criticize analyticity he is not criticizing the truth of a

sentence in virtue of syntactical rules.[1] For example, he doesn't have any

problem with the following sentence. An unmarried man is not married. The

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[79] Rudolf Carnap, "Empiricism, Semantics and Ontology," in *The Philosophy of Science*, ed. Richard Boyd, Philip Gasper and J. D. Trout, (Mit Press, 1991), 86

[80] Carnap, "Empiricism, Semantics and Ontology", 88

sentence is true because of the rules about the prefix "un" and the negation

"not". What Quine criticizes is truth by virtue of meaning. "A bachelor is an

unmarried man". Is this sentence true by virtue of its meaning? If analytical,

then yes. How can we justify analyticity? The first option for Quine is

synonymy. Are "bachelor" and "unmarried man" synonymous? How can we

know it? Not through dictionaries. Maybe if they are interchangeable then they

are synonymous. But then how will we decide that they are interchangeable?

But by interchangeable what is meant is the meaning not the words themselves

as "bachelor" and "unmarried man". So, to decide whether they are

interchangeable we should appeal to modality. If they are interchangeable then

the following sentence is true. "Necessarily all and only bachelors are

unmarried men." However, to decide whether this last sentence is true we

should know whether "all bachelors are unmarried men" is analytical. So,

Quine says, "our argument is not flatly circular, but something like it."

Can we conclude that Quine's only objection is to the claim that

ontological questions are about language? Does it mean that ontological

questions are independent of language? No. What Quine objects to is the alleged

distinction between ontology and science. "Carnap maintains that ontological

questions, and likewise questions of logical or mathematical principle, are

questions not of facts but of choosing a convenient conceptual scheme or

framework for science; and with this I agree only if the same be conceded for every scientific hypothesis."[81] To understand the last part it is very useful to see what Quine's Carnap says about philosophy. "Carnap has long held that the questions of philosophy, when real at all, are questions of language; and the present observation would seem to illustrate his point. He holds that the philosophical questions of what there is are questions of how we may most conveniently fashion our "linguistic framework," and not, as in the case of the wombat or unicorn, questions about extralinguistic reality. He holds that those philosophical questions are only apparently about sorts of objects, and are really pragmatic questions of language policy."[82] So, Quine doesn't claim that ontological questions are about facts which are independent of "choosing a convenient conceptual scheme or framework" by criticizing Carnap. With this they agree. What they disagree over is the status of a scientific hypothesis. For Quine science is also about "choosing a convenient conceptual scheme or framework."

What Quine criticizes is the fact-language distinction. "All bachelors are unmarried" or a scientific assertion are both about language and facts. The following quotation from "Two Dogmas of Empiricism" shows how Quine

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[81] Quine, *The Ways of Paradox*, (New York, Random, 1966), 134

[82] Quine, *Word and Object*, 271

rejects double standard. "Carnap has recognized that he is able to preserve a double standard for ontological questions and scientific hypotheses only by assuming an absolute distinction between the analytic and the synthetic; and I need not say again that this is a distinction which I reject."[83]

So Quine's criticism of Carnap implies that Quine is neither saying that ontological questions are trivial nor he is saying that they are independent of language. The reason is that he doesn't make a language/fact distinction. But it doesn't mean that Quine claims that the world is language or culture dependent. Instead, his refusal world/language dichotomy is more epistemological. To repeat one more time, "to call a posit a posit is not to patronize it."[84]

Quine's criticism of Carnap implies that there is no world/language dichotomy. Both science and ontology are about the world which is dependent on language and conceptual scheme and they are not trivial.

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[83] Quine, *Logical Point of View*, 45-46

[84] Quine, *Word and Object*, 22

CHAPTER V

LEWIS' OBJECTION TO RELATIVISM

David Lewis argues against semantic indeterminacy. For him there are natural properties, relations and objects that our words are inclined to refer to (or perhaps these relations and objects are inclined to be referred to). [1] Lewis makes this claim against Putnam's internal realism. Putnam claims that in a theory T1 to assign our domain D1 to the objects of the world W1 we need an interpretation function I1. Through I1, the domain D1 and the world W1 can be matched. For example D1 consist of a and b. W1 consists of green and blue objects. However, through another interpretation function I2, D1 can be assigned to the objects of world W2. For example, W2 consists of grue[85] (an object observed green before a certain time t1 and blue after t1) and bleen objects (an object observed blue before a certain time t1 and green after t1.) In this case any world under some interpretation can satisfy any theory. The problem is that "it doesn't matter what the world is like or what the theory says." [86] The interpretation function is internal to the theory. However, why is it that in practice we assign D1 to W1 but not to W2?

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[85] This predicate is introduced by Nelson Goodman under the title of New Riddle of Induction. Nelson Goodman, *Fact Fiction Forecast*., pg: 73-75. Goodman's use of it is related to his relativist ontology in his books *Structure of Appearance* and *Ways of Worldmaking*.

[86] Lewis, A New Work for Theory of Universals, pg: 370

Putnam's indeterminacy thesis is similar to those I mentioned above. Wittgenstein's rule following paradox: "no course of action could be determined by a rule, because every course of action can be made out to accord with the rule" (Wittgenstein, PI, section 201) or Quine's "gavagai" thesis —that there is no absolute link between "gavagai" and the kind of object it is supposed to denote— is similar to Putnam's claim that any world can satisfy any theory. Both Quine and Wittgenstein resolve the indeterminacy by saying that relative to a conceptual scheme (Quine) or form of life (Wittgenstein) a link between language and the world can be established.[87][88] Similarly, Putnam says, only we can interpret our languages, there is no objective perspective.[89]

Lewis rejects an indeterminacy thesis. He claims that there must be a solution for this problem because our language is determinate unlike what Putnam says. "Indeed we cannot lift ourselves by our bootstraps, but we are off the ground, so there must be another way to fly. Our language does have a fairly determinate interpretation (a Moorean fact!) so there must be some constraint not created ex nihilo by our stipulation."[90]

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[87] Quine, *Ontological Relativity*, 48

[88] Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, section 239-241

[89] Hilary Putnam, "Models and reality", *Journal of Symbolic Logic* 45, 3, 1980, 482

[90] David Lewis, New work for a theory of universals. *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 61, December, 1983, 371

The constraint must be the eligibility of the referent. The first candidate for the thing that makes semantics determinate is a causal constraint. For this view, a causal relation with the referent must be the constraint that makes the relation between language and the world determinate. Lewis says that the causal constraint is between the referrer and the referent. But for Lewis it is to the referent that we should look for a constraint. "I would instead propose that the saving constraint concerns the referent- not the referrer, and not the causal channels between the two.[91] Lewis explains eligibility of referent through naturalness. Naturalness means that the world has a natural structure. According to this structure some objects are grouped together. The properties that belong to these groups are natural properties. So, all properties and objects are divided into two groups: Perfectly natural ones and others. Those others are divided into groups by their grades of naturalness. For example, neither the property of greenness and nor the property of grueness is perfectly natural. However, greenness is more natural than grueness. Similarly, neither the sum of Socrates' nose in BC 400 plus Jupiter in 2020, nor Aristotle is a perfectly natural object. However, Aristotle is more natural than the other object. For Lewis more natural objects, properties and relations are more eligible. Since plus is more natural than quus, plus is more eligible than quus.

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[91]Lewis, A New Work for Theory of Universals, pg:371)

In this case, there is no risk of overabundance of interpretations since interpretation is no longer arbitrary. For Lewis there might even be the risk of no interpretation because of the strong constraint of naturalness. [92] Lewis says Putnam's thesis that any world can satisfy any theory fails because of the naturalness constraint. Similarly, Wittgenstein's or Quine's semantic indeterminacy thesis fails for Lewis. Sider uses Lewis' theory for his realist position in meta-ontology. The world is carved at its joints. This means that the world has a natural structure. Properties and objects which reflect the world's natural structure better are more natural. "Some candidate meanings 'carve nature at the joints' more than others, and it is part of the nature of reference and meaning that candidates that carve nature at its joints are more eligible to be meant.[93]

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[92] Lewis, "A New Work for a theory of Universals", 372

[93] Sider, *Four Dimensionalism*, xxi-xxii

CHAPTER VI

ANSWER TO LEWIS' OBJECTION

SKEPTICISM ON LEWIS' NATURALNESS CONSTRAINT

However, there are some problems with this thesis. First of all, proposing

"naturalness" as a solution to Wittgenstein's rule paradox or Quine's "gavagai"

problem does not seem like a genuine solution. Let me explain. What is the

meaning of 'relation R' if (3,1 R 4); (2,6 R 8); (5,6 R 11); (7,8 R 15); (16,19 R 35) are

provided? Plus or quus? We would say that the answer is that R stands for plus.

But where is the justification? Why not quus rather than plus? Lewis claims that

the justification is that plus is a better candidate than quus because it is more

natural than quus. However, this is not a genuine justification. This is more like

saying that it is because God controls our reference. How do I know that God

controls our reference? Similarly, how do I know plus is better candidate due to

the reality? However, I can not refute God controls or best candidate theory

explanation. But neither I have enough reason to believe any of them. However,

one can insist on saying that the point is that some sets are more natural than

others. I mean the set of objects that satisfies the relation plus is more natural

than the quus set. The point is that the world has a structure and the words are

inclined to target them. Some sets of objects are more eligible to be targeted.

However, now we have another problem. How can we ever know what objects/properties/relations are eligible and what objects/properties/relations are not? If this is just an epistemic problem then should we remain skeptic about our knowledge of the world? Should we think that at least we know some part of the world? But even this modest claim cannot be justified. However, although I don't find it pleasant, one can still believe that there are eligible objects no matter what we know about them.

ELGIN'S ARGUMENT AGAINST LEWIS

Catherine Elgin, in her paper, "Unnatural Science", reviews Lewis' argument. Elgin says she agrees with Lewis' claim that if there are privileged properties then Putnam's result that nothing outside of us interprets our language is false. However, she doesn't agree with Lewis on whether there are such privileged properties. She doesn't agree that there are such properties.[94]

In the paper, rather than merely saying that she doesn't agree with the claim that there are privileged sets of objects, she works on such a claim's implication for the philosophy of science. She criticizes Lewis' optimism about our access to natural properties. She says --and I agree-- that human evolution is not oriented to any goal to find out the privileged properties, set of objects if

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[94] Catherine Elgin, "Unnatural science", *Journal of Philosophy* 92, 6, 1995, 290-291

there are any. For example, as an outcome of human evolution, we have the concept of toxic. If through evolution we discover the reality in a better way, then toxics must have a lot of common. However, "apart from the capacity to kill or sicken the organisms they affect, its instances have little in common."[95]It means that it is too much optimism to think that the privileged properties are accessible to us.

Of course, Lewis has physics' classification in his mind, not our ordinary classifications. For Lewis there are perfectly natural properties that carve nature at its joints and physics discovers or will discover these properties. However, Elgin claims that "physics as physicist do it" does not have "any reason to seek or favor perfectly natural properties and the laws they figure in."[96] Elgin rightly says that the natural sciences do not aim what Lewis has in mind.

It means that for Lewis there are eligible and non-eligible properties which are independent of us and the only way to access them is to appeal to the scientific virtues. Lewis has simplicity in his mind. But why should we adopt simplicity? For Lewis, since there is a certain language whose vocabulary divides the world into perfectly natural properties and others, we can objectively appeal to simplicity. The simplest is the most eligible.

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[95] Elgin, "Unnatural Science", 293
[96] Elgin, "Unnatural Science", 293

However, will those perfectly natural properties be the discovery of science? For example, are quarks perfectly natural? It might not be the case. But in this situation Lewis invites a form of skepticism: The real structure of the world might be different than the one science is working on.[97] Such a skepticism is crucial here because grue might be more natural than green in that case.

Another problem is this: if current science comes up with good predictions, then how might it be possible to think that the division of the world science comes up with is not the natural division of the world? It might be possible for Lewis, due to the aristocracy of properties. Just like aristocracy in its non-metaphorical, political use, it is hard to follow in its use here. I mean it is not clear why we should think that some properties are more natural than others.[98] Lewis might answer that other properties supervene on the natural properties. However, Elgin says that in a different system natural properties supervene on the other properties.[99]

THERE IS NO PRIVILEGED STRUCTURE OF THE WORLD

Lewis claims that our language is not indeterminate. So there must be a constraint. "Indeed we cannot lift ourselves by our bootstraps, but we are off the

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[97] Elgin, "Unnatural Science", 299
[98] Elgin, "Unnatural Science", 296-299
[99] Elgin, "Unnatural Science", pg: 297

ground, so there must be another way to fly. Our language does have a fairly determinate interpretation (a Moorean fact!) so there must be some constraint not created *ex nihilo* by our stipulation."[100]

For Lewis that constraint is the naturalness constraint. More natural properties are more eligible for being the meaning of words.[101] For Lewis this means there is no indeterminacy any more. "Then if the natural properties are sparse, there is no reason to expect any overabundance of intended interpretations. There may even be none. Even ideal theory runs the risk of beings unsatisfiable, save in "unintended" ways. Because satisfaction is not guaranteed, we accomplish something if we manage to achieve it by making a good fit between theory and the world. All this is as it should be."[102]

Eliminating those candidates of meaning that are far from the world's natural structure does not solve the problem of indeterminacy completely. However, Lewis presupposes that the world has a natural structure. Does the world have a structure? I think not. I will claim that the world does not have a culture-independent natural structure but we attribute a culture-dependent structure due to some epistemological reasons. It means that the structure we attribute to the world is due to our knowledge about the world. I mean that

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[100] Lewis, "A New Work for A Theory of Universals", 371
[101] Lewis, "A New Work for A Theory of Universals", 372
[102] Lewis, "A New Work for A Theory of Universals", 372

since our knowledge about the world is changing (maybe accumulating) we need a structure to develop our knowledge about the world. For example, we need the concept of acceleration to understand the world. But this doesn't mean that F=ma is more real than the relation between Socrates' nose at t1 and the moon plus Jupiter at t2. Instead, it means that since we don't know everything about the world we use some tools to develop our knowledge about it. F=ma is better for us to develop our knowledge about the world. But that relation about Socrates' nose and moon is not a good way to develop our knowledge about the world. In other words, we have the scientific concepts because they are better tools to develop our knowledge about the world. I am not saying that acceleration or atoms do not exist. What I am saying instead is that their existence is not more foundational than the existence of a set of a cow and two atoms. However, rather than a set of a cow and two atoms, the set of atoms is better to develop our knowledge about the world. Nothing convinces me to jump to their privileged reality from their usefulness for our species.

Now, let's clarify and argue for this claim. First of all, the world does not have its own structure but there is the structure through which we represent it. To show this I will draw a diagram of the world.
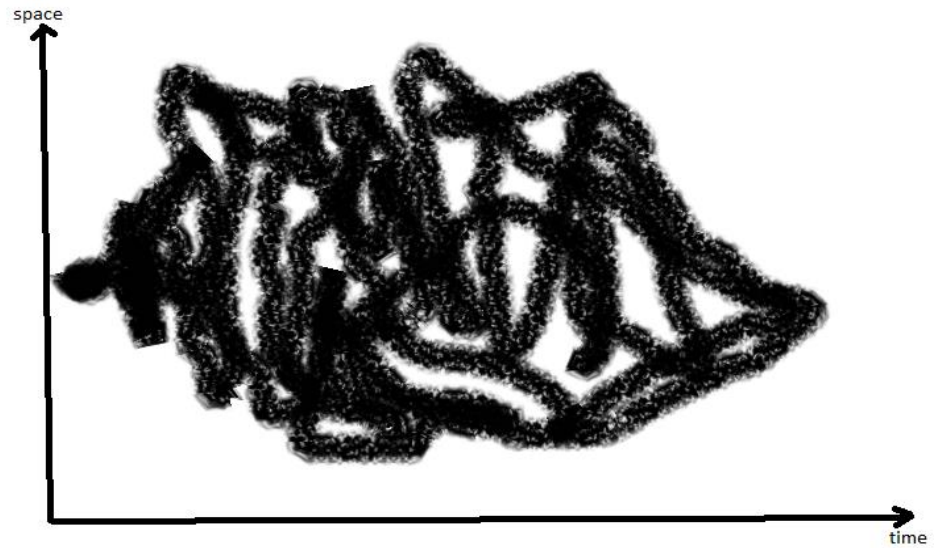
The diagram above represents the universe from its beginning to the end.

Suppose we have the whole picture of the universe as above.

Then, suppose physics in its finished form carves the universe above in the following way.
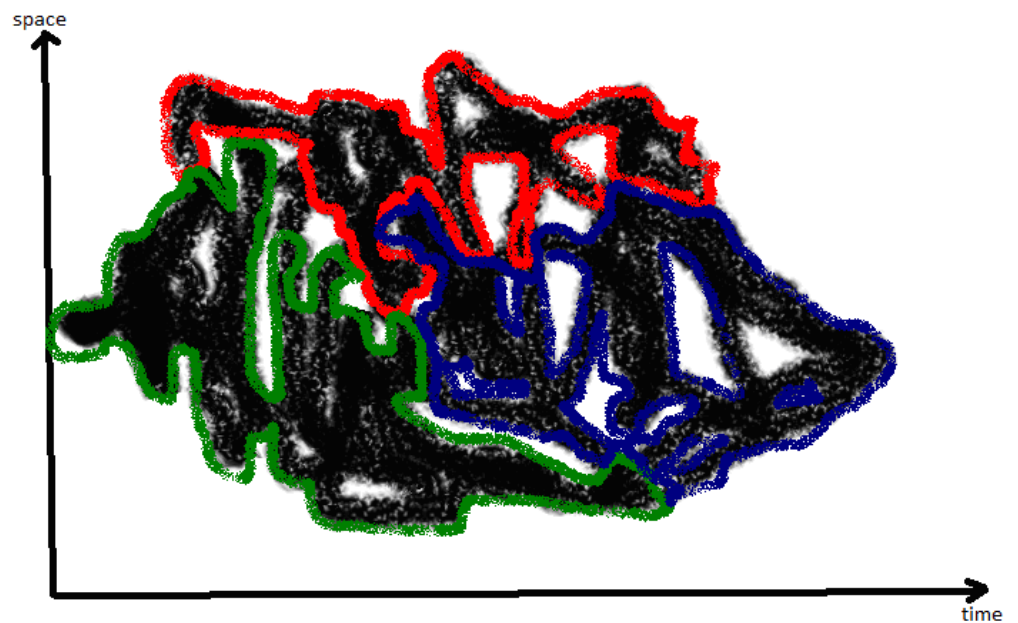
Parts in different colors represent different parts of universe. These parts take their place in mathematical equations. Through these equations scientists understand the world to predict its behaviors. However in our diagram of the world, we don't need any prediction. The universe from starting point to the end is already out there. Those who don't have access to the whole picture of universe need tools to predict it.

My question is this: What would be wrong with the following diagram in which the universe is carved in a different way.
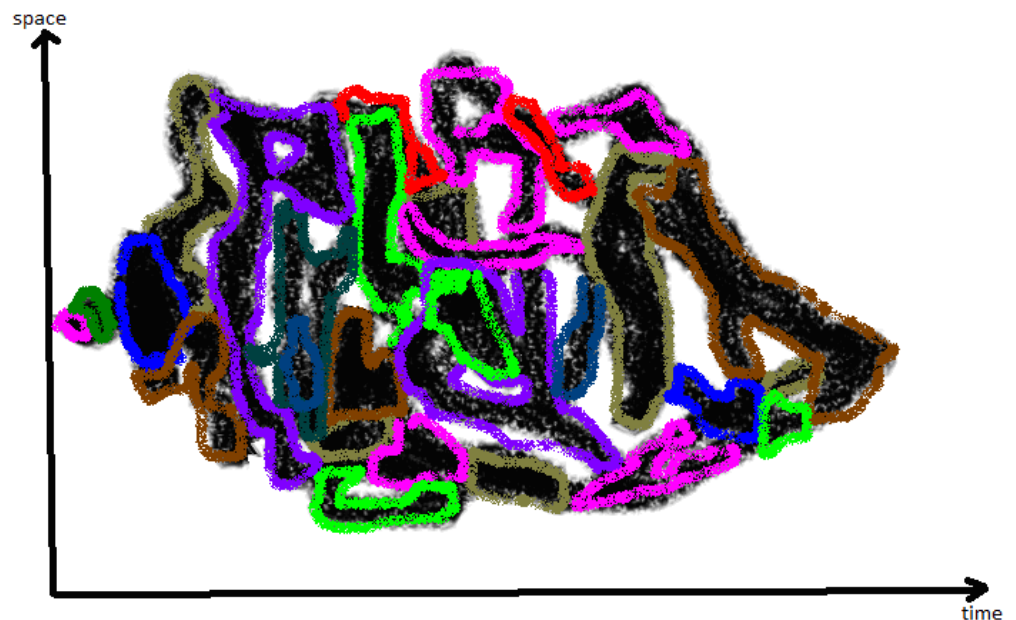
Suppose that this diagram above represents the universe carved up in a way which is far from the way universe is carved up through physics. For example, some atoms at t1; Socrates' nose at time t2 and the sun at t3 constitute a part of universe. Suppose that part is represented in mathematical equations.

Since we have the whole picture of the universe we can have good mathematical equations. To make it more familiar I can give another example. This last diagram might allow us to establish a relation between stars and our behaviors. So just as astrology, which is not a science, does we can link our behaviors to the behavior of the stars.

This seems crazy. I believe that there is no relation between stars and our behaviors. However, how can I justify my objection to the last diagram? The universe is out there and it is carved it that way. What is wrong with it? Does it affect my predictions? In case of astrology, yes, we can say that what the astrologist says does not give us good predictions. However, in our case since we have the picture of the whole universe there is no such prediction problem. This crazy diagram works just as physics works. Quine asks, "But what if, happily and beknownst, we have achieved a theory that is confirmable to every possible observation, past and future? In what sense could the world then be said to deviate from what the theory claims?" Then he answers, "clearly in none."[103]

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[103] Quine, *Things and Theories*, 22

SIMPLICITY

But, there must be something wrong with this crazy diagram. Is it about simplicity? I don't think so. First of all, even when we have two equally simple ways of carving the world, still we might find one of them crazy. For example, the universe can be carved up into stars and our behaviors. This might be done as simply as the way universe is carved up by classical mechanics. Would we say that they are equally good ways of carving the world? We wouldn't say so. We would find the astrological one crazy.

In the actual case also, we find the astrological claims crazy. But in the actual case we can justify our judgment on astrological claims. In the actual case what the astrologist says is not coherent with the predictions. So, in the actual case the problem is more epistemological. In the actual case we don't have the whole picture of the universe. We have missing parts. Through science we are filling those missing parts. Actual astrologists are not successful at filling those parts. On the other hand, a correct science[104] is perfectly correct to fill those missing parts.

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[104] I don't mean today's physics. I mean physics in its finished form.

Another thing to note is that in the actual case even if those astrologists were successful at filling the missing parts, we would still find their claims crazy. I think this is more a priori. I don't think that anyone in a serious scientific institution would take such crazy claims worthy of examination.

However, the case I am talking about in this paper is not the actual one. It is a thought experiment. In this thought experiment we have the whole picture of the universe. There are no missing parts. In that case what would be the difference between a crazy way of carving up the world and the one science recommends? I refuse simplicity to eliminate the crazy one because there could be equally simple ways of carving the world but still we might find one of them crazy. I mean that if we find out a simple astrological way of carving up the world, I would still find it crazy.

Secondly, where is our justification for attributing simplicity to the fundamental nature of the world? What kind of argument could help me to accept that the world is simple, in itself, independent of our conceptualization? Where in the world can I find simplicity as a virtue? Again, suppose we have the whole picture of the world. In that case, why would I carve it up in a simple way? I don't see any reason to do so other than our scientific habits. To note, my argument here is a negative one. What I am saying is that I don't see anything to convince me to attribute simplicity to the world. All I know is that it is a very

good tool for us to develop our knowledge about the world by helping *us* understand it. But I don't have any reason to go further and say that, independently of us, the simpler theories are better (or more fundamental) descriptions of the world.

Simplicity, at most, is about our rationality. [105] The arguments for simplicity are a priori, naturalistic and statistical. Those a priori arguments are originally theological and claim that God created a beautiful, simple universe.[106] However, as I don't have any theological commitments, this kind of argument does not persuade me. On the other hand, a priori arguments can be metaphysical. However, as Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy says, "it can be difficult to distinguish between an *a priori* defense and *no* defense".[107]

A naturalistic defense is based on what lessons we derive from the actual scientific practices. It means that according to a naturalistic defense the actual scientific practice shows that accepted theories are simpler. However, of two theories, the simpler one is accepted, *other things being equal*. But, in actual scientific practice, other things are never equal. Another problem is how to

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[105] Alan Baker, "Simplicity", *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* February 25, 2010, http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/simplicity/
[106] Alan Baker, "Simplicity", *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* February 25, 2010, http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/simplicity/
[107] Alan Baker, "Simplicity", *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* February 25, 2010, http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/simplicity/

measure simplicity; based on the number of different kinds of objects, the complexity of the laws, or something else?[108]

As Baker says, neither a priori nor naturalistic justifications of simplicity are good enough. The third one is the statistical approach, which does not attribute simplicity to the world itself. If simplicity is understood statistically then it cannot be the criterion of which of two ways of carving the world is more real. Because of this, this approach is not related to my thesis.

Indeed, as the Baker explains, all three approaches, a priori, naturalistic, and statistical, are about rationality and not about reality.[109] Quine, on the other hand, tries to explain our preference for simplicity with pragmatic concerns. He thinks that our appeal to simplicity is due to our "wishful thinking", "perceptual bias", "bias in the experimental criteria of concepts", "preferential system of scorekeeping".[110]

So either way, simplicity is about rationality or our pragmatic concerns, it is irrelevant to my concern about reality. It might be plausible to appeal to simplicity because of the rational or pragmatic concerns, but there is no reason

[108] Alan Baker, "Simplicity", *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* February 25, 2010, http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/simplicity/
[109] Alan Baker, "Simplicity", *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* February 25, 2010, http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/simplicity/
[110] Quine, On simple theories of a complex world. *Synthese* 15, 1, 1963, 106

to say that reality is also simple. Just as Quine thinks, simplicity is just a tool compatible with our cognitive faculties.[111]

MODALITY

So, I don't think that simplicity is a good argument to find one way of carving the world crazy; another way good. Could modality help us to justify our judgments about crazy ways of carving up the world? I mean can we say that "yes in actual universe such and such ways of carving the world work but if the case was different, then crazy ways of carving the world would not work." It is possible to say so. A crazy way of carving up the world might not work in a possible universe. Such crazy way of carving up the world works in all instances of the universe since we find that crazy way through carving the whole universe in a random way. I mean since in the thought experiment we saw that whole universe is laid out and we carved it in such a crazy way. So that crazy way would work in every instances of universe. However, it might not work in a possible universe although the scientific way of carving up the world might work in all possible universes. I will not discuss modality here. My question is very straight: Where is that possible universe? I mean in such a thought experiment that the whole universe is laid out before our eyes; I don't see any

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[111] Peter Godfrey Smith, "Quine and Pragmatism" in *A Companion to W.V.O. Quine,* ed. Gilbert Harman and Ernest Lepore, (Oxford, Wiley Blackwell, 2014), 13.

reason to talk about the possible universes. To remind again, my argument here is a negative one. I am simply asking (negatively) why would I analyze the possible universes when the whole universe is laid out before my eyes. So I don't see any reason to appeal to possible universes or possible conditions to find a difference between a crazy way of carving the world when the whole universe is laid out and a so-called scientific one.

Modality is just a tool to predict the events beforehand. For example, when we say if this happened then that would happen, we have a good tool to predict things. But when we have the whole picture of the universe, we wouldn't need any tool to make good predictions.

Quine in his papers "Reference and Modality", "Notes on Existence", "Three Grades of Modal Involvement" criticizes de re modality. His basic argument in those papers is that modality prevents variables to be quantified. I mean for Quine sentences like it is possible that there exist…. are better than sentences like there exist the possibility that ….. Quine claims that de re modality ends up with Aristotelian essentialism which is not good. In his arguments, Aristotelian essentialism's badness is an undisputed position. I mean he gives arguments to show that de re modality ends up with Aristotelian essentialism. But he doesn't discuss Aristotelian essentialism. For Quine, Aristotelian essentialism "is the doctrine that some of the attributes of a thing

(quite independently of the language in which the thing is referred to, if at all) may be essential to the thing, and others accidental. E.g., a man, or talking animal, or featherless biped (for they are in fact all the same things), is essentially rational and accidentally two-legged and talkative, not mere qua man but qua itself."[112] Similar to my claim, Quine thinks de re modality "leads us back into the metaphysical jungle of Aristotelian essentialism."[113]

Quine's claims can be criticized as it is done by Barcan Marcus and Kripke.[114] However, their criticism is not about Quine's evaluation of the Aristotelian essentialism. My concern here is this unpopular part of Quine's criticism of de re modality. I simply claim that appealing to modality to compare two different ways of carving the world does not make sense if the full picture (including past, present and future observations) was before our eyes. In other words, modality does not work to compare two different ways of carving the world which is consistent with all the observations that have been done and will be done. The way I reject realism about (de re) modality[115] is similar to Quine and Goodman's rejection of abstract objects. They just say that based on

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[112] Quine, *The Ways of Paradox*, 174
[113] Quine, *The Ways of Paradox*, 174
[114] See Ruth Barcan Marcus, Essentialism in Modal Logic, Saul Kripke Naming and Necessity
[115] By realism on modality I don't mean Lewis' modal realism.

their philosophical intuition they reject abstract objects[116]. Similarly, I claim that I simply reject the appeal to de re modality to distinguish between two ways of carving the world.

<div align="center">REVISING NATURALNESS</div>

Another important thing is that naturalness does not need to be an external constraint, for naturalness can be internal to a conceptual scheme. In some conceptual scheme, CS1, greenness might be more natural than grueness; while in another conceptual scheme, CS2, grueness might be more natural than greenness.

What counts as naturalness depends on our form of life, i.e. our conceptual scheme. A conceptual scheme is not simply a matter of choice but it is the world as we see it through education, language, biological structure, and environment. An outcome of such strong determinants may force us to see greenness as more natural than grueness. Wittgenstein makes a similar claim in *Lectures on the Foundations of Mathematics*: "It is unnatural –unnatural for *us*- to use "red" and "green" in the way we're accustomed, and then to go on to talk of "reddish-green". And it is unnatural for us, though not for everyone in the world, to count: "one, two, three, four, five, many". We just don't go on in that

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[116] Nelson Goodman and W.V.O. Quine, "Steps toward a constructive nominalism", *Journal of Symbolic Logic*,12, 4, 1947,105.

way."[117] But it could have been the other way round. In a very different human culture or a culture belonging to another organism (for example homo Neanderthal) quus might be more natural than green. Without appealing to a language-, culture-, conceptual scheme-independent world we can't solve Putnam's problem of interpretation. There is reality out there, but it is conceptualized by our science, culture, education, linguistic rules, biological capacity, past experience…etc. I call all these constituents our form of life.

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[117] Wittgenstein, *Wittgenstein's Lectures on the Foundations of Mathematics*, (London: University of Chicago Press, 1975), 243

CHAPTER VII

IS RELATIVISM SELF-REFUTING?

The charge that relativism is self-refutating starts with Plato's dialogue

Theatetus. Socrates argues that Protagoras' relativism is self-refutating.

Protagoras says that ""man is the measure of all things, of the existence of the

things that are and the non-existence of the things that are not.""[118] It means

that all truth is dependent on us. This is a form of relativism. Since somebody

else might disagree with Protagoras, for Socrates, Protagoras' relativism implies

the non-relativist' claim that that Protagoras' relativism is not true is also true.

"He concedes about his own opinion the truth of the opinion of those who

disagree with him and think that his opinion is false, since he grants that the

opinions of all men are true."[119] Then, Socrates says that this form of relativism

is untenable.

Then would he not be conceding that his own opinion is false, if he grants that
the opinion of those who think he is in error is true?
Theodorus: Necessarily.
Socrates: But the others do not concede that they are in error, do they?
Theodorus: No, they do not.
Socrates: And he, in turn, according to his writings, grants that this opinion also
is true.
Theodorus: Evidently.
Socrates: Then all men, beginning with Protagoras, will dispute—or rather, he

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[118] Plato, *Plato: With an English Translation, Theaetetus, Sophist.* Trans. Harold North
Fowler, (Cambridge, Mass. : Harvard University Press, 1996), 152a
[119] Plato, *Theaetetus*, 171a

will grant, after he once concedes that the opinion of the man who holds the opposite view is true[120]

He then claims that truth cannot be relativized to anything. "neither a dog nor any casual man is a measure of anything whatsoever that he has not learned."[121]

Hilary Putnam makes similar claims about relativism. Just like Socrates, Putnam thinks that relativism is untenable. "After all, is it not obviously contradictory to hold a point of view while at the same time holding that no point of view is more justified or right than any other?"[122] The problem with relativism here is that the point of view that "relativism is false [is] as good as any other" point of view.[123] It means that "if all is relative, then the relative is relative too."[124]

What we need to note is that relativism doesn't say that P and not P are both true at the same time. Instead it says that P is true according to one framework while not P is true according to another framework and that there is no framework-independent truth at all. In this sense, relativism is misinterpreted as if it says that relativism is not true while holding relativism. Let me show that how relativism is not self-refuting.

[120] Plato, *Theaetetus*, 171b
[121] Plato, *Theaetetus*, 171c
[122] Putnam, *Reason, Truth, and History*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1981), 119
[123] Putnam, *Reason, Truth, and History*, 119
[124] Putnam, *Reason, Truth, and History*, 120

Relativist claim: "There are no truths which are true independently of any culture."

Non-relativist claims: ""There are no truths which are true independently of any culture" is false."

The apparent contradiction occurs when we interpret relativists' general claim as follows. """There are no truths which are true independently of any culture" is false" is true". So "there are no truths which are true independently of any culture" implies, """"There are no truths which are true independently of any culture" is false" is true". In other words, P implies that not P is true. This is self-refutation. However, the interpretation is misguided here. The correct one is as follows. ""There are no truths which are true independently of any culture" is false **according to the culture C1**" is true." Since ""There are no truths which are true independently of any culture" is false according to the culture C1" is not the negation of "there are no truths which are true independently of any culture" there is no self refutation here.

However, even though there is no problem formally, there might be some informal problems since """There are no truths which are true independently of any culture" is false" according to the culture C1" sounds like the negation of "there are no truths which are true independently of any culture." However,

there is a difference between -P is false- and -P is false according to the culture

C1-. When a relativist says that P is false he is asserting it according to his own

culture. However, here, in our case, P is false according to the culture C1.

Now we have another problem. How can I persuade the non-relativist? If

what I say is true according to my culture and not true according to her culture

then it seems there is no way to persuade the non-relativist. However, again,

this is based on a problem with understanding relativism. Of course, in many

cases it is impossible to persuade others. Remember Wittgenstein, if I could

have a chance to speak with a lion I probably wouldn't persuade him not to kill.

However, this claim shouldn't be exaggerated and thought as if the relativist

claims that we can never talk with each other. Our life styles change constantly.

There is no constant clear border between social groups. Through interaction,

social groups affect other groups' lifestyles. Considering this social interaction

and its importance, I come up with two claims. a) I believe that I share almost

the same form of life with the people I am trying to persuade. b) We can

persuade people who don't share our life style through changing their life

styles. There are questions with both a and b. About a, the first question is how

come a relativist and a non-relativist share the same culture? Individuals of the

same culture might come up with two different opinions. However, through

making a conceptual scheme analysis with their own ways they can persuade

each other. But if they do not share the same culture, there is no way to persuade each other. For example, it seems there is no way to persuade a fundamental terrorist group that believes in a doctrine which is fundamentally incompatible with ours. We can at most change their form of life. This would happen only practically, not by persuading by arguments. About b, the question might be this: How can we change somebody's life style? There are ways to change it. Pleasure and pain are keys to change others life style. But of course there are many other ways to change others' life styles. Art, for example, can help us to do it. That's why sometimes we need artistic language to persuade people.

To summarize, first of all, relativity is not self-refuting because it doesn't assert P and not P at the same time. Instead it asserts both *P* and *P is false according to another culture*. *P* and *P is false according to another culture* do not contradict. Secondly, with these words I do not try to persuade those whose culture is closed to mine. I am trying to persuade those who say relativism is false but belong to the same culture as I do. I do it through analyzing our culture. For those others that I don't try to persuade in this paper, there must be ways other than argumentation. In other words those who share the same culture with me can be persuaded with the analysis of our conceptual scheme; others that do not share the same culture with me cannot be affected without

changing their life style first. For example, I don't think I can change a

fundamentally religious person's ideas just with argumentation. We can only

change his form of life.

Finally, Putnam claims that according to relativism there is no difference

between "being right and thinking he is right"[125] Of course not, there is a

difference due to the standards adopted. But the standards are cultural. He adds

"no difference between *asserting* or *thinking,* on the one hand, and *making noises*

(or producing mental images) on the other."[126] This is partly true. Those who have

fundamentally different conceptual schemes make mere noise for us. If a lion

could speak that would be a noise for us. For Putnam this means that "I am not

a *thinker* at all but a mere *animal."*[127] I would be happy with this conclusion. We

are not *thinkers* but mere *animals.*

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[125] Putnam, *Reason, Truth, and History*, 122
[126] Putnam, *Reason, Truth, and History*, 122
[127] Putnam, *Reason, Truth, and History*, 122

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