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Is Professor Hubert J. Farnsworth a Scientist?

fictional entities, natural kinds, and a justified contradiction[1]

I. Professor Hubert J. Farnsworth

I aim to focus this paper on understanding empty names in the theme of natural kind distinctions. I take a kind distinction to mean a kinder is kinding and categorically separating from other things ~*x*, things *x* by properties that the thing *x* shares with other things *x* that are members.[2] The kind would be the set that the property sharers are members of. So, a kind as an example can be the set of things with four legs. Lassie has four legs, so that makes her an x. The table on which my laptop is placed as I write this sentence (its name is Jean Paul Sartre) also has four legs, so it is an x. Oscar Pistorius does not have legs, which makes him a ~x. This category would be too broad to be sufficient since there are an infinity of sets we could make. Four-leggedness would not constitute natural kinds. I think a natural kind (if there are such things) is a set that is distinct from other sets by meaningful distinctions of certain properties. By meaningfully distinct of certain properties, I mean to say that the kind *x* cannot be the kind *x* without some specific properties or it would be a ~*x*. Farnsworth's property of being a scientist will not make Farnsworth a member of a natural kind because Farnsworth could have been a detective. Professor Hubert J. Farnsworth is a fictional entity. In being a fictional entity, I believe

[1] I should mention to begin that I do not think "fictional character" extends only to the kinds of fictional characters we typically think of as those that have been created by an author. I think fictional character extends to non-existent entities that are conceptually possible. There needs not be an author for a fictional character to be conceived. Consider Earl (a turtle I just made up, but Earl gives live birth and has the neck of a giraffe) who is as much a fictional character as Cthulhu). Ben Caplan (2004) suggests that if authors create creatures of fiction, then imaginers create creatures of imagination. I take these to be the same.

[2] A kinder is someone who partakes in the activity of kinding.

Farnsworth does not exist (or for the sake of the meinongian, Farnsworth is not a thing)[3], and thus belongs to the empty set for having the important property of non-existence.[4,5] For the sake of discussion for just a moment, take Hubert J. Farnsworth to be real. If we are to refer to facts about Farnsworth, then the following facts about Farnsworth should be true. Here are basic facts about Farnsworth and whether these facts are really facts is of central concern to this paper:

F1. Farnsworth does not exist (or is not a thing, or is not).
F2. Farnsworth is a creation of Matt Groening.
F3. Farnsworth is a character in the television program known as *Futurama*.
F4. Except for preserved persons, Farnsworth is the oldest human being on Earth.[6]
F5. Farnsworth is a scientist .
F6. Farnsworth owns the Planet Express delivery company (to fund his studies).
F7. Farnsworth is known for inventions such as the Fing-Longer (3002) and the Parallel-Universe box (no date).[7]
F8. Farnsworth has two offspring (one clone, Cubert; one child, Igner).[8]

II. An introduction (of sorts) to the problem

The scope of my argument as stated above is about fictional entities as members of natural kinds. In this paper, I aim to argue for something like a quasi-realism about fictionalism.[9] Quasi-realism as attributed in ethics is a privileged anti-realism which allows the anti-realist to

[3] Or Farnsworth is a nothing.
[4] I will sometimes talk about Farnsworth as though he is real, but am not sold on this. For the sake of fixing confusion about Farnsworth the fictional entity and a nothing by the name of Farnsworth. If needed, I underline Farnsworth to refer to Farnsworth the nothing and I leave Farnsworth untouched to refer to Farnsworth the character.
[5] OED online defines entity as "A thing with distinct and independent existence." This is not what I mean by entity, and certainly not what previous writers on this topic means by entity. Entity (in regards to fiction), should be understood as "thing."
[6] This excludes preserved heads and those who have been cryogenically frozen.
[7] Air date: June 8, 2003
[8] His only other living family member is Philip J. Fry, who is several times removed.
[9] David Lewis (2005) attributes Simon Blackburn with being a fictionalist about ethics, but Blackburn (2005) rejects this. I will not address Lewis and Blackburn's specific discussion in this paper, but think that we can adopt the quasi-realist position for fictionalism, and set aside the decision of if the quasi-realist is a fictionalist about ethics.

talk about ethical "facts" as though they are real. Specifically, I will be looking at Professor Hubert J. Farnsworth as a fictional entity and a potential member of a natural kind.

I will continue this section with a problem case that we ought to be committed to. I will explain that this problem case has premises we might not want to commit ourselves to. I, in section **III**, will address different theoretical conceptions of natural kinds and how it would be possible to kind fictional entity. In section **IV**, I aim to show the issues of being committed to the problem case. I shall look at an alternative positions on truth in fiction from David Lewis and Peter Van Inwagen's position on truth in fiction as reasonable, but restrictive. I will discuss kinding Farnsworth in **V**. In the same section I aim to show that there are different kinds of facts which are sometimes unspoken justifications for how we to talk about fictional entities. In section **VI**, I show that the resistance to the proposed problem case is actually unjustified. I also briefly address potential other problems and implications of my position, and conclude.

We can draw natural kinds distinctions of fictional entities in discussion (or as first order kinds joined with second order kinds), but the truth of that kind actually is not justified when entirely considered. Thus, Professor Farnsworth will not be a member of a natural kind because existence supervenes on other properties that we could determine Farnsworth to be a kind of. Consider the following argument (let's call it the Justified Contradiction of Fiction):

(1) If a name refers to a fictional entity, then it refers to a member of the empty set.
(2) If a name refers to a member of the empty set, then it refers to nothing.
(3) If a name refers to nothing, then it does not refer.
(4) **∴** If a name refers to a fictional entity, then it does not refer. [(1)-(3) hypothetical syllogism]
(5) "Farnsworth" is a name that refers to a fictional entity.
(6) **∴** "Farnsworth" does not refer. [(4)-(5) modus ponens][10]

[10] Credit to Joyce Havstad for help with the formulation of this.

The consequence of (5) joined with (6) is that Farnsworth simultaneously refers to a fictional entity and also does not refer (or refers to nothing). This is a contradiction, but this contradiction is fine and can be resolved while the premises still hold. Specifically, it follows from different orders of existence. We can argue about these individual premises. The most seemingly controversial premises available are (1), (2), and (3). Let's approach these throughout the paper, but continue with how fictional entities could be members of natural kinds.

III. How to kind a fictional entity

In "A Tradition of Natural Kinds" Ian Hacking shows that the tradition has been largely dependent on some criteria such as "independence… definability… distinction… purpose."[11] Traditionally, either something is a real natural kind or it is a nominal kind in the tradition of the natural kinds literature. Hacking thinks that this criteria is too restrictive. What do we do about social kinds? For Hacking and his dynamic nominalist position, some natural kinds can be social kinds as evident in his "Making Up People." In the paper, Hacking provides a way of looking at natural kinds in the traditional sense. Planets and horses are intuitively moreso natural kinds than gloves.[12] Gloves are quite clearly nominal kinds, while planets and horses are real kinds. Social kinds that Hacking examines are in some in-between status and includes (but is not limited to): homosexuality, suicide, dissociative personality disorder, and *garçon de café*. This paper is about a seemingly social kind (if this kind is not a social kind, I do not know that we'd have any way of talking about it in regards to natural kinds).

[11] Ian Hacking "A Tradition of Natural Kinds" p. 110-111. Hacking later goes into disputing this criteria. De Sousa in "The Natural Shiftiness of Natural Kinds" provides a criteria like this, but Hacking's is condensed.

[12] Ian Hacking "Making Up People" p. 165

Regarding the essentialist approach, in *Naming and Necessity* Saul Kripke uses linguistic reference and metaphysical necessity to provide an account for natural kinds.[13] Necessary (or essential) properties are those that will keep the kind of thing being the kind of thing regardless of whether the kind has accidental properties. We could understand this as the property being necessary for the thing. Gold, for example, depends on having the atomic number 79.[14] So, to be a gold, that gold will have to have 79 protons. Essentially, thing *a* depends on that property *p* to remain the same property *p* of the thing *a* and if not, it's not essentially the kind of thing. If thing *a* remains the same without property *p*, then the property is non-essential. So, in another possible world, when people speaking English refer to gold, they are referring to that chemical element with the atomic number 79 (that is having atomic number 79 is essential to gold). This makes gold a "rigid designator" (to identify) across all possible worlds. If "gold" in Twin-English referred to the chemical element with the atomic number 1, then it would not be gold. Twin-English speakers would be using the term "gold" to mean "hydrogen."[15] Accidental properties are those that could have been different in transworld identity. Such accidental properties are four-leggedness of a tiger or the yellowness of gold, or Nixon's winning of the 1968 election.[16,17]

I think there is good reason to believe that some abstract ideas can sometimes be members of natural kinds. A specific number, say the number 635, very well could be argued to

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[13] Saul Kripke, *Naming and Necessity* published by Blackwell in 2013
[14] Ibid, 123
[15] Further, we could get clear on what we were talking about with our Twin-Earth twins through a
Kripkean skeptical solution to language games.
[16] Ibid, 121
[17] Kripke's view is more complex than this, but I am not writing *Naming and Necessity*.

be a member of a natural kind "the numbers with three digits." If a fictional kind is to survive as a member of a natural kind, then Farnsworth will have some clear set membership in which other fictional entities are interchangeable. Properties might be a good way for fictional entities to be of a kind. Farnsworth does have set membership (as noted above) because Farnsworth is in the set of characters in the *Futurama* series and other sets like that. Farnsworth is not in the set of scientists along with Lawrence Kraus and Steven Pinker. The Justified Contradiction of Fiction holds that Farnsworth is not a thing. There are three potential moves that can avoid the problem provided.

IV. How a realist could provide resistance to the Justified Contradiction of Fiction

Problem for the anti-realist: It's perfectly reasonable for Farnsworth to not be a member of the empty set, but rather the set of entities in *Futurama*, and also a member of the set of characters created by Matt Groening. Farnsworth could also be a member of the set of all fictional entities. I also think that Sherlock Holmes is a nothing. I also think if both of these "things" are a nothing, then they are the same thing. It seems as though because we regularly do draw distinctions amongst fictional entities, that there is a real distinction amongst fictional entities and that these fictional entities do have names that we can refer to. Furthermore, it seems as though there are manifestations of fictional characters, such that Benedict Cumberbatch plays Holmes in the *Sherlock* series and the team of *Futurama* cartoonists, producers, writers, and a voice actor make Hubert Farnsworth real. We understand fictional characters as being distinct from other fictional characters. If we did not, then there would be no purpose for more than one fictional entity. If they are all the same entity in sharing the property of non-existence (or being a member of null, or being a nothing), then this would lead to some confusion. We can read and

understand truths in fiction, we do not read it as thing "x" interacting with itself throughout the fiction.[18] The fictional person "x" sitting on the fictional chair "x" and reading book "x" by the fireplace "x" in her home "x" would mean these all are the same thing and leads one to realizing that a fiction is entirely about one thing (and everything that does not exist being the one thing that does not exist). That is an unappealing position to hold and ultimately would be absurd. Understanding the distinction of characters such as Elizabeth Bennet or Petruccio would be impossible, but we are (or could be on a quick reading) well aware that Petruccio's spouse is Kate Minola and that Elizabeth's spouse is Mr. Darcy. This does not necessarily get us out of this silly issue of nothing as it is possible that "x" has multiple spouses who are all also "x", but we do have different ideas of Petruccio and Elizabeth.[19]

So far, I have partially identified why (1), (2), and (3) of the Justified Contradiction of Fiction are controversial premises to accept. There is good reason to believe the above stated distinction of Petruccio from Elizabeth Bennett. Premise (1) entails that names of fictional entities are referred to as members of the empty set. The reason for this is that if fictional entities are to be referred to, the non-existence brings it into the empty set.

Alternative 1: Who more prone to accept the existence of fictional entities than the modal realist David Lewis? He opens "Truth in Fiction" with the proposition "We can truly say that Sherlock Holmes lived in Baker Street, and that he liked to show off his mental powers. We cannot truly say that he was a devoted family man, or that he worked in close cooperation with the police."[20] From this, we are able to suggest that it is true that Farnsworth is a scientist, and

[18] Of course, an equivocation of this is possible. The author can write fiction of one person who lives in isolation, but that's not what I mean here.
[19] One who does not accept this is not being honest with oneself.
[20] David Lewis Truth in Fiction American Philosophical Quarterly 37

lives in New New York. We cannot say that Farnsworth is the most moral person in New New York. Lewis's argument for there being truth in fiction relies on what he calls Analyses 1 and 2: [21]

> **Analysis L1 is stated as:** "*A sentence of the form 'in the fiction* f, Φ*' is non-vacuously true iff some world where* f *is told as known fact and* Φ *is true differs less from our actual world, on balance, than does any world where* f *is told as known fact and* Φ *is not true. It is vacuously true iff there are no possible worlds where* f *is told as known fact."*[22,23]
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> **Analysis L2 is stated as:** "*A sentence of the form 'in fiction* f, *Φ' is non-vacuously true iff, whenever* w *is one of the collective belief worlds of the community of origin of* f*, then some world where* f *is told as known fact and Φ is true differs less from the world w, on balance, than does any world where* f *is told as known fact and Φ is not true. It is vacuously true iff there are no possible worlds where* f *is told as known fact.*"[24]

Lewis provides a distinction between L1 and L2 in that L1 is concerned with facts about our actual world and L2 is concerned with facts about the community of origin. L1 gives a pluralist answer to a question such as "are there an even or odd number of wrinkles on Farnsworth's body?"[25] which allows for there to be some number of possible worlds where the

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[21] I call these L1 and L2 respectively to avoid confusion about all of the numbered propositions.
[22] Ibid, 42
[23] This last sentence possibly does away with Earl from footnote 2 (poor Earl!), except now that I have told the reader about her, she seems to potentially survive.
[24] Ibid, 45
[25] Ibid, 42 The actual quote from Lewis being "does Holmes have an even or odd number of hairs on his head?"

answer is different on each. L1 also fixes the designation of the world in the *Futurama* series to be the same as our world except where noted otherwise.[26] This suggests that the world in which Farnsworth enjoys being naked is going to be more like our world than the world in which Farnsworth does not enjoy being naked. L2 fixes the designation to rely on the community which has beliefs about *Futurama*.

Problem for Alternative 1: There could be a fiction that has contradictory assumptions about physics. Isaac Asimov's *The Gods Themselves* offers truth in fiction for David Lewis.[27] In this science fiction novel, aliens who live in a parallel universe with different laws of physics exchange matter with Earth in order to exploit the contradictory laws of physics to save their dying universe. Richard Garfinkle's *Celestial Matters* shows a world in which the laws are determined by Ancient Greek conceptions of physics.[28] The galaxy is not heliocentric, but geocentric. These truths in fiction show a determined law of physics p is met with a contradiction $\sim p$ existing in the same world. Is there a possible world with laws of physics include $p \wedge \sim p$? I would think not, but then maybe Lewis could appeal to his vacuous truth claims about these possible worlds. It does follow that the fictions mentioned here are told as known fact in their respective possible worlds and that $p \wedge \sim p$ are factual conditions for those possible worlds. In these possible worlds, Earth does seem to be like ours. If we are to follow L1, then we should reasonably understand that there will be possible worlds where there is a state of events that take

[26] The parenthesis might makes this a more complicated claim. To justify Lewis's claim, there is a Mars in our world, in which there are no known inhabitants. *Futurama* also has a Mars in which the Wong family lives on and owns the western hemisphere. Mars will be the exact same except where otherwise noted (such as the location of Wong Ranch and that the Wong Family drove Native Martians out of their land on a trade deal for one single large diamond that they assumed was worthless).
[27] Isaac Asimov, *The Gods Themselves*
[28] Richard Garfinkle, *Celestial Matters*

place $p \wedge \sim p$. There is no possible world that would allow for contradictory laws of physics within the same world. If that were the case, the laws of physics would not be contradictory, but mistaken. The authors have intentions of contradictory laws of physics. L1 should not be a condition for truth in fiction. There are no possible worlds with contradictory laws of physics, so it leads us to this question: Are these fictions vacuously true? No, if fictions can have non-vacuous truth, then science fictions should have non-vacuous truth. After all, there is meaningful writing within the science fictions. In "Paradoxes of Time Travel," Lewis suggests "Not all science fiction writers are clear-headed, to be sure, and inconsistent time travel stories have often been written."[29] I would agree with Lewis on this point, but I bring it up to suggest that even though they have been written (perhaps) poorly, there is no reason to expect that these sorts of stories are not told as known fact. L1 does not work in its current formulation.

L2 provides a case for the community of origin. What do we do about potential spinoff series though? Suppose Matt Groening and David Cohen have some issues with each other and (copyright rights aside) David Cohen (at the point in which I am referring is 70 years old) in the year 2037, creates a prequel series called *Planet Express* that follows some of the cast before Bender, Fry, and Leela have been introduced. The target audience is aimed at people born after September 4, 2017 (4 years after the last airing of Futurama). Some (or even most) members of the target audience are also clueless about *Futurama*. What is Farnsworth's community of origin for these collective beliefs by the target community? We are prone to say that the community of origin for those collective beliefs are through the series *Planet Express*, but that's a mistaken origin as Farnsworth's community of origin is through *Futurama*.

[29] David Lewis, "Paradoxes of Time Travel." Published by American Philosophical Quarterly. 1976 p 1

Lewis's modal realism offers an opportunity for there to be some realism about fiction, but it is not a good candidate for the reader. There is some amount of effort in the author's unstated intention or expressly stated intentions. Truth in fiction would further depend on collective belief worlds about the entities involved. As seen with the potential *Planet Express* example, it does not provide this. Modal realism will allow for truth in fiction, but in this case, modal realism is met with counterexamples.[30]

Alternative 2: I believe Peter Van Inwagen provides a well convincing argument that might not commit us to all of the unappealing commitments that Lewis does. There is no modal talk in Van Inwagen, but the notion seems to remain and Van Inwagen's position is a more likely candidate for there to be realism about fiction. Van Inwagen's position holds that there are *creatures of fiction* which are *theoretical entities of literary criticism*.[31] Just as in any discipline that contains theoretical entities, literary criticism does as well! Van Inwagen suggests "... sometimes, if what is said in a piece of literary criticism is to be true then there must be entities of a certain type, entities that are never the subjects of non-literary discourse, and which make up the extensions of the theoretical general terms of literary criticism."[32] Van Inwagen believes there are not first order truths of fiction. He states:

> "an adequate paraphrase must not be such as to leave us without an account of the logical consequences of … the paraphrased sentences. Almost certainly, any paraphrase that satisfies this condition will have a quantificational structure not much simpler than the (apparent)

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[30] Other examples: *Frasier*, which is a spinoff of *Cheers*; *10 Things I Hate About You*, which is a modern retelling of *Taming of the Shrew* in which William Shakespeare is credited as the writer (also of which Joyce Havstad mentioned as Petruccio was mentioned earlier in the paper).
[31] Peter Van Inwagen. "Creatures of Fiction" published by American Philosophical Quarterly in 1977 P. 302
[32] Ibid, 303

quantificational structure of its 'original.'"[33]

Van Inwagen further believes that Farnsworth does not have the properties of first order truths, such as "(F5) Farnsworth is a scientist." Under Van Inwagen's position, we have some properties for Farnsworth, such as "(F2) Farnsworth is a creation of Matt Groening" and "(F3) Farnsworth is a character in the television series *Futurama*." It is false that Farnsworth is a scientist under the Van Inwagen position. Farnsworth is not even a "he" because Farnsworth has no gender. He is a "he" out of convenience.

Problem for Alternative 2: We can sort of preserve Van Inwagen's position as it is determined by the creatures of fiction to being entities of literary criticism, but we still need not accept that these creatures have no properties. It is true that we can talk about Farnsworth. It is also true that when talked about, Farnsworth is an entity of film criticism. There are distinctions and conceptions that we have of these entities. If the only things about the entities in question are that "creator *z* created the creature *c*" and that they are "a character in this novel" and possibly "the character is introduced in chapter *n*," then there is nothing else worth saying. It leads the properties to be restricted. 'Farnsworth' has ten letters, but what use is this? We need a "theoretical entities of literary criticism + properties" in order to accurately reflect the qualms that the anti-realist, Peter Van Inwagen, and the fictional realist. What can be said of Farnsworth?

V. Kinding Farnsworth

What sorts of things are going to be first order and second order truths of fiction? A first order truth of fiction will be a state of affairs for a fiction (this partially includes the David Lewis

[33] Ibid, 304

truths), but extends to some essential features of the fiction. So if it happens in the fiction and about the fiction, then the truth exists in the first order (or in Futurama), as sometimes second order truths are entailed by the first order.[34] "In *Futurama*, Philip J. Fry lacks the delta brainwave" is a first order truth. A second order truth of fiction will be a statement "about" the fiction without the properties explained in the fiction, since the fiction itself is a pretend story (this is the Peter Van Inwagen position). Second order truths of fiction are about a state of affairs in this world, such as "the writers for *Futurama* hold 3 Ph.D's, 7 master's degrees, and more than fifty years of study at Harvard."[35] Second order truths about fiction supervene on first order truths about fiction. Some of the stated facts are categorically different from each other. Some will take some of the facts as true and others as false. Consider the categories here:

FFO-TSO - False First Order, True Second Order:
F1. Farnsworth does not exist (or is not a thing, or is not).

TFO-TSO - True First Order, True Second Order:
F2. Farnsworth is a creation of Matt Groening.
F3. Farnsworth is a character in *Futurama*.

TFO-FSO - True First Order, False Second Order:
F4. Except for preserved persons, Farnsworth is the oldest human being on Earth.
F5. Farnsworth is a scientist.
F6. Farnsworth owns Planet Express.
F7. Farnsworth is known for inventions.
F8. Farnsworth has two offspring.

FFO-FSO - False First Order, False Second Order:
F9. (added false statement not mentioned in section **I**) Farnsworth is a detective.

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[34] One could resist this by stating that Matt Groening was not in *Futurama*, but what we gain from this is that we have embedded causal assumptions when we express statements like "Farnsworth exclaimed 'GOOD NEWS, EVERYONE.'" The causal assumption when we make first order claims about Farnsworth is that Farnsworth is the character created by Matt Groening.
[35] Patric M. Verrone, "'Welcome to the World of Tomorrow:' How *Futurama*'s writers depicted asymmetrical warfare." Published online in 2014

But on what conditions is Farnsworth a potential member of a natural kind? It seems as though Farnsworth is not to be a natural kind in the consideration of completely false claims as those aren't true properties. So the FFO-FSO category easily fails. TFO-FSO claims are probably going to not constitute natural kinds either. Farnsworth is merely a kind in the specific sets that rely on first order truths about *Futurama*. TFO-FSO claims have the unfortunate situation of being reliant on (as Kripke would call them) accidental properties. Farnsworth has different kinds of set membership, and earlier I suggested Farnsworth is not a scientist in the way that Lawrence Kraus and Steven Pinker are scientists. Farnsworth can have set membership in the set of fictional scientists, but this is not necessary for Farnsworth. The set of fictional scientists includes characters such as Dr. Jekyll of *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, Dana Skully of *X-Files*, and of course our beloved Hubert J. Farnsworth of *Futurama*. This kind is arbitrary as any of these entities could be other things. Groening could have made Farnsworth a detective and not a scientist.

FFO-TSO claims about Farnsworth are going to fail too. FFO-TSO claims are going to rely on Farnsworth to be a nothing. Farnsworth does not exist. Something that does not exist would be a non-member of a natural kind on the grounds that it has no properties. The empty set (in set theory known as "{}") can be understood as the set containing no members.[36] With existence as a property we want to consider essential to being, there comes seeming members of the empty set. Consider Farnsworth. Because fictional entities do not exist *per se*, they are members of the empty set. So, we have members of the set that contains no members. This follows because "Farnsworth" is a term designated as a nothing. Farnsworth is only a kind in

[36] This might be common knowledge, but Bertrand Russell, *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy* inspires the statement.

specific sets that allow for Farnsworth to be. FFO-TSO claims make it so that Farnsworth does not refer and could not be a member of a natural kind (and this truth is supervening).[37]

So, in order for Farnsworth to be a member of a natural (social) kind, the way would have to rely on those which are TFO-TSO. This is because it provides (existing) set membership, and identifies necessary properties. The sets that we can look at for Farnsworth includes "the set of characters created by Matt Groening." Members of this set include: Homer Simpson of *The Simpsons*, Sideshow Bob of *The Simpsons*, Hedonism Bot of *Futurama*, and of course Hubert Farnsworth of *Futurama*. Now one may be skeptical to suggest that Van Inwagen is indeed allowing for TFO-TSO claims, but I think he is, on a dissection of the sentences, that he allows for. So, Van Inwagen's claims are mostly second order. Such that "Matt Groening is the creator of" is of the second order, while the object of the sentence is of the first order. It has a strong justification in terms of fictional members of natural kinds and provides necessary conditions for there to be a way to talk about fictional entities as members of natural kinds. The theory identifies the necessary properties for Farnsworth to be a member of a natural kind because it gives TFO-TSO claims. Van Inwagen's position is almost hitting the mark, but it ignores the merely true first order and merely true (but very important) second order.

VI. Justified Contradiction of Fiction and some opposition

We've seen David Lewis not provide an adequate answer for truth in fiction as it is subject to serious criticism from truth in science fiction as well as issues with the community of origin for some fictions. An objection hinted at through the previous section is that the truths that Lewis provides are in regards to things that could have been otherwise. That is initially fine for

[37] It very well could be that this commitment, in order to be meaningful, relies on an even higher order truth about Farnsworth's existence.

the modal realist, but the modal realist cannot say anything is meaningfully false because there will always be some possible world in which a false state of events is true. Why would anyone want to be committed to that and does it do any good in evaluation? No!

Further, we've noticed Peter Van Inwagen's entities of literary criticism are restricting in truth. There are no accidental truths in Van Inwagen's argument, such as F5. There is also no ground to talk about Farnsworth as what Farnsworth really is. The advantage of Van Inwagen's position is that it gives some grounds for us to talk about fictional entities as social natural kinds, in that it addresses true first order, true second order claims. But there is more to the way that fiction is talked about. Further, Van Inwagen's position allows for the Justified Contradiction of Fiction, but does not allow for (6) to follow because Van Inwagen wants to suggest that "'Farnsworth' is a referent" is one of the few truths that we can have about Farnsworth.

The Justified Contradiction of Fiction relies solely on second order truths, while (5) relies on a first order notion of the referent "Farnsworth." As stated earlier, second order truths of fiction will supervene on first order truths of fiction. Reason being, the first order truths of fiction are weaker in justification than second order truths of fiction. We've addressed some potential problems for the Justified Contradiction of Fiction earlier. Particularly, it relies on truth of the propositions (1)-(3), which are necessary for the hypothetical syllogism and then a reason to accept the less controversial modus ponens of (4)-(5) [if (1)-(3) follow]. These premises are not false and the conclusion follows. Let this be my last attempt to win the reader over (but note, this particular argument is valid and I am trying to help the reader in finding ways for it to be unsound, so far not successful):

On (1)-(2): "If a name refers to a fictional entity, then it refers to a member of the empty set" is true iff fictional entities are members of the empty set. I ask the resistant realist why something that does not exist is not a member of the set of no members? The clearest point of disagreement is whether fictional entities exist. But, let's suppose the reader believes either one. A fictional realist who wants to follow me in rejecting Lewis and wants to follow me in suggesting that Van Inwagen does not extend far enough will not follow me in suggesting that the fictional entities themselves do not exist. The fictional realist believes that fictional entities do exist. In the first order, this deals with accidental properties and in the second order, this deals with the aboutness of the entity. Of course, for the realist, it goes further then this. There are beliefs about the thing, so it exists collectively in our heads (and regardless of the community of origin that David Lewis requires). So I aim to show the reader through the following example that "is real" can be interchangeable with "exists."

Parents and children both have beliefs about Father Christmas. If I am to ask an American child "where does Father Christmas reside?" she will surely give me an answer of "The North Pole!" Suppose this child is still at an age where she won't be affected by the next two questions: I ask her "Is Father Christmas real?" and she responds "Yes!" I then ask "Does Father Christmas exist?" and she look a little confused as though I did not understand her the first time and will answer "Yes!" If I am to ask this child's parent while the child is not around "Is Father Christmas real?" the parent will surely respond in some way like "No, Father Christmas is not real." So, then I am naturally inclined to ask "Does Father Christmas exist?" and the parent will respond with "No, I just told you Father Christmas is not real." From this, I would like to ask the reader: Is Father Christmas real? And further does Father Christmas exist? The

reader (unless terribly sheltered) will accept that at some point before reading this paper, they've believed Father Christmas to not exist. Someone might try to defeat this claim by suggesting that there was a real person that Father Christmas is based on, and so Father Christmas does exist. St. Nicholas existed at some point long ago. St. Nicholas does not currently exist. St. Nicholas had a temporal existence that spanned the time of his life. The maternal great great great grandmother of the reader also does not exist. The fictional realist will claim that there could be a current manifestation. This would also not hold as if we believe Farnsworth exists, we believe Farnsworth exists in the year 2010, 990 years before *Futurama* takes place. There are sets that Farnsworth belongs to as noted before, but there are not sets that Farnsworth actually belongs to. It is TFO-FSO that Farnsworth is a scientist, but the second order fact about Farnsworth being a nothing supervenes on the TFO-FSO fact. So while it is true that Farnsworth was created by Matt Groening, it is not true that Farnsworth is anything and if that is true, then Farnsworth is not a creation. If "something" is not a thing, It would follow that it ought to belong to the set which has no members, by definition.

On (2)-(3): "If a name refers to a member of the empty set, then it refers to nothing" is true iff the empty set contains nothing. One could argue that something's lack of existence does not necessarily make it a member of the empty set. This is on the grounds that the empty set has no members. So, because Farnsworth joins the other nothings along with phlogiston, and my son (hopefully), these nothings create a set of things that do not exist. Further, it has been shown over and over again that Farnsworth is a creation of Matt Groening, and that places it in a separate set Thus, we can escape the Justified Contradiction of Fiction. This of course depends on necessarily not equating "does not exist" and "nothing." As noted earlier, we make different kinds of claims

about these things that do not exist. There is necessarily a problem with this view. How could we ever say that there is a nothing to distinguish things that take up matter from things that do not? Note, I have used three different types of nothing in this set. If they are all not nothings or in the set of nothings, then there would be better reason to assume these things do not exist, but are not nothing. We can reasonably decide the following six sentences are true. My son does not exist. My son is not nothing. Phlogiston does not exist. Phlogiston is not nothing. Farnsworth does not exist. Farnsworth is not nothing. What would my son be? I suppose my son would be a conceptual object which I assume would be like a son other people have. Phlogiston conceptually would be a (failed) theory. Farnsworth would conceptually be a scientist. Do we want to take these this far? We should be weary of these conceptual entities, as often they will be relatively understood and we will have mistaken beliefs about conceptual entities of other people. I suppose we are playing a game of "beetle in a box.",[38] So, what are we meaningfully to say about completely mind-dependent entities? Nothing.[39] The sets that these nothings can be members of is the empty set.

Implications and alternatives to the JCoF: The Philosophy Club of Oakland University was rather hung up on physical manifestations of fictional entities.[40] Benedict Cumberbatch is "make-believing" when he plays Sherlock Holmes. The comedian Nick Swardson once made a joke on people mistaking him for being a homosexual because he played a homosexual on Reno 911! He gives the wrongful accusers the heart-breaking news that Toby Maguire is not really

[38] Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations
[39] Descartes and Berkeley who are of different schools of thought will suggest the next step is God.
[40] I am grateful for the club feedback. It came with a presentation titled "Do They Exist?" in which I merely presented the introduction to the problem on 6 April, 2017.

Spiderman. There aren't physical manifestations of fictional entities in the way we understand the fictional entities. Holmes is no more real than Farnsworth simply because the Sherlock Holmes fiction is not a cartoon. Is Farnsworth the pixels displayed on television when Futurama is airing? Is Holmes the words "Sherlock Holmes" on the pages of the Conan Doyle stories? These are physical manifestations after all. The failure of that is that it entails none of the truths expressed earlier, whether first or second order, whether true or false. These physical "manifestations" would be true, uninteresting, and would not convey the author's intentions.

Further, if the concern is with if numbers exist I suggest that numbers are unsettled, but that they seem more real than fictional entities. Numbers are seemingly mind-independent.

Does the Justified Contradiction of Fiction extend to other creations? The simple answer is no. Fictional entities are a special kind of creation, a kind in which we are pretending about the state of affairs. This is reflected through how the terms in each proposition are extended.

It could also be that there could be a real person that will be named Professor Hubert J. Farnsworth and shares all of the same qualities as Farnsworth. This would not be sufficient because the Farnsworth that comes into existence will be a separate entity that only accidentally shares the properties with the Farnsworth in question.There may also be a concern that my position extends to the dead. I think this is correct as the dead do not exist. There could be many more objections, but I've merely taken the most popular on here and have not had any reason so far to reject the Justified Contradiction of Fiction.

VII. Concluding remarks; Is Farnsworth a member of a natural kind?

We started with basic facts about Professor Hubert J. Farnsworth of the *Futurama* series. I introduced the Justified Contradiction of Fiction. I then explained how Farnsworth will have an

opportunity to succeed as a member of a natural kind. I looked at first briefly at reasons that the contradiction could not work (and intended for it in depth later). I examined alternative theories of fiction from philosophical greats David Lewis and Peter Van Inwagen.

David Lewis's truths of fiction either had issues in practice or did not extend beyond accidental properties. We were left with contradictory truths, depending on which possible world we are looking at. Peter Van Inwagen provided restrictive truths of fiction that make it so there are true first order, true second order claims about fiction. Under that position, there are not true first order, false second order claims about fiction. This of course does away with the way that we generally talk about fiction (except sometimes we are praising or blaming in the second order). We can say statements such as "Matt Groening created *Futurama*." We cannot say "Farnsworth is amoral." There is also a restriction on false first order, true second order claims such as "Farnsworth does not exist."

The Van Inwagen propositions are the best chance at (social) natural kinding Farnsworth. So I believe that if Farnsworth is a member of a natural kind, then Farnsworth as a member of a natural kind depends on essential properties of Farnsworth, such as being a creation of Matt Groening, or being a character in the series *Futurama*. Peter Van Inwagen ought to be committed to the notion that Professor Farnsworth is a member of a natural kind.

Because Van Inwagen is too restrictive, there are not meaningful statements which will be false in one of the two proposed orders, but the distinction of orders is often how we talk about these entities. I propose that we could have accidental truths in fiction (TFO-FSO sentences) which will pass as long as we keep in mind the overall, supervening truth that

Farnsworth does not exist (which is false in the first order). The Justified Contradiction of Fiction is unique only to fiction, but is true of fiction.

If Farnsworth is a member natural kind, then Farnsworth would have to exist as a member of a meaningful set. Farnsworth does not exist (and this is a supervening truth over first order truths). Therefore, Professor Hubert J. Farnsworth is not a member of any natural kind. The positive of this is that there is a meaningful way to talk about fiction while still not allowing for the fiction's existence. We just need to be clear about how we are talking about the nothing.

To say that Professor Farnsworth is a scientist is to acknowledge a property of first order truth, but ignore the second order truth. We can pretend this is the case with first order truths, just as the quasi-realist can pretend that killing is permissible. Simon Blackburn in saying "killing is permissible" says "hooray killing!" or "if ethics were real, then killing is permissible." So we can say something like "Farnsworth is a scientist" and have it mean "If Futurama were real, Farnsworth would be a scientist." We can also meaningfully talk about sentences such as "Matt Groening is the creator of Farnsworth, a character in the cartoon *Futurama*," which again is true first order, true second order. "Matt Groening is the creator of … a character in the cartoon *Futurama*" is true in the second order, while Farnsworth is a first order referent. We can talk about all of these kinds of truths as long as we keep in mind that Farnsworth does not exist. Professor Hubert J. Farnsworth is not a scientist because as a fictional entity, he is a member of the empty set.

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[41] I include any references I make to avoid confusion. Maybe I am uncultured swine. I was unfamiliar with Van Inwagen's case Mrs. Gamp and the *Pickwick Papers* in general.

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