Modest Moorean Metaphysics

LOUIS DOULAS

Some metaphysicians offer a sweeping way to settle existence debates. Their recipe is simple. Suppose we're after an answer to (Q):

(Q): Do composite objects (like tables) exist?

An answer to (Q), so these metaphysicians say, is easy to come by. Given the evident fact that

(i) There are many tables before me

it just follows that

(ii) There are tables.

The argument is valid, and its premise is clearly true. So, tables exist.[1] As Jonathan Schaffer attests, "contemporary existence debates are *trivial*, in that *the entities in question obviously do exist*" (2009: 357).

But why believe the premise(s) of easy ontological arguments like (i–ii) are true? The kind of metaphysician I'm interested in here says premises like (i) express something *Moorean*, they're "one of the many facts which even philosophers should not deny" (Armstrong 1978: 440–41), and that's reason enough for believing they're true. That is, they endorse what I'll call *Moorean Ontological Arguments* or MOAs for short. MOAs are just easy ontological arguments whose premise(s) express a Moorean truth. I'll call any metaphysician whose ontology is built from MOAs a "Moorean metaphysician" or a "Moorean" for short.

The purpose of this paper is to cast doubt on the epistemic credentials of common sense as found in certain strains of metaphysics and the claim that philosophical existence debates are highly trivial.[2] To do this, I'll present a puzzle that shows how the combination of Mooreanism and easy ontological arguments is committed to a contradiction.

Here's the plan. In §1, I get clear on just what sort of principles are at play in MOAs like (i–ii). Drawing on these principles, I develop four Moorean

---

[1] In this and what follows, I assume that quantification is "ontologically loaded" à la current orthodoxy.

[2] That existence debates can be resolved by trivial inferences from Moorean premises has been endorsed (in some form or another) by Fine (2001, 2009), Hirsch (2002, 2011), Kelly (2008), Korman (2015b, 2019, forthcoming), Lycan (2001), Schaffer (2009a, 2009b: §S4), and Thomasson (2007, 2015).

approaches and, in §2, I argue that the Moorean should reject all but one. In §3, I present a puzzle that shows how the most plausible Moorean approach engenders a contradiction. In §4, I consider various attempts at reconciliation but, as I show, they all fail. I conclude in §5 with some discussion.

Some caveats before we begin. First, I won't be offering a definition of "common sense" or "Moorean truth," nor is one necessary for my arguments to go through.[3] Second, I'll take Moorean or neo-Moorean idioms in the vicinity—e.g., "Moorean truths," "Moorean facts," propositions that "command Moorean certainty" or are "obvious and undisputed," "common-sensical" or "of common sense," and propositions that correspond to our "ordinary, everyday beliefs" and "what we ordinary believe"—as all expressing (more or less) the same idea: that some propositions express truths we just shouldn't give up, even in the face of sophisticated philosophical arguments to the contrary. Here, I refer to them most frequently as "Moorean truths" and "common sense propositions." Occasionally, however, when it improves the reading of a passage, I'll ditch talk of them for one of the Moorean expressions above.

1   Mooreanism and Trivialism

Think of easy ontological arguments like (i–ii) as a map charting the ontological territory and Moorean principles as the reason for believing that the map is accurate. It's the support easy ontological arguments get from Moorean principles that make MOAs a philosophical force to be reckoned with.

But it may be hard to see why MOAs should be taken seriously. After all, MOAs seem "cheap" and superfluous to the ontological project.[4] Their simplicity, however, is the source of their power. Start with what philosophers know best: valid deductive arguments. We might think such arguments are nothing more than an invitation to compare plausibility. And since arguments are only as strong as their weakest premise, an argument whose premises are *all*

---

[3]I'll also be assuming that, for the most part, we know these truths when we see them. However, this isn't to say that *no* helpful characterization of common sense or Moorean truth exists. Both Kelly's (2005, 2008) and Lycan's (2001) accounts are compelling attempts at precisely this (see especially Lycan (2001: 48–49) who sketches several criteria of identity for Moorean propositions).

Of course, some may doubt that Moorean truths exist or (if they do exist) find their epistemological legitimacy highly questionable. On Sider's (2013) view, for example, a theory's coherence with common sense counts for very little if it counts for anything at all. Furthermore, Conee (2001: 58) worries that the criteria some use to identify Moorean propositions may turn out to be entirely psychological. I'm sympathetic to both Sider's approach and Conee's worry.

[4]See, for example, Cameron (2010) and Dorr (2007).

individually plausible is, all things considered, *better* than an argument whose weakest premise is only partially plausible. The power of MOAs lie in the fact that their premise(s) are *all* plausible because they're composed of truths *we already know*. The Moorean only asks us to compare the plausibility of their MOAs with philosophical arguments purporting to refute them. Consider, for example, a mereological nihilist's argument for the non-existence of tables.[5] No matter how ingenious the argument, the Moorean instructs us not to budge. For denying that *there are tables* means giving up on a premise that deserves greater credence than any philosophical argument to the contrary. It means giving up on a premise we already *know* is true. If arguments serve as evidence, the Moorean has common sense as evidence on their side. Those with revisionary inclinations must deny known truths.

This dialectic is not unfamiliar. According to the Moorean, when it comes to believing a proposition of common sense versus a philosophical thesis that contradicts this proposition, the smart money is always on common sense:

> No *purely philosophical* premise can ever (legitimately) have as strong a claim to our allegiance as can a humble common-sense proposition such as Moore's autobiographical ones. Science can correct common sense; metaphysics and philosophical "intuition" can only throw spitballs.
>
> William Lycan (2001: 41)

> A simple point that Moore made in a number of papers is that our common sense convictions have more epistemic weight than any fancy philosophical arguments. Suppose you think you have an argument against the existence of tables. Maybe there is some mistake in the argument that you haven't seen. That's possible, isn't it? What is more likely, that there is a mistake in the argument or that there aren't any tables? Moore thought that any sane person who considers that question would soon realize that it is more reasonable to abandon the argument than to abandon tables.
>
> Eli Hirsch (2002: 104)

> It is a very fundamental part of the Moorean corpus that there is motion. Things move. Perhaps we have still not, after two and a half thousand years, got to the full bottom of Zeno's brilliant arguments against the existence of motion …But certainly Zeno should not persuade us that things do not move. Neither should anybody else.
>
> David Armstrong (1999: 79)

---

[5]I discuss the revisionist's strategy in more detail in §4. For a non-eliminative version of nihilism see Contessa (2014).

In this age of post-Moorean modesty, many of us are inclined to doubt that philosophy is in possession of arguments that might genuinely serve to undermine what we ordinarily believe. It may perhaps be conceded that the arguments of the skeptic appear to be utterly compelling; but the Mooreans among us will hold that the very plausibility of our ordinary beliefs is reason enough for supposing that there *must* be something wrong in the skeptic's arguments, even if we are unable to say what it is. In so far, then, as the pretensions of philosophy to provide a world-view rest upon its claims to be in possession of the epistemological high ground, those pretensions had better be given up.

Kit Fine (2001: 2)

Here, without further ado, is a proof of the existence of numbers:

1. There are prime numbers.
2. Therefore there are numbers.

1 is a mathematical truism. It commands *Moorean certainty*, as being more credible than any philosopher's argument to the contrary. Any metaphysician who would deny it has *ipso facto* produced a *reductio* for her premises. And 2 follows immediately, by a standard adjective-drop inference. Thus numbers exist. End of story.

Jonathan Schaffer (2009: 357)

The norm of belief revision in operation here seems to be something like this (where p is a proposition that expresses a Moorean truth): any *philosophical argument* that is at odds with p is either outright flawed or its premise(s) should not be believed. So common sense is an indefeasible source of justification against *philosophical arguments* to the contrary.[6] More precisely, then, the Moorean seems to be endorsing something like the following principle:

(STRONG MOOREANISM): If p is a Moorean truth and q is the conclusion of a philosophical argument that contradicts p, and S is deciding which proposition to believe, then S should always believe p.

This formulation seems to gel best with the quoted material above, but also with the attitude of many other Moorean sympathizers.[7] It also leaves open

---

[6]Not indefeasible *simpliciter*: science is capable of overturning Moorean common sense. See footnote 8.

[7]See Armstrong (2004: 26–30), Gupta (2006: 178), Kelly (2005, 2008), and Lewis (1973: 88, 1996: 549).

the possibility that *scientific* theses or arguments can be legitimate defeaters of Moorean truths, which the Moorean seems comfortable conceding.[8]

But one may wonder whether this characterization of Mooreanism is too strong. After all, for all the Moorean knows, there's a philosophical argument out there with revisionary implications whose premises all express Moorean truths. Is the Moorean really so foolish to deny such a possibility? Other self-professed Mooreans might think that it's at least *epistemically possible* that a philosophical argument (with all Moorean premises say) could come along and stir the pot. While this sort of Moorean may ultimately admit the unlikelihood of such a possibility, it's a possibility in their eyes no less. So it seems that Mooreanism comes in weaker and stronger blends. Perhaps such a Moorean would endorse:

> (WEAK MOOREANISM): If p is a Moorean truth and q is the conclusion of a philosophical argument that contradicts p, and S is deciding which proposition to believe, then S should, *almost* always, believe p (otherwise S should believe q or else suspend belief in p).

Think of the proviso, "*almost* always," as picking out the specific instances in which the Moorean feels compelled to let a philosophical argument defeat a Moorean premise—whatever those cases may end up being and however the Moorean ends up deciding them. (I'll put pressure on this point in §2.)

In addition to (STRONG MOOREANISM) and (WEAK MOOREANISM) there's another important principle that seems to be endorsed by the Moorean—call it *trivialism*: philosophical existence debates[9] are highly trivial because

---

[8]So, in principle, premises like (i) can be overturned if (in a bizarre turn of events) the *Physical Review* were to come out claiming that the latest physics has debunked the existence of tables. Good work if you can get it, but what's left for philosophy? Why isn't philosophy gifted these debunking capabilities? The idea (so it goes) comes down to philosophy's inferior track record: science produces results and philosophy doesn't. Many Mooreans seem to converge on this point. For an interesting argument showing why philosophy *can* overturn Moorean common sense see Rinard (2013).

[9]What kinds of existence debates? I trust the reader has *some* idea as to what the target debates are supposed to be. But if pressed further, here's some (admittedly vague and non-exhaustive) criteria we might employ. Talk of "*all* existence debates" or "*some* existence debates" should therefore be understood with the following restrictions in mind: debates that are determinately and distinctly philosophical, i.e., it's fairly clear that science—broadly construed—is incapable of settling them; debates that only philosophers, analytic metaphysicians in particular, professionally engage in, i.e., debates that have been addressed in journals, presented at conferences, etc., *and* that don't overlap with debates that the general public might engage in, e.g., are there aliens, god(s), or souls?; debates that might strike the general public as having mostly obvious answers, e.g., are there tables?

they can be resolved by MOAs. By "resolved by MOAs" all I mean is that for any existence debate $d_1,...,d_n$ the Moorean can provide an MOA such that the MOA answers a "Does F exist?" question. Like our two Moorean principles above, however, trivialism is ambiguous, admitting of strong and weak readings:

> (STRONG TRIVIALISM): All existence debates are highly trivial because they can be resolved by MOAs.

> (WEAK TRIVIALISM): Some[10] existence debates are highly trivial because they can be resolved by MOAs.

Since both Mooreanism and trivialism come in strong and weak versions, we are left with four possible Moorean approaches to ontology:

MA1	MA2
(STRONG MOOREANISM)	(STRONG MOOREANISM)
(STRONG TRIVIALISM)	(WEAK TRIVIALISM)
MA3	MA4
(WEAK MOOREANISM)	(WEAK MOOREANISM)
(STRONG TRIVIALISM)	(WEAK TRIVIALISM)

Which Moorean approach is the target of this paper? In the next section, I'll argue that no self-respecting Moorean should endorse the weak versions of these principles. This leaves us with what I believe to be the appropriate target of this paper, the Moorean approach deserving of serious philosophical consideration: **MA1**, or (STRONG MOOREANISM) with (STRONG TRIVIALISM). Unfortunately, however, as I'll show in §3, **MA1** entails a contradiction, and is thus false.

Alternatively, this paper could be understood as presenting the Moorean with the following dilemma:

> Either **MA1** is contradictory, thus false, or

> **MA2** or **MA3** or **MA4** are consistent, but implausible.

Obviously this is bad news for the Moorean. If they can't find a way to make one of the above principles work, Moorean metaontology looks like a nonstarter.

---

[10] "Some" has its typical reading as "at least one." But obviously if only one existence debate is resolved by an MOA, (WEAK TRIVIALISM) would be an extremely uninteresting principle. Perhaps, by "some" the Moorean means something closer to "most"—as in *exactly* or *more than* half.

2   Weak Mooreanism and Weak Trivialism

I said the weaker formulations are all implausible. But on the face of it, they don't seem this way. So, what gives? My grievances come in two forms. First, taken individually, the weaker formulations fail to accommodate some plausible desiderata that any Moorean approach to ontology ought to accommodate (§§2.1). And second, taken conjunctively, the weaker approaches are each committed to a *prima facie* implausible thesis or else just not Moorean enough (§§2.2).

2.1   *Desiderata*

I divvy up the desiderata accordingly: *Maximally Moorean* and *Particularist Prohibiting* are desiderata for Mooreanism, while *Metaontologically Methodical* and *Explanatorily Elevating* are desiderata for trivialism. Following the introduction of each one, I show how the weaker formulations—(WEAK MOOREANISM) and (WEAK TRIVIALISM)—fail to accommodate the desideratum at hand. (Some desiderata may subsume others, in which case our list could end up slightly shorter than it is. Risking incompleteness, I opt for possible redundancy.)

Mooreanism should aim to be *Maximally Moorean*. It should accommodate the core epistemological commitments of the Moorean. This one is obvious. But what *are* the epistemological commitments of the Moorean? We needn't look any further than the quoted passages above: "[T]here *must* be something wrong in the skeptic's arguments, even if we are unable to say what it is" (Fine 2001: 2) and "No purely philosophical premise can *ever* (legitimately) have as strong a claim to our allegiance as can a humble common-sense proposition" (Lycan 2001: 41, my emphasis). The modal force of "must" and "can" in these passages strongly suggest that *in no circumstance whatsoever* should the Moorean concede to the revisionary. Since any formulation of Mooreanism should accommodate the epistemological commitments of the Moorean, and since these commitments are *maximally* Moorean, Mooreanism should aim to be maximal.

How does (WEAK MOOREANISM) fare in accommodating these commitments? Though modest seeming, its singular proviso breeds problems: between a Moorean proposition and some opposing philosophical one, (WEAK MOOREANISM) says that a Moorean should almost always believe the former (otherwise they should believe the latter or else suspend belief in the former). *Almost* always. This allows *some* negotiation to take place between the Moorean and any number of radical ontological/epistemological positions

(e.g., nihilism and skepticism). The proviso, then, grants too much. The Moorean doesn't negotiate with *any* kind of skeptic.

Mooreanism should aim to be *Particularist Prohibiting*. It should be constrained by a general set of epistemological principles. Better, that is, to answer according to a general principle than to make impromptu adjustments case-to-case. Here, I'm conceiving of such principles along the lines of guides or policies. Principles *qua* guide or policy tell the Moorean *what to do* in certain epistemologically sticky situations. They act as epistemological and dialectical *insurance* for the philosophically unexpected—e.g., when a radical philosophical argument composed of uncontroversial Moorean premise(s) comes knocking. Of course, general principles are no guarantee of immunity. But when confronted with such troubling cases, it's better to be prepared than scrambling for a solution.

(WEAK MOOREANISM) doesn't seem to deliver on this front either. First, it doesn't tell us *when and under what circumstances* a Moorean premise can be defeated by philosophical arguments to the contrary (nor when such beliefs should be rationally suspended). Second, it seems that any solution will inevitably vary case-from-case. In other words, it's not clear the Moorean has an *anti*-particularist solution handy.[11] Perhaps such a Moorean will protest, "Here's an anti-particularist solution: Moorean truths can be overturned or rationally suspended iff there exists an opposing philosophical argument such that its premise(s) are all Moorean." But this is less of a solution than it is the ad-hoc concession of a particularist. Not only does it fail as a solution (e.g., it doesn't tell the Moorean which disjunct to plump for *after* being confronted with such an argument) but it should strike any Moorean as dialectically strange: If such arguments are already anticipated to be rarities and if the Moorean is otherwise believing Moorean truths left and right over radical philosophical arguments to the contrary, it seems the Moorean could do no better than to adopt a general *policy* of dismissing such arguments as faulty (*when* and *if* they ever come along). As Hirsch remarks, "What is more likely, that there is a mistake in the argument or that there aren't any tables?" (Hirsch 2002: 104)

Trivialism should aim to be *Metaontologically Methodical*. It should offer the Moorean a systematic way of doing ontology. This is because trivialism is a metaontological principle, and metaontological principles are *general* guides to doing ontology. Imagine another sort of guide: a tour guide that shows you

---

[11]In a slightly different context: Fairchild and Hawthorne (2018) argue against ontological conservatism on grounds that it's too particularist. I suspect something similar is going on here with (WEAK MOOREANISM) and also (WEAK TRIVIALISM).

around some enchanted city but mysteriously leaves the tour halfway through. Though perhaps the guide was knowledgeable, surely there's a better one in town—someone who can actually *complete* the tour and show you the *whole* city. An ideal metaontology is a little like this "full-time" tour guide, and ontology is a little like the city you're touring. We want our metaontological principles to work for us full-time—to stick around and show us *all* of what there is—not anything less.

So, if only *some* existence debates are highly trivial—as (WEAK TRIVIALISM) says they are—not only does trivialism risk collapsing into a philosophically uninteresting thesis, but MOAs no longer look like a principled way of settling existence debates. Again, if metaontological principles are general guides to doing ontology, they shouldn't be working for the Moorean "part-time." Metaontological principles (like this one) should tell the Moorean *how to settle existence debates*, full-stop. Though not without its problems, the metaontology of the Quinean[12] provides metaphysicians with an apt model of this—*not* for doing ontology *per se*, but for what our metaontological principles should aspire towards. What's important to appreciate about the Quinean method *isn't* that it's the best or most appropriate way of *doing* ontology (it's not), but that what it offers is a procedure for carrying out that task in a methodological and principled way. The Quinean method is a way of delivering ontological commitment *full-stop*.[13] The Moorean who endorses (WEAK TRIVIALISM) is no less exempt from these standards than any other metaphysician.

Trivialism should aim to be *Explanatorily Elevating*. It should offer genuinely ampliative explanations where certain exceptions are made. For example, wherever there's an adequate source of light I know I can observe my shadow, but wherever there's not (such as in pitch darkness) I know I can't. So, I know I can only observe my shadow *some* of the time (namely, wherever there's an adequate source of light). Why can't I observe my shadow *all* of the time (e.g., when I'm in pitch darkness)? One answer is this: *because sometimes there isn't an adequate source of light*. This answer isn't wrong, but it leaves much to be desired in terms of an explanation. It's not explanatorily ampliative in the right way as it doesn't tell me anything I didn't already know. A better

---

[12] See especially Quine (1948) and van Inwagen (1998).

[13] Simplifying, to resolve an existence debate the Quinean way—e.g., "Do *F*s exist?"—the Quinean first recommends that we look to our best scientific theory, which we are to then regiment into first-order logic. From there, to determine whether *F*s exist or not, we look at what entities are required in the domain of quantification for sentences of our theory to come out true. If *F*s are within the domain of quantification, *F*s exist, and one is ontologically committed to them; if not, they don't.

answer would be one that explains why and how the particular properties of light, shadows, and my perception of them, are such that wherever there is an adequate source of light I can observe my shadow and wherever there isn't, I can't.

Why do MOAs resolve only *some* existence debates and not others? (WEAK TRIVIALISM) leaves this fact unexplained. One possible explanation could be that the unresolved ones are the real non-trivial existence debates—the debates deserving of the metaphysician's attention—and that's why they can't be resolved by MOAs. But this isn't a genuinely ampliative explanation. If just what it means for an existence debate to be non-trivial is that an MOA is incapable of settling it, then explaining why some existence debates are non-trivial by virtue of the fact that some MOAs don't settle existence debates isn't explanatorily ampliative in the right way; it doesn't tell us anything we didn't already know.

What to conclude? Well, since **MA3** and **MA4** both incorporate (WEAK MOOREANISM) they're in tension with a plausible conception of Mooreanism and remain vulnerable to particularist worries. And since **MA2** and **MA4** both incorporate (WEAK TRIVIALISM) they're in tension with a plausible constraint on metaontological principles and remain vulnerable to worries about ampliative explanation. **MA1** doesn't have these problems. Of the four approaches, it's the only one that accommodates all the desiderata above.

2.2 *Further Issues*

So, the weaker formulations all fail to accommodate the desiderata. Might there be more promise in their conjunction?

Let's start with the most implausible of the weak, **MA3**: (WEAK MOOREANISM) with (STRONG TRIVIALISM). Together, these two principles yield the following: *all* and *only* philosophical existence debates can be resolved by Moorean principles, all other philosophical debates may (or may not be) resolved by such principles. But it's a bit odd to maintain one's Mooreanism exclusively in the context of existence debates and not other philosophical debates. Why are existence debates more susceptible to Moorean reconciliation than other philosophical debates? Is there a special feature unique *only* to existence debates that somehow makes them more responsive to Moorean solutions than other philosophical debates? It's hard to take these questions seriously. Indeed, I don't think there are convincing answers to them. Still, any **MA3** theorist must answer them.

Moving on, we have **MA2**, (STRONG MOOREANISM) with (WEAK TRIVIALISM), which entails the following: some existence debates can't be resolved

by MOAs because there is no MOA—or no Moorean proposition(s)—that corresponds to/resolves those existence debates. **MA2** is certainly more plausible than the last. Intuitively, it at least seems as if MOAs are incapable of resolving *some* philosophical existence debates. Consider the debate over the existence of concrete possible worlds. Surely, *this* is a philosophical existence debate that no MOA can or will resolve. But I think this is a mistake. It's a mistake because it's unclear whether this debate is, at its core, philosophical or empirical. If it's the latter, then the Moorean will leave it up to science (perhaps cosmology) to settle it. But suppose it's really the former. Then I think common sense does rule it out: according to common sense, there are *possibilities* to be sure, but to analyze them as concrete possible worlds goes far beyond the jurisdiction of common sense. So, it turns out that common sense *does* rule out concrete possible worlds or else the question is in the hands of science and therefore outside the scope of trivialism. Perhaps there are other philosophical existence debates that I'm overlooking that are more determinately philosophical that MOAs can't resolve. But given the relevant sense of "existence debate"[14] it's hard to see how there isn't at least one MOA in the vicinity capable of resolving them.

Enter now the most plausible of the weak, **MA4**, (WEAK MOOREANISM) with (WEAK TRIVIALISM), which says that some existence debates *can't* be resolved by MOAs and some Moorean truths *can* be overturned by radical philosophical arguments to the contrary (or rationally suspended until further notice). Unlike the previous two approaches, **MA4** has a lot going for it. But what's gained in plausibility is lost in credibility. The problem with **MA4** is that it's simply not Moorean enough. Indeed, in principle, **MA4** can accommodate a number of metaphysical positions that should, by the Moorean's lights, be deemed too radical to be taken seriously. **MA4** permits one to be both a mereological nihilist and a believer in numbers, a modal realist and a believer in properties, a nominalist and a believer in tables. Yet, these ontologies are far from deserving the Moorean title.

What we're left with, then, is **MA1**, (STRONG MOOREANISM) with (STRONG TRIVIALISM), which (I say) is the most plausible of the four approaches here. **MA1** says that *all* existence debates are highly trivial because they can be resolved by MOAs and *all* Moorean truths should be believed—not sometimes abandoned for radical philosophical theses to the contrary or rationally suspended. Recall also that **MA1** accommodates all the desiderata above.

So, the weak principles just seem too weak. **MA2**, **MA3**, and **MA4** therefore aren't appropriate targets. This isn't to say that the weaker approaches

---

[14]See footnote 9 for the relevant sense.

are all lost causes. Indeed, I challenge the Moorean to mitigate some of the offenses enumerated here. Nevertheless, in light of the considerations above, I take the real target here to be **MA1**. Though obviously it is more extreme than the other approaches, it has virtues the others lack: its commitments are clear and its approach is sufficiently principled. Moreover, it seems better supported by those who embrace Mooreanism.

3   A Puzzle for Moorean Metaphysics

Consider again argument (i–ii). We're supposed to believe tables exist on the basis of the argument's premise. The premise is obviously true—it *commands Moorean certainty*—so we should believe it. So we should believe whatever this true premise entails: that there are tables.

But just as common sense corroborates many positive existential claims, so too, I think, it corroborates many *negative* existential claims. Common sense—as ontologically inclusive as it can be—*excludes* many things from reality. Paradigmatic examples of this include (*inter alia*) mythical and fictional things, past and future things/times, and impossible objects. Of course, this hasn't stopped philosophers from debating the existence of these things. My point is simply that, from the purview of common sense, there are things that *obviously* don't exist. For example, we (eventually, I hope) tell young children that Sherlock Holmes, the Easter Bunny, and the Tooth Fairy don't exist, hence their fictional status. Imagine how a philosopher who believes in the existence of such things would break the news to their children: they wouldn't say the Tooth Fairy exists *qua* abstract object. No, they would say (to their child's chagrin) that there is no such thing as the Tooth Fairy. The Tooth Fairy just doesn't exist. Similar reasoning applies in the case of past and future things/times and impossible objects. I take it, then, that certain negative existential statements, e.g., "*F*s don't exist," express Moorean truths.

I turn now to the puzzle. The puzzle exploits two familiar and plausible logico-ontological principles—existential generalization and the predication principle—to ultimately show how the combination of Mooreanism and easy ontological arguments is untenable. To keep things clean and simple, I focus just on fictional things like the Tooth Fairy. And to keep things intuitive, I focus on singular propositions with the understanding that they generalize to propositions about all fictional entities. It will also be helpful to have in front of us the commitments of the Moorean approach in question:

> **The Moorean Approach to Ontology (MA1)**
>
> (STRONG MOOREANISM): If *p* is a Moorean truth and *q* is the conclusion

of a philosophical argument that contradicts p, and S is deciding which proposition to believe, then S should always believe p.

(STRONG TRIVIALISM): All existence debates are highly trivial because they can be resolved by MOAs.

Now, just as much as common sense giveth, common sense taketh away. We granted this above. Common sense therefore licenses us to count the following claim as true, i.e., as one expressing a Moorean truth:

(r) The Tooth Fairy doesn't exist.

But consider now another Moorean truth:

(p) The Tooth Fairy is fictional.

From which it follows that:

(q) The Tooth Fairy exists.

What results is an inconsistent Moorean triad. (q) is obviously in conflict with what we ordinarily believe: that the Tooth Fairy doesn't exist. What to do? Denying (p) saves (r) but at the cost of contradicting common sense. But saving (p) means giving up (r) which comes at the same cost. Do we kill one Moorean truth to save another? To dissolve the paradox, the Moorean must either reject (r) or else deny (p). From the standpoint of common sense, both options seem untenable. More formally:[15]

(1) (STRONG MOOREANISM) and (STRONG TRIVIALISM) are true.   (assume for *reductio*)

(2) If (STRONG MOOREANISM) is true then the Tooth Fairy doesn't exist.

(3) If (STRONG MOOREANISM) is true then the Tooth Fairy is fictional.

(4) Therefore, the Tooth Fairy is fictional.   (from 1, 3)

(5) If (STRONG TRIVIALISM) is true and the Tooth Fairy is fictional, then the Tooth Fairy exists.

(6) Therefore, the Tooth Fairy exists.   (from 4, 5)

(7) Therefore, the Tooth Fairy doesn't exist.   (from 1, 2)

(8) Therefore, the Tooth Fairy exists and the Tooth Fairy doesn't exist.   (from 6, 7)

(9) Therefore, (STRONG MOOREANISM) and (STRONG TRIVIALISM) are false.   (from 1, 8)

---

[15]Thanks to an anonymous referee for suggesting I formalize the puzzle this way.

Thus, the conjunction of (STRONG MOOREANISM) and (STRONG TRIVIALISM) entails a contradiction.

With necessary alterations, the puzzles generalizes to other categories of entity: past and future things/times, impossible objects, and whatever else *obviously* doesn't exist.[16] Consider, for example, past and future things/times. Our commonsensical conception of time and temporal experience support the belief that past and future things/times don't exist.[17] Yet, it's a Moorean truth that *some present objects stand in certain relations to past objects*, e.g., *I'm taller than my deceased grandfather*. But to say this presupposes some past object (e.g., my grandfather). But past objects don't exist! (Also a Moorean truth.) Of course, they *did* exist, but they don't *now* exist which is just to say they don't exist period. Likewise for future things/times. So, inconsistent Moorean triad.

Impossible objects don't exist either. How could the round square exist? For it to exist there would have to be something that has the property of being both round and square which is, well, impossible. Nothing is or can be both round and square. So, the round square doesn't exist. That's a Moorean truth. Yet, it's also a Moorean truth that *the round square is an impossible object*. But this presupposes the existence of the round square! So, inconsistent Moorean triad.

MOAs are supposed to establish that existence debates are trivial: they're trivial because they're easily resolved. But the MOAs above establish just the opposite: existence debates aren't trivial because they can't be easily resolved by the very MOAs that are supposed to easily resolve them.

4 Attempts at Resolution

One natural response to the puzzle is to paraphrase. Quine taught us that when we're in an ontological bind we can eschew ontological commitment by locating an appropriate paraphrase. To avoid commitment to holes, for example, we might paraphrase "There are many holes in my sock" into "My

---

[16]Perhaps, even non-existent objects themselves. Consider the sentence "The Tooth Fairy is non-existent" which implies the existence of at least one non-existent object (e.g., the Tooth Fairy). But non-existent objects don't exist—they're not objects of any kind, they're nothing!

[17]Saint Augustine concurs: "[I]t is abundantly clear that neither the future nor the past exist, and therefore it is not strictly correct to say that there are three times, past, present, and future" (Augustine, Book XI §20: 269). Presentists do too. One of the cited upshots of the presentist view is that it coheres with common sense. (Of course, this is also what gets the presentist into trouble. If past things/times don't exist, it's not clear what could make sentences like "Caesar crossed the Rubicon" true. Likewise for sentences about the future.) See Zimmerman (2008) for further discussion.

sock is multiply-perforated." The Moorean paraphraser could adopt a similar strategy. Perhaps there is a more natural translation of "The Tooth Fairy is fictional" that doesn't quantify over or entail the existence of the Tooth Fairy. Perhaps, then, the Moorean should only consider propositions that have first been vetted by paraphrase: if p is a Moorean truth but has a paraphrase p^* that isn't ontologically committing, then it shouldn't be used as a premise in an MOA.[18],[19]

But paraphrase seems antithetical to the whole Moorean approach. The Moorean deals in Moorean truths. These are truths that are meant to be un-ambiguous by design. Indeed, it's for this reason that they seem so compelling: they're true, obviously, *as stated*, no paraphrase necessary.[20] Suppose, how-ever, we were to grant the Moorean their paraphrases. There's an unresolved tension between the Moorean truth and the paraphrased one: though the paraphrase is ontologically innocent, the Moorean truth is not. Yet, it could be that the Moorean truth is still more compelling than the paraphrased one. For consider "There are many tables before me" which seems more like a Moorean truth than "There are many particles arranged tablewise before me." While the latter avoids commitment to tables, it ceases to count as Moorean. So must the Moorean count this paraphrase as a Moorean truth too? Or is the abandoned Moorean truth no longer Moorean?

There is a more serious issue with the paraphrase approach. If paraphrase is permissible, we might wonder what work MOAs are doing for the Moorean. Paraphrase enters the scene as a strategy for *retaining* one's preferred ontology. That is, before one paraphrases, one already has an ontology in mind that one intends the paraphrase to respect (hence the motivation to paraphrase *away* the existence of holes). Yet, the whole upshot of the Moorean approach is to use MOAs to settle existence debates. Mooreans employ MOAs to determine what exists. Paraphrase undermines this whole approach by forgoing MOAs altogether: with paraphrase, the Moorean picks and chooses their ontology ahead of time as opposed to letting ontology come to them by putting MOAs to work.[21]

---

[18]Thanks to an anonymous referee for this objection.

[19]A concern in the vicinity has to do with the puzzle of negative existentials. One might worry that it's just *irrational* for the Moorean to go on believing the truth of bare negative existential statements. For when the Moorean asserts "The Tooth Fairy doesn't exist" what they're in effect asserting is "There exists something (e.g., the Tooth Fairy) such that it doesn't exist" and *that's* a contradiction. Of course, this ancient puzzle hasn't stopped anyone from doing ontology, but it's a special concern for the Moorean only insofar as it seems that any solution will involve rejecting and/or modifying some intuitively commonsensical premise(s).

[20]See Schaffer (2009: 357) for a similar line of reasoning.

[21]Maybe this isn't all that bad. Paul Audi (2015: 225), for instance, proposes we understand

Moving away from paraphrase, the Moorean might try sidestepping the puzzle by deferring to a principle like the following:

> (EASY BELIEF): If a premise p of some MOA expresses a Moorean truth, but its conclusion q doesn't, then S should nevertheless believe q on the basis of p because p expresses a Moorean truth.

Consider argument $(p\text{–}q)$ again. Its premise "The Tooth Fairy is fictional" expresses a common sense proposition while its conclusion "The Tooth Fairy exists" clashes with another common sense proposition "The Tooth Fairy doesn't exist." (EASY BELIEF) tells us that we should believe the conclusion of $(p\text{–}q)$ simply because its premise respects common sense.

But (EASY BELIEF) is implausible on two fronts. First, (r)—like (p)—expresses a common sense proposition. So respecting common sense can't be used as a condition for rejecting (r) here since (r) itself respects common sense. Second, even if (q) is a conclusion that is deduced by S why should S believe (q) when S believes more strongly in (r)? That is, if we are more certain of our belief in the proposition "The Tooth Fairy doesn't exist" why believe otherwise? If common sense counts in favor of truth and one is more *certain* of propositions which respect common sense than those that don't, it seems irrational to believe otherwise, especially when certainty about (r) is stronger than mere belief in (q).

I anticipate the following rejoinder: "But (q) is the logical entailment of something we believe to be true, namely, (p), and if we know (p) to be true, and we're in a position to know what follows from (p), then are we not justified in believing that (q) is true?"

The problem with this line of reasoning is that we're both justified in believing that (q) is true and also that (r) is true. On the one hand, it's commonsensical to say that the Tooth Fairy *is* fictional. And since something isn't nothing then it seems we have evidence that something exists, namely, the Tooth Fairy. So, given that the former claim is supported by common

---

common sense "as a source of concepts and categories rather than as a body of propositions most of which are true (perhaps even obviously so)." His idea is that we should stop looking to particular claims of common sense for Moorean enlightenment, e.g., "There are many tables before me," but instead to the ontological categories these common sense claims presuppose, e.g., "complex material object." But this overlooks the epistemic saliency of the claims from which these ontological categories are derived. The Moorean's belief in the existence of complex material objects might be entailed by a belief (or presupposed by a belief) in the proposition "There are many tables before me," but only because *the Moorean believes this proposition is true*. And *why* does the Moorean believe it true? Because to deny it would contradict common sense. It's unclear to me, then, how common sense could be merely appended to *categories* of things but not also to specific *claims* (of common sense).

sense, we're justified in believing it, hence we're justified in believing the entailment of that claim: fictional things like the Tooth Fairy exist. On the other hand, it's commonsensical to say that the Tooth Fairy doesn't exist. The Tooth Fairy is, after all, thought to be non-existent for good reason: it's made-up! And made-up things don't exist. Because our evidence for both claims is underdetermined we seem justified in believing either one. Therefore, believing (q) on the grounds that it's entailed by (p) (assuming our belief in (p) is justified) isn't enough to decide the matter.

Perhaps the Moorean might retreat to a different sort of principle, suggested to me by Dan Korman:

> (PLAUSIBILITY): If at least one premise p of some MOA is less plausible than the denial of its conclusion q, then S shouldn't believe the premise of that MOA (otherwise S should believe it).[22]

(PLAUSIBILITY) seems to do the trick for familiar MOAs like (i–ii). Is "There are many tables before me" less plausible than "Tables don't exist"? No. So, Mooreans should believe the premise of that MOA for the existence of tables.

Unfortunately, however, this move proves to be fruitless in the end as (PLAUSIBILITY) yields the same puzzling results. Consider again (p–q):

> (p) The Tooth Fairy is fictional.

> (q) Therefore, the Tooth Fairy exists.

With the updated decision procedure in place we can ask: Is (p) less plausible than the negation of (q)? That is, is (p) less plausible than (r)?

> (r) The Tooth Fairy doesn't exist.

It's indeterminate given that (p) seems equally as plausible as (r). So (PLAUSIBILITY) gets the Moorean no closer to solving the puzzle.

Could going "fundamental" escape the problem? Some metaphysicians make a distinction between fundamental and non-fundamental quantification.[23] Call these metaphysicians *fundamentalists*. According to the fundamentalist, different senses of "there are/there exists" are invoked when making existential claims. For example, the quantifier we use when we're metaphysically serious can be dubbed the "fundamental quantifier"—it's the quantifier

---

[22]If you find the plausibility relation too underspecified, feel free to substitute it with "certainty" or some other relevant epistemic notion.

[23]See Cameron (2008, 2010), Dorr (2007), and Sider (2009, 2011, 2013) for different but related strategies. See also van Inwagen (1990) for the locus of compatibilist-inspired strategies like these.

that "carves at the joints." When one denies the existence of tables, then, one is denying that *fundamentally-speaking* tables exist. But when one isn't doing metaphysics, and is out in the wild, furniture shopping (say), one's assertion that "There are many tables before me" doesn't entrap you in contradiction, for it doesn't commit you to tables. Here only a non-fundamental, ordinary sense of the quantifier is in use. And while what was said was literally and strictly true, it isn't ontologically deep or serious.

Why is fundamentalism relevant to the Moorean? Because having our ordinary common sense propositions come out true is one of the main motivations to go fundamental. Fundamentalists with revisionary inclinations (i.e., those who want to deny the existence of tables, numbers, and so on) want to hold on to the literal truth of common sense propositions that we (and they) all utter outside the seminar room. They would also like to be able to express their deep ontological commitments which seem to contradict these ordinary claims. To do both, they invoke the fundamental/non-fundamental distinction. Thus, the fundamentalist who doesn't like fictional things bloating their ontology might say "The Tooth Fairy exists" is true *non*-fundamentally-speaking (and therefore doesn't entail ontological commitment to fictional things) but false *fundamentally*-speaking, for fundamentally-speaking, the Tooth Fairy doesn't exist.

Though this resolves the puzzle, the Moorean should find the fundamentalist move deeply unsatisfying. For what good is the Moorean approach to ontology if it has nothing to do with *ontology*? If Moorean truths like "There are many tables before me" don't entail the existence of tables (in the fundamental sense) they seem useless to the Moorean who'd like to include such entities in their ontology—and include them on the basis of their entailment from claims that *command Moorean certainty*. The reason for believing in such entities is *because* they follow from such claims. The problem with fundamentalism, then, is that it asks too much of the Moorean. For while it sidesteps the puzzle, it does so by radically reforming the scope and application of Moorean common sense. It then becomes quickly unclear what exactly the upshot of fundamentalism is supposed to be if the Moorean image it alleges to preserve is one the Moorean can't recognize.[24]

Suppose now that we were to make a distinction between *what exists$_C$* and *what exists$_A$* where "exists$_C$" means something like "exists concretely" and where "exists$_A$" means something like "exists abstractly." The Moorean could then take (*r*) to mean:

---

[24] See also Korman (2015a, 2015b, forthcoming) for critical discussion of the fundamentalist approach.

$(r)^*$ The Tooth Fairy doesn't exist$_C$.

And if the quantifiers in (p–q) are taken to express "exists$_A$" then the contradiction disappears and the puzzle is resolved. Call this the *ontological pluralist* approach.[25] Ontological pluralism says there are *multiple ways for something to be*. Some things exist concretely and other things exist abstractly, but make no mistake: both exist.

I think there are good, independent reasons for the Moorean *not* to adopt pluralism.[26] Nevertheless, we can still ask: should the Moorean go pluralist for the simple reason that it resolves our puzzle? It's not clear they should. I assume what makes (r) a Moorean truth is that it says the Tooth Fairy doesn't exist *in any sense at all*—not that it exists in *some* sense. Moreover, I don't think it's exactly commonsensical to hold that the Tooth Fairy, if it does exist, exists as an abstract object, outside of space (and perhaps time). If in order to resolve the puzzle the Moorean has to invoke strange, commonsensically dubious entities then the move to pluralism doesn't seem worth it.

A different direction: suppose we were to depart from Quinean orthodoxy and adopt a different view of quantification altogether—quantifier neutralism.[27] Quantifier neutralism is just the view that quantification in natural and formal language is ontologically neutral, and thus not ontologically committing. According to the neutralist, quantificational expressions like "some," "there are," and "∃" *don't* mean *there exists* and therefore don't entail ontological commitment. Instead, existence is a predicate, "E," and ontological commitment is induced (or thwarted) by attaching that predicate to expressions in the following way: $\exists x \, (Fx \wedge Ex)$. In English: "There is something (e.g., the number 3) such that it is prime and it exists." Or if we think numbers *don't* exist: $\exists x \, (Fx \wedge {\sim}Ex)$. In English: "There is something (e.g., the number 3) such that it is prime and it doesn't exist." Thus, for the neutralist, the domain of quantification includes both existent and non-existent things.

Neutralism has an elegant solution to the puzzle: (p) doesn't entail (q). All (p) entails is *there is* a Tooth Fairy—not *the Tooth Fairy exists*. For fictional things are *non-existent*. So (q) is better understood as $(q)^*$: "There is a (non-existent) Tooth Fairy." On this approach, (p), $(q)^*$, and (r) all express Moorean truths. So the Moorean can endorse (p), $(q)^*$, and (r) without contradicting themselves.

---

[25] See McDaniel (2017) and Turner (2010) for a defense of ontological pluralism.

[26] See Merricks (2019) for critical discussion, much of which I'm sympathetic to.

[27] For a defense of neutralist views ranging from the Meinongian to the anti-Meinongian, see Azzouni (1994, 2004, 2017), Crane (2012, 2013), Finn (2017), Priest (2005, 2008), and Routley (1980, 1982).

Yet, neutralism seems to suffer a similar fate as fundamentalism. For I doubt the Moorean will like that (by the neutralist's lights) Moorean truths such as "There are many tables before me" don't entail the existence of tables. But suppose a compromise is reached: maybe according to the Moorean *tables exist* is true not because it was deduced from any MOA but because *tables just exist*! That is, instead of *inferring* the conclusion "Tables exist" from a Moorean premise "There are many tables before me" the Moorean here can simply insist that "Tables exist" is true because it expresses a Moorean truth. But as Ted Sider correctly points out:

> This maneuver is just a fig leaf. These propositions that Mooreans simply take as premises exhibit a striking pattern: they include all the dictates of common sense. If Mooreans realize this but are unwilling to regard common sense as a source of justification, it would be unreasonable (and unselfaware) for them to continue insisting on the premises, unless they have reason to believe that there is another source (or sources) of justification for the premises. (Sider 2013: §2)

In other words, the Moorean who insists that "Tables exist" is true but denies that common sense is playing any sort of justificatory role in reaching this conclusion is just fooling themselves. So, though initially compelling, neutralism doesn't help the Moorean in the right way.

The Moorean seems backed into a corner. With no way to override the puzzle, MOAs look like an inconsistent and ineffectual way of settling existence debates.

5   Concluding Discussion

Inconsistent beliefs aren't anything new. When we discover an inconsistency in our belief system, we update it accordingly, shoring up the unwanted inconsistency by deciding to endorse some propositions and rejecting others. In the cases above, however, it's unclear how exactly we might do this: **MA1** seems to allow no wiggle room. What, then, to make of our puzzle? Either Mooreanism or trivialism—or both—must go!

Perhaps some would like to *keep* trivialism and give up Mooreanism: easy ontological arguments like (i–ii) get by just fine without Moorean principles.

But then we might wonder why the premise(s) of such arguments are *true*. Why believe them? What's doing the justificatory work? If it isn't Mooreanism, or if it's something weaker than Mooreanism, proponents of easy ontological arguments should be open to potentially revising their ontological beliefs in the face of radical but compelling philosophical arguments to the contrary. (Recall

that proponents of MOAs are unwilling to concede this since it would mean giving up on some Moorean truths.) Yet, I assume that those interested in trivialism are interested in easy ontological arguments because they seem like a compelling way of *settling* existence debates. But if revising one's ontological beliefs in the face of such arguments is a real option, why think such debates are "trivial" or "easily resolved" in the first place?

Maybe others would be tempted to give up trivialism and *keep* Mooreanism. Maybe all existence debates are highly non-trivial. Or maybe existence debates are all trivial in some *other* way than what trivialism suggests.Whatever the case, the proponent of such a view has modest aspirations: Mooreanism settles *some* philosophical debates to be sure, but which ones? (Hint: *not* existence debates.) I take it that those attracted to this approach recommend patience: answers are to be discovered piecemeal, on a case-to-case basis.

One last way forward is to embrace some general form of *anti*-Mooreanism and *anti*-trivialism. Anti-Mooreanism, because common sense doesn't count for much; anti-trivialism, because existence debates are highly *non*-trivial.

How would an approach like this one play out? Well, everyone can agree that common sense is an acceptable starting point. (What else is one supposed to lean on at the beginning of inquiry?). But instead of letting common sense stubbornly dictate what, in the final analysis, there is and what there isn't, it should be renegotiated when new evidence comes along. For instance, J.R.G. Williams suggests that the real Moorean challenge ought to focus not on the relative justification of one's beliefs but *when and under what conditions it is rational to change these beliefs*.[28] Moorean principles simply ban philosophical arguments from inducing rational belief change: according to the Moorean, philosophy just doesn't have the capabilities. But the puzzle above cries out for a seachange: philosophical argument *needs* to be capable of undermining Moorean common sense or else land itself in paradox. With the right sort of philosophical argument, then, it should be permissible to give up our belief in certain Moorean propositions.[29,30]

---

[28]Although note that Williams goes on to develop a compatibilist strategy similar in spirit to the fundamentalist. See Williams (2013: 167).

[29]It's easy to see how some form of anti-trivialism follows: if we're justified in rejecting the premise(s) of MOAs like (i-ii), settling existence debates *by* MOAs looks futile.

[30]It's an interesting question as to how "anti-Moorean" the proposal sketched here really is and whether it could be accommodated by something like (WEAK MOOREANISM). My response to the former is that it's anti-Moorean in the sense that common sense doesn't count for much— it only guides initial inquiry and can be overturned by compelling philosophical arguments to the contrary. I take it that no Moorean would be happy with this outcome. As for whether this "anti-Mooreanism" coheres with (WEAK MOOREANISM): it doesn't insofar as proponents of (WEAK MOOREANISM) only believe it's every blue moon (if ever *actually* the case) that common

This lends some credence to incompatibilist approaches like those of the error theorist and fictionalist. If philosophical arguments are capable of undermining Moorean common sense, then it's permissible to give up our belief in certain Moorean propositions. Thus, we may be *justified* in rejecting the premise(s) of MOAs like (i-ii): there aren't many tables before me because (perhaps) *tables don't exist*. Of course, much turns on fleshing out the "what" and "when" of rational belief change. For if the conditions are too stringent, we could slide back into Mooreanism; but if the conditions are too permissive, we could end up with something deeply unprincipled, or worse, incoherent.

Whatever the case, the Moorean metaphysician has their work cut out for them.

References

Armstrong, David M. (1978). *Universals and Scientific Realism*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

——— (1999). "A Naturalist Program: Epistemology and Ontology." *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 73: 77–89.

——— (2004). *Truth and Truthmakers*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Audi, Paul (2015). "Explanation and Explication." In Chris Daly (ed.), *The Palgrave Handbook of Philosophical Methods*, 208–230. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, Great Britain: Palgrave Macmillan.

sense can be philosophically overturned. The anti-Mooreanism here says that this happens more frequently than proponents of (WEAK MOOREANISM) are comfortable conceding.

Augustine (1961). *Confessions.* R. S. Pine-Coffin (trans.) Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Azzouni, Jody (1994). *Metaphysical Myths, Mathematical Practice: The Ontology and Epistemology of the Exact Sciences.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

——— (2004). *Deflating Existential Consequence.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

——— (2017). *Ontology without Borders.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Cameron, Ross P. (2008). "Truthmakers and Ontological Commitment: Or, How to Deal With Complex Objects and Mathematical Ontology Without Getting Into Trouble." *Philosophical Studies* 140: 1–18.

——— (2010). "Quantification, Naturalness, and Ontology." In Allan Hazlett (ed.), *New Waves in Metaphysics*, 8–26. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, Great Britain: Palgrave Macmillan.

Conee, Earl (2001). "Comments on Bill Lycan's Moore Against the New Skeptics." *Philosophical Studies* 103: 55–59.

Contessa, Gabriele (2014). "One's a Crowd: Mereological Nihilism without Ordinary-Object Eliminativism." *Analytic Philosophy* 55: 99–221.

Crane, Tim (2012). "Existence and Quantification Reconsidered." In Tuomas Tahko (ed.), *Aristotelian Metaphysics*, 44–65. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

——— (2013). *The Objects of Thought.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Dorr, Cian (2007). "There Are No Abstract Objects." In (eds.) John Hawthorne, Theodore Sider, and Dean W. Zimmerman, *Contemporary Debates in Metaphysics*, 32–63. Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Fairchild, Maegan and John Hawthorne (2018). "Against Conservatism in Metaphysics." *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement* 82: 45–75.

Fine, Kit (2001). "The Question of Realism." *Philosopher's Imprint* 1: 1–30.

——— (2009). "The Question of Ontology." In David Chalmers, David Manley, and Ryan Wasserman (eds.), *Metametaphysics: New Essays on the Foundations of Ontology*, 157–177. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Finn, Suki (2017). "The Role of Existential Quantification in Scientific Realism." *Philosophy* 92: 351–367.

Gupta, Anil (2006). *Empiricism and Experience.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hirsch, Eli (2002). "Against Revisionary Ontology." *Philosophical Topics* 30: 103–127.

——— (2011). *Quantifier Variance and Realism: Essays in Metaontology.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kelly, Thomas (2005). "Moorean Facts and Belief Revision or Can the Skeptic Win?" *Philosophical Perspectives* 19: 179–209.

——— (2008). "Common Sense as Evidence: Against Revisionary Ontology and Skepticism." In Peter French and Howard Wettstein (eds.), *Midwest Studies in Philosophy: Truth and Its Deformities* 32: 53–78.

Korman, Daniel Z. (2015a). "Fundamental Quantification and the Language of the Ontology Room." *Noûs* 29: 298–321.

——— (2015b). *Objects: Nothing out of the Ordinary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

——— (2019). "Easy Ontology without Deflationary Metaontology." *Philosophical and Phenomenological Research* 99: 236–243.

——— (forthcoming). "Why Care About What There Is?"

Lewis, David (1973). *Counterfactuals*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

——— (1996). "Elusive Knowledge." *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 74: 549–567.

Lycan, William (2001). "Moore Against the New Skeptics." *Philosophical Studies* 103: 35–53.

McDaniel, Kris (2017). *The Fragmentation of Being*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Merricks, Trenton (2017). "The Only Way To Be." *Noûs* oo: 1–20.

Priest, Graham (2005). *Towards Non-Being*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

——— (2008). "The Closing of the Mind: How the particular quantifier became existentially loaded behind our backs." *The Review of Symbolic Logic* 1: 42–55.

Quine, W. V. O. (1948). "On What There Is." *The Review of Metaphysics* 2: 21–38.

Routley, Richard (1980). *Exploring Meinong's Jungle and Beyond: An Investigation of Noneism and the Theory of Items*. Philosophy Department Monograph 3 (Canberra, Australia: Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University).

——— (1982). "On What There is Not." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 43: 151–177.

Rinard, Susanna (2013). "Why Philosophy Can Overturn Common Sense." In Tamar Szabó Gendler and John Hawthorne (eds.), *Oxford Studies in Epistemology* 4, 185–213. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Schaffer, Jonathan (2009a). "On What Grounds What." In David Chalmers, David Manley, and Ryan Wasserman (eds.), *Metametaphysics: New Essays on the Foundations of Ontology*, 347–383. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

——— (2009b). "The Deflationary Metaontology of Thomasson's *Ordinary Objects*." *Philosophical Books* 50: 142–157.

Sider, Theodore (2009). "Ontological Realism." In David Chalmers, David Manley, and Ryan Wasserman (eds.), *Metametaphysics: New Essays on the Foundations of Ontology*, 384–423. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

——— (2011). *Writing the Book of the World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

——— (2013). "Against Parthood." In Karen Bennett and Dean W. Zimmerman (eds.), *Oxford Studies in Metaphysics 8*, 237–293. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Thomasson, Amie L. (2007). *Ordinary Objects*. New York: Oxford University Press.

——— (2015). *Ontology Made Easy* . Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Turner, Jason (2010). "Ontological Pluralism." *Journal of Philosophy* 107: 5–34

Van Inwagen, Peter (1990). *Material Beings*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

——— (1998). "Meta-ontology." *Erkenntnis* 48: 233–250.

Williams, J. Robert G. (2012). "Requirements on Reality." In Fabrice Correia and Benjamin Schnieder (eds.), *Metaphysical Grounding: Understanding the Structure of Reality*, 165–185. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Zimmerman, Dean (2008). "The Privileged Present: Defending an 'A-Theory' of Time." In Theodore Sider, John Hawthorne, and Dean W. Zimmerman (eds.), *Contemporary Debates in Metaphysics*, 211–225. Malden: Blackwell Publishing.