

# Garcia's Paradox

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## I. N'importe Quoi

THE MOST IMPORTANT CONCEPT in Book I of Tristan Garcia's *Forme et objet: Un traité des choses* is perhaps *without importance*, "n'importe quoi" ("anything").<sup>1</sup> In an ordinary, exclamative sense, the expression "c'est n'importe quoi!" may translate as "that's bullshit!" or "that's rubbish!" and so on. In this sense, "n'importe quoi" is close to "nothing." But when I say "*that's* bullshit!" something characterized as "n'importe quoi" is not *absolutely* nothing since having the property of bullshit is at least something, however much disapprobation we might bring to bear. Like Heidegger's infamous discussion of "das Nichts" ("the Nothing") Garcia's usage both deviates substantially from colloquial French and cleverly combines the quantificational sense of the phrase ("for all x") and something more denotational and name-like.

A historically attuned reader of Garcia cannot help but think back to Rudolph Carnap's attempted excoriation of Heidegger for just this same supposed sin.<sup>2</sup> According to Carnap, he treated "Nichts" as if were a name with a specific

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1 Tristan Garcia, *Forme et objet: Un Traité des Choses* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2011).

2 Rudolph Carnap, "Überwindung der Metaphysik durch Logische Analyse der Sprache," in *Erkenntnis*, 2:4, (1931), 219–41.

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denotation, rather than a quantificational expression meaning “it is not the case that there exists an  $x$  such that.”

This is actually a felicitous comparison, for Graham Priest has recently demonstrated not only that Carnap was wrong about Heidegger but why it was interesting that he was wrong.<sup>3</sup> One can, in fact, use the logic that Carnap helped create and popularize to make perfect sense of Heidegger’s argument as saying something profound about how cognizing limits of description forces one to also cognize something beyond the limits of the describable by describing that very something.<sup>4</sup>

Something similar can be achieved with respect to Garcia’s “n’importe quoi.” This will not only forestall potential uncharitable Carnaps amongst the readership, but also bring to the forefront central properties of the n’importe quoi. Again, like Heidegger, Garcia’s usage of the term departs substantially from the colloquial. While one might argue about how important the issue of “Nichts” really is to making sense of either the substantive disagreements between Heidegger and Carnap or to Heidegger’s *œuvre* considered

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3 Graham Priest, *Beyond the Limits of Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

4 We would be remiss not to note that Garcia himself would certainly demure with respect to the relevant bit of Heideggeriana (cf. the discussion of “nothing” in Book I, Part I, Section II of *Forme et Objet*). Also consider Herman Philipse on “the problem of being” in Herman Philipse, *Heidegger’s Philosophy of Being* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998). Both of these more recent charges of equivocation rest neither on the verificationism in common to phenomenologists and positivists (cf. Mark Okrent, *Heidegger’s Pragmatism: Understanding, Being, and the Critique of Metaphysics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991) and Raphaël Millière, “La métaphysique aujourd’hui et demain,” *Atelier de métaphysique et d’ontologie contemporaines* (October 2011), <http://www.atmoc.fr/resources/La-metaphysique---Milliere.pdf>. Mark Allan Ohm’s English translation of the latter is available at [http://atmoc.files.wordpress.com/2012/06/milliere\\_metaphysics\\_today\\_and\\_tomorrow1.pdf](http://atmoc.files.wordpress.com/2012/06/milliere_metaphysics_today_and_tomorrow1.pdf).) nor the Carnapian view that all natural language reasoning can be formalized.

in itself,<sup>5</sup> “n’importe quoi” is a fundamental part of Garcia’s systematic metaphysics.

By our rough count, the phrase occurs one hundred and forty three times in *Forme et objet*, one hundred and thirty four of these in Book I. The term occurs with no preceding article: (1) as a simple predicate after some conjugation of “être” (e.g. “Que rien ne soit n’importe quoi...” (i.i.i §10, p. 30)),<sup>6</sup> (2) as a subject noun phrase (e.g. “N’importe quoi peut être quelque chose...” (i.i.iii §5, p. 61)), (3) as a direct object (e.g. “Prenez - ou ne prenez pas - n’importe quoi...” (i.i.i §8, p. 29)), (4) as an adjectival quantifier (e.g. “tout tabou est donc différent des autres de telle sorte qu’un tabou n’est jamais *n’importe quel* tabou...” (i.i.i §17, p. 36)), and (5) after a preposition (e.g. “Pour accéder à n’importe quoi...” (i.i.i §11, p. 30)). Some of the above uses occur in quotation marks (e.g. “‘n’importe quoi’ n’est rien d’autre que l’expression du refus d’accorder quelque importance que ce soit à ce qu’est ceci, à ce qu’est cela, à ce que peut être tout ce qui peut être” (i.i.i §8, p. 30)). The phrase occurs with a preceding definite article (“le”): (1) as a subject (e.g. “Le « n’importe quoi » n’a pas d’intérêt...” (i.i.i §8, p. 30)), (2) after a preposition (e.g. “Si une contradiction est une porte d’accès au n’importe quoi...” (i.i.i §16, p. 36)), (3) after a partitive (e.g. “C’est le monde plat du *n’importe quoi*” (i.i.i, p. 41)),

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5 For the former, cf. Michael Friedman, *A Parting of the Ways: Carnap, Cassirer, and Heidegger* (Chicago: Open Court, 2000), and Peter Gordon, *Continental Divide: Heidegger, Cassirer, Davos* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2010). For the latter, see Graham Harman, *Tool-Being: Heidegger and the Metaphysics of Objects* (Chicago: Open Court, 2002).

6 “(i.i.i §10, p. 30)” should be read as “Book I, Part I, Chapter I, Section 10, on page 30.” With one exception, each Chapter in Book I (“Formellement”) of *Forme et objet* begins with numbered sections, followed by one to three sections of commentary. The Chapters in Book II (“Objectivement”) do not begin with numbered paragraphs, and are divided into named sections. So “(i.i.iii, p. 68)” will cite material in the post-numbered commentary, and “(ii.ii, p. 180)” will cite material in Book II, Chapter II.

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and (4) as a demonstrative (e.g. “Et c’est ce n’importe quoi qui nous intéresse ici” (i.i.i, §22, p. 39)). Some such uses occur in quotation marks (e.g. “Le refus physique ou métaphysique du « n’importe quoi »” (i.i.ii §4, p. 50)).

Garcia’s philosophical prose is in fact generally so clear that were it not for the fact that the phrase represents a central metaphysical category, there would be no special difficulty for the translator. One could just use cognates of “anything” and for determiners affix “the concept of,”<sup>7</sup> and then fiddle further with the syntax of the English sentences to secure quantificational (i.e. “for all x”) readings throughout. But, as will be clear from the following discussion, this would actually radically confuse Garcia’s metaphysics, one that demands the reader give phrases with quantificational interpretations simultaneous name-like<sup>8</sup> interpretations.

Another solution would be to stay closer to the French

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7 Much boorishness could be avoided if something like this guideline (or for example using “humanity” instead of “the human”) concerning determiners were taken as a general rule, to be honored in the breach only when absolutely necessary. That is, if you talk about “the event” or “the other” (capitalized or not) in English conversation, it is perfectly licit for an interlocutor to badger you about which event or other you mean to reference. But this is not the case with respect to the French definite article in ordinary conversation. In this manner, retaining determiners in the English often slaps on a patina of affectation that is not there in the original.

8 We say “name-like” for two reasons: (1) Carnap’s quibble actually concerned “das Nichts” which is a determiner-noun noun phrase, but still name-like because the determiner normally functions to pick out one entity, (2) much more important, even though Garcia uses the phrase “le n’importe quoi,” it would be a category error on Garcia’s view to say there was one “n’importe quoi.” In an attempt to differentiate his position from Quine and Leibniz, Garcia explicitly states in an introductory footnote that oneness or identity is not a requirement of “n’importe quoi.” Moreover, Garcia’s view of counting has much in common with the Geach-Kraut view of indiscernibility, where identity only makes sense relative to a sortal predicate (or more metaphysically, a property of the right sort). Robert Kraut, “Indiscernibility and Ontology,” *Synthese*, 44 (1980), 113–35. But, as we note above, there is neither predicate nor propriety to do such work with “n’importe quoi.”

syntax and mark the phrase as philosophical by rendering it “Anything” with a capital “A,” in the sense that it used to be standard to translate Heideggerian “Sein” with big B “Being” in English. But translating “n’importe quoi” in this way would also lead to much confusion, for the literal combinatorial meaning of the three words actually does work for Garcia as well. As we will show, it is central to n’importe quoi that it be *absolutely undetermined*, not any kind of “what” that can be determined via predicate or property. For these reasons, in our forthcoming Edinburgh University Press translation of Garcia’s book we translate “n’importe quoi” as “no-matter-what.”

## II. Surface Contradictions

In addition to issues of semantic type, a first time reader might think that Garcia is simply saying incoherent things about no-matter what. Here we will present just a few instances of the main seeming contradiction, all from Book I, Section I, Chapter I, though these claims are of necessity repeated throughout Book I by Garcia.

On the one hand, Garcia claims that something can never be n’importe quoi, that nothing can be n’importe quoi. For example:

Quelque chose n’est jamais n’importe quoi : je ne pourrais pas trouver dans le monde quelque chose qui serait n’importe quoi (i.i.i §9, p. 30).  
Que rien ne soit n’importe quoi signifie qu’il n’existe pas un objet, un événement, un dieu, une idée qui serait « n’importe quoi ». (i.i.i §10, p. 30).

In our translation, we render these as:

Something is never no-matter-what. I could not find something in the world which would be no-matter-what (i.i.i §9, p. 30).

That nothing is no-matter-what means that there does not exist any object, event, god, or idea that would be ‘no-matter-what’ (i.i.i §10, p. 30).

In seeming contradiction to these assertions, we are simultaneously told both that n’importe quoi can be something

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and that *n'importe quoi* is something.

Pour autant, *n'importe quoi* n'est pas rien, bien au contraire. *N'importe quoi*, c'est-à-dire « également ceci *ou* cela *ou* tout autre chose », est quelque chose (i.i.i §13, p. 31).

This can be rendered:

Nonetheless, no-matter-what is not nothing. On the contrary, no-matter-what - that is to say, 'equally this *or* that *or* any other thing' - is something (i.i.i §13, p. 31).

But then Garcia is saying both that no-matter-what is something and that nothing is no-matter-what. And to add to one's potential soupçon, consider,

D'où nous pouvons affirmer qu'il est incompatible d'être quelque chose et d'être *n'importe quoi* : tout ce qui n'est pas *n'importe quoi* est quelque chose (i.i.i §16, p. 36),

which we translate as,

From this we can claim that it is incompatible to be something and to be no-matter-what. Everything which is not no-matter-what is something (i.i.i §16, p. 36).

Again, how can it be incompatible to be something and to be no-matter-what while at the same time being the case that no-matter-what is something?

The answer to this question requires attending to one essential facet in Garcia's theory of being, most clearly presented in Part III of Book I. Note in what follows that Garcia's notion of "comprehension" is not intrinsically epistemic nor tied to human or animal capacities. For Garcia, any object that includes another *in any way* can be said to comprehend that other object. With this proviso, we have the following:

The subject is always the part, and the predicate is the whole, the set. When I say that  $x$  is  $y$ , I mean that  $x$  belongs to  $y$ , that

$x$  is a part of  $y$ , that  $x$  composes  $y$ , and that  $x$  takes part in  $y$ 's matter.  $x$  is  $y$  – that is, that  $x$  is comprehended by  $y$ . Since  $x$  is  $y$ ,  $y$  comprehends  $x$ ,  $y$  is external to  $x$ , and  $y$  is 'outside'  $x$ .

The first important consequence of the decision to interpret 'being' as the inverse of comprehending derives from the product of an 'anti-symmetric' relation. It may seem that being is the sign of a symmetric identity relation: if  $a$  is  $b$ , then  $b$  is  $a$ , and so on. No! Being is anti-symmetry *par excellence*. If  $a$  is  $b$ , then  $b$  cannot be  $a$ . Being means nothing other than this one-sidedness [*ce sens unique*] (i. iii, pp. 117-118).<sup>9</sup>

From this perspective, it is easy to show the seemingly contradictory claims to be consistent.

First, consider the claim that nothing is no-matter what. The most important meaning of this for Garcia is if we take "nothing" in the quantificational sense and no-matter-what as name-like (as noted, it is a consequence of his metaphysics that this is permissible). Then we are saying all things are such that they do not enter into the no-matter-what, or equivalently that all things are such that the no-matter-what does not comprehend them.

So the no-matter-what is contained in other things (in "something") but itself contains nothing, the exact inverse

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9 In the French passage, Garcia actually uses the word "transitive" in the grammatical sense. But this would be unclear to an English reader as it is absolutely clear that he means "symmetric" in the mathematical sense. Given this, his "non" should be "anti-." Mathematically, the four words are the same in both languages. Again though, this also means that being is intransitive in the sense that it takes no direct object, it is unidirectional. Another crucial feature of Garcia's theory of being is that something is never (in) itself, or what Garcia calls "compactness." The relation between something and itself is anti-reflexive (e.g.  $x \notin x$  or "I am not myself") and yields another seeming contradiction, this one of a Fregean "the concept horse is not a concept" type, i.e. "no-matter-what, through the milieu of something, is not no-matter-what. Something is in fact that which 'detaches' no-matter-what from no-matter-what; no-matter-what is a thing, and a thing is that which is not no-matter-what" (i.i.iii §10, 62)).

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of Garcia's "world" which is a container of every thing but which is itself not contained.<sup>10</sup>

Given that being is being comprehended, and that this is anti-symmetric, if nothing is no-matter-what, then (for Garcia) no-matter-what is not nothing. This means, quantificationally, that no-matter-what is something. Which is precisely our other claim.

Now let us recover our pre-Carnapian innocence and think of the quantificational phrase "something" as name-like. To make this maximally clear, we will follow Heidegger and talk of "the something." Then to say that no-matter-what is something is to say that no-matter-what enters into the something and that the something comprehends no-matter-what.

Again, part of Garcia's genius is that the equivocations Carnap saw in Heidegger are a consequence of Garcia's metaphysics. So let's consider the claim that no-matter-what is something with "no-matter-what" understood quantificationally. Then, to say that no-matter-what is something is to say that anything is something, or as he sometimes puts it "anything can be something," which is as succinct a statement of Garcia's radically anti-reductionist Meinongian ontological profligacy as can be made! Like Meinong, or perhaps more so, when Garcia says "anything" he really means *anything*.<sup>11</sup> For Garcia, any thing, whether existent or not, possible or not, imaginary or not, consistent or not, etc. is a thing. We discuss this further in presenting the initial paradox.

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10 In "Why a Dialetheist Might Still be Moved by Russell's Paradox: Tristan Garcia on World" we demonstrate the manner in which Garcia's world is like a proper class in traditional set theory, and also show how the reasons are interestingly different. Mark Allan Ohm and Jon Cogburn, "Why a Dialetheist Might Still be Moved by Russell's Paradox: Tristan Garcia on World," in preparation.

11 However, it should be noted that Garcia distances himself from Meinong and various neo-meinongian currents. See Tristan Garcia, "Après Meinong. Un autre théorie de l'objet," *Atelier de métaphysique et d'ontologie contemporaines*, (April 2012), <http://www.atmoc.fr/resources/handout23.pdf>.

### III. Garcia's Paradox

We have seen that for Garcia to be is to be comprehended, and when we put this together with his understanding of the claim that anything can be something we get the further claim that to be is to be determined. Garcia's defense of this view and drawing out of the anti-reductionist and anti-dialectical consequences in some way forms the whole 486 pages of the book, and we cannot hope to do it justice here. In particular we will not discuss two of Garcia's major accomplishments: (1) his idea that an object is neither a substance nor a bundle of properties, but rather the difference between that which the object comprehends and that which comprehends the object, and (2) the systematic deployment of this differential model combined with his concept of "intensity" to account for an astonishing variety of phenomena (e.g. time, life, animals, gender, death, art. . .) in Book II of the work.

For our present purposes we must focus on the discussion inaugurated in Book I, Part I, Chapter I, Section 15. There Garcia considers six distinct strategies that preclude no-matter-what from being something: logical, linguistic, epistemic, cultural, religious, moral/political. In each case he opposes the claim that some category does not pick out a thing by noting that within that category determinations are made. In other words, each strategy denies that something has what Garcia calls a "minimum-of-what" (i.i.i. §16, p. 36), that is, a minimum determination. Unlike no-matter-what, these things are not *absolutely* indeterminate.<sup>12</sup>

For example, to the logician who denies that there are true contradictions, Garcia deftly points out that we can differentiate contradictory entities; the squared circle is necessarily circular while the non-white white is not. This, then, is how

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<sup>12</sup> As with the example of a clementine that follows, Garcia makes this point rather brilliantly elsewhere, when one tries to remove all determinations from something (in the example, a tree): Tristan Garcia, "Crossing Ways of Thinking: On Graham Harman's System and My Own," trans. Mark Allan Ohm, *Parrhesia: A Journal of Critical Philosophy*, 16 (2013), 14-25.

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he defends the claim that anything is something. Garcia argues that to attribute a determination is to talk about a thing. To be is to be determined. It is in this sense, then, that no-matter-what can be anything.

But then once one holds that to be is to be determined, Garcia's Paradox follows naturally. All one must do is consider an entity that lacks all determination, and note that lacking all determination is itself a determination. For Garcia, the no-matter-what names precisely this determination of lacking all determination. Consider a representative passage:

What do we mean by claiming that a clementine is something, that a segment, pip, orange colour, weight, unity, its falling, two, three, the word 'clementine', or its idea are something, just as me, you, an animal, or the earth? We have assumed that a clementine is not *another thing*, that it is only *something*. More precisely, we have assumed that a clementine is not no-matter-what. A clementine is *this* clementine. But this clementine is not *that* clementine. Therefore, it is a matter of something, it is a matter of no-matter-what. The word 'clementine' is neither the word 'Australia' nor an animal nor the end of a storm. When this clementine is something, it is not that clementine or something else. No-matter-what, we have said, is this *or that or its opposite or something else*. No-matter-what is something, anything.

A clementine is not this *or that or its opposite or anything else*. It *matters* that a clementine be something, that is, that it can be this or that, but that it absolutely cannot be this or that or anything else. If a clementine is no-matter-what, then it is not a matter of a clementine (i.i.iii §7, p. 61).

For a clementine to be something it must be determined in some way, but no-matter-what's only determination is that it lacks all determination.

This is clearly a *prima facie* paradoxical notion, but we can see why Garcia must embrace it. In order to articulate what is arguably the most resolutely anti-reductionist metaphysical system in the history of thought Garcia puts forward the bold Meinongian claim that anything (no-matter-what) is something. While critiquing specific forms of reductionism

inconsistent with this claim he argues that all that is necessary for being something is possessing some determination. But then what about the concept of just being anything? For this concept to be maximally inclusive it must lack any determination whatsoever. But “lacking any determination whatsoever” is itself a determination. So it would seem to both lack and possess determinations.

One might say that this no-matter-what is itself thus a contradictory entity, but Garcia's model of being provides a way out of the paradox. Let us step back and consider all of the things that lack all determinations. By describing the collection thus, we provide a determination, so everything in this “collection” is both determined and not determined. So, on the assumption that this is a contradiction we should reject,<sup>13</sup> we now know that nothing is in this collection. But now we have a “thing” such that nothing is (in) this thing! Moreover, this thing is something, as it has a determination, being the collection of all things that have no determination.

In the Appendix we provide a formal derivation of this. What we hope to have done is provide a rational reconstruction of the reasons that led Garcia to characterize the no-matter-what as being something while at the same time affirming that nothing is no-matter-what. This is a novel paradox, and a somewhat novel solution. Not entirely novel, as the no-matter-what has commonalities with the empty set that forms the basis of standard set-theoretic universes in mathematics. But somewhat novel because standard set-theories either simply assert the existence of an empty set via axiom, or prove it using a restricted comprehension axiom with respect to a claim that some object is not identical to itself. In both cases the axiom of extensionality, which holds that

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<sup>13</sup> Since Garcia is committed to inconsistent objects (given that they possess determinations), this is a way open to him, albeit one he does not take. In fact, one of Garcia's most profound discussions (located in Book I, Part I, Chapter V (*Le Compact*)) concerns the manner in which the dialetheist must face the fact that mere inconsistency is not sufficient grounds for rejection. This is one of many places that there are fruitful grounds for dialogue between Graham Priest and Garcia.

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two sets are identical if they have the same members, is later employed to show that there is only one empty set.

The no-matter-what is distinct from the empty set in several ways. First, it is not clear that the normal derivation would work for Garcia, since in his account of beauty he allows that things can be more or less themselves. Likewise, Garcia's anti-reductionist differential model of objects is inconsistent with the axiom of extensionality, so it is not clear that one could go on to strictly establish that there is exactly one no-matter-what. As noted in footnote 8, Garcia's model of counting (in common with the Geach-Kraut view of individuation) arguably precludes providing either ordinality or cardinality to the no-matter-what.

## IV. Conclusions

What have we established? The importance of no-matter-what is that it lacks all importance. No-matter-what can be bullshit, but it can also be horseshit or clownshit or Donald Rumsfeld. And while no-matter-what can be this or that or any other thing, each of them alone is not no-matter-what. We also hope to have made explicit is that, even though it may be an arduous and otherwise thankless task, *translation matters*. One's entire universe can hinge on the felicitous rendering of a phrase. We will have been successful here if our clarifications of this phrase assist the English reader approaching Garcia the first time and also to the extent that we have enlarged that readership by showing that no-matter-what, for all its necessary lack of importance, is nonetheless immensely important.

## Appendix

Here is a formal proof of the existence of no-matter-what. The places analogous to Garcia's claims are: (1) the unrestricted (second order!) Comprehension Axiom which would be one way of articulating the claim that to be is to be determined,

(2) line 13 ( $\forall x (x \notin a)$ ), which would be one formal way of expressing the claim that nothing is no-matter-what, and (3) the conclusion, line 15 ( $\exists y \forall x (x \notin y)$ ) which would be one way of expressing the claim that no-matter-what is something. Here are the rules that might be found controversial.

*Second Order Comprehension:*

Where  $y$  is the only free variable in  $\Phi[y]$ ,  $\exists x \forall y (y \in x \leftrightarrow \Phi[y])$ .<sup>14</sup>

*Second Order Existential Introduction ( $\exists^2$  introduction):*

Where  $b$  is a term of type  $\circ$ ,  $\Phi[b] \vdash \exists P(P(b))$ .

*Second Order Existential Elimination ( $\exists^2$  elimination):*

Where  $b$  is a term of type  $\circ$ ,  $\exists P(P(b)) \vdash R$  when it can be shown that there is some  $Q$  that doesn't occur in  $P$ , nor in any assumptions upon which  $\exists P(P(b))$  rests, such that  $Q(b) \vdash R$ .

We start by considering the determination of having no determinations, which we express as  $\forall P \neg Px$ , meaning for all determinations,  $x$  does not have that determination. Then the beginning of the proof is an instance of Second Order Comprehension applied to the determination of having no

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14 Note that one obtains a similar proof using Graham Priest's stronger "Characterization Principle," some form of which Garcia is committed to. Graham Priest, *Towards Non-Being: The Logic and Metaphysics of Intentionality*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). Instead of forming a set of things characterized by a given property, the Characterization Principle allows us to name one of the things so characterized: where  $y$  is the only free variable in  $\Phi[y]$ , then for some term  $t$ ,  $\Phi[t/y]$ . Then what you get corresponds to lines 6-11 of the proof we go on to represent. There are a variety of open issues between Priest and Garcia, not least of which concern dialogue between Priest's appeal to possible worlds to save the characterization principle from slingshot type arguments (e.g. let the predicate be " $y = y$  and  $A$ " let the unused name be "fred," then you get "fred = fred and  $A$ ," which entails that  $A$  is true for any  $A$ ) and Garcia's critique of possible worlds in Book I, Part II, Chapter III. Of course an unrestricted Comprehension Axiom is problematic in that it yields Russell's Paradox. See our discussion in "Why a Dialetheist Might Still be Moved by Russell's Paradox: Tristan Garcia on World," where we expound further on the potential disputes between Priest and Garcia concerning Russell's Paradox.

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determinations.

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|-----|---|--|
| 1.  | $\exists x \forall y (y \in x \leftrightarrow \forall P \neg P(y))$ | by Comprehension   |
| 2.  | $\forall y (y \in a \leftrightarrow \forall P \neg P(y))$           | assumption for $\exists$ elimination<br>("a" is arbitrary)     |
| 3.  | $   [b]$  | assumption of arbitrary name "b"<br>for $\forall$ introduction |
| 4.  | $   b \in a \leftrightarrow \forall P \neg P(b)$                    | 2 $\forall$ elimination  |
| 5.  | $     b \in a$  | assumption for $\neg$ introduction                             |
| 6.  | $     \forall P \neg P(b)$  | 4,5 $\leftrightarrow$ elimination                              |
| 7.  | $     \exists P (P(b))$   | 6 $\exists^2$ introduction                                     |
| 8.  | $       Q(b)$   | assumption for $\exists^2$ elimination<br>("Q" is arbitrary)   |
| 9.  | $       \neg Q(b)$  | 6 $\forall^2$ elimination                                      |
| 10. | $       \perp$  | 8,9 $\neg$ elimination   |
| 11. | $     \perp$  | 7, 8-10 $\exists^2$ elimination                                |
| 12. | $   b \notin a$   | 5-11 $\neg$ introduction                                       |
| 13. | $  \forall x (x \notin a)$  | 3-12 $\forall$ introduction                                    |
| 14. | $  \exists y \forall x (x \notin y)$                                | 13 $\exists$ introduction                                      |
| 15. | $\exists y \forall x (x \notin y)$                                  | 1, 2-14 $\exists$ elimination                                  |

Comments: (1) From a logical perspective, two things are interesting here. First, the use of second order resources, which is not the norm in set theory. We do not know if this presents any special problems. Note that one could do the above with Comprehension restricted to subsets of other existing sets, but one would still need the second order version. Second, as noted in the body of the paper, we have not proved that there is exactly one no-matter-what. This would require an axiom of extensionality, which in this context would fit neither with (a) Garcia's central intensionalist contention that an object is not determined by that which is comprehended by the object, but rather that the object is the difference between that which it comprehends and that which comprehends it, nor (b) Garcia's semi-Geach-Kraut type theory of how counting is relativized to a sortal property.

(2) Even given this, tension with Garcia's framework might

be argued to arise from two sources: (a) in this context Garcia would have good reason to restrict the Comprehension Axiom, since an unrestricted axiom would yield sets that are members of themselves,<sup>15</sup> and (b) the conclusion could be parsed in natural language as saying that something is such that nothing is it, which might be parsed as something is no-matter-what, which Garcia denies. We take the first to be part of a collection of important questions concerning what a Garcian philosophy of math would look like. In any case, as long as some object exists the proof would work as long as second order comprehension axiom restricted in the usual manner (only applying to subsets of already existing sets) was deemed licit. The second seems less important to us. The sentence is not in English, and in English should literally be read as, “There exists a  $y$  such that, for all  $x$ ,  $x$  is not a member of  $y$ .” There seems nothing amiss about someone who accepts Garcia’s metaphysics to read this in English as “no-matter-what is something,” with no-matter-what getting a name-like reading, i.e. that which has no members is something. Consider that “ $\exists y(\text{Happy}(y))$ ” can be read as that which is happy is something. These kinds of readings seem to us to be the price one pays for taking it to be the case that to be is to be determined. Likewise, as rich and important as the general project remains, Carnap was mistaken in thinking that discourse could without loss be reduced to logical derivations. There is a price to pay here too.<sup>16</sup>

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15 We begin to discuss these issues in “Why a Dialetheist Might Still be Moved by Russell’s Paradox: Tristan Garcia on World.”

16 We would like to thank Emily Beck Cogburn, Paul John Ennis, Tristan Garcia, Fabio Gironi, Graham Harman, and Dawn Suiter.