

AN ARGUMENT FOR EXISTENCE MONISM: THE ARGUMENT FROM OBJECT DUPLICATION

By
Loc G. Ho

Senior Honors Thesis
Department of Philosophy
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

March 29, 2019

Approved:

Thomas Hofweber, Thesis Advisor

Ram Neta, Reader

Carla Merino-Rajme, Reader

ABSTRACT

Loc G. Ho: An Argument for Existence Monism: The Argument from Object Duplication

(Under the direction of Thomas Hofweber)

Contemporary arguments for existence monism are in short supply. The main contemporary argument for the view is Horgan and Potrč's argument for objectivism, but this argument is rather unpersuasive. I present my own argument for existence monism based on a thought experiment where objects are duplicated and replaced with their duplicate. I argue that the cosmos is the only genuine object that exists because all other seemingly genuine objects fail the test for genuineness. That is, their duplication and replacement result in a certain kind of non-qualitative change to the cosmos itself, whereas truly genuine objects would not result in such a change.

Introduction

The debate concerning which objects are concrete has been dominated by pluralism, the view that there are many, or more than one, concrete objects. This view stands as the status quo for good reason; we see that there are many concrete things, and common sense tells us that there are indeed many things.¹ Pluralism of this kind has stood in contrast to monism, which takes two forms, priority monism and existence monism. Priority monism is the view that the whole and its parts are concrete, but only the whole is basic or fundamental.² Existence monism, this paper's focus, is typically taken as the view that there is only one concrete object.

Literature regarding monism attributes to monism itself some credibility as it has historically been seen as a viable ontological theory.³ But despite its long history, it has been dismissed for a time, and then revived as priority monism and existence monism. The arguments for these theories are far from "nonsense," but considering how radical, relative to pluralism, these theories are, they stand to benefit from further support, with existence monism benefitting the most from additional support. Whereas a compelling argument for priority monism is readily available, the difficulty in finding a compelling argument for

¹ Schaffer, Jonathan, "Monism," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2018), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2018/entries/monism/>.

² Schaffer, Jonathan, "Monism: The Priority of the Whole," *The Philosophical Review* 119, No. 1 (January 2010).

³ *Ibid*, 32.

existence monism consists in how much more radical of an ontological theory it seems to be.

Even though the most compelling argument for this view would be one that shows it to be necessarily the case, I can present no such argument. I instead present the main contemporary argument for existence monism and offer my own argument, which aims to establish that the cosmos is the only genuine object and leads to the conclusion that existence monism is correct. In part one, I reconstruct the leading argument for existence monism and motivate the need for more support if existence monism should be more compelling and intuitive. After this, I proceed to part two where I present my own argument for existence monism on the basis of object duplication.

Part I

Terence Horgan and Matjaž Potrč are nowadays the main advocates for existence monism. They offer their own argument which advocates for an indirect correspondence theory of truth in conjunction with a version of existence monism called bobjectivism. Because there are few contemporary arguments for existence monism, it is fitting to present the main contemporary argument for the view so that this paper shows the state of the arguments for existence monism.

1.1 Horgan and Potrč's Argument Reconstructed

Advanced by Horgan and Potrč, the main contemporary argument for existence monism takes the desiderata for any ontological theory to motivate the suitability of blobjectivism as the correct ontological theory. Blobjectivism is the view that only the blobject exists as concrete, with the blobject having “enormous spatiotemporal structural complexity, and enormous local variability—even though it does not have any genuine parts.”⁴

Horgan and Potrč's argument for blobjectivism starts with considering the principle that composition does not occur arbitrarily, and that Van Inwagen's special composition question tells us that an ontological theory must be, above all, general. Yet, it must also be sensible. For example, the ontological theory that there are only simples and living organisms meets these criteria.

Vagueness, an essential element in language, involves boundarylessness, which entails weak logical incoherence. For instance, describing some aggregation of sand as a “heap of sand” is vague; due to this vagueness, taking a grain of sand from the heap one-by-one and declaring a statement about whether the heap is still a “heap” would lead us to find that the first statement is true and the last is false, with no clear transition from truth to falsehood. As there is no clear transition from truth to falsehood, there is nothing to determine legitimately the semantic status of each predicative statement in our example.

⁴ Horgan, Terence, Potrč, Matjaž, “Blobjectivism and Indirect Correspondence,” *Facta Philosophica* 2, no.2 (2000): 249.

So, each statement should have the same semantic status, but this is not the case. In considering how to accommodate for this boundarylessness in our semantics, we find that such boundarylessness entails weak logical incoherence because its accommodation requires meeting mutually unsatisfiable semantic standards, i.e. the standard that each statement indeed has the same semantic status, while the set is attributed a general semantic status.

Given the implications of vagueness, 1) there are no vague objects since there can be no ontological analog to weak logical incoherence and 2) truth in vague discourse is not a matter of direct correspondence. So, the correct ontology admits no vague objects, and discourse about vague objects requires indirect correspondence. Given that the correct ontology must be general, sensible, and must only admit precise, determinate objects, we are left with three possible ontologies: one where there are non-vague simples, one where there are non-vague simples as well as non-vague composites, or ontological blobjectivism. Based on ontological parsimony, Horgan and Potrč lastly conclude that blobjectivism is the correct theory.

As far as this paper is concerned, the main critique of Horgan and Potrč's argument is that it ultimately makes its case based on ontological parsimony, and it does so by starting with ontological desiderata, instead of, say, intuition. A view as radical as existence monism would find greater support if its case were not primarily made on these abstract principles but instead made on more concrete considerations.

Horgan and Potrč's argument concludes that blobjectivism is the correct ontological theory essentially because the theory posits the least number of objects. This argumentation is rather unpersuasive because it is still the case that blobjectivism seems nonsensical. If one is faced with the choice of those three possible ontologies, it is more appropriate to appeal to something more concrete to justify which theory is correct. One would not justify picking a chocolate cake over a vanilla or strawberry one on the abstract basis that *chocolate releases more endorphins*. Instead, one would be persuaded to pick the chocolate cake because her gut tells her to do so. There is little in Horgan and Potrč's argument that sways the gut to pick blobjectivism as the correct theory, as it relies too heavily on abstract considerations and the principle of ontological parsimony.

In addition to this critique of Horgan and Potrč's argument, a problem with the argument is its distinction between concrete objects and abstract objects. In blobjectivism, the blobject is the only concrete object, while all others are abstract. Although in any conception of existence monism the cosmos should exist in a domain separate from all other objects, the assertion that all other objects are abstract should raise eyebrows. It is implausible to think that objects like chairs and tables are abstract, in the same way that ideas are abstract. Indeed, something *unlike* ideas is referenced when a chair is referenced, whether monism is the case or not. The problem with the distinction between concrete and abstract objects is that it seems correct to predicate the cosmos with 'concrete,' but it is incorrect to predicate all other objects with 'abstract.' And yet, abstract is the most fitting word to describe what is not concrete. Since blobjectivism and its vision of monism are

defined with this distinction, this problem with the view is difficult to overcome. Given the critique and problem of Horgan and Potrč's argument, we may see that existence monism needs further support, and if it should be more compelling and intuitive, another argument must be provided.

Part II

How do we go about determining whether the cosmos has actual parts? We can look around and see apples, cars, etc. and simply stop there to conclude that the cosmos indeed has parts. Yet this is too fast; the cosmos may merely take on the appearance that leads us to this conclusion. According to David Cornell, "it is not rationally acceptable to reject monism solely on the basis of [this] appearance" because the monist can give an explanation for this appearance.⁵ But why should we believe that the monist is correct in her explanation? This is where I start in attempting to determine whether the monist or the pluralist is correct. Looking at our cosmos, and perceiving there to be apples, cars, etc., we must determine whether these objects are even genuine ones. If not, we have reason to believe the monist's explanation. In the following sections, I present my own argument which concludes that these objects are not genuine, and only the cosmos is a genuine object.

To state my argument rather briefly, consider that there would be no noticeable or meaningful changes to the cosmos and the state of affairs if each apple, car, etc. were

⁵ Cornell, David M., "Taking monism seriously," *Philosophical Studies* 173, no. 9 (September 2016): 2397, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11098-015-0620-0>.

indeed a genuine object (objects that both look as such and exist as such) but were replaced by an exact copy of itself. Of course, there is the change that once there was the original object and then there is the duplicate object, but this change is trivial and does not aid in determining whether an object is a genuine one. I deny that apples, cars, etc. are genuine objects because there are noticeable changes to the cosmos, and the state of affairs, that occur upon replacement of these objects with their duplicates. Through considerations based on material coincidence, these objects fail the test for genuineness, and I thus conclude that the objects in question are not genuine ones; they merely look like objects, but they are not veritable objects.

How then is the cosmos a genuine object when all others merely seem to be genuine objects? Let us assume that the cosmos is a genuine object, just as we assumed the other objects were genuine objects. If it were replaced with an exact copy of itself, there would be no noticeable changes to both the cosmos itself and the state of affairs. A duplicate cosmos does not differ from the original cosmos, and so the state of affairs determined by the duplicate is the same as that of the original. The cosmos thus passes the test for genuineness. Since apples, cars, etc. are not genuine objects, the cosmos is the only genuine object.

My argument posits two ideas that help to establish its crucial premise but need to be clarified. These two ideas are that of object duplication and that of object replacement.⁶

⁶ I also consider the idea of an object standing in place of another object. Although conceptually prior, this idea is different from object replacement. It does not just entail that an object dematerializes, as it were; it also entails that an object overlaps with another. As we will see, this idea serves only to show how our analogy guides our thought process.

Object duplication is the idea that an exact copy of an object can be materialized, and with this new material coincides the objects necessary for the original object to be copied. Object replacement is the idea that an object can be replaced by another object, much like how a part of a machine can be replaced by another part.⁷

In supposing that an object can be duplicated, and further, that its duplicate can replace the original object, we can proceed to work out which objects are not genuine ones. This is done so by relying on the intuitive belief that replacement of a genuine object bears no consequence other than the original being replaced. For example, a fuel pump of a car can be replaced by another fuel pump, made by the original equipment manufacturer, without any noticeable changes to the car and how it behaves.

In this example, it is important to note that there is indeed a change to the car. The original fuel pump was replaced. This constitutes no qualitative changes to the car itself, but there is a meaningful, non-qualitative change to the car, especially with the kind of object replacement in my argument. This non-qualitative change consists in another intuitive consideration.⁸ To illustrate this consideration, consider that there was very plausibly a solid block of metal, among other objects, coinciding with the original fuel pump. However, when we replace, with its duplicate, the material where these various

⁷ If an agent must be specified for these concepts, then it will suffice to say that God materializes the duplicate and replaces the original object with it.

⁸ The use of the phrase 'non-qualitative change' seems to be a matter of appropriate wording, especially when talking about the examples I have given thus far. Later in this paper, I give examples where it may seem apt to say 'noticeable changes' or 'meaningful changes,' in an effort to specify in what this non-qualitative change consists.

objects materially coincided, we are left without the object that was the solid block of metal (because material taking the form of a *fuel pump* is certainly not a *solid block of metal*).

In the first section of part II, I will offer an analogy that helps simplify how we can think about the cosmos, and motivates the idea that a genuine object can be tested to be as such. After clarifying how this analogy works with considerations of the cosmos, the following sections frame and present my argument for existence monism at first in very general terms then in more particular terms.

2.1 The Cosmos as a Collage or Painting

Suppose an artist is in the middle of creating her *monumentum exactum* (henceforth, ME). We, as onlookers, have yet to discover and will not assume what kind of art she is producing, but we do know that she is producing either a collage, where the individual pieces, having been cut out or made in a similar manner, are being stuck onto a canvas and assembled into a complex whole, or a painting, where the whole is the canvas which she merely strokes with her brush to eke out an image. Perhaps, the ME is rendered in such a way that it's difficult to determine, based on appearance alone, whether it is a collage or painting. Yet, given more information, we can work out whether ME is a collage or a painting.

Suppose she tells us that she has to duplicate one of the elements of ME to aid in completing it. If she is making a collage, she can cut out the element in the same way as she did for the existing element, thereby duplicating it. On the other hand, if she is creating a

painting, she can replicate her strokes with extreme precision to duplicate the element.⁹

This does not help us. So, suppose she hints that there would be noticeable or meaningful changes to the final version of ME, if she were to have the duplicated element stand in place of the original element.

We now know that ME is a painting because, if it were a collage, the duplicate element can simply be stuck on top of the original or the original can simply be removed from the canvas and replaced with the duplicate element, resulting in no noticeable changes to the artwork. If it were a painting, there would be noticeable changes to the artwork. The duplicate element cannot simply be painted on top of the original as the original element would interfere (in the form of, say, visually muddy or mixed elements due to layering) with the duplicated element such that it is important to recognize the interaction between the two elements.¹⁰ Further, in whatever way the artist might have the duplicate stand in place of the original, the artwork will always have the original element, with the duplicate element being an addition.

To fairly evaluate whether the cosmos is a collage of genuine objects or a painting of seemingly genuine (but ultimately non-genuine) objects, we start with some intuitive assumptions. We must assume that each candidate object is a genuine one and then

⁹ Replicating her strokes with extreme precision is an important detail. The sum of the paint used for the duplicate element must also be the same as the sum used for the original. When we connect this analogy to the pluralist and monist models of the cosmos, this detail mirrors the desideratum that a duplicate object should be a duplicate in all respects.

¹⁰ As with regular painting, mistake correction (by painting white then proceeding with duplication) and restoration would present meaningful changes to the artwork in question. The former alters the original texture of the area painted; the latter increases the sum of the paint used to duplicate the element.

evaluate whether each one is indeed genuine. This means that tables, chairs, etc. as well as the cosmos are taken to exist first as genuine objects, that is, until we determine whether there's a noticeable or meaningful change upon their duplication and replacement.¹¹ In starting this way, we have the potential to establish that no object is genuine, some objects are genuine, or one object is genuine.

It is important to note here that our version of the cosmos as a genuine object will be one that exists in the domain of genuine objects and separate from its parts, whether or not there are such parts. This version of the cosmos as a genuine object ensures that, if there were no parts to it, there is still a cosmos. It also ensures that the cosmos could still be a genuine object, despite the possibility that there are no other genuine objects. Also note that, with this even playing field in considering which objects may be genuine, we may end up concluding a kind of nihilism, where no object whatsoever is a genuine one. We may end up with this absurd conclusion if duplication and replacement of the cosmos results in a noticeable or meaningful change to the cosmos itself.

As the analogy illustrates, we can think of pluralist models of the cosmos as some kind of collage and monist models of the cosmos as a painting. To be explicit, the pluralist model takes its objects to be discrete from each other. Nevertheless, they conspire to form a coherent picture. On the other hand, the monist model does not satisfy the existence of

¹¹ Although assuming that the cosmos is a genuine object is plausible and (to stand a chance against pluralist models) indeed needed for monistic models of the cosmos, this assumption deserves further examination. Schaffer offers his views on this plausibility: Schaffer, Jonathan, "Monism: The Priority of the Whole," *The Philosophical Review* 119, No. 1 (January 2010), 33-34.

any other object, except one. Nevertheless, this lone object exhibits an appearance or a kind of variability such that it leads us ultimately to misrepresent our thoughts.¹²

The main idea behind presenting the analogy and thought experiment is to “test” the objects of the cosmos and to compare the results with what would result in a pluralist model and what would result in a monist model. If our world has similar results to one of the models, then we have reason to believe that that model is correct. In other words, the two competing views of the cosmos, the pluralist model and the monist model, are both tenable, but it is only when we compare how such models of the cosmos would behave with how ours behaves upon object duplication and replacement that we start to see how one of the views is more tenable than the other, all the while disregarding the appearance of the cosmos that might lead us to misrepresent our thoughts. If there are no noticeable or meaningful changes upon object duplication and replacement upon reflection, then our cosmos behaves similarly to a collage of genuine objects; if there are any such non-qualitative changes, then our cosmos behaves similarly to a painting of seemingly genuine objects.

For the pluralist model to be analogous to a collage of genuine objects, we take the elements of the artist's ME to be discrete from each other, just as genuine objects are in the pluralist model. Object duplication and replacement can then be understood as parts of a thought experiment based on the analogy. That is, a genuine object is somehow (The particulars do not matter.) precisely replicated such that, upon replacement of the original

¹² Cornell, David M., “Taking monism seriously,” *Philosophical Studies* 173, no. 9 (September 2016): 2413, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11098-015-0620-0>.

object, the cosmos, just like the collage, exhibits no noticeable change in the end. To be consistent with the analogy, this replacement can be conceived as a duplicate element coinciding with the original one or a total replacement of an original element with its duplicate. It should be noted that the analogy does not fall apart under the pluralist model.

For the monist model to be analogous to a painting of seemingly genuine objects, we take the elements of the artist's ME to be misrepresented as discrete when it is actually the case that the only discrete object is the canvas, just as it is the case that there is a lone genuine object in the monist model. Our thought experiment then takes any instance of object duplication to be the replication of a seemingly discrete object. Only when we consider how object replacement works here does the analogy fall apart. Like the pluralist model, an element may coincide with its duplicate to achieve replacement. At first this seems problematic for ME as a painting; precisely replicating an element of the painting entails using the same strokes and paint to create a duplicate. If this duplicate were painted on top of the original element, hues would darken or change. I see no analogous problem similar to this in the monist model. So, the analogy falls apart here.

Perhaps the analogy can be saved by taking replacement of an element to occur by painting white over the original element and then proceeding to replicate it with the same strokes and paint as used for the original. One problem most relevant to my argument is that this way of replacing an element adds another, separate element (the extra white paint is analogous to adding to the pattern of the cosmos's distributional properties¹³). Since the

¹³ Ibid., 2408-2409.

addition (or subtraction) of an element is important to the composition of ME and, by extension, the monist model, this would be a non-qualitative change needed for my argument to work. However, by conceiving of such an analogous object replacement for our monist model, and thus having it entail a “noticeable or meaningful change” right from the start, my argument would be begging the question. As we are trying to find if such changes obtain under object replacement, it does no good if we were to conceive of object replacement in this way.

Despite these difficulties in maintaining the analogy on the monistic side, the main takeaway is that there is a way to tell whether the cosmos is pluralistic or monistic, and this way parallels the way to tell whether the ME is a collage or a painting. That is, given the relationship of the objects in a pluralistic world and that of the objects in a monistic world, object duplication and replacement are central to determining whether the cosmos follows one of these models. This is the critical idea for the argument to proceed.

2.2 Genuine Objects

Throughout this paper, ‘genuine’ will be used to describe certain objects. A genuine object is an object that is a discrete, veritable object, existing in the same domain as the cosmos. Although in this context the more familiar terms to describe objects are ‘concrete’ and ‘abstract,’ ‘genuine’ is useful for our purposes of establishing a certain kind of intuitive monism. This kind of existence monism is intended to be slightly different from Horgan and Potrč’s blobjectivism.

Whereas blobjectivism posits a cosmos that exists as the only concrete object, my argument, the argument from object duplication or the AOD, establishes that the cosmos is the only genuine object. The difference is that the former conception of the cosmos takes all other objects as abstract, while the latter does not. This distinction between concrete and abstract objects is problematic because tables, chairs, etc. are clearly not mere abstractions. Yet these objects do not exist in the same way as the cosmos does, hence my use of the phrase 'seemingly genuine' to predicate these objects. The use of 'genuine,' as opposed to 'concrete,' in predicating objects avoids asserting that tables, chairs, etc. are mere abstractions.

2.3 Developing a Test for Genuineness

To come to the AOD's conclusion that the cosmos is the only genuine object, we must first develop a test for genuineness, a test whereby any seemingly genuine object can be shown to be non-genuine. This is where the ideas of object duplication and object replacement come into play. As our analogy helped to explain, if we can find something that obtains in a pluralistic world but does not obtain in a monistic world, we have a concrete way to determine whether our world is monistic or pluralistic. To promptly state what this thing is, it is a certain non-qualitative change, one that obtains through object duplication and object replacement of an object in a monistic world.

Object duplication and object replacement are conceptual tools that tell us whether an object behaves as it would were it a genuine one. These two conceptual tools can tell us

this because, through their application, it is expected that there is no meaningful change to the cosmos, similar to how our fuel pump from before could be replaced with no changes to the car. If there is a non-qualitative change through an object's duplication and replacement, such an object has failed the test for genuineness, as a genuine object would not result in such a change. The upshot is that if we find that all but one object results in such a change (i.e. they do not behave as they would were they genuine objects), then we have a monistic world.

A non-qualitative change, which in some cases is used synonymously with 'noticeable change' and other cases 'meaningful change,' determines whether an object is non-genuine, and thus, whether our cosmos follows a certain ontology-theoretic model because such a change consists in the fundamental difference between the pluralistic model and the monistic model. We are not looking for just any non-qualitative change; we are looking for one that indicates whether a seemingly genuine object is a non-genuine object. Such a change indicates the nature of the relationships between the objects in our cosmos such that it ultimately lets us determine the ontology-theoretic model of our cosmos, hence the usage of 'noticeable' or 'meaningful' to further describe this non-qualitative change. Such a change is sufficient to use in determining whether our cosmos is monistic because it provides us with one of the few concrete ways we can use to differentiate a monistic world from a pluralistic one.

2.4 The Argument from Object Duplication (AOD)

We aim to find an answer to whether the cosmos exists alongside other objects in the domain of genuine objects or whether the cosmos is the only genuine object, perhaps existing as Horgan and Potrč's "blobject."¹⁴ I argue that the cosmos is the only genuine object that exists because all other seemingly genuine objects result in a certain non-qualitative change to the cosmos itself upon their duplication and replacement.

The AOD differentiates a monistic world from a pluralistic world by comparing three worlds and ultimately reaching its conclusion that the third world, our world, is a monistic one. The genuine objects of World 1 (the pluralistic one) are those that are discrete from each other and whose number is at least two; the genuine objects of World 2 (the monistic one) are also discrete but whose number is one. Put this way, the difference between the two worlds is slight.

However, there is a *something* about these worlds that will enable our comparison to elucidate the nature of the relationships between objects in World 3 (our world), in addition to how many genuine objects there are in World 3; a genuine object in both World 1 and World 2 produces the same result upon the object's duplication and replacement. This result is that there would be no noticeable or meaningful change to the world upon a genuine object's duplication and replacement. Upon object duplication and replacement, if there is a non-qualitative change that is not trivial, then 1) it is not a genuine object and 2) the change is noticeable or meaningful in the sense that it helps us determine that the

¹⁴ Horgan, Terry and Potrč, Matjaž, "Blobjectivism and Indirect Correspondence," *Facta Philosophica*, no. 2 (2000): 249.

object in question is indeed not a genuine one and that it takes us one step closer to getting the correct picture of the world and its contents.

Further, a genuine object would result in no noticeable or meaningful change to its world upon its duplication and replacement because of the necessary separateness of discrete objects in both pluralistic and monistic worlds. A genuine object separate and distinct from other genuine objects would not affect these other genuine objects if it itself is the only thing being manipulated in certain ways. For our purposes, the manipulation in question consists in the object being duplicated and replaced with its duplicate. That is, such manipulation to one of the genuine objects in World 1 would be isolated to the object being manipulated, exactly because it is a discrete object, while such manipulation to one of the seemingly genuine (but nonetheless non-genuine) objects in World 2 would affect some other object in World 2. These considerations about the genuine objects of both pluralistic and monistic worlds can be used to establish that a seemingly genuine object is not to be counted as a genuine one in its world, due to the fact that all genuine objects, on account of their necessary separateness, are such that they would not affect other objects if duplicated and replaced.¹⁵

To illustrate these concepts without reference to our analogy of the collage and painting, suppose we duplicate and replace World 1 with an exact copy of itself. World 1 is certainly a genuine object because there would be no meaningful change to the world itself

¹⁵ As we will see, the case for existence monism will be made based on the discovery that all seemingly genuine objects except the cosmos are not genuine because they do not meet this condition that all genuine objects meet, the condition that its duplication and replacement must not affect another object.

upon its duplication and replacement; that is, there would be no indication thus far that World 1 follows a certain ontology-theoretic model over another model. Now, suppose World 1's contents seemed to include a kind of object called 'chair leg' (and we may take the kind of object called "chair" to be genuine for the same reason that determines that World 1 itself is genuine). One of these "chair legs" is a genuine object if its duplication and replacement resulted in no noticeable or meaningful change to World 1 itself. On the other hand, it is not a genuine object if its duplication and replacement resulted in a change, either noticeable or meaningful in its indication that this "chair leg" is not to be considered a genuine object in World 1 and that the picture of World 1 should not be misinterpreted on account of this kind of object. In World 2's case, since there is only one genuine object and the other objects are indiscrete, we see that the instances of object duplication and replacement for each seemingly genuine but non-genuine objects result in a change to another object, which we may take to be World 2 itself, as it is sure to undergo some change upon one of its non-genuine object's duplication and replacement.

Before presenting the AOD in a less general fashion, before applying these lessons from comparing World 1 and World 2 and proceeding to evaluate the objects in World 3 (henceforth, the cosmos), it is important to understand our mission. Our goal is to "test" all the seemingly genuine objects of the cosmos for genuineness, determining which ones are indeed genuine and which ones are not. We aim to evaluate all such objects because all it takes for the cosmos to be pluralistic is that one other object tests positive for genuineness. That is, the cosmos would turn out to be a pluralistic world if at least one of these

seemingly genuine objects results in no noticeable or meaningful change to the cosmos itself. If this happens to be the case, the inventory of the cosmos's genuine objects includes at least this object and the cosmos itself. On the other hand, the cosmos would turn out to be a monistic world if none of the seemingly genuine objects test positive for genuineness. So, to establish that the cosmos is monistic we must evaluate all objects and find that they fail the test for genuineness and that the cosmos is the only one that passes the test.

Very broadly, we know we have to establish 1) the cosmos exists as a genuine object and 2) no other object exists as a genuine object.

1. So, suppose that object j is a genuine object.
2. From our thought experiment based on our analogy, any object can have a duplicate of the kind expressed in the thought experiment; yet, if an object is a genuine one and its duplicate were to stand in its place, then these conditions would preclude a non-qualitative change to the cosmos and the state of affairs other than the trivial one consisting in the replacement of the original object with an exact copy of itself.
3. Because object j is assumed to be a genuine object, if object j has a duplicate which we will name object j' , then object j' can stand in place of object j with no such changes whatsoever.
4. But object j' *cannot* stand in place of object j with no such changes whatsoever.

There would be some non-qualitative change relating to material coincidence.

5. Thus, object j is not a genuine object.¹⁶

¹⁶ This line of reasoning can be applied to all supposed genuine objects. The result of applying this line of reasoning to all other supposed genuine objects and finding that they

As an initial case, suppose the cosmos is object j , a genuine object. When object j is duplicated, the result is an object non-numerically identical to the original object. We now have another, non-numerically identical cosmos. Such a duplicate object exists such that material coincidence with the original object only trivially results in two objects or even such that material coincidence results in them being numerically identical. When a duplicate of an object stands in place of it, the result can be material coincidence or a god-like kind of object replacement. The latter result implies that the original object, the cosmos in this initial case, is materially replaced and in its place stands the duplicate cosmos.

Since we are only concerned with the cosmos and its contents, the replaced, original object does not bear on the argument, as it is “outside” the cosmos.¹⁷ In our initial case, then, what we have after this process is a copy of the cosmos. Since there is no noticeable or meaningful change to the cosmos and the state of affairs other than the trivial one of the original cosmos being replaced, our initial supposition stands: the cosmos is a genuine object. As will be explained, this is not the case if object j were some other object, because there would be some non-qualitative change to the cosmos and the state of affairs.

do not belong in the domain of genuine objects does not mean that these objects are necessarily abstract; they are, however, not genuine. From this we can conclude that the cosmos is not analogous to a collage of genuine objects; that, instead, it is analogous to a painting of what appears to be genuine objects; and that no other object exists in the domain of genuine objects.

¹⁷ The initial concept of an object standing in place of another will be reduced to just refer to the god-like kind of object replacement, which in turn will be further reduced to refer to material replacement. The reason I do not skip directly to referring to material replacement is because we move from analogy (hence the initial concept) to objects as such to objects as material.

Thus far, our critical “non-qualitative change” has merely been referenced and remains unsubstantiated, so it is not immediately clear how step 4 works in regards to its talk of “some non-qualitative change” relating to material coincidence. But the puzzle of the statue and the clay provides an intelligible example of how this step works. Suppose a sculptor molded a lump of clay into a statue. In the sculptor’s hands, where there was once only a lump of clay, now there is also a statue. The object that was the lump of clay, object *l*, now materially coincides with the object that is the statue, object *s*. Since these two objects differ in many respects, they seem to be different objects. For example, one way they differ is that object *l* exists at one point in time, while object *s* exists at a later point in time. For step 4 to work, it must be agreed that two objects can be made of the same material at the same time.¹⁸ Now suppose that the object in the sculptor’s hand were duplicated, and the duplicate were to stand in place of the original. As I have suggested, if the cosmos were analogous to a collage of genuine objects, then we may conceive of two ways for a duplicate to stand in place of the original, with neither way yielding noticeable or meaningful changes to the cosmos. If at least one of the ways yields such changes, then the statue is not a genuine object, and the cosmos is not analogous to a collage of genuine objects.

To help illustrate the role played by our analogy and thought experiment, even though we come to a dead end, we start with the first way: the duplicate of the statue materially coincides with the original. There would neither be a noticeable or meaningful

¹⁸ The case for the material coincidence of objects is argued elsewhere, so I will not argue it here. Nor do I find the need to do so as the idea is intuitive, similar to how pluralism is intuitive and thus needs no argument, at least initially.

change if the material coincidence of the duplicate and the original left the sculptor with what he originally had. Before this duplication, he had objects *l* and *s*; after the duplication, he still has objects *l* and *s*, but he now has an object (a statue) identical to object *s*.

Technically, there is a change upon replacement, but this change is neither noticeable or meaningful. The sculptor, as it turns out, is left with what he originally had. Therefore, this first way of the duplicate standing in place of the original presents no changes of the sort referred to in step 4.

The second way is for the duplicate of the statue to materially replace the original. Similar to the replacement of an element on a collage, what is in the sculptor's hand will be replaced with the duplicate. There would be no noticeable change if the material replacement of the original with the duplicate left the sculptor with what he originally had. This second way to conceive of the duplicate standing in place of the original, i.e. through material replacement, sees the sculptor left with no object *l*, just an object (a statue) identical to *s*. The original material is both object *l* and *s*, whereas the duplicate material is just an object (a statue) identical to *s*.

The duplicate material precludes the additional duplication of object *l* because the new material has different properties than those of object *l* and because of the scope of our duplication. Object *l* is soft, while object *s* is hard. So, these two objects are distinct, and duplication of object *s* does not mean duplication of object *l*. Further, this duplicate of object *s* is composed of the same material as the original, but it is not necessary that, say, the same lump of clay was used for its creation; another lump of clay existing at a different

time than object *l* could have been sculpted to form the duplicate. When object *s* is duplicated, only object *s* (and those objects necessary for its existence) is duplicated.

In this case, we have a meaningful, non-qualitative change to the state of affairs. Through the process of object duplication and material replacement, an object ceases to exist. Object *l* ceases to exist because we replaced the original material, wherein both object *l* and object *s* coincided, with the duplicate material, wherein the duplicate of object *s* resided. If object *s* were a genuine one, according to premise (2), there would be no such changes. But there are such changes, and thus, object *s* is not a genuine object.

Before considering the result of applying this reasoning to all supposed genuine objects, it is worthwhile to consider objects *l* and *s* as objects consisting of temporal parts, instead of consisting solely of materials. Object *l* and object *s* would be four-dimensional objects, with some temporal parts being shared. Considering these objects as four-dimensional objects means that the duplicate of object *s* will be a four-dimensional object consisting of all the temporal parts of *s*. Like above, suppose that the duplicate of object *s* replaces object *s*. Unlike above, the change to the state of affairs (i.e. object *l* ceasing to exist) does not obtain. Since object *l* exists over time and was created before object *s*, it does not disappear when the duplicate replaces object *s*.

However, the non-qualitative change from the replacement lies in the truncation of object *l*. Because the lump of clay became the statue, the temporal parts of object *l* extended into the temporal parts of object *s* and were dependent on the original temporal parts of object *s*. The replacement of these original temporal parts with the temporal parts of the

duplicate of object *s* leaves object *l* with only its temporal parts separate from object *s*. Object *l* would not have the parts that were dependent on object *s*, and so object *l* is truncated. This is similar to how object *l* ceases to exist upon the material replacement of object *s* with its duplicate. We therefore see a similar non-qualitative change if we take our objects in consideration to be supposed genuine, four-dimensional objects.

In applying this reasoning to all supposed genuine objects (apples, cars, etc.), we find that all objects other than the cosmos are eliminated from the domain of genuine objects. All other objects are eliminated in the same manner as the elimination of the statue from our last case. But perhaps the statue is a special case, where it just so happens that our test for genuineness works. Therefore, let us consider how a table and an organism may be tested to be non-genuine, and from these cases it may be seen how all other objects fail the test for genuineness.

To determine whether the table is a genuine object, let us refer to it as object *table* and suppose that it is duplicated and replaced with its duplicate, object *table'*.¹⁹ Object *table* materially overlapped with, say (for simplicity), a tree named object *tree*. Object *tree*, sufficient as it is, was cut and put together to form object *table*. Similar to our example with the statue and the clay, object *tree* and object *table* materially overlap, but they are two

¹⁹ For this and the following application, it helps to think of the table or organism in the same way that we ultimately must think of the cosmos itself. For if we think of tables, etc. as themselves parts of some greater object, we must turn our attention from duplicating and replacing the table, etc. to duplicating and replacing the greater object. This is due to the limited scope of the AOD, and explains why we talk of “applications” of the AOD when coming to conclude that the cosmos is disanalogous to a collage and analogous to a painting.

different objects. Object *table'* consists in material separate from both object *table* and object *tree*, but upon replacement of the original material, we are left with material that is object *table'*, material which does not coincide with a duplicate of object *tree*. Since we duplicated only object *table*, the material of this duplicate would not include object *tree* or a duplicate of object *tree*. Thus, object *table's* material replacement with object *table'* does not bring along object *tree*.

Whereas, before the replacement, we had object *tree* and object *table*, we now have only object *table'*. We do not now have both the original object *table* or the original object *tree*, as we duplicated and replaced object *table*. There is no problem that we do not have object *table* anymore; the problem lies in the fact that we do not have object *tree* anymore. The material that was once both object *tree* and object *table* is replaced with material that is the duplicate of object *table*, and not object *tree*.

This new material is certain to contain object *table'* among others such as objects *table leg 1'*, *table leg 2'*, etc. These other objects are present and coinciding in the duplicate material because they are necessary for object *table'* to exist. A duplicate of a table must have a duplicate of its parts, objects that make it the table. Similarly, the duplicate must also coincide with, say, wood. I am not asserting that our non-qualitative change, indicating that object *table* is non-genuine, consists in the disappearance of *any* object. Instead, I am asserting that it consists in the disappearance of *some* object, which we have named object *tree*. Object *tree* has certain properties that make it distinct from object *table*. For example, object *tree* has the property that it could grow ten more feet, whereas our duplicate may

have been created from the same type of tree but that tree could only grow one more foot. Because of this, it is not necessary for a duplicate of object *tree* to exist within the material that holds object *table*'.

To determine whether the organism is a genuine object, we proceed in a more general manner. Let us suppose that the organism, named p , is duplicated and replaced with its duplicate, p' . The material that was replaced is certain to have been overlapping with some object(s), named $x(s)$, distinct from but nevertheless overlapping with p . When p is replaced with p' , those $x(s)$, unnecessary for p' to exist, are not replaced, even though their material was replaced. They are not replaced when p' replaces p because only p was duplicated (not p and these $x(s)$) and the material of its duplicate p' replaces the original material that was both p and $x(s)$.

Both object *table* and p are thus not genuine objects because there is a meaningful change when they are duplicated and replaced. This change is that some object other than the one duplicated ceases to exist upon replacement of the duplicated object. There is no reason to think that other objects do not fail the test for genuineness in the same way that the table and organism do.

So, in using this line of reasoning to eliminate from the domain of genuine objects all supposed genuine objects, we come close to the conclusion that the cosmos is the only genuine object. But there is one kind of object that presents difficulties for our test for genuineness: the curious case of mereological atoms. The objects that have been found to be non-genuine were all found to be so on the basis of having materially coincided with

another object. With such objects, this material coincidence seems to occur because they are composite objects. A table might materially overlap with a part of a tree, and upon duplication and replacement of this table, the object that is the part of the tree disappears; so, because the table was made from a tree, with such a production method resulting in material coincidence between the table and the object that is the part of the tree, it is found that the table is not a genuine object on the basis of it being a composite object.

Yet, with the case of atoms, there seems to be no such overlap, since mereological atoms are defined to be non-composite. With what may atoms be seen to materially coincide? There is no definite answer to this question because it largely depends on conclusions that must first be reached in physics. The important thing is that it is possible that mereological atoms can be non-composite but nevertheless remain materially overlapping with another object. One possibility, using our previous example as a model, is that the object, which was once a part of the singularity posited by the big bang theory, disappears upon object duplication and replacement of an atom, much like the object that was once a part of a tree disappears when the table is duplicated and replaced.

Conclusion

Our analogy tells us that to determine if our cosmos is a collage of genuine objects or a painting of non-genuine objects, we evaluate what happens upon object duplication and replacement. This parallels the intuition that replacing a genuine object with a non-numerically identical one would not change the greater object in any meaningful way.

Using the concepts of object duplication and object replacement, objects can be tested to determine whether they are genuine. Upon evaluation of statues, tables, organisms, and atoms, we see that all supposed genuine objects, once duplicated and replaced, fail the test for genuineness and present non-qualitative changes to the cosmos and the state of affairs. Upon evaluation of the cosmos, we find that it passes the test for genuineness because its duplication and replacement do not result in such a change. These non-qualitative changes consist in the fact that some object other than the one duplicated ceases to exist upon replacement of the duplicated object. So, after applying the conceptual tools of the AOD and testing all objects for genuineness, we find that the cosmos is the only object in the domain of genuine objects. Therefore, our cosmos is analogous to a painting of seemingly genuine objects, and the correct ontology is that of existence monism.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Cameron, Ross P. "How to Have a Radically Minimal Ontology," *Philosophical Studies*, 151 (2010). doi.org/10.1007/s11098-009-9442-2.

Cornell, David M. "Taking Monism Seriously." *Philosophical Studies*, 173 (September 2016). doi.org/10.1007/s11098-015-0620-0.

Horgan, Terence, Potrč, Matjaž. "Bbjectivism and Indirect Correspondence." *Facta Philosophica*, 2 (2000).

Schaffer, Jonathan. "Monism." The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (2018). Edward N. Zalta (ed.). <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2018/entries/monism/>.

Schaffer, Jonathan. "Monism: The Priority of the Whole." *The Philosophical Review*, 119 (January 2010).