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## THE QUEST FOR HIGHER ORDER CRITERIA FOR META-ONTOLOGY: METAPHYSICS VINDICATED\*\*

**Abstract:** Ontology has become a respectable subject for analytic philosophers to pursue, thanks to its divorce from traditional metaphysics and the translation of existential claims into the idiom of quantification theory, along classic Quinean lines. Such a strategy is the standard paradigm for ontological commitment and it is usually presented as the best reply to Carnap's veto of existential questions as "external", metaphysical questions. This rehabilitation of ontology as a discipline has recently been disputed by both deflationists and neo-Aristotelians, but generally the "metaphysical" challenge within the quantification model, when disagreement in ontology occurs remains unquestioned. How can we regulate the possibilities of different evaluations in meta-ontology and what is, if any, the general framework of such an evaluation? Are there higher-order criteria and are they consistent? My proposal is that the relativity of metaphysical options has not been avoided, but rather moved to a background, often implicit, theory.

**Keywords:** Ontology, Realism, Metaphysics, Meta-Ontology.

### THE DIVORCE OF ONTOLOGY FROM REALITY

The standard task and meaning of "ontology" and "realism" have been negotiated many times, often implicitly, so far beyond the usual redefinition of general philosophical terms that it is a constant in the history of thought. Taken sometimes as synonyms (a defense of ontology is taken to be, *per se*, a defense of realism), the two terms ended up in explicit contraposition, via the role played by a third, crucial notion: "metaphysics". "Metaphysics", on the other hand, was for a long time meant to be a quasi-synonym of "ontology" and both were linked to the question of realism thanks to the metaphysical appeal to "reality" in "realism". Curiously enough, most recently, philosophical ontology has become a respectable research field on the basis of its divorce from metaphysics. Nowadays, we typically, even if not exclusively, consider ontology to be the study of which entities (or, rather, which classes of entities) are actually required by the truth of the

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sentences of our theory (or theories). That is, if we intend our theory to be a (partial) description of “the world” (in any sense), ontology can be regarded as the discipline which tells us which classes of entities are actually needed to provide such a description of “the world” (or of the portion of “the world” relevant to the theory in question). Nonetheless, this interpretation is not necessary and we can consider ontology to be a mere specification of the objects assumed by a theory, in a clear deflationary approach, leaving aside any “metaphysical” notion of “world” or “reality”.

When I say that ontology has become a respectable research field on the basis of its divorce from metaphysics, I am ceding to metaphysics *any* other consideration pertaining to “being” in order to restrict our investigation to the necessity of admitting a certain taxonomy of entities in the domain of a theory. Note that I am *not* using the term “metaphysics” in the weaker (and, again, deflationary) sense of a typological specification of our ontology, a sense that has recently gained a certain popularity. We can, in fact, decide to call “metaphysics” the typological specification of *what kinds* of entities are actually required by the truth of the sentences of our theory (or theories), and paraphrase the “nature of being” as the articulation of the conceptual mapping of our domain. Sure, *this* metaphysics seems to be closely connected to ontology, for it is hardly imaginable that one could admit the existence of some entities without simultaneously characterizing them (at least, at a certain level), but this is not my point. To what extent we have to specify the kind without leaving ontology as a discipline can be further investigated or conventionally stipulated and the distinction between ontology and *this* enquiry, which we call “metaphysics”, seems at most a matter of degree, or of nuance (Varzi, 2011). However, here I am *not* using the term “metaphysics” in this sense, but rather in the strong (and traditional) sense of a general *a priori* philosophy that guides, and perhaps justifies, our preferences and inclinations on the basis of a particular *philosophical insight*.

So much for the link between metaphysics and ontology. Regarding the link between ontology and realism, the separation was not limited only to the rather obvious contraposition of a theory of being, in any sense, which aims at being a discipline, and a particular point of view about any “ideal” contribution of “reality”, which is clearly a philosophical assumption among others and not a discipline. The renegotiation also went far beyond the more subtle contraposition of “being an entity” and “being real”, which has been, and sometimes still is, the basis for those who assume “unreal” or “non-existent entities”, in the spirit of the so called (neo-)Meinongianism.

In order to clarify the most recent attempts to negotiate the task and meaning of the question of ontology and the question of realism, and the internal struggle that such a negotiation reveals, let me recall one turning point which contributed to the origin of the most influential divide between the two: the elimination of metaphysics advocated by the neo-empiricists. In *Empiricism, Semantics and Ontology*, Carnap previewed, correctly, a new trend in philosophy in which any “appeal to ontological insight will not carry much weight” (Carnap, 1950: 40). That happened, in a way that might sound surprising, through the rehabilitation of “ontology” as a discipline, mostly thanks to Quine’s revision of the question of ontology as a quantificational question. As Putnam wrote:

How come [...] it is precisely in *analytic* philosophy—a kind of philosophy that, for many years, was *hostile* to the very word “ontology”—that Ontology flourishes? [...] If we ask when Ontology became a respectable subject for an analytic philosopher to pursue, the mystery disappears. It became respectable in 1948, when Quine published a famous paper titled *On What There Is*. It was Quine who single handedly made Ontology a respectable subject (Putnam, 2004: 78–79).

However, what happened might not be a revolution but, rather, the realization of Carnap’s agenda.

#### EXTERNAL QUESTIONS AND QUESTIONS ABOUT REALITY

When Carnap vetoed any “external” questions he clearly had in mind any questions about “reality”: “questions concerning the *existence or reality* of the system of entities as a whole, [are] called ‘external questions’ and dismissed in as much they are not ‘of cognitive nature’” (Carnap, 1950: 21–22). The “or” between “existence” and “reality” seems to be legitimately read as “or, what is the same”. Ontology, mentioned explicitly in the title of the paper, is dismissed as a theory concerning *existence*, put on a par with *reality*, on the basis of the opposition between external and internal questions. Quine’s countermove, rejecting the opposition between external and internal questions can be easily read disarming the basis for the refusal and the resulting rehabilitation of ontology as a theory concerning *existence*.

In *On Carnap’s View on Ontology*, Quine proposed a reading of the dichotomy between the two kinds of questions as a dichotomy

between questions of the form “Are there so-and-so’s?” where the so-and-so’s purport to exhaust the range of a particular style of bound variables, and questions of the form “Are there so-and-so’s?” where the so-and-so’s do not purport to exhaust the range of a particular style of bound variables (Quine, 1951: 207).

External questions are therefore redefined as “category questions” while internal questions are “subclass questions”:

...the external questions are the category questions conceived as propounded before the adoption of a given language; and they are, Carnap holds, properly to be construed as questions of the desirability of a given language form. The internal questions comprise the subclass questions and, in addition, the category questions when these are construed as treated within an adopted language as questions having trivially analytic or contradictory answers (Quine, 1951: 207).

According to Quine’s reading, it is always possible to consider the very same question either as an internal question or as an external question, since there is no principled way to separate *category questions* and *subclasses questions* if not relatively. For instance, the question “are there numbers?” may be considered a category question with respect to languages which appropriate a separate style of variables for the exclusive purpose of referring to numbers and a subclass question if our language refers to numbers through variables which also take classes as values. Dismissing any ontological question of the form “are there numbers?” as meaningless seems now unjustified and the way for the strategy offered in *On What There Is* is open.

Notwithstanding the previous reading, there is an essential link between the refusal of the “ontological insight” in Carnap and the rehabilitation of “ontology” in Quine: the strategy carried out by the two alleged opponents is the same, i. e. the refusal of any reference to “reality”. Ontology may have been rehabilitated as a meaningful discipline but its fundamental question had to be redefined in terms that worked with this refusal. Carnap himself seems to read his move favorably, commenting his own proposal: “Quine was the first to recognize the importance of the introduction of variables as indicating the acceptance of entities” (Carnap, 1950: 30, n. 1). And then, quoting *Notes on Existence and Necessity*: “the ontology to which one’s use of language commits him comprises simply the objects that he treats as falling [...] within the range of values of his variables” (Quine, 1943: 118).

Therefore, if “realism” had to mean something, it merely meant the acceptance of a certain kind of field of entities that we assume in our “ontology”, in the sense assumed, for instance, in the classical debate about universals. If we follow this line, one cannot be “a realist” *tout court*, but “a realist about something”, for instance abstract entities. Being realist means merely that you accept what you are a realist about. The separation between “ontology” and “reality”, and the rehabilitation of the former as a meaningful discipline, implied that the only question of realism which

could survive was the question of ontology with a different name; and that the only question of ontology that could survive was the quantificational question with a different name. You are a realist about  $x$  if you accept an ontology of  $x$ ; if you have an ontology of  $x$ , then you are a realist about  $x$ . The question of realism is, in these terms, meaningless or a duplicate of the meaningful question expressed by reformed ontology.

As a side observation, note that, in Carnap's terms, the elimination of metaphysics (and of any "ontological insight" in terms of *reality*) was reached through the paraphrase obtained by means of the logical analysis of ordinary language, and that the rehabilitation of ontology, which a popular narrative sees as Quine's reaction to Carnap, is reached exactly through the paraphrase obtained by means of the logical analysis of ordinary language. The ontological commitment is transparent only in the idiom of a first order language.

Such a redefinition of ontology also imposed a translation of other related questions in a way which could work with this new perspective and forced the community of analytical philosophers to introduce tricks or *ad hoc* solutions. A clear example in this sense is an additional predicate of "Existence" or an additional quantifier attempted by those who wanted to express (or support) a notion of Being "as Essence" different than Being "as Existence", but still wanted to remain within the new paradigm. Even in this case, the question of realism and the notion of reality as such were avoided.

#### THE QUEST FOR HIGHER ORDER CRITERIA

The standard strategy which ontology adopted to gain scientific respectability in the meaning expressed above is what is known as the reduction of the question of ontology to a *quantificational question*. Whether quantificational form is a satisfactory ontology, in the sense that it satisfies all the desiderata of traditional ontology is clearly and extensively discussed by Fine (Fine, 2002; 2009) and I do not spend more on that. What I want to point out is that the only sense of "being" or "existence" worthy of being investigated is adequately captured by the existential quantifier of first order logic. Ontological questions such as "do numbers exist?" should be reformulated in the idiom of quantification theory, assigning an ontological commitment to the values of our bound variables, along classic Quinean lines. For instance, van Inwagen considers all ontological disputes in which the disputants do not accept this line "suspect", and declares: "If Quine's rules for conducting an ontological dispute are not followed, [...] then it is almost

certain that many untoward consequences of the disputed positions will be obscured by imprecision and wishful thinking” (van Inwagen, 1998: 249).

The very same criterion was applied in order for philosophers to release themselves from Quine’s several vetoes. For instance, when Lewis argued for the existence of possible worlds, he reached an anti-Quinean conclusion by means of a strictly Quinean ontological commitment: it is uncontroversially true that things might be otherwise than they are; ordinary language permits the paraphrase: “there are many ways things could have been besides the way they actually are”; this sentence is an existential quantification and it is true; taking the paraphrase at its face value, I therefore believe in the existence of entities that might be called “ways things could have been” (Lewis, 1973: 84). Our ontology is decided by the paraphrases that display the existential quantification of our true sentences.

Nonetheless, even if this criterion for the ontological debate has become a (quasi-)standard in the scientific community of ontologists, still we face many cases of extreme disagreement about what conclusions are to be derived by applying the same method of enquiry. When ontological disagreement occurs, most of the time one contender can offer a solution to a given problem or set of problems that the other contender rejects *as a solution* to the given problem for a series of reasons. For instance, one contender could object that the problem to be solved has been misunderstood. Still, even when both offer solutions to the same problems that are accepted as solutions by both of them, disagreement may arise about which is the *better* solution. Consider the following scenario: two theories seem to face successfully what it has to be faced, they use the same strategy to deal with the discipline’s problems, though they are mutually incompatible. If the strategy to reduce ontological questions to quantificational questions can be regarded as a first-level criterion to discipline the debate, what we need are some higher-level parameters to contrast the two theories, beyond their equal explanatory power, which is the ability they exhibit to solve exactly the same range of problems.

At this point, the ontological controversy typically appeals to a set of criteria to evaluate the pros and cons of the various proposals, along the lines of a classic cost-benefit analysis. Without these second-level criteria, the debate would be meaningless and with no hope of making progress. The criteria may vary from context to context and even from time to time, not to mention in convenience and advantage, but, despite variations, they recur in standard versions, insomuch as we may take the liberty to recall them briefly in a (not to be considered complete) list.

- (a) Economy of results (i. e. parsimony) and/or the steps to reach them (i. e. simplicity). Following Baker (Baker, 2011), we can recap the first part of the principle as follows: “All other things being equal, if  $T_1$  is more ontologically parsimonious than  $T_2$  then it is rational to prefer  $T_1$  to  $T_2$ ”. Perhaps it is even possible to consider disjointedly a qualitative parsimony (slenderness in the number of fundamentally different kinds of entities) and quantitative parsimony (slenderness in the number of the instances of the kind a theory posits) following Lewis (Lewis, 1973: 84). The second part of the principle can be recapped, quoting Swinburne:

All other things being equal, the simplest hypothesis proposed as an explanation of phenomena is more likely to be the true one than is any other available hypothesis, that its predictions are more likely to be true than those of any other available hypothesis, and that it is an ultimate *a priori* epistemic principle that simplicity is evidence for truth (Swinburne, 1997: 1).

- (b) Coherence of concepts, of methods and of results within the logical framework of the theory. *Logical consistency* seems a minimal requirement but it is not necessary. A particular form of this criterion is the refusal of any theory which can be paraphrased only resorting to a paraconsistent logic.
- (c) Accord with other results already established or accepted. *Epistemic consistency* may be used to recall not just other philosophical results or assumptions but also scientific results in general, and/or unwanted or unforeseen consequences in other areas of our knowledge, e. g. physics.
- (d) Accord with expectations and anticipations about the topics and the results we intend to evaluate (i. e. plausibility). Plausibility here is considered, somehow or other, estimable in an inter-subjective manner, for instance as accords with the ordinary usage of concepts in a sense to be defined, ordinary language usage, and so on. If plausibility is intended as *intuitiveness*, I am ready to give this criterion to metaphysics, for it clearly lacks any objectivity and it might well be the case that every single philosopher has his own specific intuitions.

These criteria operate in many fields of intellectual enquiry, but seem to have their own form in ontology. Parsimony, for instance, encourages not assuming objects in our ontology when they play no role or seem to be redundant; epistemic consistency may be used to recall not just other philosophical results or assumptions but also scientific results in

general, and/or unwanted or unforeseen consequences in other areas of our knowledge, and so on.

#### QUEST FOR A BACKGROUND THEORY

From the short list given above, the criteria *cannot* work at the same time. Patently, we cannot appeal to plausibility *and* to epistemic consistency, for we have many examples of unexpected results within science, in general, and philosophy, in particular, that we consider, nonetheless, acceptable and reasonable. Even the two sides of economy cannot work at the same, since the economy of the results can be reached, at least most times, only with complicated and contorted passages or expressions and economy of steps or formulations rarely lead to simple results. Think of the economy (parsimony) desired by the nominalist, which requires a complicated (non-economical) paraphrase of the formulation of our standard theories. The ideal situation is respecting all these *desiderata* at the same time, but unfortunately it does not seem possible.

What happens at this point is that, on rare occasions, the confrontation offers a benefit-cost analysis of the different solutions recalling one or the other criterion untidily, without directly facing this hurdle: it might be advantageous admitting one ontology or another according to parsimony and/or simplicity and/or epistemic consistency and/or intuitiveness and/or whatever. Actually, what we do, without necessarily being aware of it, is assume a background, frequently underlying, theory.

Such a theory *cannot* be just the background, *scientific*, theory advocated by philosophers such as Chihara. Chihara has a point and it imposes complications on the quantificational criterion, but of a different nature, not immediately relevant for my topic here. Chihara pointed out the necessity that the quantificational ontological commitment extends to consider not only the explicit but also the implicit commitments of a theory, which may not be apparent in the canonical notation (Chihara, 1968). According to this perspective, there *are* entities that are not explicitly nominated by a theory, but whose sentences imply. This way, as Chateaubriand remarked (Chateaubriand, 2003), we may open Pandora's Box: let us consider a theory assuming the existence of dogs; should we acknowledge the existence of dogs without conceding also the existence of hearts, livers, cells, proteins, mitochondria? How far should we follow the implicit acknowledgment of other entities? These may be critical worries but it seems that we may make sense of such a background, *scientific*, theory, in applying first level criterion, considering not only the entities requested by the quantified theory, but



also the entities requested by the quantified theory *relative* to a background, more general theory. This background theory is not, in any case, a theory that may help us.

The background theory we need here has to discipline the application not of first level criterion but of the competitive higher-order criteria. A background theory that can justify our preferences in choosing one criterion or another and even, on rare occasions, in reformulating the criteria so much that they may end up the opposite of what a different perspective reads in the very same prescription.

The easy way here is to mention our expectations, embedded in any “plausibility” criterion. However, the same can be said of all the other criteria and, in particular, of what seems to be the most reliable guide for our ontological debates: parsimony and simplicity often jointed together in the classical metaphor of Ockham’s razor. A classic example is provided by Goodman & Quine (Goodman & Quine, 1947: 108), who needed to reformulate straightforward propositions such as “class *A* has three members” to avoid specifying the existence of the class with a quantifier, by quantifying, that is, only over individuals, obtaining something like the following (that is clearly anything but simple):

$$(\exists x)(\exists y)(\exists z)(x \neq y . y \neq z . x \neq z . (w)(Aw \equiv: w = x . \vee . w = y . \vee . w = z))$$

The justification for this explicit violation of the simplicity criterion was the belief that any philosophy that countenances abstract entities is to be judged unsatisfactory as a *final philosophy*. The appeal to metaphysical insight *does* carry much weight!

#### IMPLEMENTATION AND HOW TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT “LOGICAL FORM”

In addition, even putting aside the choice (and the interpretation) of second level criteria to evaluate what we get once we apply the quantificational reduction of ontological questions as a first level criterion, the application of the very same criterion may be adapted in different ways and yield different results. Essential to the quantificational reduction is the possibility to translate the sentences of our theory in order to make apparent their “logical form”. As pointed out by Azzouni, this translation requires: (i) regimenting a discourse in a first-order language; (ii) determining that the aims of the original discourse are served once the range of the objectual quantifiers in the regimentation is minimized, and (iii) identifying

the ontological commitments of the original discourse with the range of the quantifiers in the regimentation (Azzouni, 2010).

This strategy is clearly not a computational process which can be executed automatically, but relies on a not so trivial interpretation of how to paraphrase our sentences into quantificational notation. In fact, not every “there is” can be ontologically pertinent. One attempt to make sense of a distinction between quantificational questions that are “ontically irrelevant” and quantificational questions that are “ontically relevant”, proposed in different ways by Azzouni, Dorr and Hofweber (ibid.; Dorr, 2005; Hofweber, 2005), may be a differentiation between a “thin” [\*] and a “thick” [\*\*] quantifier, such that  $\forall^{**}x\exists^*y(x = y)$  and that  $\sim\forall^*x\exists^{**}y(x = y)$ . Another may be the contraposition between the existential quantifier and the universal quantifier *plus* an Existence predicate “E”:  $\forall x(Fx \rightarrow Ex)$ , discussed in Azzouni, 2004. Creativity here plays a role and how to judge such creativity is, again, a matter of background philosophical insight which guides us among the many, possible alternative steps.

We can push even further. Even if we decide to ignore the creativity required in the application of one criterion, chosen among the others, as if it were a neutral application, still the very idea of the necessity to paraphrase any sentence of our theories may give rise to some perplexities. Here, having ascertained that we need a background theory to make sense of our high order parameters, we may ask if there is an independent reason to prescribe such analysis or, again, if it makes sense if we just presuppose a previous metaphysics to guide us. Take the case of nonexistent entities: we need to find the right paraphrase of any sentence that allegedly implies nonexistent entities and the right paraphrase shows us that we do not need to assume nonexistent entities; since we do not need to assume nonexistent entities and since we have to assume all and only the entities that are strictly required for our true sentences to be true, nonexistent entities should not be part of our ontology. However, exactly as was the case with the refusal of abstract entities in Goodman-Quine, it is the belief that any philosophy which countenances nonexistent entities is to be judged unsatisfactory as a *final philosophy* which justifies the choice of the right paraphrase among the many possible paraphrases more than it is the right paraphrase that justifies the ontological conclusion that nonexistent entities are not to be accepted.

Searle pushed as far as saying that the paraphrase which Quine recommends for the sake of quantificational clarity in the form of the canonical notation is, in fact, an arbitrary and unjustified alteration of the ontological commitment of the original sentences: ontological assumptions should

remain intact (Searle, 1969). I think that the procedure (which may, in fact alter the ontological assumptions) is not gratuitous or unjustified, but justified by a previous metaphysical intuition or, as Quine sometimes calls it, “taste”. As noted already by Strawson, Quine’s taste for desert landscapes may be connected to a kind of “aesthetic Puritanism”: “With a Roman ruthlessness he makes a solitude in which he can quantify peacefully over lumps of rock” (Strawson, 1955: 229).

However, taste cannot be prescribed. As Barcan Marcus reminded us, everybody has their own taste: “Plenitude is equally compelling as an aesthetic category and as Leibniz would have us believe, it was God’s preference. If nature abhors a vacuum, it may prefer a plethora” (Barcan Marcus, 1985–1986: 117). One might reply that Leibniz’ taste was predisposed by his metaphysical beliefs, and even his theological assumptions and it was, therefore, “biased”. And that is exactly the point.

#### REALISM, FOR REAL

In recent literature in meta-ontology and meta-metaphysics, there are more and more explicit requests to reconsider the divorce of ontology from reality, and of metaphysics from ontology. This is true, not only from a neo-Carnapian perspective, as in Price (Price, 2009), and not only for the uneasy relations between Carnap and Quine in ontology, on one side, and the question of the rehabilitation of metaphysics, on the other, as shown by Alspector-Kelly (Alspector-Kelly, 2001). The request comes also from the reconsideration of the Quinean model *from within*.

Consider, for instance, the following passage from Fine: “the ontological impulse is not something that will go away and, in the absence of any other means by which it might be expressed, the quantification idioms will somehow be pressed into service, no matter how strange or contorted the results might be” (Fine, 2009: 165). Or consider his *genuine* rejection of the internal-external dichotomy:

Ever since Carnap’s *Empiricism, Semantics and Ontology*, it has often been supposed that, for any given area of enquiry, one should adopt one of these points of view to the exclusion of the other, either engaging in the enquiry itself or evaluating it from the outside. [...] But if I am right, the full force of the ontological claims that we need to make can only properly be brought out by straddling both points of view. It is only by standing outside of reality that we’re able to occupy a standpoint from which the constitution of reality can be adequately described (ibid.: 174).

Other signs of this renewed interest in ontology and realism, as they were intended *before* Quine's "rehabilitation" of both, can be found in Azzouni's work<sup>1</sup>, which points out that the quantificational criterion is not the only one. After all, it seems difficult establishing which, if any, is the best criterion. In principle, we may follow Quine's suggestion that names are not relevant for our existential assumptions, without choosing the quantifier as the next best candidate, for instance opting for a predicate. Not an *ad hoc* predicate as "Existent", but a real one. For example, according to those philosophers committed to the idea that any accepted entity must be observable, our ontological commitment should be revealed by the possibility to add the predicate "is observable", the genuine mark of *reality*. Or any other predicate, according to our metaphysical belief. In fact, any criterion may be defended, through the appeal to our preliminary intuitions, and none can be imposed as the most valuable, if we do not preliminarily agree on those intuitions.

If there is a lesson that we can learn, it is that, as has happened other times in the past, metaphysics was declared dead too hurriedly and the strategy to relocate its pressure elsewhere was not successful, or at least not as much as we may have hoped or thought at first. This may sound like good or bad news. Whether the return of "metaphysics" is a gain or a trouble, what I am sure of is that ignoring it or acting as if metaphysics did not play a role is not the most profitable and forward-looking strategy.

Carnap's prevision was wrong, after all.

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<sup>1</sup>Especially Azzouni, 1998.

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## ПОИСКИ ВЫСОКОУРОВНЕВЫХ КРИТЕРИЕВ ДЛЯ МЕТАОНТОЛОГИИ: В ЗАЩИТУ МЕТАФИЗИКИ

**Аннотация:** Онтология стала уважаемым предметом исследований для аналитических философов благодаря ее отделению от традиционной метафизики и переводу — в согласии с классической линией Куайна — экзистенциальных суждений с помощью аппарата теории квантификации. Такая стратегия является стандартным образцом прояснения онтологических обязательств, и обычно она позиционируется как лучший ответ на карнаповский запрет экзистенциальных вопросов, которые являются «внешними» и метафизическими. В последнее время упомянутая реабилитация онтологии как дисциплины подвергается сомнениям как со стороны дефляционистов, так и со стороны неаристотелианцев. Тем не менее, когда появляются разногласия в онтологии, «метафизический» вызов в целом остается без ответа в рамках квантификационной модели. Как мы можем регулировать возможности различных оценок в метаонтологии? Какова общая структура таких оценок, если таковая вообще имеется? Существуют ли высокоуровневые критерии и согласуются ли они друг с другом? Мое предположение заключается в том, что относительность метафизических опций в действительности не была искоренена, но скорее переместилась на метатеоретический уровень, зачастую имплицитный.

**Ключевые слова:** онтология, реализм, метафизика, метаонтология.