Daniel Z. Korman, *Objects: Nothing Out of the Ordinary*.
Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015. x + 251 pp.

Most philosophers and nonphilosophers alike believe in the existence of "ordi-nary objects" like tables and chairs, but not in the existence of "extraordinary objects" like trogs, which are objects composed of dogs and tree trunks. Yet, somewhat surprisingly, this "conservative" view is a minority view among those working on the metaphysics of material objects. Most of these practitioners adopt a permissivist approach that countenances certain extraordinary objects in addi-tion to ordinary objects, or an eliminativist approach that eliminates certain ordinary objects as well as extraordinary objects.

In his book *Objects: Nothing Out of the Ordinary*, Daniel Korman mounts a comprehensive and systematic defense of the conservative view. The book is in three parts. The first part (chapters 2–3) surveys various forms of permissivism and eliminativism, and the arguments that have been advanced in favor of them. The second part (chapters 4–7) presents an "argument from counterexamples" in favor of the conservative view and considers three different responses to the argument. The third part (chapters 8–12) develops replies to familiar argu-ments against conservatism including arbitrariness arguments, the argument from vagueness, the overdetermination argument, the puzzle of material con-stitution, and the problem of the many.

Overall, I found the book to be very lucid, well written, and well argued, making it an excellent contribution to the literature on material objects as well as a great text for an upper-level undergraduate course in metaphysics. My discussion here will focus on three central topics: the argument from counter-examples, the debunking response to this argument, and the arbitrariness arguments.

Argument from Counterexamples

Korman's main argument against permissivism and eliminativism is what he calls an "argument from counterexamples." I will consider his argument from counterexamples against universalism, the permissivist view on which any given objects compose a further object. Here is the argument as Korman formulates it (27):

(1)   If universalism is true, then there are trogs.
(2)   There are no trogs.
(3)   So, universalism is false.

Premise (2), of course, is the key premise. Korman maintains that it is prima facie justified by intuition (which he takes to be an intellectual seeming) together with background knowledge. The relevant intuition is conditional in form: if dogs and tree trunks are distributed through space in the way they seem to be, then there are no trogs. The relevant background knowledge concerns the actual distribution of dogs and tree trunks through space (for instance, we know that there are no dogs with tree trunks growing out of their backs).

While an argument of exactly this form has not been advanced before, objections very much in the same spirit have been—namely, that universalism goes against commonsense and pre-philosophical intuition (Hirsch 2002; Markosian 1998, 2014; cf. Rose and Schaffer 2017). Korman, however, suggests that he is raising the bar by formulating the objection as an argument from counterexamples: "You can probably just ignore the objection that people who know nothing about philosophy would disagree with your view. But you cannot ignore the objection that your view is open to counterexamples. Unfortunately, it is the former objection that gets all the attention in the literature, resulting in a pretty low bar for what constitutes an adequate response. I'm hoping to raise that bar by shifting the focus to an argument from counterexamples" (28).

I am unconvinced that shifting the focus to an argument from counterexamples raises the bar in the literature. That is because I don't think that the universalist can just ignore the objection that her view conflicts with commonsense or pre-philosophical intuition. Rather, I think that she must do one of three things: (i) maintain that universalism is in fact compatible with commonsense, (ii) provide reasons for doubting commonsense, or (iii) argue that the theoretical considerations supporting universalism outweigh the cost of conflict with commonsense. But exactly these same strategies—the compatibilist strategy, the debunking strategy, and the rebutting strategy—are available to the universalist when it comes to Korman's argument from counterexamples. This is evident from the subsequent chapters of the book, which engage with these strategies in turn: chapters 5 and 6 argue against two variants of compatibilism, chapter 7 considers a debunking argument that seeks to undermine our confidence in our anti-trog intuitions, and chapters 8 and 9 deal with various theoretical considerations that have been adduced in favor of universalism. The bar has remained just where it was. The argument from counterexamples, I suggest, is best viewed as a tool for framing the subsequent discussion, which is where the real contribution of the book lies.

Debunking Argument

Of the various responses that Korman considers to his argument from counterexamples, I found the most interesting and thought-provoking to be the debunking argument. While debunking arguments have been widely discussed in the case of moral and mathematical beliefs, they have received far less atten-

tion in the case of material object beliefs, and Korman deserves credit for bringing them to the fore in this domain. Here is how Korman formulates the debunking argument against our belief in trees (he formulates an analogous debunking argument against our disbelief in trogs) (93):

(1) There is no explanatory connection between our object beliefs and the object facts.
(2) If so, then we shouldn't believe that there are trees.
(3) So, we shouldn't believe that there are trees.

The support adduced for premise (1) is that we divide up the world into objects in the way that we do, believing in trees and tables but not in trogs, because of cultural conventions or innate biological tendencies that are entirely independent of the relevant ontological facts (which themselves don't depend upon our object beliefs). Premise (2) may be motivated by noting that if (1) holds, then it would be a lucky coincidence if our object beliefs aligned with the object facts; and since we have no reason to believe in such a coincidence, we should suspend these beliefs. Korman's positive proposal is that we have a capacity for apprehending facts about coinstantiation, composition, and kind membership (CCK-facts), which secures the explanatory connection needed to falsify premise (1). His proffered justification for positing this capacity is abductive: he takes as his starting point that our perceptual experiences are accurate, and then contends that the best explanation of their accuracy is that we have such a capacity (113).

While Korman's proposal is intriguing, it's not clear to me that he needs to posit the relevant capacity to refute the argument, given his own starting point. Once the accuracy of our perceptual experiences is granted, it looks like the game is already over: the fact that our perceptual experiences are accurate gives us reason to believe in a lucky coincidence, and this undermines the motivation for premise (2).

Korman anticipates this sort of reply, maintaining that it is "epistemically unstable" to deny premise (2) on these grounds while affirming premise (1) because the belief that there is no explanatory connection between your object beliefs and the object facts defeats your justification for believing that your perceptual experiences are accurate (100–102). One reason to be skeptical of Korman's response is that it relies upon an internalist explanatory connection constraint on justification to the effect that S's beliefs about a subject matter are justified only if S does not believe that the beliefs are not explained by facts about that subject matter. This is arguably too demanding of a constraint on justification (cf. Fairchild and Hawthorne 2018). Consider, for example, my belief that all bachelors are unmarried. I think that what explains this belief is not facts about bachelors, but rather facts about the meaning of "bachelor" together with whatever it is that explains my belief in the logical truth that all unmarried men are unmarried men. Provided that the subject matter of my

belief is bachelors, the belief does not satisfy Korman's constraint. Yet, intuitively, the belief is justified.

Setting this issue aside, I worry that Korman's own proposal does not entirely escape epistemic instability. His considered view is that the capacity for apprehending CCK-facts is underwritten by a "topic-neutral capacity for apprehending necessities" (122). Presumably, this topic-neutral capacity is responsible for a whole range of metaphysical intuitions including the intuition that a statue cannot survive being squashed whereas a lump of clay can, that a and b are identical only if they share all properties, and that there cannot exist distinct coincident objects. Yet what the puzzle of material constitution shows us is that some or other of these intuitions must be mistaken, on pain of contradiction. This gives us reason to doubt the reliability of the postulated capacity, which in turn casts doubt upon the accuracy of our perceptual experiences (since they are influenced by this capacity).

Arbitrariness Arguments

One of the most forceful and persisting objections to conservatism is that it is too arbitrary. Conservatives countenance islands but not incars, the Supreme Court but not trogs, statues but not gollyswoggles. But, the objection goes, there is no ontologically significant difference between these ordinary and extraordinary objects, and so, countenancing the former but not the latter is unacceptably arbitrary. Korman takes an unconventional approach to answering this objection. Instead of trying to come up with a small number of general principles that would admit the ordinary objects but not the extraordinary objects, he instead proceeds case by case and, in each case, claims to find some intuitive ontologically significant difference between the ordinary and extraordinary objects in question. For instance, in the case of the Supreme Court and a trog, he claims that there is no single object that is the Supreme Court ("the Supreme Court" is referentially plural on his view), whereas ex hypothesi a trog is a single object. This view, he says, accords with various intuitions that we have, including the intuition that the Supreme Court is not "a single object bearing the features that it should have if it were a single object" (145). "Is the Supreme Court a single fleshy object with nine tongues and eighteen elbows?" Korman asks. His answer: "Intuitively, no" (145).

I am sympathetic to Korman's "particularist" approach here, which puts great emphasis on intuitions about particular cases, at the expense of preserving simplicity and unity. However, I am skeptical of many of the intuitions that he appeals to, including those concerning the Supreme Court. Of course, the Supreme Court is not a single fleshy object with nine tongues and eighteen elbows. But that leaves open the possibility that the Supreme Court is a variable embodiment (Fine 1999), a realization of a structure (Ritchie 2013), or some other kind of hylomorphic compound that does not have such features. If we keep

these theoretical options in mind, intuitions as to whether the Supreme Court is a single object bearing the requisite features become very murky. I, at any rate, have no intuition, one way or the other. Korman could respond by emphasizing the other intuitions he cites in support of his view of the Supreme Court, for example, the intuition that every part of the Supreme Court is in the Supreme Court (145). But again, this is only intuitive given a substantive theoretical assumption, namely, that the only parts of the Supreme Court are the Supreme Court justices. And this assumption itself does not strike me as more intuitive than various alternatives, for example, that the rules and regulations of the court are among its parts.

More generally, I worry that many of the intuitions that Korman invokes as justification for his preferred treatment of ordinary objects such as trains, planes, bee colonies, orchestras, and teams are likewise driven by substantive theoretical assumptions that are dialectically inappropriate given the justificatory role that the intuitions are meant to be playing in his theorizing. That said, I should note that Korman does invoke some intuitions that I do not find to be problematic in this way, for instance, the intuition that nothing new comes into existence when a meteoroid randomly collides with space junk and temporarily comes to be a qualitative duplicate of some actual statue (153). The viability of his particularist approach may ultimately depend on whether such intuitions can be adduced in the other cases as well. But, regardless, it is a significant achievement of the book that it pioneers this new approach and puts it on the map as an alternative to the standard methodology in material object metaphysics.

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