

Counterexamples and Commonsense: When (Not) to Tollens a Ponens

Commentary on Dan Korman's book *Objects: Nothing Out of the Ordinary*

Most ordinary folks think that there are ordinary objects such as trees and frogs. They do not think there are extraordinary objects such as the mereological sum of trees and frogs (trog), as the permissivist does.¹ Nor do they deny the existence of ordinary composite objects such as tables, as the eliminativist does. In his recent book, *Objects: Nothing Out of the Ordinary*, Korman positions himself alongside ordinary folk. He defends the common sense view of ordinary objects, and argues against the permissivist and eliminativist (the revisionists). One of the ways he does this is by launching what he calls 'arguments from counterexample.'

Below, I focus on the dialectical effectiveness of arguments from counterexample generally, and Korman's arguments in particular. A natural objection to such arguments is that they beg the question against intended opponents. In section 1, I discuss Korman's response to this worry, and his appeal a distinction between intrinsic and dialectical question-begging. In section 2, I argue that appealing to this distinction does not help, and that certain arguments from counterexample, including Korman's arguments against the revisionists, are inescapably problematic. In section 3, I consider some reasons why someone might nonetheless use such arguments in philosophical debate (given that so many in the philosophical literature have and do). Yet given some of Korman's other commitments, this still won't work; there is little to no pressure generated for any revisionist to take the arguments from counterexample seriously.

1. Using Counterexamples, Begging Questions

Below are Korman's arguments from counterexample against the revisionists.

Against Permissivism:

- (CX1) If permissivism is true, then there are trogs.
- (CX2) There are no trogs.
- (CX3) So, permissivism is false.

Against Eliminativism:

- (CX4) If eliminativism is true, then there are no tables.
- (CX5) There are tables.
- (CX6) So, eliminativism is false.

Korman thinks that such arguments are on par with other 'celebrated' arguments from counterexample, such as Gettier cases against justified true belief (JTB) accounts of

¹ There are at least two ways to be a permissivist: by accepting universalism or accepting plentitude. Universalism is a thesis about composition: for any two things, *a* and *b*, there is a mereological sum (or object) that is composed of *a* and *b*. Plentitude is a thesis about coincidence: for any material object, *m*, there may be a multitude of overlapping material objects within the region occupied by *m*. Some philosophers adhere to both of these principles, or are committed to thinking that one entails the other (Korman, *Objects*: 8). This is merely clarificatory; it is not necessary to take a stand on these issues in what follows.

knowledge, Fine's Socrates/{Socrates} example against modal analyses of essence, Putnam's super-spartan example against behaviorism, etc. (*Objects*, 26) I disagree with this comparison, and further think that, unlike Gettier cases and other celebrated arguments from counterexamples, Korman's arguments against the revisionists are particularly problematic.

But before we investigate this latter point, let us consider the natural objection that such arguments are question-begging. The first argument, one might argue, begs the question against permissivists because CX2 is a claim that permissivists explicitly deny. The second argument begs the question against eliminativists because CX5 is a claim that eliminativists explicitly deny.

Korman responds by distinguishing two ways that an argument can beg the question: *intrinsically* or *dialectically*. To beg the question intrinsically is to assume the very conclusion (or rule of reasoning) being argued *for*. To beg the question dialectically is to use as a premise something that an opponent is "already on record as denying," but which may not be the very conclusion being argued for. Korman denies that his arguments from counterexample are intrinsically question-begging, but admits that his arguments are dialectically question-begging. (*Objects*, 28-9)

Why aren't dialectically question-begging arguments problematic? They are. A dialectically successful argument has to, at the very least, transfer some evidence or reasons, or provide some way of persuading reasonable people to accept a certain conclusion that they do not initially accept. If a participant in a debate does not accept the premises of an argument toward a conclusion she (also) does not accept, then the argument in question is unsuccessful with respect to this participant.² But this is essentially what dialectically question-begging arguments *do*: they take as premises statements that are already known to be explicitly denied by opponents, rendering such arguments ineffective against opponents.

This is why many philosophers consider dialectically question-begging arguments to be non-starters. Consider, for example, Stroud's (1979) commentary on Moore's argument against the radical skeptic:

"I have said that I think it will be felt that this 'proof' does not amount to a demonstration of the falsity of philosophical scepticism or of the truth of an affirmative answer to the philosophical question of whether we can ever know whether anything exists 'outside us.' Here I do no more than appeal to your own sense of the issue, since I confess it would be difficult to demonstrate its failure to someone who feels no deficiency in Moore's 'proof.' But I ask you to consider whether your initial response is not that, considered as an answer to the philosophical question of knowledge, Moore's assertions are unjustified - in that context they are simply dogmatic and without probative force. It is known at the outset of the philosophical inquiry that people frequently think and often claim they know things in circumstances as 'favourable' as those in which Moore found

² See (e.g.) Graham Oppy (2006) *Arguing about Gods* for discussion.

himself. The question is whether they do know what they think they know on those occasions, and if so, how. The considerations which have traditionally been thought to lead to a negative answer must somehow be dismissed or accounted for before the philosophical question will have been answered or exposed as illegitimate. (p. 279)

Philosophical challenges require sophisticated philosophical responses, not a doubling-down on our unreflective, non-philosophical intuitions. Moreover, one cannot simply respond to a philosophical challenge by insisting on the truth of the very claims that are under intellectual scrutiny. Put in contemporary terms, in a philosophically respectable debate, you can't just *do* that.

So how does it help to admit that the arguments from counterexample are dialectically question-begging? Korman appeals to the relativity of such arguments. Dialectically question-begging arguments may not have always begged the question, in which case such arguments may have been (and may still be) useful and effective. This seems to be one of the reasons why Korman appeals to Gettier cases and other 'celebrated' arguments from counterexample - to show that whether an argument is dialectically question-begging is relative to a set of explicitly stated claims, which can change over time.

Before Gettier cases were discussed in the literature, JTB theorists were not already on record as having denied such examples as cases of knowledge. They had no antecedent beliefs about such cases, which is why many were taken by surprise when they were first used in arguments against them. At the time, and against the background of explicitly stated commitments, it was perfectly dialectically appropriate (and decidedly not question-begging) to use such counterexamples as premises in arguments against JTB theories. The same goes for other arguments from counterexamples Korman mentions: super-spartan, Socrates/{Socrates}, overdetermination cases, etc. In each instance, the counterexample (initially) used was something *new* in the debate - an example that hitherto had not been considered before, and that no one in the debate had any antecedent beliefs about. Using such an example was in no way begging the question against opponents. It was rather more like bringing new evidence to light, which is exactly what we are supposed to be doing when we are engaging in philosophical debate. A philosopher's 'evidence' is very often a thought experiment or some *a priori* consequence that has not been considered before. Once such consequences have been considered, participants in the debate revise or adjust their beliefs accordingly. The initial counterexample then becomes part of the dialectical landscape and participants in the relevant debate subsume the counterexample among the consequences of accepting a certain view.

So the "celebrated arguments from counterexample" Korman lists as being structurally similar to his own were not initially dialectically question-begging against opponents. Now they (typically) are, which renders them currently dialectically ineffective against (most) opponents. In other words, such arguments from counterexample are effective in the debate when those committed to certain theories have no antecedent beliefs about the relevant counterexamples - *i.e.*, when the arguments, against a background of explicit claims made by opponents, do not assume as premises something opponents are on record denying.

Notice, however, that there is no such moment in the ordinary object debate, as Korman himself admits.

“Unlike proponents of the JTB analysis of knowledge, who were taken by surprise by Gettier’s counterexamples and thus had no antecedent view on the matter, permissivists are very explicit about their commitment to extraordinary objects like trogs, and eliminativists are very explicit about their rejection of ordinary objects like tables.” (29)

Unfortunately, this admission of difference doesn’t go far enough. For not only do Korman’s arguments from counterexample *currently* dialectically beg the question against opponents - notably, *they always have*. Unlike Gettier cases, and other arguments from counterexamples, no one has interpreted the supposed counterexample claim, CX2, as something *new* in the debate, or some *a priori* consequence that has yet to be considered. CX2 is not a claim revisionists have no antecedent beliefs about. On the contrary, everyone in the debate is perfectly well aware that whether there are extraordinary objects - whether there are trogs - is one of the primary issues under discussion.

It’s not a matter of dialectical history. It’s about who we can expect to engage in philosophical debate and what prior beliefs we can expect them to have. No one in the ordinary object debate is ever in the same doxastic position with respect to the existence of trogs as JTB theorists were (or are) about Gettier cases. No one in the ordinary object debate was or is surprised by the case of trogs, because trogs aren’t an unforeseen *a priori* consequence of a distinct theoretical commitment. A person can’t even have a belief about trogs one way or the other without engaging in a philosophical debate or being told about the metaphysical worldview (permissivism) that commits to trogs. And once someone enters the debate, and is given enough information to participate, then they are aware that whether extraordinary objects such as trogs exist is one of the primary issues under discussion. So denying the existence of trogs is in no way a revelatory counterexample. It is a flat-out denial of a paradigmatic existence claim that permissivists explicitly endorse.

For comparison, imagine a (simplified) Moorean presenting an argument from counterexample against the radical skeptic.³ She claims: “Skepticism entails that I don’t know that I have hands. But I do. Counterexample.”

(M1): If skepticism is true, then I don’t know that I have hands.

(M2): I know that I have hands.

(M3): So, skepticism is false.

The above argument is certainly *structurally* similar to Korman’s own arguments from counterexample, if by that we mean (i) it’s a modus tollens argument that (ii) has as a premise a claim explicitly denied by opponents. And a familiar complaint often launched against this kind

³ For the original, of which there are many opinions about how best to interpret, see Moore (1962).

of Moorean move⁴ echoes the complaint we've been discussing against Korman's arguments. That is, M2 dialectically begs the question against the radical skeptic, just as CX2 and CX5 beg the question against revisionists.

Moreover, not only does the Moorean argument beg the question against the skeptic - notably, *it always has*. Unlike Gettier cases, and other arguments from counterexamples, but similar to Korman's arguments from counterexample against the revisionists, no one has interpreted Moorean's 'counterexample' claim, M2, as something *new* in the debate, or some *a priori* consequence that has yet to be considered. Everyone in the debate, including the Moorean, is perfectly well aware that whether we have knowledge of the ordinary sort - i.e., whether we know we have hands - is one of the primary issues under discussion. No one in the philosophical debate about knowledge is ever *surprised* by the specific claim "I don't know that I have hands," unless she is surprised by the thesis of skepticism itself. So insisting on the truth of M2 is in no way a revelatory counterexample. It is a flat-out assertion of a paradigmatic knowledge claim the skeptic explicitly denies.

How can this be acceptable in philosophical debate?

One way Korman defends his own use of dialectically question-begging arguments by pointing out that dialectical question-begging is participant-relative.

"...my arguments may beg the question against some, they do not beg the question against all. Some will find my arguments just as persuasive as the Gettier arguments against the JTB analysis of knowledge. The mere fact that there are some JTB theorists out there and that those arguments beg the question against them doesn't mean that they don't give the rest of us perfectly good reason to reject the JTB analysis. Similarly, I think that the arguments from counterexamples are a perfectly good reason for rejecting eliminativism and permissivism, even if they do dialectically beg the question against revisionists" (29)

In other words, for those whom the relevant argument is *not* dialectically question-begging against, such arguments may be an effective way to get them to accept the relevant conclusions. But it's not clear how this helps.

Let's imagine that our (simplified) Moorean defends his argument similarly: "the mere fact that there are some skeptics out there and my argument (dialectically) begs the question against them doesn't mean that my argument doesn't give the rest of us perfectly good reason to reject skepticism about knowledge."

This response is surely unsatisfying. Recognizing that someone other than the skeptic might find the argument persuasive doesn't justify the Moorean's use of M2 as a premise in an argument to an *anti-skepticism conclusion*. Part of this has to do with the fact that anyone who is coming to the debate about whether skepticism is true or not needs to be informed about skepticism as a view. Before anyone can even affirm the first premise, M1, one has to know what skepticism is and why it entails that we don't have ordinary knowledge such as knowing

⁴ See, e.g., Lehrer (1971), Stroud (1979), etc.

we have hands. This isn't a secret or implicit entailment - it's a primary example of the sorts of claims the skeptic denies. This is what makes a flat-footed denial of this example dialectically ineffective.

To be clear, I *do* think that there are successful cases of counterexample in the philosophical literature. And I think it is correct to classify Gettier arguments as an example of these kinds of successful arguments. But I disagree that Korman's arguments form counterexample against the permissivist should fall under this category. They are far more like a (simplified) Moorean against the skeptic, or Hirsch against revisionists.⁵ Each of these latter arguments is structured in such a way as to be *inescapably* question-begging. Let's see why.

2. Inescapable Question-Begging

Call 'Gettier-naive subjects' those who have not yet heard of Gettier cases, those who have no antecedent beliefs about Gettier cases, or those who do not yet recognize that Gettier cases are counterexamples to JTB theories of knowledge. In Gettier cases, and other acceptable arguments from counterexample, it is reasonable to think there are plenty of Gettier-naive subjects. Gettier cases are non-obvious, tricky, and do not explicitly present themselves at the presentation of JTB accounts of knowledge. Even if many philosophers are currently aware of Gettier cases, many students new to philosophy are not, which is why we can expect many of them to be Gettier-naive when first presented with JTB theories of knowledge. This is also why Gettier cases will be surprising to them, and may get them to revise their opinions if they were tempted by JTB theories.⁶ In short, given the relationship between JTB theories and Gettier cases - *i.e.*, that the latter are a non-obvious consequence - such cases were and can continue to be successful counterexample cases. And this is also why such arguments can be question-begging against some but not against others. When there are Gettier-naive subjects involved, it is not question-begging against them, even though such an argument is question-begging against JTB theorists who are Gettier-enlightened.

In contrast, it is unreasonable to think that there are 'ordinary-knowledge-naive subjects' out there - *i.e.*, those who have not heard of ordinary knowledge claims such as "I know I have hands", those who have no antecedent beliefs about such ordinary knowledge claims, or those who do not recognize that "I know I have hands" is a counterexample to skepticism. Ordinary folk *do* have antecedent beliefs about ordinary knowledge claims; they think we *do* know that we have hands. They likely haven't encountered the skeptic yet, so they have no need to use such a claim in an argument against the skeptic. Moreover, they wouldn't use such a claim in an argument as the Moorean does (above), because that would assume they have assented to M1,

⁵ Hirsch (2011) *Quantifier Variance and Realism*. Oxford University Press. More on the comparison between Korman and Hirsch in section 3.

⁶ Although see Korman (*Objects*: 59-62), Korman and Carmichael (2016), Rosen and Dorr (2002), etc. for more detailed and careful discussion about what exactly is going on when the uninitiated become initiated.

which requires being informed of skepticism and its explicit, obvious entailments. Anyone who has heard of the skeptic enough to assent to M1 will know better than to flat-out deny an obvious consequent of skepticism in an argument against skepticism.

The similarities between the above Moorean argument and Korman's arguments from counterexample is even more striking if we concentrate on Korman's argument against the eliminativist:

(CX4) If eliminativism is true, then there are no tables.

(CX5) There are tables.

(CX6) So, eliminativism is false.

Both M2 and CX5 are claims that ordinary folk have. And, as with the Moorean argument, it is unreasonable to think that there are 'table-naive subjects' out there - *i.e.*, those who have no antecedent beliefs about the existence of tables, and so on. Ordinary folk *do* have antecedent beliefs about the existence of tables; they think tables exist. They likely haven't encountered the eliminativist yet (or any revisionists), so they have no need to use such a claim in an argument against the eliminativist. Moreover, they won't use such a claim in an argument against the eliminativist, because that would assume they have assented to CX4, which requires being informed of eliminativism and its explicit, obvious entailments. Any informed participant in the debate who *has* heard of eliminativism, knows better than to simply deny one of the primary claims at issue in an argument against the eliminativist.

Similarly, but for slightly different reasons, it is unreasonable to think there are 'trog-naive subjects' - *i.e.*, those who have not heard of trogs, those who have no antecedent beliefs about trogs, or those who do not recognize that trogs are counterexamples to permissivism. As discussed above, in order to be in a position to affirm CX2 - "there are no trogs" - a participant has to know what trogs are. Ordinary folk do not have antecedent beliefs about trogs. Yet, once they are given enough information to form a belief about trogs, it will be obvious that such a claim is a flat-out denial of an explicit consequence of permissivism. So they will easily recognize that trogs are a counterexample to permissivism, and hence will not be trog-naive.

So in each case - in the Moorean argument, and in each of Korman's arguments against the revisionists - one of the reasons the relevant argument is inescapably dialectically question-begging is that it is unreasonable to think that there are any counterexample-naive subjects. Either everyone already comes to the debate with an antecedent belief about the alleged counterexample (M2 and CX5), or else if they have no such antecedent beliefs (CX2), obtaining the requisite information to make a judgement on the claim will reveal that it is a counterexample against the relevant view, making them counterexample-*enlightened*. Since there are no counterexample-naive subjects in these cases, such arguments are inescapably dialectically question-begging.

Here's another way to put the point. Grant that dialectical question-begging is participant-relative, and that this renders such arguments ineffective against *opponents*. That leaves open

that there may be others for whom these arguments could be effective against. But who's left? The ordinary folk? Fellow conservativists? The as yet uncommitted?

Clearly, Korman isn't trying to convince ordinary folk that his view of ordinary objects is correct - they admittedly already agree with his metaphysical view, and moreover think the view is so obvious as to not even be worth defending or discussing.⁷ Also, as discussed above, even if we grant that ordinary folk are entering the debate, bringing with them at least some relevant antecedent beliefs (perhaps that are inclined to grant, say, CX5), they do not have other relevant antecedent beliefs (say, CX4). And if they do, they won't need a question-begging argument to convince them what they already think is true.

Korman also isn't trying to convince other philosophers who already accept conservatism about ordinary objects. We surely all expect more from our arguments than to 'persuade' reasonable people who already accept the conclusions we endorse. That's not persuasion; it's reinforcement.

So perhaps the intended aim for the arguments from counterexample are the as yet uncommitted. But this is where the difference between Korman's arguments and Gettier arguments - and the similarities between Korman's arguments and the Moorean - becomes important. The relevant second premise in Korman's arguments (and the Moorean's) is *always explicitly denied by opponents*. Against the background of these explicit denials, there simply *couldn't be* any participants in the debate that might find the relevant counterexample surprising or revelatory or convincing. This isn't a mere phenomenological fact. Our inability to find these claims surprising or revelatory indicates a crucial conceptual connection between the relevant claim and the view that explicitly entails this claim. And, importantly, this feature is present even if we assume that the participant is uncommitted with respect to the relevant conclusion.

So, even granting that dialectical question-begging arguments are participant-relative does not help alleviate what's problematic about the Moorean argument or Korman's arguments against the revisionists: they are *inescapably* question-begging.

In short, then, we should not be misled by the relative dialectical success of 'celebrated' arguments from counterexample into thinking that this is what Korman's arguments from counterexample are doing. On the contrary, we should be about as optimistic about the dialectical effectiveness of Korman's arguments from counterexample as we are about the dialectical effectiveness of the Moorean against the radical skeptic.

Yet perhaps you have more hope for the Moorean against the skeptic than I am assuming here - which, given my comparison, would translate to more hope for Korman's arguments against the revisionist. In the next section, I consider a different (perhaps more charitable) interpretation of Moore against the skeptic and Korman's arguments against the revisionists. However, I do

⁷ "Outsiders to the debates over the metaphysics of material objects will likely find my view so obvious as to hardly be worth stating. Let alone defending. Let alone spending a whole book defending." (*Objects*, 2)

not think that such a strategy will work for the arguments from counterexample against the revisionist, given some of Korman's other commitments.

3. Impasses and Push-back

The above criticisms of dialectically question-begging arguments assumes that one of our goals in giving arguments is to further our debates in some way, to make some conversational *progress*. A productive argument, I assume, has to (at the very least) succeed in genuinely transferring some evidence or reasons, or providing some way of persuading reasonable people who do not initially agree with the conclusion being argued for. We want arguments to reveal something to those participants engaged in the debate, to give them new information, present them with heretofore unconsidered counterexamples, to draw out unforeseen consequences of relevant views and commitments, etc.

But let's be real: this doesn't always happen in philosophical debate (especially in metaphysics). Very often we find ourselves at dialectical impasses.

The skeptic claims we can't know that we aren't a brain in a vat made to think we have hands, so we can't know that we have hands. A Moorean insists we *do* know we have hands, so we *can* know that we are not a brain in a vat made to think we have hands. Impasse. A presentist claims that change has certain features, which rules out four-dimensionalism.⁸ A perdurantist insists that four-dimensionalism isn't ruled out, because change does not have the features insisted upon by the presentist.⁹ Impasse. Eliminativists claim that eliminativism is true, so there are no tables.¹⁰ Hirsch insists that utterances of ordinary folk (including 'there are tables') are true, so eliminativism is false.¹¹ Impasse. Permissivists claim that permissivism is true, so there are trogs. Korman insist that there are no trogs, so permissivism is false. Impasse.

All of these arguments can be charged with being dialectically question-begging against opponents, since it is plausible in each instance that there are no counterexample-naive participants in the debate. Nonetheless, it is clearly acceptable *in some sense* to give such arguments - for philosophers have, in fact, given them. But the points made in section 1 and 2 still stand: dialectical question-begging isn't ideal, it doesn't further debate, it isn't something we should do. So what's the point in doing it anyway, and contributing to argumentative deadlock?

Hirsch (2003), (2011) endorses one answer. He aims to undermine revisionary ontologists, who are defined by the endorsement of a worldview that entails that common sense judgements

⁸ Hinchliff (1996).

⁹ Lewis (1986), Sider (2001), e.g.

¹⁰ Unger (1979), e.g.

¹¹ Hirsch (2003), (2011).

about ordinary objects are false. Hirsch's strategy is to appeal to a 'charitable presumption' of the utterances of ordinary speakers.

This charitable presumption isn't undefeatable. And it doesn't make the intuitions of the ordinary folk infallible. It is rather supposed to be the language analogue of a certain kind of Moorean move (*Quantifier Variance and Realism*, 98). One might interpret a Moorean appeal to ordinary knowledge not as a decisive flat-footed appeal to common sense (as we did above), but rather as putting epistemic pressure on us to weigh our convictions, pitting our ordinary intuitions against the premises of any argument that has anti-ordinary conclusions. That is, philosophical epistemic principles that lead to absurd conclusions (e.g., radical skepticism) need to outweigh our ordinary claims about knowledge (e.g., "I know I have hands"), if such arguments are to be successful. Otherwise, it is the philosophical principles that will be rejected, not common sense.

Similarly, then, Hirsch's appeal to a principle of charity is not intended to be decisive; it merely puts linguistic pressure on us to weigh our understanding of ordinary concepts against revisionary ones. Very often in ordinary object ontology, Hirsch may argue, the thing to go should be our highly theorized principles and analyses, not the original concepts or terms we are trying to analyze or formulate principles about. If ordinary speakers assert "there are tables", we are under linguistic pressure to assume that what they are saying is not necessary, *a priori* false, barring overriding reasons to the contrary.¹²

Lycan (2001:39) remarks that any "deductive 'proof' can be no more than an invitation to *compare plausibility*." Any valid argument with premises, P_1, \dots, P_n , to some conclusion, C , can be re-interpreted as a claim that the set $\{P_1, \dots, P_n, \sim C\}$ is inconsistent. But this allows for two responses: we can either accept all of the premises and the anti-ordinary conclusion (as the revisionist wants us to do), or we can reject one of the premises if we wish to also deny the anti-ordinary conclusion. In short, plunking down for common sense, and rejecting certain philosophical premises that conflict with common sense, is always a legitimate, available move. This is one way to shift the burden of proof in debate; this is how to tollens a ponens.

So, one way to understand Korman's arguments from counterexample is as doing something similar. Thus interpreted, his arguments are not intended to be decisive. They are intended, rather, to put pressure on participants to weigh our convictions, pitting our ordinary intuitions about ordinary objects against revisionary arguments that arrive at anti-ordinary conclusions. Like all arguments, valid revisionist challenges are invitations to compare plausibility. Given the plausibility of common sense, Korman might argue, tables are in and trogs are out, despite any philosophical principles used to argue to the contrary.

¹² This strategy connects up with why Hirsch thinks that Gettier cases are so successful: we can reject an analysis of knowledge if it doesn't fit with our ordinary concept of knowledge. An analysis of a concept is wrong if it doesn't fit with our ordinary understanding of the term. After all, it is an analysis of *this* term or concept ('knowledge', 'table', etc.) that we want, not an analysis some other term or concept. (2011: 109, 163) Similarly, Hirsch maintains that any analysis of 'object', 'thing', or 'table' etc., which flies in the face of our ordinary notions, fails to be an analysis of the very concepts under consideration. This may be why Korman describes Hirsch's defense of the relevant premises as "full-blown" (*Objects* 35-37).

Interpreting the arguments from counterexample in this way puts pressure back on revisionists to (re)defend their claims and arguments against common sense. Principles or arguments that lead revisionists to anti-ordinary conclusions then need to *outweigh* our ordinary intuitions about ordinary objects, not merely be hand-waved away as irrelevant. Arguments for revisionism are then under greater scrutiny, as are their responses to the arguments from counterexample.

Curiously, however, Korman makes clear that his arguments from counterexample are not driven by language, meaning, or epistemological convictions. He does not think that appealing to language or analytic entailment works to defend the relevant premises.¹³ Korman argues for the acceptability of the relevant premises by appealing to intuition and experience (30, 35), while admitting that intuition isn't enough to *show* that the arguments from counterexample are sound.

In addition, Korman accepts that intuitions and beliefs can come apart (*Objects* 31-33).

“...I take intuition to be a certain sort of conscious, contentful mental state--sometimes called a “seeming”--which presents its contents as true...As with experience, one can have an intuition with content *p* without believing that *p* or even being inclined to believe that *p*...Also, as with experience, one can be inclined to believe that *p* without having the intuition that *p*...”

Furthermore:

“...having anti-trog intuitions is entirely compatible with thinking that there's nothing so bad about postulating trogs. One can have anti-trog intuitions without finding it *obvious* that there are no trogs. One may have been utterly convinced by the arguments for universalism, think that it is entirely obvious that there are no trogs, feel no inclination whatsoever to deny that there are trogs, and yet still have the intuition that a dog and a trunk do not compose anything. Something can seem true to you even when you are entirely convinced that it's false.”

So on Korman's own understanding of the relationship between mere *intuitions that p* and *beliefs that p*, it is perfectly compatible that we have an intuition that there are no trogs yet also believe “there are no trogs” is false. That is, it is perfectly compatible with our ordinary intuitions about ordinary objects that CX2 and CX5 are *false*. But if so, then it is difficult to see how the arguments from counterexample are providing any significant kind of dialectical pressure against opponents. Revisionists may easily grant that we all have conservative-friendly intuitions. But by Korman's own admission, this is perfectly consistent with admitting that after some reflection and theorizing, these intuitions do not withstand scrutiny - i.e., that conservatism is false (and the arguments from counterexample are unsound).

¹³ “I claim that CX2 and CX5 are *prima facie* justified by intuition and experience. Others have gone further, advancing full-blown arguments in defense of these premises. I don't think that their arguments work.” (35)

Moreover, having divergent intuitions and beliefs about the world is not merely theoretical, and it is not unique to metaphysics. If modern atomic theory is correct, objects are mostly empty space. Intuitively, objects are *not* mostly empty space. But on the basis of this intuition we do not conclude that modern atomic theory is false. If current optical theories are correct, pencils in water are not bent. Intuitively, however, pencils in water are bent (and even when we know better, they still *seem* bent). But on the basis of this intuition, we do not conclude that current optical theories are false. If we can generally trust what we see, then the two lines in a Muller-Lyer illusion are the same length. Yet, intuitively, the two lines in a Muller-Lyer illusion are not the same length (even when we know better). Yet from this intuition we do not conclude that we cannot generally trust what we see. And so on.

If intuitions are just 'seemings', as Korman explains, then a lot of what seems to be the case simply *isn't*. And we know better. Yet once we accept that having the *intuition that p* is compatible with *believing not-p*, we can easily deny the soundness of the arguments from counterexample. We won't accept the *truth* of the relevant, crucial premises because we understand that just because it may *seem* as if these premises are true, they aren't. Moreover and importantly, *it can keep seeming as if they are true*, even when we believe them to be false.

At one point, Korman uses the example of garden path sentences, admitting that they seem ungrammatical even when we know better.¹⁴ He explains that the phenomenology of such sentences appearing as if they are ungrammatical is perfectly compatible with rejecting the belief that they are ungrammatical (*Objects*, 32). Similarly, in the Muller-Lyer illusion, we can all grant the intuitive allure of it seeming as if the two lines are not the same length, even when we know that they are. Examples abound. Yet if so, then the revisionist can easily grant the intuitive allure of conservativist intuitions about ordinary objects, as well as admit (along with Korman) that this phenomenological pull is perfectly consistent with the metaphysical facts being otherwise.

To be clear, admitting that *intuitions that p* and *beliefs that p* come apart is not itself problematic. What's problematic is endorsing this claim while simultaneously promoting the arguments from counterexample in the way that's currently being proposed. If one of the primary aims in launching the arguments from counterexample is to put dialectical pressure on revisionists - if it's to shift the burden of proof on his opponents, highlighting their reasons for denying CX2 and CX5 - then we better have good reasons to think that CX2 and CX5 *are in fact true*, not just that they seem to be.

Suppose deductive arguments are, indeed, invitations to compare plausibility of premises and conclusions. The plausibility of our commonsense intuitions about ordinary objects loses force when it is coupled with the admission that intuitions about the world come apart from how the world really is. And in light of Korman's rejections of "full-blown" defenses of CX2 and CX5, we are left in need of something other than mere (defeasible) intuitions in support of the relevant

¹⁴ Garden path sentence: "The horse raced past the barn fell."

premises. Why should opponents be at all moved by the arguments from counterexamples? Either they are merely question-begging against opponents and can be dismissed as ineffective (as discussed above in section 1 and 2), or else they are intended to present some argumentative push-back in favor of our ordinary intuitions about ordinary objects (as we've been considering in section 3). But without solid arguments for or a steadfast commitment to the truth of relevant premises, it is difficult to see how they exert any dialectical pressure on revisionists. And without such pressure, it is unclear why revisionists should take such arguments from counterexample seriously.

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