

“Sider’s Third Realm” (penultimate draft)  
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**Abstract:**

Sider (2011) argues it is not only predicates that carve reality at its joints, but expressions of any logical or grammatical category- including quantifiers, operators, and sentential connectives. Even so, he denies these expressions pick out entities in the world; instead, they only represent the world’s “structure”. I argue that this distinction is not viable, and that Sider’s ambitious programme requires an exotic ontology – and even a Fregean “third realm” – of logical entities.

**Keywords:** Ontological Commitment, Joint-carving, Logical Realism, Sider

**1. Introduction**

According to David Lewis, predicates that pick out natural properties “carve reality at its joints” (1983: 13). In his *Writing the Book of the World* (2011), Ted Sider argues Lewis did not go far enough: it is not only predicates that carve at reality’s joints, but expressions of any logical or grammatical category- including quantifiers and connectives. On Sider’s telling, this insight is the key to getting at what metaphysicians have always sought: the ultimate or fundamental structure of reality. For only with a perfectly joint-carving language can one “write the book of the world”- that is, understand fundamental reality in its own terms.

But Sider does not simply extend Lewis. For Lewis, a predicate – which is a linguistic item – carves at the joints only if it corresponds to a natural property- an entity in the world. Although Sider ratifies ‘ $\exists$ ’ and ‘&’ as joint-carving, however, he denies there are entities corresponding to these terms (for strange entities these would be).

Crucial for this balancing act is Quine’s ontology/ideology distinction- which Sider accepts in one sense, but rejects in another. For Quine (1951), a theory’s ontology is what the theory says exists, whereas its ideology consists of the concepts or primitive

notions – including logical vocabulary – used to say it. And as Sider notes, it is usually thought that whereas ontology concerns the objective world, ideology is merely conventional. But Sider rejects this mapping: though only ontology concerns what exists, Sider claims, ideology is objective too, in that ‘ $\exists$ ’ and ‘&’ represent the “structure” of the world. Thus, Sider’s goal is to show that logical ideology is “structural” or joint-carving, but that ideology is still not ontology.

I argue, however, that this goal cannot be achieved- for there is no difference between there being structure and there being entities. Consequently, Sider is committed to entities corresponding to every term he considers joint-carving- even the quantifiers and connectives. Put another way, Sider’s version of the ontology/ideology distinction is unsustainable: for if ideology is taken to represent objective worldly structure, it is just more ontology- and a quite exotic ontology at that.

## 2. A Whiggish History of Ontological Commitment

To see why Sider’s revamped version of the ontology/ideology distinction is problematic, it will be helpful to first have a sense of a) how Quine’s original distinction is connected to his criterion of ontological commitment, and b) the view of ontological commitment against which Quine’s was a reaction.

Before introducing his famous criterion of ontological commitment (in “On What There Is”), Quine (1948) discusses what is sometimes called “the paradox of nonbeing”: that the denial of something’s existence implies that it nonetheless has *being*, or *is*, in some sense. For instance (and using Quine’s example), in order for the assertion ‘Pegasus does not exist’ to be a denial of the existence of *Pegasus*, the assertion must be *about*

Pegasus. But if Pegasus were nothing at all, there would be nothing for this assertion to be about. So Pegasus must be other than nothing; paradoxically, therefore, the denial that Pegasus exists (seemingly) implies that Pegasus *is*.

What principle of ontological commitment does the paradox express? Since using the word ‘Pegasus’ to make a meaningful assertion seems to bring with it a commitment to Pegasus, this suggests that one is committed to accepting any entity for which one has a name (whether existent or not). Or, equivalently, that *there are* entities – existent or non-existent – corresponding to every meaningful singular term (or phrase).

Of course, this sort of view is associated with Meinong, who held that any intentional object (or object of thought) must have *being* in order to be thought *about*.<sup>1</sup> Slightly less well-known, perhaps, is that before developing his theory of descriptions, Bertrand Russell accepted this Meinongian view- and for similar reasons. In his 1903 *Principles of Mathematics*, for example, after Russell defined a “term” as “whatever may be an object of thought, or may occur in any true or false proposition”, Russell asserted that “every term has being, i.e. *is* in some sense. A man, a moment, a number, a class, a relation, a chimera, or anything else that can be mentioned, is sure to be a term; and to deny that such and such a thing is a term must always be false” (1903: §47). Clearly, Russell assents to the paradox of nonbeing, and accepts its principle of ontological (or subsistential) commitment: to be is to be mentionable (or thinkable).<sup>2</sup>

Suppose one accepts this Meinongian or 1903 Russellian principle. Is one only committed to the being of non-existent *things*, or *objects*- such as flying horses or golden

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<sup>1</sup> See e.g. Marek (2013) and Reicher (2012) for more detailed overviews of Meinong’s position.

<sup>2</sup> As parenthetically indicated, a Meinongian might distinguish ontological from “subsistential” commitment, i.e., between commitment to existence as opposed to being. For now, though, I’ll use ‘ontological commitment’ to indicate commitment to any kind of reality whatever.

mountains? Presumably not. First, Russell lists non-objects – such as moments, numbers, classes, and even relations – as terms. Second, there is good reason for Russell to have done so, for the same arguments apply in the case of non-object categories: for instance, if ‘Pegasus does not exist’ commits one to the being of Pegasus, then ‘moments do not exist’ and ‘relations do not exist’ commits one to the being of moments and relations, respectively. (Along the same lines, surely moments and relations can be mentioned or thought about.) And third, Russell also claims (in the same passage) that ‘term’ is “the widest word in the philosophical vocabulary”. But if ‘term’ was restricted to objects and excluded e.g. relations, ‘term’ could hardly lay claim to this title.

But this makes the doctrine even stranger than it may already appear. Consider relations again- though this time sentential relations, such as those expressed by ‘and’, ‘or’, and ‘therefore’. Are there logical objects or relations corresponding to even these words? Regardless of whether Russell meant to include ‘and’ and ‘or’ in his (maximally?) broad category of terms (see §71 for his ambivalent discussion and e.g. Candlish 2007: 106-115 for commentary), thinking of *and* and *or* as entities with being is likely for someone who endorses the Meinongian/Russellian view, and may well be a commitment. For *and* occurs in truth-apt propositions, it “can be mentioned”, and it too can be run through paradox of nonbeing type arguments: for example, if ‘the golden mountain does not exist’ commits one to the subsistence or being of the golden mountain, then ‘the sentential relation *and* does not exist’ similarly commits one to the being of *and*.

It is easy to scoff at this view, of course. But what is involved in rejecting it? What apparatus does one need? Some sort of type or category distinction appears necessary: for instance, that there is a distinction between referring terms (such as names)

and non-referring terms (such as sentential connectives), or a distinction between things (such as horses) and logical relations (such as conjunction). It is not clear, however, that Meinong or 1903 Russell had the apparatus to make this distinction principled. And this is just what made Russell's 1905 theory of descriptions so important: Russell was able to distinguish singular referring terms from non-referring descriptive phrases, thereby providing a principled criterion for distinguishing semantic or logical types. Or, put another way, Russell was able to articulate how certain words or phrases – such as definite descriptions – are meaningful not in virtue of referring or denoting (as names might be), but rather by being a part (albeit incomplete) of establishing the truth-conditions for a statement as a whole. As a result, Russell was able to avoid the Meinongian commitment to entities corresponding to every meaningful word or phrase: for instance, to say it is false that there is an  $x$  such that  $x$  is both golden and a mountain does not bring with it a commitment to a nonexistent golden mountain (or a non-specific  $x$ , for that matter).

Similarly, sentential connectives were taken to differ in kind from names, and words such as 'or' and 'and' were taken to be meaningful not in virtue of referring to corresponding entities, but by contributing to the truth-conditions of the statements in which they are embedded. Both Russell and the early Wittgenstein would trumpet this insight over the next decade, worrying that some might miss it. In his *Lectures on Logical Atomism*, for instance, Russell (1918) felt the need to warn his audience as follows: "You must not look about the real world for an object which you can call 'or', and say, 'now, look at this. This is 'or''. There is no such thing" (p. 72). Similarly, Wittgenstein (1921)

thought it twice worth mentioning in the famously terse *Tractatus* that negation is not an object (5.44), and that “nothing in reality corresponds to the sign ‘~’” (4.0621).

But Russell and Wittgenstein didn’t have a pithy slogan to capture the distinction between what terms are ontologically committing and which are not (and which terms do and don’t refer). In our Whiggish history, at least, this job fell to Quine, who famously extends Russell’s view and canonizes it- with the slogan ‘to be is to be the value of a variable’. For Quine, of course, this means that only bound variables (in a canonical language used by our best theory) are ontologically committing. Other parts of the quantified sentence, however – such as predicates, operators, other syncategorematic terms, and the quantifiers themselves – have other roles to play, and so are not ontologically (or subsentially) committing.<sup>3</sup>

To see that Quine’s criterion of commitment is closely related to – or is the basis of – the ontology/ideology distinction, note that the ontology/ideology distinction is unavailable to Meinong and the 1903 Russell: because on this view *all* terms refer to or pick out entities, everything is ontology- and nothing is ideology. But if only certain terms refer (e.g. names substituted for bound variables), then ontology only concerns the referents of those names (or the values of those variables) - and the rest is ideology. That is, because predicates, operators, quantifiers, and the like contribute to sentential structure (or truth-conditions) in ways other than by referring to entities in the world, the use of such terms brings with them no ontological commitment. Ideology is thereby distinct from ontology, and one is only committed to what one says there is- not to something corresponding to how one says it.

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<sup>3</sup> Thus, certain traditional debates – such as nominalism vs. realism about universals – can be recast in linguistic or quasi-linguistic terms: e.g., do predicate terms refer, as substantive terms do? Are predicates names for universals? (Of course, Quine answers in the negative.)

Thus, we see that the ontology/ideology distinction is a natural concomitant of the view there is nothing “out there” that corresponds to words such as ‘not’ and ‘or’. Crucially, this suggests it is not a coincidence that ontology/ideology is taken to map onto objective/conventional: for ontology concerns the entities that are objectively out there in the world (presumably), whereas how we express thoughts about these, or how we construct our sentences – i.e., the language in which these sentences are expressed – is largely conventional. For after all, it would appear that there are only two (mutually exclusive and exhaustive) options: something is either objective or conventional, mind-independent or mind-dependent. There is no third option, no third realm between objective existence and being only in the mind (of the individual or group). Instead, there is just ontology – what there is – and ideology- how we say it.

### 3. Structure, Truthmakers, and Ontological Commitment

This brings us back to Sider. For as described at the outset, Sider claims that ‘not’ and ‘or’ *do* correspond to reality, that ideology is as objective as ontology, and that even ostensibly non-referential terms – such as ‘ $\exists$ ’ – are “structural” or joint-carving. In so doing, is Sider affirming that there are logical objects? Does Sider think *and* has being?

Sider says no, for three reasons. First, he introduces a regimentation of ‘ $\alpha$  is structural’ (or joint-carving) that he believes avoids commitment to an entity corresponding to  $\alpha$ . Second, he appeals to the ontology/ideology distinction (as mentioned above). And third, he offers a direct argument against the existence of logical entities. I will show, however, that none work. Consequently, I argue, Sider is committed to an exotic form of logical realism.

Consider first the regimentation strategy. For Lewis, ‘is natural’ is a predicate (of properties). Thus, truly predicating ‘is natural’ may seem to require the existence of a predicated entity. Sider, however, wishes to treat (alleged) non-entities as perfectly natural (what he calls “structural”). So instead of treating ‘is structural’ as a predicate, he introduces a “structure operator”, which he stipulates may attach to “expressions of arbitrary grammatical category” to form truth-evaluable complete sentences (p. 92). Symbolized ‘ $\mathcal{S}$ ’, one can thereby assert ‘ $\mathcal{S}$ (is negatively charged)’, ‘ $\mathcal{S}(\exists)$ ’, and ‘ $\mathcal{S}(\text{and})$ ’. And if ‘ $\mathcal{S}(\text{and})$ ’ is true, ‘and’ is structural- it carves at the joints.

Nonetheless, Sider explicitly denies that his structure operator invokes entities:

“To say ‘ $\mathcal{S}(\text{and})$ ’ is not to say something about an alleged object Conjunction. It is not to say anything about any thing at all. It is nevertheless to say something true, something objective, something about reality. Nowhere is it written in stone that all facts must be entity-involving. In Graham Nerlich’s phrase, ‘realism need not be ontic’” (p. 92).

Declaring this is not enough, however, as there is considerable truthmaker pressure here: for if the sentence ‘ $\mathcal{S}(\text{and})$ ’ is *true*, then one wonders what *makes* it true. Sider’s answer is that there is conjunctive structure in the world, or, as he also puts it, that the world has a conjunctive “aspect” (p. 91). And though Sider does not intend to “reify aspects”, his intention may be moot: for if aspects are that in the world which make statements about structure true, then aspects are a kind of entity. After all, *entities* need not be *objects*: for instance, *redness* being a property rather than an object does not preclude it from being an entity (of the property sort). So even if *conjunction* is an aspect (and not an object), this does not imply it is not an entity (of the aspect sort). Put another way, even if one doesn’t literally *reify* aspects – which, etymologically, means to treat as an object (*res* being Latin for ‘thing’) – one may well still be treating aspects as having some sort of being- which is enough to make them an entity (of some kind or another).



This argument may be elaborated. Suppose for a moment that “joint-carving” talk is literal rather than metaphorical. If so, and nature literally has joints, then surely joints are a kind of entity. Moreover, on Sider’s telling, the key difference between himself (as a meta-metaphysical realist), and his meta-metaphysical opponent (as an anti-realist), is whether ‘there exist joints in nature’ is taken to be true (pp. 82-3). But surely a disagreement over whether *there are* joints in nature is an *ontological* disagreement.<sup>4</sup>

Of course, joint-carving talk is probably best understood metaphorically. If so, and given Sider’s regimentation, I will assume the literal talk invokes ‘structure’. But the same problem emerges: if the world contains structure according to Sider, but it does not contain structure according to his meta-metaphysical opponent (as indicated above), then surely this is an ontological disagreement, and structure counts as some sort of entity, or as something with being.<sup>5</sup>

Even so, one might resist. For one might think I’m taking surface grammar too literally here. For instance, although ‘there are joints in nature’ and ‘there is structure’ appear to be quantificational statements (with ontological commitments), one might reject this as an artefact of natural language. Instead, Sider’s official regimentation likely renders ‘there is conjunctive structure’ as  $\mathcal{S}(\text{and})$  - not by something like  $\exists x(x=\text{and})$ , or  $\exists x(Sx \ \& \ x=\text{and})$  - where ‘S’ is a predicate for structure. And for Sider this difference is crucial: for the fact that ‘ $\mathcal{S}(\text{and})$ ’ contains no quantifiers means it is not ontologically committing (as  $\exists x(x=\text{and})$  would be were it true). Properly rendered, then, English statements such as ‘there is structure’ turn out not to be ontologically committing after all

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<sup>4</sup> Examples of this sort of talk abound. For instance, Sider writes that “In the case of logic.. it’s plausible to think that there *are* joints in nature” (p. 222, original emphasis).

<sup>5</sup> This is so even on Sider’s own terms. For Sider claims that metametaphysics is “just more metaphysics” (p. 82), and, moreover, that ‘ $\mathcal{S}(\mathcal{S})$ ’ is true- that is, that structure is itself structural (p. 137). And surely a dispute over this claim is a dispute as to whether *there is* structure.

(even if true)- and to take them as incurring a commitment to some structural entity would be a mistake, based on a superficial reading of a natural language not ideally suited to expressing metaphysical truths.

But this reply simply assumes what is at issue: namely, that only variables falling within the scope of a quantifier – and not terms falling within the scope of the structure operator – are ontologically committing. For as above, the truthmaker pressure on  $\mathcal{S}$ (and) suggests that this sentence could well be committing; i.e., the truth of  $\mathcal{S}$ (and) might well imply *there is* conjunctive structure- even if the expression lacks quantifiers.

This is worth elaborating. Return to the Meinongian view outlined earlier. On that view, the subject/predicate statement ‘Pegasus is a horse’ brings with it a commitment to Pegasus- even if the statement contains no quantifiers. For as we saw earlier, the Meinongian is operating on a different principle of commitment: something along the lines of ‘to be is to be mentionable, or an object of thought’. That ontological commitment is limited to what one (explicitly) says there is – in the quantificational idiom – is a development due to Russell, Quine, et al. So the first point to make here is it is not self-evident that only claims made in the quantificational idiom are committing- other claims could be as well. Now, one may grant this as a logical possibility, but nonetheless insist that we need not be hemmed in by the mistaken Meinongian view: after all, what we’ve learned since Meinong is what Russell, Quine et al taught us: that to be is to be the value of a bound variable. But, I contend, one cannot automatically help oneself to this idea- for as I hope to have made plausible, this notion of commitment may well be tied not only to the ontology/ideology distinction, but to this distinction mapping onto the objective/conventional distinction.

Recall that on Russell's Meinongian view from 1903, something with *being* corresponds to every meaningful term. Consequently, *all* terms count as ontological and none as ideological; as such, the very distinction collapses (better: it can never be built). So it is only because the Quinean tradition distinguishes between terms which are world-involving from those which are not that the ontology/ideology distinction gets off the ground. And what this shows is that the ontology/ideology distinction cannot be taken for granted; instead, it must be established. And the worry here is that Sider is not entitled to the distinction: for if one claims that *every* category of term may carve at the joints (or represent worldly structure), as Sider does, then one cannot assume ontological commitments are limited to the values of bound variables; perhaps terms within the range of the world-involving structure operator are committing as well.<sup>6</sup>

Allow me to put the issue one other way. Recall that Sider worries that if 'is structural' were a predicate, it might require commitment to a predicated entity. As a result, Sider introduces a structure operator, which he claims incurs no commitment. But what is the argument for accepting this claim? Why shouldn't true statements made with operators bring a commitment to something being operated on, akin to true statements made with predicates requiring a predicated entity? (Equivalently: if  $Fa$  being true implies  $\exists xFx$  and  $\exists x(x=a)$ , why doesn't  $\mathcal{S}(a)$  imply  $\exists x(x=a)$ ?) As best I can tell, Sider takes the difference to be grounded in the ontology/ideology distinction: that is, the difference between there existing structure and there existing entities is that something is an *entity* only if it falls on the ontology side of the divide. (Or, put another way, that objectual variables fall on the ontology side, but operators fall on the ideology side.) But

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<sup>6</sup> I take this to comport with the anti-Quinean doctrine of "truthmaker commitments": roughly, that one is ontologically committed to every entity needed to make a sentence true, not only what it quantifies over. See Armstrong (2004) and Cameron (2008), and Schaffer (2008) for criticism.

what *justifies* putting any given term on one side rather than the other? As we saw, the Meinongian collapses (or can never establish) the distinction. So to avoid also collapsing the distinction, Sider must somehow distinguish between terms that pick out entities from terms that pick out only structure (or, along the same lines, Sider must distinguish which sorts of terms are subject to something like existential generalization: e.g. why  $Fa$  entails  $\exists x(x=a)$  but  $\mathcal{S}(a)$  does not). But here Sider faces a dilemma. For he cannot simply say that because ‘and’ falls on the ideological side, it does not represent an entity, or incur any commitments- for that begs the question. Put another way, he cannot simply declare that because  $\mathcal{S}(\text{and})$  is not equivalent to (or does not entail)  $\exists x(x=\text{and})$ , that ‘and’ is ideological and not ontological. For this is just what is under dispute. But neither can he simply declare that ‘and’ does not represent an entity, and therefore it falls on the ideological side. For if structure existing is tantamount to some sort of entity existing, as I’ve suggested, then if ‘and’ is joint-carving it does pick out an entity. So without the traditional version of the ontology/ideology distinction to fall back on, it is not clear that Sider has the apparatus to avoid commitment to logical relations such as *conjunction*.

Despite this, one might think Sider’s third strategy outlined earlier – his direct argument against logical entities – gives him a way out. That argument runs as follows. For Sider, expressions such as ‘there is’ and ‘and’ are fundamental (or structural). But any corresponding entities would not be fundamental, Sider contends, and given this disconnect, he rejects the entities. For example, if quantifiers represent second-order properties, then <there exists cows> is an abstract second-order fact (i.e. the property of being a cow has the property of having at least one instance). But, Sider claims, that a cow exists is a concrete first-order fact. So he rejects the second-order property (p. 90).

Similarly, Sider claims that if the semantic values of the connectives were entities, they would be distinctively semantic entities (i.e. propositions and the relations between them). But as semantics is a nonfundamental or special science, purely fundamental facts cannot include semantic entities any more than they can include economic entities (p. 91).<sup>7</sup> Sider concludes: no entities correspond to logical expressions.

But the argument does not succeed- even if one accepts that if ‘ $\exists$ ’ and ‘&’ are structural, the entities they pick out must also be structural. For the argument also requires the only possible referents of these expressions to be nonfundamental beings, such as second-order properties and semantic relations. But not only is it not necessary to share this assumption, Sider’s own arguments undermine it. For if Sider is right that ‘ $\exists$ ’ and ‘&’ are structural, and that any corresponding entities must also be structural, then one might consider this a reason for thinking ‘ $\exists$ ’ and ‘&’ *do* pick out fundamental entities. That is, one might take the fundamentality of ‘there is’ and ‘and’ as part of an argument *for* the existence of fundamental quantificational or conjunctive entities, and *against* taking second-order properties and distinctively semantic entities to be picked out by ‘there is’ and ‘and’. In sum, the objection is this: Sider cannot assume the nonfundamentality of logical entities when his own reasoning is more naturally construed as supporting the idea that they are fundamental, and that they exist.

#### 4. Pseudo-Sider

I will now employ a rhetorical strategy for which I hope I am granted poetic license. Below I quote a strikingly Siderian passage from a philosopher who will remain

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<sup>7</sup> More generally, Sider defends “purity”- the doctrine that fundamental facts are not contaminated by anything nonfundamental (see esp. §§7.2-7.3).

momentarily anonymous- but who is not Sider. In reading this passage, I ask the reader keep two points in mind. First, Sider calls “ontologism” the belief that ideology is subjective or conventional, and that the only objective part of fundamental metaphysics is ontology (p. 94). Second, I have substituted in some of Sider’s preferred (but I believe equivalent) terminology; these are underlined. So, in the tradition of dubious authorial ascriptions (e.g. Pseudo-Aristotle and Pseudo-Dionysius), consider a passage from the philosopher I will temporarily call ‘Pseudo-Sider’:

“I recognize a domain of the objective but non-ontological, whereas the defenders of ontologism automatically assume that the non-ontological is subjective... Because the defenders of ontologism fail to recognize the possibility of the objective non-ontological, they take ideology as ideas and thereby consign them to psychology.”

To my ear, this is exactly Sider’s complaint. But, as indicated, I altered some phrases.

Here is the original, in which ‘ontological’ is replaced by ‘actual’, ‘ideology’ is replaced by ‘concepts’, and ‘defenders of ontologism’ is replaced by ‘psychological logicians’.

“I recognize a domain of the objective but non-actual, whereas the psychological logicians automatically assume that the non-actual is subjective... Because the psychological logicians fail to recognize the possibility of the objective non-actual, they take concepts as ideas and thereby consign them to psychology.”

As some readers may have guessed, the true identity of Pseudo-Sider is Frege.<sup>8</sup> And its significance is this: this passage expresses an argument for the existence of the “third realm”. For Frege, famously, there is not only the realm of the actual or physical (i.e. ontological by the lights of physics), and the realm of the mental (i.e. the subjective or conventional), but there is also a third realm, which is not physical (or sensible), but is nonetheless objective and mind-independent.<sup>9</sup> In brief, it seems Sider is making the same

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<sup>8</sup> Frege (1893: p. xvii), translated by, and reprinted in, Beaney (1997: 204-205).

<sup>9</sup> See Frege (1918) for his more robust defence of the third realm.

argument- for there being a third realm of logical ideology, distinct from the realm of physical objects, and from the realm of what is merely subjective or conventional.

The analogy runs deeper. Consider Frege's view on empty names (names lacking reference, such as 'Pegasus'). Such names are meaningful even without referring because, on Frege's view, they have a *sense*. And for Frege, of course, these senses (or meanings) are not only in the mind; instead, they are (posited as) objectively existing entities. For only in this way, Frege thinks, can the objectivity of language be grounded: for if there were no objectively existing senses (and no winged horses), then the meaning of 'Pegasus' would likely be each individual's own mental-image of Pegasus- in which case no two speakers could mean the same thing by 'Pegasus'.<sup>10</sup> Even so, Frege argues, senses being mind-independent does not entail they must be (akin to) physical objects: as quoted above, Frege is eager to remind his reader that being spatiotemporal or mental are not exhaustive categories- there is also a third realm (of abstract senses or meanings).

Sider finds himself very much in the same position. For Sider, meaningful (logical) words such as 'and' do not express subjective or conventional ideas, but neither do they pick out spatiotemporal entities. Yet they carve at the joints- they are structural and objective. Can Sider pull off this trick without invoking, as Frege did, a third realm (of logical ideology)? I am sceptical- for if Sider is to reject something like a Fregean sense of 'and' existing in a third realm of logical ideology, he needs, according to my previous arguments, something other than Quine's ontology/ideology distinction. But as far as I can tell, Sider has no such mechanism.

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<sup>10</sup> Moreover, in this case 'Pegasus does not exist' would be false- for if 'Pegasus' means the subjective *idea* of Pegasus, and that idea exists (whenever it is thought), then Pegasus does indeed exist- contra the original statement.

## 5. Platonic Logical Realism

I close with one last strategy to show Sider's commitment to an exotic ontology. In general, Sider contends that a successful theory not only warrants belief in its ontology, but in its ideology. In particular, Sider argues that modern logic's use of "*and, or, not, all, some, and identical*" has led to "overwhelming success", and so warrants belief "in the existence of corresponding structures in the world" (p. 97).

This view is not more widespread, Sider claims, because of an implicit acceptance of logical conventionalism. For the typical contrast between (non-logical) predicates that have worldly content, and purely formal logical expressions – which seem not to have worldly content – encourages the assumption that these expressions are conventional (ibid). But Sider rejects logical conventionalism. Instead, he upholds

"Russell's (1919) diametrically opposed position: 'Logic is concerned with the real world just as truly as zoology, though with its more abstract and general features'. Evaluating logical expressions for joint-carving is therefore not different in kind from evaluating any other expressions for joint-carving" (p. 98).

But following Russell here is dangerous. For just two chapters later in the work Sider cites (*Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy*), Russell elaborates on his logical realism: for Russell, the truth of logical propositions

"is independent of the existence of the universe. We may lay it down that, *if there were no universe, all general propositions would be true*; for the contradictory of a general proposition is a proposition asserting existence, and would therefore always be false if no universe existed" (1919: 197, my emphasis).

Even if one is used to thinking of trivial truth in this context, that there would be true propositions even if the universe did not exist is a radical claim. For not only is there a *truthmaker* issue here – if the physical universe did not exist, what could possibly make



logical propositions true? – but there is also a *truthbearer* issue here- for if the physical universe did not exist, how can there *be* propositions bearing the values true or false?

Plato would have had no difficulty with this question, of course: for Plato, there most certainly are logical and mathematical objects (necessarily) existing even in the absence of the physical universe. And with Plato as a foil, it is easy to see both what motivates logical conventionalism, and why the conventionalist is not committed to logical truths obtaining in an endless void. For as A.J. Ayer claims (and as Sider quotes as well), logical expressions “simply record our determination to use symbols in a certain fashion” (1936: 31). That is, Ayer suggests it is our commitment to using symbols in a certain way that makes logical propositions true or false. So for Ayer, logic is conventional (and thus knowable *a priori*). But from this it follows, of course, that if the universe did not exist, and *a fortiori* neither did we, logical statements would not be true- for neither the truthbearing statements nor their truthmaking speakers would exist.<sup>11</sup>

But Sider denies that we make logical truths true. Instead, the world does: in order for ‘if it is raining, then it is raining’ to be true, Sider writes, “the world must also cooperate; the world must really be as the sentence says. It must really be that if it is raining then it is raining” (p. 101).

Two points are worth emphasizing. First, Sider accepts truthmakers for logical truths; i.e., he accepts that something about the world makes logical truths true. (Consequently, he cannot avoid my arguments simply by denying truthmakers on principle.) Second, if ‘if it is raining then it is raining’ is true even if the physical object called ‘rain’ never existed, one wonders if it would still be true if the physical object

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<sup>11</sup> This is not to say, however, that they would be false: as these propositions would not *be* at all, they could not have (or bear) any truth-value whatever.

called ‘the universe’ never existed, à la Russell. For on the assumption that logical structure rather than rain is Sider’s truthmaker for the conditional, one wonders if logical structure would still exist – or have being – even if no physical objects did. If so, then Sider, like Russell, is committed to the truth – and the existence or being – of logical propositions even in the absence of the physical universe. And in that case, not only does logical structure have to count as some sort of entity, but logical structure is a strikingly Platonic entity.

Sider professes his worldview to be broadly physicalist: fundamentally, there is only what (Sider believes) physics posits- points of spacetime, and the physical objects he takes to be identical to those points (p. 292). According to my arguments, however, Sider’s view on logical structure commits him to a third realm of logical entities beyond the physical universe.<sup>12</sup> Rather than argue that this makes the view more or less palatable, I will suggest it is fitting: for Frege too was a Platonist, and it was Plato himself, after all, who in search of the Forms that he took to structure the universe, first described what he was doing as carving at nature’s joints.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Though Sider also accepts sets (ibid); whether this is already Platonism I leave for another day.

<sup>13</sup> See Plato’s *Phaedrus*, 265d-266a

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