In Defense of a Four-Part Theory
Replies to Hardimon, Haslanger, Mallon, and Zack

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Among the hopes that one harbors in writing a book is that the effort will be repaid by the book receiving the thoughtful examination of sharp and reflective minds. Thus I am grateful that the editors of the *Symposia on Gender, Race, and Philosophy* have carved out an occasion for just such a reward. Michael Hardimon, Sally Haslanger, Ron Mallon, and Naomi Zack have brought their usual insightful analysis to *A Theory of Race*, delivering critical commentary that I learned from and much appreciate.

In the book, I try to advance a cluster of claims about race. Some of them are ethical and political claims that amount to one basic policy recommendation: we should replace our race-talk with something else, something I call *race*-talk*. On

this proposal, as Haslanger observes, for any racial term, there is a corresponding racial* term, which is pronounced the same way and written the same way as its racial counterpart. In fact, the language of race* is to be embedded in our discourse in superficially many of the same ways that the language of race is: we can still talk about race* and white* oppression and black* people and so on. But while the terms are the same, the semantics are quite different (and signified by the asterisk). I maintain that the word 'race' in ordinary discourse purports to refer to something biological. Since no such biological thing exists, we have reason to get rid of that discourse. However, if we simultaneously replace it with the language of race*, then we will implement a discourse that refers to a wholly *social* object, which turns out to be real.

So my four-part theory is composed of (1) an ethico-political conclusion that we should replace race-talk with race*-talk – a position I call *reconstructionism* – that is partly motivated by (2) a metaphysical position – *racial anti-realism* – which is itself partly supported by (3) a semantic premise, namely that 'race' purports to refer to a certain biological kind of thing. This premise is, finally, buttressed by (4) a methodological orientation in favor of experimentally-informed conceptual analysis. With as varied and creative a cast of characters as has been assembled for this symposium, it is perhaps unsurprising that they challenge my theory not only on each of its four parts, but also on the relations that I try to establish between those parts. Some of these challenges appear to be quite forceful – as I took them in, several gave me pause about the soundness of the views contained in *A Theory of Race*. But upon reflection I believe that the theory's fundamental aspects are strong enough to withstand the criticisms put forth by Hardimon, Haslanger, Mallon, and Zack. Demonstrating a justification for this conviction is a tall order, but I will do my best in what follows.

The Normative Position: Reconstructionism

Zack suggests that reconstructionism – the thesis that we should reconstruct our racial discourse so that racial terms are intended to refer to social rather than biological kinds of things, that is, that we should replace race-talk with race*-talk – has some "empirical gaps." One such gap is that there might be some distance between the people I call 'we' and ordinary people who use racial discourse. In the book I stipulate that 'we' refers to the community of people who competently use a subset of American English, namely its racial discourse (3).[1] To whatever extent the linguistically incompetent might complain about a lack of representation, I think it is safe to exclude them from our analysis: for someone who sincerely insists, without irony or metaphor, that my couch is a white person (and they're pointing at my couch as they say this), I will have to insist that they simply don't understand what those in my linguistic community mean by 'white person,' or possibly that they do understand this but rebelliously choose to use their own language anyway. My theory isn't meant to apply to these folks.

Zack worries that this exclusion of the linguistically incompetent might turn out to be objectionably elitist, but I cannot see why that is the case. Even if, as she suggests, the linguistically competent might turn out to contain a disproportionally large amount of white people (perhaps an unlikely supposition, given that it seems hard to identify an independent frame of reference for defining a proportional community), the fact remains that my theory concerns those who speak either my language or languages that can be translated into the relevant portion of my language.[2] If the phonetic equivalent of 'race' in Thai turned out to mean 'tree,' then 'race' in the mouths of its speakers would refer to something very different than it means in the mouths of English speakers. What the word-form 'race' expresses for them would then be real (assuming that trees are real!), but I can't know whether the supposed meaning holds, since I am

not a competent speaker of Thai. It is only in a similar sense that reconstructionism has no commitments, one way or the other, about the semantic contents of other linguistic communities. So it's hard to see why reconstructionism might be objectionably elitist.

Of course, to actually reconstruct our discourse, the actual linguistic community has to get on board, and Zack's other concerns focus on whether and how this communal reframing of race might be brought about. We don't know how easy it will be to mount a widely effective education campaign about the fact that race is not biologically real. We don't know that such an education would result in the kind of reconstruction that I recommend. We don't know that evils similar to the evils done in the name of race won't weasel their way into other discourses if we replace race-talk with race*-talk. (Zack also observes that we do not know that the proposed reconstruction would effect all of the positive change we need with respect to race, but I think this last point is far too generous: we can be very confident that the reconstruction would *not* bring about all of that change by itself (146).)

To this I can only report that I agree that we do not know these things, and that they raise important questions about how to *implement* reconstructionism. In those moments when my activist urges surge and my theoretician's pen lies dormant, I wish that I had answers to them. But I don't. For answers, I would consult with educators, producers of PBS documentaries, marketing types, political strategists, and community activists. But that is as it should be. We need to know both *how* to rally the troops and *the end* to which they ought to be rallied. My book only aims to answer the latter question: it is, explicitly and proudly, a work of theory. It is one proposal about what we should aim for with respect to racial discourse. I leave it to others to figure out how best to achieve those aims. And I think that this division of intellectual labor is not only acceptable but advisable.[3]

So let us return to the theoretical question of what we should do with racial discourse. In a remark that harkens back to her path-breaking work in defense of eliminativism (the thesis that we should simply get rid of racial discourse, rather than reconstruct or conserve it), Zack's commentary concludes that "I do not think a case has been made that the way to preserve and further [positive moral, psychological, and political] values is to change what is meant by race. Rather, the analysis of the biological lack should be made common knowledge through broad education that changes people's understanding of race." I wish that at this point Zack had also discussed my main argument that the values in question are not best promoted *simply* by publicizing the fact that race is not biologically real. We must ask: what do we want to talk about once we no longer talk about biological race? Do we want to talk about race*, or racialized groups? Or perhaps simply lose the language of race altogether? Zack and I agree that we should do away with biological concepts of race. But if talking about race is necessarily talking about something biological, then if we don't change what we mean by 'race,' losing the biological concept of race means losing *the* concept of race. Weighing our options at this point is where reconstructionism seems very strong. If we simply eliminate racial discourse, then, as conservationists have long predicted, we will cause severe disruption to identities, to ways of framing large swaths of crucial experience, and, therefore, to whole lives. That disruption, I argued in Chapter 7 of the book, is an unnecessary cost, since we can reconstruct our racial discourse instead of eliminating it, and thereby preserve valuable identities, narrative and decision frames, and ways of living. That seems like a good reason to reconstruct rather than eliminate.

The Ontological Position: Racial Anti-Realism

Of course, what motivates the claim that we should do something radical with our racial discourse is that it is corrupt. One big problem, as I see things, is that in using terms like 'race,' we are by definition committing ourselves to talking about things that aren't really there. I'm an anti-realist about race. There are no races. Race is an illusion.

The reason that there are no races is that racial terms purport to refer to things that must be, but fail to be, vindicated by the biological sciences. More specifically, they purport to refer to groups of humans that are demarcated in biologically non-arbitrary ways by certain visible traits, like skin color, facial features, etc. I call this a 'non-negotiable' commitment of racial discourse: if you're not talking about those groups when you try to talk about races, you're not really talking about race (in *our* sense). This explains why it doesn't make sense to tell me that my couch is a white person: my couch isn't even *apparently* a member of a group of human beings, let alone a group that might be demarcated in some biologically non-arbitrary way. I think that the presence of this non-negotiable linguistic commitment is suggested by psychological research on how we deploy racial terms, but also more decisively supported by various thought experiments, intuitions about which have not yet been experimentally validated.[4]

Bringing the full weight of the multifarious evidence to bear on this question basically required four chapters' worth of arguments (Chapters 2, 4, 5, and 6), so it would not be an understatement to say that anti-realism is a key part of my book. To learn, then, that Haslanger thinks that my anti-realism is "beside the point" caused me some distress, and not just because her remarks in this symposium continue to manifest the eye-opening creativity that has distinguished her work on race. More directly, I had always considered it something of an author's prerogative to choose what the point of his or her book would be. And, as Haslanger herself observes, I'm pretty up-front about what *I* take the point of my book to be, which I've recapitulated above in my

statement of the four theses (which makes it somewhat more mysterious why one might think that my "object" is not clear): I want to figure out what we should do with our racial discourse, which requires figuring out whether race is real, which requires figuring out what we mean by 'race.' Haslanger does make it certain that these aims are not the same as *hers* – she wants to understand identity, injustice, and race's meaning "personally, historically, socially." Of course, I think that understanding these phenomena is an important endeavor. I even dance around them a bit, although I don't attempt a full-fledged theory of them. But to say that my book is beside *the* point just because I'm not focused on addressing *those* questions seems problematic. There are lots of points that my book, and just about every book I've ever read, don't address: my book isn't on superstring theory, or the Democratic party, or Chinese naval history, or growing up in Brooklyn, or any number of other things that are the points of books on my shelves, in addition to those books about race's non-semantic meaning. My book has a *different* point, and as far as I can tell, there is no reason to think that it is a particularly bad or misguided or uninteresting point. In fact, I'm pretty sure that it dovetails with the focus of some of Haslanger's earlier work (though not all of it). So I'm going to take the bit about my anti-realism being beside the point as a bit of powerful rhetoric, not as an independent indictment of it.

Relatedly, Haslanger says, in a way that sounds like an argument, "[s]urely [races] exist and have social significance." But I hope I read her right that this too is not *actually* an argument; it is merely an assertion of realism. Here and at other times, she says things that to me sound similar to the argument that race is real because it has a 'lived reality,' that is, it has a very real impact on our lives. But, just to reiterate what I say in the book, that kind of argument cannot work, because the whole question is what 'it' is. Anti-realists generally grant – and I myself would insist – that practices

involving racial discourse affect our lives. Nevertheless, as other anti-realists have long maintained, that alone doesn't mean that *race* affects our lives. During the witch-hunts, social practices involving witch-talk radically affected lives, but that didn't make witches real (if by 'witch' we mean a human who congresses with the devil). Surely people have deployed *some* discourses that purport to refer to things that don't exist – witches, phlogiston, Zeus, compassionate conservatism – and the fact that some of those discourses impact lives does not by that very impact conjure up their purported referents' reality *ex nihilo*.[5]

Whether a discourse succeeds in referring to something real depends on two things: what it purports to refer to, and what actually happens to be in the world. Haslanger and I (and many others, Mallon would no doubt remind us) can generally agree on what's in the world. We 'merely' disagree about whether to call some of what's in the world 'race.' That disagreement, again, concerns my semantic thesis that it is non-negotiable that races must be demarcated, by certain visible traits, in biologically non-arbitrary ways. If I read her right, Haslanger's real argument against me takes up that question. That is, her full argument against my anti-realism comes not in bare assertions of realism, but indirectly, by way of an argument against my semantic thesis and its methodological presupposition that we should be talking in terms of conceptually non-negotiable commitments at all. So let's turn to that argument.

The Methodological Position: There are Racial Concepts to be Analyzed (Construed Broadly) in Terms of Non-Negotiable Commitments, and Candidate Analyses are Most Compelling When Supported by Experimental Research

One of Haslanger's reasons for being skeptical about the project of figuring out the semantics for what counts as a race (or for the other object of reflection in her comments, a family)

appears to be that she thinks such matters can't be settled *at all* by some version of the project of conceptual analysis. According to her, these matters can't be settled by philosophers' intuitions, and they can't be settled by the intuitions of non-philosophers, sometimes known as 'ordinary people.' Now there is surely something to this: she and I agree that what counts as an X might not be settled *merely* by appealing to intuitions about X. Often we apparently also need to know *how the world is* to know what counts as an X. (It's not for nothing that the largest chapter in my book is devoted to sorting through the biological data in an effort to figure out what race might be.) For instance, we need to know about the actual behavior of actual molecules to know that H_2O counts as water. But surely we also need to know *something about our linguistic practices*. The only way that we know that H_2O counts as water and Au (gold, the stuff with atomic number 79) does not count as water is that we know that we use the term 'water' to talk about the stuff that ends up being composed of H_2O, and never about the stuff that is composed of Au.

Our intuitions, in turn, are supposed to tell us something about our linguistic practices. I agree with Haslanger, again, that the world can inform our inquiry into what is conceptually non-negotiable, and also that we can disagree about what is non-negotiable, and that finding what is non-negotiable can often be very difficult. But whether or not we can adequately formulate what it is, I think that something has to *be* non-negotiable for us to even have a sensible conversation, and I think that our evidence for what is non-negotiable must be *some* judgments about what claims are implausibly counter-intuitive. If I invent my own way of talking, referring to couches as 'white people' and gold as 'water' and so on, you're going to get exasperated pretty quickly. We coordinate our ways of talking, and the points of coordination are the very non-negotiable commitments that Haslanger worries about. I reiterate: this allows that we can

disagree about whether water is essentially liquid or whether it's a compound of hydrogen and oxygen that can be solid or vaporous. All that such examples show is that each of those commitments might be negotiable, and that our non-negotiable commitments must lie elsewhere. Perhaps all that is non-negotiable with respect to 'water' is the simple claim, "*This stuff* is water!" which we exclaim in unison during our disagreement, as we point at the rain pouring down upon us. Such an intuition is simply the doorway to the conceptually non-negotiable. And when, as Haslanger worries, the intuitions that we call upon fail to be adequate to lived experience, that lived experience itself is just providing *another* set of intuitions about *another* set of possible (more than that, *actual*) cases, to provide counter-evidence.[6]

It is for this reason that we should not be moved by Haslanger's claim that my racial anti-realism "sounds as bizarre as saying that my family is not a *real* family because we aren't related by blood." Haslanger says that this analogy shows that we're not going to find out what race is by looking for non-negotiable commitments in our racial discourse, and that we should instead – as if this were an exclusive alternative – look to the world to find race. I don't see how can we even know *where* to look in the world until we have a grip on some relevant linguistic commitments. I cannot tell you what race is if you use 'race,' willy-nilly, to talk about couches on one occasion, lilies on another, rivers on another, and the number fourteen on yet another. And I can't find a family if you are not limited in how you use 'family.' Of course, there might be many kinds of race (or family – which, Haslanger is right, is probably not defined exclusively ancestrally), or it might be a disjunctive kind, or whatever: I make no methodological commitments about that, one way or the other. Finding out the answer to that question, instead, can be a product of substantive inquiry into how we use terms like 'race' (or 'family' or 'water'), *plus* a solid understanding of how the world is.

Why, then, do races need to have a biological basis to be real? Because that commitment is, I argue, the non-negotiable limit to the ways we use terms like 'race,' just like water has to be a certain kind of stuff because we point at things like rain when we talk about water. Water, by virtue of our linguistic practices, *can't be* a piece of gold, and race, similarly, *can't be* something not grounded in biological traits (or so I maintain, anyway). As these cases illustrate, the only way that we can find out what stuff matches up with which kinds of words is by seeing when we are and are not willing to use those words and what we want to say about them. That is, we're going to *have* to use intuitions *somewhere*. They're not the only part of the recipe, but they're an indispensable ingredient. I don't have a knock-down argument for this position, but I do have a challenge: show me a *thorough* understanding of a concept that doesn't appeal to intuitions somewhere. At that point, I'll reconsider my claims. Until then, as illustrated by Haslanger's own appeals to intuition in her illuminating discussion of family,[7] I can't see a reason to doubt that intuitions will continue to be the currency of philosophy.

Although Haslanger might well resist my *substantive* thesis that race-talk is non-negotiably committed to biology, I wonder if I might be able to eventually talk her into the general idea of a conceptually non-negotiable commitment, because she herself wants to hang onto the closely related idea of *meaning*. The theory of meaning she allies herself with in this symposium holds that a term's meaning is constituted by a "historically extended representational tradition," so that you and I can successfully communicate about, and refer to, water, just in case you and I both use 'water' in a collaborative effort to represent the world. Such collaborations can survive a lot of false belief about the topic of conversation, and disagreement as well.

Now I agree that any good theory of meaning will have to preserve these phenomena of false belief and disagreement. Their existence is beyond dispute for anyone who has survived a nice long session of analytical wrangling with a philosopher. So I believe that there can be a lot of disagreement and false belief about race in particular. In fact, both phenomena play a key role in my argument that race non-negotiably purports to be biological. So that's not where I find myself at odds with Haslanger.[8] The only real issue of contention that I can find here is that she rejects that idea that racial concepts (and possibly any concepts) have some non-negotiable commitments. But – here's the punch-line – Haslanger's collaborationist account of meaning *itself* can be reframed in the language of non-negotiable commitments. We can just say that the non-negotiable part of racial discourse is some conceptually ineliminable collaborative representation CR_1, which is itself part of the larger (partly negotiable) collaborative representation that focuses on race, rather than couches or water or whatever else we try to locate in our world. To put it another way, if you fail to engage in CR_1, you fail to talk about race. The person who says that my couch is a white person fails to collaborate with us, that is, he fails to participate in CR_1. The presence of this non-negotiable commitment – that couches aren't white people – in our collaboration accounts for why he and we fail to share a language of race.

So we can incorporate the tool of non-negotiable, conceptually embedded propositions within the collaborationist framework. This just returns us to our question, though: what – to stay with the collaborationist's framework – is content of CR_1? When has a person, someone like the couches-are-white-people person, stopped collaborating with us in their attempt to represent the world in an apparently racial way? For what it's worth, I'm pretty confident that we're going to have to use some intuitions to answer this question. But in any case the theory I defend in

the book is that they have stopped collaborating with us – at least in the semantic, if not pragmatic, sense – when they stop talking about races as purportedly biologically-based groupings centered around visible traits. Sometimes this divergence will happen simply because the interlocutor has become unhinged from the collaborative process, perhaps due to psychological damage, and started thinking that couches are people. But other times the collaboration will cease through a more organic, historical revolution, as when, legendarily, the referent of 'Madagascar' changed from a portion of continental Africa to an island off of Africa, or, evidently, when the referent of 'awful' changed from its original positive connotations (preserved to this day in its 'awe'-based etymon) to its current negative connotations. Either way, sometimes representational projects change, and sometimes they change so much that the meanings and referents of the terms involved change. One of the claims of my book is essentially that shifting from talking about race biologically to talking about it socially is an instance of the meaning-level sort of change.

Thus while Haslanger might resist some of my substantive analytical claims here, the ones about race being non-negotiably *biological*, I independently want to convince her, and you, that my theory cannot be undone by any *general* theory of language (other than outright skepticism about *both* meaning and reference). For every theory of meaning you want to throw at it, I will defend my view by recasting your theory in the language of non-negotiable commitments. And I predict that for each such adaptation, we will repeatedly return to the conclusion that, when combined with the best experimental and armchair evidence, your theory of meaning entails, in some way or another, that races are non-negotiably supposed to be groups of people demarcated in biologically non-arbitrary ways by virtue of their visible traits.

Now here I haven't presented the actual argument that this *is* a non-negotiable element of racial discourse. I've just defended the idea that *something* has to be that element, or else we will lose our ability to talk about race in a sensible way altogether. Not only would that be nonsensical, it is plainly *not* what we do. We do limit our ways of talking about race: we've settled on some non-negotiable commitments, just like we have with 'water.' I'd leave it open, then, for someone to say that my evidence doesn't demonstrate that our racial discourse has the non-negotiable commitments that I attribute to it because it has some *other* non-negotiable commitments. But the two-pronged case that Haslanger has presented in her contribution to this symposium seems to be vulnerable to the following rejoinder. If one argues against the whole idea of constrained reference at all (the idea that every proposition and every set of propositions is equally negotiable for every term at every sociolinguistic and spatiotemporal location), one will be committed to an unsustainable portrayal of how language works, allowing that, for us today, couches can be white people and water constituted entirely by gold; and if one argues that racial terms refer in a collaborationist kind of way, that is consistent with my analysis that racial discourse is non-negotiably committed to race being biological.

If, in light of this rejoinder, one were to shift gears and argue that there are some non-negotiable commitments that are alternatives to the ones produced in my investigation, that would be another discussion entirely, and one to be taken seriously, no doubt. Haslanger doesn't pursue that kind of critique, but Hardimon does. He thinks that my analysis of 'race' and related terms is in need of adjustment. But before we get to that, Hardimon attributes to me some positions with respect to the project of conceptual analysis that I believe are misattributions. It will pay to clear those up before moving onto the project of substantively analyzing the concept of race.[9]

Among other things, Hardimon thinks that I fail to recognize that we can disagree about what a concept's content is, and he thinks this in part because he thinks that I think that the non-negotiable propositions that deliver that content are non-controversial. But this is not what I think. Looking back over the pages he cites here (24-5), I can see where I misled him and perhaps other readers. What should be non-controversial (and I do mean 'should' in the normative sense here) is a claim about *the project of conceptual analysis itself*, namely that for many concepts there are non-negotiable propositions. So, my thesis is that the content of concepts can be spelled out (perhaps only in part) in terms of conceptually non-negotiable commitments, and I claim that this thesis shouldn't be controversial. But this allows that for any version of the question, *Which commitments are assigned to which concepts?*, any answer might be controversial, that we can disagree about how to answer it, and that we can harbor false beliefs about what the true answer is.

To revive the book's example, it is not negotiable that horses are not plants. I stipulated here that we have a shared understanding of what a plant is (22). There's no extensional or intensional disagreement on that front. Given that stipulation, then if you start telling me that horses are plants, or if you point at a lily and say that it's a horse, I'll think that we don't share a concept of horse. Note that, contrary to Hardimon's attribution, I do not say that this commitment about horses is *non-controversial*, in the sense that nobody might challenge or attempt to controvert what I identify as a non-negotiable commitment. I only say that it is *non-negotiable*.

So consider what Hardimon says about my claim that it is non-negotiable *that horses are not plants*. He maintains that this might be *disputable* by imagining someone who points to a horse, Trigger, and calls him a plant. Surely this "oddball,"

he observes, possesses the concept HORSE. That is indicated by his saying, "Trigger, the horse, is a plant." Hardimon's verdict here resonates with me, but we should say two things about it. First, note that this case violates the stipulation that the oddball and I share an understanding of what a plant is. As part of a shared understanding, we'd have to agree on paradigm instances of plants and non-plants, and surely Trigger would be at the top of my list of non-plants. But then the game has been changed: it's no counterexample to my hypothesis, that *if we share a common understanding of plants, the claim that horses are not plants is non-negotiable*, to give me a case where the oddball and I do *not* share a common understanding of plants, and *this* is why the oddball might claim that Trigger is a plant. So I'd reject the purported argument-by-counterexample here, and steadfastly hold onto my hypothesis about what is non-negotiable about horses.

Nevertheless, Hardimon has a broader point about conceptual analysis that is crucial, and that deserves reemphasis. He points out that, again, we *can* disagree about what the content of a concept is. Hardimon calls these "ground floor disagreements," and he is right about their existence. The apt illustration he provides is that he (and I) disagree with some other race theorists about whether 'race' is defined in terms of racial essences. But you don't have to look at the race debate to get an example of a ground floor disagreement. Just about every philosophical discussion worth its weight in paper contains conspicuous debate about the content of the concept of concern, be it JUSTICE, KNOWLEDGE, FREE WILL, MIND or whatever. Now here's the thing: I agree with this completely. In fact, much of my book is essentially an *argument with other race theorists about the content of the concept of race*, so it would be strange if I thought that people couldn't disagree or have false beliefs about the content of a concept. And yet I think that the same content, about which we can disagree and harbor false beliefs, is non-negotiable. How can I maintain these two theses

simultaneously? Much of the first (metaphilosophical) branch of Hardimon's critique boils down to this question, and answering it is the second thing we should say.

Hardimon himself has a suspicion that I want to deny. He writes: "My hunch is that [Glasgow] is forced to deny that [ordinary] speakers misunderstand the ordinary concept of race because he does not distinguish between the kind of understanding exhibited by competent use of a term and the kind of understanding required to arrive at a correct characterization of a meaning of a term – a distinction emphasized by Tyler Burge." It is important that this is not actually my view. First, I do *not* deny that speakers can misunderstand the ordinary concept of race. Second, I *do* distinguish between the ability to competently use a term and the ability to characterize its meaning. Both of Hardimon's hunches in fact are rejected in the book, most prominently in section 6.3 (where I lean on Burge's important work). There I emphasize that, as Hardimon reminds us, meanings are often not transparent (126), which explains why we can disagree about them, and have false beliefs about them, and be ignorant about them – *even as we continue to competently use the terms that express them*. I thus attribute to neither ordinary folk nor professional conceptual analysts the ability to infallibly express the meaning of a term, even for those who competently use the term. Again, our fallibility is implied by my larger project, which is to sort out that very difficult question of meaning with respect to the term 'race.' Nevertheless, I *do* think that we must consult ordinary usage in order to identify those meanings. We don't have anything else with which to start such identifications, as I emphasized above in my reply to Haslanger. And Hardimon seems to agree when he writes that commonality of subject matter can be preserved through "appeal to common use of an identical word form, common acknowledgement that the concept in question…is the intended subject matter of putative truisms, bipartisan agreement about what count as relevant examples,

and common acknowledgement that certain claims are held to be truisms about the examples."

Still, though, how can I say that there are any non-negotiable propositions if we can disagree about all of them – if I take *my own book* to be part of a disagreement with other race theorists about the concept RACE? In brief, I think that I can say this because I think that we can disagree about which propositions are non-negotiable. Haslanger, for just one example, will disagree with me about whether biology is non-negotiably part of the concept of race. Here, then, is the key to solving our present puzzle: to say that this proposition is conceptually non-negotiable is to say that *after adequately reflecting on all of the best evidence,* no philosophical reasoning will motivate us to give up the claim that someone who is talking about race must be talking about something that is purportedly biological.

Disagreement about what is negotiable can thus arise in one of two ways: one or more parties to such a debate either fail to adequately reflect or fail to have the best evidence. Of course, I do not generally think that those with whom I disagree have reflected inadequately. (Though I might accuse the person who says that my couch is a white person of something along those lines.) Instead, I think that they do not have the best evidence. That is the point of marshalling all of the new experimental evidence I bring to bear in Chapter 4 and the new armchair evidence I bring to bear in Chapters 2, 5, and 6. It is nothing other than an (experimentally inclined) continuation of a philosophical tradition that goes back to the ancients, which prominently includes providing new counterexamples – new evidence – that serve to cast doubt upon the theory one is critiquing. Thus Chapter 6's arguments against Haslanger-style constructivism, which holds that race is a real non-biological social kind, proceed by using new counterexamples that help us identify ways in which race cannot be determined by social convention alone.

So a commitment can be conceptually non-negotiable, even when any claim that the commitment *is* non-negotiable is itself disputable or controversial, and even though the truth of any such claim might be hidden from us at present. It will *be* non-negotiable if, after adequately reflecting on all the best evidence, anyone who tries to get us to give up that commitment will simply not make headway (at least not by using reasoning rather than, say, brainwashing or physical coercion). This can be illustrated with concepts where there is no disagreement because we all use the same evidence, as when we all agree that bachelors *must*, by definition, be unmarried. But while we agree that the proposition *that bachelors are unmarried* is non-negotiable, we disagree that the proposition *that races must be grounded in biology* is non-negotiable, because we don't all work with the same set of evidence. Each new article and each new book is an attempt to fill in evidential gaps. One hopes that the filling of gaps will eventually reduce the disagreement, but in any case what is non-negotiable is there all along; we just haven't uncontroversially figured it out yet with respect to concepts like RACE, even if we have with concepts like BACHELOR.

Thus clarified, I believe that we are in a fertile place for making analytical progress. I agree that it is plausible that the nature of the world can sometimes help determine the referent of a term, and sometimes its meaning perhaps, too. I agree that we can err in our formulations of the content of a concept. I agree that we can disagree about meaning. Nevertheless, it still makes sense, I believe, to say that some propositions are strongly non-negotiable when it comes to most terms, and anyway racial terms in particular. This claim appears to be capable of surviving the kinds of concerns that Hardimon and Haslanger raise. This, though, is only to establish some metaphilosophical starting rules. We still need to identify the content of the ordinary concept of race. And

on that question, again, Hardimon and I have further disagreement.

The Conceptual Position: It is (Only) Non-Negotiable that Races Must be Groups Demarcated in Biologically Non-Arbitrary Ways According to Certain Visible Traits

Hardimon and I agree that one element of the concept of race is that (H1) races are supposed to be groups of people demarcated according to visible traits.[10] To this extent, my views are very much indebted to Hardimon's careful analytical work (the 'H' in H1 and the rest stand for 'Hardimon'). But he and I disagree as to whether 'race' is also defined such that (H3) races have distinctive geographical origins and (H2) races are ancestral lineages. I argued in Chapter 2 that geography and ancestry are not part of the *concept* of a racial group, even though they are part of the actual contingent *reality* of race.

Hardimon wonders if my only reason for rejecting H2 and H3 is that I think that people "are disinclined to accept them." Just to be clear, this is not only not my *only* reason for rejecting them, it is not even *among* my reasons for rejecting them. Instead, my evidence against H2 and H3 is that we can imagine scenarios in which people competently deploy the concept of race in ways that are inconsistent with H2 and H3. (Essentially, the reasons I give are of a strategic piece with the reasons Hardimon suggests he would offer against Jared Diamond's understanding of race.) It is worth briefly revisiting that evidence.

To reject H2, I invited the reader to imagine someone in a world almost exactly like ours – Racial Twin Earth – who does not agree that race is always passed from parent to child. Perhaps this person has recently seen God create a planet just like ours, with people in it exactly similar to us in visible traits, geographic distribution, names, occupations, and everything else *except for being born to God rather than human*

parents. So there is a twin U.S. President Barack Obama on twin earth in late 2009, but he was created instantaneously by God in a body similar to that of 48 year-old, instead of being born as an infant in 1961 to Ann Dunham and Barack Obama, Sr. And so on for the rest of the world. Considering this memorable experience, the twin earthling knows that the people in that world didn't get their races from human parents. But all the same, she thinks that just like us, those people are Asian and black and white (choose whatever categories you want). In thinking this, is she misusing racial terms? Is she conceptually confused about what races are, such that she *contradicts* herself when she says that this world contains races? I think not, and I predict that the reader will agree with me. If my prediction is borne out, then this is good evidence that H2 is not part of the concept of race.

Similarly, imagine another person on another Racial Twin Earth, who says that (~H3) races do not originate from different geographical regions. This person believes that God created all the races simultaneously in one location. Of course, such a person might be wrong. But is she *conceptually* confused? Is she *abusing racial discourse* to say such a thing? Again, I predict that the reader will agree with me that the person who says things that are inconsistent with H3, in contrast to the person who tells me that my couch is a white person, is within her linguistic rights to say such things (even if she is wrong). Thus H3 must not be part of the very *concept* of race.

These are my arguments against including H2 and H3 in our best formulation of the content of the concept of race. If I read him correctly, Hardimon offers two counterarguments to these arguments.[11] The first is that H2 and H3 "provide a principled metaphysical characterization of the sort of visible physical traits that belong to the patterns of visible *traits of the relevant kind*." I'm not sure exactly what constitutes a principled metaphysical characterization, but I take it that the

idea is that geography and ancestry explain why we have the particular visible traits that are constitutive of race according to H1. But, if this is indeed the argument that we are to consider, it contains an assumption: that if some phenomenon *m* partly explains the existence or nature of something that is picked out by concept c_1, which is an element of another concept c_2, then the concept of *m itself* is part of the content of c_2, as well. I think that this assumption is probably not correct. We might need the concept of the big bang to adequately explain the existence and nature of hydrogen and oxygen, but the concept of the big bang is not part of the concept of water. We know this because we can coherently imagine water existing without the big bang (imagine that an eternal God was the creator of the world instead). Similarly, even if geography and ancestry explain our visible traits, we can still – I have argued, at least – imagine race existing without them.

Hardimon's second counter-argument to my argument against inclusion of H2 and H3 in the concept of race utilizes his own version of the Racial Twin Earth thought experiments. In his variation on the case, he asks us to imagine that on Racial Twin Earth, everyone looks just like us, except that there is no predictability as to what visible traits their offspring would have, at least with respect to racial traits like skin color. As a result, and in a departure from my twin earth cases, each twin continent is not predominantly populated by people of any one visible type. They each are populated by people who have a random selection of visible traits. Hardimon's question is whether we would find it intuitive to nonetheless call the twin Earth groups that are organized by similar visible traits 'races.' That is, would we be inclined to call all the people who look like black people on our planet 'black people,' and all the people we ordinarily call 'white' 'white people,' and so on, even though the members of each such group are not also organized geographically and ancestrally? Hardimon says we would not have such an

inclination. I can only reply by reporting that I have the opposite intuition. I definitely think that our world's Al Gore is no whiter than their world's Al Gore, regardless of who his parents are or what continent his ancestors hail from. I think that we would be inclined to call their equivalent of white supremacists 'white supremacists.' And I believe I would say the same about most or all similar parallels. (Perhaps the inhabitants of such a world would not label a racial group 'Asian' but would instead reserve such a term for a geographically based group. Nevertheless, this is just about what words they use, not about whether they would classify people according to similarity of the visible traits that appear to determine our racial categories and thus use words that can be translated into our racial words.) Again, we're back to intuitions here, our only available evidence, and as I urge in the book, this evidence is more convincing when it receives experimental confirmation. None of the Racial Twin Earth thought experiments have been the subject of experimental study. Perhaps such study could nudge the stand-off between Hardimon and me in one direction or the other.

Interconnections: From Semantics to Ontology to Policy

If the foregoing holds up, then all four parts of my theory stand up against the criticisms leveled by Hardimon, Haslanger, and Zack. That is, we have not yet seen compelling reason to reject the claims that we should replace racial discourse with racial* discourse, that we should be replacing racial discourse in the first place because there are no races, that there are no races in large part because 'race' non-negotiably purports to refer to something biological (which turns out not to exist), and that experimental and armchair evidence can be well-used to corroborate this thesis about the reference of 'race.' Again, however, note that these four theses are *interconnected*: a reason to replace our racial discourse is that race is not real (so we are unwarranted in trying to talk about it); a reason it is not real is that 'race' has a certain referential purport (which is not made good by the world); a reason that we can say that 'race' has this purport is that the kind of conceptual analysis that I formulate is well-founded. These interconnections leave my theory vulnerable on one final front, for even if each thesis were true, the arguments for them, drawing as they do on the other theses, might be misguided. And these justificatory intersections are where Mallon aims his two critiques.

In a continuation of his work that importantly pushes us to give dedicated attention to the normative aspects of the race debate, Mallon's first objection is that the semantics – the meaning and reference – of 'race' do not matter to the ethico-political debate about what we should do with our race-talk. His second objection is that the semantics of 'race' do not affect "the metaphysics of race." In fact, he dramatically tells us that having a "correct analysis [of 'race'] doesn't illuminate anything that we should care about." I myself care about the meanings of terms just because I like sorting out what we're talking about, and so I might be inclined to say that since a correct analysis of 'race' illuminates the nature of racial discourse (granting this much, as Mallon does), that itself is something we should care about. But this point (with which Mallon could agree, his dramatic claim notwithstanding) can be put to the side, so that we can focus on the putative points of illumination that concern Mallon.[12]

Let's start with the first objection, about the connection between semantics and the normative debate. Mallon points out that many of the reforms to our discourse that are part of the reconstructionist package are also part of the package of recommendations made by those who think both that race is a social reality – constructivists – and that we should continue to talk about race as a social reality – constructivist conservationists. Thus the constructivist conservationist and I can both agree on a number of claims, such as that many people falsely believe that races are biological, that 'race' used to entail belief in a biological kind, and that 'race' should

from now on be used to refer to social kinds. So what *do* we disagree on? Mallon puts it well: "The only thing they disagree about is whether the folk term 'race' *already* refers to a social kind, perhaps because they disagree about whether the common but false folk belief in racial biology is constitutive of the meaning of 'race' or not."

This framing of the debate closely hews to the framing that I put forth in the book. So what should we make of Mallon's next claim, that "this seems to be precisely a disagreement that makes no difference to practice"? One thing (which, again, Mallon should be able to agree to) is that as a purely theoretical result, answering the Conceptual Question seems like a fairly interesting project even if it has no practical implications. But in any case it does, I maintain, make a difference to practice, concerning *what we should do with racial discourse*. Conservationists (constructivist or not) think that we should keep racial terms around. Mallon is correct to note that constructivists often think that we should reform some of the ways in which we think about race – that we should stop believing that it is based in biology, in particular. But, because constructivists think that we can keep talking about race without talking about biology, they think that we can keep race-talk around. Because I think that we cannot keep talking about race unless we keep talking about biology, I think that we cannot keep race-talk around. So, the basic practical difference is that they want to keep race-talk and I want to get rid of it. Of course, this all hangs on what we mean by 'race.' Mallon is right that this is a semantic dispute. But that's the whole point, and just because it's semantic, that doesn't mean that it has no practical implications. It has one large practical implication: it affects whether or not we should keep talking about race.

And it is important that semantic disputes are rarely 'just' semantic. Meaning governs how we can deploy terms. To illustrate, consider that the camp that I call 'categorical

constructivism' holds that races exist exactly insofar as we engage in racial categorization. Their position thus entails that if we were all struck with exclusively racial amnesia for one hour, in which we entirely forgot about racial classification, we would lose our races for that hour and then become re-raced in the next hour. I think that this implication is preposterous (120-1). I think that we cannot lose our (purported) races just by getting struck with amnesia. Thus I disagree with the categorical constructivist not just about what 'race' means, but also, relatedly, about how race can behave and how we can talk about it. And this is why we have a practical dispute about whether or not to conserve racial discourse.

Now one thing that Mallon says is that, because the constructivist conservationist already uses talk of race in the way that I use talk of race*, that is, because we equally talk about race or race* in a social, non-biological way, and since each kind of talk is therefore epistemically legitimate, neither is epistemically superior to the other. But the question here is not how *professional conservationists* or *professional reconstructionists* talk about race; it's how *we* – the grand *we*, the folk, ordinary speakers, linguistically competent users of racial terms – presently use racial discourse. Conservationism demands that we keep using our current racial terms. So if I am right that those terms are committed, by definition, to race being biological, then conservationists, no matter how constructivist they (erroneously) aspire to be, are committed to us keeping *biological* race-talk around when they ask us to keep race-talk around. Of course, they would deny this, because they would deny that race-talk is ineliminably biological – they would maintain that we can keep race-talk without keeping *biological* race-talk. But that's the dispute then: is our very use of racial language itself committed to race's biological reality? We both agree that we should give up biological race-talk; I maintain, though, that conservationists keep us committed to biological race-talk by

keeping us committed to any kind of ordinary race-talk (truly so labeled), and they thereby encourage us to use a language that is committed to an illusion, which constitutes an epistemic liability of conservationism. Again, I won't try to re-hash my argument that race-talk is ineliminably biological. For the purposes of offering a compelling reply to Mallon's first critique, it should suffice to show that the very question of whether or not race-talk is ineliminably biological crucially impacts the normative debate about whether we should keep our race-talk around.[13]

What about Mallon's second objection, that the semantics don't even bear on the metaphysics of race? Here Mallon again observes that both the constructivist and the anti-realist can agree that much of racial discourse is false, and in particular that we are mistaken to talk about race as if it were a biological reality. The difference, as he rightly notes, is that the constructivist says that the mistake is in some of our *mere beliefs* about race, while I say that it is in *the very concept* of race itself. He grants that if I am right, this would confer some advantage on my view as to whether race-talk is epistemically legitimate, but he maintains that this is a 'very thin' advantage, almost as if its emaciation alone means that it makes no difference to the metaphysical dispute. But, whether or not you want to call that a 'thin' advantage for reconstructionism, and for that matter whether or not you want to focus on the legitimacy of race-talk, the claim that the concept of race is itself committed to race's being biological is crucial to the debate over whether or not race is real.

As I said above, whether race is real depends on (a) what 'race' purports to refer to and (b) whether that purported referent is actually in the world. Mallon seems to think that the first part of that equation (a) is of zero import. At the end of Section 4 of his commentary, he asserts that "all the interesting facts" about race are in premises about (b) what is in the world, implying that premises about (a) what 'race'

means do not matter. But he doesn't tell us *why* we should think that part (a) doesn't matter, and I don't see how we could do without that part. You can't successfully argue that race is real because H_2O is real and race is H_2O, and the reason that such an argument fails is that *race is not H_2O*. It just isn't, and that's a fact dictated by semantics. Similarly, if I am right, you can't argue that race is real because social kind *S* is real and race is *S*. Chapter 6 especially is devoted to rejecting that claim, and the analytical dispute is where *all* the action is. Whichever side you come down on in that dispute, it is evident that it does matter to the metaphysical dispute: those who don't agree with this more basic claim about the relevance of meaning to metaphysics would have to allow that it is legitimate to say, in our current linguistic and metaphysical environment, that race is real H_2O.

So while Mallon is right that this is a semantic dispute – something that I and others who think like me have been up-front about – it is not right to say that this debate cannot help us understand social life. Our social life is structured in part by how we represent the world, and while we've thought that we could understand our world in terms of race, that thought has come in for renewed critical examination, the discharging of which requires us to try to identify what race is even *supposed* to be. That's the Conceptual Question. My attempt at answering this question leads me to think that race does not provide an appropriate way of understanding our world. Sure, maybe we can talk about racialized groups and water and couches and all the rest. But we should not talk about *race*. Because race is not real. Because race conceptually purports to be biological.

<p style="text-align:center">*   *   *   *   *</p>

At the end of Section 4 of his comments, Mallon says some things that suggest to me that he thinks that we might as well just use other terms to talk about race-related phenomena,

terms like 'racialized group' or 'breeding population' or whatever. I, of course, am fine with using many such terms. But I also want to know whether we can justifiably talk about *race*, and knowing whether we can do this depends on knowing whether race is real, which in turn depends on figuring out what race purports to be. The fact that we can use other terms to talk about different (if related) aspects of our world doesn't decide those questions about race, so answering the questions that animate my book is, I believe, a project that remains both important and viable. In these remarks I hope to have shown that my theory is a fairly defensible way of making good on that promise. Its four parts and the interconnections between them seem to hold up against the (admittedly impressive) criticisms engaged here. As I write this, I realize that I have probably not convinced all of my critics. But in any case I am grateful to Hardimon, Haslanger, Mallon, and Zack, not only for enabling our joint pursuit of coming to understand race, but also for helping me to nurture the notion that a well-rounded, synthetic, and plausible result might not be so far off.

References

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Glasgow, Joshua. 2009. *A Theory of Race*. New York: Routledge.

[1] Parenthetical page references in the text refer to Glasgow (2009).

[2] As an anti-realist about race, I don't believe that there are any white people, truly so-called. But I do believe that there are people who we (mistakenly) think of, and treat, as white. So when I talk about 'white people,' I mean to talk about something like the more cumbersomely labeled, 'people who have been racialized as white.' I use phrases like 'white people' as shorthand for these people, and the same goes, *mutatis mutandis*, for people racialized in other ways.

[3] Zack rightly notes that, since *ought* implies *can*, the merits of reconstructionism hang on whether or not it is possible for us to reconstruct racial discourse. If it were shown that it is impossible to bring about the reconstruction that I recommend, then I would agree that it is a doomed recommendation. But I do not think that we have good reason to think that it is *impossible* (142-3).

[4] A note of clarification might be due. Haslanger writes that I consider the psychological studies "inconclusive" and thus resort to untested thought experiments to make my case. This is, strictly construed, true, but possibly misleading. While the psychological data are not *conclusive*, they are, I believe, *suggestive* that the kind of commitment I call attention to is a core element of folk racial discourse. This suggestion is *complemented*, I believe, by the untested, armchair reactions that I claim are intuitive in certain thought experiments.

[5] Similarly, consider Haslanger's assertion that, "If our starting point as we inquire into *what race is*, is the social experience of race and the social implications of race, it is not a serious option to claim that race isn't real." This, too, seems problematic to me: if we assume that *race* has social implications that impact experience, then anti-realism isn't a

serious option, because we are assuming the existence of race. If, however, we want to consider whether anti-realism might be true, then we shouldn't make that assumption. The assumption we should make is that *practices that reflect our potentially false belief in race* have social implications that impact experience. Unlike the other assumption, this one is indubitable, and it doesn't question-beggingly presuppose the falsity of anti-realism. Thus my answer to Haslanger's query, "It is puzzling to me, then, what Glasgow takes our current racial divisions to be," is to reiterate that I believe that there are no *racial divisions*, although there are *beliefs in and practices that rely on the belief in racial divisions*.

6 Haslanger attributes to me a weak form of descriptivism because I think that for many concepts, including racial concepts, there are some conceptually non-negotiable propositions, which competent speakers would affirm. This is not a wholly accurate attribution, since the propositions that are non-negotiable might not be descriptive. They might instead by directly referential. For example, if someone points at a lily and says, "That is a horse!" they will have violated one of my non-negotiable, conceptually embedded propositions about horses, namely that horses aren't *those things* (where *those things* are lilies). Similarly, it is conceptually non-negotiable that *those things* aren't white people, if you were to point at a roomful of couches and say 'Those things are white people!' Neither of these instances obviously makes use of descriptions; they are plausibly both directly referential. But both are non-negotiable nevertheless. This point notwithstanding, Haslanger is correct to attribute to me the view that I think that many concepts, and racial concepts in particular, have "core meanings," that is, non-negotiable commitments that "constrain the referent of the term."

7 For instance, Haslanger writes that it is not a "serious option" to hold that she is "not a mother but only a mother* because according to [some people's] intuitions, mothers are those who give birth." Notice that her claim is just an appeal – a compelling appeal, to be sure – to our intuition that adoptive mothers are truly mothers. Appeals to intuition are and have to be ubiquitous.

8 Haslanger says some other things that might seem to be at odds with my view, but which are not. For instance, she holds that we should not be so quick to judge that an intuition about some phenomenon is an intuition about the *meaning* (or *reference*) of the terms we use to talk about that phenomenon – a warning she vividly brings to life in her discussion of family. I of course agree with this; it was, in fact, in that very spirit that (in Chapters 2 and 4) I took so many intuitions about race and assigned them not to the ordinary *concept* of race, but to the ordinary *conception* of race, as they are negotiable enough to not be part of the meaning of 'race.' I also agree that social context can determine meaning.

9 A smaller issue that can be quickly clarified concerns reflective equilibrium and analytical solipsism. In his comments on reflective equilibrium, Hardimon seems to think that I believe that personal intuitions about how to use words are not evidential of communal use of those words, because they are personal. I reject this belief, so we do not actually disagree about that. In calling armchair analysis 'solipsistic,' I mean that it limits itself to one set of data, namely that of the armchair conceptual analyst herself. So I agree when Hardimon writes that reflective equilibrium is "social, even when carried out in isolation." But I think that we should not carry it out in isolation (a process that I call 'solipsistic' – it sounds like Hardimon might simply prefer that we call such an endeavor 'isolationist'). Isolation is a problem because, although our own intuitions amount to

some data about our communally defined terms, they are data of very limited utility; our data-set can be made much more robust by consulting the intuitions of our linguistic community (Chapter 3). Given this understanding of analytical solipsism, then, I also reject the claim that solipsistic analysis cannot engage with the world. Analytical solipsism's characteristic weakness isn't that it's internally directed. Its characteristic weakness is that it does not call upon an adequate supply of data.

[10] However, to return to a related metaphilosophical dispute, in note 5, Hardimon does write that "Glasgow professes an in principle willingness to give up the intuition supporting [H1], should it not be experimentally confirmed… My own view is that this is a mistake… [T]he only thing the fact that a majority of experimental subjects implicitly or explicitly denied that the idea of differences in visible physical differences is conceptually embedded in the concept race would show is that *the majority can get it wrong*." Some things should be said about this. First, I agree that the majority can get it wrong. Second, getting majority approval on one thought experiment relevant to conceptual content should be construed as *suggestive*, rather than *decisive*, evidence about the content of that concept. Third, what I actually say is that I would give up my support of H1 if my intuitions that support it are *idiosyncratic* (not that I could be in a sizeable minority). The oddball who says that horses are plants or that my couch is a white person simply doesn't deploy the relevant terms correctly, as evidenced by the radical idiosyncrasy of such claims. Given that language is *communal*, as Hardimon emphasizes in his comments, people who don't conform their talk to the community rules simply fail to competently speak the same language as the rest of us. This conformist nature of language is how radical changes in discourse can start revolutions, including at one extreme revolutions in meaning, or what I call semantic 'substitutions.'

[11] Hardimon also argues that H2 and H3 jointly "pick out what appears to be an identifiable biological phenomenon: *morphological differences corresponding to differences in continental ancestry*." But I do not think that we should take the concepts of the *components* of phenomena that are in the world to be elements that constitute the content of the concepts of those very *phenomena*. Even if organisms are identifiable phenomena, we probably don't want to say that concepts representing everything that constitutes an organism are all part of the concept of an organism.

[12] Again, a few initial clarifications are in order. Mallon writes that I share with eliminativists the thesis that the reference of 'race' entails that races must have an adequate biological basis, which they do not have. As I define the term 'eliminativist,' I don't necessarily share this semantic thesis with eliminativists. Eliminativists, as I define them, just say that we should eliminate racial discourse. This is consistent with any analysis of 'race,' and it is even consistent with realism about race: one might hold that race is real, but also that invoking race is dangerous for us, and that this is a reason to eliminate racial discourse (cf. Boxill 2004). As this mapping of the landscape illustrates, it is not quite accurate to say that I use "the terms 'eliminativism,' substitutionism,' and 'conservationism' to label positions that combine a stance on the metaphysics/semantics with a stance on the practice." For me, those terms only name positions that take a stance on the practical question, which for all of them is orthogonal to any given stance on the metaphysical or semantic questions. (Of course, *my* substitutionism – reconstructionism – is *motivated* by my anti-realism, but the barest substitutionism itself just says that we should replace racial discourse with some other discourse.) A further clarification concerns Mallon's claim that I share with conservationists "the idea that our current practices of labeling people by race should

be, when minimally reformed, retained." As I define the categories, conservationists hold, as Mallon suggests, that we should *retain racial discourse*. I reject this and maintain that we should get rid of racial discourse, but replace it with racial* discourse.

[13] In note 8, Mallon points out that my reconstructionism should be no better than (certain kinds of) conservationism in being able to serve morality, politics, and prudence. I agree with this, of course, and I think that it is one of the real appeals of constructivist conservationism (137-8). The only evaluative, as contrasted with metaphysical, argument I make against constructivist conservationism concerns its epistemic flaws.