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Semantic deflationism deflated

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Abstract Deflationism is the view that certain metaphysical debates are defective, leaving it open whether the defect is best explained in semantic, conceptual, or epistemic terms. Local semantic deflationism is the thesis that familiar metaphysical debates, which appear to be about the existence and identity of material objects, are merely verbal. It's a form of *local* deflationism because it restricts itself to one particular area of metaphysics. It's a form of *semantic* deflationism because the defect it purports to identify in these debates is explained in terms of the broadly semantic notion of a merely verbal disputation. Three questions about this thesis are asked and answered here. Does a commitment to the principle of interpretive charity support it? No. Does it avoid the problems that plagued Carnap? No. Does it support a linguistic turn with respect to questions about the nature of material things? No. The central take-home message is that local semantic deflationism is unstable: advocates of the view must (on pain of inconsistency) admit that debates about material coincidence and identity are substantive.

Keywords Verbal disputation · Reference magnetism · Naturalness · Metaphysical structure · Composition · Coincidence

1 Did Suárez cheat?

I once observed a heated exchange in the graduate student lounge of a highly regarded philosophy program. The intensity of the dispute wasn't especially unusual, but its subject matter was. Students and faculty argued about whether Luis Suárez "cheated"

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by handling the ball to prevent a last minute goal in a quarterfinal match between Uruguay and Ghana in the 2010 World Cup. Some of us felt at the time that the dispute was merely verbal. On reflection, both sides of the dispute should have agreed that there was something cheap and less-than-fully-sportsmanlike about Suárez's violation of the rules; and, plausibly, there's an extended sense of the word according to which a cheap and unsportsmanlike rule-breaking qualifies as cheating.[1] At any rate, the main point that members of the Suárez-cheated camp probably wanted to make (or ought to have made) was that Suárez's hand-ball was a cheap and unsportsmanlike rule-breaking, and both sides of the dispute could have agreed to this. They could also have agreed that Suárez's hand-ball wasn't a *deceitful* or *unfair* violation of the rules, but was, rather, a *strategic* violation, performed in the open, and for which he was duly penalized. This, I recall, was the main point of the Suárez-didn't-cheat camp.

My description of the exchange about Suárez highlights an important feature of merely verbal disputes: charitably interpreting the two sides reveals that what one side is primarily intending to assert is perfectly consistent with what the other side is mainly trying (or ought) to say. Merely verbal disputes are disputes that can be resolved in a conciliatory way by properly regimenting certain fragments of language.[2] Some (but certainly not all) deflationists have argued that this feature—susceptibility to conciliatory interpretation; being "merely verbal"—is present in ongoing metaphysical debates about material objects. I'll call this view *semantic* deflationism in order to distinguish it from a variety of nearby positions. As I use the term here, deflationism is the view that certain metaphysical debates are defective, leaving it open whether the defect is best explained in semantic, conceptual (Thomasson 2007, 2015), or epistemic (Bennett 2009) terms. In the discussion below, I'll focus exclusively on semantic deflationism about the metaphysics of material objects. For stylistic reasons, I'll sometimes drop the modifier and simply speak of "the deflationist" or "deflationism", but it should be understood that I don't have the general doctrine in mind, just one specific way of developing it in terms of the idea of merely verbal disputation—a broadly semantic notion.

[1] If one is worried that 'cheating' simply can't be correctly used in this loose way, then the point I want to make can be made less directly. Imagine a different linguistic community, which resembles our community in all but one way: 'cheating' *is* correctly used to describe Suárez's handball in the language of this community. Presumably, this difference is compatible with 'cheating' playing roughly the same role in various rational activities (i.e., communication and inference). If members of the Suárez-cheated camp had been speaking this hypothetical community's language, then they would be asserting a truth consistent with the truth that members of the Suárez-wasn't-cheating camp were asserting.

[2] A dispute's being "merely verbal" in the intended sense is compatible with there being disputes in the vicinity that are entirely substantive. And it may well be that these "nearby" disputes are what the interlocutors are really (though dimly) aiming to prosecute. For example, the dispute about Suárez may well have been substantive insofar as it was an effort to properly calibrate (or, as others have put it, "metalinguistically negotiate" (Plunkett and Sundell 2013) or "modulate" (Ludlow 2014)) the meaning of 'cheating'. In other words, though the disagreement wasn't really about what it purported to be about—a certain non-linguistic factual matter—speakers could have been using (rather than mentioning) 'cheating' to advocate that the rough contours of its meaning be smoothed out in ways that would better serve the purposes for which 'cheating' is part of the lexicon. Or, as one anonymous referee suggests, the dispute might have been substantive insofar as it was a less-than-completely-perspicuous effort to determine the appropriate sentiment one ought to have toward Suárez. In either case, there would have been something semantically defective about the dispute, since it was carried out in terms that don't adequately reflect the genuine issue (how best to speak, or what feelings to have).

Eli Hirsch is probably the most prominent contemporary semantic deflationist. He presents his variety of deflationism as a descendent of Carnap's (Hirsch 2011).[3] Both Carnap and Hirsch rely on principles about the conditions for meaningful speech. Although it's a controversial exegetical question whether the "metasemantic" considerations that Carnap relied on require anything as strong as verificationism, it's quite clear that Hirsch rests his case on the principle of interpretive charity—very roughly, the principle that, all else equal, we should prefer interpretations of speech that represent speakers as more rather than less rational. But, unlike Carnap, Hirsch restricts his deflationism to disputes about the existence and identity of "perceivable objects" (Hirsch 2008a, p. 192). One might call it, therefore, a *local* semantic deflationism. The Platonism-nominalism debate, and the physicalism–dualism debate, are in good order.[4] Global deflationists take a dim view of metaphysics generally.

"My central claim", Hirsch says, "is that many familiar questions about the ontology of physical objects are merely verbal. Nothing is substantively at stake in these questions beyond the correct use of language. A derivative claim is that, since they are verbal, the proper way to resolve these questions is by appealing to […] ordinary language" (Hirsch 2005, p. 144). To paraphrase: typical metaphysical disputes about the nature of material things are most charitably interpreted as being about how to properly use certain words. And it's reasonable to suppose that verbal disputes of this sort can be reliably settled by investigating ordinary language. If Hirsch is right, semantic deflationism supports a "linguistic turn" in a large part of metaphysics. As Hirsch puts the point elsewhere, "If our business is the ontology of moderate-sized dry goods then our only philosophical task is to explore the currents and undercurrents of our ordinary ways of thinking and talking about the perceptible world around us" (2003, p. 123).

The subject of this paper is local semantic deflationism—does the principle of charity support it (Sects. 2, 3); does it support a linguistic turn with respect to questions about the nature of material things (Sect. 4); and does it avoid the problems that plagued

[3] According to Carnap (1950), insofar as ontological questions are meaningful, they're questions about which "linguistic framework" one ought to adopt. So there isn't anything factual at stake beyond the issue of how best to speak. Consequently, the true subject matter of these debates is obscured if they're carried out, as is often the case, in the material mode of speech. To that extent, then, they're semantically defective. Whether Carnap took these disputes to be *merely* verbal is an exegetical question on which I don't want to take a stand. As Hirsch uses the phrase, a dispute is merely verbal if there isn't anything at stake in how it's ultimately resolved other than the correct or best way to speak. (Compare this characterization with the quotation from Hirsch in the main body of this paper. See also Hirsch (2016, p. 2 and p. 6).) To be clear, I'm certainly not attributing any of Hirsch's more specific commitments, like his belief in the primacy of interpretive charity and his commitment to a plurality of equally good quantifier meanings, to Carnap. Furthermore, there were epistemological elements to Carnap's deflationary outlook that appear to be absent in Hirsch's work. As one anonymous referee reminds me, Carnap was partially motivated by unclarity about what it would take to confirm certain metaphysical claims. And, as I acknowledge in the main body of the paper, it's unclear whether this motivation is best understood in verificationist terms, at least as it's presented in 'Empiricism, Semantics, and Ontology'. Carnap scholarship is fraught with difficult questions here. I'm grateful to the referee for recommending that I signal these caveats at the outset. I introduce Carnap into the discussion not to take a stand on whether his deflationary outlook was similar to Hirsch's, but to raise the question whether Hirsch's local deflationism can avoid all of the pitfalls commonly associated with a more global suspicion of metaphysics.

[4] See Hirsch (2010).

Carnap (Sect. 5)? The short answer to all three questions is no. The upshot will be that the local deflationist must (on pain of inconsistency) admit that debates about material coincidence and identity are substantive.

2 Composition, conciliation, and carving at the joints

To minimize exposition, let's focus on a debate that will be familiar to many readers.

Una: There are trout–turkeys.[5]
Niles: There isn't any such thing. There are only fundamental entities arranged troutwise and turkeywise.[6]

According to Hirsch, Una and Niles are best interpreted as speaking distinct, specialized languages that, in many ways, resemble standard English. Call these languages, respectively, Universalish and Nihilese. The most fundamental semantic difference between these languages consists in the interpretation of their quantifiers.

The denotation of 'There is' in English is, let's suppose, the second-order property that a first-order property has iff the first-order property has an instance. The denotation of 'There is' in Universalish is, therefore, the second-order property that a first-order property has iff, were it the case that composition (trivially) occurs, then the first-order property would have an instance. The denotation of 'There is' in Nihilese is, then, the second-order property that a first-order property has iff the first-order property has an instance and the instance is a fundamental entity. Thus we ought to interpret Una's exchange with Niles in our language as follows.

Una: Were it the case that that composition (trivially) occurs, then there would be trout–turkeys.
Niles: It's not the case that the property of being a trout–turkey has an instance that is a fundamental entity.

Thus Niles is speaking the truth in his language, just as Una is speaking the truth in hers. Our interlocutors no longer appear to be contradicting each other. Our interpretation is, therefore, conciliatory. Furthermore, Universalish and Nihilese are intensionally equivalent languages: they permit their speakers to partition logical space in exactly the same ways. For example, any statement Una makes about tables using her language we can interpret on behalf of Niles as a statement about fundamental entities that are arranged tablewise, and vice versa (cf. Hirsch 2008a, p. 190). So, according to Hirsch, the two languages are metaphysically on a par: neither has any more fact-stating power than the other.

Why is the best interpretation of Una and Niles such as to make their dispute merely verbal? According to Hirsch, the answer is that a conciliatory interpretation is the most charitable way of understanding their exchange (Hirsch 2005). In particular, Hirsch

[5] A trout–turkey is a creature with the undetached front half of a trout and the undetached back half of a turkey. Una is a universalist. She believes that composition is a trivial relation—one that imposes no additional demands beyond there being some things.

[6] Niles is a nihilist. He believes that nothing is a composite object. There are, of course, intermediate positions between universalism and nihilism, but I ignore them to avoid complicating the set up.

emphasizes that any interpretation that would represent Una and Niles as engaging in a dispute about some non-linguistic matter of fact would also represent at least one of them as committing either an inexplicable (or hard-to-explain) error in perceptual judgment, or an embarrassingly obvious conceptual mistake.

The idea that a conciliatory interpretation of Una and Niles is the best because it's the most charitable has been challenged. The most prominent sort of objection—and the one that, according to Hirsch, provides the best bet for his adversaries—is the objection from naturalness or structure.[7] The basic idea behind this objection owes a great deal to Lewis (1983, 1984), but it takes shape more fully in the work of Sider (2001, 2009, 2011). According to Sider, correct interpretation requires that we not only take into account the demands of charity, which dictate that our theory represent (insofar as is possible) the speakers of our target language as rational, but also that we assign meanings which do a better job of "carving the world at the joints". Lewis gave us a pretty good idea of what it means to say that some predicate-meanings carve better at the joints: they're comparatively more fundamental, and their distribution contributes more to facts about objective resemblance. The more a property satisfies these conditions, the more "natural" it is. Sider's work generalizes the idea of property naturalness to quantifier-meanings. The resulting notion is "metaphysical structure". Though this isn't Sider's preferred way of thinking about quantifier-meanings, for our purpose it would do no harm to continue thinking of them, *à la* Frege, as second-order properties. Thinking of them in this way would allow us to lean on Lewis's explanation in terms of fundamentality and objective resemblance.[8]

According to Sider, interpretation is a messy balancing act between two requirements that may push and pull in opposite directions, since the most charitable interpretation could assign meanings that do a relatively poor job of carving at the joints. Sider combines this general theory of interpretation with a suggestion about how speech in philosophical settings is to be understood. He suggests that when speakers are engaged in metaphysical inquiry, the requirement that we assign joint-carving meanings takes precedence.[9] This entails that the existential quantifier in the official statement of each thesis ought to be assigned a maximally natural meaning. Assuming there is such a thing, and that there's no more than one, the presumption in favor of a charitable, conciliatory interpretation is defeated. Thus it may well be that one of either Una or Niles is wrong. Maybe they both are, and composition is somehow restricted. Settling the matter would require that we do some nontrivial metaphysics, not merely explore ordinary language.

[7] See in particular Hirsch's remarks in his (2003, p. 122) and his (2005, p. 170).

[8] There are elements of Lewis's theory of naturalness that I'm leaving out. For example, I'm leaving out the connection it posits between naturalness and laws of nature. My reason for doing so is that I don't want to make a long paper any longer.

[9] Hirsch (2008b) argues that this sort of stipulation imposes inconsistent interpretive demands. For a response, see Sider (2014). In any event, the precedence of the joint-carving constraint is premised on the assumption that the aim of inquiry is to represent the world in *its* terms. This assumption will be explained and assessed momentarily.

Lewis focused on predicates, Sider on a wider range of logical terms. It's worth mentioning another difference between them. For Lewis, the requirement that interpretations assign natural properties is a corollary of the principle of charity.

> We need further constraints, of the sort called principles of (sophisticated) charity, or 'humanity'. […] *It is here that we need natural properties*. The principles of charity will impute a bias toward believing that things are green rather than grue, toward having a basic desire for long life rather than for long-life-unless-one-was-born-on-Monday-and-in-that-case-life-for-an-even-number-of-weeks. *In short, they will impute eligible content, where ineligibility consists in severe unnaturalness of the properties the subject supposedly believes or desires or intends himself to have* (Lewis 1983, p. 375, my emphasis).

But Sider sees the interpretive presumption in favor of assigning joint-carving meanings as something distinct from, and (in a metaphysical context) superordinate to, the principle of charity.

> Suppose, for the sake of argument, that **existence** fits PVI's use of 'there exists' perfectly, and therefore fails to fit DKL's use. Does this mean that DKL does not mean **existence** by 'there exists', and rather means plural existence$_{DKL}$ (say) instead? Surely not; *surely **existence**'s superior naturalness outweighs its failure to fit DKL's use of 'existence' perfectly* […] (Sider 2009, p. 410, my emphasis).[10]

Hirsch thinks Sider is right to treat the joint-carving constraint as a principle that competes with charity.

> Lewis's terminology is a bit puzzling, since he seems to treat his naturalness-presumption as a corollary of the principle of charity, although there is no obvious connection between this presumption and the charitable presumption that the sentences accepted by the community are true or reasonable. (The apparent absence of any connection between the two presumptions is the main topic of my *Dividing Reality*.) (Hirsch 2005, p. 170)

It would be a problem for the Lewis–Sider theory of content determination if the joint-carving constraint weren't a corollary of independently motivated principles of interpretation. The reason is that it would render the theory vulnerable to the charge of appealing to magic.

Hilary Putnam was fond of this point (1981, p. 53). One way to make it more vivid is by asking what, specifically, do reference and meaning have to do with naturalness and structure. Why is appealing to such metaphysical notions any more respectable for the purpose of *explaining* (in reductive terms, mind you!) how reference and meaning are fixed than a view on which the presumption of charity is sometimes defeated on the grounds that interpretations ought to accommodate certain *primitive* semantic relations? Why isn't the idea that some properties are more natural, and thus more eligible

[10] I interpret "**existence** fits PVI's use" to mean that assigning **existence** to PVI's use of 'there is' would be the most charitable interpretation. Further evidence that Sider sees the joint-carving constraint as being in competition with the principle of charity can be found in his (2014, p. 4).

for reference, simply another way to put the view that some properties are "reference magnets", exerting a kind of primitive referential force (cf. Hodes 1984, p. 135). Reference magnetism explains nothing. Unless the joint-carving constraint follows from independently justified interpretive requirements, such as charity, one struggles to see how it improves on reference magnetism. Are we merely disguising how unexplanatory the theory is by swapping metaphors—joint-carving for magnetism?

Lewis himself seems to have had little patience for this kind objection, likening it to schoolyard name-calling, and giving it the sort of response that verbal abuse on the playground deserves. "Recently, [Putnam] has called my talk of elite classes 'spooky' and 'medieval-sounding'. Well, sticks and stones may break my bones…" (Lewis 1984, p. 229). But even if one is perfectly happy to acknowledge the respectability of naturalness for certain purposes, more is required to engender confidence in its *interpretive* significance. It's probably because he believed the naturalness constraint to follow from a more general demand for charitable interpretation that Lewis took himself to be warranted in simply dismissing the charge of appealing to magic. Still, Hirsch is right to say that "there is no *obvious* connection" between naturalness and charity. What one would like is something resembling a derivation of the idea that naturalness imposes an interpretive constraint from the principle of charity, and perhaps some highly plausible auxiliary assumptions. As far as I'm aware, no such derivation has been attempted.

But authors have tried to explain the interpretive significance of naturalness in other ways. For example, Williams (2007) has argued that (i) interpretations are theories, (ii) simple theories are preferable, and (iii) interpretations that assign comparatively natural properties appear to be simpler than bizarre interpretations that assign relatively unnatural properties. If correct, naturalness constrains reference by determining which interpretive theory is, all things considered, simplest. However, Williams then exploits this conclusion to make trouble for the Lewis–Sider view. He shows that, sometimes, the simplest interpretation is actually the "gruesomely gerrymandered" one that Lewis and Sider want to disqualify by means of the joint-carving constraint. Anyone fond of the constraint will be unhappy with this outcome.

More recently, however, Sider has offered a different explanation of the interpretive significance of joint-carving. It relies on the assumption that

> […] *reference is an explanatory relation*—one can explain certain facts by citing what words refer to. But if reference were given by a bizarre interpretation [an interpretation assigning relatively unnatural properties], then reference-involving 'explanations' would not in fact be explanatory, since they would be cast in badly non-joint-carving terms. Hence reference is not given by a bizarre interpretation (2011, pp. 27–29, emphasis in original).

A crucial yet implicit premise in this argument is that if a bizarre interpretation accurately represented what the terms of our language referred to, then the reference relation itself would fail to correspond to a joint in reality. Reference would be comparatively less natural. And if *that* were the case, then explanations in terms of reference would be less explanatory than they in fact are, since the explanatory potential of a theory is partly determined by whether its central notions pick out relatively natural phenomena.

But why should the naturalness of the reference relation be diminished if a bizarre interpretation were correct? The accuracy of a bizarre interpretation would only mean that one of the relata in cases of reference—namely, the referent—would be unnatural. But the naturalness of a relation isn't determined by the naturalness of its relata. The identity relation is an excellent example of a completely natural relation—it's absolutely fundamental and makes for maximal objective resemblance—but some of its relata are highly unnatural properties.[11] Grueness, after all, is identical to grueness. So, even if reference is an explanatory relation, and even if theories put in terms of structural features are more explanatory, Sider's explanation of why there's a joint-carving constraint on interpretation seems to fail, because the accuracy of a bizarre interpretation wouldn't diminish the naturalness, and thus wouldn't undermine the explanatory potential, of reference.

Where does all of this leave us? The most recent efforts to explain the interpretive significance of the joint-carving constraint are highly problematic. One threatens to show that the Lewis–Sider theory resolves radical semantic indeterminacy in favor of bizarre interpretations, while the other rests on a false premise. Can we do better? Yes. I'd like to construct a derivation that would vindicate Lewis's original view about the connection between charity and naturalness.

My argument will rely on a key insight from Sider (2009, 2011), namely, that one of the aims of inquiry is to formulate theories that carve reality at its joints.

> Lewis's conception of objective structure is important, but I want to highlight other connections. First, structure has an evaluative component. The goal of inquiry is not merely to believe many true propositions and few false one. It is to discern the structure of the world. An ideal inquirer must think of the world in terms of its distinguished structure; she must carve the world at its joints in her thinking and language. *Employers of worse languages [i.e., languages for which a bizarre interpretation is accurate] are worse inquirers*. Imagine [a group of inquirers] divvying up the world in terms of grue and bleen […] (2009, p. 19).

Rather than encoding the division between green things and blue things as basic elements in their systems of representation, they primitively encode the division between grue things and bleen things.

> It is almost irresistible to describe these people as *making a mistake*. […] The problem is that they've got the wrong concepts. They're carving the world up incorrectly. By failing to think in terms of [green and blue], they are *missing something*. Although their beliefs are true, those beliefs do not match the world's structure (2011, p. 2).

With this idea in hand, we can formulate the derivation as follows.

(P1) Language users use language to request, convey, and acquire information. In short, language use is (very often and non-accidentally) inquiry.[12]

[11] The example of identity is adapted for my purpose from Korman (2015, p. 305), which is concerned with different issues.

[12] The plausibility of this is reflected in the disproportionate attention that philosophers give to literal, assertoric language. The assumption underlying such favoritism seems to be that the transmission of information

(P2) One of the aims of inquiry is to carve reality at its joints.
(C1) Therefore, interpretations of a language that assign non-joint-carving meanings represent users of that language as falling short of one of the aims of inquiry.
(P3) All else equal, it would be uncharitable of an interpreter to assign meanings that represent users of the relevant language as falling short of the aims of their language use.
(C2) Therefore, there's a charitable presumption against assigning non-joint-carving meanings.

The presumption is defeasible, but that is as it should be.

If my argument is sound, then the principle of charity and the joint-carving constraint aren't in competition, as Sider and Hirsch seem to think. The latter is merely one among several more determinate requirements, each falling under a broader principle that, vaguely put, demands we represent subjects as being relatively well off epistemically. One wonders, then, what the other, more specific, requirements of charity are. Hirsch provides a helpful list. "If one interpretation has the effect of sustaining some of the typical speaker's assertions while abandoning others, and a second interpretation has the reverse effect, the correct interpretation is the one that tends as far as possible to favor assertions that are:

A. assigned good reasons (rather than truth)
B. numerous
C. perceptual
D. specific (as in examples)
E. strongly held
F. widely held
G. hard to qualify
H. hard to explain away by a theory of human error" (Hirsch 2003, p. 113).

If my argument is sound, then Hirsch's list should be extended to incorporate the idea that the correct interpretation is the one that tends as far as possible to favor assertions that are

I. made with basic lexical items that denote joints in reality.

And, in light of this new condition, the best-case scenario appears to be that it simply isn't clear whether Hirsch's argument vindicates a deflationary attitude toward the debate between Una and Niles. For it might well be that one quantifier-meaning carves better at the joints than all the others.

3 On the interpretive (in)significance of metaphysical structure

Let's quickly review. Hirsch argues that the debate between Una and Niles is best interpreted as a merely verbal dispute on the grounds that it's the most charitable take on

Footnote 12 continued
is the fundamental purpose for linguistic communication, and that other kinds of linguistic interaction can be explained derivatively.

their exchange. I argued that the principle of charity supports an additional interpretive constraint—one which requires assigning meanings that carve at the joints, and which can be used to justify the view that Una and Niles are engaged in a dispute about a non-linguistic matter of fact: whether the world's metaphysical structure vindicates one set of existential claims or another. The central premise of my argument, P2, relied on an important thesis from Sider (2009, 2011), namely, that one of the aims of inquiry is to carve reality at its joints. The temptation to accept this thesis is based on the thought that green–blue divisions are better than grue–bleen divisions. This thought may seem like nothing more than a commonsensical rejection of what's often called Goodmania: skepticism about whether 'All emeralds are green' enjoys a greater degree of confirmation than 'All emeralds are grue'. But from the deflationist's point of view, P2 smuggles in something more dubious. Once we have this commitment in view, I'll explain why the deflationist takes it to be problematic. I'll then argue that an impartial evaluation of this back and forth reveals a dialectical standoff: it's simply unclear whether the principle of charity favors an interpretation of the relevant metaphysical dispute as merely verbal or fully substantive.

'Grue', you'll recall, means *green and observed for the first time before (or at) some particular moment in the future,* t*, or blue and observed for the first time after* t.[13] Similarly, 'bleen' means *blue and observed for the first time before (or at)* t *or green and observed for the first time after* t. Given these definitions, let's assume the meaning of the complex predicate, 'grue and observed before (or at) *t* or bleen and not observed before (or at) *t* or not observed at all but…', determines exactly the same classification of objects as the meaning of 'green'.[14] In fact, given the way in which 'grue' and 'bleen' were introduced into our language—being explicitly defined in terms of 'green' and 'blue', respectively—just a little bit of logical acumen would be sufficient to determine that 'green' is intensionally equivalent to the more complex Goodmanese predicate, 'grue and… or bleen and… or not observed at all but…'. Quite plausibly, then, the two predicates are analytically equivalent. Thus one *might* think that the complex Goodmanese expression and 'green' carve equally well at the joints, in which case one would think that Goodmanese is no worse than English at representing chromatic structure. The only difference would be that English allows speakers to do so in a syntactically simple way. But these thoughts are based on a misunderstanding. They rely on the mistaken presupposition that two expressions carve the same joint if they're analytically equivalent. But that is crucially not Sider's view. Although it's analytically equivalent to the English word 'green', the complex Goodmanese predicate doesn't carve the same joint. In fact, from Sider's point of view, its meaning is significantly less natural than the meaning of 'green'. So, for Sider, the two hypotheses below express

[13] This isn't quite how Goodman (1955) defined it, but it's not too far off, and it serves my purpose much better than the original definition.

[14] How the ellipsis is filled in will depend on what other color predicates are part of Goodmanese. For the sake of argument, let's assume that Goodmanese is rich enough to construct a complex predicate that's intensionally equivalent to 'green'. Assume also that these additional color predicates are definable using English color terms. These assumptions secure the claim that 'green' and the complex Goodmanese color predicate above are analytically equivalent.

the same truth, but only the 'green' hypothesis represents (in the relevant sense of 'to represent') genuine chromatic structure.[15]

(G1) All emeralds are green.
(G2) All emeralds are grue and observed before (and during) t or bleen and observed after t or not observed at all but….

For P2 to sustain the sort of interpretive constraint that Sider intends, it has to be understood so as to entail that G1 is better than G2. How is this comparative evaluation to be understood, the deflationist wonders, if not as an epistemic judgment about which theory is better confirmed? From the semantic deflationist's point of view, this is the additional commitment that the premise smuggles in: confirmation isn't merely a matter of rendering it more probable that the truth-conditions associated with a sentence or thought are actually satisfied; it partially consists in truths being formulated in a certain representational format, even when the different forms (in this case, 'green' and 'grue and… or bleen and… or not observed at all but…') are analytically equivalent.[16]

One would be justified in wondering why an inability to represent structure in a syntactically simple way should constitute a theoretical mistake. Surely some further argument is required. Hirsch raises this challenge in a different way.

> The crucial difference to note is that between "carving at the joints" and "saying where the joints are." If we believe in the objectivity of reality's joints, it perhaps follows immediately that we ought to have the wherewithal to say where they are. This would require that we have certain words in our language, perhaps indeed the word "(reality's) joints." But to carve at the joints, in the sense relevant to this discussion, is to arrange for there to be a special kind of *structural* fit between [the basic expressions of] one's language and reality's joints. An argument is needed to show why that kind of fit is required (1993, pp. 52–53, my emphasis).[17]

It is for this reason that I think a deflationist would reject both my argument and condition I. From her point of view, one is left wondering why correspondence with structure should be an interpretive requirement at all.

I used to be far more sympathetic to this response than I now am. At a certain point, I wanted to say that confirmation isn't so sensitive to the linguistic trappings of a theory as to distinguish between analytically equivalent hypotheses. To think otherwise is no more plausible, I thought, than a view on which the epistemic merit of a theory is partly dependent on the quality of the font with which it's formulated. But now it seems to me that we've reached a dialectical standoff. The reason is that I'm not entirely sure what *epistemic* (as opposed to pragmatic) merit amounts to once we allow for certain

[15] Recall: "It is almost irresistible to describe [the community of Goodmaniacs] as *making a mistake*. […] **Although their beliefs are true, those beliefs do not match the world's structure**" (Sider 2011, p. 2, my emphasis in bold).

[16] 'Hesperus is Hesperus' may be epistemically better than 'Hesperus is Phosphorus', even though they express the same truth-conditions, but that's because the different linguistic forms (in this case, 'Hesperus' and 'Phosphorus') aren't analytically equivalent.

[17] The point expressed in this passage is reiterated in Hirsch (2013b).

considerations to make an "epistemic" difference with respect to a hypothesis without making it more likely that the hypothesis is true.

P2 is a normative constraint on theory selection alongside (not ultimately explicable in terms of) truth. So I think it only promotes confusion to put a great deal of weight on the contrast between epistemic and pragmatic merit in this context. And it now seems to me that the response I gave on behalf of Hirsch makes too much of this contrast. The basic point, I now think, is just that P2 identifies a non-alethic respect in which theories can be more or less virtuous, and we needn't bother about whether to classify this reason as distinctively epistemic or pragmatic. On Sider's view, the ideology of a theory (its most basic concepts and primitive vocabulary) reflects a commitment about what joints there are in nature—a commitment that may not impede our ability to use the ideology to represent truths, but a commitment that may nevertheless be incorrect. If this non-alethic dimension of correctness makes sense to you, then P2 will not seem analogous with the crazy view that nicer fonts are truth-conducive. For a better analogy—one that highlights the plausibility of P2—we might consider the use of real numbers as a way of representing certain physical magnitudes, like temperature. Important features of temperature are nicely represented by the reals. And, as Heck (2007) notes in a discussion about an entirely different matter,

> […] given a one–one mapping between the reals and the ordinals, it would be easy enough to define a relation on the ordinals that mirrored the natural ordering of the reals […]. But this ordering of the ordinals is unlikely to be in any way a natural one. There are ever so many relations on the ordinals: Why should that one be of any significance? Indeed, the ordinals themselves have a natural ordering, but it is very unlikely that it would have any significance at all as regards temperature.
>
> Now, to be honest, I don't know that I have anything to say here that would move someone who was already committed to the view that it is merely *convenient* to measure temperature using the reals rather than the ordinals. But most of us, I hope, don't find this view very appealing (pp. 7–8, emphasis in original).

Heck's point is that, though the ordinals could be used as an empirically (even analytically) equivalent system of representing temperature, the ordering relation that would allow for such representation would appear arbitrary, giving rise to certain questions that don't arise from within the standard way of modeling temperature. It may be misleading to regard this as an epistemic reason for using the reals, since truth doesn't hang in the balance, but it doesn't quite seem like a pragmatic justification either. Nothing is gained by trying to fit this example into age-old dichotomies. In short, P2 says that a preference for G1 over G2 enjoys the same *kind* of justification as a preference for modeling temperature with the reals rather than the ordinals. Just as the relevant ordering relation on ordinals would appear arbitrary to an inquirer that modeled temperature in this alternative way, the classification determined by the complex Goodmanese predicate, 'grue and… or bleen and… or not observed at all but…', would appear arbitrary to an inquirer whose ideology was Goodmanian. Theories are comparatively better when they minimize the appearance of arbitrariness.

Now, like Heck, I acknowledge that these considerations are unlikely to persuade anyone who was already committed to the idea that one can only evaluate ideological decisions in terms of convenience. But at this stage it's important to be clear about where we are in the dialectic. In the previous section we considered an argument from the principle of charity for treating the disagreement between Una and Niles as merely verbal. I then argued that the principle of charity recommends the joint-carving constraint, which allows one to maintain that the dispute isn't merely verbal. Perhaps this argument won't convince the deflationist, but neither will the deflationist's argument convince the other side. The main point to take away from all of this is that the principle of charity is so malleable—so easily understood in conflicting ways—as to be argumentatively ineffective. In the hands of an anti-metaphysical interpreter, it justifies deflationism; in the hands of a metaphysician, it justifies an inflationary take on things. In the next section I'll argue that this malleability generates a conflict even from within the deflationist's use of the idea.

4 Coincidence and coherence

For the moment, let's grant that Una and Niles are engaged in a merely verbal dispute. Now the only substantive question in the vicinity, according to Hirsch, is whether English is Universalish, Nihilese, or some other language in which composition is represented as a restricted phenomenon, occurring under some conditions but not in every condition. By settling this question, Hirsch believes, we settle the relevant metaphysical dispute, since we are, after all, speaking English.

To argue that English is neither Universalish nor Nihilese, Hirsch (2003, p. 103) relies on a certain pattern of reasoning that he schematizes as follows.

(H1) Typical fluent speakers of English assertively utter (or accept) the sentence '*S*'.
(H2) Therefore, there's a charitable presumption that, on the correct assignment of truth-conditions to '*S*', speakers have good reason to utter (or accept) '*S*' and '*S*' isn't a priori necessarily false.
(H3) Nothing defeats this presumption.
(H4) Therefore, '*S*' isn't a priori necessarily false in English.
(H5) Therefore, it's possible that *S*.

This reasoning embodies the linguistic turn that a commitment to semantic deflationism is supposed to vindicate.

Let the relevant substituent in H1–H5 be a sentence one might utter in the marketplace, e.g., 'There is a table'. Hirsch claims that this instance of H1–H5 is sound. In English, then, 'There is a table' expresses a possibility. But, in Nihilese, the counterpart of 'There is a table', in which the domain of quantification is absolutely unrestricted, expresses an impossibility.[18] So English isn't Nihilese. Hirsch also directs our atten-

[18] When do some things compose a further thing—always, sometimes, or never? Whatever the answer may be, it's usually presupposed that the answer is a necessary truth. This assumption has recently been questioned. See Cameron (2007). But if the assumption is abandoned, and the contingency of, say, nihilism is intelligible, then by Hirsch's own lights the debate between universalists and nihilists would be substantive, just as, by his lights, the debate between physicalists and dualists is substantive (Hirsch 2005, p. 164, footnote 29). (Physicalism, if true, is usually understood to be a contingent truth.)

tion to instances of H1–H5 in which the relevant substituent is a negative existential sentence, such as 'Nothing is a creature with an undetached front half of a trout and an undetached back half of a turkey'. He claims that this instance of the scheme, too, is sound.[19] But the corresponding sentence in Universalish expresses an impossibility. So English isn't Universalish, either. From Hirsch's perspective, advocates of universalism and nihilism are "perilously close to carrying on a burlesque battle with the English language" (2003, p. 117).

Recently, authors have criticized Hirsch's reasoning.[20] I think these criticisms raise serious issues, not all of which have been addressed. I'd like to raise two independent worries—one threatens to undermine the coherence of H1–H5, the other reveals the inherent instability of local deflationism.

Our focus has been on material composition. But there's another question about the nature of material objects that philosophers discuss just as frequently. I have in the mind the question of material coincidence: are material objects identical with their constituent hunks of matter? One-thingers say yes; many-thingers say no. To make my point—that H1–H5 generate an inconsistency—I'll focus on Hirsch's treatment of this debate.

Suppose we plug in for '*S*' a straightforward commitment of one-thingism:

(NO-TWO-THINGS) No two things can wholly occupy the same region of space at the same time.[21,22]

[19] One possible asymmetry between the instance of H1–H5 in which 'There is a table' appears and the instance in which, abbreviating a bit, 'Nothing is a trout–turkey' appears is that a universalist might explain ordinary speakers' disposition to affirm the latter by appealing to implicit quantifier domain restriction. To get around this sort of worry, one would need to claim that even if the standard ways of lifting implicit domain restrictions were applied (e.g., the application of intonational focus, the use of 'strictly speaking', etc.) ordinary speakers would still accept 'Nothing is a trout–turkey'.

[20] See Balcerak Jackson (2013) and Horden (2014). See also Hirsch (2013a) for a response.

[21] *Proof*. Spatiotemporal coincidence entails material coincidence. According to one-thingism, material coincidence entails identity. So, if one-thingism is true, spatiotemporal coincidence entails identity.

Kit Fine very quickly presents an apparent counterexample to the principle that spatiotemporal coincidence entails material coincidence: "[…] a water-logged loaf of bread and the loaf of bread that is water-logged are spatially yet not materially coincident" (2003, p. 3). Fine's idea seems to be that a certain quantity of water is part of the material constituting a water-logged loaf of bread but not part of the material constituting the corresponding loaf of bread. The water is additional material, according to Fine, but not material that takes up more space, since it *permeates* the water-logged loaf.

I'm not persuaded. Suppose I have a single loaf of bread. I don't believe that I make a second loaf of bread by simply dunking my loaf of bread into water. So I think the water-logged loaf of bread just is the loaf of bread. But if they're identical, then they share the same matter. Fine must be assuming that the water-logged loaf of bread and the loaf of bread are numerically distinct—maybe because he's assuming that the water-logged loaf of bread is necessarily wet, whereas the loaf of bread isn't. (Incidentally, this interpretation of Fine fits well with his theory of qua-objects.) But I don't see any reason to believe that the water-logged loaf of bread is necessarily wet. One can intelligibly ask, "Is the water-logged loaf of bread dry now?" And one can intelligibly reply, "Yes!"

[22] An anonymous referee for this journal voices a concern about my use of the words 'thing' and 'object' in this context: since these words aren't associated with any individuating criteria, it's not at all clear what the thesis that the statue and the piece of alloy are "one thing" really amounts to, nor is the thesis that they're really "two objects" any clearer. It does no harm to my discussion, however, to replace 'thing' and 'object' with 'artifact'. The relevant thesis would thus be that no two *artifacts* can occupy the same region of space at the same time. Presumably, 'artifact' is equipped with sufficient individuative content to side-step

The resulting instances of H1–H5 appear to enjoy at least as much plausibility as a similar argument in terms of

(ALLOY-&-NOT-STATUE) The piece of alloy existed at noon but the corresponding statue didn't.

Typical fluent speakers of English assertively utter (or accept) the NO-TWO-THINGS principle, so there's a charitable presumption in favor of interpreting it as true. There doesn't appear to be any more pressure to think that this charitable presumption is defeated than there is to think that the presumption in favor of interpreting ALLOY-&-NOT-STATUE as true is defeated. Parity of reasoning should lead us, then, to conclude that NO-TWO-THINGS is true. Assuming, as Hirsch does, that NO-TWO-THINGS and ALLOY-&-NOT-STATUE have to be assigned incompatible contents, our exploration of "the currents and undercurrents of our ordinary ways of thinking and talking about the perceptible world" has led us to incoherence.

Hirsch is aware of this apparent tension. He calls it "a conflict of charity" (2003, Section III), and tries to resolve it by providing a reason to think that there's interpretive disparity between NO-TWO-THINGS and ALLOY-&-NOT-STATUE. He says,

> The correct interpretation of English is most plausibly […] the one that makes ordinary assertions about existence and identity come out true and the "no-two-things-in-the-same place" principle come out false. […] It is a standard assumption in general discussions of the nature of language that the linchpin of language-learning and language-interpretation consists of *examples*, especially perceptual examples. Faced with two candidate interpretations, and a conflict of charity, we must therefore choose the interpretation that does best in sustaining people's assertions about examples, rather than the interpretation that sustains some general principles. General principles are made to be qualified or refined in the face of counterexamples […]. In a conflict between accepted principles and accepted examples we normally hold onto the examples and qualify or refine the principles. So it should be with the "no-two-thing-in-the-same-place" principle (2003, p. 109).

I don't find this argument convincing. There are two reasons why.

First, it seems to me that there might sometimes be interpretive pressure, deriving from charity itself, to prioritize the truth of general principles over conflicting specific judgments. The reason is that general principles have a greater degree of explanatory potential. After all, explanation very often involves treating specific examples as manifestations of more general phenomena. So, interpreting a general principle as false may require representing a language user as failing to have an explanation for various specific beliefs. This sort of interpretation is, all else equal, less charitable because it represents the language user as being in a relatively worse epistemic predicament. And, as I view the principle of charity, it most fundamentally requires privileging interpretations that treat subjects as being better off epistemically. To be clear, I'm not

Footnote 22 continued
this worry. If readers aren't happy with my use of 'thing' and 'object', I recommend that they make the appropriate mental substitutions.

advocating a default presumption in favor of the general over the specific. I'm merely expressing skepticism about the demands of charity unequivocally imposing a default presumption in favor of the specific.

Second, the contrast between general principles and specific cases is really just a red herring. A similar conflict of charity can be generated by appealing only to specific assertions about existence and identity.

Suppose I own a piece of alloy. Over time, I mold it, reconfiguring its shape. My efforts produce a statue. Now, when I put the following questions to uninitiated yet competent speakers of English, they almost invariably respond with a quizzical look, a brief pause, and an unqualified *yes* to each.

Did the piece of alloy become the statue?[23]
Is the piece of alloy now the statue?
Is the piece of alloy the statue?

To clarify, my point here isn't about whether an affirmative answer to these questions is most plausible or most intuitive. Often, 'plausible' and 'intuitive' are used in ways that are supposed to have some degree of positive normative force. I'm not making a normative claim, but an empirical one. My point is simply that philosophically naive but linguistically competent speakers of English are prepared to assertively utter or accept IDENTITY, just as they're prepared to utter or accept ALLOY-&-NOT-STATUE.

(IDENTITY) The piece of alloy is the statue.

An instance of H1–H5 in which the relevant substituent is IDENTITY seems to me, therefore, no less forceful than an instance in which the relevant substituent is ALLOY-&-NOT-STATUE. What we have here, then, is a conflict of charity. And this conflict can't be resolved by Hirsch's strategy to privilege the specific over the general.[24]

5 On the instability of localism

There's a deeper problem in the offing—one that closely resembles a major threat to Carnap's more global deflationary outlook toward metaphysics. To make this problem explicit, it's useful to begin with two observations. First, according to Hirsch, the dispute between advocates of NO-TWO-THINGS and ALLOY-&-NOT-STATUE is merely verbal. As it happens, English is a language in which the quantifiers express meanings that render NO-TWO-THINGS false, but Hirsch acknowledges that we might speak a different language, with no less fact-stating power than English, which

[23] I recently learned about Bios Urn, a receptacle which is designed to promote the growth of new plant life from the cremated remains of people or pets. As of June 28, 2016, the description for this product on the website, https://urnabios.com/, reads: "The Bios Urn is a fully biodegradable urn designed to convert *you* into a tree after life. […] Bios Urn turns death into a transformation and a *return* to life through nature" (my emphasis).

[24] The most obvious alternative strategy borrows an idea from Wiggins (1980, 2000). One might say that IDENTITY involves the 'is' of constitution. But standard linguistic tests for detecting ambiguity indicate that there is no 'is' of constitution (Pickel 2010).

employs quantifier-meanings that render NO-TWO-THINGS true (2003, pp. 108–111). So NO-TWO-THINGS isn't a substantive principle; its truth merely depends on a choice about which language to speak. The second observation I'll rely on is that, according to Hirsch (2010), the physicalism–dualism debate is substantive. In fact, Hirsch himself is a dualist for Kripke-inspired reasons. So although he thinks physicalism is false, he's committed to thinking that it's a substantive doctrine, since otherwise the dispute between physicalists and dualists would be merely verbal.[25] The point I'd like to make now is that these two commitments—that physicalism is substantive but that NO-TWO-THINGS isn't—are incompatible.

There's a small cottage industry devoted to the proper formulation of physicalism. Assuming that physical properties can be both intrinsic and relational, as well as qualitative and non-qualitative,[26] we can formulate the view adequately enough for our purposes as follows.

(PHYSICALISM) All of a thing's properties are grounded in its physical properties.

This doctrine entails that if two actual individuals are physical duplicates, then they're duplicates *simpliciter*. (Incidentally, this entailment is even weaker than "weak supervenience".) Consider now the sort of counterexample to NO-TWO-THINGS that Hirsch and others envisage: an alloy statue and the constituent piece of alloy—distinct objects that wholly occupy the same region of space at the same time. Since they're distinct, they must differ in some respect. The statue must have modal, representational, functional, or aesthetic properties that the piece of alloy doesn't have. But since the two objects are complete spatiotemporal coincidents, they must also be complete material coincidents—having the same material parts in the same arrangement. So they must have all of the same physical properties. In short, they're physical duplicates; and yet, they're not duplicates *simpliciter*, because they differ in some modal, representational, functional or aesthetic respect. Thus the denial of NO-TWO-THINGS is incompatible with PHYSICALISM.

(There's a temptation, I've noticed, to respond to the argument I just gave by pointing out various "coincidents-friendly" supervenience theses that authors have proposed, and suggesting that the local deflationist might avail herself of one of those.[27] But this reaction misses the point. Assume there are plausible coincidents-friendly microphysical supervenience theses compatible with the negation of NO-TWO-THINGS. Then I'll simply reformulate my objection in terms of *reductive* PHYSICALISM. All of the "coincidents-friendly" supervenience theses I'm aware of are too weak to sustain any kind of reduction.[28] Any supervenience thesis strong enough to support the

[25] As Hartry Field famously observed, physicalism "functions as a high-level empirical hypothesis, a hypothesis that no small number of experiments can force us to give up" (1972, p. 357).

[26] Qualitative properties, in the relevant sense, are to be contrasted with haecceitistic properties. For discussion about why this assumption bears on the formulation of physicalism, see Almotahari and Rochford (2011). Regarding both intrinsic and relational properties as physical is supposed to accommodate externalism about mental content.

[27] See, e.g., Zimmerman (1995) and Rea (1997). The term, "coincidents-friendly", is Zimmerman's.

[28] One exception to this might be found in Sider (2008). The kind of coincidence without identity Sider describes is compatible with strong global supervenience. But in order to ensure the compatibility Sider is forced to say things that are fundamentally at odds with the kind of deflationism we're considering.

possibility of reduction will entail that if two actual individuals are physical duplicates, then they're duplicates *simpliciter*, and that's all I need to get the argument up and running. Though it may be false, reductionism is a substantive doctrine. Thus, if pressed on this issue, I would reformulate the next three paragraphs in terms of reductive PHYSICALISM.)

Several interesting conclusions can be drawn at this point. First, if a certain principle isn't substantive, as NO-TWO-THINGS is alleged to be, then it should be compatible with any doctrine that is substantive, for one can't arrive at substantive conclusions via substance-less considerations. As the saying goes, "Out of nothing nothing comes". So any reason for thinking that a principle is incompatible with a substantive thesis is a reason for thinking that the principle is itself substantive. But NO-TWO-THINGS *is* incompatible with a doctrine that, even by Hirsch's lights, is substantive, namely, PHYSICALISM. So NO-TWO-THINGS must itself be substantive, for surely the truth or falsity of PHYSICALISM can't hinge on which language one chooses to speak.

Second, the logical relation between NO-TWO-THINGS and PHYSICALISM—and what that relation indicates about the substance of the former principle—illustrates a more general lesson: any form of local semantic deflationism will be in danger of collapse for just the sort of reason that NO-TWO-THINGS was shown to be substantive. For if one thinks that a certain metaphysical dispute is merely verbal while other metaphysical disputes aren't, it will always be possible that the dispute which seems to be merely verbal is logically or evidentially related to at least one of the other substantive disputes in such a way that renders it substantive. In short, disputes aren't isolated from each other in such a way as to engender confidence in the kind of line-drawing that's required for localizing one's deflationism. This problem is akin to one that threatened Carnap. There's no clear distinction between metaphysics and science.[29] So it's very hard to draw a line around metaphysics and label it as meaningless without also (and implausibly) deeming a good deal of science as suffering from the same defect.[30]

Third, if one is a (reductive) physicalist, then (on pain of inconsistency) one ought to accept NO-TWO-THINGS. Even if one isn't, there's some degree of motivation in light of these considerations to accept NO-TWO-THINGS. For it's plausible to think that if PHYSICALISM is false, then it's false for reasons having to do with the nature

Footnote 28 continued
The kind of deflationism under scrutiny here is one that's committed to a linguistic turn—that is, to the resolution of debates about the nature of material objects by considerations schematized in H1–H5. To reconcile coincidence without identity and strong global supervenience Sider is forced to say, among other things, that there's no such thing as being right-handed, and that, as between the statue and the piece of alloy, it's indeterminate which would survive melting (pp. 615–617). If such statements were appropriately plugged into H3, they would surely yield falsehoods. A local deflationist committed to a linguistic turn wouldn't, therefore, view Sider's proposal as a viable option.

29 Popper (1963) presses this point again and again.

30 Another dispute that Hirsch regards as merely verbal is the debate between 4Dists and 3Dists about the nature of material persistence. One early move in this struggle was Russell's argument that Special Relativity entails 4Dism (Russell 1927, p. 286). It's unlikely that this argument is sound (Sider 2001, pp. 79–87), but I take it that one wouldn't want to prejudge the issue in advance of inquiry. Classifying the dispute between 4Dists and 3Dists as merely verbal, and thus regarding the two doctrines as substance-less, would be to prejudge the matter.

of "higher-level" phenomena: intentionality, consciousness, personhood, or the like. One wouldn't antecedently think that (reductive) PHYSICALISM is falsified by the nature of *physical* objects, nor by such "easy", "cheap", or "mundane" considerations as those at play in the familiar literature on material coincidence.[31] Insofar as one is moved by this additional thought, one should take the incompatibility of (reductive) PHYSICALISM and the negation of NO-TWO-THINGS to tell in favor of NO-TWO-THINGS.

Let's step back and take a broader look at where we are. Local semantic deflationism is supposed to motivate a linguistic turn. But ultimately both the case for deflationism and the way in which the turn is implemented rely on the principle of charity. I've argued that the principle can't support so much weight. Dialectically, it can be interpreted to support an inflationary take on metaphysical disputes. Methodologically, it generates inconsistent results. Furthermore, there's good reason, quite separate from considerations about charitable interpretation, to regard the dispute about NO-TWO-THINGS as substantive: NO-TWO-THINGS is related, in a substance-conferring way, to PHYSICALISM. As long as local deflationists are incapable of offering general assurances that other specific principles about the nature of material objects aren't similarly related to substantive doctrines, their view is threatened by worries very like those that Carnap faced. But it seems unlikely that one will be able to offer such assurances in advance of a good deal of metaphysical inquiry.[32]

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[31] I borrow these terms from Sattig (2014), who has recently argued that there's a *prima facie* incompatibility between determinism and the negation of NO-TWO-THINGS.

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