

*Eliminativism and the Challenge from Folk Belief**

DANIEL Z. KORMAN

University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

I regret to say that all too many professors of philosophy consider it their duty to be sycophants of common sense, and thus, doubtless unintentionally, to bow down in homage before the savage superstitions of cannibals.

Bertrand Russell¹

Revisionists standardly delude themselves into thinking that they can plausibly explain why people make the mistakes they allege. It is closer to the truth to say that such mistakes would require some highly selective and seemingly arbitrary forms of genetically or culturally transmitted idiocy.

Eli Hirsch²

1. The Challenge from Folk Belief

Some are more willing than others to embrace philosophical theories that are at odds with our pretheoretical conception of the world. But virtually everyone agrees that, even after having presented the arguments for their positions, proponents of revisionary philosophical theories—that is, those that deviate from the pretheoretical conception—are required to provide some sort of account of the conflict between their theories and the pretheoretical beliefs of non-philosophers (“the folk”). Those who defend seemingly revisionary theories meet the challenge in one of two ways. Some supply a compatibilist account according to which, despite appearances, there is no conflict with folk belief. Others supply an incompatibilist account, attempting to answer the challenge without denying that the conflict is genuine.

What follows is a critical assessment of various strategies for answering the challenge from folk belief. The underlying goal will be to illuminate the general constraints on an adequate response to the challenge. So as to anchor our discussion of these strategies, the examination will proceed as a case study, the focus of which is eliminativist theses on which many of the material objects that we ordinarily take to exist do not exist. For instance, although there are “statuewise” arrangements of atoms, atoms so arranged do not together compose a statue.³ This may be because they do not compose anything at all, or because the object that they compose is not a statue, but either way there are no statues.⁴

I will show that no existing eliminativist answer to the challenge from folk belief is satisfactory and that no appeal to paraphrases, the way things seem perceptually, or the way things seem intuitively can serve as a satisfactory account. I withhold judgment on the further question of whether this is reason enough to reject eliminativism. Eliminativists may contend that the pretheoretical cost of having no satisfactory account of folk belief is appreciably less than the theoretical costs associated with views that are consonant with folk belief (e.g., ontic vagueness, coincident entities, lacking a pithy answer to the special composition question). Perhaps they are right. I am defending only the weaker claim that—despite all that eliminativists have said on the topic of folk belief—the “scorecard” of costs and benefits should reflect the fact that they have not met (and probably cannot meet) the challenge from folk belief.

2. The Nature of the Challenge

Why do the folk believe that there are statues? If eliminativists are right, they have never seen a statue (for there are none). They do sometimes see statuewise arrangements of atoms; but, if eliminativists are right, there is no necessary or a priori entailment from the existence of atoms arranged statuewise to the existence of statues. Indeed, the arguments for eliminativism purport to show that it is impossible for there to be statues. But the folk surely do not confidently believe in statues for no reason whatsoever. What, then, could possibly explain why the folk find it at all reasonable to believe in them? Call this *the problem of reasonableness*.

Standard strategies for answering the challenge from folk belief fall short of answering the problem of reasonableness. For instance, the challenge is often taken simply as a requirement that one show the erroneous folk beliefs to be in some way different from purely delusional beliefs.⁵ This challenge can be met relatively easily. Although there are no statues, there are atoms arranged statuewise; accordingly, the folk (unlike the delusional) are not making a mistake about the distribution of properties and matter in space-time. But simply identifying some way or other in which the belief in statues

is different from purely delusional beliefs is not yet to explain why the folk believe in them.

Understanding the challenge as requiring an explanation of the reasonableness of folk belief also has implications regarding its scope. It is sometimes suggested that philosophers need concern themselves with folk beliefs only when the folk are deeply committed to the beliefs in question. Attempts are then made to show that the folk are not deeply committed to their belief in statues, perhaps on the basis of how they respond to philosophical interrogation or how they would respond to a trusted oracle's proclamation that there are no statues.⁶ But whether or not the folk are deeply committed to their belief in statues, it still remains to be explained why they thought there was any reason to believe in them in the first place.

Some may think that it counts for very little that hordes of nonphilosophers (who, let us not forget, have never encountered the arguments for eliminativism) find eliminativism implausible. But one reason that eliminativists cannot simply ignore the challenge from folk belief is that lacking an account of the supposed error leaves them in danger of epistemic self-defeat. Peter van Inwagen expresses the worry as follows:

Is the existence of chairs . . . a matter of Universal Belief? If it were, this would count strongly against [eliminativism], for any philosopher who denies what practically *everyone* believes is, so far as I can see, adopting a position according to which the human capacity for knowing the truth about things is radically defective. And why should he think that his own capacities are the exception to the rule?⁷

Since the alleged error is so thoroughgoing, the most likely source would seem to be idiocy or else a general inability to form true beliefs about the world. It would then be unrealistically optimistic for eliminativists to put any credence in the belief-forming mechanisms and lines of reasoning that led them to accept eliminativism. Only one who has a satisfactory answer to the challenge from folk belief—one who has identified the source of error and can either guard against it or else assure oneself that one's other convictions are not vulnerable to that sort of error—is in a position to defuse this threat of global self-defeat.

Not only must eliminativists supply an account of folk belief that spares them from this sort of global self-defeat, they also must supply an account that is not *locally* self-defeating. An account is locally self-defeating to the extent that it undercuts the justification for some specific claim(s) that one has made. As an illustration of this sort of local self-defeat, consider Hud Hudson's defense of another revisionary ontological view, universalism, against the objection that it has counterintuitive implications. Hudson's strategy for handling the objection is to contend that our intuitions about which composite objects exist have an unreliable source:

we simply mistake a strategy for identifying objects that are likely to concern us in some way or other for a guide to which composite objects exist. Furthermore, the mistake is so deeply ingrained in our casual inventory of the world's furniture ... that it illegitimately becomes the source of powerful intuitions that speak against Universalism ... Once we fully recognize the source of these intuitions, however, they seem to lose much of their force.⁸

He then offers the following explanation of why he prefers universalism to eliminativism:

The costs [of eliminativism] are too high. Once again, I possess a much stronger intuition in favor of the existence of chairs than I do against the existence of that thing which is the fusion of all the extant copies of The Gutenberg Bible, the ruin at Stonehenge, and all the world's silk.⁹

But if intuitions about which material objects exist are (as Hudson thinks) the products of a deeply ingrained mistake, it is hard to see why the anti-eliminativist intuitions should be given any credence, whatever their strength.¹⁰ This would not be relevantly different from asking a magic 8-ball whether there are statues and then rejecting eliminativism on the strength of its verdict of 'definitely', while disregarding its 'probably not' verdict when asked about the universalist's strange fusions on the grounds that it is "just a toy." We will see, in §5, that certain attempts to explain away our anti-eliminativist intuitions give rise to similar local self-defeats.

Before turning to the various attempts to meet the challenge from folk belief, I should say a few words about the relationship between the present proposal about the significance of folk belief and two other proposals. First, the present proposal is different from the Moorean proposal that it is always more reasonable to deny the premises of arguments against seemingly self-evident propositions than it is to accept their conclusions. My proposal, by contrast, is both weaker and less discriminating. All false beliefs of otherwise intelligent people stand in need of explanation. Understood in this way, even opponents of eliminativism should be able to explain why some reasonable and intelligent philosophers believe that there are no statues. But here the explanation is straightforward: these philosophers have been moved by powerful arguments that there are no statues. Most false folk beliefs admit of equally straightforward explanation. What is special about the mistakes alleged by eliminativists and other revisionary metaphysicians is that it is exceptionally difficult to provide any satisfactory explanation of their reasonableness.

(Philosophers who face the problem of reasonableness as a result of denying some compelling general principle are typically well-positioned to deal with the problem. For instance, since naive comprehension is a generalization with countless obvious instances and no obvious exceptions, and since

consideration of nonobvious exceptions (e.g., $\{u: u \notin u\}$) is the only way of coming to see that naive comprehension is false, it is clear why it seemed reasonable. Similarly, the belief that the material coincidence of distinct objects is impossible is reasonable because it is a generalization that holds for virtually any pair of distinct objects.¹¹ Admittedly, the anti-coincidence principle does continue to seem true even after one is aware of the purported exceptions, but this is not special grounds for concern, for the same is true of naive comprehension. So, whatever other problems they may face, proponents of coincidence have a psychologically plausible account of the reasonableness of the belief that there cannot be coincident objects. No explanation of this sort is available to eliminativists since the concrete-case proposition that these or those atoms arranged statuewise compose a statue is not the sort of thing that can admit of exceptions.)

Second, Eli Hirsch has recently defended folk beliefs about statues and the like on the basis of a principle of interpretive charity, according to which the folk must be interpreted in such a way that their utterances and associated beliefs—especially their perceptual beliefs—are at least reasonable, if not true.¹² Hirsch contends that (incompatibilist) eliminativists violate the principle of interpretive charity by interpreting such folk utterances as ‘there are statues’ in such a way that the existence of atoms arranged statuewise does not suffice for their truth. The argument from charity can be resisted by showing that it is perfectly reasonable for the folk to believe the relevant falsehoods and, accordingly, not uncharitable to interpret them as uttering these falsehoods. So, a satisfactory solution to the problem of reasonableness should suffice to block Hirsch’s argument from charity.¹³

3. Compatibilist Strategies

The most straightforward response to the challenge from folk belief is simply to deny that the theory in question is genuinely at odds with what the folk believe. Compatibilists maintain that the appearance of conflict is the result of misinterpreting ordinary discourse, and one common strategy is to supply paraphrases that are meant to serve as correct interpretations. These paraphrases may be intended as specifications of the literal meaning of the sentences in question or, alternatively, as specifications of what the folk conversationally intend in uttering the sentences (allowing that the sentences uttered are literally false). Either way, the claim is that it is only the truth expressed by the paraphrase that the folk believe, not the falsehood that they may seem to be asserting. If the compatibilists are correct, the problem of reasonableness does not even arise.

Let us begin by considering van Inwagen’s brand of compatibilism. Van Inwagen proposes that such sentences of ordinary discourse as ‘there are statues’ be paraphrased as saying (roughly) that there are mereological simples arranged statuewise.¹⁴ He contends that the folk’s use of such sentences

is of a kind with their “loose and misleading” use of ‘the sun moved behind the elms’ (though he is not explicit about whether he takes loosely-uttered sentences to literally express the propositions expressed by their paraphrases).

Van Inwagen’s compatibilist strategy has been widely criticized,¹⁵ but it is worth emphasizing what seems to be its main shortcoming—namely, that it is implausible and unmotivated. This of course is not to deny that we sometimes speak in a loose and misleading way; the point, rather, is that there is no evidence whatsoever that we are speaking loosely when we speak of statues and the like. In typical cases of loose or misleading talk, there are clear indications that one’s interlocutor is speaking loosely. For instance, if she is an educated adult, we cannot take her utterance of ‘the sun moved behind the elms’ at face value without taking her to be saying something that she knows (and that she knows that we know that she knows) to be false. Relatedly, when she finds that her remarks have been taken at face value, she takes herself to have been deliberately misunderstood. Finally, if presented with the paraphrase (e.g., ‘the sun is now obstructed from view by the elms’) and asked whether that was all she really meant, she will readily agree that it is.

By contrast, there appears to be no evidence whatsoever for the hypothesis that the folk speak loosely when they appear to be quantifying over statues and the like. One can take their remarks at face value without taking them to be saying anything that they know to be false. There is no indication that the folk take themselves to have been misinterpreted or misunderstood when they find that their utterances have been taken at face value.¹⁶ Nor would one expect the folk to concede, when presented with van Inwagen’s paraphrase, that this, of course, is all they really meant in uttering ‘there is a statue in the quad’.¹⁷

Since there apparently is no reason not to take the relevant utterances at face value, we ought to take them at face value—namely, as reporting beliefs about statues—and reject the unmotivated linguistic hypothesis that the folk are speaking loosely. This is not to say that the absence of any evidence is a decisive reason to reject van Inwagen’s hypothesis. But the absence of evidence, together with its *prima facie* implausibility, is reason enough to view it as a wholly unsatisfactory response to the challenge from folk belief. If the only reason for taking the folk to be speaking loosely is that it spares the eliminativist from having to face the challenge from folk belief, it is little more than wishful thinking to suppose that the folk are indeed speaking loosely.¹⁸

Another sort of compatibilist strategy turns on the suggestion that natural language quantifiers have both a “lightweight” (or “internal”) and a “heavyweight” (or “external”) reading.¹⁹ Let us simply grant that there are two such readings. The fact that the folk readily assent to ‘there are two numbers between one and four’ and yet balk at ‘there really are such things

as numbers' could serve as evidence that they believe the lightweight proposition that there are numbers but not the heavyweight proposition that there are numbers. But, even supposing that 'there are statues' has both a heavyweight and a lightweight reading, there is no analogous evidence that the folk believe only the lightweight proposition that there are statues and not the corresponding heavyweight proposition. Setting aside what they say under philosophical interrogation (which is hardly an indication of what they believed all along), the folk will readily agree that there really are such things as statues, which suggests that they believe the heavyweight proposition as well.²⁰

I have thus far been assuming that the compatibilist's contention is that such English sentences as 'there are statues' have two readings; otherwise, the compatibilist could not coherently say (in English) that the folk do not mean that there are statues when they say 'there are statues'. However, compatibilists might insist that their own sentence 'there are no statues' is not really a sentence of English, but is rather a sentence of "the language of the ontology room," in which familiar words are not being used with their ordinary meanings. In this case, it is not the folk but rather the compatibilists who are not saying what they seem to be saying.²¹ Since the folk do not speak this other language, this would obviate the need to find linguistic evidence of a second reading of 'there are statues' in English.

Those who opt for this form of eliminativism may or may not face a challenge from folk belief, depending upon what 'there are no statues' means in this other language. Perhaps all it means is that statues are not ontologically fundamental entities, in which case, not only is there clearly no conflict with folk belief, but the envisaged "eliminativism" is just the plausible view that composites (which exist) are ontologically posterior to their parts. Notice, however, that the standard arguments for eliminativism can all be stated in plain English and have as their conclusion (here I am speaking English) that there are no statues. Ironically, the envisaged eliminativist, who concedes that 'there are statues' is unequivocally true in English, must hold that all of the standard arguments for eliminativism fail.

4. Incompatibilist Paraphrases

The project of reconstruing everyday discourse as a means of reconciling eliminativism with folk belief seems hopeless—not necessarily because it is impossible to concoct such reconstructions,²² but because the concoctions are bound to be implausible. Eliminativists ought to prefer an incompatibilist strategy, according to which they really do disagree with the folk. But, in abandoning the compatibilist strategy, they now must face the challenge from folk belief head on. To meet the challenge, incompatibilists may try to co-opt the compatibilist paraphrases, putting them forward in a more revolutionary (vs. hermeneutic) spirit.²³

But opting for the more revolutionary rephrasal threatens to sever the link between the rephrasal and what the folk actually believe, which in turn renders the rephrasal powerless to account for these beliefs. As an illustration, let us consider Trenton Merricks's incompatibilist strategy. Merricks offers the following explanation of why it is reasonable for the folk to believe that there are statues: "The answer is that statue beliefs are nearly as good as true... In general, a false belief's being nearly as good as true explains how *reasonable* people come to hold it."²⁴ Before we can properly assess whether this explanation is satisfactory, we must know what it is for a belief to be "nearly as good as true." On one natural interpretation, to say that a belief is nearly as good as true is just to say that it is highly reasonable or warranted despite being false. But so understood this cannot serve as a solution to the problem of reasonableness, which is to *explain* why the belief in statues seems reasonable. So how are we to understand 'nearly as good as true'? Merricks offers the following stipulative (partial) definition: for a false folk-ontological belief that there are Fs to be nearly as good as true just is for there to be atoms arranged F-wise.²⁵ So, to say that the belief in statues is reasonable because it is nearly as good as true is really just to say that the belief is reasonable because there are atoms arranged statuewise.

This may at first seem like a good explanation. But bear in mind that we normally take there to be both a tight perceptual connection as well as a tight conceptual connection between statues and atoms arranged statuewise. Eliminativists, however, deny that we see statues when we see atoms arranged statuewise and deny that it is a priori (or even true) that atoms arranged statuewise compose statues. They may insist that it is a priori that *if* there were such things as statues, *then* the existence of atoms arranged statuewise would suffice for the existence of a statue. But given only this information, it would be positively irrational to conclude on the basis of some atoms' being arranged statuewise that they compose a statue—unless, of course, one has independent reason for accepting or presupposing the antecedent of the indicated a priori conditional (i.e., that there are such things as statues). And this leaves us right back where we started, that is, in need of an explanation of why otherwise reasonable people erroneously take there to be statues. So the observation that the belief in statues is nearly as good as true takes us no way towards answering the problem of reasonableness.

This explanatory inadequacy will be shared by any paraphrase strategy on which there is no substantive psychological link between the paraphrase and the relevant folk beliefs. Eliminativists might try to tighten the link, without retreating to a compatibilist strategy, by insisting that the folk's error is the result of a confusion: they *confuse* the (true) proposition that atoms are arranged statuewise with the (false) proposition that there are statues. Unlike Merricks's strategy, this one is poised to serve as a genuine psychological explanation of the folk's mistake, and unlike compatibilist strategies, this

strategy does not commit one to the dubious psychological hypothesis that the folk do not believe in statues.²⁶

The problem with this strategy is that, if the charge of confusion is to do any explanatory work, then the idea must be that the folk are overlooking the relevant distinction. For instance, we often find our students embracing the hyper-essentialist thesis that nothing (persons included) can survive any kind of change, and when this happens we presume that they are confusing qualitative and numerical identity. This presumption is plausible only because they tend to have a change of heart when the distinction is brought to their attention; otherwise, there would be no reason to think that they make this mistake *because* they are confusing qualitative and numerical identity. By contrast, if asked whether what they really think is that there are statues or only that there are some tiny things arranged in the shape of a statue which (we might add) may or may not be the parts of any bigger thing, one would never expect people to respond “that’s right, I meant the second one.” The folk do not exhibit any of the normal signs of being confused or of failing to mark a distinction. So there is little if any reason to accept the psychological hypothesis that the folk are confusing these two propositions.²⁷

The general lesson is that any attempt to meet the challenge from folk belief by way of paraphrase faces a dilemma: if the paraphrase is intended to be connected in some substantial way with folk belief, it is crucial that the paraphrase be supported by some kind of linguistic or psychological evidence; but if the connection is not substantial, the paraphrase can do no explanatory work. Perhaps there are cases in which occupying the first horn is unproblematic.²⁸ In the case of eliminativism, however, the dilemma for the paraphrase strategy appears to be fatal. So eliminativists must look elsewhere for an answer to the challenge from folk belief. In what follows, I examine three other possible sources of error: intuition, perceptual experience, and habit.

5. Intuition

Eliminativists cannot avail themselves of the most straightforward explanation of why we believe in statues, namely, that some of us have actually seen them. We have, however, seen statuewise arrangements of atoms, and we have intuitions to the effect that things arranged that way compose something. Eliminativists might therefore appeal to how things seem intuitively in explaining why the folk make the mistakes that they do. There are two ways of developing this line of response. On the first, the intuitions that are ultimately responsible for the belief in statues and the like are held to be correct, and compatible with eliminativism, but misunderstood. On the second, the intuitions that explain the belief in statues and the like are held to be false. Either way, we have an explanation of the reasonableness of these beliefs.

But eliminativists must proceed with caution when condemning a whole range of intuitions as mistaken or misunderstood, if they are to avoid the sort of local self-defeat mentioned in §2. To see why, just consider the sorts of premises that one finds in the arguments for eliminativism. Arguments from explanatory redundancy rely on such premises as the premise that ordinary macroscopic objects cannot be epiphenomenal, that an event cannot be caused both by a thing and by its parts, and that if some objects cause events $v_1 \dots v_n$, and $v_1 \dots v_n$ compose event V , then those objects cause V .²⁹ Arguments from material constitution: that distinct material objects cannot exactly coincide, that lumps and statues (given that they exist) differ with respect to their modal properties.³⁰ Arguments from vagueness: that the removal of one atom from an object cannot make a difference as to whether it is a statue.³¹ Arguments from arbitrariness: that there is no ontologically significant difference between a certain familiar kind that we do ordinarily countenance and a certain strange kind that we do not.³² Arguments from bruteness: that the facts about composition are not explanatorily basic, that they must be explanatorily basic if there is no general and systematic answer to the special composition question.³³ If these premises are justified at all, they presumably are justified either on the basis of intuition or else on the basis of further a priori arguments whose premises are themselves justified on the basis of intuition. Consequently, it is not open to the eliminativists who advance these arguments to embrace a general skepticism about intuitive judgments. If they are to have a non-self-defeating answer to the challenge from folk belief, they must supply some account of intuitional error that does not undermine whatever reasons they take themselves to have for accepting eliminativism.

Can there be a purely a posteriori argument for eliminativism? One might try to argue for eliminativism on the basis of Ockham's razor. But any such argument is bound to be dialectically ineffective. To see why, one must distinguish the question of what best explains our evidence from the question of what our evidence is. Ockham's razor speaks only to the former. For instance, Ockham's razor instructs us to prefer a theory on which a single intruder left both sets of footprints (other things equal); but if no single-intruder theory can explain both sets of footprints, one cannot conclude *on the basis of Ockham's razor* that there is no second set of footprints. Similarly, Ockham's razor instructs us to prefer a semantic theory that accounts for the truth of certain negative existentials without postulating nonexistent objects (other things being equal). But should it turn out that we cannot account for their truth without postulating nonexistents, we cannot then conclude *on the basis of Ockham's razor* that all negative existentials are untrue. The question of whether the second set of footprints, or the truth of 'Pegasus does not exist', should be counted as part of our evidence needs to be decided prior to, and independently of, appeals to Ockham's razor. In short, Ockham's razor instructs us to prefer more parsimonious accounts of our evidence; it

does not instruct us to prefer accounts of what evidence we have that lend themselves to more parsimonious explanations.

Opponents of eliminativism will take their empirical knowledge that there are statues (or, at least, macroscopic statue-shaped things) and their a priori knowledge that if there are atoms arranged statuewise then there are statues as evidence that needs to be explained by any satisfactory metaphysical theory. Perhaps they are mistaken about their evidence, but that is something that remains to be shown and something that (again) would have to be established prior to, and independently of, any appeal to Ockham's razor. Let us turn, then, to the question of whether there is good reason to deny that these intuitions should counted as evidence.

a. Correct Intuitions Incorrectly Understood

Bearing in mind the need for an account of the alleged intuitional error that does not overgeneralize (on pain of local self-defeat), let us consider the first line of response mentioned above, according to which the apparently anti-eliminativist intuitions are correct but misunderstood. Schematically, the idea is that we have the intuition that *p*, we mistake the intuition that *p* for an intuition that *q*, and we wrongly come to believe that *q* on the basis of the intuition that *p*. Saul Kripke, for instance, suggested that we sometimes mistake intuitions of epistemic possibility for intuitions of metaphysical possibility: we report having the intuition that it is metaphysically possible for there to have been water that lacked hydrogen but are in fact misreporting a (veridical) intuition to the effect that one could have been in a phenomenologically indistinguishable situation in which some water-like substance lacked hydrogen.³⁴ Anti-externalist beliefs are based on intuitions that do not support them.

It may seem that a similar strategy is available to eliminativists. According to Theodore Sider (not himself an eliminativist), intuitive judgments about highly abstract principles are more trustworthy than intuitive judgments about particular cases because "judgments about cases are often infused with irrelevant linguistic intuitions."³⁵ Of course, the linguistic intuitions in question cannot be intuitions to the effect that such sentences of English as 'these things compose a statue' are *true*; for, far from being irrelevant, this intuition entails the falsity of the eliminativist thesis that things cannot possibly compose a statue. Rather, the proposal must be that the irrelevant linguistic intuitions concern what it is *appropriate to say*. The eliminativist proposal would then be that we have correct intuitions to the effect that, given that things are as they appear (i.e., that there are things arranged statuewise here), it is appropriate to say that there is a statue here, but we mistake it for an intuition to the effect that, given that things are as they appear, it is true that there is a statue here.³⁶

The first problem with this suggestion is that, as with the confusion-based proposal considered in §4, and unlike Kripke's proposal, when we reflect

carefully on our intuitions it does not seem to us that we had been confusing these two things.³⁷ It does not seem to us that we only ever had intuitions about what it is appropriate to say, nor does the intuition change in any way when we very deliberately call to mind the proposition that it is true that there is a statue present (given that things are otherwise as they appear). None of the normal signs of confusion or failing to mark a distinction are present in this case. So there is no evidence whatsoever that we have been confusing these propositions.

The eliminativist might maintain that there is no evidence of confusion because the confusion is incurably deep, and the contents of the relevant intuitions are inscrutable. But this is strange to say the least, for we ordinarily are quite capable of distinguishing intuitions to the effect that a sentence is true from intuitions to the effect that a sentence is literally false but appropriate. It would be mysterious if, in this of all cases, we were hopelessly confused about the contents of our intuitions and wholly unable to correct them even upon careful reflection. What could possibly account for the resilience of this mistake, apart from “some highly selective and seemingly arbitrary forms of genetically or culturally transmitted idiocy?”³⁸

Furthermore, this line of defense renders some of the strongest arguments for eliminativism unavailable, for it raises similar doubts about the intuitions that appear to support the premises of these arguments. For instance, Amie Thomasson suggests that the intuitions against material coincidence, as well as those against the systematic overdetermination of events by things and their parts, are in fact only linguistic intuitions to the effect that it is conversationally inappropriate to count things as distinct unless they are “separate and independent.”³⁹ Whatever the plausibility of Thomasson’s suggestion, it would be hopelessly arbitrary for the envisaged eliminativists to insist that Thomasson is mistaken—as though in this case, but never in the case of anti-eliminativist intuitions, we are in a position to tell the difference between what seems true and what merely seems appropriate. Yet if they admit that we cannot in general expect to be able to tell the difference, then they must admit that they cannot tell whether the premises of their arguments have any intuitive support.

b. Incorrect Intuitions Correctly Understood

Let us turn now to the second strategy, on which the error is traced, not to a correct but misunderstood intuition, but rather to a correctly understood but incorrect intuition. As before, eliminativists who opt for this line of response owe us an account of intuitional error that does not undermine the evidential force of the intuitions that they rely upon in arguing for eliminativism. For instance, one may be tempted to maintain that the truths of metaphysics are synthetic and that intuitions are a guide only in analytic matters. But this will not do, for however one draws the analytic/synthetic distinction, the eliminativist premises and anti-eliminativist judgments will surely fall on the

same side. Likewise for the suggestion that our intuitive faculties are adaptive capacities and, consequently, cannot be expected to be particularly reliable when it comes to matters that are more or less irrelevant to our survival, such as whether things arranged statuewise compose something. For having true beliefs about whether there can be distinct but coincident entities, or whether a single event can be caused both by a thing and its parts, is equally irrelevant to our survival. (I will have more to say on this topic in §7.)

Nor will it do simply to dismiss intuitions about material objects as the product of our peculiar interests and purposes, for this again calls into question the premises of the aforementioned arguments for eliminativism. Suppose that our interest in atoms arranged statuewise and lack of interest in atoms arranged nose-plus-Eiffel-Towerwise suffices to explain our intuitions that the former, but not the latter, together compose something. By parity, then, our lack of any practical need to distinguish between things and the stuff of which they are made should suffice to explain our anti-colocation and causal-exclusion intuitions; and if this indeed is the source of those intuitions, then there is little reason to expect them to be correct.

Eliminativists might try to contain the threat of error, and escape local self-defeat, by postulating a highly specific psychological mechanism that is responsible for generating our anti-eliminativist intuitions. For instance, the eliminativist might contend that, whenever one perceives or contemplates a plurality of things, there is a special intuition-forming mechanism that yields the intuition that they compose something of kind *K* just in case (1) one observes that they are arranged *K*-wise and (2) one has the kind concept *K*.⁴⁰ If which particular kind concepts we possess is largely driven by our interests, it would be plain to see how our interests infuse our intuitions about composition. The envisaged eliminativists would then be free to hold that the intuitions that they rely upon are the products of some other (reliable) intuition-forming mechanism.

There are three problems with this account (setting aside the general implausibility of this sort of modular account of intuition). The first is that it does not explain all of our anti-eliminativist intuitions. Someone might lack the concept *corkscrew* and yet, when presented with one, have the intuition that there is a single thing there (given that things are as they appear). The mechanism described above cannot account for this intuition.⁴¹ The eliminativist would therefore have to postulate some further unreliable mechanism to explain this and similar intuitions.

The second is that it makes false predictions. Consider, for instance, the concept *nose-tower*, where an object is a nose-tower just in case it has a nose and a tower as its parts and exists at all and only those times that they both exist. Despite having now acquired this kind concept, we (or at least those of us not already in the grips of universalism) would not have an intuition to the effect that there is a nose-tower upon seeing my nose and the Eiffel Tower. Yet the present account predicts that we would have this intuition.

I can see no way of modifying the account so as to avoid this implication without adding the condition that one believes in *Ks*. But this will not do, for it has to be the intuitions that explain the false folk beliefs—not the other way around—if this is to serve as an answer to the challenge from folk belief.

The third problem concerns the source of the intuitions that the eliminativist does take to be reliable. There has been a great deal of work in epistemology on the nature of a priori justification, but it is unclear whether it is any use to the envisaged eliminativist. To my knowledge, all detailed accounts of a priori justification (e.g., those of Bealer, Bonjour, Peacocke, and Sosa) involve a perfectly general capacity to assess a priori evaluable propositions. If there is such a capacity, then it would be hopelessly ad hoc to suggest that it yields intuitions about the possibility of material coincidence but not about whether atoms arranged statuewise compose statues. And if it does yield intuitions on the topic, then they must either be pro-statue intuitions, in which case the eliminativist is in trouble (for they are the output of what, by hypothesis, is a reliable process), or else anti-statue intuitions, in which case the eliminativist is in trouble because we seem not to have any anti-statue intuitions. It appears, then, that the envisaged eliminativists owe us a completely novel account of the reliability of the intuitions that they rely upon in arguing against statues; they cannot simply piggyback the work that has been done in epistemology.

c. Where Things Stand

That the folk have pro-statue intuitions can indeed explain why it is reasonable for them to believe in statues. For, absent known defeaters, it is reasonable to believe what intuitively is true. But eliminativists are in no position to avail themselves of this strategy for answering the problem of reasonableness for, in trying to account for the apparently anti-eliminativist intuitions, they undermine any reason they might have for accepting the premises of their own arguments.

Eliminativists might respond that, even if they cannot supply a plausible (and non-self-defeating) account of intuitional error, the puzzles surrounding material objects demonstrate that at least some of our intuitions have to be abandoned and that abandoning the anti-eliminativist intuitions is the least costly way of dealing with these puzzles. Perhaps this is right, though it admittedly is hard to imagine how a view according to which virtually all of our intuitions about familiar kinds are incorrect could be less costly than a view that abandons a handful of intuitive general principles about causation, vagueness, and coincidence. The fact remains, however, that we have not yet been given any plausible account of the intuitional error, and our scorecard should reflect this fact.

The problem of accounting for apparently anti-eliminativist intuitions is not a problem only for those eliminativists who appeal to intuition as a means

of answering the challenge from folk belief. The inability to account for recalcitrant concrete-case intuitions is an independent problem and, plausibly, a far more serious problem than that of accounting for what non-philosophers are disposed to say and believe. For we all take counterexamples seriously and, when we do, what we are taking seriously are the concrete-case intuitions of trained philosophers—trained, that is, to mark relevant distinctions, attend to precisely the question that was put to them, know the difference between reporting one's intuitions and reporting one's considered judgments, and so forth. Yet the concrete-case intuitions that would seem to tell against eliminativism and other revisionary ontological theories have been almost entirely ignored in the literature on material objects.⁴² So, even if the problem of reasonableness can somehow be solved in some other way (e.g., by appeal to paraphrase, perception, or habit), the charge that eliminativism is open to counterexamples would still remain to be answered.

6. Perceptual Experience

Rather than appeal to how things seem intuitively to explain why the folk make the mistakes that they do, eliminativists might instead appeal to how things seem perceptually. They might suggest that, although none of us has ever seen a statue, it does look to us as if there are statues. The question of whether the way things look is poised to explain the reasonableness of belief in statues turns on the further question of what enters into the phenomenal content of experience. To see why, let us first mark a well-known distinction between two uses of 'looks'. A meteorologist looks at the clouds, and it looks to her as if it will rain. It does not look to a child as if it will rain, though there is still a sense in which things look the same to the child as they look to the meteorologist. The latter use of 'looks' is what is called the phenomenal use (hereafter: *looks_p*). The way things *look_p* is commonly held to be restricted to a limited range of qualities and relational features: paradigmatically color, shape, illumination, and depth. The former use is what is called the epistemic use of 'looks' (hereafter: *looks_e*): it *looks_e* to S as if p iff the way things *look_p* to S, together with S's background beliefs, supports the proposition that p.⁴³

It is controversial exactly which features are represented at the level of how things *look_p*. But sortal features like statuehood plausibly are not among them. Rather, it *looks_e* to us as if there are statues as a result of how things *look_p*. So how do things *look_p* to us when there *looks_e* to be a statue with these or those qualities? If the answer is that there *look_p* to be some things before us that collectively instantiate those properties, then the way things *look_p* cannot itself explain why we believe that there is a *single* thing there that has those properties, for in that case perceptual experience does not itself attest to there being a single thing there; one must look elsewhere (e.g., §5 or §7) for a solution to the problem of reasonableness.

The eliminativist might instead maintain that it is part of how things look_p that there is a single thing with these or those qualities. If indeed it is given in perception that there is a single thing present, then the way things look_p is poised to solve the problem of reasonableness, since the false beliefs are supported by the content of perceptual experience together with true background beliefs, for instance, that *if* there is a single thing present that has such and such qualities, then there is a statue present.

But this account is not without its costs, for there is good reason to doubt that there being a single thing before one typically features into the way things look_p. To see this, consider van Inwagen's bligers. A bliger looks like a single animal from afar but, on closer inspection, turns out only to be several animals walking in a pack.⁴⁴ Having now learned the truth about bligers, I spot one from afar. It seems quite natural to say that things are exactly the way they appear to be, even though there is another sense in which it still looks to me as though there is a single animal out there. (Compare: It may sound to me as though a gun has been fired when in fact it was a car backfiring, yet I did not mishear anything.) If so, then it cannot be that there looks_p to be a single thing with such and such qualities, for in that case my experience would be nonveridical even at the most fundamental level. Eliminativists may respond that, *after* learning the truth about bligers, the content of the experience is different: now the content is that there are some things that collectively instantiate such and such qualities, whereas before it was that there is a single thing that instantiates them. But it is quite plausible that, at least at some level, things look the same to me now as they did before I learned the truth about bligers. The envisaged eliminativist would have to insist either that, despite appearances, there is no level at which my bliger experience is veridical or else that, despite appearances, things cannot possibly look the same to me once I learn the truth about bligers. I leave it to eliminativists to try to motivate one or the other of these claims.⁴⁵

Moreover, even if there does indeed look_p to be a single thing instantiating the qualities given in perception, it is difficult to see why the belief that there is a single thing continues to seem reasonable upon reflection. By contrast, consider what happens when one sees a three-dimensional replica of the Penrose triangle (immortalized on the cover of Nozick's *Philosophical Explanations*).⁴⁶ There look_p to be three straight beams meeting one another at right angles. But casual contemplation of this figure suffices to show that things cannot possibly be as they look to be. No discursive reasoning or calculation is required; one just recognizes that it is impossible for things to be that way. That there continue to look_p to be three straight beams meeting at right angles does not suffice for it to continue to seem reasonable that things are as they look to be. So we cannot in general rely upon the way things look_p to explain the resilience of perceptual beliefs when the contents of those beliefs are a priori impossible, even if it can explain their *initial* reasonableness.

Finally, the present strategy (like several of strategies considered above) threatens to undercut the strongest arguments for eliminativism. For suppose that the way things look_p does in fact include information about how many objects there are and that this, in turn, fully accounts for the false folk belief that there is a single object before them when they see atoms arranged statuewise. By parity, the fact that there looks_p to be a single thing when one sees some atoms arranged statuewise should suffice to explain their conviction that the statue and the lump of clay are not distinct objects. Likewise, the fact that what shattered the window looked_p to be a single thing should suffice to explain their conviction that the shattering of the window was not overdetermined (e.g., by both a baseball and by the atoms arranged baseballwise). Since these convictions are the product of what the envisaged eliminativists admit to be a wildly unreliable belief-forming process—namely, believing that things are as they look_p to be—they should be disinclined to trust the premises of their arguments for eliminativism.

7. Bad Habits

A final sort of response to the challenge from folk belief runs as follows: the false belief that there are statues is the result of a habitual tendency to conceive of the world as containing statues, and the belief in statues seems reasonable simply because we become so used to conceiving of the world as containing them. But what is the source of this habitual tendency? One straightforward answer is that we habitually conceive of the world as containing statues, despite only seeing atoms arranged statuewise, because intuitively atoms arranged statuewise compose statues. But we have already seen that eliminativists cannot provide an account of folk belief in terms of intuition that is both plausible and non-self-defeating. Let us now consider two other possible sources of this bad habit.

As an illustration of the first possible source, let us consider some advice that Sider offers to presentists. Presentists are (allegedly) unable to secure the truth of various beliefs about cross-time relations, for instance, that there was a great grandfather of Ned. If the presentist is right that there is no existing individual who either does or did stand in the grandfather relation to Ned, then (the argument goes) the belief must be false. Sider advises presentists to concede the point and to explain the error by appeal to “the ontologically unscrupulous nature of natural language . . . [I]n ordinary life we quantify freely over nonactual objects, and over abstracta, without thinking very hard about whether such objects exist.”⁴⁷ This is “explanation enough,” he says, of why we are inclined to believe such things.

Eliminativists may adopt a similar strategy. We are born into linguistic communities in which statues are freely quantified over, and we find it natural to believe in them because we find it so natural to talk about them. But the prevalence of quantification over statues hardly suffices to explain the

reasonableness of this belief, insofar as it provides no explanation of why the folk find it reasonable to take discourse about statues at face value. After all, the folk do not take their unscrupulous quantification over other sorts of objects at face value—they deny that fictional characters exist, while finding it natural to say such things as ‘Some fictional characters are more famous than the president’. Similarly, they are hesitant to assent to the reality of such things as the average person, sakes, meanings, and numbers, despite happily referring to them and quantifying over them. They even hesitate over whether there are really such things as corporations. By contrast, even in their most scrupulous moments the folk readily agree that there (really) are such things as statues. So the fact that we find ourselves talking unscrupulously about statues cannot by itself explain why we find it reasonable to believe in them.

The second possible source is evolutionary: we have an innate tendency to employ concepts that purport to apply to single objects, and to deploy these concepts when in the presence of certain arrangements, for straightforward reasons having to do with the survival value of deploying such concepts. But the habitual deployment of concepts that purport to apply to composites is unable to account for our belief in statues for the same reason that habitual quantification over statues cannot explain this belief—we habitually deploy all manner of concepts (of sakes, characters, etc.) without developing a conviction that there is anything answering to them. So if this sort of evolutionary explanation is to be an improvement upon the previous explanation, one must make the stronger claim that there is an innate tendency to *believe* that there are things answering to such concepts (upon encountering the relevant arrangements). The solution to the problem of reasonableness would then be that we believe in statues in the first place as a result of an innate tendency to form such beliefs (in the relevant circumstances), and we subsequently find it reasonable to believe in them because we become so used to conceiving of the world as containing them.

The eliminativist who opts for this response now faces a problem similar to one discussed in §5. For if this unreliable belief-forming mechanism is the source of some of our beliefs about material objects, then what of the others—in particular, those that feature as premises in the arguments for eliminativism? If they too are the product of evolutionary forces that cannot be expected to yield true beliefs, then having a theory that accommodates the deep-seated conviction that (say) distinct objects cannot coincide should be viewed as no more advantageous than having a theory that accommodates the firm ‘Yes—Definitely’ verdicts of a magic eight-ball. Eliminativists would, by their own lights, have no good reason to accept the premises of their own arguments.

Plausibly, however, these deep-seated convictions about principles in metaphysics have some other source. Perhaps it is “unabashedly metaphysical insight,”⁴⁸ perhaps something else, but whatever it is it had better be a reliable capacity. Now (as in §5b) the question becomes: what does this capacity have

to say about the possibility of statues? Eliminativists cannot maintain that this source yields pro-statue verdicts, for these would then be the result of what, by hypothesis, is a reliable capacity. Yet if this source does (or at least can) yield an anti-statue verdict, one would expect to find some amount of cognitive dissonance upon contemplating the proposition that these or those things compose a statue, as this source pulls one in one direction while one's innate tendencies pull one in another. But one finds no such cognitive dissonance.

8. Conclusion

Proponents of revisionary philosophical theories should be viewed as having answered the challenge from folk belief only if they can solve the problem of reasonableness. I have surveyed a number of attempts to address these problems as they arise for eliminativism and have found none of them to be satisfactory. The appeal to paraphrases that are meant to specify the propositions that the folk in fact believe—or the propositions that folk confuse with the propositions that they in fact believe—are implausible and unmotivated. The appeal to paraphrases that are not meant to specify the propositions that the folk in fact believe cannot serve as the kind of psychological explanation needed to solve the problem of reasonableness. Nor does the fact that there appear to be statues suffice to account for these beliefs, since perceptual beliefs based on impossible appearances (e.g., the Penrose triangle) ordinarily cease to seem reasonable upon minimal reflection. Nor can eliminativists plausibly appeal to false or misunderstood intuitions to explain folk belief, nor to our deep-seated tendencies to talk about and think about statues, without undermining any justification that there might be for the premises of their arguments.

The considerations raised above can be wielded against many other revisionary positions in metaphysics and beyond. The most obvious culprits are the compatibilist accounts offered by the other parties to the debate over composition and persistence: for instance, the hypothesis that the folk speak loosely when they seem to speak of things changing parts, the hypothesis that the folk are restricting their quantifiers in such a way as to exclude the strange items postulated by universalists, and the hypothesis that the folk are confusing two senses of 'object' when they deny the existence of various objects found in plenitudinous ontologies.⁴⁹ Although we plainly do sometimes speak loosely, restrict our quantifiers, and employ a restricted use of 'object', there is no evidence that we are doing so in the specific speech acts that these philosophers have in mind.

I should emphasize, however, that the challenge from folk belief is far too weak to be used as an all-purpose validation of everything that passes for common sense. There may be anti-realisms and error theories that are able to meet the challenge; it must be taken case by case. It may be, for all I have

shown, that even eliminativists can somehow meet the challenge from folk belief. Even so, I hope to have shown that the challenge has not yet been met and to have demonstrated what it is that revisionary philosophers need to do if they are to supply a satisfactory account of the folk beliefs that tell against their views.

Notes

*This paper has benefited from helpful feedback from Derek Ball, George Bealer, John Bengson, Ben Caplan, Chad Carmichael, E.J. Coffman, Andy Egan, Bryan Frances, Scott Hagaman, Eli Hirsch, John Keller, Rob Koons, Jon Kvanvig, Trenton Merricks, Dave Robb, Irem Kurstal Steen, Chris Tillman, Michael Tye, and audiences in DeKalb and Chicago. I am especially grateful to Mark Sainsbury for comments on several early drafts of the paper. I regret that I received a good deal of objections and advice too late to make the relevant revisions.

¹ Russell (1925, 145).

² Hirsch (2002a, 117).

³ See Hawthorne and Michael (1996) for a related case study, which focuses exclusively on van Inwagen's compatibilist strategy.

⁴ Unger (1979), Heller (1990), van Inwagen (1990), Merricks (2001), Dorr (2005), and Horgan and Potrč (2008) all embrace some form of eliminativism. For ease of exposition, I ignore the possibility both of living statues and of mereologically simple statues (which some of these authors may be willing to countenance).

⁵ See, e.g., Heller (1990, 148–9), and Merricks (2001, 171).

⁶ See, e.g., Rosen and Dorr (2002, 157–8) and Eklund (2005, 559–61). Cf. Sider (2004, 680) on how the folk respond to “innocent coaching.”

⁷ Van Inwagen (1990, 103).

⁸ Hudson (2001, 107).

⁹ Hudson (2001, 108).

¹⁰ Moreover, if Hudson is right about the source of these intuitions, the superior strength of the anti-eliminativist intuitions is easily explained by the strength of our interest in things arranged statuewise, things arranged tigerwise, and so forth.

¹¹ Cf. Hirsch (2002a, 116): “people tend to make mistakes about general principles such as the ‘no-two-things-in-the-same-place’ principle because they generalize too hastily from a few paradigmatic examples that immediately come to their minds.”

¹² See Hirsch (2002a) and (2005).

¹³ Hirsch may well disagree. According to his doctrine of quantifier variance (2002b), there is a possible interpretation of folk discourse on which the truth of ‘there are statues’ is guaranteed by the existence of the statuewise arrangements of atoms *and which is otherwise on a par with the eliminativist’s interpretation*. If there truly is such an interpretation, it would be perverse to insist upon an interpretation on which the folk are saying something false, whether or not the error can somehow be accounted for.

¹⁴ Van Inwagen (1990, 108–114).

¹⁵ E.g., Tye (1992), Hirsch (1993), Hawthorne and Michael (1996), Sider (2001, 178–80), Merricks (2001, 162–170), Varzi (2002, 64–5), and Uzquiano (2004).

¹⁶ See Merricks (2001, 162–170) for further discussion of this point.

¹⁷ The only evidence that van Inwagen does offer in support of the hypothesis that talk about ordinary composites is by and large loose talk is a hypothetical case in which the folk continue to talk about “bligers” even once they discover that what was thought to be a single large animal is in fact several small animals walking in a pack. Yet it is unclear how this bears in any way upon discourse about statues and the like; see Noonan (1999, 283–4).

¹⁸ Turning Hirsch's argument from charity on its head, the eliminativist may try to argue that, even in the absence of any linguistic or behavioral evidence, charity demands that the folk be interpreted as speaking loosely, for to take their utterances at face value is to take the folk to be saying a great many false things (e.g., that there are statues). See Varzi (2002, 65) and my (2008a, 324–5) for arguments that the appeal to charity here is misguided.

¹⁹ See Hofweber (2005) and Chalmers (forthcoming, §6) for discussion of this sort of Carnapian line.

²⁰ See Horgan and Potrč (2008) for another compatibilist strategy. I discuss their strategy in my (2008b).

²¹ For discussion of the language of the ontology room, see Dorr (2005), my (2008a, §4), and Sider (forthcoming).

²² See Uzquiano (2004) and Hovda (manuscript) for relevant discussion.

²³ Here I have in mind Burgess and Rosen's (1997, 6) distinction between hypotheses about how a certain domain of discourse is in fact used and those about how it might be or should be used.

²⁴ Merricks (2001, 172). The italics are his.

²⁵ Merricks (2001, 171).

²⁶ Cf. Markosian (2004, 69–73), who employs a similar strategy in his defense of presentism.

²⁷ The implausibility becomes even more pronounced as we consider more and more complex cases; cf. Sider (1999, 330–1) on Markosian's strategy.

²⁸ Kripke, for instance, offers a "substantial" paraphrase of our anti-externalist intuition reports which on reflection seems entirely plausible; more on this below.

²⁹ See Merricks (2001, chapter 3).

³⁰ See van Inwagen (1990, 5) and Merricks (2001, §2.3).

³¹ See Unger (1979).

³² See van Inwagen (1990, 126) and my (forthcoming).

³³ See Horgan and Potrč (2008, §2.3).

³⁴ Kripke (1980).

³⁵ Sider (2007, 88).

³⁶ There are alternative ways of developing this confusion-based strategy. For instance, one might maintain that we have the intuition that *according to folk ontology* atoms arranged statuewise compose statues, but we mistake it for the unmodified proposition that atoms arranged statuewise compose statues. This proposal faces problems similar to those raised in the text.

³⁷ Cf. Hawthorne (2004, 119–20 n.17), who lodges similar complaints against the suggestion that we mistake intuitions about assertability for intuitions about truth.

³⁸ Hirsch (2002a, 117).

³⁹ Thomasson (2007, 13–14 and 76–81).

⁴⁰ Hill (1997, 72–78) employs a structurally similar strategy for addressing the intuitions that tell against type-type materialism.

⁴¹ One might complain that we do have the requisite kind concept—namely, *appliance*. But one can simply revise the example so that one encounters some item from Mars, radically different from any sort of thing one has ever before encountered, but whose parts and organization exhibit the sort of unity found in trees, statues, and so forth. One would still have the intuition that there is a single thing there.

⁴² An illuminating contrast is the highly sophisticated discussion of anti-materialist intuitions in the philosophy of mind. One finds nothing even remotely like this in the literature of material objects. Rather, one finds what would be more accurately compared to a defense of materialism against the widespread folk belief that our souls will survive the death of our bodies, with no mention of intuitions about multiple realizability, inverts, or zombies.

⁴³ Cf. Jackson (1977, 30–33).

⁴⁴ Van Inwagen (1990, 104). It is not obvious whether what has turned out to be the case is that there are no bligers or, rather, that there are bligers but that a bliger (like an assortment)

is not a single individual but rather a plurality of individuals. Either way, the idea is that it has turned out that there are just some things, and no additional thing whose parts they are. Some may insist that the animals do compose a further thing (either on the basis of an intuition about this specific case or on the basis of more general commitments), but this line of response of course will not be open to eliminativists.

⁴⁵ One could try to occupy a middle ground, holding that the things arranged statuewise look_p to “belong together,” and that it is on this basis that we tacitly infer that there is a single thing there. But this will not do, for one still must explain why it seems reasonable to treat some things’ belonging together as an indication of their being the *parts* of a further thing.

⁴⁶ Such three-dimensional replicas exist (see Sorensen 2002, 361), though of course either there only appear to be three beams or else the beams only appear to meet.

⁴⁷ Sider (1999, 333).

⁴⁸ See Sider (2007, 88).

⁴⁹ See Chisholm (1976, chapter 3), Lewis (1986, 213), and Thomasson (2007, 183–5), respectively.

References

- Burgess, John P. and Rosen, Gideon (1997), *A Subject with No Object* (Oxford: Clarendon Press).
- Chalmers, David (2009), ‘Ontological Anti-Realism’, in David Chalmers, David Manley, and Ryan Wasserman (eds.), *Metametaphysics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 77–129.
- Chisholm, Roderick M. (1976), *Person and Object* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd.).
- Dorr, Cian (2005), ‘What We Disagree About When We Disagree About Ontology’, in Mark Kalderon (ed.), *Fictionalism in Metaphysics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press), 234–86.
- Eklund, Matti (2005), ‘Fiction, Indifference, and Ontology’, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 71: 557–579.
- Hawthorne, John (2004), *Knowledge and Lotteries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Hawthorne, John and Michael, Michaelis (1996), ‘Compatibilist Semantics in Metaphysics: A Case Study’, *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 74: 117–134.
- Heller, Mark (1990), *The Ontology of Physical Objects: Four-Dimensional Hunks of Matter* (New York: Cambridge University Press).
- Hill, Christopher S. (1997), ‘Imaginability, Conceivability, Possibility and the Mind-Body Problem’, *Philosophical Studies* 87: 61–85.
- Hirsch, Eli (1993), ‘Peter van Inwagen’s *Material Beings*’, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 53: 687–691.
- Hirsch, Eli (2002a), ‘Against Revisionary Ontology’, *Philosophical Topics* 30: 103–127.
- Hirsch, Eli (2002b), ‘Quantifier Variance and Realism’, *Philosophical Issues* 12: 51–73.
- Hirsch, Eli (2005), ‘Physical-Object Ontology, Verbal Disputes, and Common Sense’, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 70: 67–97.
- Hofweber, Thomas (2005), ‘A Puzzle About Ontology’, *Noûs* 39: 256–283.
- Horgan, Terence and Potrč, Matjaž (2008), *Austere Realism: Contextual Semantics Meets Minimal Ontology* (Cambridge: MIT Press).
- Hovda, Paul (manuscript), ‘How to be an Atomist’.
- Hudson, Hud (2001), *A Materialist Metaphysics of the Human Person* (Ithica: Cornell University Press).
- Jackson, Frank (1977), *Perception: A Representative Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).
- Korman, Daniel Z. (2008a), ‘Unrestricted Composition and Restricted Quantification’, *Philosophical Studies* 140: 319–334.
- Korman, Daniel Z. (2008b), ‘Review of *Austere Realism*’, *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews*.

- Korman, Daniel Z. (forthcoming). 'Strange Kinds, Familiar Kinds, and the Charge of Arbitrariness', *Oxford Studies in Metaphysics*.
- Kripke, Saul (1980), *Naming and Necessity* (Cambridge: Harvard).
- Lewis, David (1986), *On the Plurality of Worlds* (Malden: Blackwell).
- Markosian, Ned (2004), 'A Defense of Presentism', in Dean W. Zimmerman (ed.), *Oxford Studies in Metaphysics, Volume 1* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 47–82.
- Merricks, Trenton (2001), *Objects and Persons* (New York: Oxford University Press).
- Noonan, Harold W. (1999), 'Identity, Constitution, and Microphysical Supervenience', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 99: 273–288.
- Rosen, Gideon and Dorr, Cian (2002), 'Composition as Fiction', in Richard M. Gale (ed.), *The Blackwell Guide to Metaphysics*, (Oxford: Blackwell), pp. 151–174.
- Russell, Bertrand (1925/1958), 'Mind and Matter', in his *Portraits from Memory* (London: George Allen and Unwin), pp. 140–60.
- Sider, Theodore (1999), 'Presentism and Ontological Commitment', *Journal of Philosophy* 96: 325–47.
- Sider, Theodore (2001), *Four-Dimensionalism* (Oxford: Clarendon).
- Sider, Theodore (2004), 'Replies to Gallois, Hirsch and Markosian', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 58: 674–87.
- Sider, Theodore (2007), 'Parthood', *The Philosophical Review* 116: 51–91.
- Sider, Theodore (2009). 'Ontological Realism', in David Chalmers, David Manley, and Ryan Wasserman (eds.), *Metametaphysics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 384–423.
- Sorensen, Roy (2002), 'The Art of the Impossible', in *Conceivability and Possibility*, Tamar Szabó Gendler and John Hawthorne (eds.), (New York: Oxford University Press), pp. 337–68.
- Thomasson, Amie (2007), *Ordinary Objects* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
- Tye, Michael (1992), 'Material Beings', *The Philosophical Review* 101: 881–84.
- Unger, Peter (1979), 'There Are No Ordinary Things', *Synthese* 41: 117–154.
- Uzquiano, Gabriel (2004), 'Plurals and Simples', *Nous* 87: 429–451.
- van Inwagen, Peter (1990), *Material Beings* (Ithica: Cornell).
- Varzi, Achille C. (2002), 'Words and Objects', in Andrea Bottani, Massimiliano Carrara, and Daniele Giaretta (eds.), *Individuals, Essence, and Identity: Themes of Analytic Metaphysics*, (Dordrecht, Boston, and London: Kluwer Academic Publishers), pp. 49–75.