Winner of the ISOS Essay Prize 2022

Canberra Planning for Gender Kinds

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Abstract: In this paper I argue that the Canberra Plan is ill-equipped to offer a satisfactory theory of gender. Insofar as the Canberra Plan aims to provide a general and unified approach to philosophical theorising, this is a significant problem. I argue that this deficit in their method stems from the robust role assigned to pre-theoretical beliefs in constructing philosophical analyses. I utilise a critical conception of ideology to explain why our pre-theoretic beliefs about certain social kinds are likely to deliver politically dubious metaphysics of the social world. The first half of the paper is dedicated to exercising this theoretical shortcoming. In the second half, I suggest a way in which the Canberra Plan can address and rectify this problem, with a view to maintaining the theoretical viability of the Canberra Plan with respect to politically important concepts.

1.   INTRODUCTION

The Canberra Plan endures as one of the most promising systematic approaches to philosophical theorising. It proposes an exhaustive theoretical enterprise: it aims to synthesise a fairly traditional conception of philosophical analysis with metaphysical naturalism. The project starts from our pre-philosophical beliefs about the world. These platitudes of common opinion are systematised and subjected to conceptual analysis, thus deriving truth conditions for the relevant sentences. Finally, any worldly satisfiers of those truth conditions must

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be identified. One putative advantage of the approach is that it respects our pre-philosophical beliefs, such that we get to take much of our ordinary talk as true, whilst incurring minimal ontological inflation.

In this paper I argue that the Canberra Plan is ill-equipped to offer a satisfactory theory of gender. Insofar as the Canberra Plan aims to provide a general and unified approach to philosophical theorising, this is a significant problem. I argue that this deficit in the method stems from the robust role assigned to pre-theoretical beliefs in constructing philosophical analyses. I utilise a critical conception of ideology to explain why our pre-theoretic beliefs about certain social kinds are likely to deliver politically dubious metaphysics of the social world. The first half of the paper is dedicated to exercising this theoretical shortcoming. In the second half, I suggest a way in which the Canberra Plan can address and rectify this problem, with a view to maintaining the theoretical viability of the Canberra Plan with respect to politically important concepts.

I proceed as follows. First, I offer some general quasi-historical comments on the general Canberra Plan project as a means of situating the subsequent discussion. Second, I outline David Lewis's project of philosophical analysis, highlighting the integral role played by common opinion in this project. Third, I show that, as it stands, the method offered by Lewis cannot deliver an acceptable analysis of gender concepts and I identify the source of this deficit in the method. Fourth, I consider a range of possible responses to the problem that I've identified. Fifth, I articulate and motivate my preferred response to the deficit in the method. I argue that the Canberra Planner can adapt their method, whilst incurring minimal costs, by analogising Lewis's treatment of the tension between materialism and common opinion. I aim to motivate the claim that, like materialism, social justice should constrain the data for philosophical analysis.

2.   THE CANBERRA PLAN

There's a big picture motivating problem at the centre of these issues to do with the nature and aims of metaphysics. There are sticky and often intractable questions about the relationship between metaphysics and science and why anyone outside of a niche field of analytic philosophy should care. How does the traditional project of philosophical analysis square with the idea that the fundamental nature of reality might be radically different from our everyday representations of it? One promising proposal, which aims to respond to such concerns and neutralise these apparent antagonisms, is the philosophical

methodology known as the Canberra Plan.

'The Canberra Plan' picks out a somewhat heterogeneous class of philosophers who take a fairly traditional conception of philosophical analysis to play a central role in theorising about the nature of reality. Thus, it promises a departure from what might be seen as the contemporary metaphysical orthodoxy, where concerns to do with language and meaning are seen as distractions from the real work of limning the structure of reality. The Canberra Plan, by contrast to this now dominant conception of the tools of metaphysics, takes semantic analysis to be the foundational tool. However, the use of this tool doesn't position the Canberra Plan in opposition to naturalism and materialism. On the contrary, once the different stages of philosophical inquiry are clearly articulated, we should see that analysis and naturalism are not hostile to each other, but rather form an overarching and systematic approach to both semantic and metaphysical theorising.

It is worth noting that one of the explanations for the heterogeneity of this class is that there are two slightly different methods which belong under the label of 'The Canberra Plan.'[1] First, there is what might be termed 'The Formal Plan.' This approach is centrally concerned with Ramsey-Carnap sentences, and the locus classicus for this approach to the Plan can be found in Lewis's 'How to Define Theoretical Terms' (1970). This conception of the aims and methods of the Plan utilises formal tools and has mostly been concerned with the theories of natural science.

However, there is another more informal approach to be found in both Lewis and other Canberra Planners.[2] This informal approach is likewise preoccupied with philosophical analysis, but rather than focusing on analysing the terms deployed in scientific theories it is often more concerned with analysing the terms at work in our folk theories and defining the terms therein. This more informal approach is what Nolan (2015) has referred to as 'generalized functionalism', as you can trace the origin of the approach to generalising Lewis's analytic functionalism in the philosophy of mind, and it is more generally concerned with isolating the functional role of the terms under investigation.

There is another sense in which the class is heterogeneous. Whilst the Formal Plan comes with fairly strict instructions for how the project of philosophical analysis should be prosecuted, the details of the informal Plan are hostage to other commitments one may have about meaning, truth, and

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1   I am indebted to Raatikainen's (2021) terminology here.
2   For a taste of the variety of projects with which Planners have recently engaged, see Braddon-Mitchell and Nola (2009).

analysis. The precise details about what form the analysis of our folk theories should take depends upon a range of ancillary views. In this paper, therefore, I focus on Lewis's conception of philosophical analysis. I believe there is significant motivation for this. First, as I said, whilst the details of the Plan varying according to other commitments, Lewis is taken to be the central authority on both the formal and informal versions. Second, Lewis offers the most comprehensive and systematic approach to the Plan.

3.   CANBERRA PLANNING WITH LEWIS

The aims of this section are exegetical. For those already familiar with Lewis's methodology and who want to get straight to the critical discussion, you can skip ahead to section four. However, the details of the critical discussion, and my final positive proposal, depend upon the details of my interpretation of Lewis. So, if you can stomach another rendering of Lewis's Method^{TM}, I recommend sticking with this section.

Lewis tells us that our job as theorisers is to systematize the mass of common opinion into some kind of coherent picture. (Lewis 1973, 88) There are two different moving parts here that need isolating. First, we need to articulate the mechanism by which we systematise common opinion into a coherent picture, and second, we need to understand the precise nature and role of common opinion. I'll take these in turn.

First, Lewis's conception of philosophical analysis is the method by which we systematise. Lewis's brand of philosophical analysis is intrinsically and primarily concerned with giving the meanings of expressions of natural language. Semantic analysis is in the business of giving the meaning of expressions of natural language by providing truth conditions for the sentences in which those expressions appear. The type of truth conditions that Lewis thinks should be given by analysis are *world invariant* truth conditions. World invariant truth conditions provide a uniform type of condition that applies at each world, and a sentence is true at a world if and only if the relevant conditions are satisfied at that world.

Although an adequate analysis must always provide world invariant truth conditions, it is worth noting that the form of the analysis can differ depending on the nature of the analysandum. In his analyses of contingent concepts, such as mental state terms or causation, Lewis provides functional definitions. For example, as a matter of analytic necessity, counterfactual dependence of events on other events provides the necessary and sufficient conditions for causation. (Lewis 2004, 287) This analysis holds across all worlds in virtue

of its articulation in terms of world invariant truth conditions. This, however, allows that as a matter of contingent fact the thing at the actual world "on which the truth values of causal ascriptions supervene" is the 'biff' kind of causation. (Lewis 2004, 287) Similarly, a mental state term such as 'pain' is analysed in terms of its causal role. It can then be contingently identified with a physical role-player at the actual world, and we can thus contingently derive the truth of identity theory. The idea driving this treatment is that semantically contingent expressions are those whose extensions vary from world to world. By contrast, in his analysis of a non-contingent concept, such as necessity, Lewis gives an explicit definition. Unlike the contingent cases, the truth values of necessity statements do not vary from world to world: it is the whole of logical space which determines their truth value.

With this understanding of analysis on the table, we can now characterise the nature and role of common opinion. Whilst merely systematizing common opinion is not *sufficient* for providing an adequate analysis, in many places Lewis presents it as a necessary feature of a satisfactory theory. (Lewis 1974, 111-4) For Lewis, 'common opinion' refers to those beliefs or statements which we collectively take to be true as language users. This will include, in addition to folk common sense, some well-established and widely held scientific beliefs. For example, among our analysis-relevant pre-philosophical opinions are the beliefs that there are more particles than there are dinosaurs in my coffee mug, and that volcanoes are caused by tectonic activity. Common opinion, therefore, must be pre-philosophical opinion, but may still include some well-established theoretical scientific opinions or concepts.

Lewis takes it as non-negotiable that analysis must (to some extent) accommodate the platitudes of common sense. Whilst the analysis we end up with does not have to all those platitudes as direct components, it must still be compatible with them. To say that common opinion is the data for analysis does not necessarily mean that it is the common opinion itself that we are analysing: common opinion acts, in many cases, as the *signifier of the explanandum*. When we try to construct a theory of, say, modality, it is possibility and necessity in which we are interested. However, our best guide to that subject matter is given by the everyday pre-philosophical thought pertaining to the area in question. Lewis can talk both of systematizing common opinion and analysing the concept; this makes sense as it is the common opinion which helps us pick out the thing in which we are interested.

Common opinion serves another function in Lewis's analytic projects: in addition to acting as the data for analysis, common opinion also acts to constrain what constitutes an acceptable analysis. To explain the role of

common opinion, therefore, it is not sufficient to just acknowledge that it fixes the relevant notion, we must explain how it further guides the analysis. In many places throughout his work Lewis tells us that if presented with two analyses, two posits, two answers to particular problems, we should prefer "the platitude of common sense to the interesting philosophical thesis." (Lewis 1976, 56) He claims that in cases where we have a firm and uncontroversial opinion, "theory had better agree." (Lewis 1986d, 194) The guiding idea is that the plausibility of any particular analysis is seriously decreased if it diverges too far from what we ordinarily think about such matters. Lewis claims that to deny common opinion this role is to reject much of what we would recognise as analytic philosophical method. Lewis 1994, 311-2)

In establishing this robust role for common opinion, it must be acknowledged that Lewis treats it as defeasible: he thinks that it is sometimes permissible to deviate from common opinion. He tells us that "canons of reasonable belief need not be counsels on perfection." (Lewis 1980, 85) Whilst Lewis does not offer much by way of a general and explicit statement of when we can legitimately depart from common opinion, I think a principled view can be drawn out and articulated. I will return to this matter in section six, when I offer my positive proposal.

So, it is our goal as theorisers is to systematize the mass of common opinion into some kind of coherent picture. What this consists in is gathering together the platitudes of common sense about the expression under investigation and giving the meaning of that expression in terms of a functional definition (for contingent concepts). The final stage of the Plan consists in working out what thing in the world plays the role identified by the analysis. The relationship between analysis and metaphysics in Lewis's framework is a source of debate. In what follows I present my interpretation.[3] I think we should interpret Lewis's conception of the analysis-metaphysics relationship in the following way. If we are going to try and give a metaphysical account of some phenomena, we require some idea of what would count as a satisfactory answer. It is hard to imagine exactly how we could even begin our metaphysical theorising had we not (to some extent) already established what the relevant terms of the discourse mean and how they are related. However, although analysis clarifies the subject matter, this does not mean that the analysis is identical to a metaphysical theory about the nature of that subject matter. The analytical process may indeed be a prerequisite for metaphysical theorising,

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3   I have argued for this interpretation elsewhere, with John Divers, with respect to the metaphysics of modality. Divers and Fletcher (2020)

but it is not the metaphysical theorising itself. In slogan form: Lewis takes it that analysis is necessary, but insufficient for an adequate metaphysical methodology. However, although these projects are distinct in that they have different aims, in practice Lewis thinks that we should be concerned with both the analytical project and the metaphysical project given their methodological connection. (Lewis 1986b, 15)

One of the primary motivations for the claim that analysis and metaphysical inquiry are not the same thing is that in a number of places Lewis tells us that analysis will only get you so far. Although analysis may determine part of the content of our metaphysical theories (e.g. the functional role of the thing in question) we do not get a full picture of the commitments. I take it that this is something that becomes pronounced when you view Lewis's corpus as a whole. Although in the early work, when his attention is directed at more logical and semantic concerns, he provides analyses of certain kinds of things, for example possibility and necessity in terms of quantification over worlds (Lewis 1968; 1970), he leaves much of the metaphysics largely untouched. For example, he claims: "Up to a point is makes little difference whether you believe as I do in a multitude of concrete worlds of which ours is one, or whether instead you believe as Quine does in a multitude of abstract ersatz worlds, of which one is special in that it represents that one and only concrete world. Most analyses involving possible worlds go through equally well either way." (Lewis 1979a, 148) Lewis thinks that there will be much of metaphysical interest left unsaid even after we have given the analysis.

The conception of the analysis-metaphysics connection endorsed by Lewis is twofold. First, there is an analytic element of metaphysical inquiry, which specifies the meaning of terms and acts to stop the metaphysical posits from floating free from what the terms mean and how they are used. Second, that metaphysical method is still, in some way yet to be unspecified, distinct from the analysis. I have emphasized that Lewis thinks that more must be done to get you from a serviceable analysis to ontological commitments. There are two important steps. First, we must establish the non-emptiness of the analysis. That is: whether *anything* satisfies the analysis. Second: we must establish the character or nature of what satisfies the analysis. Of course, the analysis itself may tell us what the thing is like in causal terms; so this second stage may consist in a non-causal specification.

Consider as an example Lewis's psychophysical identification. The first part of the theoretical project is analytical: it is where we define that some mental state M is the occupant of the M-role. Taking the mental state term 'pain' as an example: we define the mental state term 'pain' in terms of the

relationship this concept bears to other adjacent concepts. We give an implicit definition of 'pain' in terms of its functional role. We are then in a position to execute the metaphysical part of the project. In the case of mental state terms, the second part of the project is empirical: it is where we establish that some physical state P is the occupant of the M-role. The identification of the worldly role players of the M-role will in this case consist in establishing what best science says about what realises the functional role we have defined in analysis. Taking these two stages together we arrive at the conclusion that M = P. (Lewis 1994, 303)

The picture of Lewis's method we end up with is a grand and unified approach to semantic and metaphysical theorising. The approach has two features in particular which we might think are desirable features for a philosophical method. First, because of the constraints on analysis, we will often end up with theories which respect our everyday views about the nature of reality. Philosophers aren't going to be in the business of rendering verdicts about the nature of reality which end up judging huge swathes of what the folk ordinarily believe false. However, we are not merely reading metaphysical commitments off the true sentences of our natural language. The worldly satisfiers of an analysis might be surprising because often we will be relying on best science to tell us what things in the world play the functional role identified by analysis. Therefore, the second desirable feature that the approach exhibits is that it allows for a robust and full-blooded, albeit constrained, conception of metaphysics. Maintaining this dual profile is a general methodological commitment of the Canberra Plan.

4.   CAN GENDER BE PART OF THE PLAN?

Prima facie, the theoretical aspirations of the Canberra Plan might make it well suited for providing a theory of gender: it connects our pre-theoretic thought about gender to the empirical research of social psychologists, sociologists, gender theorists, and neurobiologists. I argue in this section, however, that as it stands the Canberra Plan's methodological commitments can only offer a politically problematic and metaphysically dubious account of gender. The first major claim of this paper is that due to the conservative attitude towards common opinion advocated by the Canberra Plan, the methodology is ill-suited to theorising about politically important concepts relevant to social justice.

Let's begin by considering the kind of theory of gender the Canberra Plan would construct. Recall, we start by eliciting our pre-theoretical beliefs

about the subject matter. As we are motivated by a conservative attitude towards common opinion, we aim to incorporate as many of these platitudes as possible. We then provide truth conditions for the relevant sentences, and finally find their worldly satisfiers. So just what are our pre-theoretic beliefs about gender? I would suggest some of the following: 'there are only two genders,' 'a person's gender is determined by their genitals,' 'men are stronger,' 'women are more emotional,' 'women are ruled by their periods,' 'boys don't cry,' etc. These pre-theoretic beliefs are then systematized into our 'folk theory of gender.' In giving gender the Canberra treatment, then, we would be required to accommodate commonly held gender stereotypes into the analysis.

Consider a toy example. If the analysis of 'women' is constructed in the way I've just suggested, then the semantic interpretation of the true sentence 'women earn less than men' would consist in interpreting it such that the following is true: 'there is some x which has the property of being 'ruled by periods,' 'especially emotional,' etc. and that x earns less than men.' Obviously, the details of the analysis would be more fine-grained than this, but for illustrative purposes this example does its job in showing why we should be worried by a Canberra analysis of gender terms.

There are two distinct but related problems here and it is important to distinguish them. First, there is a semantic problem. Given the method we have for giving the meaning of gender terms, the definition of 'woman' would be such that sexist gender platitudes are part of what 'woman' means. When we use the gender kind term 'woman' we use a term which picks out a functional role which incorporates a multitude of beliefs about women which are politically antithetical to the aims of feminism. But there is second, and I think more worrying, concern here. Assuming that there are true sentences which contain gender terms, this discourse would consist in the problematic *endorsement* of misogynistic folk opinion. This concern is metaphysical and requires some unpacking. Let's start with an example. A successful analysis does not commit one to the view that something satisfies that analysis. For example, we can successfully analyse the term 'witch,' we can give an adequate account of the meaning of this term, and this clearly doesn't commit us to the view that there must be witches, merely because we've defined a concept. However, the use of a term in a true sentence places certain demands on reality[4]. If a

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4   It is worth noting that there are going to be some contexts in which we use the term 'witch' in a true sentence where it doesn't place any demands on reality. For example, when we use it metaphorically ("the headmistress is a real witch") or in the context of a fiction ("Winnie, Sarah, and Mary Sanderson are witches") we utter truths involving the term. The correct way to conceptualise the meaning and truth of metaphorical and fictional utterances

term appears in a literally true sentence, we owe a story about what the world is like such that that sentence is true. The story that a Canberra Planner is going to offer is that the sentence is true in virtue of the composite expressions successfully discharging their semantic function. That is: securing a referent.

This isn't an *easy ontology* conception of the connection between the true sentences of a language and reality. It isn't the case that we are committed to irreducible mental states just because the sentence 'Stirling is in pain' is true. The reason for this is that we have a sophisticated conception of semantic analysis mediating between the true sentences of a language and the demands that those sentences place on reality. The world invariant truth conditions with which analysis should furnish us don't give a full metaphysical characterisation of their satisfiers, and thus the worldly satisfiers of an analysis may be quite different than what we could have pre-theoretically thought.

This is important—saying that the analysis is conservative of common opinion does not mean that that the final metaphysical theory must be commonsensical. The Planner walks a fine line between on the one hand offering a well constrained conception of metaphysical inquiry and on the other offering a conception of metaphysical inquiry which is largely autonomous from common sense and natural language. The Planner satisfies the former demand by giving a central role to philosophical analysis, where analysis directs and guides metaphysical inquiry, and they satisfy the latter demand by analysis leaving room for independent metaphysical inquiry into the nature of the analysis-satisfiers.

How does this play out with our gender kind term 'women'? I take it as uncontroversial that we are capable of using the term 'woman' in some true sentences of English; much feminist theory and activism relies on it. When we want to talk about the gender pay gap, or the different ways that Black women and white women experience patriarchal oppression due to patriarchy's interaction with white supremacist oppression, I assume that the gender kind term 'woman' appears in some literally true sentences. But, this requires that there is something which satisfies the proposed analysis. As I said, there is much of metaphysical interest left untouched by analysis, so analysis alone cannot tell us everything about the nature of *women.* However, analysis does place a restriction on what the satisfiers of the analysis can be like and in this case, whatever satisfies the analysis, must be such that is has some significant subset

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is a contested matter and so what I say here about truth is limited to literal utterances. There is one form of literal utterance involving the term 'witch' which is going to come out true— "witches do not exist". My comments are therefore restricted to literal utterances and excludes negative existentials.

of the characteristics identified by the analysis.[5]

Of course, we could say that nothing satisfies the analysis. There isn't an x such that they have the properties outlined above. So, like the term 'witch,' the term 'woman' fails to secure a referent. But, if this were so, then the descriptive sentences which contain the relevant term would all come out as false. The concern here is that given the methodological constraints of the Canberra Plan, if we want to say that nothing satisfies the analysis we must say that the statements in which the term occupies a reference demanding position are strictly false. By way of comparison, at a world at which there is nothing that plays the pain-role we cannot truly describe someone as being in pain at that world. Likewise, if at this world there isn't anything which plays the woman-role, then we cannot truly describe someone as being a woman.

These two considerations together generate a significant problem for the Canberra Plan. You might be content with the thought that ordinary uses of the term 'woman' are such that they communicate the sort of sexist opinion I have claimed. However, given the integrated conception of semantic analysis and metaphysical method offered by the Canberra Plan we cannot merely accept the semantic analysis without also either (1) admitting into our ontology something that plays that functional role, or (2) denying that all 'woman' involving sentences are true. We have important political reasons to reject both of these options.

I close this section by offering my diagnosis of where the Plan does wrong. Quite simply, the deficit in the method stems from the robust role assigned to pre-theoretical beliefs in constructing philosophical analyses. Of course, I spent some time trying to motivate the virtues of this integrated approach to semantic and metaphysical theorising. When thinking about the metaphysics of mind, causation, or modality, you might think that a general approach to metaphysics which accommodates our ordinary thought in a way which is compatible with the deliverances of best science is a promising method worth pursuing. However, this approach yields a woefully inadequate theory of gender. I think we can offer a principled distinction between the types of concepts for which the Plan works as intended, and the types of concepts for which it will yield bad results.

I suggest that the boundary between these concepts is carved by attending to those concepts which have been significantly marred by ideology

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5   I say 'some significant subset of the characteristics' because Lewis thinks we should allow for what he calls 'semantic satisficing': "analysis may reveal what it would take to deserve a name perfectly, but imperfect deservers of the name may yet deserve it well enough". (Lewis 1994, 298)

and those which have not. By 'ideology' I have in mind the broadly Marxist idea of a functional distortion of thought: a way of thinking that is in some sense inaccurate, which functions to perpetuate an oppressive social structure, and which exists and endures in part *because* it so functions. This can be made more precise by borrowing from Tommie Shelby's (2003) characterisation of ideology. Shelby develops a strong critical conception of ideology according to which identifying a particular belief system as an ideological one requires rejecting that belief system (or a significant part of it). This contrasts with uses of 'ideology' where it merely picks out some dominant form of social thought. Shelby distinguishes a *form of social consciousness* from an ideology. A form of social consciousness is a system of beliefs which are widely shared, and known to be widely shared; which make up, or result from, a prima facie coherent system of thought; which are part of the general outlook of members of the group that they concern and which shape their self-conception; and which significantly impact social action and social institutions. (2003, 158) An ideology is a form of social consciousness which is both epistemically and morally defective.

Ideologies often present themselves as platitudes of common sense, part of the epistemic common ground of a community. The sense in which ideologies are epistemically defective isn't that they are always straightforwardly false; rather, often ideologies present reality through a distorting lens. Ideologies offer misleading representations of reality, and they can be misleading in a variety of ways. Shelby claims that some of the epistemic defects of ideological thinking are as follows: "inconsistency, oversimplification, exaggeration, half-truth, equivocation, circularity, neglect of pertinent facts, false dichotomy, obfuscation, misuse of "authoritative" sources, hasty generalization, and so forth." (2003, 116) There is another sense in which they are epistemically defective: ideologies are held in false consciousness. What Shelby means by this is that people who hold ideological beliefs are unaware of their real reasons or motivations for holding those beliefs. While they may take themselves to hold such beliefs on good epistemic grounds, in fact those beliefs are primarily accepted "because of the influence of noncognitive motives that operate, as Marx was fond of saying, "behind [their] back." (2003, 170) The final feature which separates a form of social consciousness from an ideology concerns the social function of the system of beliefs in question. An ideological form of social consciousness is a system of beliefs which are distorted by illusions, where their acceptance is explained in terms of false consciousness, and where this system of beliefs functions to create and sustain oppressive social structures. (2003, 183-4)

For example, consider the following belief: *Women are good caregivers.* On the one hand, this seems true. Most caring professions are disproportionately occupied by women, and women are still overwhelmingly responsible for raising children. Many of the skills young women are socialised to have are such that they develop caring and empathic capacities which are well-suited to carework. On the other hand, the belief also seems false. First, and most obviously, not all women are good caregivers. More worryingly, the belief is *essentialising.* Taking that belief as true appears to endorse the thought that it is an essential fact about the nature of women that they are good caregivers.[6] When asked to justify the acceptance of this belief, people are likely to recall imagery of natural motherhood, women foraging for berries while carrying babies on their backs in some mythologised womanly state of nature, or indeed the statistics which unpin my initial reading of the belief. What they probably won't talk about is capitalism necessitating an uncommodified private sphere for social reproduction and the multifarious cultural artefacts and economic incentives that people are bombarded with which function to maintain this sphere.[7] When a community accepts this essentialising interpretation of the belief, this is then used to justify an unequal division of social and domestic labour and entrench spurious norms about gender differences more generally. Thus, taking the distorting belief as true functions to maintain existing power structures, structure social reality, and legitimise women's social and economic subordination.

Such platitudes about gender are indeed a part of the folk conception of gender and should not be uncritically accommodated into analysis. But, as it stands, the Canberra Plan does not have the resources to adequately evaluate such statements prior to accommodating them into analysis. Where we have areas of thought which are likely to be permeated with ideology, the Canberra Plan will fall short. Thus, the argument of this section isn't unique to gender: it will apply to a variety of politically significant concepts. The Canberra Plan will deliver dubious analyses of gender concepts, racial concepts, class concepts, disability concepts, sexuality concepts, and so forth. This won't merely yield factually and normatively problematic definitions of the relevant terms, it will further commit us to politically questionable metaphysical theories about the nature of the social world.

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6   For further illuminating discussion of the essentialising character of generics see Haslanger (2011), Langton et al. (2012), Leslie (2017), Wodak and Sarah-Jane (2017), and Wodak et al. (2015).

7   On this view of sexist oppression being a pre-condition for the function of capitalism see Fraser (2017) .

5.   RESPONDING TO THE CHALLENGE

In the face of such a challenge to the exhaustive theoretical aspirations of the Canberra Plan, how should we respond? In this section I first briefly consider two possible kinds of response and find them lacking. In the following section, I will argue for my preferred response which aims to preserve the theoretical viability of the Canberra Plan with respect to politically important concepts.

First, Lewis presents two other theoretical options aside from analysis, and perhaps in the case of gender we should adopt one of these. When attempting to offer a theory of some subject matter, such as causation, colour, mind, or modality, Lewis claims that there are three ways to give an account. (Lewis 1983a, 112; 1983b, 20-1) First, we can offer an analysis. Second, we can decline the invitation and be eliminativists. This option requires that we deny the existence of the things in question, and we must then explain away any apparent commitment to them. Third, we can accept it as primitive. Thus, we embrace the existence of the thing in question, but we are not required to offer an account of it in other terms.

How would this work with respect to gender concepts? If we follow the eliminativist route, we deny that there is anything to which gender concepts correspond. As above, this would require that the literal sentences which contain any such gender concepts (in reference demanding positions) are systematically false. This option seems like a non-starter. Eliminativism cannot do justice to the very real and significant role that gender plays in our social reality: the robust role it plays in the political, personal, and legal spheres, and this option should thus be rejected.[8] If we follow the primitivist route, then we may well be committed to the existence of genders, but we cannot really have a *theory* about what they are like. However, providing an account of how genders relate to and depend on social roles, political structures, etc. seems like the central motivation for engaging in metaphysical theorising about gender. Inasmuch as a primitivist account won't be able to make good on this requirement, it too should be rejected.

Second, then, we could accept that the methodology offered to us by the Canberra Plan is inadequate when it comes to gender concepts. There are two different ways I see this option going, and it is important to separate them. First, perhaps the Canberra methodology is only inadequate because we are trying to deploy it for inappropriate work. According to this view, gender is not the sort of thing with which a serious systematic metaphysics need engage. For very

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8   Perhaps some more sophisticated form of anti-realism may be attractive; but given that theories of this form are not a part of the Canberra approach, I do not consider them here.

much the same reasons I gave above with regards to eliminativism, this way of understanding the claim that the Canberra methodology is inadequate will not do. Gender is an integral part of the world that we live in; not only does it play a role in our everyday communication and classification, it serves a purpose in social policy, our legal system, etc. In addition, political activism requires some idea of what kind of things we are referring to when we use gender terms. If the Canberra Plan really does intend to offer an exhaustive methodology for theorising about the world, then social concepts and entities must be part of the Plan.[9]

The second way of understanding the claim that the Canberra approach in inadequate, then, forces us to reconsider the viability of the approach. If this is the correct option, then perhaps we should take my discussion here to have uncovered a flaw in the all-encompassing aspirations of the Canberra Plan: its approach simply cannot accommodate politically important concepts. Lewis assigns a robust role to common opinion in philosophical analysis, and in doing so, he makes it the case that the Canberra Plan cannot deliver on its wide-reaching metaphysical aspirations; when it comes to gender kind terms we simply do not have the methodological space to give an informative account without also perversely vindicating our everyday sexist beliefs. If this is the correct option, the locus of the problem is that the approach to analysis advocated by the Canberra Plan cannot work for all kinds of concepts.

There are multiple ways we could navigate the departure from the methodology of the Canberra Plan. Perhaps the problem is the Planner's descriptivist semantic theory, and so we should rather adopt a more externalist framework to determine the referent of 'woman.' Perhaps we should neither rely on a descriptivist conception of conceptual analysis, nor an externalist theory of reference determination. I take it that these sorts of concerns about the ideological distortion of our ordinary thought about gender is what has motivated the proliferation of ameliorative analyses of gender concepts. For example, the locus classicus of this sort of approach is Sally Haslanger's revisionary project in her 'Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them To Be?' In this paper she starts with a question: what is (it to be) an X? Such questions further invite a methodological question: how are we going to approach answering the question? Haslanger distinguishes three different types of project. (Haslanger 2000, 33) First, we might be interested in the 'manifest concept.' This is the concept we take ourselves to be applying,

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9   I take this point to be roughly analogous to Barnes' (2014) criticisms of certain fundamentality approaches to metaphysics.

and requires that we engage in a conceptual approach. That is: we will be using a priori methods and aiming to reach a reflective equilibrium by taking into account our intuitions about the concept. Second, we might be interested in the 'operative concept.' This is the concept we are in fact applying, and requires that we engage in a descriptive project. That is: we must consider what objective types our vocabulary tracks; i.e. identifying paradigm cases for fixing the referent of the term and drawing on (quasi) empirical methods to explicate the relevant kind or type to which the paradigm belongs. Finally, we might be interested in the 'target concept.' This requires an ameliorative approach. This approach starts from the question of 'what is the point in having concept x.' We must determine what concept would actually do the best work for us, given some kinds of explanatory (or political) purposes.

When it comes to gender, Haslanger thinks that we should be engaged in the latter of these projects. She tells us that "neither ordinary usage nor empirical investigation is overriding, for there is a stipulative element to the project: *this* is the phenomenon we need to be thinking about." (2000, 34, emphasis in text) We should not want to merely track our pre-existing conceptions of gender, but we must have a theory of meaning and a metaphysics that can serve the important political purposes of feminism. Haslanger identifies the aim of her project as follows: "… the task is to develop accounts of gender and race that will be effective tools in the fight against injustice." (2000, 36) We can see ample motivation for this approach by reflecting on the flaws of the Canberra Plan. Our everyday gender concepts have been significantly shaped by contemporary and historical sexism, and to construct a theory from these would be to construct a theory which is antithetical to our social, political, legal, and ethical purposes.

This is certainly one of the most popular contemporary approaches to theorising about the nature of politically salient concepts. Indeed, advocates of conceptual engineering propose this ameliorative methodology for a whole variety of concepts of philosophical interest. However, conceptual engineering is not without its critics, and rather than attempt to tackle these important methodological questions about the viability of conceptual engineering, I'm going to try to offer a reconstruction of the classic Lewisian method that is suitable for application to concepts which are marred by ideology.[10]

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10 It has been suggested to me that I'm proposing a form of conceptual engineering. Perhaps this is correct and I do take my suggestion here to be similar in spirit to Haslanger's own motivations. However, what's important for my present theoretical purposes is that such an approach can be executed from *within* the Canberra Planning framework. Inasmuch as this is the aim, I take my particular approach to be more desirable.

6.   CANBERRA PLANNING FOR GENDER

The state of play is that we want an analysis of gender concepts which is consistent with some of our utterances being true. Thus, we want a theory which doesn't merely encode all of our pre-theoretic misogynist opinion. What we need is a constraint on what gets to count as the admissible data for analysis. I propose a refinement of the Canberra method which gives it the resources to offer a politically satisfactory theory of gender. The concern of this paper is distinctly methodological. I will not provide a Canberra-style analysis, but rather I aim to motivate an amendment to the methodology. What I want to do is demonstrate how those philosophers who wish to broadly pursue the Canberra Plan method can do so without offering misogynistic semantic analyses for gender concepts or endorsing a sexist metaphysics. Whilst this paper is primarily aimed at those philosophers who want to maintain the viability of the Canberra Plan *and* have a politically useful theory of gender, I trust that what follows nonetheless has wider methodological interest. Seeing that there is room in theoretical space for such a combination is important, especially in showing that those who favour more traditional analytic philosophical methodologies needn't be hostile to politically orientated philosophical projects.

The site of the problem is that common opinion is marred by ideology. An obvious move is to merely exclude the opinion in question. But how can we do that without damaging the structural integrity of the approach? Without excluding it in an ad hoc or arbitrary manner? How might we limit the class of analysis relevant opinion in a principled way? Lewis himself does not take all our common opinions to be sacrosanct. Whilst Lewis assigns a central and robust role to common opinion he does think that there can still be some give and take. (Lewis 1986b, 240-1) The question is, then, under what circumstances should common opinion be respected, and when should it be overridden? As I said in section three, Lewis does not give a categorical answer to this question. However, I think his view on the limits of common opinion as a decisive theoretical tool can be reconstructed. There are three reasons why we might not want to take common opinion to be a significant constraint on our theorising.

First, our opinions about certain cases might be inconsistent. (Lewis 1983c, 25; 1986b, 100) That is: we might have competing opinions about some cases. Remember, part of the job of analysis is to systematise our opinions about the subject matter and we cannot systematise what is inconsistent. Second, Lewis does not think that we need to respect opinion that is not really *common* opin-

ion. I take it that there are a number of ways this could be the case. Perhaps the opinion is "offhand," in which case he does not think we need to adhere to it. (Lewis 1973, 80; 1986b, 87) He also does not think we need to pay attention to opinion about extreme cases. For example, he claims that in cases of "extreme oddities" our opinions cannot be taken as a guide. (Lewis 1973, 28) He counsels that in cases where it appears that we do have opinions about far-fetched matters, we should not trust them. (Lewis 1986b, 246-7) In addition, we also do not need respect opinion that has become saturated with theory. (Lewis 1974, 111-2) I take it that what unites these ways in which common opinion can be safely ignored is that they are all cases in which our opinions are too far removed from the kind of pre-philosophical thought that Lewis thinks can act as a constraint on analysis.

Perhaps these first two routes already provide the resources for excluding the problematic common opinion at issue? There are no doubt inconsistencies in our everyday thinking about gender. However, I expect that noting this won't be sufficient to side-step the problems that I've indicated. The folk conception of gender does not clearly distinguish it from sex and, inasmuch as a core part of feminist theorising about gender maintains a sex-gender distinction, excluding some peripheral inconsistencies won't be enough. Alternatively, perhaps what I've pointed to as common opinion isn't sufficiently common? Perhaps only 80% of people believe this and thus this isn't sufficiently common. Maybe this is correct, but this makes our analysis hostage to the facts. At a world where patriarchal ideology is hegemonic, we would be left with no way to exclude the problematic opinion.

Finally, therefore, Lewis tells us that we may diverge from common opinion because it leads to an unfavourable theory. For example, if an analysis forces us to accept something mysterious, we do not need to adhere to such opinions, as in his discussion of the counterfactual analysis of causation. (Lewis 1986d, 182) A particularly interesting manifestation of this kind of motivation to move away from common opinion is that if common opinion forces us to accept an analysis that, in turn, dictates acceptance of certain empirical theories, we need not adhere to that opinion. This point merits discussion. Much in the same way that common opinion acts as a defeasible restriction on what constitutes an acceptable analysis, Lewis also takes scientific theory to place a restriction on his analytical projects. Lewis does not think scientific posits should be *constitutive* of an analysis. The reason for this is that Lewis does not think that scientific relationships deserve to be built into our analyses, as we could not establish such connections a priori. (Lewis 1992, 209; 1986c, 126) Two things follow from Lewis's commitment to the a priority

of analysis. First, analysis itself should not posit empirical relations. Second, we should reject an analysis if it forces either the acceptance or the dismissal of particular scientific theories.

This latter component has two dimensions. On the one hand, Lewis does not want any particular analysis to rule out any physical theories as impossible a priori. (Lewis 1979b, 41) Although we may have good empirical reasons for rejecting a certain scientific theory, Lewis thinks that the falsity of scientific hypotheses should not be established by means of analysis. From the other direction, he does not want analysis to force the acceptance of particular scientific theories. This would be to a priori commit ourselves to things that should be established empirically. Lewis thinks that there are certain kinds of things (for example the empirical posits of natural science) which should not be determined by philosophy alone, and certainly not by analysis. (Lewis 1992, 198) Essentially, he does not want to "impose a priori answers on questions that ought to be empirical." (Lewis 1986a, 63)

These general considerations work out more concretely in Lewis's discussion of any potential tension between common opinion about colour and materialism. Lewis tells us that:

> An adequate theory of colour must be materialistic and commonsensical. The former demand is non-negotiable. The latter can be compromised to some degree. We need not be 'ever so inclusive' in advancing all our offhand folk-theoretical opinions as conditions of adequacy on a theory. (Lewis 1997, 332)

So, the thought goes, if accommodating certain common opinions about colour would require a divergence from materialism, then this provides sufficient reason to reject the opinion in question. This materialistic constraint is central to my positive proposal. But there are two distinct ways in which we can use this constraint. First, perhaps materialism alone can do all the work for us. Looking at the contemporary state of the scientific study of gender suggests that there isn't a natural order.[11] Social difference isn't grounded in biological difference. So, by materialism we can exclude the sorts of sexist opinions that make trouble for the approach by noting that many of these opinions conflict with what best science says about the nature of world.

A second and more radical option is to make Lewisian analysis compatible with social justice, at minimal cost to the Canberra Planner, by

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11 For discussion of the (lacking) biological basis of gender categories see Fausto-Sterling (2000) and Fine (2010).

analogising this treatment of the tension between materialism and common opinion. My suggestion is that much like how materialism can act as a constraint on the acceptability of common opinion, the same line should be adopted with social justice. If incorporating commonly held opinion about gender into the analysis requires endorsing sexist beliefs, then this gives us reason to reject those opinions. Lewis's argument is that analysis should not settle matters a priori that should be settled a posteriori. So, in so far as contemporary physics can act as a defeater for anti-materialist opinion, gender theory and feminist politics can act as a defeater for sexist opinion.

Some things to note about my proposal. First, this proposal isn't merely to reject the Canberra Plan methodology with respect to gender concepts. It is rather to add, along with materialism, a guiding constraint on the uptake of common opinion. So, the stock of common opinion which we must systematise and to which we must assign truth conditions will not include the sort of misogynistic opinion that motivated the problem in section four. As such, the analysis at which we will arrive need not be antithetical to the aims of social justice. Second, the degree to which my suggestion is friendly to the Canberra Planner depends on the degree to which you think that 'not settling a priori what should be settled empirically' is relevantly similar to 'not settling a priori what should be settled practically/politically.'

The central question is, therefore, what justifies the comparison between social justice and materialism? Why should we think that taking social justice to be a defeater for pre-philosophical common opinion is a permissible move? I think this comparison can be justified. Crucially, my target justification depends on my diagnosis of why the Canberra Plan malfunctions with respect to politically important concepts. To see this, it is worth reflecting on why a Canberra Planner would take materialism to provide a legitimate defeater. The motivation for this stems from the explanatory aims of the Planners' inquiry. They are ultimately trying to give theories about what the world is like independent of our representations of it, and so a method which allowed our pre-theoretical opinions to dictate the acceptance of *scientific* hypotheses would not yield metaphysical theories with the right kind of status. Philosophical analysis was supposed to provide a sophisticated conception of the relationship between our ordinary thinking about the world and the way the world in fact is. If common opinion always reigns supreme, it becomes unclear how our theories are about the world at all, rather than just being models of widely held belief. Thus, what motivates the materialist constraint is that it facilitates the explanatory goals of metaphysics and will be more likely to produce accurate theories about the nature of reality.

I think there are two different motivations for the social justice constraint which emerge out of these reflections. An initial option would be to make use of this idea of 'the explanatory aims of inquiry' and to claim that our explanatory goals differ depending on the area of metaphysical inquiry. So, when we are concerned with fundamental metaphysics, we are concerned with truth alone and we must exclude any opinion which will decrease the likelihood of constructing accurate theories. But, when we are concerned with social metaphysics, certain kinds of contextual values can come into play,[12] and ethical or political considerations become relevant to theory construction. I think those philosophers who are already sold on the sort of conceptual engineering projects I gestured towards above, will find this satisfactory. However, inasmuch as metaphysics is thought of as an objective study of the nature of reality, admitting such contextual values into the methodological toolbox is likely to illicit concerns that we're just not playing the same game anymore.[13]

Given this, I suggest we pursue a different motivation for the social justice constraint: both materialism and social justice can constrain the class of analysis-relevant common opinion because they are both guides to truth. The explanation I gave of why the Canberra Plan goes so wrong when analysing gender concepts was that these concepts have been marred by ideology. I offered an understanding of ideology according to which an ideology is an epistemically defective system of beliefs. The sorts of ideological beliefs that the unconstrained Canberra Plan would have sought to analyse must be excluded because we have good reason to think that these beliefs offer distorting representations of reality. Many of these beliefs aren't merely morally or politically dubious; they misrepresent the world. A useful way to characterise my proposal is that I think we should treat ideology as a higher-order defeater. Roughly, epistemologists make a distinction between first-order evidence, which is evidence that bears directly on some target hypothesis, and higher-order evidence, which is evidence about the status of the first-order evidence. Higher-order defeaters provide evidence that a belief, or system of beliefs, have been formed in a defective manner. I think that we should understand ideological distortion as a higher-order defeater for our beliefs about the social world. This proposal motivates the idea that there isn't really any competition

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12 See Longino (1994) for discussion of contextual values.

13 It is worth noting that Mikkola (2015) has defended the view that contextual values are perfectly admissible in metaphysical theory construction and choice, along similar lines to Anderson's 'justice model of theory choice and method justification' in the philosophy of science (Anderson 1995).

between truth and justice: excluding sexist ideological folk opinion from analysis can serve both goals.

You might now wonder how my proposal leaves room for any common opinion at all. I think it still has a (suitably constrained) role to play. It might be the case that some of our ordinary beliefs are not false; perhaps some aren't even significantly distorting. Thought and talk about gender is ubiquitous and heterogeneous. The Planner has a mighty task in trying to evaluate and systematise this mass of usage and, given the pervasive hold of gender ideologies, the Planner needs to regard their data with healthy suspicion. I think a significant upshot of my suggestion is that there is a sense in which philosophical analysis becomes posterior to ideology critique. Therefore, even though I'm trying to preserve the theoretical viability of the Canberra Plan, my proposal does have profound methodological ramifications. These are ramifications that I think the Canberra Planner should welcome: if we want accurate theories about the nature of reality, we should be eager to root out misleading common opinion that will lead us astray.

My aim is not to convince you that the overarching philosophical programme of the Canberra Plan, or justice-orientated approaches to theorising about gender, are projects worth pursuing. My aim is rather to speak to the compatibility of these approaches. Those sceptical of justice-orientated approaches to metaphysics might worry that truth and justice pull in different directions and consequently that an approach to metaphysics which is constrained by its commitment to justice might to have compromise one of the fundamental aims of metaphysical inquiry. Conversely, those sympathetic to justice-orientated approaches might question whether the traditional methods of metaphysics are remotely fit for purpose when theorising about the nature of our deeply political social reality; they might consequently regard aspirations toward a systematic approach to metaphysics as being regrettably naïve. I hope to have shown that these approaches needn't be at odds with each other: there are resources within the Lewisian framework to accommodate a just metaphysics of gender. My concern about the theoretical limitations of the Canberra Plan was that it could only offer a theory which effectively endorses misogynistic common opinion or else it could only remain silent. What I hope to have charted here is a route for the Canberra Planner who wants to have a theory of gender which is compatible with the emancipatory aims of feminism.

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