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IMMATERIALIST SOLUTIONS TO PUZZLES IN PERSONAL ONTOLOGY

BY

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DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Philosophy  
in the Graduate College of the  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2017

Urbana, Illinois

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## ABSTRACT

What are we? Despite much discussion in historical and contemporary philosophy, we have not yet settled on an answer. A satisfactory *personal ontology*, an account of our metaphysical nature, will be informed by issues in the metaphysics of material objects. In the dissertation, I target two prominent materialist ontologies: *animalism*, the view that we are numerically identical to human organisms, and *constitutionalism*, the view that we are constituted by, but not identical to, human organisms. Because of the problems that arise from endorsing these ontologies, I instead advance *immaterialism*, the view that we are essentially immaterial.

In Chapter 2, I discuss how animalists must respond to a widely-discussed metaphysical puzzle, the problem of the many. This puzzle prompts some to endorse revisionary ontologies of material objects, and I argue that the animalist cannot appeal to these revisionary ontologies to solve the puzzle as it arises for *personal ontology*. In addition, solutions that don't involve a commitment to revisionary ontology will be unavailable to the animalist: I argue that if animalists make use of non-revisionary solutions to the problem, they must abandon the most successful argument for their view. Absent their most successful argument, animalists will need to motivate the view in some other way. Some new arguments for animalism have been proposed, and I argue that they fail to give us reason to endorse animalism over competing ontologies. Without a strong argument, we should not prefer animalism over the other, more attractive, views.

In Chapter 3, I show how constitutionalists face a different problem: explaining how the person is not the very same thing as the human organism, despite sharing the very same parts and occupying the very same physical space. We think that the person and the organism are different things because they have different modal profiles – the human organism can survive permanent loss of psychological life, but the person, presumably, cannot. Constitutionalists must then explain what grounds the difference in modal profiles, but such an explanation is hard to come by. This is an instance of the *grounding problem*, which is notoriously intractable. While the grounding problem is a well-known challenge to constitutional accounts of objects, I demonstrate that this puzzle is even more threatening when applied to persons. Some “solutions” to the problem fail to solve it at all, and solutions that might get the right result for ordinary objects require accepting that there are a multitude of persons where we ordinarily take there to be only one. We should not accept a personal ontology that requires a commitment to that multitude. I argue that the threat of the grounding problem is so great that we must reject the constitutionalist personal ontology.

We will see from these puzzles in personal ontology that materialist solutions are either unsuccessful or yield unacceptable consequences. This should prompt us toward considering, instead, immaterialism. According to immaterialism, persons are *not* material objects, and the immaterialist can then provide solutions to the puzzles that threatened materialist ontologies. In Chapter 4, I outline these immaterialist solutions and show that the puzzles cannot be reinstated successfully against the immaterialist. I then discuss different available varieties of immaterialism and argue in defense of my preferred version. Ultimately, I

argue that we are simple, immaterial entities that come into existence at the proper functioning of the brain. Endorsing this view of personal ontology permits us to adequately respond to metaphysical puzzles and retain judgments about persons that should be most important to us. In particular, the immaterialist has the resources to avoid the problem of too many thinkers and retain the judgment that there is exactly one person in circumstances where we take there to be just one. The immaterialist also has the resources to plausibly analyze thought experiments, such as cerebrum-swap cases, that threaten materialist ontologies.

All things considered, it remains to be seen which personal ontology has the most evidence in its favor. In the context of debates that arise from material object metaphysics, however, evidence weighs in favor of immaterialism. Materialist personal ontologies are saddled with unacceptable responses to metaphysical puzzles, and endorsing materialism about persons requires taking on a very high cost: Either there are far more of us than we ordinarily take there to be, or there are *no* persons – far *fewer* of us than we ordinarily take there to be. Some might argue that these are the only acceptable options, so cost be damned. But we cannot afford to be so cavalier about our personal ontology. Instead, I advance immaterialist solutions to puzzles in personal ontology and propose that, in the interest of saving ourselves and everyone we love, we should seriously consider accounts according to which we are immaterial entities.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to all my immaterial loved ones for supporting me in the process of writing this dissertation. This project would not have been possible without the outpouring of encouragement I received. Many thanks to my dissertation committee, who engaged with my project and prompted me to pursue challenges from directions I did not anticipate. Their questions and insights have helped me become a more careful thinker and opened my eyes to new areas of inquiry. Thanks, in particular, to Robert McKim, for whom I was fortunate to work as a research assistant and whose work is inspiring. I am also grateful to the Philosophy Department for financial support as well as graduate students and faculty members for their conversations about this topic.

There aren't enough pages for me to adequately thank Dan Korman, the model of a sharp philosopher, thoughtful advisor, and excellent person. His continual support, intellectual challenges, professional guidance, and constant willingness to offer advice enabled me to pursue my goals with confidence.

Special thanks, also, to Keith Yandell, who played a significant role my early philosophical studies while at UW-Madison. He, as both teacher and advisor, established a solid foundation for me to continue in philosophy, and I will always be grateful for his influence.

And thank you to my friends and family. I'm grateful for the teachers and fellow yogis at Ashtanga CU for our shared practice, Katie Francis for our shared library dates, and Clara Bosak-Schroeder for our shared breakfasts. They have all helped me keep my focus and motivation. Thank you to my parents, who have encouraged me to argue my case for as long as I've been able to talk. Finally, thank you especially to my husband, David, who in innumerable ways made it possible for me to finish this degree. And even if it turns out that I'm wrong and you're all *material*, thank you all the same.

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# Chapter 1 Introduction

## 1.1 The Importance of Personal Ontology

What are we? Among many other things, we are thinkers, conscious beings, and persons. In ordinary circumstances, we are good at identifying how many of us there are: there's just one of us writing this dissertation and one of us sitting in your chair reading it. Further, we know for certain that we exist, regardless of whether we're certain that anything else exists. But despite certainty *that* we are, most of us don't have a robust sense of *what* we are. A satisfying answer to this question, beyond triviality, will be simultaneously respectful of our ordinary judgments about ourselves and philosophically respectable.

Historically, we find accounts according to which we are *souls* or *minds*, or at least have such things as parts. Plato defended the existence of an immaterial soul, separable from the body, which is responsible for our intellectual nature.<sup>1</sup> Aristotle believed that a human is a compound of soul (form) and body (matter) but denied that the soul can exist independently of the body.<sup>2</sup> Saint Thomas Aquinas defended an Aristotelian account, although he diverged from Aristotle in allowing the possibility of the soul's existence independently of the body.<sup>3</sup> Descartes, for whom 'Cartesian dualism' is named, held that the mind and body are distinct substances.<sup>4</sup> In contemporary philosophy, it has become more favorable to defend accounts according to which we are material objects, devoid of immaterial souls or immaterial minds. On some accounts, we are the very organisms sitting in our chairs. On others, we are material objects that are not the very same things as the organisms in our chairs, but are intimately related to them.

In searching for answers about our nature, some may ask, 'what are persons?'. This is

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<sup>1</sup>See Plato (1973, *Phaedo*).

<sup>2</sup>See Aristotle (1993).

<sup>3</sup>See Aquinas (2006, Ia.75).

<sup>4</sup>See Descartes (2006).

an understandable move to make – we are persons, and this seems *obvious*. But in order to explicitly delineate the scope of our investigation, we must disambiguate between three different questions we might be asking when we say, ‘what are persons?’. One is the question of personhood: what is it to be a person? Some have proposed that what it is to be a person is a social matter.<sup>5</sup> Answering the question of what it is to be a person, then, might require investigating the nature of relationships, social interactions, and conventions. Answering this question is not the topic of this project.

Another is the question of *personal identity*: what does it take for some person at an earlier time to be numerically identical to some person at a later time? Locke offered an account according to which personal persistence is a matter of psychological continuity.<sup>6</sup> It has been argued, however, that mere psychological continuity fails to track facts about personal identity. Others have argued in favor of *biological* persistence conditions.<sup>7</sup> While these discussions are fruitful and are important for discerning *how persons persist*, I am interested in the more fundamental question of *what we are*. As we will see, questions about our persistence will arise, and decisions about accounts of our fundamental nature may inform decisions about accounts of personal identity and vice versa.

But it is this final, fundamental question that is of concern: what are we? While we happen to be thinkers, conscious beings, and persons, my aim is not to determine what it takes to be any of these things in particular. I’m interested in finding additional evidence that should be weighed in considering *personal ontology*, which is the study of the metaphysical nature of those things that happen to be persons – the study of *our* metaphysical nature. We can consider matters of personal ontology even if we are merely contingently thinkers, conscious beings, or persons.<sup>8</sup> At various points, I’ll refer to us in these terms, but I’m not necessarily

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<sup>5</sup>Locke, for instance, notes that ‘person’ is a forensic term, and questions of personhood are inextricable from questions of moral or legal responsibility (1979, 2.xvii.26). Braddon-Mitchell and Miller hold that being a person is (at least in part) dependent on conventions (2004). Schechtman defends a view of personhood that appeals to both metaphysical and practical concerns, including dependence on interactions with other persons (2010, esp. 279).

<sup>6</sup>See Locke (1979, 2.xvii).

<sup>7</sup>See Olson (1997).

<sup>8</sup>Even conventionalists like Braddon-Mitchell and Miller hold that in the absence of person-constitutive

using these terms to pick out any of our essential features. Instead, I'm using these terms as mere tools that aid in identifying the entity in question – one of us. Once we've referred to that entity, we can investigate its metaphysical nature. In assessing *a* personal ontology, a particular account of our metaphysical nature, we should consider the plausibility of what the account entails about (i) what kind of thing we are and (ii) how many of us there are.

Suppose *immaterialism* is true, according to which we are essentially immaterial entities. If so, then we are distinct from human organisms. We then find a familiar refrain of questions about the nature of the relationship between immaterial entities and material human organisms: How can an immaterial entity interact with a human organism, given that they're entirely different kinds of things? How can we reconcile immaterial/material interaction given contemporary scientific inquiry and what we know of physical causation? How is this particular immaterial entity paired with this particular human organism? We've seen how these debates in philosophy of mind play out, and much has been said about these questions, both by those advancing objections and those trying to respond to the objections. In the context of these debates, views according to which we are not material objects are on the defensive, and evidence weighs against them. These debates will not be pursued here.

Those who defend personal ontologies according to which we *are* material objects will avoid these challenges in philosophy of mind but will be subject to their own challenges. I show that contemporary puzzles in material object metaphysics can be reframed as puzzles in personal ontology that the materialist cannot solve. If successful, I will have demonstrated that debates in contemporary material object metaphysics yield evidence *against* materialist ontologies and toward views according to which we are *not* material objects. This will not affect the evidence *for* the materialist ontologies that we find in philosophy of mind. But we have more evidence to weigh, given the problems in material object metaphysics.

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conventions, *some entity* continues to exist (although it ceases to be a person) (2004, 461). Schechtman notes that in the absence of the relevant practical relations, some entity (a human being) would exist but would not be a *person* (2010, 280).

## 1.2 Outline of the Project

In order to produce this evidence, I target two prominent materialist ontologies: *animalism*, the view that we are numerically identical to human organisms, and *constitutionalism*, the view that human persons are constituted by, but not identical to, human organisms. In Chapter 2, I discuss how animalists must respond to a widely-discussed metaphysical puzzle, the problem of the many. This puzzle prompts some to endorse revisionary ontologies of material objects, and I argue that the animalist cannot appeal to these revisionary ontologies to solve the puzzle as it arises for *personal* ontology. In addition, solutions that don't involve a commitment to revisionary ontology will be unavailable to the animalist: I argue that if animalists make use of non-revisionary solutions to the problem, they must abandon the most successful argument for their view. Absent their most successful argument, animalism will need new motivation. Some new arguments for animalism have been proposed, and I argue that they fail to give us reason to endorse animalism over competing ontologies. Without a strong argument, we should not prefer animalism over the other, more attractive, views.

In Chapter 3, I show how constitutionalists face a different problem: explaining how the person is not the very same thing as the human organism, despite sharing the very same material parts and occupying the very same physical space. We think that the person and the organism are different things because they have different modal profiles – the human organism can survive permanent loss of psychological life, but the person, presumably, cannot. Constitutionalists must then explain what grounds the difference in modal profiles, but such an explanation is hard to come by. This is an instance of the *grounding problem*, which is notoriously intractable. While the grounding problem is a well-known challenge to constitutional accounts of objects, I demonstrate that this puzzle is even more threatening when applied to persons. Some “solutions” to the problem fail to solve it at all, and solutions that might get the right result for ordinary objects require accepting that there are a multitude of persons where we ordinarily take there to be only one. We should not accept a personal ontol-

ogy that requires a commitment to that multitude. I argue that the threat of the grounding problem is so great that we must reject the constitutionalist personal ontology.

We will see from these puzzles in personal ontology that materialist solutions are either unsuccessful or yield unacceptable consequences. This should prompt us toward considering, instead, immaterialism. The immaterialist can hold that we are *not* material objects and provide solutions to the puzzles that threatened materialist ontologies. In Chapter 4, I outline these immaterialist solutions and show that the puzzles cannot be reinstated successfully against the immaterialist. I then discuss different available varieties of immaterialism and argue in defense of my preferred version. Ultimately, I argue that we are simple, immaterial entities that come into existence at the proper functioning of the brain. Endorsing this view of personal ontology permits us to adequately respond to metaphysical puzzles and retain judgments about persons that should be most important to us. In particular, the immaterialist has the resources to avoid the problem of too many thinkers and retain the judgment that there is exactly one person in circumstances where we take there to be just one. The immaterialist also has the resources to plausibly analyze thought experiments, such as cerebrum-swap cases, that present challenges for materialist ontologies.

All things considered, it remains to be seen which personal ontology has the most evidence in its favor. In the context of debates that arise from material object metaphysics, however, evidence weighs in favor of immaterialism. Materialist personal ontologies are saddled with unacceptable responses to metaphysical puzzles, and endorsing materialism about persons requires taking on a very high cost: Either there are far more of us than we ordinarily take there to be, or there are *no* persons – far *fewer* of us than we ordinarily take there to be. Some might argue that these are the only acceptable options, so cost be damned. But we cannot afford to be so cavalier about our personal ontology. Instead, I advance immaterialist solutions to puzzles in personal ontology and propose that, in the interest of saving ourselves and everyone we love, we should seriously consider accounts according to which we are immaterial entities.

## Chapter 2 Puzzles for Animalists

### 2.1 Introduction

Animalism is the thesis that each of us is numerically identical to a human animal.<sup>1</sup> Initially, animalism might strike us as incredibly plausible – what else might we be, if not animals? Animalists also motivate their thesis by the following kind of reasoning: There certainly seems to be an animal sitting in my chair, and it's healthy and functioning correctly. When human animals are functioning correctly, we reasonably expect that they are thinking. And I know that *I* am thinking. I should not maintain that there is more than one thinker sitting here, thinking my thoughts, so I'm prompted to conclude that I am the very same thing as the animal in my chair. The same reasoning is supposed to work for you, also. Is there a thinking animal in your chair? Are you thinking? There's just one thinker? Then you're an animal, too. There's nothing particularly distinctive about you or me, so the line of reasoning will generalize, and the animalist seems to have what she needs to get to the conclusion that each of us is numerically identical to a human animal. Animalism also fits nicely with a worldview according to which everything that exists is *material*. Each of us, if animalism is true, is made up of the same basic building blocks as the rest of the world, and this is an attractive feature of animalism.

Some have challenged animalism on the grounds that animalism fails to accord with our intuitions in some particular cases, specifically considering conjoined twins. This itself, as I argue, poses no interesting threat to animalism, but it will highlight some of the costs of endorsing it. Instead we should challenge animalism on the grounds that the animalist cannot satisfactorily respond to a metaphysical puzzle: the problem of the many. I advance a challenge for the animalist and conclude that either animalism cannot be motivated by

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<sup>1</sup>For presentations and defenses of animalism, see, e.g., Olson (2007, 2009), and Bailey (2015a).

its most successful argument or animalism is false. If the animalist cannot rely on her most successful argument, then she must find some other means of motivating animalism. I turn to evaluating some of these other means of motivating animalism and show how these arguments, too, should not convince us that animalism is true. Ultimately, in this chapter I will demonstrate that we should not accept animalism, given that the animalist cannot simultaneously respond to the problem of the many and motivate animalism.

### 2.1.1 Ordinary Objects and the Problem of the Many

Before addressing the threat to animalism specifically, let us consider this general metaphysical puzzle – the problem of the many.<sup>2</sup> The problem of the many threatens the project of providing an ontology of ordinary objects. This may seem like a straightforward project; I think that I’m sitting on a single object, a chair. I think I’m drinking water from a single object, a glass. When I look up at the sky, I see what seems like a single cloud in the shape of an ice cream cone. But when we try give principled accounts of the metaphysical nature of these objects, we run into trouble.

To illustrate the problem of the many as it arises for ordinary material objects, consider its application to the case of an ordinary table. If there is such a thing as a table, then it is composed of some atoms. But which atoms compose the table? It has various parts, like table legs, which themselves have parts, which are tiny atoms. So, if there is some such composite object, then there is some plurality of atoms, call it  $p_1$  that compose the table.

We then should also recognize that if there is that plurality, there is also a plurality of atoms, call it  $p_2$ , that is quite similar to  $p_1$ ; it differs by only, say, one single atom. In fact, there are *many* pluralities of atoms whose membership differs only minutely from each other. The problem of the many arises, then, because if we want to grant that one of these pluralities compose a table, it would be strange to claim that none of the other nearly

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<sup>2</sup>For initial presentation of the problem, see Unger (1980). For discussion and purported solutions, see, e.g., Lewis (1993), Lowe (1995), van Inwagen (1990, Ch. 17), Markosian (1998), and McGee and McLaughlin (2000). For its application with respect to persons and/or thinkers, see, e.g., Unger (2004), Hudson (2001, esp. Ch. 1, 4), Hershenov (2013), Olson (2004, forthcoming) and (2007, §9.3), and Sutton (2014b).

identical pluralities compose a table. They're so similar to each other; how could we explain how only one of the pluralities compose a table and the others compose nothing at all, or compose objects that are not tables? We're prompted to conclude, then, that either there are millions of tables or none.<sup>3</sup>

Let us formalize the argument with respect to this ordinary object, the table, as follows:

(OO1) The atoms of  $p_1$  compose a table if and only if the atoms of  $p_2$  compose a table.

(OO2) There are millions of other pluralities that differ from  $p_1$  and  $p_2$  only minutely.

(OO3) If (OO1) and (OO2), then either there are millions of tables or there are none.

∴ (OOC) Either there are millions of tables or there are none.

This conclusion most certainly does not accord with what we ordinarily take to be the case – that there is a single table where there appears to be a single table. Our choice to pick a table, as opposed to, say, a chair or a mountain or a dog, was arbitrary; the problem of the many will apply to ordinary objects in general. In response, the trend has been to accept the consequences and grant either that there really are none of the objects in question or that there are a multitude of objects where we ordinarily recognize just one. Some argue that there really just are no tables, and there are merely atoms arranged tablewise.<sup>4</sup> And others accept that there are millions of table-like objects.<sup>5</sup> In either case, we have departed from the commonsense judgment. Perhaps this is not terribly worrisome with respect to ordinary objects. While these ontologies are revisionary, we might not be bothered by reexamining our ordinary object judgments and revising them as necessary. But these options, viable as they may be with respect to ordinary objects, become less tenable if we apply them to persons.

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<sup>3</sup>For the original problem, as it applies to clouds, see Unger (1980). Unger has since backpedaled from his extreme view that there are no clouds; see Unger (2004, esp. p. 195).

<sup>4</sup>For defenses of views on which there are no ordinary objects, see van Inwagen (1990) and Merricks (2001b).

<sup>5</sup>For a similar view with respect to cat-like things, see Lewis (1993). For another defense of a similar view, see Sider (1997).

### 2.1.2 Persons and the Problem of the Many

If we endorse a materialist ontology of persons, then we will again face the problem of the many, but the conclusion is even more devastating. Since we can offer a similar argument about persons, there's more at stake than an inventory of our tables; what's at stake is our census. Suppose we assume that persons are composite material objects, like tables or chairs. Let's take you as an example. We can pick out one plurality of atoms,  $p_3$ , that might reasonably compose a material person in your chair. Then there is also a very similar plurality,  $p_4$ , that seems just as qualified as  $p_3$  to compose a material person in your chair. Then we can run an argument like this:

(P1) The atoms of  $p_3$  compose a person if and only if the atoms of  $p_4$  compose a person.

(P2) There are millions of other pluralities that differ from  $p_3$  and  $p_4$  only minutely.

(P3) If (P1) and (P2), then either there are millions of persons in your chair or there are none.

∴ (PC) Either there are millions of persons in your chair or there are none.

Unlike (OOC), which may strike us as odd but not totally implausible upon investigation, there is a more serious tension in (PC). If there is no person in your chair, then who is reading this chapter? Who is thinking about the problem of the many as it applies to persons? If anything seems to be the case, it probably seems to you that *you* exist – and what are you if not a person? Eliminating persons altogether is not a solution to the problem of the many, and ontologists concerned with establishing the existence of persons will not make this move.

So what of the other alternative: accepting that there are millions of persons in your chair? We face a serious worry if we take this line. If persons are material objects, then there are some material objects that think. The most plausible candidates for being thinking material objects are the ones with functioning brains, like us. If so, then we can frame the problem of the many as a problem of too many thinkers. Even if thinking requires some particular arrangement of parts, such as brains and parts of brains, many pluralities of

atoms are arranged in this way. The presence or absence of some arbitrary atom should not make the difference between being a thinker and not being a thinker. If so, then the same reasoning that we saw with respect to the multitude of objects will result in (at least) millions of thinkers. Consider the argument for a conclusion about thinkers in particular:

(T1) The atoms of  $p_3$  compose a thinker if and only if the atoms of  $p_4$  compose a thinker.

(T2) There are millions of other pluralities that differ from  $p_3$  and  $p_4$  only minutely.

(T3) If (T1) and (T2), then either there are millions of thinkers in your chair or there are none.

∴ (TC) Either there are millions of thinkers in your chair or there are none.

Certainly we should not grant that there is no thinker in your chair. Nor should we grant that there are *many thinkers* in your chair.<sup>6</sup> Even if only one of the thinkers is a *person*, it should still be concerning that there are many *thinkers*. If there are many thinkers in your chair, distinguishable from you only minutely, then their thoughts will resemble yours, and a multitude of others'. If we are concerned with giving an account of personal ontology, one according to which there just is one person and just one thinker in your chair, then we have good reason to resist this move. Our concerns about personhood may relate to a variety of issues, such as responsibility, selfhood, free will and agency, and others. But these issues are not uniquely applied to things that we label 'persons'; they would also apply to *thinkers*.<sup>7</sup> So, even if we want to argue that there are many thinkers but only one *person*, it seems that we've just changed the subject. Our concerns in giving an ontology of persons may instead just shift to being concerns about thinkers. As a result, both of the viable moves in response to the initial table argument, denying that there is a table or granting that there are millions of table-like objects, are unavailable to us as responses to the thinker argument.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Sutton disagrees and offers an account that is purported to explain how there can unproblematically be many thinkers but only one person (2014b).

<sup>7</sup>Hudson makes a similar point with respect to freedom and the trouble we face if we assume that there are many thinkers present (2007, 39-44).

<sup>8</sup>Zimmerman has raised similar challenges for materialist ontologies (1995; 2003; 2008). I here focus

### 2.1.3 Situating Animalism

Since animalism is a materialist account of what we are, animalism is a prime target for problem-of-the-many challenges. In order to remain a plausible ontology, the animalist should be able to defend the view that there is just one thinker in your chair and just one thinker in mine. In fact, the animalist relies on the commonsense count of thinkers in order to motivate animalism, as we will see in §2.4.3. The key for the animalist will be in plausibly defending a close relationship between animals and thinkers such that for every thinker like us there will be exactly one animal, and, further, that the thinker and the animal are one and the same thing. We find challenges for this relationship from a few directions. One is by considering implications of the problem of the many as they relate to animalism. Another is by considering puzzles that arise from cases of conjoined twins. Some have raised a challenge for animalists because of the apparent mismatch between the number of thinkers and the number of animals in conjoined twin cases – it appears that there are too many thinkers because there are too many persons. This, I argue, isn't the puzzle that the animalist needs to worry about. Before turning to the more serious puzzle of the problem of the many and its implication that there are too many thinkers, let us first discuss the apparent puzzle that arises from considering conjoined twins.

## 2.2 A Puzzle that isn't *the* Puzzle

When we consider a typical human being, we find no discrepancy in counting how many organisms there are and how many persons there are. In a typical case, we count one of each. According to animalism, each of us just *is* identical to an animal, a human organism, so if animalism is true, we count the very same individual once when we count one of us and again when we count the organism. When we consider atypical cases, however, it seems that our counts will not match. For instance, in some cases of conjoined twins, we judge

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specifically on how the problem of the many threatens the best motivation for animalism in the context of recent discussion of a particular strategy that some use in response.

that there are two persons but only one organism. If our judgment is correct, this is a problem for animalism, since, for every organism, there should be at most one of us. While the animalist discusses what *we* are, in what follows, I'll discuss cases of conjoined twins in terms of *persons*. Animalists may not be happy with this substitution in all cases, so I will note potential divergences between uses of 'each of us' and 'a person'.<sup>9</sup>

One might try to argue that cases of conjoined twins serve as counterexamples to animalism. Animalists have responded by claiming that our judgments about conjoined twins are incorrect and that we are counting either persons or organisms incorrectly. Here I will present an argument against animalism that appeals to cases of conjoined twins. My discussion here will demonstrate that the apparent puzzle that arises in cases of conjoined twins is not much of a puzzle at all, for the animalist has responses that are available even if not particularly attractive. The discussion will be fruitful, however, in that it reveals the more serious puzzle that *will* undermine animalism.

### 2.2.1 Cases of Conjoined Twins

Cases of conjoined twins will demonstrate that animalism is false only if they show that some person is not the very same entity as an organism. Consider first the case of *dicephalus*, in which two heads, with two brains, share a single torso, as Abigail and Brittany Hensel do. The Hensel twins have two hearts, esophagi, and stomachs; they share three lungs, a liver, small and large intestine, and a urinary, circulatory, immunological, and reproductive systems.<sup>10</sup> Legally, and according to common sense, Abigail and Brittany are not one and the same person; Abigail is a person, and Brittany is a different person. Each has her own private mental life and experiences, and each is a thinker. But, since they have so much in common biologically, some judge that the Hensel twins jointly inhabit only one organism.<sup>11</sup> We may consider an even more drastic case; suppose that we have a case of *dicephalus* in

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<sup>9</sup>One benefit of using 'each of us' language is its exclusion of persons that are not like us, such as angels or deities or non-human persons; see Olson (2009). When I use the word 'person', I mean human person.

<sup>10</sup>See Campbell and McMahan (2010, 286).

<sup>11</sup>See, e.g., Bayne (2008, 271-80), McMahan (2002, 35-9), and Campbell and McMahan (2010).

which the only duplicated organs are above the neck, and the rest of the organism is like any other human organism. We can imagine that in this case there are still two private mental lives, each isolated from the other, so some judge that in this case there are two persons as well.<sup>12</sup> But because this dicephalus is otherwise similar to other human organisms, it seems that there is only one organism. There is just one heart, esophagus, stomach, circulatory system, and digestive system. Many functions, those that are not psychological, operate quite similarly in dicephalus and a typical human organism. The difference is that there are two mental lives in the case of dicephalus but not in the case of a typical human organism. A natural way of describing this case, then, is that one human organism has two heads. If so, opponents of animalism claim that there are more persons than there are organisms in cases of dicephalus; there are two persons and two thinkers but only one organism.

Consider second the case of *cephalopagus*, in which two brainstems, necks, and bodies share a single cerebrum. Unlike dicephalus, there are few or no cases of cephalopagus surviving much past birth, but some say that there *could* be such cases.<sup>13</sup> In such cases, we might reasonably judge that there are two organisms but only one person. After all, given the single cerebrum, we would expect that there be just one mental life that unites experiences of two bodies. And because the only organ shared by the bodies is the cerebrum, we might judge there to be two organisms. We can imagine that an advanced surgical method could be used to separate the two organisms, leaving one with a cerebrum intact and the other without a cerebrum. The animalist's opponent will argue in this case that the twin with the cerebrum intact is an organism. And one does not need to have a cerebrum in order to be an organism, so the animalist's opponent will argue that the other twin is an organism as well. It would then be unreasonable to further claim that their being conjoined entails that there be only *one* organism when there seem to be two, so plausibly there are two organisms present in

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<sup>12</sup>See Campbell and McMahan (2010, 286).

<sup>13</sup>See Campbell and McMahan (2010, 298) and Olson (2014, 26). Cases of twins conjoined at the head who do *not* share a single normally-formed cerebrum are not considered cases of cephalopagus for these purposes. Whether or not surviving twins conjoined at the head have shared a single cerebrum may be up for debate. The more noteworthy challenge for the animalist arises for the more extreme cases.

cases of cephalopagus.

Now, this by itself does not threaten the animalist. Animalism does not entail that every human organism is a person, so the response that there two organisms but only one person is available.<sup>14</sup> But the problem with cases of cephalopagus is that each organism would be related intimately to what happens in the cerebrum while conjoined. Whatever mental states are present are shared by both organisms. As a result, it would be arbitrary for the animalist to claim that one, and only one, of these organisms is a person. And the person cannot be identical to *both* organisms, since the organisms are distinct from each other. So, we then see the difficulty; in cases of cephalopagus, there *problematically* are more organisms than there are persons. In cases of both dicephalus and cephalopagus, then, animalism gives us the wrong count of persons and organisms.

### 2.2.2 The Conjoined Twins Argument

While these cases are supposed to threaten the animalist, it is not clear that they can be successfully used in an argument against animalism. The argument might go like this:

(CT1) If animalism is true, then every human person is identical to a single human organism.

(CT2) Cases of dicephalus and cephalopagus show that not every human person is identical to a single human organism.

∴ (CTC) Animalism is false.

Here is a place where an animalist may reject (CT1) and point out that if animalism is true, then *each one of us* is identical to a single human organism, and it might be that a conjoined twin does not count as *one of us*, being so different from cases of typical human organisms.<sup>15</sup> I'll proceed as if a conjoined twin is indeed one of us, but the possible objection is noted. If a conjoined twin is not one of us, then animalism may be silent on cases of

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<sup>14</sup>See Olson (2014, 26).

<sup>15</sup>Blatti, for instances, has defended a view on which cases of conjoined twins are borderline cases, and so our normal methods of counting persons or organisms do not apply. See Blatti (2007).

conjoined twins and say nothing about how we count conjoined twins and organisms. But we should do what we can to see what happens if each conjoined twin is one of us and examine other options for animalists.

An animalist may simply deny (CT2) and explain how our commonsense count of persons and organisms is incorrect. In the case of dicephalus, the animalist may grant that there are two persons but also claim that there are two organisms.<sup>16</sup> The animalist can appeal to some particular feature of an organism, like the brainstem, as the feature that distinguishes one organism from another. Of the Hensel twins, Olson says:

There are two brainstems that direct breathing, circulation, digestion, reflexes, and other life-sustaining functions. These organs control different regions, even if those regions overlap. Their activities are largely independent of one another. If the left brainstem were destroyed, the organs under its exclusive control – the left heart and stomach, for example – would cease to function. The limbs on the left side would immediately lose their muscle tone and become paralyzed. The left spinal cord would begin to atrophy. This would look much like the death of an organism (even if the right heart could continue to supply all the affected tissues with oxygenated blood). But if it were possible for one organism to die while the other survives, there would have to be two organisms.<sup>17</sup>

In saying this, Olson notes that the brainstem directs and regulates the organism, as a kind of control center. Distinguishing between organisms, then, may amount to distinguishing between entities regulated by brainstems. Since the Hensel twins have two brainstems between them, we can identify two organisms, just as there are two persons. The fact that they are fused and overlapping should not deter us from counting two organisms; they simply share some organs and features. By distinguishing organisms from each other based on brainstems, the animalist can give an account of dicephalus according to which the commonsense judgment that there are two persons is true without abandoning animalism. Just as there are two persons, so there are two organisms.

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<sup>16</sup>See Olson (2014, 28), Liao (2006), and van Inwagen (1990, 188-94). Hershenov, at one point, claimed that in extreme cases of dicephalus (in which two apparent persons share also a brainstem), that there is just one person present but has since revised his position to claim that there are indeed two persons; see Hershenov (2004, 464) and Liao (2006, 350, note 26.).

<sup>17</sup>See Olson (2014, 28).

Of cephalopagus, the animalist who counts organisms by counting brainstems is committed to the existence of two organisms. If so, then there are two persons in this situation as well. Since there is only one cerebrum between the organisms, the animalist who takes this line is committed to a shared mental life; both persons have the same mental contents and share mental states. Olson claims that this would be true with respect to the case of cephalopagus. Just as Abigail and Brittany Hensel share a digestive system but are two persons, perhaps two persons can also share a mental system by sharing a cerebrum. Olson claims that there is no good reason to grant that persons can share digestive “states” but not mental states, absent some unknown feature that distinguishes the kind of state in question.<sup>18</sup> This is a rather strange response, but assessing cases of conjoined twins can be rather strange. The animalist can then respond to the challenge raised by cases of cephalopagus by granting that there are two persons just as there are two organisms.

The animalist should not be particularly worried about the first-pass argument as stated. Because the animalist can offer an account according to which there are two persons and two organisms in cases of both dicephalus and cephalopagus, the animalist has no reason to grant (CT2). In fact, it seems that only non-animalists have reason to grant (CT2). The opponent trying to appeal to cases of conjoined twins, then, needs a more nuanced approach in order to dismantle animalism.

### 2.2.3 Counting Organisms and Counting Persons

In describing for the cases of dicephalus and cephalopagus, animalists can offer an explanation of how we should count organisms and dismiss a commonsense method of counting persons. With respect to counting organisms, the animalist who counts organisms by counting brainstems (call this animalist the ‘brainstem counter’) maintains that there is one brainstem per organism and therefore one brainstem per person. With respect to counting persons, the brainstem counter rejects the method of counting persons by counting mental lives according

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<sup>18</sup>See Olson (2014, 39).

to which there is just one person per mental life per person. If conjoined twin cases are going to threaten animalism, then it must be because the animalist's account of conjoined twins depends on a fallacious method of counting persons or counting organisms.

Campbell and McMahan appeal to two cases, one imagined and one real, in which counting brainstems and counting organisms will yield different results. First, they describe a case in which a human is born with an extra head, which includes a developed cerebrum but a brainstem that is only partially developed.<sup>19</sup> We are instructed to imagine that this parasitic head is surgically removed, and the removed head retains only what is necessary for consciousness and nothing involved in regulating other bodily functions. If the head were connected to an external blood supply, Campbell and McMahan expect us to judge that this conscious being is a person. But, according to the brainstem counter, this person is not an organism, since it lacks a brainstem. Thus, argue Campbell and McMahan, animalism that requires brainstem-counting is false, since this is a case in which we have a person who is not identical to an organism.

Here again we should note that since animalism is a thesis about what *we* are, it is not clear that this case is a counterexample to animalism. The animalist might grant that this being, conscious though it may be, is not a human organism and therefore is not one of *us*.<sup>20</sup> Perhaps it is a different kind of thing and therefore a different kind of person or different kind of thinker that happens to lack a brainstem. This case does not suffice to show that one of *us* could lack a brainstem and therefore that animalism is false. This is not a good option for the animalist, however. Prior to removing the parasitic head, there are still two thinkers, even if only one is a human organism. If the animalist argues that this parasitic head is a thinker, but not a thinker like us, then the animalist holds that some other kind of entity (perhaps like a cerebrum) can be a thinker. But if the parasitic head thinks in the same way that each of us thinks, then we should grant that even in the case of a typical human being, some other entity (perhaps like a cerebrum) is a good thinker-candidate. Taking this option

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<sup>19</sup>See Campbell and McMahan (2010, 294).

<sup>20</sup>Cf. Olson (2009, §1).

will close off this line of response to the charge that there are too many thinkers where there should be just one.

Campbell and McMahan also describe an interesting case, reported by Dr. Alan Shewmon, in which a four-year-old boy was pronounced brain dead but remained alive with the provision of nutrition and hydration as well as ventilation.<sup>21</sup> After fourteen years, Shewmon performed an examination and noted that the brain, including the brainstem, had been replaced by “ghost-like tissues” while the body remained alive. The boy had grown and had healed from infections and wounds. Campbell and McMahan point out that the external life support for the boy was no more involved than the kind of life support that is given to some fully conscious human beings. So, they argue, it is possible for a human organism to survive even lacking a brainstem. If we then count organisms by counting brainstems, we will get the wrong answer here; there is an organism, a *human* organism, but no brainstem.

A response to this case: it’s not the brainstem *qua* brainstem that the animalist appeals to when counting brainstems. Rather, the animalist might count organisms by counting control centers, or whatever it is that regulates the general biological function of the organism. But if the animalist opts for this counting method, it still will not secure the right result. In the Shewmon case, for instance, we can imagine that the machine offering external life support for the boy is also offering external life support for some other patient, a girl, serving as a control center for two different persons and two different organisms. If we count by control center, then we conclude that the boy and the girl are parts of one organism, but this is not correct. So, counting by control centers rather than brainstems won’t be useful in this case.

Since some animalists appeal to the counting-by-brainstems method in order to argue that there are two organisms in the dicephalus case, and we now have a case in which a human organism exists without a brainstem, this animalist needs some other way to explain how to analyze the case of dicephalus. Olson proposes another option.<sup>22</sup> Perhaps granting that Abigail and Brittany Hensel are two different persons was a mistake. Perhaps there is just

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<sup>21</sup>See Campbell and McMahan (2010, 298) and Shewmon (1998).

<sup>22</sup>See Olson (2014, 29-31).

one organism and therefore one person. It is possible, says Olson, for one person to have two mental systems. Although this is uncommon, and maybe even unlikely, it is possible. Abigail and Brittany Hensel, then, could be the same person and have a very disunified psychology. Claiming that such disunified psychologies prompt us to grant the existence of additional persons merely presupposes that persons are distinguished by psychological, not biological, features. But this presupposes that Olson's variety of animalism is false. So, despite the oddity of claiming that Abigail and Brittany Hensel are not actually twins and are in fact one organism and therefore one person, it is an option available to the animalist.<sup>23</sup> Adopting this account, then, avoids the problems of counting organisms by counting brainstems, thus side-stepping the concerns raised by Shewmon's research.

This option is not without its costs. Suppose medical practice has advanced such that Abigail and Brittany can be surgically separated: the Abigail-head is successfully transplanted onto a donor body, and the Brittany-head remains on the original body. Now Abigail's head, with a brainstem, regulates one organism totally independently of Brittany's head and brainstem, which regulates a different organism. It would be unacceptable to say that in this case Abigail and Brittany are the very same organism. So, if pre-transplant there is just one organism and post-transplant there are two, where did this new organism come from?<sup>24</sup> It is very strange to think that the Abigail-head *turns into* an organism at its separation from the Brittany head-and-body or at its conjunction with the new body. And it is unacceptable to argue that the resulting entities (functioning independently with separate control centers) are actually one, disconnected organism.<sup>25</sup>

All of these challenges highlight a common theme: finding a method of counting persons that gets the same result when counting organisms is tricky. If the animalist counts organisms by counting brainstems, then we might end up with more persons than organisms, as in the Shewmon case. If the animalist rejects the brainstem-counting method as Olson discusses,

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<sup>23</sup>Geddes (2013) discusses and advocates for a similar solution in similar cases.

<sup>24</sup>See worries for a similar case in Campbell and McMahan (2010, 294-297).

<sup>25</sup>We will return to similarly-worrying fission cases as they arise for the immaterialist in §4.3.3.

then we end up with a strange result that Abigail and Brittany are one organism and also one person. This raises additional strange commitments in imagining a transplant of the Abigail head onto a new body. The animalist can let go of the counting-by-brainstems method, but the animalist is then saddled with new concerns surrounding the identity and persistence of organisms. This, of course, is an issue not specific to organisms that happen to be conjoined twins; this is an issue that pertains to all human organisms.

The foregoing discussion puts pressure on the animalist's method of counting persons by counting organisms. The animalist may likewise put pressure on a method of counting persons by counting mental lives, which motivates resistance to animalism in cases of conjoined twins. Under ordinary circumstances, mental lives match up neatly with each of us. In fact, in ordinary circumstances, where there is a single mental life of a human person, there is also a single human organism. But when we look at atypical cases, we should question whether our method of distinguishing persons by distinguishing mental lives is reliable. There are cases in which a single person has a highly disunified psychology, such as cases of Dissociative Identity Disorder (DID). Individuals who have DID can have multiple mental lives, each isolated from the others.<sup>26</sup> But these patients are treated as one person with an abnormal psychology, and treatment is aimed at unifying the psychology of this patient.

We may also appeal to cases of individuals who have undergone a treatment for epilepsy that involves severing the corpus callosum. Sometimes called 'split-brain patients', these individuals present disunified psychologies under certain testing conditions.<sup>27</sup> Research has revealed that information in the left hemisphere is unavailable to the right hemisphere and vice versa without the connection between the hemispheres normally provided by the corpus callosum.<sup>28</sup> While, normally, these patients experience an apparently-unified psychology, these testing conditions demonstrate that their experiences need not be so unified. There is disagreement about the best way of describing these psychologies, but the testing conditions

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<sup>26</sup>See Liao (2006, 341-342).

<sup>27</sup>See Puccetti (1981) and Bayne (2008).

<sup>28</sup>See Bayne (2008, 278-9).

at least reveal that our ordinary method of counting persons by counting mental lives is not so straightforward. If these are cases in which a single person has this disunified mental life, then a unified psychology is not a necessary condition of personhood.

So, while cases of conjoined twins may seem to threaten animalism, the animalist has resources available to respond to the apparent puzzle. Since arguments relying on conjoined twin cases depend on a claim that the animalist can reject – the claim that there is a discrepancy between the number of organisms and the number of persons – arguments based on such appeals do not clearly defeat the animalist. Responses available to the animalist are rather unattractive but are not devastating. The animalist can appeal to methods of counting persons and counting organisms that yield the desired results in cases of conjoined twins, although their methods differ from commonsense counting methods. As a result, the true challenge to the animalist will come by attacking these counting methods, and doing so does not depend on any special appeal to conjoined twins. So, if we are interesting in challenging the animalist, the real work will be done independently of any concerns about conjoined twins.

As we will see shortly, the animalist will face much greater difficulty in correctly counting organisms in light of the puzzle we saw at the outset of this chapter – the problem of the many. We can get the puzzle going even without appealing to strange organism-dividing-and-transplanting cases. The problem of the many constitutes a serious threat to animalism, and it is a puzzle that, as I argue, the animalist cannot satisfactorily respond to. Let's discuss how the puzzle threatens animalism by looking at the case of one person in particular.

### **2.3 The Thinking Animal Argument**

Kelly sits in a chair at her kitchen table, drinking a cup of coffee. She thinks about how much she hates mornings and how much she loves coffee. Looking up, she sees an animal in the mirror, but she has no guests and no pets. She's alone in her kitchen, alone with her thoughts. She sees the reflection of the human animal sitting in her chair, at her table,

holding her cup of coffee. She appears to see *herself*. These are familiar experiences and familiar items, we see many of them in our own kitchens when we sit at our tables, drinking coffee, and hating mornings.

Let's focus on Kelly and try to determine what kind of being she is. Kelly is a thinking thing, a coffee-drinker, and a morning-hater. She is the *only* thinking thing sitting in her chair drinking coffee and hating mornings. There is also a human animal sitting in Kelly's chair, a human animal – a member of the species *Homo sapiens* – with a functioning nervous system, digestive system, and brain. If so, it is completely ordinary to hold that this human animal sitting in Kelly's chair is a thinking thing. After all, we ordinarily believe that human animals with functioning brains are thinking. If Kelly is sitting in her chair, thinking, and there is a human animal sitting in her chair, thinking, then the natural conclusion is that Kelly *is* the very coffee-drinking, morning-hating human animal sitting in her chair. It would be completely bizarre if there were more than one coffee-drinking morning-hater in Kelly's chair; surely there aren't *two* of those there. In the interest of preserving the judgment that there is a single thinker in Kelly's chair, we are prompted to conclude that Kelly is numerically identical to an animal, namely the very human animal she sees in the mirror.

Animalism is motivated by this reasoning, which we also saw at the outset of this chapter: animals are thinking things, we are thinking things, we don't find two thinkers for every human animal, so we, including Kelly, must be those animals. We find this reasoning in the so-called *Thinking Animal Argument*. Such an argument strikes us as attractive and plausible; its premises seem *obvious*. Rejecting a premise seems to come at the cost of common sense: 'There's no human animal in Kelly's chair' or 'There's more than one thinker in Kelly's chair' or 'The human animal in Kelly's chair isn't thinking'. Who would take any of these options?

I argue that, ultimately, we *should* take one of these options. As attractive as animalism seems to be, endorsing it also comes at a cost. Animalism ties our identity to organisms, and if the persistence conditions of organisms are not *psychological* conditions, then we could be distanced from our psychologies. (If you're the prince in Locke's famous thought experiment,

for instance, animalism seems to entail that you would wake up with a completely new psychology, not that you would wake up in a new body.)<sup>29</sup> We should endorse animalism only if either (i) arguments in its favor give us strong reason to prefer it over competing ontologies that better maintain our connection to our psychological features or (ii) the animalist can provide a strong defense of the claim that despite being human organisms, our persistence conditions are psychological. In this section, I'll focus on the challenge to the animalist's motivation: The Thinking Animal Argument, obvious though it may seem, is weakened when we consider the implications of the problem of the many. Animalists do not uniquely bear the burden of trying to respond to the problem of the many, but the animalists' burden is especially weighty, for they must not only resolve the problem but also retain motivation for animalism itself. I will demonstrate how the problem of the many requires the animalist to make concessions that undermine defense of the account. Specifically, I will advance a dilemma that leaves the animalist in an unfortunate position: either animalism cannot be motivated by its most successful argument, or animalism is false.

Animalists appeal to the Thinking Animal Argument (TAA) because it seems so compelling:

(TAA1) There is a human animal sitting in Kelly's chair.

(TAA2) Kelly is the only thinking being sitting in her chair.

(TAA3) The human animal sitting in her chair is thinking.

∴ (TAAC) Kelly is that animal.<sup>30</sup>

It certainly seems to be the case that there is a human animal in Kelly's chair. Further, it is easy to accept that Kelly is sitting in her chair, thinking, and nothing else in her chair is thinking. Plausibly, the thinker in her chair is the human animal. Animals certainly seem like the kinds of things that think; they have functioning brains. Together these entail that Kelly is the very human animal sitting in her chair. The argument is intended to generalize, resulting in the view that we are human animals.

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<sup>29</sup>See Locke (1979, II.xvii).

<sup>30</sup>I've offered a version of the argument as it applies to Kelly; for the original argument, see Olson (2009).

Despite the apparent plausibility of animalism, it is subject to some criticisms. For instance, Olson's variety of animalism entails that we could continue to exist even if we lost all of our psychological features and conscious experiences.<sup>31</sup> Consider the following thought experiment. Scientists have successfully performed cerebrum transplants. Kelly find this exciting because she has always wanted to be taller, and the scientists offer to transplant her cerebrum into a different (taller) body. The transplant is successful, and her cerebrum is now connected to a taller body. The body that previously contained her cerebrum remains on the operating table with functioning organs but no conscious experience. The scientists wake up the individual with the taller body. This tall individual sits up and marvels at the successful transplant! This tall individual has all of Kelly's memories, beliefs, desires, and happily thinks that the desire to be taller has been satisfied.

Where is Kelly? The intuitive answer is that Kelly is now taller, sitting up and talking with the scientists about how successful the operation was. Because our psychological life is so connected to who we are, we would want to judge that Kelly goes with her cerebrum into a different, taller body. But some animalists will say that Kelly is still lying on the operating table, and she has no conscious experiences whatsoever because she *is* that animal. And because Kelly is an animal, Olson's version of animalism also entails that she once was a fetus and will one day be a corpse.<sup>32</sup> These counterintuitive implications should prompt us to look for a way the avoid being committed to animalism.

So, some premise must go. Which one? If you deny (TAA1), which says that there is a human animal sitting in Kelly's chair, you are committed to claiming that contrary to your sensory evidence and knowledge of what animals are, there is no human animal in Kelly's chair. Apart from merely trying to desperately avoid animalism, we would need good reason to reject (TAA1). You might deny that there are human animals if you endorse some variety

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<sup>31</sup>This variety of animalism includes an endorsement of biological rather than psychological persistence conditions, see Olson (1997) and, for a critique, Dupré (2014). Not all animalists take this line, see, e.g., Bailey (2015a, forthcoming). For critiques of the variety of animalism that includes a commitment to psychological persistence conditions, see §2.6. For a discussion of the different varieties of animalism, see Thornton (2016).

<sup>32</sup>More precisely, it entails that she will one day be a corpse unless her death involves the complete annihilation of her body, leaving no corpse behind.

of eliminativism, which is a metaphysical thesis according to which many ordinary objects, the existence of which we would normally assent to, do not exist.<sup>33</sup> Endorsing eliminativism is often a response to metaphysical challenges. Responding to the challenges may also provide reason to deny that there are human animals; but if you deny that there are human animals, you should also deny that there are ordinary objects.<sup>34</sup>

Many object to the revisionary nature and apparent implausibility of eliminativism.<sup>35</sup> If eliminativism is true, then we are largely mistaken about what things there are in the world. Eliminating ordinary objects from our ontology is indeed revisionary, and it is not clear that doing so is the best way of avoiding a commitment to animalism. If you wish to resist the animalist's conclusion, denying (TAA1) is an option, but it comes at a high cost.

You might instead deny (TAA2). If you deny this second premise, then either there is no thinking thing sitting in Kelly's chair, there is a thinking thing sitting in Kelly's chair (but it is not Kelly), or there is more than one thinking thing in Kelly's chair. Certainly something in Kelly's chair is thinking; one must be a thinker in order to hate mornings. And it further seems that *Kelly* is the morning hater – Kelly herself is thinking. So, the only other way to deny premise two is to maintain that there are multiple thinkers present where there appears to be only one.

Denying (TAA2) in this way is problematic for two reasons. First, it puts us right back in the unfortunate position of being committed to too many thinkers. If Kelly and the animal in her chair are both thinkers, then the animal is thinking thoughts just like Kelly's. This in itself should strike us as problematic. Second, maintaining that there are two thinkers present raises the challenge of determining which thinker is Kelly and which is the animal. To feel the force of the problem, consider the premise first personally: you are the only thinker sitting in your chair.

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<sup>33</sup>For discussion of eliminativism, see Hossack (2000), Dorr (2005), Horgan and Matjaž Potrč (2000, 2008), and Unger (1979).

<sup>34</sup>Some eliminativists do maintain instead that there *are* human animals but there are *not* other ordinary objects. For motivations for doing so, see van Inwagen (1990) and Merricks (2001b).

<sup>35</sup>See, e.g., Hirsch (2002), Baker (2007a), Korman (2010), and Korman (2015).

Suppose you deny this and accept that there are two thinkers in your chair, thinking the same thoughts. Call them ‘Person’ and ‘Animal’, where ‘Person’ refers to the thinker who is not the human animal, and ‘Animal’ refers to the thinker who is the human animal. If you want to avoid the conclusion that you are the animal sitting in your chair, then you must have a reason to think that you are Person and not Animal. But, since both thinkers think the same thoughts, both Person and Animal will have equally good reason to think, ‘I am Person and not Animal’. Any possible evidence that would lead you to think that you are one rather than the other will be evidence for both Person and Animal. So, you have no reason to think that you are Person and that you are not Animal; so you cannot clearly avoid the conclusion that you are the human animal sitting in your chair.<sup>36</sup>

And therein lies the problem. If you deny premise two, then you are committed to there being two thinkers. You do this in order to avoid the conclusion that you are the human animal sitting in your chair. But in committing yourself to there being two thinkers, you place yourself in a situation in which you have no better reason to think that you are not the human animal than to think that you are the human animal. The same problem will arise for Kelly. Denying premise two, then, is not a successful way of avoiding animalism.

If you want to resist the conclusion that you are the animal sitting in your chair, I suggest that you should deny (TAA3), which says that the human animal sitting in Kelly’s chair is thinking. Denying premise three requires denying that human animals think, but this is more plausible than denying either premise one or premise two. If you deny that the human animal thinks, then there must be something else that is doing Kelly’s thinking. Kelly, the thinker, is not an animal but some other entity. Ultimately I will propose that the thinker is an immaterial entity and not an animal, but we need not reach for immaterialism in order to resist premise three. Constitutionalist offer a view according to which Kelly is constituted by but not identical to the human animal in her chair.<sup>37</sup> In either case, both immaterialists

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<sup>36</sup>See Olson (2009, 617).

<sup>37</sup>For constitutionalist accounts, see Baker (2000, 2008) and Corcoran (1999). We will address constitutionalism in more detail in Chapter 3. It should be noted that Baker will assert that the animal is thinking but only derivatively. In order to clarify this response, then, a denial of premise three will involve asserting that

and constitutionalists will reject the claim that Kelly is numerically identical to a human animal and can do so by arguing that human animals are not thinkers.<sup>38</sup>

Rejecting (TAA3) in the way I prefer comes with some costs, and we will discuss them later (especially in §4.3 and §4.5). But because of the force of the problem of the many, we are unable to distinguish among many thinker-candidates and conclude in a principled way that one, and only one, is really a thinker. This is a problem for materialist ontologies in general, but we will focus our attention specifically on its application for animalism in the next sections.

## 2.4 The Problem of the Many and the Dilemma for Animalists

Animalism, like many ontologies, is subject to the problem of the many. Let's remind ourselves of the problem by considering the table in Kelly's kitchen: We may reasonably ask questions about her table: Is the varnish a part of the table or merely layered over the table? Is this ink-stain a part of the table or merely on top of it? If she chips a tiny speck of wood off of the table, has the table lost a part? Has it ceased to exist? These questions highlight some of the challenges in specifying what exactly the table is.

Kelly's table, if it exists at all, is a material object, whose parts plausibly include wood, screws, and varnish. At a more basic level, these parts are composed of some atoms. Call the plurality of atoms that compose the object made of the wood, screws, and varnish, ' $p_1$ '. Then consider another plurality of atoms that differs from  $p_1$  by only a single atom. Call this plurality of atoms, ' $p_2$ '. If  $p_1$  compose something, then  $p_2$  should compose something, too. The object composed of  $p_2$  seems equally qualified as the object composed of  $p_1$  to be a table. Objects composed of millions of other similar pluralities also seem to have what it takes to compose tables. It would be arbitrary to select only one of these candidates but none of the others as being a table. The problem of the many arises: either there are millions

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the human animal sitting in Kelly's chair is not *non-derivatively* thinking. For a critique of constitutionalism on this basis, see Bailey (2015b).

<sup>38</sup>Note, again, that constitutionalists will claim that human animals are not thinkers non-derivatively.

of tables in Kelly's kitchen, or there are none.

#### 2.4.1 Responding to the Problem

In responding to the problem of the many, one might pursue one of three options. First, one might grant the conclusion that either there are millions of tables in Kelly's kitchen or there are none and argue that there *are* millions of tables in her kitchen. Someone taking this line might embrace the multitude of objects and accept that there are millions of tables where we ordinarily take there to be just one.<sup>39</sup> Embracing the multitude involves accepting that all of the relevant pluralities of atoms in Kelly's kitchen compose tables. It is indeed very difficult to specify conditions under which just a single one of these pluralities compose a table but none of the others do; what difference between these pluralities could we appeal to in order to offer such conditions?<sup>40</sup> So, a response that involve accepting that there just are millions of tables, one for each plurality of atoms in question, may be reasonable. Second, one might grant the conclusion that either there are millions of tables in her kitchen or there are none and argue that there are *no* tables in her kitchen, consistent with eliminativism. This response is consistent with eliminativism, according to which there are far fewer material objects than we ordinarily take there to be. In both cases, the response involves acknowledging the force of the problem of the many and accepting its implications.

Instead, one might deny the conclusion and instead argue that there is a single best candidate for being Kelly's kitchen table. In this case, the response involves rejecting that there are either millions of tables or no tables in her kitchen. Perhaps there is in fact a single best candidate for being a table, but we aren't sure which one it is because of our epistemic position. This epistemic response involves maintaining that one, and only one, plurality of atoms in her kitchen compose a table.<sup>41</sup> None of the other, nearly identical, pluralities

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<sup>39</sup>For examples of those who would defend such a response, see e.g., Kim (1976, §3), Chisholm (1976, §3.4), Lewis (1993, 642-651), Unger (2004, 203), and Williams (2006).

<sup>40</sup>The difficulties of providing conditions under which composition occurs are illuminated in van Inwagen (1990, Ch. 2).

<sup>41</sup>This would follow the framework that Williamson endorses, under the label 'epistemicism' (1994).

compose a table. We don't know which one composes the table, but it is not in virtue of there being no fact of the matter. Rather, if this strategy is correct, there is a fact of the matter as to which plurality compose the table, but we don't know it. If this were correct, there would be exactly one table in Kelly's kitchen. But this line of response is unacceptable because it entails indefensible arbitrariness, for pluralities that differ with respect to a single atomic member would then differ with respect to whether they compose a table. Concerns about arbitrariness may lead us to think that it is implausible that there be some fact of the matter as to the exact number and arrangement of simples such that they alone compose a table and no other similar pluralities compose anything or compose things that are not tables.

If we aren't interested in endorsing this kind of epistemically-oriented response, then perhaps we should consider supervenientism. The supervenientist assessment of Kelly's table is as follows: There are many admissible ways of precisifying our word 'table', and each of these ways will apply to a single table-candidate. So, the precise meaning of 'table' under one precisification will apply to, for instance, the object composed of  $p_1$  but no other object. The precise meaning of 'table' under a different precisification will apply to, for instance, the object composed of  $p_2$  but no other object. There will be only a single table<sub>1</sub> in Kelly's kitchen because there is only a single object that is suitable for being a table, under the first precisification. Likewise, there will be only a single table<sub>2</sub> in her kitchen because there is only a single object that is suitable for being a table, under the second precisification. On every admissible precisification of 'table', then, 'There is one table in Kelly's kitchen' will be true according to the supervenientist; therefore it is true *simpliciter* that there is one table in Kelly's kitchen. The supervenientist response, then, does not require accepting that there are millions of tables in her kitchen, nor that there are none; there is exactly one.

The supervenientist strategy, although it appears to solve the problem for Kelly's table, is not a strategy that we immediately reach to. Rather, we would endorse it out of necessity in responding to problems like this. Beyond merely noticing that supervenientism isn't

immediately attractive, it has also been argued that supervenience has implausible consequences for standard logic.<sup>42</sup> Ultimately, though, I argue that there is a more serious worry lurking for the animalist who also wants to be a supervenienceist, independently of these more technical consequences. I will discuss this further problem in §4.4, but for now, let us simply note that because of these challenges, we might be hesitant to endorse supervenienceism. None of the options, embracing the multitude, eliminativism, an epistemic response, or supervenienceism are particularly attractive, even if they offer a way out of the problem of the many as it arises for Kelly's kitchen table. As I will argue, the situation is even worse when we consider the implications for personal ontology.

#### 2.4.2 The Problem for Kelly

The problem of the many arises for other material objects as well, including us, if we are material objects. Even if we aren't bothered by the available options in the table case – either there are millions of tables in Kelly's kitchen or there are none – we should be worried about the problem of the many as it arises for us, and for Kelly. Suppose the animalist is correct, and we are human animals. Then there is a human animal sitting in Kelly's chair, drinking coffee, and hating mornings. The human animal in her chair is composed of some atoms, perhaps arranged in a particular way or situated to support life in a particular way. Just as we saw in the table case, there will be some plurality of atoms composing a human animal. And there will be a minutely different plurality, also plausibly composing a human animal. We should not accept that there are millions of animals sitting in Kelly's chair. A further problem also arises: If there are millions of animals in her chair, then it seems that each is equally capable of hating mornings and equally capable of thinking. Surely there are not *many thinkers* sitting in Kelly's chair, but we have no reason to think that only one of the millions of animals is a thinker.

We have arrived at the unfortunate conclusion, then: either there are millions of animals

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<sup>42</sup>See Williamson (1994, §5.3) and Tye (1989). For other objections to the supervenienceist response to the problem of the many, see Korman (2015, XII.2).

sitting in Kelly’s chair or there are none. Worse, either there are millions of *thinkers* in her chair or there are none. These options are unacceptable, and the problem of the many is a serious problem for Kelly, and for us, since the problem generalizes to all of us. Just as we saw with respect to Kelly’s table, there are worries about endorsing an epistemic response and a supervenientist response, and these worries will still apply if we try to respond to the problem for Kelly. Perhaps we should look for a different solution that permits us to (i) deny that there is no thinker in Kelly’s chair, (ii) deny that there are millions of thinkers in Kelly’s chair, and (iii) offer principled reason to identify just a single object in Kelly’s chair that is uniquely a thinker without resorting to linguistic gymnastics. It has been suggested that such a solution is available, but as I will argue, it highlights the dilemma for the animalist – if the animalist makes use of this solution, then animalism is false. If the animalist does not make use of this solution, then animalism cannot be motivated by its most successful argument.

### 2.4.3 A Solution: The Elimination Principle

A solution to the problem of the many as it applies to thinkers like Kelly will involve distinguishing among the many thinker-candidates in Kelly’s chair and determining which is uniquely Kelly. We might appeal to an *elimination principle* to distinguish among these many candidates. Let us first consider the general principle and then examine its consequences for both inanimate objects and thinkers like Kelly. Concerning objects of some kind  $k$ , then

Elimination Principle (EP): If there are many  $k$ -candidates and  $x$  is the  $k$ -candidate that has no superfluous parts, then  $x$  is an object of kind  $k$  and no other candidate is.<sup>43</sup>

Superfluous parts are those parts which do not contribute to  $x$ ’s *characteristic profile*, where

Characteristic Profile Principle (CP): For any property,  $p$ ,  $p$  is part of  $x$ ’s characteristic profile just in case  $x$  would cease to be a member of  $x$ ’s primary kind

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<sup>43</sup>The spirit of the principle is from Hudson (2007, 218).

if  $x$  ceases to have  $p$ .

Consider again Kelly's kitchen table, for illustration. Call the object composed of the members of  $p_1$  'Table-Plus' and the object composed of members of  $p_2$  'Table-Minus'. By applying the elimination principle (EP), if Table-Plus is a table-candidate and Table-Plus has superfluous parts, then Table-Plus is not a table. Plausibly, the characteristic profile of her table would include the property of being a surface to set things on, or perhaps the property of being a surface to serve meals on, or similar properties. Superfluous parts would be parts that play no contributory role in that characteristic profile. An ink-stain, for instance, usually plays no role in making an object a table. So, if Table-Minus is a table-candidate without an ink-stain and some other object is a table-candidate with an ink-stain, then using an elimination principle yields that the object with the ink-stain is not a table because it has superfluous parts. If all of Table-Minus' parts play a contributory role in the table's characteristic profile, then Table-Minus is a table and no other table-candidate is. The appeal to (EP) and the idea of a characteristic profile thus allows us to distinguish among the candidates and conclude that there is just a single table in Kelly's kitchen. Appeals to (EP), however, I will argue, will not help the animalist.

We might also worry whether this solution would in fact get the right result with respect to the table, especially once we narrow in on which parts of the table are really not superfluous. But recall that we need *something* to do the work of distinguishing among the many candidates. While I'll return to worries with elimination principles in §2.4.4, let us note that it seems to be doing the theoretical work it needs to do: we don't need to claim that there are no tables and we don't need to claim that there are millions of tables. Instead, just a single object is a table. So far so good for solving the problem of the many and saving Kelly's kitchen table. As I will argue, however, using a similar strategy to solve the too-many-thinkers version of the problem will not be fruitful for the animalist.

### 2.4.3.1 The Challenge for Animalism

While the argument is compelling, the foregoing discussion threatens the second premise of the (TAA). Recall the problem of the many as it applies to human animals: either there are millions of animals in Kelly's chair or there are none. And, further, either there are millions of thinkers in her chair or there are none. The animalist must maintain that there is exactly one thinker in her chair; Kelly is that thinker. Animalists can neither accept that there are millions of thinkers nor accept that there are none. In order to defend (TAA2), that Kelly is the only thinking being in her chair, then, the animalist must offer a solution to the problem of the many. Use of the elimination principle might seem promising, but using (EP) will undermine the very case that the animalist is trying to make.

If we apply (EP) to thinkers, like Kelly, then an application of (EP) would be:

(EP<sub>Kelly</sub>): If there are many thinker-candidates and  $x$  is the thinker-candidate that has no superfluous parts, then  $x$  is a thinker and no other candidate is.

Since Kelly is the  $x$  in question, it is natural to apply (CP):

(CP<sub>Kelly</sub>): For any property,  $p$ ,  $p$  is part of Kelly's characteristic profile just in case Kelly would cease to be a thinker if she ceases to have  $p$ .

Kelly, then, by (EP<sub>Kelly</sub>) and (CP<sub>Kelly</sub>) is essentially a thinker, and parts that play no contributory role in her ability to think are superfluous parts. Her brain, for instance, is not a superfluous part; it plays a contributory role in her ability to think. But arbitrary skin cells, for instance, don't, so they *are* superfluous.

The best candidate for being Kelly would not be an animal, then, contrary to the animalist's thesis.<sup>44</sup> The human animal sitting in her chair has parts that play no contributory role in her characteristic profile – parts play no role in thinking. If (EP<sub>Kelly</sub>) and (CP<sub>Kelly</sub>) are true, then she does not have arms, legs, or other parts of the human animal body, since these

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<sup>44</sup>This is Hudson's point, applied to our case (2007). Persson (2004) argues that the smaller material thing is a thinker, but would deny that this thing is Kelly.

parts are superfluous to her. By  $(EP_{Kelly})$  and  $(CP_{Kelly})$ , she is instead a material object that has at least the brain as a part but not parts like arms or legs.<sup>45</sup> Animals, however, do have parts like arms and legs in addition to parts like brains. Since the animal has parts that are superfluous to the thinker, if we appeal to this elimination principle and characteristic profile principle, we will not get the result that the animalist wants – that Kelly is the very animal in her chair. The elimination principle sets up the dilemma for the animalist: if the animalist makes use of  $(EP)$ , then animalism is false, as we see from the case above. If the animalist does not make use of  $(EP)$ , as I will further argue, then animalism cannot be motivated by its most successful argument.

Now the animalist will certainly reject  $(CP_{Kelly})$  because animalists will not grant that Kelly is essentially a thinker. Animalists can accept that Kelly could continue to exist even if she has no mental life whatsoever. This objection from the animalist will be addressed in §2.4.5, but for now I will simply say that while animalism itself is not a view according to which we have the ability to think essentially, the motivation for  $(TAA)$  depends on our self-identification as thinkers to get off the ground. And, since many thought experiments are designed to reveal that the person goes with the mental life, e.g. Locke’s thought experiment of the Prince and the Cobbler, I suggest that it is more natural to use  $(CP_{Kelly})$  as a claim about Kelly as *a thinker* rather than some other primary kind. By this natural application of  $(EP_{Kelly})$  and  $(CP_{Kelly})$ , then, animalism is false.

#### 2.4.4 Rejecting the Elimination Principle

The animalist cannot avail herself of  $(EP_{Kelly})$  and  $(CP_{Kelly})$  to avoid the problem of the many since their use requires a rejection of animalism. Perhaps the animalist should instead reject principles like  $(EP)$  altogether and find a different solution. This would allow the

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<sup>45</sup>It might even be the case that using  $(EP)$  doesn’t guarantee a single best smallest candidate. Suppose we use  $(EP)$  and find two Kelly-candidates that have the same number of parts but differ with respect to the specific atoms that compose the candidate. Then how would we determine which is Kelly? We need a uniqueness guarantee for the elimination principle to work. We will see further problems with the elimination principle in §3.6.

animalist to avoid the conclusion that Kelly is not an animal but some smaller object. It has been suggested that this is a good strategy for animalists to pursue. An elimination principle like (EP) might give us the wrong results when we apply it to, for instance, books.<sup>46</sup>

#### 2.4.4.1 Elimination Principles and Books

Suppose you look on your bookshelf, and you wonder how many books you have. You might look at some titles and see things like ‘*Material Beings*’, ‘*Crime and Punishment*’, and ‘*Calvin and Hobbes*’. You have at least three books. Suppose you pick up (only) your copy of *Crime and Punishment*; you’re holding one book. Now you might want to know what parts the book has, what its dimensions are, etc. There are many book-candidates that might be the referent of ‘*Crime and Punishment*’.<sup>47</sup> There are (at least) four options:

1. Something composed of all the pages and the binding and the dustjacket (intuitively, what we call ‘book’).
2. Something composed of all the pages (including the blank ones).
3. Something composed of just the pages with writing on them.
4. Something composed of just the page-parts with writing on them (intuitively, something composed of just the pages with writing on them, minus their margins).<sup>48</sup>

In order to identify which of the candidates is *Crime and Punishment*, we might use an elimination principle: If  $x$  is the *Crime and Punishment*-candidate that has no superfluous parts, then  $x$  is *Crime and Punishment*. The purpose of books is, arguably, to bear information. In this case, then, for some property,  $p$ ,  $p$  is part of *Crime and Punishment*’s characteristic profile just in case *Crime and Punishment* would cease to be a book if  $p$  is lost. For books, including *Crime and Punishment*, when  $p$  is the property of bearing information,  $p$  is part of the book’s characteristic profile. If we consider, for instance, the price sticker on the back cover, then we should acknowledge that the sticker is a superfluous part since it

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<sup>46</sup>This example is from Bailey (2014a).

<sup>47</sup>To set aside worries related to the ontology of literary works, take ‘*Crime and Punishment*’ to refer to *your copy of Crime and Punishment* in what follows.

<sup>48</sup>See Bailey (2014a, 479).

does not play a contributory role in *Crime and Punishment*'s characteristic profile. Once we apply the elimination principle to books, we conclude that only candidate 4 is a book, since it accomplishes what books accomplish – bearing information – with the fewest parts. This application demonstrates that we should consider things like bindings and blank pages to be superfluous parts that play no contributory role in the information-bearing of the book.

But now we've gotten the wrong answer. It is important for being a book that the book bears information, but this case seems to demonstrate that it would be a mistake to think that the smallest book-candidate that gets the job done is *Crime and Punishment*. In this case, we (apparently mistakenly) assumed that if some property (information-bearing) is characteristic of or essential to books, then all of the parts of a book must play some contributory role in the information-bearing of the book. If this application of (EP) and (CP) yields the wrong results in this case, that is, if it entails that candidate 4 and not candidate 1 really is *Crime and Punishment*, then we have reason to be skeptical about the success of elimination principles. For it seems as if using elimination principles commits us to the false conclusion that things that have bindings and margins are not books. Perhaps we're getting the wrong answer with respect to which thinker-candidate is really Kelly as well when we appeal to  $(EP_{Kelly})$  and  $(CP_{Kelly})$ . If not every part of a book plays a contributory role in the book's characteristic information-bearing, then perhaps not every part of Kelly plays a contributory role in her characteristic thinking. Our purported solution to the problem of the many is therefore, at best, not as straightforward as we may have hoped or, at worst, utterly fails.

#### 2.4.4.2 Can we save (EP)?

In order to threaten animalism, an elimination principle must both be plausible and entail the falsity of animalism. The book case suggests that the elimination principle we're working with is not plausible. A defender of (EP) might offer suggestions as to how we can fortify the principle so it entails that candidate 1 is *Crime and Punishment*. She might pursue one

of two options:

Option (i): reject that a book's characteristic profile includes only bearing information

Option (ii): argue that none of candidate 1's parts are superfluous to bearing information.

To pursue option (i), the defender of (EP) might suggest that bearing information is just part of what a book does. But books also have other roles. They not only bear information but bear information in a certain way; books characteristically split information across multiple pages. Books characteristically contain these pages in a stable construction, complete with a binding. If we ripped out all the pages of *Crime and Punishment*, cut off all the white space, taped it back together, and rolled it up like a scroll, we no longer have a book, although we have all the information contained within *Crime and Punishment*. We would be missing some of the book's characteristic profile: bearing information in a certain format. More work would need to be done in order to specify exactly what that format is, but the case illustrates that it is not *merely* bearing information. Candidate 1, but not the other candidates, is the only candidate that bears information in that particular format, so one might argue that candidate 1 really is *Crime and Punishment*.

Or to pursue option (ii), the defender of (EP) might suggest that merely bearing information is a book's sole characteristic feature. But, one might argue, things like blank pages and bindings contribute to the bearing of information. The blank pages situate the information in a certain way relative to other pages and the cover. The binding contributes to the information maintaining its order. Absent these features, the book would not bear the information in the same way, so these so-called "superfluous" parts are not so superfluous. Pursuing option (ii) likewise allows us to both apply (EP) and maintain that candidate 1 is *Crime and Punishment*.

The options should give us pause before rejecting (EP) altogether. And recall that (EP) is supposed to rescue us from the threat of the problem of the many. Employing (EP) allows

us to give a principled reason for thinking that there is a single best candidate for being the thinker in Kelly's chair, and it is false that there are either millions of objects equally qualified, or no object qualified, to be a thinker. This at least gives us some reason to think we should keep (EP) around. We should now ask what is at stake for the animalist if she abandons elimination principles.

#### 2.4.5 The Dilemma

The appeal to elimination principles was intended to be an objection to animalism.<sup>49</sup> Indeed, if  $(EP_{Kelly})$  and  $(CP_{Kelly})$  are true, then animalism is false. The animalist can then pursue two routes forward: offer an alternative application of (EP) or reject use of (EP) altogether. As I will argue, alternative applications of (EP) can be defended only by begging the question. Rejecting use of (EP) altogether requires the animalist to let go of the commonsense appeal that the Thinking Animal Argument is supposed to have. Neither option allows the animalist to retain dialectical advantage over other ontologies, since either animalism is false or (TAA) is unmotivated.

I now propose the Elimination Principle Argument (EPA):

(EPA1) If (EP) is true, then animalism is false.

(EPA2) If (EP) is false, then (TAA) fails.

(EPA3) If (TAA) fails, then we should not endorse animalism.

∴ (EPAC) If animalism is true, then we should not endorse animalism.

This argument formalizes the dilemma that the animalist faces: If (EP) is true, then animalism is false; if (EP) is false, then we should not endorse animalism.

##### 2.4.5.1 (EPA1)

In defense of (EPA1), I have already demonstrated that the conjunction of  $(EP_{Kelly})$  and  $(CP_{Kelly})$  entails that animalism is false; so if this is the right application of (EP), then

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<sup>49</sup>See Hudson (2007).

Kelly is not an animal, so we shouldn't think we are either. The animalist might propose an alternative application of (EP). Recall the strategies used in §2.4.4. In the books case, a defender of (EP) could either (i) reject that the characteristic profile of books includes only bearing information or (ii) argue that none of the intuitive candidate's parts were superfluous to bearing information. The animalist might try to pursue analogous options to defend animalism. Instead of endorsing  $(CP_{Kelly})$ , the animalist might reject the idea that her primary kind is *thinker*. The animalist might instead propose something like the following:

$(CP_{animal})$ : For any property,  $p$ ,  $p$  is part of Kelly's characteristic profile just in case Kelly would cease to be a human animal if she ceases to have  $p$ .

Instead of appealing to thought as Kelly's characteristic feature, the animalist might suggest that her essential properties are properties characteristic of human animals.<sup>50</sup> Then  $(EP_{Kelly})$  and  $(CP_{animal})$  would not entail that the smallest material object that enables thought is Kelly, since many parts of the human animal play a contributory role in the characteristic profile of human animals even if they play no contributory role in thought.

This move allows the animalist to reject (EPA1), but it does not put the animalist in a favorable position to defend the account. The (TAA) derives its force from the fact that we are *thinkers*, and this has such strong appeal because we conceive of ourselves as thinkers. When we conceive of ourselves as thinkers, we will assent to the truth of there being just one thinker in each of our chairs. The thinkers are *us*; *we* are the ones thinking our thoughts. And there cannot be more than one subject of our thoughts, and not many thinkers having qualitatively-identical thoughts. We must assent to these claims in order for the (TAA) to be successful, but they are claims that the animalist is unable to defend because the animalist rejects principles like  $(CP_{Kelly})$ . To motivate the (TAA) and simultaneously downplay the importance of Kelly's ability to think is an unstable position.

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<sup>50</sup>This might include properties like having a certain kind of DNA, being disposed to survive and reproduce, or keeping kin away from predators.

Consider what the animalist must do if the recipient of the (TAA) is both wary of animalism and aware of the problem of the many. The recipient may cling tightly to the fact that she is a thinker and look for resources to avoid the problem of the many. To allay these concerns, if the animalist wants to make use of (EP), the animalist can provide only a question-begging application of (EP), according to which Kelly's characteristic profile is the profile of a human animal and not a thinker.<sup>51</sup> Even with this modified (CP), however, animalism might still be false. It isn't the case that every single part of the human animal, such as a single eyebrow hair, plays a contributory role in the continuation of a life. But eyebrow hairs are parts of human animals, so an application modified in this way gets the animalist no closer to rejecting (EPA1) successfully. If the animalist wants to propose a new application of (EP), it must be by using something like (CP<sub>animal</sub>). This will do little to convince someone to endorse animalism, especially if it requires giving up self-identifying as a thinker.<sup>52</sup>

Once someone has endorsed animalism, it is certainly a respectable move to reject (EPA1) and propose something like (CP<sub>animal</sub>). But this move does not provide the animalist with the tools required to motivate the (TAA) in light of the problem of the many. Perhaps the animalist could instead accept (CP<sub>Kelly</sub>) but deny that it entails that Kelly is not an animal. In order to do so, the animalist would have to argue that parts of human animals, like eyebrow hairs, the appendix, and skin cells, really do contribute to thought. If she can do this, the animalist can maintain that no human animal part is superfluous to Kelly, and Kelly therefore is a human animal. This move is simply implausible, nor would it be pursued by animalists who deny that we are essentially thinkers.

Another method of rejecting (EPA1) would be to endorse a sparse ontology according

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<sup>51</sup>Even if the animalist proposed an application of (CP) according to which we are essentially living beings, not explicitly human animals, the defense of that application may still be question-begging.

<sup>52</sup>Note, too, that analogous problems will arise if we try to provide a principle that the *biggest* candidate that upholds the characteristic profile is Kelly. For specifying the correct characteristic profile principle will depend on what kind of thing Kelly is. We will find ourselves with a mismatch of best candidates for being Kelly because the biggest candidate that qualifies as an animal may not be the biggest candidate that qualifies as a thinker.

to which material objects like organisms exist but no other composite objects (like brains or arms) exist.<sup>53</sup> It has been argued that pursuing this strategy, too, requires the animalist to rely on question-begging support.<sup>54</sup> In addition, accepting this sparse ontology is often a consequence of other metaphysical and ontological commitments and is not useful as a starting point or contributing factor in motivating the ontology itself. Since the animalist is trying to convince us that we are animals, building in a controversial claim about classes of composite objects might give us reason to be hesitant about endorsing animalism, absent additional arguments in favor of these controversial claims. With respect to (EPA1), then, either the premise is true or the animalist will find herself in an undesirable position when trying to motivate animalism by appealing to the (TAA). So even if the animalist can use a different application of (EP), we can still establish the conclusion that if animalism is true, then we should not endorse animalism; for if the animalist cannot motivate the (TAA), then we should not endorse animalism.

#### 2.4.5.2 (EPA2)

(EPA2), ‘If (EP) is false, then (TAA) fails’, requires more motivation than we have seen thus far. If (EP) is false, then *one* solution to the problem of the many is unavailable. If we don’t appeal to (EP), then there are many thinker-candidates, which results in the problem of the many and therefore the too many thinkers problem, since the entity in question is a thinker. This threatens the motivation for the (TAA), which requires that there be a single thinker in Kelly’s chair.

I argue that the animalist cannot maintain (TAA2), ‘Kelly is the only thinking being sitting in her chair’, without appealing to something like  $(EP_{Kelly})$  and  $(CP_{Kelly})$ .  $(EP_{Kelly})$  and  $(CP_{Kelly})$  allowed us to exclude other objects from being thinker-candidates, avoiding

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<sup>53</sup>For defenses of sparse ontologies like this, see van Inwagen (1990, Ch. 9, 12) and Merricks (2001b, Ch. 4). For its use by animalists, see Olson (2007, §9.5) and Yang (2015). For critique of this strategy as it relates to the Thinking Animal Argument, see Zimmerman (2008) and Watson (2016). For a reply to Zimmerman, see Olson (2008, 38-42).

<sup>54</sup>See Watson (2016). Our strategies are similar, but Watson and I developed these responses independently and concurrently.

the problem of too many thinkers. And while it certainly remains intuitive that Kelly is the only thinking being sitting in her chair, this is a claim that the animalist should not be permitted to motivate unless it has already been established that Kelly is the human animal sitting in her chair, and that human animal (Kelly, according to the animalist) is the only thinker. Once we're made aware of the nearby candidates, we're on unstable ground with respect to establishing the truth of (TAA2).

Grant that Kelly is a thinker. The animalist should be able to give reasons for believing that no other nearby candidate is likewise a thinker. It would certainly be a problem if there were multiple thinkers in Kelly's chair. Absent an elimination principle, the only recourse an animalist has is question-begging. What reason does the animalist have for maintaining that Kelly is the *only* thinker? We might ask what's required in order to be a thinker. The animalist will point to features of organisms that support the ability to think. At the very least, thinkers have brains. And the animalist will not maintain that an organism needs to retain all of its parts in order to remain a thinker.

Someone might object to the animalist, then, and claim that the brain is a thinker. The brain has everything necessary to be a thinker, so, if Kelly is not her brain, both Kelly *and* her brain are thinking things, in which case (TAA2) would be false. The problem of too many thinkers arises, then, because the animalist cannot resist the move that the brain is a thinker. Indeed animalists recognize this difficulty.<sup>55</sup> The animalist may point out that this is a problem that arises not just for animalism but for any account on which we are not identical to our brains.<sup>56</sup> The unique difficulty in this situation arises, however, because the animalist making this move must reject elimination principles that are purported to solve the problem and can't plausibly appeal to the other available solutions. The animalist, then, can make claims like 'the human animal sitting in Kelly's chair is thinking' but not 'Kelly is the only thinking being sitting in her chair' without assuming that Kelly is that very animal and also eliminating the other thinker-candidates.

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<sup>55</sup>See Olson (forthcoming).

<sup>56</sup>Olson makes this claim (forthcoming, §6).

The animalist is in good company with defenders of other ontological accounts; the problem of too many thinkers does not uniquely threaten the animalist. The recognition that this problem applies does not demonstrate the falsity of animalism. But it does put the animalist in an unfortunate position with respect to motivating the view. Recall that the Thinking Animal Argument is supposed to have intuitive appeal. The argument seems so successful because it is just so easy to assent to the truth of the premises. If someone fairly new to personal ontology faces the (TAA), it is easy to be convinced that Kelly is identical to a human animal. But given that the animalist is aware of the too many thinkers problem, this should threaten the defensibility of presenting the (TAA) as an intuitive, easy-to-accept argument. It would be disingenuous for the animalist to prompt someone to accept, for instance, (TAA2) when the animalist *knows* that there are many other thinker-candidates around.

The reasoning that would establish the truth of (TAA2) would then have to be something like the following, utilizing a new premise (NP):

(TAA1) There is a human animal sitting in Kelly's chair.

(TAA3) The human animal sitting in her chair is thinking.

(TAAC) Kelly is that animal.

(NP) There is only one thinking being sitting in her chair.

∴ (TAA2) Kelly is the only thinking being sitting in her chair.

Now this may be a perfectly sound argument, and (NP) may help establish the truth of (TAA2). But anyone who accepts this argument will already accept (TAAC), the animalist thesis. So, in order to motivate the (TAA), the animalist who does not want to appeal to (EP) requires some other strategy to establish that Kelly is the only thinking being in her chair. A neat way of doing that is by somehow making a case that organisms are the only things capable of thought. But this itself requires a commitment to animalism, since anyone thinking about this issue is, trivially, a thinker. Unless someone has already granted that he is identical to an organism, he will not assent to it being the case that only organisms can

think, for he is thinking but may not believe that he is an animal. In this case, the (TAA) would fail because it would be question-begging. Rejecting (EPA2), then, undermines the plausibility of the (TAA).

Perhaps the animalist instead proposes a solution from the other direction: We don't need an *elimination* principle; we need a *maximality* principle. We can defend (TAA2) and say that Kelly is the only thinking being in her chair if being a thinker is a *maximal* property.<sup>57</sup> Likewise, the animalist could suggest that being an animal is a maximal property: for anything that is an animal, there is no large proper part of that thing that is itself an animal. If true, a maximality principle would provide the animalist with a method of distinguishing among many candidates and arriving at the conclusion that just one thing in Kelly's chair, the animal, is a thinker.

I see two problems with the maximality principle. First, we should resist the idea that a change entirely extrinsic to some entity results in a change to that entity's primary kind – the kind of thing that entity is essentially.<sup>58</sup> Plausibly, according to the animalist, our primary kind is *animal*, although the same problem will arise if our primary kind is *thinker* or *person*. So, in this case, consider Kelly and Kelly-minus, where Kelly has the property of being an animal according to the maximality principle and Kelly-minus is something composed of all the atoms that compose Kelly, minus a single atom, but does not have the property of being an animal. But if Kelly loses that single atom, then the thing composed of all the atoms that composed Kelly, minus that single atom, will come to be an animal. Kelly-minus has undergone no change in this case, however, but if being an animal is a maximal property, then Kelly-minus turns into an animal despite undergoing no intrinsic change. Before Kelly loses that single atom, Kelly-minus is some object but not an animal. Once Kelly loses that single atom, Kelly-minus becomes an animal, despite no intrinsic change.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>Bailey defends the claim that being conscious is a maximal property (2014b, §3). I'll speak in terms of being a thinker, but we would arrive at the same place if we speak in terms of being conscious. For discussion of maximality about other kinds of things, see Sider (2001).

<sup>58</sup>This discussion is inspired by Johnston (2016), although Johnston is putting pressure on a four-dimensionalist account of persons.

<sup>59</sup>The same problem arises if we're speaking of Kelly as a thinker or as a person. It is implausible that

The animalist might argue that Kelly-minus does not exist at all, and so it is false to say that Kelly-minus changes into an animal from a non-animal at some extrinsic change. Rather, if this is the case, the parts that we described as Kelly-minus' go from composing nothing to composing *something* at Kelly's loss of a single atom. This brings me to the second problem with the maximality principle as used by the animalist. In order to defend the claim that there is no such object as Kelly-minus, the animalist must argue that *being a composite material object* is a maximal property *in general*. For the animalist must secure the result that only the maximal candidate, Kelly, has the property of being a composite material object and no other nearby candidate is. In order to do this, the animalist would need some principle that prohibits composite objects from having large proper parts at all.

This, as a general principle, is false. Many things have the *non-maximal* property of being a composite material object.<sup>60</sup> A tile can have another tile as a large proper part. A jacket can have another jacket as a large proper part. A file can have another file as a large proper part. So, even if Kelly-minus is not an *animal*, Kelly-minus might be some other kind of object. If Kelly has the property of being a composite object, then we should think that Kelly-minus has the property of being a composite object as well. And if Kelly-minus is an object, then some change, presence or absence of some atom, entirely extrinsic to Kelly-minus will affect whether Kelly-minus is an animal. Unless the animalist can either demonstrate that being an object is a maximal property or defend the idea that some object can turn into an animal without undergoing any intrinsic change, then appealing to a maximality principle will not provide a means of rejecting (EPA2) either.<sup>61</sup>

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Kelly-minus would come to be a thinker or a person despite no intrinsic change.

<sup>60</sup>See Sutton (2014a).

<sup>61</sup>A further problem arises because maximality principles will not help in cases of vague parthood. The problem of vague parthood will also plague Hudson's preferred account according to which we really are the small material objects that the animalist denies we are. We will revisit the problem of vague parthood for the elimination principle strategy in §3.6.1.

### 2.4.5.3 (EPA3)

(EPA3) says that if (TAA) fails, then we should not endorse animalism. The (TAA) is presented as the primary motivation for animalism.<sup>62</sup> The animalist might best spend her time looking for new motivation for animalism. The (TAA), while still an argument in favor of animalism, lacks its requisite commonsense motivation. Animalism does seem to capture some ordinary judgments about what we are. It is ordinary to think of ourselves as being located in the physical world, and we seem to physically interact with material objects. It seems natural to think of ourselves as human animals and unnatural to reject any premise in the (TAA).

Endorsing animalism is troubling, however, in light of thought experiments that prompt us to privilege psychological over bodily continuity. More sophisticated Lockean thought experiments involving cerebrum transplant cases push us toward ontologies according to which we are psychological beings, and we feel less attached to our apparent identity as organisms when organisms are separated from their mental lives. Animalism allows for the possibility that you could continue to exist even if you cease to be conscious or cease to have thoughts of any kind. Since we are so attracted to views according to which our self-identification as thinking beings is upheld, it is reasonable for us to resist animalism until faced with a successful argument in its favor.

A strong defense and motivation of animalism, then, might address worries about cerebrum-swap intuitions, provide strong evidence for animalism (cerebrum-swap intuitions notwithstanding), or give a robust defense of each premise in the (TAA) that doesn't depend on a prior commitment to animalism.<sup>63</sup> Or perhaps the animalist can demonstrate that competing views of ontology are plagued with worse problems than animalism.<sup>64</sup> Without appealing to

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<sup>62</sup>Olson states if the thinking animal argument fails, then we have little or no reason to endorse animalism (2004, 265-6).

<sup>63</sup>One argument that does not depend on premises in the (TAA) is the Evolutionary Argument for Animalism, defended by Blatti (2012). Gillett (2013) has raised concerns about the argument. Bailey (2015a; forthcoming) argues both for new motivation and for psychological persistence conditions. We will discuss these argument in the next sections.

<sup>64</sup>This is largely Olson's project in *What are We?* (2007), although Olson himself relies heavily on the

the (TAA), however, and given other alternative ontologies, work needs to be done to establish the truth of animalism and reject (EPA3).

#### 2.4.6 Revisiting Other Options

Perhaps the best strategy would be to pursue a different solution to the problem of the many and the too many thinkers problem. The trick for the animalist would then be to find a solution to these puzzles that is both plausible and also not available to competing views of ontology. The animalist must provide a defense of their ontology that is more attractive, more plausible, or more convincing than alternatives. Let us revisit the epistemic response: Perhaps there is some fact of the matter, and the vagueness that we find in trying to pick out the relevant object is the product of our lack of epistemic access to the facts.<sup>65</sup> Then it would still be the case that there is just one thinker, but it is not clear (to us) exactly what object ‘thinker’ picks out. We might be mistaken if we claim that the object composed of *these* particular atoms is the thinker – maybe the object composed of *those* atoms is the thinker. In this case, it simply will not be obvious to us which of our claims that mention ‘thinker’ are true or false. We lack epistemic access to the fact of the matter not because the world is vague but because we do not know what the real referent of ‘thinker’ is. Just as we saw in §2.4, this move involves a commitment to arbitrariness and should not be pursued in the case of thinkers any more than it should be pursued in the case of tables.

Perhaps we should instead revisit the supervenience response. The animalist might propose a supervenience strategy here: Obviously there is only one thinker in Kelly’s chair, and it is vague which candidate is the real thinker.<sup>66</sup> By any precise meaning of ‘thinker’, there is just one. Setting aside the concerns raised for supervenience mentioned in §2.4, we have a greater worry here. Suppose the supervenience is right that there is just a single thinker<sub>1</sub> and just a single thinker<sub>2</sub>. Does this solve the problem? Certainly not. The problem

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(TAA).

<sup>65</sup>For an application of epistemicism to the case of persons, see Hawthorne (2006). Hudson also alludes to endorsement of epistemicism to solve the problem (2001; 2007).

<sup>66</sup>For an example of this strategy, see Lewis (1993).

of too many thinkers is not just a problem of there being more than one candidate referent of ‘thinker’. It is just as bad for there to be both a thinker<sub>1</sub> and a thinker<sub>2</sub>. Even if the supervenientist can secure the result that ‘there is one thinker’ is true on all admissible precisifications of ‘thinker’, there are too many thinker-like things around doing similar (albeit not identical) things.

Consider the following case that illustrates this. According to the supervenientist, Kelly and Kelly-minus (whose composition differs from Kelly’s by a single atom, say, on the toe) are not both thinkers. Suppose Kelly goes to the eye doctor, sees a blurry vision chart, and reports ‘I think I need glasses’. Kelly-minus likewise goes to the eye doctor, sees a blurry vision chart, and reports ‘I think I need glasses’. Kelly and Kelly-minus will both be in representational states that have mental content. And they have qualitatively-identical brains and sense organs, so given the same external stimuli, Kelly’s contentful state will be an intrinsic duplicate of Kelly-minus’ contentful state. A difference of one single atom will not make any difference to the mental contents. It’s bad enough, then, that we have two different subjects with a duplicated contentful state even if they are not both *thinkers*.

I argue further, however, that the supervenientist cannot defensibly maintain that only either Kelly or Kelly-minus is a thinker, and the epistemic response will fail in this case, too, for the same reasons. Suppose we find a qualitative duplicate of Kelly-minus, call her Kelly-minus\*. She is exactly like Kelly-minus, except she and Kelly are not overlapping at all. Kelly and Kelly-minus\* both go to the eye doctor and report ‘I think I need glasses’. They sit in an otherwise-empty waiting room while the doctor writes up their prescriptions. If the eye doctor says to her assistant, ‘Both women think they need glasses’, what she says is *true*. Even the supervenientist should grant this. In ordinary circumstances if we see two women sitting in a waiting room, we would correctly say ‘there are two thinkers in the waiting room’. So, if supervenientism is plausible, it should yield the result that on any admissible precisification of ‘thinker’, ‘Both women think they need glasses’ is true.

Suppose we find a precisification according to which ‘Kelly thinks she needs glasses’ is

true but ‘Kelly-minus\* thinks she needs glasses’ is false. This will then not be a precisification on which ‘both women think they need glasses’ is true. So, any precisification on which ‘Kelly thinks she needs glasses’ is true but ‘Kelly-minus\* thinks she needs glasses’ is false will be *inadmissible*. Likewise, if we find a precisification according to which ‘Kelly thinks she needs glasses’ comes out false but ‘Kelly-minus\* thinks she needs glasses’ comes out true, then ‘both women think they need glasses’ would be false. Any precisification of this variety will be inadmissible as well. We likewise should not count as admissible any precisification on which both ‘Kelly thinks she needs glasses’ *and* ‘Kelly-minus\* thinks she needs glasses’ are false, for ‘both women think they need glasses’ would be false on this precisification as well. So any admissible precisification, one on which ‘both women think they need glasses’ is true, will be a precisification on which both ‘Kelly thinks she needs glasses’ is true *and* ‘Kelly-minus\* thinks she needs glasses’ is true. The defender of the epistemic response should also accept that both Kelly and Kelly-minus\* are thinkers in this case.

If this is so, then ‘Kelly-minus\* is a thinker’ is true if and only if ‘Kelly is a thinker’ is true. And since Kelly-minus\* is an exact duplicate of Kelly-minus, then we should hold that ‘Kelly-minus\* is a thinker’ is true if and only if ‘Kelly-minus is a thinker’ is true. Therefore, even the *supervaluationist* should maintain that ‘Kelly-minus is a thinker’ is true if and only if ‘Kelly is a thinker’ is true. Therefore, if the supervaluationist and the defender of the epistemic response want to grant that ‘Kelly is a thinker’ is true, they must also grant that ‘Kelly-minus is a thinker’ is true also. This *is* a problem of too many thinkers. Supervaluationism and the epistemic response, then, fail to solve the problem of the many as it arises for thinkers.

Further, even if these responses were real solutions at all, they are not at all immediately attractive, plausible, or convincing. The (TAA), however, *is* supposed to be attractive, plausible, and convincing, so if its support is not, the (TAA) fails. In addition, these strategies are likewise available to competing ontologies that face the same problem. This does not demonstrate that the (TAA) is unsound, but it does demonstrate that the (TAA) is less

attractive than the animalist may think.

#### 2.4.6.1 Taking Stock and Looking Ahead

So, it turns out that giving an ontology of the items in Kelly's kitchen is difficult, especially when we try to determine what kind of being Kelly is. She, at least, is a thinker; perhaps more than that as well. Animalists will insist that she is an organism, a human animal, to be precise, and motivate their view with the Thinking Animal Argument. The (TAA) is supposed to be convincing, with premises that are easy to grant. Most importantly, we easily assent to the claim, 'Kelly is the only thinker sitting in her chair'; what, other than Kelly, could be sitting in her chair and thinking? This seems obvious, and it relies on the fact that we conceive of ourselves *as thinkers*.

The animalist appeals to this self-conception to demonstrate to us the truth of a premise in the argument. I have argued, however, that in order to fully motivate the argument, the animalist has to require us to simultaneously *depend* on this self-conception and *reject* it in deference to the animalist thesis. We must reject it because if we hold tightly onto our self-identification as thinkers, then we will not be able to both respond successfully to the problem of the many and maintain animalism – for being *thinkers* prompts us toward principles like  $(EP_{Kelly})$  and  $(CP_{Kelly})$ , which are unavailable to the animalist. But once we reject our self-identification as thinkers, the Thinking Animal Argument becomes harder to accept.

The difficulty arises because of the implausible moves required to maintain that there is just a single thinker in Kelly's chair, which we can see most clearly in the discussion of elimination principles. I have here shown that the argument from elimination principles threatens animalism and that the truth of  $(EP_{Kelly})$  and  $(CP_{Kelly})$  entails that animalism is false. I then argued that without the use of an elimination principle, the animalist is required to make use of controversial or implausible responses to the problem of the many. Because we should not quickly assent to the truth of the controversial or implausible responses,

we should not be convinced by the Thinking Animal Argument. The best argument for animalism, therefore, fails. The animalist would be well served by provision of new arguments for animalism.

## 2.5 The Animal Ancestors Argument

While the Thinking Animal Argument is perhaps the most well-known motivation for animalism, there may be other resources to appeal to in the animalist's defense. This is critical, given the foregoing discussion in §§2.3-2.4. Another consideration worth weighing in personal ontology is the idea that we seem to be products of evolution. Animalism fits very nicely with our conception that we, ourselves, are participants in large-scale biological development on earth. This kind of reasoning has been framed as an argument for animalism.<sup>67</sup> The argument prompts us to choose between two options: accepting animalism or rejecting evolutionary theory. Since, so the reasoning goes, evolutionary theory is well established, we should not reject it. If so, then we should accept animalism. My aim here, however, is to show that the choice between accepting animalism and rejecting evolutionary theory is a false dilemma. Though the animalist can straightforwardly account for how we are the products of evolution, other theories of personal ontology can plausibly situate themselves in the context of commitments to evolutionary theory as well.

The argument appealing to our apparent evolutionary history is called the *Animal Ancestors Argument* (AAA). We can reconstruct it as follows:<sup>68</sup>

(AAA1) If animalism is false, then none of your ancestors were animals.

(AAA2) If evolutionary theory is correct, then some of your ancestors were animals.

(AAA3) Evolutionary theory is correct.

∴ (AAAC) Animalism is true.

We see support for (AAA1) in the following reasoning. If animalism is false, then you

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<sup>67</sup>See Blatti (2012).

<sup>68</sup>Blatti presents the argument as a reductio, but this reconstruction remains true to his reasoning (2012, 686).

are not an animal. If you are not an animal, then your parents must not be animals either. And if your parents are not animals, then their parents must not be animals either, nor their parents, nor *their* parents. If that's the case, then your ancestry doesn't include any beings who were animals. But we ordinarily think that we are the kinds of things that do have animals as ancestors, since we seem to trace our lineage back through generations of animal development. If we take our best science seriously, we seem committed to the claim that we ourselves have descended from earlier human animals who in turn descended from ancestors of some earlier species. Let us understand 'evolutionary theory', for now, to refer to the general theory of the development of species on earth. (We will examine 'evolutionary theory' in more detail in §2.5.1). Evolutionary theory, then, arguably entails that at least some of your ancestors were animals. And, setting aside objections that depart from scientific consensus, evolutionary theory is correct. We arrive, then, at (AAAC): animalism is true.

If this argument is successful, rejecting animalism requires rejecting evolutionary theory and accepting evolutionary theory commits us to accepting animalism. And since we shouldn't reject something as well established as evolutionary theory, then we're prompted to accept animalism. If our options really are to either reject large-scale, well-established scientific theories or accept the animalist's ontology, then our choice should be made for us and we should accept animalism. This would involve rejecting accounts like constitutionalism and immaterialism according to which we are not numerically identical to the very animals sitting in our chairs. The (AAA) was intended to target constitutionalism specifically.<sup>69</sup> We will address constitutionalism in more depth in Chapter 3, but for now we can simply note that according to constitutionalism, human persons are constituted by, but not identical to, human organisms. Human organisms are *animals*, so we are not identical to human animals. If we are not numerically identical to animals, which *are* products of evolution, we must deny that we ourselves are the most recent evolutionary development following *Homo erectus* and

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<sup>69</sup>See Blatti (2012, 685). Blatti identifies Baker (2000), Johnston (1987), and Shoemaker (1999, 2011) as proponents of constitutional views, and notes that other non-animalist views have been defended by DeGrazia (2005), Hershenov (2005), Mackie (1999), and Wiggins (2001).

*Homo neanderthalensis*. Immaterialism, which we will discuss in Chapter 4, entails likewise that we are not numerically identical to human animals. Any account according to which we are not identical to human animals seemingly entails that we are not products of evolution.

Two expected constitutionalist objections to the argument have been dismissed as unsuccessful.<sup>70</sup> First, constitutionalists may claim that human *persons*, including you, have evolved from human *animals*, in which case (AAA1) would be false. If this is the case, then the fact that we ourselves are not animals does not entail that none of our ancestors were animals. One might claim that our recent ancestors were *not* animals – our parents, for instance, were also persons – but our distant ancestors *were* animals. In response: “Evolutionary biology does not identify personhood as the latest speciation stage in the descent of human animals – as if human evolution transitioned from *Homo erectus* and *Homo neanderthalensis* through *Homo sapiens* to *Homo personae*.”<sup>71</sup> It is argued that evolution is a process that operates on organisms, and evolution doesn’t produce non-organisms.<sup>72</sup> The constitutional objection is supposed to fail because it depends on a non-evolutionary story of our origins.

As a modification of this first constitutionalist objection, it may be proposed that the right story about the origins of *persons* is an explanation of the emergence, rather than evolution, of persons.<sup>73</sup> Persons, so the modification goes, are a new kind of thing; they “emerge” from organisms but are not themselves organisms. If this is the case, Blatti argues that the constitutionalist then faces the burden of reconciling this account with the fact that features that seem so characteristic of personhood, such as self-consciousness and rationality, can be explained in terms of adaptation to selective pressures.<sup>74</sup> If these features arose because they increase fitness, then it would be odd to attribute these features to entities that don’t themselves participate in the process of natural selection.

A second anticipated objection from the constitutionalist is the ‘overstatement’ objec-

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<sup>70</sup>For discussion of these particular objections, and for the original replies, see Blatti (2012, 686-689).

<sup>71</sup>See Blatti (2012, 686).

<sup>72</sup>See Blatti (2012, 686).

<sup>73</sup>Blatti considers this modification, (2012, 686).

<sup>74</sup>See Blatti (2012, 687).

tion.<sup>75</sup> The objection is that evolutionary theory yields only the conclusion that we are animals, but not that each of us is *identical* with an animal. The force of this objection depends on the claim that evolutionary theory underdetermines our relationship the human animals we seem to be. In response, it is noted that it would require treating the word ‘animal’ differently, depending on whether the organism in question is a human animal or a non-human animal. If we are constituted by human animals, then ‘I am an animal’ should be interpreted differently than ‘My dog, Buster, is an animal’. In the first case, the assertion is that I am constituted by but non-identical with an animal. In the second, the assertion is that Buster is identical with an animal. The simpler, and favorable, explanation is that evolutionary theory yields conclusions in which ‘animal’ should be interpreted univocally. To demand that the evolutionary accounts be consistent with constitutionalism is an unsupported demand unless one has already rejected animalism.<sup>76</sup>

### 2.5.1 What does Evolutionary Theory entail?

I am most interested in raising a different objection to the Animal Ancestors Argument: ‘evolutionary theory’ can be interpreted in two ways, and on both interpretations, we can resist the conclusion of the (AAA). First is a narrow interpretation of ‘evolutionary theory’ according to which no natural entities come into existence without participating in the process of natural selection.<sup>77</sup> On this more narrow interpretation, all natural entities must themselves be products of evolution that can (in principle) trace their lineage back through many generations of ancestors, including ancestors of different species. Second is a more broad interpretation of ‘evolutionary theory’ according to which no natural entities come

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<sup>75</sup>See Blatti (2012, 687).

<sup>76</sup>More has been said about this objection. See Blatti (2012, 688-689). I will not here pursue the discussion, since my line of objection does not depend on the success or failure of this objection.

<sup>77</sup>Now of course “natural entities” can’t mean things like, for instance, rocks, which might be understood to be “natural.” I don’t mean to build anything into the phrase ‘natural entities’ that will make a difference with respect to whether the broad or narrow interpretation is more plausible – ‘natural entities’ can be understood to include things like plants, animals, organisms in general, and us (neutral with respect to whether we are organisms). It will exclude things like supernatural entities and things like rocks that weren’t participants broadly or narrowly in the processes of natural selection.

into existence independently of the processes of natural selection. On this more broad interpretation, all natural entities must exist because of the processes of natural selection but don't necessarily trace their very lineage back through many generations of ancestors. As we will see, if we understand 'evolutionary theory' on the first, narrow, interpretation, then we should not accept the third premise that evolutionary theory, interpreted narrowly, is correct. If we understand 'evolutionary theory' on the second, broader interpretation, then we should not accept the second premise that evolutionary theory, interpreted broadly, entails that some of your ancestors were animals.

Let's consider first the narrow interpretation. Then we can give the following reconstruction:

(AAA1) If animalism is false, then none of your ancestors were animals.

(AAA2') If evolutionary theory, narrowly construed, is correct, then some of your ancestors were animals.

(AAA3') Evolutionary theory, narrowly construed, is correct.

∴ (AAAC) Animalism is true.

The reasoning for the first two premises will remain mostly the same, noting that the narrow construal of 'evolutionary theory' still requires that some of your ancestors were animals. Now the heavy lifting happens in (AAA3'), which says that the narrow interpretation of 'evolutionary theory' is correct. This must be what the defender of (AAA) has in mind, for this interpretation keeps the animal ancestral requirement intact. Now the question is whether someone who resists animalism can plausibly reject evolutionary theory, narrowly construed. Part of what seems to be at work in this argument is a commitment to a naturalistic understanding of who we are – we weren't miraculously dropped onto the earth by a supernatural being, we can situate ourselves in the grand scheme of the development of life on earth without appealing to divine origins that confer privilege on us, set apart from other living things on earth. But we can retain what's important about accepting evolutionary theory in general, including this commitment, by accepting the broad interpretation

of ‘evolutionary theory’ and rejecting the narrow interpretation. Endorsing the narrow interpretation involves accepting less important claims that we should grant only once we’ve accepted something like animalism.

Here are several claims that can be endorsed by the defender of both the narrow and the broad interpretations of ‘evolutionary theory’:

- Selective pressures made it such that better-developed brains were conducive to survival.
- Better-developed brains led to rational capacities and consciousness.
- We exist because past pressures made it advantageous to have rational capacities and consciousness.
- If evolutionary history had gone differently and *Homo sapiens* never evolved, then we would not exist either.
- Only natural entities have rationality and consciousness.

Even those who reject animalism can accept these claims. A constitutionalist, for instance, can maintain that selection favored well-developed brains which in turn led to rational capacities and consciousness. And they can likewise maintain that if there had never been beings with the kinds of brains that human animals have, then we would not exist. The animalist will accept all of these claims too.

Here are several claims that you have to give up if you endorse the broad interpretation and reject the narrow interpretation:

- Entities with rationality and consciousness must themselves be the very products of the processes of natural selection that can (in principle) trace their very lineage back through generations of biological species.
- All natural entities are organisms.
- Human animals are the only entities with rationality and consciousness (like ours).<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>78</sup>Of course it may be the case that other species exhibit rationality and consciousness as well, but non-human animals are not the subject of this discussion. So we will use ‘like ours’ to restrict the rationality and

Settling the matter of which interpretation is correct will then depend on some kind of stance on the claims immediately above, which an animalist will accept and a constitutionalist or immaterialist will not. But if we can tell a story according to which we came into existence because natural selection went the way it did – favoring brain development which led to rationality and consciousness – without being an animalist, we can retain what’s attractive about evolutionary theory. Rejecting animalism doesn’t mean that we’re evolution deniers – we’re rather denying the narrow interpretation of ‘evolutionary theory’ and favoring the broad interpretation. We then need to see more support for the claims above that are not consistent with rejecting the narrow interpretation. Doing so would require settling the very matter at hand – what kinds of things we are. And since we can remain neutral in response to that question and still retain a commitment to evolutionary theory (broadly construed), we need not answer the question here.

Instead we can accept the broad interpretation of ‘evolutionary theory’ and also reject animalism. If we interpret ‘evolutionary theory’ broadly, then the Animal Ancestors Argument would be reconstructed as follows:

(AAA1) If animalism is false, then none of your ancestors were animals.

(AAA2'') If evolutionary theory, broadly construed, is correct, then some of your ancestors were animals.

(AAA3'') Evolutionary theory, broadly construed, is correct.

∴ (AAAC) Animalism is true.

Here someone who wants to reject animalism can interpret ‘evolutionary theory’ broadly and reject (AAA2''). Someone who takes this line can maintain that the processes of natural selection made it the case that we came into existence, and perhaps it is adaptive to human animals that we exist, but we ourselves need not be the very products of evolution with some animal ancestors. (Maybe our ancestors were persons and not animals.)

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consciousness that we’re talking about to be the rationality and consciousness that we take to be associated with human beings. This claim will exclude, for instance, immaterial entities that are rational/conscious or material entities that are constituted by but not identical to human animals.

Absent a defense of the narrow interpretation of ‘evolutionary theory’, then, the (AAA) will not suffice to demonstrate the truth of animalism. In fairness to Blatti, he does not take the (AAA) to be a knockdown argument.<sup>79</sup> Unfortunately for the animalist, that’s rather what the animalist needs, especially if the Thinking Animal Argument has been compromised. While, of course, the animalist can offer a straightforward account of how we participated in the grand evolutionary story of life on earth, the (AAA) won’t be enough to settle questions about what kind of thing we are. Those who reject animalism may be prompted to reconcile their accounts with the acknowledgement that the evolutionary process has influenced who we are, but they need not sacrifice their accounts in the name of consistency with evolutionary theory. Those who aren’t animalists can escape the clutches of the argument by endorsing a broader interpretation of ‘evolutionary theory’ and still maintain what seems to be so important about it. As a result, then, sufficient motivation for animalism won’t come by way of the Animal Ancestors Argument, nor will it come by way of the Thinking Animals Argument.

## 2.6 The Animal Interests Argument

Recently another new argument for animalism has been presented.<sup>80</sup> The argument relies on the overlap between our interests and the interests of animals. Because they are so closely matched, so the argument goes, the best explanation of the overlap is that animalism is true. We see support for this with some examples:

Consider a few ways in which someone might harm your animal (the human animal you see when you look in the mirror): beating up your animal, depriving your animal of oxygen, or even killing it. Were someone to do one of these things to your animal, would *you* be harmed?<sup>81</sup>

Surely you would. We find great overlap between our interests and the interests of human animals, and Bailey calls this long list of correlations ‘the interest datum’. If the best

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<sup>79</sup>See Blatti (2012, 686).

<sup>80</sup>See Bailey (2015a, forthcoming).

<sup>81</sup>See Bailey (forthcoming, §3).

explanation of the interest datum is that animalism is true, then we may have reason to prefer animalism that does not depend on the (TAA) or the (AAA). Animalism provides the most direct and parsimonious explanation for how the interest datum is true – your interests overlap with your animal’s interests because you and the animal are one and the same thing. We need no further story to explain why you are harmed when your animal is harmed and why you thrive when your animal thrives.

Formalized, we see the *Animal Interests Argument* (AIA):

(AIA1) The interest datum holds.

(AIA2) If the interest datum holds, then it is best explained by animalism.

(AIA3) If the interest datum is best explained by animalism, then animalism is true.

∴ (AIAC) Animalism is true.<sup>82</sup>

The most fruitful way of raising an objection to the (AIA) is by showing a mismatch between our interests and the interests of human animals. If we can show such a mismatch, it will either undermine (AIA1) by weakening the interest datum or provide reason to reject (AIA2). We can revisit our case of Kelly and her cerebrum transplant from §2.3 to highlight such a mismatch. It is in Kelly’s interest to undergo the cerebrum transplant and come to be taller. It is not in the interest of Kelly’s prior-to-transplant animal that Kelly undergo the cerebrum transplant, for it is not in the interest of the human animal that its cerebrum is removed. If so, then Kelly’s interests diverge from her animal’s interests. Animalism does not offer a good explanation of this divergence, for Kelly’s interests should exactly match her animal’s interests if animalism is true.

### 2.6.1 Persistence Conditions

Bailey responds to such cases by proposing that they will threaten the (AIA) only if we assume that human animals have strictly biological persistence conditions.<sup>83</sup> But perhaps

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<sup>82</sup>This is slightly rephrased from how Bailey presents it but remains true to his reasoning (forthcoming, §5).

<sup>83</sup>See Bailey (forthcoming, §10).

animalists can reject this assumption and offer different persistence conditions of human animals that do not require an interest divergence in cerebrum transplant cases.<sup>84</sup> In order to argue that the person's interests and the animal's interests are the very same, the animalist must motivate the claim that human animals have psychological persistence conditions. One strategy is to argue that the persistence of a human animal depends on the continuous preservation of a sufficient number of capacities that are characteristic of human animals.<sup>85</sup> Human animals have many capacities. Some of these are biological, like breathing or digesting food. Some of these, according to the animalist, are psychological, like believing or remembering. So, on this proposal, "[o]ne of us persists if and only if a sufficient number of capacities for human-animal-characteristic activity are continuously preserved."<sup>86</sup>

What we need from such a proposal is the result that in the case of Kelly's cerebrum transplant, a sufficient number of capacities for human-animal-characteristic activity are preserved via the cerebrum into a new body and that the number of capacities for human-animal-characteristic activity remaining in Kelly's old body is insufficient. In order for that to be the case, it must be that the thing left behind without a cerebrum does not count as a human animal, because its capacities are insufficient for maintaining human-animal-characteristic activity. And Kelly, retaining the sufficient number of capacities for human-animal-characteristic activity, goes with her cerebrum into a new body. Madden argues that there are so many psychological capacities characteristic of human animal activity that they alone will suffice for our persistence because they outnumber our purely biological capacities.<sup>87</sup> He notes that among our psychological capacities are things like color discrimination, face recognition, and practical know-how, which are covered by the term 'thinking'. Things like breathing, he argues, do not include such a range of capacities.

The success of this proposal, then, relies on it being the case that the capacities covered by

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<sup>84</sup>Madden, for instance, tries to argue that animalism is perfectly consistent with our commonsense judgments in cases of cerebrum removal and reattachment (2016).

<sup>85</sup>This is Madden's proposal (2016, §§3-4).

<sup>86</sup>See Madden (2016, §3).

<sup>87</sup>See Madden (2016, §4).

our cerebra outnumber the capacities covered by the rest of our human animal bodies. But if we can subdivide capacities like consciousness or thinking into many different capacities, we should not be prevented from doing the same with other capacities. We have the capacity to, for instance, digest food. But this itself involves many capacities characteristically associated with breaking down food and making the energy accessible to our bodies: chewing, production of saliva, swallowing, stomach acid production and regulation, absorption of nutrients into the body, etc. And our bodies do many other things as well. So, we should be skeptical that we can secure the right number of capacities that are characteristic of *human animals* in only the cerebrum. We should *not* be skeptical that we can secure a sufficient number of capacities characteristic of *persons* in only the cerebrum.

Consider also what follows from this proposal: the thing leftover after the removal of Kelly's cerebrum retains many capacities characteristic of human animals. Some assistance may be required, but this leftover thing will be able to digest food, breathe, and exhibit other capacities we normally associate with human animals. But if the persistence conditions of human animals rely on retention of a sufficient number of capacities characteristic of human animal activity, and this leftover lacks that sufficient number because it lost its cerebrum, then we must deny that this leftover is a human animal. Either it is some other kind of animal or it is not an animal at all. But if it is some other kind of animal, when did it come into existence? Did it come into existence when Kelly's cerebrum was removed?<sup>88</sup> This is implausible, for the cerebrum was never part of this animal in the first place, and relocation of something external to this animal cannot affect whether this animal exists. If it is not an animal, then we're owed an explanation as to why it is not. It retains capacities characteristic of animals. Further, if a human animal experiences significant brain damage, it might retain only the capacities that the leftover has. We should then give those cases the same treatment, either they both are animals or neither is. And we should not think that human animals that suffer significant brain damage cease to be *animals*.

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<sup>88</sup>Sharpe (2015) would maintain that this is the case, despite its apparent implausibility.

A case like Kelly's transplant, then, illuminates the cost of holding that human animals have psychological rather than purely biological persistence conditions. At the end of the transplant, we're left with two entities: Kelly (who goes with her cerebrum) and the leftover. The animalist who endorses a psychological account according to which Kelly goes with her cerebrum then must do one of the following:

- hold that there have always been two animals: the leftover and Kelly,
- maintain the leftover is an animal that has just come into existence, or
- deny that the leftover is an animal.

None of these are acceptable options. If she takes the first option, then we have a problem of too many animals. If she takes the second option, then she's committed to an implausible explanation of the origins of the animal. If she takes the third, then she's committed to an implausible view of what counts as an animal. The animalist cannot plausibly maintain that the human animal has the same persistence conditions as Kelly, then. Kelly goes with her cerebrum, but her human animal is left behind. As a result, Kelly's interests diverge from the animal's interests.

Because we can find cases where the person's interests diverge from the animal's we can reasonably reach to other ontologies that better explain this interest correspondence. Constitutionalist, for instance, must do more work in explaining the constitution relation, but they can do a great job explaining how the person's interests mostly overlap with the animal's but diverge in cerebrum transplant cases: the person is constituted by the human animal, so in normal cases, their interests overlap. But if the constituted person is somehow transplanted and comes to be constituted by a different animal, then the person's interests can diverge from the animal's.

We should resist the Animal Interests Argument on the grounds that animalism fails to explain how our interests overlap with but can also diverge from our animals'. Recall that the animalist cannot appeal to the Thinking Animal Argument to motivate animalism because of what the animalist must do in order to respond to the problem of the many. The

animalist might appeal to the Animal Ancestors Argument, but then she needs to motivate a specific, narrow conception of what evolutionary theory is. All things considered, then, the animalist needs a rather robust argument in favor of animalism, and we do not find it in the Animal Interests Argument. Taken together, the (TAA), (AAA), and (AIA) may constitute some case for animalism, but given the threat of the problem of the many and the counterintuitive claims the animalist seems committed to, we should turn to other accounts to settle questions about what we are.

## 2.7 Conclusion

Animalism is a tempting ontology to endorse. It seems to capture ordinary judgments about our nature: we're located exactly where we take ourselves to be located, we are products of a long process of evolution, we are human animals. Endorsing animalism, however, comes at a price. Not only do we potentially distance ourselves from our mental lives, but we must also take on counterintuitive metaphysical commitments. This is especially evident when we consider how animalists are challenged by the problem of the many. The problem of the many straightforwardly challenges the ontology of animals, just as it challenges the ontology of ordinary objects. Animalists are left in an unfortunate position once they are forced to respond to the problem of the many. A successful response requires giving up on plausibly defending premises in the Thinking Animal Argument. So, animalists cannot appeal to the (TAA) as successful motivation for animalism.

Perhaps, then, the animalist should pursue other arguments. One argument, the Animal Ancestors Argument, would provide evidence in favor of animalism if successful. This argument, however, does not require us to endorse animalism since the best reasoning presented in this argument is consistent with other ontologies. Another, the Animal Interests Argument, will be successful only if the animalist can motivate the claim that human animals have psychological persistence conditions, which requires implausible consequences for cerebrum-transplant cases. So, we're left with three dubious arguments for animalism and

some evidence against animalism. While the animalist can respond to other challenges (for instance, arguments that appeal to cases of conjoined twins), the fact remains that animalists cannot plausibly respond to the more serious metaphysical puzzle of the problem of the many. We, therefore, should not endorse animalism.

## Chapter 3 Puzzles for Constitutionnalists

### 3.1 Introduction

Among accounts of personal ontology we find accounts according to which human persons are constituted by, but not identical to, human organisms.<sup>1</sup> Call these accounts ‘*constitutional accounts*’; call its defenders ‘*constitutionnalists*’. Constitutional accounts are appealing; they permit both that persons are ordinary material objects and that persons are not merely the very same things as human organisms. This departure from animalism gives the constitutionalist intuitive appeal over the animalist, for constitutionalism can easily accord with our judgments that we go with our psychologies. A constitutionalist can offer different persistence conditions for the person and for the organism, for the person is not the very same thing as the organism. Defenses of constitutional accounts often appeal to the apparent ubiquity of the constitution relation more generally. Perhaps we shouldn’t be suspicious of the constitution relation between persons and organisms if we are perfectly comfortable with the constitution relation between ordinary material objects and the materials that constitute them, e.g. a table and the piece of wood that constitutes it. But if constitutionalism inherits support from accounts of the constitution of ordinary material objects, then it also inherits related problems; and accounts of ordinary material objects that appeal to the constitution relation are subject to a puzzle.

Consider, for instance, the relationship between a statue and the piece of alloy that

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<sup>1</sup>See, e.g., Baker (2000) and Corcoran (2006). Baker speaks about human persons being constituted by “bodies”, “biological bodies”, and “organisms” at various points (2000, e.g. 91-93). I’ll treat constitutionalism as a view according to which persons are constituted by human organisms, which simplifies our terminology. Baker speaks about persons being constituted by organisms specifically in cases of *human* persons, which is indeed the subject of our discussion here: “On the Constitution View, what makes a human person a *person* is the capacity to have a first-person perspective. What makes a human person a *human* is being constituted by an organism.” (2000, 91). Corcoran speaks most often in terms of bodies, but he notes that by ‘body’ he means “quite simply, a physical organism” (2006, Ch. 3).

constitutes it.<sup>2</sup> The statue and the piece of alloy differ with respect to their modal properties – the piece of alloy can survive being melted down, but the statue cannot. As a result, the relationship between the statue and the piece of alloy seems *not* to be identity. If two objects differ with respect to their modal properties, then they cannot be the very same object. So, what grounds the difference in modal properties? It seems that any feature that we appeal to that might make the difference with respect to modal properties will be had both by the statue and the piece of alloy – they seem to be made up of exactly the same parts, arranged in the same way, and occupy the very same physical space. The problem of plausibly identifying what grounds the different modal profiles of the objects and the materials that constitute them is the *grounding problem*.<sup>3</sup> We need to identify something that grounds the difference between the statue’s modal profile and piece of alloy’s modal profile if we are to preserve the judgment that the statue and the piece of alloy are not the very same material object. My concern arises especially if persons are constituted by human organisms: what grounds the difference in *their* modal profiles? Common strategies for “solving” the grounding problem, as I will argue, will either yield unacceptable consequences in the case of persons, or they will fail to solve the problem at all. In this chapter, I first explore the range of options for responding to the grounding problem as it applies to inanimate objects like statues. I then explore how these options might function analogously for the grounding problem as it applies to persons and organisms. Ultimately, I argue that none of the available options prove acceptable in solving the grounding problem for constitutional accounts of personal ontology.

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<sup>2</sup>Or, if you’d like, consider Gibbard’s *Goliath* and Lump case (1975).

<sup>3</sup>There has been discussion about what exactly the grounding problem is and whether it poses a real threat to those who hold that the constitution relation holds between things like statues and pieces of alloy; see deRosset (2011). For statements of the grounding problem as a challenge to the pluralist, see Heller (1990, §2.1), Burke (1992), Sidelle (2014) Zimmerman (1995, §9), Olson (1996), Hawley (2001, §5.1), and Merricks (2001b, §2.III).

### 3.2 Monism, Pluralism, and the Grounding Problem

Not all accounts of material objects are subject to the grounding problem. When considering the case of the statue and the piece of alloy, *monists* maintain that there is just one object present: the statue and the piece of alloy are not distinct entities.<sup>4</sup> *Pluralists* maintain that there are two distinct, co-located objects present in this kind of case; in this instance, the statue and the piece of alloy are distinct entities.<sup>5</sup> Pluralists are the targets of the challenge of explaining what grounds the modal difference. Monists, who take there to be *no* modal difference between the statue and the piece of alloy, face no such challenge. For clarity, consider the case of the statue and the piece of alloy with some additional details. Suppose that the statue and the piece of alloy come into existence at the same time; the statue is molded precisely at the same time that the particular piece of alloy in question comes into existence. Suppose further that the statue and the piece of alloy are later destroyed at exactly the same time. These modifications prevent pluralists from appealing to a temporal difference as the reason for thinking that the statue and the piece of alloy are distinct.<sup>6</sup> Appealing to a temporal difference will not serve as a *general* solution to the grounding problem, since there can be cases of permanent coincidence. So, we will discuss whether solutions are available for solving the problem without appealing to a temporal difference.

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<sup>4</sup>See Heller (1990 §2.4-2.7), van Inwagen (1990, §13), Merricks (2001, p.38), and Olson (2007, §9.4).

<sup>5</sup>By ‘distinct’, I mean ‘not numerically identical’.

<sup>6</sup>Some strategies appeal to temporal differences as features that distinguish between ordinary objects and the pieces of matter that constitute them, and in the case of many objects, there are temporal differences. In the case of some statues, for instance, the piece of alloy exists before it is molded into a statue, and it may continue to exist if the statue is destroyed. But it is not *necessary* that objects and the pieces of matter exhibit temporal differences, so it would be a mistake to argue that the temporal differences could ground the difference in modal profiles. If the statue and piece of alloy really are distinct, whatever grounds the difference in modal profiles should be present both in cases of spatial (but not temporal) coincidence as well as spatiotemporal coincidence. This may also exclude accounts like we find in Moyer (2006). Even supposing that the piece of alloy come into existence at different times, the grounding problem concerns the co-located objects at a single time. A solution to the problem, then, should identify some feature *at that very time* that grounds the modal differences.

The grounding problem factors into the following argument as a challenge to the pluralist:

(G1) If pluralism is true, then the statue and the piece of alloy are distinct entities that have all the same parts.

(G2) If the statue and the piece of alloy have all the same parts, then there is no difference between the statue and the piece of alloy that could ground their difference in modal properties.

(G3) If there is no difference between the statue and the piece of alloy that could ground their difference in modal properties, then the statue and the piece of alloy are not distinct entities.

∴ (GC) Pluralism is false.

The pluralist, recall, is committed to the claim that the statue and the piece of alloy are distinct entities that occupy the same space. If two material entities occupy the same space, then they arguably have all the same parts. They do not differ with respect to spatial parts; every spatial part of one is shared by the other. And we closed off the option of appealing to a temporal difference. Since spatial parts and temporal parts seem to exhaust the parts of the objects, then they have all the same parts. With respect to the statue and the piece of alloy, then, we arrive at (G1); if pluralism is true, then they occupy the same space, in which case they have all the same parts.

Now for (G2); if the statue and the piece of alloy share all their parts, then there is nothing about the statue and the piece of alloy that could ground a difference in their modal properties. If they have all the same parts, then any feature of the statue that might account for its modal profile should be a feature shared by the piece of alloy. And if that's the case, then the pluralist lacks the resources to explain how the statue has different modal properties from the piece of alloy. If the pluralist cannot explain what grounds the difference in modal profiles, then, (G3), we should not accept that the statue and the piece of alloy are in fact distinct entities. Despite the judgment that the statue and the piece of alloy differ modally

and therefore must be distinct, we arrive at the conclusion that pluralism is false.

Since there's nothing special about the statue and the piece of alloy as an example, this problem will arise for any two co-located material objects, and the spirit of the problem will arise for co-located material objects even when they differ temporally. If the pluralists can't solve the problem in the statue/alloy case, then they can't solve it with respect to ordinary objects more generally. It's tempting to maintain that the statue and the piece of alloy are distinct, but this gives rise to the grounding problem. If pluralists cannot provide a satisfactory response to the grounding problem, then pluralism is false, and we should abandon it.

### 3.3 Range of Possible Solutions

The range of options available to the pluralist, then, come in three varieties: arguing that the statue and the piece of alloy do in fact have different parts, arguing that there is a difference between the statue and the piece of alloy that grounds their difference in modal properties despite having all the same parts, or maintaining their distinctness despite there being no difference that grounds the difference in modal properties.

#### 3.3.1 Different Parts

Some pluralists will deny (G1) and deny that the statue and the piece of alloy have all the same parts. One suggestion is that the statue and the piece of alloy, distinct objects, have different modal profiles in virtue of having different logical parts.<sup>7</sup> According to this suggestion, the statue and the piece of alloy do not have all their parts in common because the statue has among its parts *de re* modal properties that the piece of alloy does not and vice versa.<sup>8</sup> The *de re* modal properties count as parts of the statue and the piece of alloy because, on this view, objects are fusions of properties, both qualitative and non-qualitative;

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<sup>7</sup>See Paul (2002). It is important to note that Paul uses 'distinct' to mean something other than 'not numerically identical'. Paul would not describe the case as being one where 'the statue and the piece of alloy are distinct entities' is true. McDaniel (2001) offers a similar account, although not in terms of logical parts.

<sup>8</sup>See Paul (2002, 590-592).

a table, for instance, is a fusion of its color, spatial location, texture, shape, etc. Among these non-qualitative properties are its *de re* modal properties – that it cannot survive going through a wood-chipper, that it can survive minor dents and scratches, and others. With respect to the statue and the piece of alloy, they have many parts in common. They share the properties of color, shape, and spatial location. But each is purported to have parts that the other does not. The statue has the property of not being able to survive being bent out of shape completely. The piece of alloy does the property of being able to survive being bent out of shape completely. The statue and the piece of alloy, then, according to this view, are co-located but do not have all the same parts. Endorsing this account of mereology – that objects are fusions of their properties – allows the pluralist to explain how the statue and the piece of alloy have different parts because they have different *logical* parts. This amounts to a denial of (G1), with the aim of avoiding the conclusion that pluralism is false.

A similar strategy is to deny that the piece of alloy has all the parts that the statue has.<sup>9</sup> Suppose that our statue represents a human being. One might suggest that the statue has parts like arms, legs, and a head, but the piece of alloy does not have parts like arms, legs, and a head; the piece of alloy has merely bits of alloy as its parts. Endorsing the account requires a different way of denying the first premise: that every part of the statue has a part in common with the piece of alloy and every part of the piece of alloy has a part in common with the statue.<sup>10</sup> They have in common, e.g., the bits of alloy that are in the same location as the arm. But only the statue has the arm as its part; the piece of alloy merely has bits of alloy as parts. In order to have the same parts, they would both need to have arms. If successful, this likewise amounts to a denial of (G1) with the aim of avoiding the conclusion that pluralism is false.

Others appeal to a purported difference in form as a difference in parts. They hold that the statue and the piece of alloy, for instance, have all the same material parts but maintain

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<sup>9</sup>See Wasserman (2002, §3).

<sup>10</sup>See Wasserman (2002, 202-203).

that they have different *non-material* parts.<sup>11</sup> Consider again a piece of alloy, but this time in the shape of a sphere rather than a statue.<sup>12</sup> The problem arises in this case because the sphere and the piece of alloy are distinct but occupy the same space. They apparently differ with respect to their modal properties. On this view, objects are compounds of matter *and* form; the whole is composed of the material components and the formal components. It would be incorrect, then, to say that the sphere and the piece of alloy have all the same parts; they merely have all the same *material* parts. Perhaps they have different *formal* parts – they have different parts in virtue of having different forms.<sup>13</sup> The pluralist appealing to a difference in form may explain that the sphere has *being sphere-shaped* as its form (as a part) and the piece of alloy just happens to be shaped in a sphere at the time. The sphere cannot survive being melted down because it has as one of its parts its form, which is being sphere-shaped. The piece of alloy can survive being melted down because it has as a part its form, which is being piece-shaped, which can come in many varieties.

If the sphere is squished or melted down, there is nothing in the vicinity that has being sphere-shaped as a formal part, but there remains something that has being piece-shaped as a formal part. We can tell an analogous story for the statue and the piece of alloy. This account, and versions like it, theoretically allow the pluralist to cite a difference between the statue and the piece of alloy that grounds the difference in modal properties.

Appealing to the difference in parts, whether a difference in logical parts, formal parts, or identifying parts that one has and the other lacks, if successful, allows the pluralist to maintain that the statue is distinct from the piece of alloy. If they have different parts, then they have different properties, and they therefore are distinct objects. While it is true that if two objects have different properties they are distinct, we still may reasonably ask for further explanation. We haven't found what grounds the difference in modal profiles, even if these

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<sup>11</sup>See Fine (1999, 2008), McDaniel (2001), and Koslicki (2008).

<sup>12</sup>See Fine (2008, 110). Fine discusses a sphere instead of a statue to demonstrate how being spherical is dependent on being shaped like a sphere, which is more readily comprehensible than being shaped like a statue, which comes in many varieties.

<sup>13</sup>This strategy has been subject to some criticism, for how could two material objects have different non-material parts? See Johnston (2006, 652), Saenz (2015), and Cameron (2014, §4) and Sidelle (2014).

modal profiles count as *parts* of the objects. We can still reasonably ask why the statue has *this* part and the piece of alloy has *that* part.

### 3.3.2 Some Other Difference

Pluralists who grant that the statue and the piece of alloy have all the same parts must appeal to some other feature of the statue and the piece of alloy that could ground their difference in modal properties. A common first-pass suggestion is a *sortal* feature, that the statue and the piece of alloy are different *kinds* of things, and different kinds of things have different modal profiles.<sup>14</sup> Statues, for instance, are not the kinds of things that can have just any shape; a statue cannot survive being completely melted down and still *be a statue*. Pieces of alloy, however, are much more flexible. They are the kinds of things that are far more malleable than statues and can survive being melted down in virtue of *being a piece of alloy*. Making such a move allows little progress for the pluralist; the pluralist has answered the challenge of grounding the modal differences but now must ground the sortal differences. Even if it is correct that the statue and the piece of alloy have different modal profiles in virtue of their sortal differences, we are left in need of an explanation of how they differ sortally.<sup>15</sup>

The task for the pluralist, then, is to identify a difference between the statue and the piece of alloy that (i) explains their sortal or modal differences and (ii) is not a difference of parts.<sup>16</sup> We should now revisit the discussion of different forms. On some accounts, a difference in form is supposed to amount to a difference in parts – the sphere will have its form as a part but not the form “piece-shaped” as a part and vice versa for the piece of

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<sup>14</sup>One might also approach this from the other direction: “The statue and the piece of alloy are different kinds of things. Why? Well, because they have different modal profiles.” The following discussion starts with a difference in modal profiles and moves to a sortal difference, but we could go the other direction as well and arrive at the same place.

<sup>15</sup>Korman notes that, in principle, this challenge could arise for many explanations the pluralist gives; whatever explains the sortal difference will itself need explanation, and that explanation requires its own explanation, etc., until an acceptable “bottoming-out” point (2015, XL3).

<sup>16</sup>It is not always the case that modal differences are explained by sortal difference, see Fine (2008, 106) and Fine (2000). Here I mean for ‘or’ to serve purely as a disjunctive connective, and explanations may explain either one or the other but not necessarily both. In either case, some explanation is needed.

alloy. Instead, on this strategy, the pluralist can maintain that the statue and the piece of alloy have all the same parts (because they have all the same *material* parts). The statue and the piece of alloy differ, however, with respect to their form; the parts of the statue are arranged according to the statue-form, and the parts of the piece of alloy are arranged according to the piece-form.<sup>17</sup> This happens to be the very same arrangement of parts but governed by two different organizational structures. This strategy would amount to denying (G2), which says that if the statue and the piece of alloy have all the same parts, then there is no difference between the statue and the piece of alloy that could ground their difference in modal properties. They have all the same parts, but the difference in form is supposed to ground their modal difference.

Pluralists may advance a *grounding solution* to the grounding problem.<sup>18</sup> Consider again our sphere. We may reasonably ask, not ‘what grounds the modal difference between the sphere and the piece of alloy?’ but ‘what grounds the sphere?’ and ‘what grounds the piece of alloy?’. We can discuss what grounds the sphere and what grounds the piece of alloy as an example to illuminate the grounding solution to the grounding problem. In this case, some arrangement of parts grounds both the sphere and the piece of alloy, and it seems to be the very same arrangement of parts that grounds both.<sup>19</sup> But according to this solution, what grounds the piece of alloy is merely that its parts are in some contact with each other, but the particular arrangement of parts in contact is flexible. What grounds the sphere, on the other hand, is a more restricted arrangement; the parts must be in a certain kind of contact with one another – contact that preserves being sphere-shaped. The arrangement of the alloy in a spherical shape is what grounds the sphere, and the arrangement of the alloy in some contiguous shape or other is what grounds the piece of alloy. The grounding solution is consistent with the sphere and the piece of alloy having all the same parts, and the grounding solution depends on the *arrangement* of the parts. But the grounding solution

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<sup>17</sup>See Johnston (2006).

<sup>18</sup>For the solution, see Saenz (2015); for further defense, see Korman (2015, XI.3).

<sup>19</sup>See Saenz (2015, §1.2).

makes use of the differing arrangements as what underlies the nature of the objects rather than being among the compositors of the objects, as is the case on some solutions that appeal to a difference in form. The pluralist can appeal to a difference in which arrangement of parts grounds the modal difference in order to deny the second premise.

These strategies, if successful, both allow pluralists to maintain that the statue and the piece of alloy have all the same parts but nonetheless have different modal properties grounded by a difference in some other respect. The statue and the piece of alloy differ with respect to how their parts go together. The parts can be arranged in only so many ways in order to compose a statue, but the parts can be arranged in a far more ways in order to compose a piece of alloy.<sup>20</sup> The difference in arrangements is purported to ground the difference in modal profiles between the statue and the piece of alloy and might therefore allow the pluralist to defend the claim that the statue and the piece of alloy are distinct entities.

Other pluralists make no appeal to the arrangements of parts to ground the modal difference between things like statues and pieces of alloy. Some appeal to a difference in *extrinsic relations*, or relations between the object and some other non-co-located object, to explain the difference in modal properties.<sup>21</sup> According to this strategy, some objects, like artifacts, derive some of their modal properties from their extrinsic relations, e.g., their relations to human intentions.<sup>22</sup> For instance, that the statue exists is partially a function of the human intentions that are relevant to statue-hood. An artist had the relevant art-aimed intentions when creating the statue, and absent the intentions, we should hesitate before calling the resulting object 'statue'. The statue is uniquely related to human intentions in this way; the piece of alloy does not depend on human intentions for its existence and persistence conditions. The statue ceases to exist when melted down because no object stands in relation to the human intentions as the statue did prior to being melted down. The melted-down

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<sup>20</sup>Cf. Wilson (2013).

<sup>21</sup>See Baker (1997) and Sutton (2012).

<sup>22</sup>See Sutton (2012, 711).

object did not come into existence by any creative intentions. The piece of alloy, however, independent of human intentions, can persist through such a change. The pluralist can then purport to ground their modal differences in these extrinsic relations. In this case as well, the pluralist tries to appeal to a difference between the statue and the piece of alloy even while granting that the statue and the piece of alloy have all the same parts.

### 3.3.3 Bruteness

A rejection of (G3) involves accepting the bruteness or primitiveness of certain facts about objects. We might argue that facts about modal properties are themselves primitive or perhaps grounded in sortal facts which are themselves primitive.<sup>23</sup> The pluralist might offer a defense of this strategy by entertaining the idea that there are a multitude of objects that are co-located with the piece of alloy, each with its own modal profile. For *any* modal profile that can be instantiated, the pluralist may claim, there is some object that instantiates it. There is some object, then, that can survive only as some precise range of changes so it still resembles the form that its creator intended for it, and this object is a statue. These precisely-determined persistence conditions give the modal profile of the statue. If this is the case, then the “primitiveness” of modal or sortal properties might be more palatable – the statue has *this* modal profile not because it is a special or privileged entity in the ontology. We cannot reasonably ask *why* the statue has this modal profile and why the piece of alloy has *that* modal profile, because we already have the entire story: all possible modal profiles that are instantiated, and we pick out one of those objects when we say ‘statue’ and another one of those objects when we say ‘piece of alloy’.<sup>24</sup> And we know that the statue, as opposed to the piece of alloy, has this modal profile because we’ve identified the statue *by* its modal profile; the object that has this modal profile *is* the statue. The piece of alloy, differentiated by a different modal profile, is not even a candidate for being the statue.

Now an appeal to bruteness would not be plausible if there were only two co-located

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<sup>23</sup>For a discussion of this strategy, see Bennett (2004).

<sup>24</sup>See Bennett (2004, 355).

objects in this situation, the statue and the piece of alloy. If those are the only two co-located objects, then it *would* be reasonable to ask why the statue has *this* modal profile and why the piece of alloy has *that* one. If not all possible modal profiles are instantiated, then we reasonably look for an explanation as to why this is the case. The need for further grounding is avoided only by a commitment to there being a multitude of distinct co-located objects in this situation, one for each possible modal profile. On this strategy, there is no further ground for these differences; the matter is brute. If this strategy is successful, then the pluralist can maintain that the statue and the piece of alloy are co-located, have all the same parts, differ in modal profiles, but maintain that there is no need for further grounds, so pluralism is true.

### 3.3.4 Applying the Strategies

The foregoing discussion involved a survey of responses pluralists give when facing the challenge of the grounding problem.<sup>25</sup> Pluralists may argue that the statue and the piece of alloy have *different parts*, logical, formal, or spatial, or they may offer an explanation of what grounds the modal differences between the statue and the piece of alloy despite having all the same parts. Some explanations of what grounds the modal differences appeal to differences in *form* or *structure*; others appeal to different *grounds*, and others still ground the modal difference in a difference of *extrinsic relations*. My ultimate goal in this area is to show that the constitutionalist cannot successfully adopt any of these strategies to explain how *persons* are distinct from the human organisms that are supposed to constitute them. Some strategies *appear* more fruitful than others. Next we will apply these strategies to the grounding problem as it applied to persons and evaluate their success.

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<sup>25</sup>I haven't discussed solutions to the grounding problem that appeal to supervenience, although discussions of the grounding problem are framed in terms of supervenience, see Rea (1997) and Sider (1999). It has been suggested that this is not the best way to frame the problem; see Zimmerman (1995), Bennett (2004), and deRosset (2011).

### 3.4 The Grounding Problem and Personal Ontology

As we saw above, pluralists who maintain that ordinary objects are distinct from the materials that constitute them face the grounding problem. It seems that a statue is not the very same thing as the piece of alloy that constitutes it because, for instance, they differ with respect to their modal profiles. But it is difficult to explain what grounds the differences in their modal profiles. Some pluralists attempt to show that the statue and the piece of alloy have different parts, despite being co-located. Some pluralists attempt to solve the grounding problem by maintaining that some other difference between the statue and the piece of alloy underlies the difference in modal properties despite sharing the same parts.

Here I will explore whether the constitutionalist can offer a plausible account of the relationship between persons and organisms with respect to the challenge of the grounding problem. Can constitutionalists successfully respond to the problem by appealing to the pluralist strategies we've seen applied to other ordinary objects? In what follows I will canvass the challenges that arise for the constitutionalist and the range of possible solutions and conclude that these solutions are unsuccessful when applied to persons.

A brief note: it might be that the constitutionalist faces many levels of the grounding problem. Persons are constituted by organisms, but are organisms constituted by something else, perhaps a body? If so, then the constitutionalist faces two grounding problems: explaining what grounds the modal difference between the person and the organism as well as explaining what grounds the modal difference between the organism and the body. Call this the *two-fold grounding problem*.<sup>26</sup> Ultimately, however, I am most interested in addressing how the constitutionalist can respond to the grounding problem as it arises for persons and organisms. While it may arise for other co-located material objects as well, I take it to be sufficient to demonstrate that the constitutionalist cannot solve the problem for persons and

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<sup>26</sup>“Two-fold” might even be too modest – the constitutionalist may need to also explain what grounds the modal difference between the person and the body. Or, further, they might need to explain what grounds the difference between the body and the – as Sidelle phrases it (2014, 401) – “blob” of bodily material that constitutes the body, between the organism and the blob, and between the person and the blob. For a proposed distinction between organisms and bodies, see Crane (2012).

organisms. If I'm right, then it is somewhat irrelevant whether they can solve the problem as it arises for, e.g., organisms and bodies. Hereafter, then, I will discuss the person/organism grounding problem.

### 3.4.1 Constitutional Accounts and the Grounding Problem

Appealing to analogues with ordinary objects and artifacts, the constitutionalist claims that persons are *constituted* by organisms but are not identical to them. The relationship between a person and the organism is not unique; rather “the relation between a human person and [the organism] (the relation that I am calling ‘constitution’) is exactly the same kind of relation as the relation between a statue and the piece of marble that makes it up.”<sup>27</sup> If this is the case, then challenges that arise for pluralists are appropriately posed to the constitutionalist as well.

According to the constitutionalist, persons occupy the same region of space as their bodies. But they do not necessarily occupy the same region of time, and it is an advantage of constitutionalism that it permits that a person could come into existence some time after the human organism does. According to Baker, for instance, persons come into existence later than the organism; the organism constitutes the person only after the functioning of the body gives rise to a first-person perspective.<sup>28</sup> Early-term human embryos, for example, do not exhibit a first-person perspective, but the human organism exists.<sup>29</sup> This does not, however, allow the constitutionalist to respond to the grounding problem altogether by appealing to a temporal discrepancy. We can imagine, as we did with the statue and the alloy, that an organism comes into existence and from the very beginning of its existence is arranged and functioning such that it immediately gives rise to a first-person perspective. But even if we don't like this thought experiment, based on the claim that the relation between the person

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<sup>27</sup>See Baker (2007b, 24). Baker uses the word ‘body’ here where I've said ‘the organism’, but this terminological change is consistent with how Baker frames the constitution view, as noted at the outset of this chapter. Corcoran also maintains that the same constitution relation can apply to persons as applies to ordinary objects (2006, Ch. 3).

<sup>28</sup>See Baker (2000, 92-93).

<sup>29</sup>See Baker (2005, §2).

and the organism is truly the very same as the relation between an artifact and the piece of matter constituting it, then it is reasonable for us to expect a response to the challenge of the grounding problem without appealing to the temporal difference. Since this difference is not what accounts for the difference between artifacts and their constituent matter, the constitutionalist should not appeal to it in accounting for the difference between the person and the organism.

Instead we can consider what options *are* available to the constitutionalist. We can reframe the earlier argument in terms of persons and organisms to see how the constitutionalist might accommodate the challenge associated with the grounding problem.

(GP1) If constitutionalism is true, then the person and the organism are distinct entities that have all the same parts.

(GP2) If the person and the organism have all the same parts, then there is no difference between the person and the organism that could ground their difference in modal properties.

(GP3) If there is no difference between the person and the organism that could ground their difference in modal properties, then the person and the organism are not distinct entities.

∴ (GPC) So, constitutionalism is false.

The constitutionalist will grant (GP1); the person and the organism are distinct entities, and they occupy the same region of space.<sup>30</sup> It seems then that the person and the organism have all the same parts.<sup>31</sup> If the constitutionalist grants that the person and the organism have all the same parts, then they face the grounding problem: in virtue of what do the person and the organism differ with respect to their modal properties? Arguably if they have all the same parts, there's nothing left to appeal to that could ground their difference in modal properties. And absent a difference that could explain the difference in modal properties, the

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<sup>30</sup>See Corcoran (1999, 1) and Corcoran (2006, Ch 3.) and Baker (2000, 95-96).

<sup>31</sup>I.e., this seems to be the case if we bracket appeals to temporal parts.

facts about their difference would be brute, which is arguably an untenable position. The person and the body, then, are not distinct entities. Therefore, constitutionalism is false.

### 3.4.2 Available Strategies

In order to respond to the argument, we can first straightforwardly apply the above strategies to the case of persons and organisms to see whether they help the constitutionalist the way they are supposed to help the pluralist.<sup>32</sup> Recall that the general strategy the pluralist can use is identifying a difference in parts or some other difference that grounds the modal difference. With respect to statues and pieces of alloy, some pluralists appeal to a difference in logical parts or to a distinction between having all the same parts and having parts in common or, on some accounts, a difference in form. Other pluralists grant that the statue and the piece of alloy have all the same parts but appeal to some other difference: difference in form, different grounds, or a difference in extrinsic relations. I will return to the appeals to form in §3.5, but first I will discuss the other strategies we saw earlier in §3.3. The constitutionalist can make similar moves in responding to the (GP) argument. Persons seem to have different modal properties from mere organisms, and the constitutionalist can offer support for the distinction between the person and the organism by appealing to a difference either in parts or in some other respect.

#### 3.4.2.1 Deny (GP1): The person and the organism have different parts.

Just as the pluralist tried to identify parts that the statue has that the piece of alloy lacks and vice versa, the constitutionalist can try to identify parts of the person that the organism does not have and vice versa. If the constitutionalist endorses a logical parts response, according to which objects are fusions of properties, then the person and the organism will have different

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<sup>32</sup>Here when I use ‘pluralist’, I mean to refer to those who hold that co-location of material objects is possible in cases like statues and pieces of alloy. Constitutionalists can be considered to be a kind of pluralist – constitutionalists hold that persons are material objects co-located with human organisms. I will use the label ‘pluralist’ when referring back to strategies as they were discussed for statues and pieces of alloy and ‘constitutionalist’ to discuss strategies as they will apply to persons and human organisms.

properties. The person, for instance, is a subject of experience and has mental properties. And while the organism certainly has properties associated with experience, e.g. physical properties associated with brain function, the constitutionalist might claim that the *organism itself* does not have mental properties. In taking this line, the constitutionalist maintains that the person has properties that the organism lacks. In addition, the constitutionalist might maintain that the organism has properties that the person lacks – the physical properties associated with brain function might be had just by the organism and not by the person.

Consider also the *de re* modal properties we could attribute to the organism and to the person. The organism can survive even if there is no associated subject of experience, but the person arguably cannot. And the person can, in principle, survive a complete replacement of material parts, but perhaps the organism cannot.<sup>33</sup> The person can survive as a brain in a vat, but an organism might not. An organism can survive a permanent cessation of subjective experience, but a person cannot. Even if these particular examples are not convincing, the constitutionalist at least will maintain that persons and organism have different *de re* modal properties, so whatever those properties are, the person and organism will differ with respect to them. And because they have different properties, the person and the organism will have different parts on this view. But we still have not seen an explanation for why the person has these particular modal parts and the organism has the others, if they do at all.

While the appeal to logical parts may offer the constitutionalist a way of denying the first premise, the strategy of distinguishing between having all the same parts and merely having parts in common is less useful. With respect to the statue and the piece of alloy, the claim is that the statue has a leg or an arm as a part, but the piece of alloy does *not* have those parts. Rather, the piece of alloy has parts *in common* with the parts of the statue. The statue's leg is a part in common with particular bits of alloy. But the piece of alloy, on this view, does not have all the same parts that the statue has. While this may seem like a good strategy for

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<sup>33</sup>The success of this distinction, of course, depends on the operative ontology of organism. If persons could be constituted by things that are *not* human organisms, for instance, a non-carbon-based “body,” then the person survives even if the organism does not.

the constitutionalist to employ, after all, human organisms are the kinds of things that have legs and arms as well, this move highlights a new challenge for the constitutionalist. The analogous strategy would here work, if at all, only in citing the differences between organisms and “blobs” of bodily material (the “piece” of matter, analogous to the piece of alloy that constitutes the statue). It requires that the *human organism* has, for instance, a leg or an arm as a part whereas the “blob” of bodily material merely has parts in common with the organism.<sup>34</sup> In this example, the organism is like the statue and the blob of bodily material is like the piece of alloy. But now we arrive at a view according to which the organism and the blob are distinct entities, and we haven’t gotten to a discussion of how the *person* is related to either the organism or the blob.

In order for this response to be successful, it has to be the case that the person and the organism do *not* have all the same parts and merely have parts in common. Absent a view on which objects are fusions of properties or an appeal to form, it is unclear what “part” of the person the organism would not also have. The distinction between person and organism is often made on the basis of mental aspects that the person has and the body (apparently) lacks. But is it appropriate to say that mental aspects are “parts” of the person without endorsing the logical parts view? This certainly seems strange at least. Even if we grant that the mental aspects are parts, it is not clear that the organism would have these parts in common with the person. They would rather be parts that the person has and the organism lacks altogether. Perhaps this is a strategy that the constitutionalist could employ, but it differs from the strategy that we saw applied to the statue and the piece of alloy. It will then be better treated as an instance of an option we’ve already seen: argue that the person and the organism have different parts and make no appeal to “parts in common.” We are then still left with the further question: why does the person have these mental aspects as parts but not the organism? This is itself a difference that must be grounded, and merely citing this difference does not solve the problem.

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<sup>34</sup>The “blobs” language is from Sidelle (2014, 401).

We have seen, then, that the constitutionalist can deny that the person and the organism have all the same parts by endorsing the view according to which objects are fusions of properties. In this case, the person has properties that the organism lacks and vice versa. This strategy would allow the constitutionalist to maintain that the person and the organism have different parts and therefore are distinct, but have we solved the grounding problem? It seems not. Instead we've merely relocated the problem – what grounds the difference in parts? Nor is the strategy of distinguishing between having all the same parts and having parts in common fruitful for the constitutionalist; it merely could be used to account for the difference between the blob of bodily material and the organism, but not between the person and the organism. This strategy, although it permits the constitutionalist to deny (GP1), fails to do the requisite grounding work.

#### 3.4.2.2 Deny (GP2): Some other difference grounds the modal difference.

Pluralists may attempt to solve the grounding problem by identifying some other difference between the statue and the piece of alloy that grounds their difference in modal properties even if the statue and the alloy have all the same parts. The constitutionalist likewise may grant that the person and the organism have all the same parts but exhibit some other difference. Strategies for solving the grounding problem in relation to the statue and the piece of alloy included appeals to different grounds and different extrinsic relations.<sup>35</sup> These strategies may carry over to the case of persons and organisms as well.

A pluralist may appeal to a difference in *grounds* as what underlies the difference in modal properties between the statue and the piece of alloy, and the constitutionalist may try a similar move in their own defense. They might claim that the person and the organism have different modal properties because they have different grounds. Just as we asked ‘what grounds the statue?’ and ‘what grounds the piece of alloy?’, we can ask ‘what grounds the person’ and ‘what grounds the organism’? An organism exists in virtue of exhibiting

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<sup>35</sup>Recall that differences in form will be discussed later.

certain relationships among its constituent parts. What grounds the organism is material arranged in a certain way that allows the organism to be a composite object and not merely a collection of material parts. A person exists, however, in virtue of exhibiting certain mental properties.<sup>36</sup> What grounds the person are certain capacities, abilities, or mental properties that are uniquely associated with personhood. So, according to the constitutionalist taking this line, although the person and the organism are co-located and have all the same parts, they are distinct objects which have different grounds, and this difference in grounds is what underlies their difference in modal properties.

Suppose the constitutionalist is right and the person and the organism have different grounds. In order for the constitutionalist to employ this strategy as a satisfactory solution to the grounding problem, the constitutionalist must secure the judgment that there is just one person-like thing that coincides with the organism. Otherwise, a solution to the grounding problem would come at the expense of there being too many thinkers, which is unacceptable. Ultimately, the critiques I raise for the strategies that appeal to a difference in form will apply to the grounding solution to the grounding problem as well and will be discussed in §3.6.

Another difference between the person and the organism that seems to be a good candidate for grounding a difference in modal properties is the difference in extrinsic relations. Just as the statue stands in different relations to other entities compared to the relations that the piece of alloy stands in to other entities, persons are related to other entities differently than organisms are. Perhaps most obviously, persons are capable of standing in relationships categorized by mutual obligations. Persons can uphold obligations or fail to uphold them, and persons have rights against other persons that mere organisms do not. According to Baker, for instance, organisms uphold obligations and have rights only derivatively because the *person* does. Mere organisms are not the kinds of entities that can stand in this relationship of obligations; we cannot expect mere organisms to keep up their end of a bargain

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<sup>36</sup>These mental properties may be a capacity for exhibiting a first-person perspective or consciousness. Cf. Corcoran (2006, Ch. 3) and Baker (2000, Ch. 4) (and perhaps Baker (2005)).

or hold mere bodies responsible for actions. We would not, for instance, expect a human organism in a vegetative state to keep promises. And it is reasonable to ask what obligations we have toward organisms that have no cognitive capacities whatsoever – consider end-of-life decisions, for example. Persons are also the relata in many relations: friendship, marriage, feuds, acquaintances, families, etc. A constitutionalist might argue that these are not relations that we see exhibited between mere organisms.

So, the constitutionalist can maintain that while persons and organisms have all the same parts and are co-located, we relate to persons differently than we relate to mere organisms, and they exhibit differences in their extrinsic relations. We're prompted to conclude that persons and organisms are different kinds of things, and they differ with respect to their modal profiles. But we still haven't found an explanation as to what grounds this modal difference. We mischaracterize the grounding relation if we hold that a difference in extrinsic relations grounds the modal difference. It is more appropriate to argue that persons and mere organisms differ in their extrinsic relations *because* they are different kinds of things. We relate to other persons in the ways that we do *because they are persons*. So, rather than arguing that the extrinsic relations ground the modal difference, it would be more accurate to hold that some *sortal* difference grounds both the modal difference and the difference in extrinsic relations. But now we need to find an explanation for what grounds the *sortal* difference. We've done some grounding work – a sortal difference is purported to ground the modal difference – but we haven't told the whole grounding story. We've again relocated the problem without really solving it.

The differences that the pluralist appeals to therefore translate into differences that the constitutionalist might appeal to in accounting for the modal differences between persons and organisms. Persons have different grounds than organisms, and persons and organisms may differ with respect to their extrinsic relations. But merely noting these differences hasn't yielded a real solution to the grounding problem. The difference in extrinsic relations, however obvious they may seem to be with respect to persons and organisms, itself must be grounded.

Grounding the modal difference in a sortal difference still does not solve the problem, for we can reasonably require something that grounds the sortal difference. If, instead, the constitutionalist opts for a difference in *grounds*, then she will be on the hook for responding to the same challenges that arise for those who appeal to a difference in form.

### 3.4.2.3 Deny (GP3): Bruteness

Denying (GP3) involves granting that there is no difference between the person and the organism that could ground their difference in modal properties but nonetheless holding that the person and the organism are distinct entities. If the pluralist wants to take this line, then it may be possible to defend the view that the statue and piece of alloy are distinct with a bruteness response to the grounding problem, but this will not help the constitutionalist solve the grounding problem as it applies to persons. Recall that the bruteness solution is plausible only if there are a multitude of co-located objects, one for each possible modal profile. There are, then, a multitude of objects where we ordinarily take there to be far fewer – just a statue and a piece of alloy, for instance.

But we should not accept a multitude of objects where we ordinarily take there to be just one person; we certainly do not want to maintain that there are a multitude of person-like objects co-located with an organism. This might offer a solution to the grounding problem for things like statues and pieces of alloy on a technicality, but it does not get the right results for persons. If there are a multitude of person-like objects co-located with an organism, then we would need principled reason to hold that just one is a thinker and none of the others are, but we have no such solution. Even if the defender of bruteness can argue that just one of these many modal profiles instantiates a *thinker*, there will be a multitude of nearby objects that have intrinsically-duplicated contentful states. A difference in being able to survive the loss of *one* atom as opposed to being able to survive a loss of *two* atoms will make no difference in contentful states. So, as we saw in §2.4, if one candidate is a thinker, then the other is as well. Appealing to bruteness as a solution to the grounding problem as it arises

for persons and organisms, then, requires a commitment to too many thinkers.

The constitutionalist is in a similar position to the pluralist; both face the challenge of addressing worries that arise for co-located material entities. Pluralists have made several attempts to respond to the grounding problem, with some trying to identify a difference in parts, some trying to find some other difference that grounds the modal difference, and some arguing in defense of bruteness. The constitutionalist can try to make use of similar strategies to respond to the grounding problem as it arises for persons and organisms, but strategies either fail to really solve the problem or yield implausible consequences when applied to persons and organisms. The solutions addressed above demonstrate the frustratingly intractable nature of the grounding problem – for many apparent differences, we’re left in need of an explanation of what grounds *that* difference. We should turn, then, to assessing solutions that cite some difference that might not need some further ground and evaluate whether these solutions that seem well-poised to solve the grounding problem for statues and pieces of alloy will provide a satisfying solution the grounding problem as it arises for persons and organisms.

### 3.5 Hylomorphism and the Grounding Problem

A solution to the grounding problem will involve identifying some difference between co-located objects that grounds their difference in modal profiles. As we saw above with respect to the statue and the piece of alloy, some strategies include an appeal to a difference in parts between the statue and the piece of alloy, and other strategies include an appeal to some other difference between the two. In either case, the purported difference is supposed to do the work as a response to the grounding problem. Some have suggested that we can appeal to *hylomorphism* as a solution to the grounding problem.<sup>37</sup> By ‘hylomorphism’ as I use it here, I mean an account of the nature of objects that includes *forms*. Forms, although what they are precisely differs from hylomorphist to hylomorphist, account for the nature

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<sup>37</sup>See Fine (1999, 2008), Johnston (2006), and Koslicki (2008, §VII.2.7).

of objects. On hylomorphic accounts, objects are composed of parts that are structured or related in a certain way, and the structure or relation governing their arrangement is the difference in virtue of which some object has a modal profile that differs from the modal profile of the piece of matter that shares its location. In what follows, I will present the general strategy that hylomorphists use to address the grounding problem and discuss some associated worries. I will then raise further worries that arise for the hylomorphist who wants to apply their strategy to the case of persons, demonstrating that bullets bitten with respect to ordinary objects are unacceptable with respect to persons.

### 3.5.1 The Hylomorphic “Solution”

The general strategy that hylomorphists use to solve the grounding problem is appealing to a difference in form between an object and the piece of matter co-located with it to ground the difference in modal profiles.<sup>38</sup> With respect to the statue and the piece of alloy that constitutes it, hylomorphists will say that one is a statue and one is merely a piece of alloy in virtue of differing with respect to form; one has the form of a statue and the other has the form of a piece of alloy. The form grounds what kind of thing the statue is and what kind of thing the piece of alloy is, which in turn grounds the modal difference. The form of the statue of a person is fairly inflexible – only in certain arrangements will the bits of alloy compose a statue. The statue must bear some resemblance to a person, although this resemblance can manifest in different varieties. The form of the piece of alloy is more flexible; pieces of alloy can be shaped many more ways and still be pieces of alloy. They need not resemble persons. The ways that the statue’s parts can be arranged and the ways that piece of alloy’s parts can be arranged are determined by their respective forms, if hylomorphism is correct.

We see characterizations of hylomorphism in many varieties:

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<sup>38</sup>Not all hylomorphists frame their view in terms of ‘form’; Koslicki (2008) prefers ‘structure’, Johnston (2006), ‘principle of unity’, and Fine (1999; 2008), some relation ‘R’. Here I will use ‘form’ to remain neutral in presentation of the general strategy.

A principle of unity for a given item is a relation holding of some other items, such that (origins aside) what it is for the given item to be is for the relation to hold among those items.<sup>39</sup>

[T]he relation R preserves its predicative role and somehow serves to modify or qualify the components. However, the result of the modification is not a fact or state. It is a whole, whose components are linked by the relation, rather than the fact or state of the components being so linked.<sup>40</sup>

I take the primary job of an object's formal components to consist in the specification of a range of selection requirements that must be satisfied by a plurality of objects in order to compose a whole of a particular kind. We may thus think of an object's formal components as a sort of *recipe* for how to build wholes of that particular kind.<sup>41</sup>

In each case, the object in question is composed of parts whose arrangement is governed by the form – the principle of unity, the relation R, or the formal components. While there are nuances here, hereafter my discussion will use the generic ‘form’, although the challenges I raise will generalize. To account for the modal difference between distinct co-located entities, then, it seems we can make an appeal to a difference in form. The statue instantiates a different form than the piece of alloy, and this difference in form is purported to ground the difference in modal profiles.

This account is appealing because it seems to accord with our commonsense judgments about objects. If all we have is a collection of wood, arranged haphazardly, we do not judge there to be a chair. But if we put the wood together in a certain way, having four legs, a seat, and a back, then we judge there to be a chair. All we've done is rearrange the material we already had, but it seems that we have brought a new object into existence. What accounts for this? Arguably, now that there's some object whose arrangement of parts is governed by a particular form, and in virtue of instantiating this form, the object is a chair. We followed the arrangements dictated by the form and made a new object. Or, on some accounts, the collection of wood together with the form compose a new object. And the collection of

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<sup>39</sup>See Johnston (2006, 653).

<sup>40</sup>See Fine (1999, 65).

<sup>41</sup>See Koslicki (2008, 172).

wood, of course, is still there; nothing went out of existence. But the collection of wood has a different form. It does not need to be arranged like a chair; its arrangement is more flexible.

It would be an advantage of hylomorphism if it allows us to both retain our commonsense judgments about which objects exist as well as solve the grounding problem. As a matter of fact, some hylomorphists are not particularly concerned with maintaining commonsense judgments about objects, but let us set that aside for now.<sup>42</sup> Perhaps we could be happy, then, settling for a solution to the grounding problem even at the expense of common sense. Above is a general hylomorphic strategy for responding to the grounding problem – appealing to a difference in form. The general solution, however, as we saw in §3.4.2.1 and §3.4.2.2, can be treated as two different hylomorphic strategies. On some accounts, hylomorphism allows us to maintain that co-located objects share all their parts but differ in some other respect.<sup>43</sup> On other accounts, hylomorphism allows us to maintain that co-located objects have *different* parts.<sup>44</sup>

But, like other strategies we've seen, some appeals to form just kick the grounding problem can further down the road. In virtue of what does *this*, the *statue* have *this* form? And why doesn't *that*, the *piece of alloy* share the form? After all, the statue and the piece of alloy share the very same arrangement. Sidelle argues that hylomorphism cannot be used to do the requisite explanatory work.<sup>45</sup> If forms are mere arrangements of matter, then both the statue and the piece of alloy share the same form since they share the same arrangement of matter. If forms are not mere arrangements but are more robust, like things that *govern* arrangements but are not among the composers, then it seems that the form can do the work. But it may not solve the grounding problem, for we still require an explanation as to why the statue's parts are arranged according to *this* form and piece of alloy's parts are arranged according to *that* form.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>See Fine (1999, 73) and Johnston (2006, 697-8).

<sup>43</sup>See Johnston (2006).

<sup>44</sup>See Fine (1999, 2008) and Koslicki (2008).

<sup>45</sup>See Sidelle (2014, esp. p. 402).

<sup>46</sup>Korman and Carmichael disagree and hold that if objects differ with respect to their formal parts, then we have no further need for explanation (2016, 5.2). Even if this is correct, this solution will require a

So, there is something appealing about the hylomorphic story; something about *how things are arranged* is relevant to what objects there are. And hylomorphism may capture some of our commonsense judgments about colocated but apparently-distinct entities. But appealing to hylomorphism on its own doesn't adequately address the grounding problem with respect to ordinary objects. Even if we assume, however, that some version of hylomorphism is correct and the grounding problem can be adequately addressed with respect to ordinary objects, we should consider how the grounding problem applies to hylomorphic accounts of persons and assess the new challenges that arise.

### 3.5.2 Hylomorphism and Persons

Let us take an optimistic approach. Suppose hylomorphism, some version or other, solves the grounding problem for ordinary objects. It may be the case that facts about forms are brute facts, or perhaps there's something further grounding the facts about forms. We must now re-visit the two-fold grounding problem, since some hylomorphists will treat the case of persons a bit differently than we framed the earlier discussion.

Recall that the two-fold grounding problem arises with respect to persons just in case the following conditions are met:

- (i) there is a human organism that is co-located with but not identical to the blob of bodily material, and
- (ii) there is a person that is co-located with but not identical to the organism.

Some defenders of hylomorphic accounts of personal ontology will accept the first condition, provided we give the right explanation of what a blob of bodily material is. According to these hylomorphists, human organisms are composed of form and matter, and the matter is a constituent of a human organism only if the matter is "enformed" by the form. So, if we take 'blob' to mean simply the sum of material components that may or may not be arranged according to the rules that govern arrangement of matter in organisms, we should commitment to too many thinkers, as we will see in §3.6.

take (i) to be met on thesehylomorphic accounts of personal ontology.<sup>47</sup>

Condition (ii) will *not* be met on some hylomorphic accounts of personal ontology. And indeed defenders of some hylomorphic accounts are explicit that the person is identical to the human organism.<sup>48</sup> The grounding work that would need to be done is grounding the modal difference between the blob and the human organism. If the relationship between persons and their parts is analogous to the relationship between ordinary objects and their parts, then it is reasonable to expect that hylomorphic accounts of ordinary objects mirror hylomorphic accounts of personal ontology. And this seems to be the case; according to hylomorphism, metal chairs are objects made of pieces of metal whose parts are arranged according to the chair-form, and human organisms are carbon-based objects whose parts are arranged according to the, admittedly more complicated, organism-form. If this is so, then we would expect persons to be distinct from the blobs of bodily material that constitute them in virtue of having different forms; human persons have organism-forms but blobs have blob-forms. Analogously, statues have statue-forms but pieces of alloy have piece-forms.

Setting aside hylomorphic accounts on which condition (ii) is not met, there is a serious worry that arises that comes to light in relation to the grounding problem. Those who endorse a hylomorphic “solution” to the grounding problem do so at the expense of commonsense judgments about which objects there are in the world. Some admit that there are many different forms that govern material components. As a result, absent some principled reason to reject some forms and countenance others, there are many more objects than we typically take there to be:

[T]here will be many more material objects than is commonly supposed. [...] [T]here will correspond a multitude of rigid embodiments, differing in their choice of components or relational principle, and a multitude of variable embodiments, differing in their actual or possible manifestations. [...] [T]he objects we ordinarily

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<sup>47</sup>There may be related worries here, see Stump (1995, 508), but whether hylomorphic accounts meet this condition isn’t essential to my argument.

<sup>48</sup>See Oderberg (2005, 86), Toner (2011), Stump (1995) and discussion in Leftow (2009) Hershenov (2011). Origins of this account are, of course, Aristotelian and developed in a religious context in Aquinas (2006). Even if this is correct, there are other worries with hylomorphism generally; see Sosa (1999), Barnes (2003), Toner (2007), and Brown (2007). There’s also a mention of worries as it applies to persons in Lowe (2009).

recognize – chairs and tables and the like – are not ontologically privileged.<sup>49</sup>

The material wholes that strike us as paradigmatically genuine are compact, well-articulated items that have self-maintaining principles of unity [...] But the least arbitrary form of the general theory of unity that is Hylomorphism tells us that besides these ‘genuine’ wholes there is a vast plurality of wholes that ordinarily escape our attention.<sup>50</sup>

Maybe we want to shrug our shoulders, bite the bullet in light of these admissions, and adjust our ontology accordingly. After all, if hylomorphism is successful in paradigm cases and allows us to go on fruitfully investigating ontology, and especially since this is a bullet often bitten at the expense of a commonsense ontology of material objects, countenancing a multitude of objects may not worry us. But if we want hylomorphism to do work for us in the area of *personal* ontology, these admissions give us cause for concern. If forms distinguish one object from another, then there may be, in principle, as many persons as there are forms of persons. But precisely what is the form that governs personal arrangement? Arrangements that support life seem to be good candidates; maybe we can’t be persons if we aren’t alive. Also arrangements that support rationality seem to be good candidates, and on some hylomorphic accounts of personhood, some capacity for rationality is *essential* to personhood.<sup>51</sup> But those who defend such hylomorphic accounts of personal ontology are explicit that there is just *one* form doing this work; one form is what accounts for the rationality and the life of the person.<sup>52</sup>

So, if we want to appeal to hylomorphism about persons, we have a few options. We might hold that persons are material objects whose parts are arranged according to a form, but do not have a form as a part, and the person has a different modal profile than the human organism. Or, instead, we might hold that persons are material objects who have the form as a part, and the person has a different modal profile than the human organism. Or, finally, we might hold that persons are material objects that have the very same form

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<sup>49</sup>See Fine (1999, 73).

<sup>50</sup>See Johnston (2006, 698).

<sup>51</sup>See Toner (2011, 67) and Oderberg (2005, 86).

<sup>52</sup>See Toner (2011, 67), Oderberg (2005, 86), and Stump (1995, 511).

as the human organism and that human persons and human organisms have the very same modal profile. This final option, although endorsed by some hylomorphists, is irrelevant to the grounding problem as we discuss it here, for there is no modal difference between the person and the organism to be grounded.<sup>53</sup> We will instead focus on the first two options.

In order for a hylomorphic solution to the grounding problem to be satisfactory, it must be the case that the hylomorphic solution can both ground the difference in modal profiles between the person and the organism and also avoid an overpopulation of thinkers. This is in tension with some hylomorphic accounts of ordinary objects, whose defenders are happy to grant that there are many objects that ordinarily “escape our attention.” It would be disastrous if there are many more *person-like* objects that escape our attention. Moral and metaphysical problems would abound. These person-like objects would be good thinker-candidates, and we cannot accept that there are many thinkers where we ordinarily take there to be just one. We should therefore determine whether the hylomorphist can avoid a commitment to an overabundance of forms and the associated overabundance of thinkers.

### 3.6 Multitudinous and Non-Multitudinous Hylomorphism

As discussed in §3.4.2.1 and §3.4.2.2, there are differences among various contemporary hylomorphic accounts. For purposes of this discussion, I will continue to use ‘form’ to generically refer to the principle of unity, structure, or relation that serves to relate an object’s material parts.<sup>54</sup> I will use the adjective ‘item-generating’ to qualify those forms whose joint-composition with or ordering of matter produces an object. With these labels in mind, we can distinguish between *Non-Multitudinous Hylomorphism* and *Multitudinous Hylomorphism*.

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<sup>53</sup>This final option, also, will be subject to the same critiques raised for those who give the very same persistence conditions for the person and for the human organism as we discussed in §2.6, so we should not endorse it.

<sup>54</sup>See Johnston (2006), Koslicki (2008), and Fine (1999) respectively for full descriptions of the labels.

Non-Multitudinous Hylomorphism: for any material parts  $m_1\dots m_n$ , only some forms that relate  $m_1\dots m_n$  are item-generating.

Multitudinous Hylomorphism: for any material parts  $m_1\dots m_n$ , any form that relates  $m_1\dots m_n$  is item-generating.

Non-multitudinous hylomorphists will restrict their ontology such that not just any possible form serves to generate a new object.<sup>55</sup> Koslicki, for instance, would deny that all possible forms are item generating and endorses an ontology that admits only objects that fall into recognized kinds.<sup>56</sup> Multitudinous hylomorphists include in the ontology a distinct object for each possible form that relates the material parts.<sup>57</sup> Consider the following relation  $G$ : gravitationally related;  $Gxy$  just in case  $x$  is gravitationally related to  $y$ .<sup>58</sup> It is the case that when  $x$  and  $y$  are material,  $\forall x\forall y(x\neq y\supset Gxy)$ . Multitudinous hylomorphists will also maintain that a form  $G$ -relating  $x$  and  $y$  will be an item-generating form such that there is some object composed of  $x$  and  $y$ ; there is an object, for instance, composed of my laptop and the moon. Non-multitudinous hylomorphists will deny this; there is no object composed of my laptop and the moon, despite their gravitational relation. With respect to the overall ontology, then, the multitudinous hylomorphist is committed to the existence of many more objects than we ordinarily take there to be, and the non-multitudinous hylomorphist's ontology is less populated.

So far I haven't mentioned *which* forms non-multitudinous hylomorphists want to exclude from being item-generating, only *that* the non-multitudinous hylomorphist wants to exclude some. As a result, hylomorphism comes in only two varieties: non-multitudinous, which restricts which forms are item-generating, and multitudinous, which does not restrict which

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<sup>55</sup>For a non-multitudinous hylomorphic account see Koslicki (2008, Ch. VII).

<sup>56</sup>See Koslicki (2008, Ch. VII, esp. pp.174, 258).

<sup>57</sup>Johnston (2006, 697-8) endorses multitudinous hylomorphism, and Fine (1999, 73) stops short of a thoroughgoing defense of multitudinous hylomorphism but points out that, at the very least, ordinary objects are not privileged in the ontology.

<sup>58</sup>Gravitational relation is discussed in Johnston (2006, 697).

forms are item-generating. With this in mind, I put forth the following argument:

(H1) Hylomorphism is either non-multitudinous or multitudinous.

(H2) If hylomorphism is non-multitudinous, then hylomorphism gives rise to the problem of the many.

(H3) If hylomorphism gives rise to the problem of the many, then the hylomorphist is committed to the existence of too many thinkers.

(H4) If hylomorphism is multitudinous, then the hylomorphist is committed to the existence of too many thinkers.

∴ (HC) The hylomorphist is committed to the existence of too many thinkers.

To evaluate the argument, we now need more information about how non-multitudinous hylomorphists restrict their ontology; which forms are item-generating, and which are not? A non-multitudinous hylomorphist might want to grant that some objects, perhaps like dogs and tables, exist but not gerrymandered objects like the fusion of my laptop and the moon. A non-multitudinous hylomorphism of this flavor accords with commonsense ontological judgments; there are particular tables and organisms and molecules because there are the *kinds*: table, organism, and molecule, to name a few. A molecule, for instance is of the kind, water, when it is generated by the operation of a form that bonds an oxygen atom with two hydrogen atoms such that it results in an H<sub>2</sub>O molecule. But there aren't, apparently, 'related-only-by-gravitation' kinds or 'left-half-of-an-organism' kinds.<sup>59</sup> If non-multitudinous hylomorphism is correct, then it will be a non-multitudinous hylomorphism of this variety. To draw the distinction between non-multitudinous hylomorphism and multitudinous hylomorphism, then, I stipulate that the only forms that are item-generating according to the non-multitudinous hylomorphist are the forms that generate objects that satisfy the conditions of ordinarily-recognized kinds, and all other forms are not item-generating. All forms, including the forms recognized as item-generating for the non-multitudinous hylomorphist as

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<sup>59</sup>Koslicki (2008, Ch. VII) offers a sustained discussion and defense of kinds. Evnine (unpublished, §3) offers a kind-based "hylomorphism" as well.

well as any other form that relates material components, will be item-generating according to the multitudinous hylomorphist.<sup>60</sup>

### 3.6.1 The Problem with Non-Multitudinous Hylomorphism: (H2) and (H3)

Suppose we endorse non-multitudinous hylomorphism, according to which there are the objects we ordinarily take there to be, and we avoid the over-populated ontology of the multitudinous hylomorphist. If the non-multitudinous hylomorphist is correct, then there are things like tables and dogs and trees but no object that is composed of just the left-half of the table and no fusion of a dog and a tree. Non-multitudinous hylomorphism looks promising for personal ontology, for if successful, it entails that there are persons but not bizarrely-gerrymandered person-like things. Since, according to hylomorphism, persons are material objects, non-multitudinous hylomorphism is subject to worrisome metaphysical puzzles that arise in material object metaphysics, including the problem of the many. In order to defend non-multitudinous, as opposed to multitudinous, hylomorphism, the non-multitudinous hylomorphist should address this challenges.

The worries that follow, I suggest, will also plague appeals to the grounding solution to the grounding problem, according to which the person and the organism differ with respect to their grounds. Defenders of this solution will find themselves in the same situation as the non-multitudinous hylomorphist – surely not just *anything* can count as grounds for an object. Otherwise we would have a multitude of objects and a multitude of person-like things. But restricting item-distinguishing grounds from non-item-distinguishing grounds makes the defender of the grounding solution subject to the problem of the many as well.

We see the familiar challenge of the problem of the many arise for the non-multitudinous

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<sup>60</sup>One might here object to (H1), then, on the basis that there might be an even less multitudinous hylomorphism not addressed – a hylomorphism according to which there are no item-generating forms or the only item-generating forms are organism-generating, for instance. They might argue that there are no bodies, no blobs, and the only composite objects that exist are organisms. If they further hold that persons just *are* these organisms, then they will be subject to the challenges that the animalist faces. if they hold that persons are constituted by, but not identical to, these organisms, then they, too, will be subject to the challenges I raise below for the non-multitudinous hylomorphist.

hylomorphist. The problem of the many arises for the hylomorphist once one recognizes how difficult it is to specify which material parts are jointly related by a particular form. Suppose you visit Kelly at her house. The non-multitudinous hylomorphist would agree that there are the ordinary objects you take there to be at Kelly's house: her favorite coffee mug, her kitchen table, and Kelly herself. There are not, according to non-multitudinous hylomorphism, objects like the fusion of the handle of the coffee mug and Kelly's left arm. But even granting a principled distinction between item-generating and non-item-generating forms, a familiar worry arises – the problem of the many.

Recall the problem for Kelly and Kelly-minus. Kelly is composed of the atoms of some plurality,  $p_5$ , and Kelly-minus is composed of the atoms of some plurality,  $p_6$ , where  $p_5$  and  $p_6$  differ by only a single atom. Now, if non-multitudinous hylomorphism is defensible, it will yield the result that there is truly only one person you came to visit, and it is either Kelly or Kelly-minus. Then only the atoms of  $p_5$  or the atoms of  $p_6$  are organized by an item-generating form.<sup>61</sup> If the relevant kind here is 'person', then there should be principled reason to maintain that just one of these pluralities are the material parts of the person you came to visit. The constitutionalist who appeals to non-multitudinous hylomorphism is ultimately no better off than the animalist in this instance. For the epistemic response, the supervenience response, and the maximality principle will all fail.<sup>62</sup> Now, of course, the constitutionalist can make the case that constitutionalism is more appealing than animalism by arguing that constitutionalism is consistent with our having psychological persistence conditions and animalism is not. As a result, the constitutionalist has the advantage initially. But because the standard responses to the problem of the many fail, they will not help the constitutionalist in this case.

The constitutionalist might try to argue that she, unlike the animalist, *can* make use of the elimination principle strategy. She might propose, for instance, that Kelly is a thinker and that her characteristic profile is that of a thinker. Then, maybe only the smallest material

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<sup>61</sup>Or, if you prefer, only the atoms of  $p_5$  or the atoms of  $p_6$  together with the form compose an object.

<sup>62</sup>See §2.4.

object capable of constituting a thinker instantiates an item-generating form and no other objects do. While the elimination strategy was advanced as a solution to the problem of the many, it, too, will fail to secure the result that there is just one thinker in cases where we ordinarily take there to be just one. We see this by discussing a case of vague parthood. Suppose it is unclear whether that single atom on the toe is part of Kelly.<sup>63</sup> Even if it is true that the smallest material candidate constitutes Kelly, this is a case in which there is no single best candidate for being that smallest material object.

We can also arrive at the same problem from a different direction. Suppose there are no vague parts and that the smallest material object that can constitute a thinker is of a determinate size. But suppose that this smallest material object that can constitute a thinker can have slightly differentiated compositions, so it can fulfill the functions determined by the characteristic profile by being composed of some plurality of atoms together with atom *a* or by being composed of that same plurality of atoms together with atom *b*.<sup>64</sup> Either *a* or *b* must be a part of the object in order for it to constitute a thinker, but it does not matter whether *a* is the final atom or whether *b* is the final atom. We then have two candidates for being the smallest material object: the object that has atom *a* as a part and the object that has atom *b* as a part. Both have the same number of parts, so both are equally small. Both seem equally qualified to be an object with an item-generating form. Neither, then, is the best candidate for being the object that constitutes Kelly.

Because of these problems, then we cannot use an elimination principle to find a single best candidate for being the object that constitutes a thinker. And if there are many objects equally-qualified to constitute a thinker, then the constitutionalist cannot defend the claim that there is just one thinker in cases where we ordinarily take there to be just one. Whereas the trouble for the animalist arose because the competing pluralities seemed equally qualified to compose an *animal*, here the trouble arises because the competing pluralities seem equally

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<sup>63</sup>Cf. Lewis' Tibbles case, (1993).

<sup>64</sup>Thanks to Noël Saenz and graduate students in the UIUC Philosophy Department for bringing this problem to my attention.

qualified to be organized according to a kind-restricted, item-generating form. Surely we should not accept that there are *no* thinkers. And without a strategy to distinguish among them, even the non-multitudinous hylomorphist is committed to the existence of too many thinkers.

### 3.6.2 The Problem with Multitudinous Hylomorphism: (H4)

The multitudinous hylomorphist is likewise ill-equipped to solve the problem of the many. The multitudinous hylomorphic problem of the many is set up the same way; you're planning on visiting your friend, Kelly. According to multitudinous hylomorphism, there is an item-generating form that relates the material parts of Kelly, and there is another item-generating form relating the material parts of Kelly-minus. It is permitted, on multitudinous hylomorphism, that some of the very same parts (or even *all* the same parts) be related according to different item-generating forms.<sup>65</sup>

So, when you visit your friend and she opens the door, you're seeing many, many person-like objects. Not only is there Kelly and Kelly-minus, but also Kelly-minus minus a cell, and Kelly-minus minus two cells, as well as a part of a fusion of your friend and the moon and a part of a fusion of your friend and my laptop. If both Kelly and Kelly-minus are objects, they both are *thinkers*. The presence or absence of a single cell does not make the difference with respect to whether an individual is a thinker or not. In that case, each is equally qualified to be your friend. Since the multitudinous hylomorphist admits these many objects into the ontology, then they *must* distinguish between Kelly and Kelly-minus to yield the result that only one is a thinker. But the same strategies will fail the multitudinous hylomorphist, just as they have the animalist and the non-multitudinous hylomorphist. If the constitutionalist endorses multitudinous hylomorphism, then the constitutionalist is committed to the existence of too many thinkers.

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<sup>65</sup>See Johnston's spork example (2006, §VIII).

### 3.6.3 The Familiar Problem

Endorsing a hylomorphic solution to the grounding problem gives rise to some metaphysical puzzles. The hylomorphist appeals to a difference in form as the difference between an object and that which constitutes it that grounds their modal difference. In specifying which forms are item-generating, the hylomorphist can either endorse a non-multitudinous hylomorphism according to which not all forms are item-generating or an multitudinous hylomorphism according to which all forms relating material parts are item-generating. Multitudinous hylomorphism entails that there are many person-like objects that exist, and the constitutionalist appealing to multitudinous hylomorphism has no plausible basis for distinguishing among them. The constitutionalist who endorses multitudinous hylomorphism is then committed to the existence of too many thinkers. The non-multitudinous hylomorphist, in principle, seems better off, for not all forms will be item-generating. But a defense of which objects exist forces the non-multitudinous hylomorphist into puzzles like the problem of the many. The constitutionalist who endorses non-multitudinous hylomorphism is then, likewise, committed to the existence of too many thinkers.

The same troubles will arise for the defender of the grounding solution. Either all possible grounds are item-distinguishing, or they are not. If all possible grounds are item-distinguishing, then both Kelly and Kelly-minus are objects who differ modally in virtue of having different grounds. But both Kelly and Kelly-minus are equally qualified to be thinkers, so either neither is or both are. If not all possible grounds are item-distinguishing, then we need principled reason to determine which plurality of atoms,  $p_5$  or  $p_6$  are objects that have some certain ground. Both pluralities seem equally qualified to compose some object, so any reason to distinguish between them would be ad hoc. And surely there is *one* thinker and not *none*. The constitutionalist, again, cannot make use of the grounding solution to the grounding problem as it arises for persons and organisms without being committed to the existence of too many thinkers. Even if these strategies can solve the grounding

problem as it arises for inanimate objects, they will not allow the constitutionalist to solve the more serious problem that arises for persons and organisms.

### 3.7 Conclusion

In Chapter 2, we discussed whether animalism can account for what we are, given the challenging metaphysical puzzles that lurk in the material object metaphysics literature. I argued that we should not endorse animalism because the animalist cannot satisfactorily respond to the problem of the many and still maintain the motivation for animalism. In addition, other arguments for animalism fail to provide enough reason to prefer it over more intuitive ontologies. Since animalism runs counter to many judgments about what we are, we should look for another alternative, perhaps constitutionalism. Constitutionalism appears to offer a viable personal ontology. Unlike animalism, constitutionalism is more readily compatible with our commonsense judgments about our mental lives and self-understanding as psychological beings. In order to maintain both a commitment to materialism and also a commitment to psychological features of personhood, constitutionalists can hold that persons are constituted by, but not identical to, human organisms. As a result, persons are material objects that share material parts with the organisms and are located exactly where the organisms are. Therefore, there are two distinct material objects located in exactly the same place and sharing the same matter. This gives rise to the grounding problem: what difference between the co-located objects can explain their difference in modal profiles? This problem arises not only with respect to persons and the organisms that constitute them but also in more mundane cases like statues and pieces of alloy. Just as we saw the difficulties in responding to the problem of the many, we see difficulties in responding to the grounding problem, which requires sophisticated and sometimes counterintuitive concessions in response. The grounding problem is especially bad with respect to persons and organisms. Many strategies to solve the problem simply re-locate the problem and fail to address the root of the problem. Even if we grant that some solutions are acceptable in the case of ordinary objects,

perhaps hylomorphism or the grounding solution, the constitutionalist who takes this line will run afoul of the problem of too many thinkers. We need to look elsewhere for a personal ontology that permits us to both solve this puzzle and retain the right count of thinkers, and we should not endorse constitutionalism.

## Chapter 4 Immaterialism Solves Puzzles

### 4.1 Introduction

We've seen in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 that defending a materialist personal ontology gets us entrenched in challenging metaphysical puzzles. Animalists face the challenge of both responding to the problem of the many and maintaining motivation for animalism. Strategies for responding to the problem of the many, however, require sacrificing the most successful argument for animalism – the Thinking Animal Argument. Without being able to appeal to the Thinking Animal Argument, the animalist must rely on less-convincing and objectionable arguments in defense of animalism. The animalist needs a convincing argument, for animalism itself is not altogether very appealing – accepting animalism often involves accepting counterintuitive judgments in cerebrum-transplant cases, like Kelly's. As a result, we should reject animalism and look for a personal ontology that fits better with the way we conceive of ourselves. Constitutionalism seems like a better option, for constitutionalists hold that we are constituted by but not identical to human organisms. The constitutionalist, then, can make the case that we are material objects that essentially have some kind of psychological features, like having a first-person perspective (or at least a capacity for it). But constitutionalists must respond to the grounding problem, which arises because constitutionalists are committed to there being two co-located material objects, the person and the organism, that appear to have all the same parts. The person and the organism certainly have different modal profiles, but the constitutionalist cannot give a satisfactory explanation of what grounds this modal difference. Further, even if responses to the grounding problem were successful, they are unavailable to the constitutionalist because they require accepting that there are a multitude of persons where we take there to be only one. We should reject constitutionalism as well, for accepting it, too, leaves us unable to solve metaphysical puzzles.

Surely there are such things as persons. And surely there are not millions of persons where we ordinarily take there to be just one – there is just one person sitting in my chair, for instance, and not millions. But these claims are indefensible if we endorse materialist ontologies like animalism and constitutionalism. We’re in desperate need of an ontology that allows us to retain our count of persons and does not subject us to the challenges we find in the problem of the many and the grounding problem. My task in this chapter is to advance an immaterialist personal ontology that offers solutions to these puzzles. I will argue for *immaterialism*, the thesis that persons are essentially immaterial. We should understand ‘immaterial’ to contrast with ‘material’; persons are essentially a different kind of thing altogether from the material objects that apparently populate the world.<sup>1</sup>

First, I will show how my preferred version of immaterialism is not threatened by either the problem of the many or the grounding problem. This first part of the chapter will demonstrate that immaterialism really does offer a solution to these puzzles and that this solution is unique to immaterialism. Second, I will address some other challenges that the immaterialist might face, given how immaterialism is situated with respect to these puzzles. This second part of the chapter will consist in sketching some decision-points for the immaterialist – if immaterialism is true, do you have any material parts like arms or legs? Where are you located? How do you persist through time? I will also discuss how an immaterialist ontology might fare with respect to surviving bodily death and its consistency with Christian conceptions of the afterlife. My main goal in discussing these issues is to canvass the options available to the immaterialist. Ultimately, the purpose of this chapter as a whole is to situate immaterialism favorably with respect to puzzles in personal ontology and note some costs that the immaterialist must take on in endorsing this ontology.

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<sup>1</sup>Now, on this understanding of immaterialism, it is conceivable that persons, who are essentially immaterial, have material parts. And if having material parts suffices for being a material object, then immaterialism may be strangely compatible with the idea that persons are material objects. But, as I will demonstrate, immaterialism is viable only if we further hold that persons have no material parts. So, while available, versions of immaterialism according to which persons are essentially immaterial but have material parts contingently will fail to do the requisite work and should not be endorsed.

## 4.2 Immaterialism Solves the Problem of the Many

I have argued that the Problem of the Many poses an insurmountable threat to those who hold that persons are material objects. The available responses are unsatisfactory when used to solve the problem as it arises for ordinary material objects, and we should not use them to solve the problem as it arises for persons. Surely persons exist, and surely there aren't millions of persons where there appears to be only one in cases that don't involve extraordinary optical illusions. In order to retain the correct judgment that there is exactly one person for every one person that there seems to be, we should endorse an immaterialist personal ontology.

Some might argue that immaterialism fares no better than materialism about persons because the problem of the many will arise for the immaterialist as well. For instance, even if the *person* is immaterial, there is *something* material that exists, intimately related to the person. When we try to specify what exactly that material thing is, a body, a brain, or something else, the problem of the many will thwart our attempts at specificity. A further challenge might threaten the immaterialist as well if the person has both immaterial and material parts. (Here, and hereafter, when I say 'parts', I mean *proper* parts unless otherwise specified.) Simply adding an immaterial component to some material parts would not provide a solution to the problem of the many.

Suppose someone tries to argue that the person is composed of both material and immaterial parts.<sup>2</sup> Then the person is an entity that has an immaterial part, and anything that has only material parts will not be the person. But now we must ask, again, which of the many candidate objects is a person. There are still many pluralities of atoms that are candidates for being the material parts of a person. All of these pluralities will be equally qualified to be the material parts of a person. Even if the person has an *immaterial* part, we haven't settled the question as to which *material* parts are also parts of the person. There will be one

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<sup>2</sup>Swinburne, for instance, holds that human persons have two parts: an immaterial, essential part and a material, contingent part (1986, Ch. 8) and (2014, 151).

person-candidate that has some plurality together with an immaterial component as parts, and there will be another person-candidate that has some *other* plurality together with an immaterial component as parts. And there will be millions of other person-candidates composed of other pluralities together with the immaterial component. It would be arbitrary to say that just one of these material-and-immaterial composites is a person, so either all of the multitude of person-candidates are persons or none are. Solving the problem, then, cannot happen by merely adding another part, even if that new part is immaterial.

Or perhaps the immaterialist proposes, as I do, that the person is a wholly immaterial entity generated by the brain.<sup>3</sup> The problem of the many threatens to entail that there are many brains or brain-like objects capable of generating the person. If this is so, then we risk being committed to there being not only many brains but many thinkers – many persons. This is unacceptable.

In what follows I outline possible versions of the problem of the many and explore how the different versions challenge immaterialism. I argue that the immaterialist has resources to respond to each challenge. I will show that while the problem of the many does pose a real challenge to materialist personal ontologies, it will not require a rejection of immaterialism on the same basis. Indeed, although the immaterialist is faced with some unfortunate-looking options about material constitution, the immaterialist personal ontology itself remains viable.

#### 4.2.1 A New Problem of the Many

Previously, I've discussed the problem of the many as it arises for ordinary material objects and related challenges for materialist personal ontologies. Recall the threat that arises for animalists, who maintain that we are numerically identical to animals. If you are numerically identical to an animal, the animal sitting in your chair, then there must be a *single* animal that you are identical to. But there are too many animal-candidates around and too many objects that seem to have what it takes to be an animal. We're pushed to the conclusion

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<sup>3</sup>For similar views, see, e.g., Hasker (1999), Zimmerman (2010, 2011), O'Connor and Jacobs (2003), and O'Connor (2005, IV).

that either there are millions of animals sitting in your chair or there are none. Neither of these options is acceptable. If there are millions of animals sitting in your chair, they all seem equally qualified to be thinkers. But there is just one of you, and absent any reason to prefer one equally-qualified candidate over another, we have no basis for arguing that there is just one animal thinking exactly the same thoughts as you. If there are no animals sitting in your chair, then *you* aren't sitting in your chair either, according to animalism. So, if we accept animalism, then we can accept neither option that the problem of the many yields. As a result, we would be better off endorsing a personal ontology that is more attractive insofar as it is better situated with respect to both motivating the view and avoiding the problematic entailments of the problem of the many.

If immaterialism is true, if persons are essentially immaterial entities, then we can avoid the dilemma that the animalist faces. We need not accept either that there are no persons sitting in your chair or that there are millions of persons sitting in your chair, since we have principled reason to select just one person-candidate. The person-candidate is the immaterial entity. None of the animal-candidates is a good person-candidate because animal-candidates are wholly material objects. Therefore, the fact that there are millions of animal-candidates sitting in your chair does not bring along with it the charge that there are millions of person-candidates sitting in your chair. So far the immaterialist is in good shape. We can at least eliminate the problem of having to choose among equally-qualified person-candidates, for no wholly material objects will be qualified to be a person.

But there is still a problem with respect to the material thing sitting in your chair. There is still some material stuff in your chair that is apparently related to you, uniquely, in some way. Your brain enables your thoughts; your body enables you to have experiences through your senses. Depending on how we understand the relationship between the immaterial person and the material stuff, an opponent may wield the problem of the many in different ways to try demonstrate that immaterialism is implausible, or at least that immaterialism

does not solve the problem the way I've suggested it does.<sup>4</sup>

#### 4.2.2 Too Many Bodies

An opponent may use the following strategy to demonstrate that immaterialism is implausible because it requires accepting that a single person has many bodies. If immaterialism is true, then the person is not a wholly material object and so isn't appropriately identified with an organism or a body or the like. But since we shouldn't go so far as endorsing the view that *everything* that exists is immaterial, we must recognize that persons are still closely related to an organism or a body or the like. We also shouldn't endorse some variety of immaterialism according to which persons are immaterial, bodies are material, and each is completely isolated from the other. Someone might endorse a kind of Leibnizian pre-established harmony to deny that there is any real causal relation between a person's experiences and her body, but that is not the view I prefer. We should do what we can to preserve judgments that persons are causally active in the material world, via their bodies. My interest here is to show some associated costs that the immaterialist must take on if they endorse such a view.

We do not think of ourselves as having many bodies. A single person has, or at least seems to have, just a single body. But now that we know that the problem of the many prompts us to reject our commonsense judgments about how many things there are, we may be unable to plausibly maintain that a single person has a single body.<sup>5</sup> This problem is familiar, but this version of the problem doesn't cause too much trouble for the immaterialist. Consider the following Too Many Bodies (TMB) argument one might propose:

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<sup>4</sup>The unique challenge here is not the general worry about how immaterial stuff can interact with material stuff. Rather, the challenge here arises as an analogue of the problem of the many, wielded against the immaterialist. I don't take the following discussion to make any progress toward a response to the *general* worry, although the challenge is noted.

<sup>5</sup>Unger cites this problem with bodies (2004, 199-200).

(TMB1) If immaterialism is true, then a single person controls, but is not identical to, a single material body.

(TMB2) If a single person controls a single material body, then the immaterialist must have principled reason to select one body-candidate as the body that the person controls.

(TMB3) The immaterialist has no principled reason to select one body-candidate as the body that the person controls.

∴ (TMBC) Immaterialism is false.

(TMB1) seems to fall out of my preferred variety of immaterialism according to which a single immaterial person is in control of what we normally take to be a single body. Once we're threatened by the problem of the many, we see the force of (TMB2), which, reasonably, pressures the immaterialist to distinguish among body-candidates in order to maintain that a single person controls a single body. But, as we know from discussions of the problem of the many, it is incredibly difficult to offer a principled reason to select one body-candidate as the single body-candidate in a person's control. There seem to be just too many equally-qualified candidates around. So, we arrive at (TMB3), which notes the lack of principled reason to select a body-candidate. Together, these considerations may prompt someone to think that immaterialism is implausible. There is a tension between the commonsense judgment that a single person has a single body and the the conclusions we're prompted to accept when considering the problem of the many. Either there are many bodies or there are none. If so, then insofar as immaterialism requires a commitment to the idea that a single person has a single material body, then immaterialism is false.

The immaterialist can, of course, avail herself of the same strategies others use to try to select a single best candidate. She might reject (TMB3) and offer a principled reason to select, for instance, the smallest material body-candidate or the maximal body-candidate. Or perhaps she might offer a principled reason similar to organicism; the single best candidate

is the single organism. Or perhaps (TMB2) should be rejected on supervenient grounds or by appealing to an epistemic response. We saw concerns with all of these strategies.<sup>6</sup> The immaterialist won't face the same problem that the animalist faces if she uses these strategies – the animalist is still committed to there being too many thinkers or a denial of animalism if she appeals to these strategies.<sup>7</sup> It's still bad even if the animalist can maintain that 'there is just one thinker' is true on all admissible precisifications of 'thinker', because it's unacceptable for there to be many thinker-like things even if 'there is just one thinker' is *technically* true. The immaterialist can appeal to supervenientism or the epistemic response to determine that there is just one body without the related challenge of needing to use the strategies to determine that there is just one thinker (or thinker-like thing). Nonetheless, it would be good for the immaterialist to appeal to some strategy that won't rely on these problematic solutions.

The best option, then, is to reject (TMB1). The immaterialist can maintain that a single person controls some material stuff, but the immaterialist can deny that there are *any* bodies, or the immaterialist can hold that there are a *multitude* of bodies. Unlike materialist personal ontologies, not as much is at stake for the immaterialist ontology with respect to how many bodies there are. This variety of the problem of the many doesn't entail strange consequences according to which, e.g., *your* body is in *my* control. Whatever material stuff there is, however many bodies there are or aren't, the locus of my immediate control is limited to some certain plurality of particles that don't overlap with any of the particles in your immediate control. I can, for instance, directly cause *my* arm to raise by willing that it happen, but I cannot cause *your* arm to raise by merely willing it. So, even if I have a multitude of bodies in my direct control, they will be bodies that are good candidates for being *my* body. I won't have in my direct control bodies that we wouldn't ordinarily recognize as mine: your body, my mother's body, a stranger's body.

Recall that the animalist cannot make the same moves here about organisms. Whatever

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<sup>6</sup>See §2.4.1 and §3.6.

<sup>7</sup>See §2.4.1.

the animalist says about organisms, that there are no organisms or a multitude, they must also say for thinkers. According to animalism, the thinker just *is* the animal. So, if the animalist denies that there are organisms, then the animalist must deny that there are thinkers. Likewise, if the animalist holds that there are a multitude of organisms in your chair, then the animalist must hold that there are a multitude of thinkers in your chair. The immaterialist makes no such commitments – whether there are no organisms or a multitude of organisms in your chair, the immaterialist can maintain that there is still just one thinker.

The immaterialist can be comfortable (or as comfortable as a metaphysician can be) endorsing some revisionary *material* ontologies without requiring revisionary claims about how many persons there are. Perhaps there is *no* body and there are just atoms arranged body-wise; maybe those atoms can be in a single person's control. Perhaps there are a multitude of bodies, largely overlapping, and maybe the multitude of bodies are in a single person's control. The ontology of the *person* is isolated from this revision. There is just a single person – not a multitude and not none – independently of the material-ontological strategy in play. The version of the problem, then, raises no troubling consequences for the immaterialist about how many persons there are. And while it brings with it an associated cost – a revisionary ontology of bodies – it is still less troubling than it is for materialist ontologists.

#### 4.2.3 Too Much Conscious Experience

If the immaterialist can overcome the Too Many Bodies version of the problem, perhaps an opponent would better focus efforts on a different version of the problem: demonstrating that immaterialism requires a commitment to the existence of too much conscious experience. Restricting the application of the problem to bodies led us in the wrong direction and indeed leaves plenty of room for a plausible immaterialist response. A more apt problem would target a problematic multiplication of conscious experience rather than of merely the body. If conscious experience is the product of brain function, then a problem of too many brains

may very well turn into a problem of too much conscious experience. We might formalize this second version of the problem into an argument from Too Much Conscious Experience (TMC):

(TMC1) If immaterialism is true, then conscious experience is a product of a correctly-functioning brain.

(TMC2) If conscious experience is a product of a correctly-functioning brain, then for every correctly-functioning brain, there is an associated production of conscious experience.

(TMC3) If for every correctly-functioning brain there is an associated production of conscious experience, then there is either production of far too much conscious experience or none.

(TMC4) If there is either production of far too much conscious experience or none, then immaterialism is false.

∴ (TMCC) Immaterialism is false.

As I noted above, I endorse a variety of immaterialism according to which persons do interact with material things. Anyone who endorses a different variety of immaterialism may reject the whole of (TMC1) if they deny that conscious experience is a product of brain activity and so won't be threatened by this particular argument. By 'product', I mean something that is not identical to that which produced it or any feature of that which produced it so, in this case, conscious experiences are not themselves merely brain states. I further endorse the consequent of (TMC1) that conscious experience results from a correctly-functioning brain. I endorse this in good company; only identity theorists hold that mental states are identical to brain states and reject the idea that conscious experiences are correlated with but not identical to brain states.<sup>8</sup> So, many will be targeted by the problem of too much conscious experience as it plays out in the remaining premises.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>For identity theorists, see Smart (1959, 1981, 2004). For noteworthy rejections of identity theory, see Kripke (1980, Lecture 3) and Chalmers (1996).

<sup>9</sup>The identity theorist doesn't get off the hook either. They may easily sidestep the (TMC) argument by

Plausibly, conscious experiences of human persons are produced only when a particular brain is functioning correctly.<sup>10</sup> And, further, your conscious experiences are different from my conscious experiences. The subjectivity of conscious experience supports a commonsense understanding that the scope of subjective experience is bound by what a single brain supports. So, by normal counts, we find one locus of conscious experience per brain. We may find this reason enough to endorse (TMC2).

We find a familiar problem in (TMC3); the lack of principled reason to distinguish among candidates arises again. Brains are supposed to be composite material objects; they have parts. But, just as we saw with tables and with bodies, there are too many brain-candidates inside any given skull. If all correctly-functioning brains produce conscious experience, then absent principled reason to distinguish among candidates, we have the odd result of being committed to either an implausible multiplication of conscious experience or denying the existence of conscious experience. If the immaterialist is committed to this odd result, then immaterialism is false, so (TMC4) is true.

This argument, although better targeted than Too Many Bodies, won't uniquely threaten the immaterialist. Anyone who holds that conscious experiences are produced by brain activity but are not identical to brain states can be subject to the challenge in (TMC3). In fact, we can replace 'immaterialism' with 'constitutionalism' in the (TMC) argument and generate an argument against constitutionalism. Explaining the relationship between conscious experiences and brain states is a complicated and interdisciplinary endeavor. The immaterialist will face unique difficulties in explaining the relationship between conscious experience and brain states, but that is a worry independent of (TMC3). More importantly, this version of the problem is not the most forceful challenge for the immaterialist – we will find this in the

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claiming that a conscious experience is merely a state of a correctly-functioning brain (rather than a product of it), but they will face a problem of there being too many brains and therefore also too many conscious experiences that are states of too many brains.

<sup>10</sup>Specifying what exactly a correctly-functioning brain is will be inconsequential for this argument; whatever that correct function is, it can probably be had by brains that differ from each other by only a single particle. I also here exclude what conscious experience amounts to in circumstances of surviving death from the present discussion.

next section.

Immaterialist or not, the argument leaves room for objections. I'll sketch them here, although the responses that the immaterialist should be give will be discussed in §4.2.4. We might reasonably ask whether we should accept (TMC2). It makes sense to think that no one else's brain can directly produce your conscious experiences. But what if there are a multitude of brains *inside* your skull? One might find a way to argue that all these brains play a role in producing the same conscious experience, where 'same' is numerical and not merely qualitative. There may be some mechanism by which these overlapping brains produce just a single conscious experience, had by a single subject.

Another line of response involves permitting a multitude of conscious experiences but holding that these discrete experiences are unified into a single subject of consciousness, rejecting (TMC3). Perhaps there are many qualitatively- but not numerically-identical experiences produced by many brains within the same skull, but some unifying force joins them together so they are experienced by a single subject, who may not notice the duplication. Maybe there is still "too much" conscious experience, but the more fundamental worry arises if qualitatively indistinguishable conscious experiences are had by a multitude of *subjects* of experience. But this is a problem of too many subjects, not too much conscious experience, and one might argue that a multitude of indistinguishable conscious experiences within a single subject is not "too much."

The (TMC) argument, then, highlights a familiar difficulty in explaining the relationship between consciousness and material entities.<sup>11</sup> The lines of response gestured at above sketch some possible routes forward in avoiding the conclusion that either there is far too much conscious experience or none, and the immaterialist, like many others, must reject a premise. Ultimately, the immaterialist will have the resources to reject either (TMC1) or (TMC3), but development of these types of responses will be more salient in §4.2.4.

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<sup>11</sup>Unger argues against the idea that material objects can have mental powers at all (2004, 204). Property dualists, among others, would disagree; see Chalmers (1996), Jackson (1982), Kim (2005), Robinson (2004), Rosenberg (2004), Seager (1999, 2014), Smith (1993), Strawson (1994), and Stubenberg (1998). For a critique of property dualism, see Zimmerman (2010).

To separate the unique challenge for the immaterialism, then, it will be fruitful to target only the version of immaterialism I endorse as the solution to puzzles in personal ontology. While there may be a related problem of too much conscious experience, it does not uniquely threaten immaterialism, and responses available to other views may very well be available to the immaterialist. Nor does this version of the argument get us as far as the more serious and worrying consequence that there are either a multitude of people where there appears to be only one or there are none. Instead, let us focus not on too much generated conscious experience but instead too many generated people.

#### 4.2.4 Too Many Persons

The Too Many Bodies version of the problem poses no unique threat to immaterialism, since *everyone* faces the challenge of responding the problem of the many as it arises for material objects. The Too Much Conscious Experience version is not a successful challenge for the immaterialist because many hold that conscious experience is a product of brain activity but is not necessarily the very brain activity itself. Further, these versions do not undermine my claim that immaterialism solves the *worrying* problem – that there seem to be too many *of us*. Opponents would be best served by an argument that shows that immaterialism, like competing views, is committed to the implausible consequence of Too Many Persons (TMP).

Again clarity is required to restrict the scope of the problem to the appropriate target. On some varieties of immaterialism, varieties that posit no person-material interaction or varieties that cite the person's origin and function independently of the material body, the problem of too much conscious experience gains no traction. But on my preferred variety, according to which the person is generated by the brain at the first conscious experience, the threat looms. But suppose there are many brains. We may reasonably ask whether at each first conscious experience generated by each of these brains an immaterial person comes into existence. It appears that the immaterialist who holds this view faces the same unfortunate conclusion that the animalist faces: either there are a multitude of persons where

we ordinarily take there to be just one, or there are none. We see this most threatening version of the problem of the many in the Too Many Persons argument:

(TMP1) If immaterialism is true, there is one person generated per correctly-functioning brain.

(TMP2) If there is one person generated per correctly-functioning brain, then either there are a multitude of persons or no person where there seems to be exactly one.

(TMP3) If either there are a multitude of persons or no person where there seems to be exactly one, then immaterialism is false.

∴ (TMPC) Immaterialism is false.

Here the problem is more obvious; we don't need to somehow quantify conscious experiences or determine how or whether discrete conscious experiences are unified in a single subject of experience as we saw in the discussion of the (TMC) argument. The challenge is well-defined: If one person is generated per correctly-functioning brain, the problem of the many threatens immaterialism.<sup>12</sup> We cannot accept that each brain-candidate generates a person. Nor can the immaterialist (of the variety I defend) accept that none of them does. Surely there are not a multitude of persons where there appears to be just one, nor are there *no* persons, so immaterialism is false if either of these is the case.

I see the most promising options to be as follows: reject (TMP2) and provide principled reason to prefer one brain-candidate over all the others or reject (TMP1) reject that one person is generated per correctly-functioning brain.

#### 4.2.4.1 Rejecting (TMP2)

To reject (TMP2), the immaterialist might find some earlier strategies especially attractive. Take, for instance, an elimination-principle type strategy to distinguish among brain-candidates. Let us, for simplicity's sake, suppose that at the person-generating moment, there are two brain-candidates, *A* and *B*, where *A* has *x* number of parts, *B* has *y* number

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<sup>12</sup>Gasparov has this worry (2015, §2).

of parts where  $y > x$ . If both  $A$  and  $B$  seem capable of generating consciousness, we should prefer selecting candidate  $A$  as the sole person-generator rather than  $B$ . For if the person comes into existence at the first conscious experience, we should expect the smaller of the two candidates to have done the job already.<sup>13</sup> Parts that  $B$  has that  $A$  lacks may still contribute to the conscious experience in virtue of those  $B$ -parts interacting with the  $A$ -parts. Indeed we expect to find richer conscious experiences with additional physical contributors. We may even permit the replacement over time of  $A$ 's parts. Once the immaterial person exists, the supporting matter may change with no loss of conscious experience.

The elimination strategy is more promising for the immaterialist than it was for the animalist because the immaterialist need not be committed to any ordinary understanding of what a brain is. The animalist, in contrast *is* committed to an ordinary sense of what an *animal* is. Recall that the animalist cannot make use of an elimination principle to determine that the single best candidate for being Kelly is the smallest material object that upholds her characteristic profile as a thinker.<sup>14</sup> If we use such a principle, then the smallest candidate for being Kelly is not the organism or the animal but is rather some smaller material object. As a result, if we assert that the smallest candidate for being Kelly is an animal, we mean something very different by 'animal' than we would ordinarily. The animalist wants to maintain that we are human animals, where 'animals' is understood in a completely ordinary sense – they mean to refer to those things that we take to have arms and legs and digestive systems and brains. Indeed the Thinking Animal Argument depends on it – we are supposed to accept that there is an *animal* in Kelly's chair and that the *animal* is thinking.

In contrast, the immaterialist holds no ties to our ordinary conception of animals or brains. Perhaps the smallest candidate necessary for generating conscious experience is not what we ordinarily take the whole brain to be but rather some smaller part of it. Or perhaps

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<sup>13</sup>The immaterialist should then maintain that there are no vague parts of these small brain candidates; rather there must be a fact of the matter as to which parts, precisely, played a role in generating the first conscious experience.

<sup>14</sup>See §2.4.

it's what we take to be the whole brain plus some other parts that we wouldn't expect. It makes no difference what that smallest candidate is and whether it accords with what we think we're referring to in our ordinary use of words like 'brain'. We might argue that the single best candidate for being the brain is the smallest candidate that gets the job done, and that candidate alone is the brain.<sup>15</sup> It might turn out that we were mistaken about what brains are, we might ordinarily think that they are larger or smaller than they are. By using this strategy, the immaterialist can maintain that the smallest candidate, whatever size it ends up being, is the brain. This brain is provides the physical processes that give the person her conscious experiences, and the person comes into existence at its proper functioning.

By using this strategy, the immaterialist can prefer one brain-candidate over another and argue that just this single candidate generates a person. Other putative objects that overlap with the brain may interact with it and offer some contribution to conscious experience, but we should not think that they, together with this smallest candidate, generate other persons. We need not conclude that there are a multitude of brains, nor that there is no brain, and therefore can avoid the conclusion that either there are millions of persons generated or no person generated. Instead we would find a single immaterial person, having been generated by a material brain, that has rich conscious experience.

#### 4.2.4.2 Rejecting (TMP1)

Although (TMP1) seems in the immaterialist spirit, the immaterialist does not need to maintain that there is one person per brain. The immaterialist should certainly maintain that there is one person where commonsense judgment yields that there is one person. But the immaterialist can let go of attachment to commonsense counting of things like brains without loss of commonsense counting of persons. The available options in rejecting (TMP1)

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<sup>15</sup>Another option is to argue that there is some smallest candidate that gets the job done, and it is *not* a brain but some other composite object. If so, then this would result in a denial of (TMP1) and would follow the same strategy outlined here. The difference would be that in denying (TMP2), the immaterialist could hold that this smallest candidate is a *brain* and in denying (TMP1), the immaterialist could hold that there are no brains but rather some other composite object that is this smallest candidate.

are to argue that if immaterialism is true, either there is one person per many correctly-functioning brains or there are persons despite there being no correctly-functioning brains. In taking the first option, the immaterialist would maintain that there really are a multitude of brains, but these brains together generate just a single person. This strategy requires either that a multitude of functioning brains produce a multitude of conscious, qualitatively-identical experiences that are unified in a single subject or that a multitude of functioning brains produce the very same (in the numerical sense) conscious experience, which a single subject has. This single subject would be the immaterial person, generated by the multitude of brains, but there is just one person.

Or, in taking the other option, the immaterialist might instead endorse nihilism about ordinary material objects, according to which composition never occurs. Following nihilism, there are no things like brains or even bodies, since no composite objects of these kinds exist. Instead there are just some material simples that relate to each other in certain ways. Sometimes they relate to each other in chair-like ways that we can sit on and sometimes they related to each other in consciousness-producing ways that we can experience. If there are no brains, then there are just simples that relate to each other and generate conscious experiences. The immaterialist can maintain that the person comes into existence at the first conscious experience that is supported by some simples.<sup>16</sup> In distinguishing among the pluralities of simples, if we're concerned with accounting for exactly which simples played a role in the conscious experience, then we can use a similar strategy used in rejecting (TMP2): the smallest plurality that does the job is the one we care about. Yes, there will be other pluralities largely overlapping with this smallest plurality, but the generating work is done. It might be affected by members of the other pluralities, and there may be some redundancy, but we don't find the redundancy in the experiencer.

Now recall from our discussion in Chapter 2 that the animalist does not have the resources to make a similar move in response to the problem of the many. First, even if the

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<sup>16</sup>Or, as I mentioned in the discussion of (TMP2), one might hold that there are these composite objects but deny that they are brains.

animalist can eliminate *brains*, they still face the challenge of determining which of the many *animal*-candidates is the animal in question. There are far too many pluralities of atoms that seem equally qualified to compose the animal. And absent a solution to the problem of the many, the animalist cannot appeal to the Thinking Animal Argument. This is because the Thinking Animal Argument *relies* on a successful response to the problem of the many – the animalist must be able to maintain that there is just one thinker in your chair. She can maintain this only if she’s established that there is just one animal in your chair. The smallest-candidate strategy yields the wrong result – the smallest candidate is *not* the animal. Modified strategies that do yield the right result will be attractive only if we’ve already accepted animalism.

So, the animalist, too, can take the eliminative route – maybe there are no brains, maybe there are no arms, no legs, no digestive systems. But in order to maintain that there are things like animals, the animalist must have a strategy in place to resolve the problem of the many. The immaterialist has no attachment to upholding any particular conception or other of material composite objects or when some simples compose a further object. The immaterialist need not rely on what we ordinarily take animals to be, unlike the animalist. Since the animalist depends on an ordinary conception of what animals are, and since animals are material objects, the animalist is responsible for solving the problem of the many as it arises for animals. If the animalist eliminates *all* composite material objects, then she cannot maintain her thesis. If we are animals, then we are composite material objects. So the immaterialist can make use of an eliminative strategy to avoid a multitude of thinkers, but the animalist cannot.

The immaterialist, unlike the materialist, can use the person as a starting point rather than using a commitment to materialism. As a result, rather than needing to understand the nature of the person by first understanding the nature of the material, we can start by understanding the nature of the person and interpret facts about material constitution through that lens. Instead of finding ourselves in the mire of revisionary claims about what

persons are, we can uphold our judgments that there is just one of me and just one of you and respond to the metaphysical puzzles in light of these judgments. We are not beholden to any particular ordinary object ontology or revisionary strategy to solve the puzzles. We enjoy freedom in responding to the puzzles because our responses do not yield the same immediate consequences for our personal ontology.

Or, more pessimistically, one might take the foregoing discussion as evidence that there are really no such things as persons, the way we ordinarily count them. We've seen the serious challenge that the problem of the many raises for materialist ontologies. Available solutions are unacceptable when applied to persons. We then must turn to immaterialist personal ontologies. If immaterialism is utterly unacceptable, then a remaining option is to reject the idea that we can provide a satisfying personal ontology at all. This, I think, is going too far. We have some resources available – we can endorse immaterialism. Yes, it's unpopular, and yes, it might be hard to swallow. But it can do the work we need it to do, and we don't need to sacrifice ourselves and the ones we love in the process.

#### 4.2.5 Taking Stock and Looking Ahead

I have here explored different ways that the problem of the many might be wielded against the immaterialist. As we saw, the charge that the immaterialist is committed to a problem of too many bodies poses no real threat to immaterialism. We can maintain immaterialism whether there are a multitude of bodies or none. The charge that immaterialism is implausible because it requires a commitment to too much conscious experience is no more threatening to immaterialism than other ontologies that do not identify brain states with conscious states. The true challenge comes in the final version of the problem. It appears that if the immaterialist holds that persons are generated by physical matter, then the immaterialist likes faces the problem of too many persons.

But unlike competing ontologies, the immaterialist has more resources at her disposal. We can offer revisionary solutions to the problem of the many as it arises for material objects

because we don't have the associated cost of being revisionary about how many persons there are. Strategies that are unattractive when used to defend materialist ontologies are viable in response to the Too Many Persons argument. The immaterialist can eliminate the material objects altogether without eliminating thinkers. The animalist cannot do so. The immaterialist can employ an elimination principle to yield the result that there is a single material object of the kind in question – for the materialist, this is the brain. The animalist cannot employ an elimination principle to yield the result that there is a single material object, the animal, because elimination principles get the wrong result for the animalist. So, although the problem of the many may be used in attempts to threaten immaterialism, I argue that the immaterialist can respond to the threat more successfully than competing ontologies, and we must turn to immaterialism to avoid the devastating consequences of metaphysical puzzles.

### **4.3 The Simplicity of the Person**

If the foregoing is correct, then we have some reason to endorse immaterialism. If persons are immaterial, we may reasonably ask what sort of immaterial thing persons are. In particular, we should have an eye toward what kinds of features the immaterial person must have if an immaterialist account is to truly avoid the problems that we found for materialist ontologies. Here I will demonstrate that we should favor an immaterialist account according to which persons are simple entities, for we run into too much trouble if we suppose that persons are composite. Suppose for the remainder of this discussion that the person is, as I have argued, immaterial. My argument proceeds as follows: Either the person is a composite immaterial entity or a simple immaterial entity. If the person is a composite immaterial entity, then the immaterialist is subject to the challenge of the problem of the many, not as it arises for material objects, but as it arises for persons. If any version of immaterialism is viable, then, it will be one according to which the person is a simple immaterial entity. By way of motivating this claim, I will address related challenges. Perhaps even the simple account is undermined

by the problem of the many. Or perhaps the simple account is undermined by entailing a problematic form of vagueness. I argue that neither of these challenges is successful.

#### 4.3.1 Might the Person be Composite?

If the person is a composite immaterial entity, then we will see the familiar problem of the many arise again. We should endorse an ontology that allows us to maintain our (correct) judgments that persons, whatever kind of thing they end up being, can have mental features. We are beings that have mental states, beliefs, desires, memories, hopes, etc. If immaterialism is true, then immaterial entities have mental states. So, if persons are composite immaterial entities, perhaps they are *composed of* mental states.<sup>17</sup> Such a view may be called a ‘bundle theory’, since the person is an aggregated bundle of these mental states.<sup>18</sup> I advance the following charge: if bundle theory is correct, then the problem of the many arises and there are either many persons or none where there seems to be exactly one. Consider several mental states: (a) remembering an embarrassing middle-school experience, (b) desiring a cold-brew coffee, (c) thinking about an upcoming deadline. If bundle theory is correct, then a person may be composed of (a), (b), (c), and many other mental states as well. Call this bundle of these mental states  $b_1$ . If bundles are mere aggregates of mental states, we should recognize the existence of other bundles as well in addition to  $b_1$ . There is another bundle of mental states, call it  $b_2$ , that does not have (c) as a part. Just as we saw the problem of the many arise for objects composed of pluralities of material simples, the problem of the many will arise for these bundles of immaterial parts. If persons are bundles, then both  $b_1$  and  $b_2$  are equally qualified to be persons – nothing about being a person *requires* thinking about an

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<sup>17</sup>This will be a case in which *all* of the person’s parts are immaterial. As we saw in §4.2, an account on which persons are composed of both material and immaterial parts will be subject to the problem of the many.

<sup>18</sup>Hume endorses a bundle theory according to which the self is an aggregate of perceptions (1978, Book 1, IV.6). It may be helpful here to note Olson’s discussion of various other views that might be called ‘bundle’ theory. I follow Olson’s clarification here that the *person* is composed of these mental states, rather than, say, the *mind* (2007, 129-132). For a defense of a bundle theory see Campbell (2006). It has been noted that bundle theory is subject to a number of critiques, notably when considering what the bundle theorist says about thinkers; see Olson (2007, Ch. 6).

upcoming deadline, however common this mental state may be. We would have no reason to privilege either bundle over the other. Either both of these bundles, and many, many, other bundles like them, are persons, or none are.

We might be tempted in this case to appeal to a maximality principle to argue that  $b_1$  alone (not  $b_2$  or any other smaller bundles of mental states) is a person.<sup>19</sup> But, tempting as it may be, the maximality principle will not help the bundle theorist for the same reasons that it did not help the animalist in §2.4. If persons are bundles and being a person is a maximal property, then  $b_1$  is a person and  $b_2$  is not. So, either  $b_2$  is composite immaterial entity that is not a person, or there is no composite immaterial entity composed of the parts of  $b_2$ . Both of these options are implausible, for in both cases, some extrinsic change – the person’s loss of mental state (c), will result in a change to  $b_2$ . Either the object composed of the mental states of  $b_2$  will come to be a person or the mental states of  $b_2$  will come to compose something instead of composing nothing.

Another strategy is to postulate the existence of some unifier, something that *has* all the mental states rather than something that merely *is* the plurality of the mental states, will not solve the problem of the many; perhaps the person is *constituted by* a bundle of mental states. This bundle theorist still faces the challenge of explaining which of the many candidate bundles of mental states constitutes the person. And absent principled reason to legitimize only one candidate bundle,  $b_1$  for instance, nothing prevents us from identifying many other similar bundles whose parts are just as qualified to compose the person in question. We’ve ruled out maximality principles, and we should reject epistemic responses and supervenient responses for the same reasons we’ve already seen.<sup>20</sup> Even if we can secure the conclusion that there is just one *person*, there will be too many other nearby candidates doing the thing that we care about, thinking. Or they will at least do something

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<sup>19</sup>We should not be tempted to argue in the opposite direction and appeal to an elimination principle, for if we do, we will be committed to the claim that the smallest bundle of mental states that counts as a thinker is the person. But that would be a very small bundle, perhaps even just a mental state or two, and a bundle of only a couple mental states is not robust enough to qualify as a person.

<sup>20</sup>See §2.4.6.

very much like thinking because they have nearly-identical mental states. In order to truly avoid the problem of the many, we want a solution that not only permits us to truly say ‘there is one thinker’ but also rule out the possibility that the other nearby candidates are doing something nearly indistinguishable from thinking.<sup>21</sup>

Bundle theory, then, is a step in the right direction but ultimately an implausible alternative to materialist personal ontologies. We might be tempted to look elsewhere for a composite view of the immaterial person: Perhaps instead persons are immaterial entities composed of aspects or modules or powers.<sup>22</sup> Even for these composite views, we will see the problem of the many arise again. Suppose the person is, for instance, the composite of reason, spirit, and appetite. There will still be some candidate composed just of, for instance, reason and spirit that is also qualified to be a thinker. So, even if we could secure the result that there is just one person, we would once again find ourselves unable to rule out there being more than one thinker. But if the person is a composite immaterial entity, then the defender of such a view cannot plausibly claim that there is just one person, rather than many, or none.

Another option is to endorse a simple view according to which the person is a simple immaterial entity. On this view, the person will have *no* parts, material or immaterial.<sup>23</sup> And endorsing the view that persons are simple will provide straightforward resources to avoid the problem of the many.

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<sup>21</sup>Other problems for this version of bundle theory will be addressed in §4.4.

<sup>22</sup>Plato, for instance, held that the soul is composed of three aspects: reason, spirit, and appetite (1973, *Republic*, Book 4). Each of these aspects serves a unique function, and the functions of these aspects can contradict each other. As a result, so Plato says, the functions cannot be attributed to one and the same thing – they must be attributed to different parts of the soul. Aristotle attributes different faculties to the soul, although the soul is apparently itself a unity (1993). Fodor holds that the mind is modular; different “parts” of the mind serve different functions (1983). Locke attributes different powers to the mind: the will and the understanding (1979, 2.XXI). As a result, perhaps these aspects, modules, or powers are good candidates for being *parts* of the immaterial entity.

<sup>23</sup>Some have argued for independent reasons that we should prefer a simple view of the person; see Chisholm (1991), Zimmerman (1991), and Barnett (2010). Schwitzgebel, while not arguing specifically for simplicity of the person, notes some consequences of denying that thinkers are simple (2015). Some have argued against the proposal that you are simple; see Bailey (2014b). Foster (1991, §7.3) endorses a view on which we are wholly immaterial. Fumerton (2013, §8.3) argues that the “self” cannot have a material body.

### 4.3.2 Defending Simplicity

Suppose that the person is a simple immaterial entity. The person will have experiences, thoughts, and mental states but is not composed of them. Indeed the person will have *no* parts, strictly speaking.<sup>24</sup> If so, the problem of the many won't be a threat, or at least not as straightforwardly as it is a threat to bundle theory.

Someone might propose that endorsing the view that persons are simple immaterial entities does not solve the problem of the many. Consider again those mental states (a), (b), and (c) and those bundles  $b_1$  and  $b_2$ . Why should we think that the person is the bearer of the mental states of  $b_1$  and not merely of the mental states of  $b_2$ ? And why not take the step further and claim that one person is a simple immaterial entity that has only the mental states of  $b_2$  and a distinct person has the mental states of  $b_1$ ? The immaterialist who wants to avoid the problem of the many must be able to respond to this challenge or else lose the dialectical advantage of immaterialism over materialist views and bundle theories.

The challenge for the immaterialist arises in virtue of the possibility that two immaterial simples might share at least some of the very same (i.e., numerically identical) mental states, resulting in the problem of too many thinkers. In order to protect against this threat, we have two options: (i) provide reason for thinking that immaterial simples can never share particular mental properties or (ii) explain how sharing mental properties does not result in there being too many thinkers. I endorse option (i); the immaterialist should maintain that immaterial simples can never share mental properties. Suppose that the person, an immaterial entity, is generated by the brain and comes into existence at the first moment of consciousness.<sup>25</sup> Then suppose also that this immaterial entity is simple; this immaterial entity has no parts. The immaterialist must then maintain that the simple immaterial entity is the unique bearer of all of its mental properties, which have their origins in brain states.

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<sup>24</sup>I'll address in §4.5 what the immaterialist might say about "having" bodily parts like arms and legs.

<sup>25</sup>Here when I say 'brain' I use it neutrally with respect to whether there is a single object, the brain, or there is just some matter but no composite object that is the brain. In the latter case, I'll mean 'brain' as shorthand for some plurality of material simples that would compose what we ordinarily call a brain if there were such things as brains.

An analogous move would not be defensible for a materialist, who argues that the subject of experience is somehow a material entity. If the subject of experience is a material entity, then the materialist must acknowledge the problem of the many as it arises because of the innumerably many possible collections of material parts of the brain. The materialist will struggle to provide a plausible solution according to which all the brain states produced by these innumerably many collections are somehow unified in a single *material* bearer.<sup>26</sup> There are simply too many candidates for being the bearer of the mental states.

Once we step away from materialist ontologies, however, we do not face the same burden of sifting through innumerably many collections of material parts and determining which is the unique bearer of mental states. Even though there are many pluralities of material parts, the immaterialist can maintain that they are all pluralities associated with a single immaterial entity: the entity that was generated by whatever material parts gave rise to consciousness initially. As other material parts interact with these initial material parts, their interactions can give rise to continued production of mental states in the immaterial person. The problem would arise if we claimed that these various collections are thinkers rather than the immaterial person herself. If the various collections were capable of thought, then we *would* have the problem of too many thinkers. Instead, on this immaterialist view, the collections can contribute to thought, even redundantly, without there being a problematic multiplication of mental states.

So far I've tried to demonstrate how the immaterialist can avoid there being too many thinkers even if there are many brain-candidates. Now we can turn to the further claim that no two immaterial simples can share the same mental states. On the view I've endorsed, there is a single immaterial entity associated with a particular brain. What would it be like, then, for two immaterial simple entities to share the same mental properties? They must both

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<sup>26</sup>The constitutionalist may be better situated than the animalist here, or even the immaterial bundle theorist. For the constitutionalist does not identify the person with any particular collection or material parts. There may be room for the constitutionalist to argue that a single material person is the bearer of these mental states. As I've argued in Chapter 3, however, the constitutionalist cannot solve the grounding problem without committing to the existence of too many thinkers, so ultimately we should not endorse a constitutional account.

somehow be generated by a single brain such that they experience the same mental states. But suppose, contrary to my preferred view, that there are indeed two simple immaterial entities produced by a single brain. Would it be the case that they would somehow share the very same mental states? I argue that they would not. Mental states will be properties of immaterial entities rather than material entities. So, even if two immaterial entities are generated by a single brain, while they might share brain states, they will not share mental states. They may have similar, but not numerically identical, mental states.

Now of course we should not allow that there be two immaterial entities generated by the same brain, for even if their mental states are merely qualitatively (not numerically) identical, that is still a problem of too many thinkers. My response here was simply to demonstrate that immaterial entities cannot share numerically identical mental states, therefore avoiding the possible problem of too many subjects of the very same experience. So why think that only a single entity is generated for each (ordinarily-recognized) brain? My response is that we have good reason to think only a single entity is generated, and we have no good reason to think that more than one would be generated. We should take there to be a single subject of experience, as there ordinarily seems to be, and retain that judgment until other pressures force us to concede the possibility of more than one subject. The materialist faces such pressures because they claim that the person is material. But the immaterialist who maintains that the person is immaterial and further that the person is not composed of mental states isn't threatened by the *material* problem of the many. By maintaining that any (even redundant) information from the brain is unified in a single subject of experience, the immaterialist shouldn't concede that there are multiple subjects of experience simply because they are multiple collections of mental states. Instead all these collections of mental states are collections had by a single subject.

One might ask what the immaterialist says in cases of conjoined twins – won't conjoined twins share mental states? Even if these are cases in which more than one immaterial entity is generated, the immaterialist is not committed to there being one *brain* that generates two

immaterial entities. In the case of dicephalus (two heads, single torso), the immaterialist can plausibly say that there are two immaterial entities that were generated by two different brains. In the case of cephalopagus (single head, two torsos), the immaterialist can plausibly say that there is one immaterial entity that was generated by one brain. The immaterialist can further remain neutral with respect to how many *organisms* there are in these cases. With respect to “sharing mental states,” it is true that the persons in a dicephalus case may have many very similar mental states, but this will be a feature of experiencing the world in close proximity to one another, not a feature of having the very same brain-parts generating the similar experiences. This is not enough to qualify as a problem of too many thinkers.

I believe that this is what is required in order to avoid the problem of the many: endorsing a view according to which the person is the sole simple immaterial entity generated by a brain. The bundle theorist, who goes as far as to say that the person is immaterial but holds that the person is composite, does not have any recourse when pressured to explain how mental states are unified in the same subject. The subject, according to the bundle theorist, just *is* the bundle itself, and we have already seen that there is a problem of too many bundles. Or, if the bundle theorist tries to maintain that the person is something composed by the states in the bundle but is not itself the bundle, then the bundle theorist will be faced with too many subject-candidates with no method to distinguish among them. Endorsing a simple view, however, allows for there to be many “bundles” but a single subject.

### 4.3.3 Fission

Someone might try to challenge my proposal by appealing to a hypothetical case in which a person’s brain undergoes fission. Over time, suppose this person’s brain starts to duplicate its parts and slowly separate into two brains, each an exact duplicate of the other. Suppose this happens to rest of the body as well, so we end up with two apparent organisms, qualitatively identical, located in two different places. What should be said in this case? If there are any “ordinary” judgments in such cases, it seems that we end up with two persons. One can go

travel the world and have great adventures and the other can stay at home. The adventurer and the homebody seem to have very different experiences, and the adventurer and the homebody seem to be two different people.

In response to fission cases, several responses are available. We can rule out immediately responses that entail that there are really *no* persons and therefore no genuine fission. While available, this response is not in the spirit of this project. Likewise we can rule out immediately responses that entail that there are really a *multitude* of persons and therefore no genuine fission. This would involve accepting the very consequence we've been trying to avoid. Let us take a closer look at the remaining options:

- (i) there is one person prior to fission and two persons after fission
- (ii) there are two persons prior to fission and two persons after fission
- (iii) there is one person prior to fission and one person after fission

These are the options for any personal ontologist, materialist or immaterialist. If we take option (i), then there is some time during the fission process at which a new person comes into existence. The animalist who takes this option will hold that sometime during the fission process, a new organism, a new person, comes into existence. The constitutionalist who takes this option will hold that sometime during the fission process, a new constituting body and new constituted person come into existence. And the immaterialist who takes this option will hold that sometime during the fission process, a new immaterial entity comes into existence. The question for everyone, then, is *when* the new person comes into existence. Is it at some sharp point? If so, at what point? It may be tempting for the immaterialist to suggest that the new immaterial entity comes into existence once the material brains function independently of each other. This point itself may be vague – how much interaction between brains rules out functional independence? At what point do the brains cease interacting altogether? Is it vague at what point this happens? If so, then this weakens the immaterialist strategy in response to the problem of the many. The immaterialist must maintain that normal experiences generated by the brain and all the nearby brain-candidates are appropriated

into a single subject. In this fission case, there will be some nearby brain-candidates that are generating experiences that are appropriated into a *different* subject. And if this can happen in fission cases, it threatens the immaterialist's responses to the problem of the many. Even if there is such a sharp point, note a further consequence of this strategy: either the adventurer or the homebody will have just come into existence. But both the adventurer and the homebody will *think* that they've been alive the whole time.

The animalist and the constitutionalist, however, will face similar challenges for their own accounts. If it is at some sharp point that a new animal or new constituting body come into existence, both the animalist and constitutionalist would need to identify that point and likewise accept that either the adventurer and the homebody will think (falsely) that he has been alive the whole time. And if it is vague at what point the new person comes into existence, then the animalist and constitutionalist, too, will face a problem of there being too many thinker-candidates prior to the fission. So, no one clearly has the advantage in taking option (i).

In taking option (ii), someone might hold that there have really been two persons all along, one the adventurer and one the homebody.<sup>27</sup> Prior to fission, then, they simply overlap. This option is not available to the animalist, who would deny that there are really two *organisms* prior to fission. The option is, in principle, available to the constitutionalist, who could hold that there are two persons, constituted by two mostly-overlapping bodies. And the option is, in principle, available to the immaterialist as well, who could hold that there were two persons generated by what we would ordinarily recognize as a single brain. While the option is available in principle, it would not be a good option to take. For if there is more than one person prior to fission in this example, we have a problem of too many thinkers where we ordinarily take there to be just one. And if there is more than one thinker prior to fission, then we have no reason to think that there is *only one* thinker in indistinguishable cases of a typical person. No one should take this option, then, if we're interested in avoiding the

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<sup>27</sup>Cf. Lewis (1976).

problem of too many thinkers.

The final option, then, is option (iii). Here the immaterialist has the advantage, albeit an advantage that isn't very attractive. The immaterialist may suggest that no immaterial entity comes into existence and this is a very strange person – one who has the adventurer's experiences and the homebody's experiences.<sup>28</sup> This person will have an incredibly disunified psychology, and this person will seem to everyone else to be *two* persons. It will not be the case that fission results in two persons, one homebody and one adventurer. Rather the adventurer and the homebody will be one and the same person. But if there are two qualitative bodily duplicates of the adventurer and the homebody, we would normally judge that the adventurer and the homebody are indeed two different persons. We would not think that *their* conscious experiences are unified in some single subject.

This is a strange result, but it is available to the immaterialist. The animalist cannot make use of this option, for the animalist would need to deny that either the homebody or the adventurer is a human organism. But both are. And the constitutionalist would need to either hold that one person is constituted by the organisms of the adventurer and the homebody or hold that only one of the post-fission organisms constitutes a person. But one person cannot be constituted by two organisms, and surely the adventurer and the homebody do not compose a single organism. And both the adventurer and the homebody individually have what it takes to constitute a person. So, only the immaterialist can make real use of this option because the immaterialist is not constrained by counting persons analogously to how we count material objects. It is certainly a strange option, but it is available.

All of options (i)-(iii), then, are unattractive and come with their associated costs, and these are bad options for *everyone*. Anyone who holds that there was one person prior to fission and two persons after fission is either stuck with vagueness about when the new entity comes into existence or is committed to there being some sharp point at which the new entity comes into existence. Anyone who holds that there have been two persons all

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<sup>28</sup>Cf. Moyer (2008, §3) and Ehring (1987).

along is committed to the existence of two many thinkers. And maintaining that there is still just one person post-fission is plausible (if at all) only for the immaterialist. So, insofar as fission is a challenge, it is a challenge for everyone, and the options come with costs for everyone.

None of the available options accords with what we would ordinarily judge to be the case with respect to persons. It seems like it is determinate how many persons there are. It seems like there is no actual sharp point at which a new person would come into existence in fission cases. And it seems like the adventurer and the homebody are two different people, not one person who has incredibly disunified experience. The immaterialist must resist the option according to which the new person comes into existence at some vague point. So, if immaterialism is the right view of personal ontology, it must be that either a person comes into existence at some sharp point or no new person comes into existence in cases of fission.

#### 4.3.4 Vagueness and Persons

Concerns about vagueness will also arise for the immaterialist independently of fission cases. I've been speaking about immaterialism as a view according to which persons – immaterial simples – come into existence when a brain is functioning correctly. This is not the only option for an immaterialist, however. Someone who holds that immaterial persons exist has three options: immaterial persons come into existence at some specific point in time, it is vague when immaterial persons come into existence, or immaterial persons have always existed. None of these options seems particularly attractive, but the immaterialist must endorse one of them. Here I will explain why each of the disjuncts seems problematic for the immaterialist and consider how the immaterialist should respond.

Some immaterialists might be tempted to accept the third disjunct. They might claim that every immaterial being has always existed. What happens with respect to humans, they might say, is that an immaterial being is joined with the human body at some point. While this option is available, this “joining up” of bodies with immaterial persons that existed

prior to their bodies does not accord well with the idea that persons are products of natural processes of the physical world. The immaterialist should prefer views according to which persons are such products in order to adequately respond to the Animal Interests Argument, as we saw in §2.6. This is an option for the immaterialist, but I suggest that the immaterialism is better motivated if it is consistent with the idea that we come into existence as a result of there being things like human bodies and human brains that function in such a way that produce conscious experiences. The immaterialist should then hold that persons come into existence some time after their bodies and brains do. Or, to be more precise, persons come into existence some time after material simples are organized in an arrangement that we would ordinarily call ‘body’ and ‘brain’, even if there are no such composite objects. So, the immaterialist must decide between the other two options: either it is vague at what point persons come into existence or persons come into existence at some specific point in time.

We saw from the discussion of fission cases that the immaterialist should not hold that persons come into existence at some vague point. In addition, if it is vague at what point immaterial beings come into existence, then the immaterialist is committed to a problematic form of vagueness. To explain the problem, let us examine the different accounts of vagueness. Suppose someone takes a trip to Nepal to visit Mt. Everest. She arrives at her destination and starts walking toward the mountain. Elated, she says ‘I am standing on Mt. Everest!’ If she’s walking near the base of the mountain, it may be vague whether what she says is true.

On the linguistic account of vagueness, ‘Mt. Everest’ is a vague term because there are many candidate referents of ‘Mt. Everest’ and we have not settled on one because of our linguistic indecision. It is then vague whether the traveler is standing on Mt. Everest because our imprecise language fails to pick out a unique referent of ‘Mt. Everest’ from among the many candidates. Someone endorsing an epistemic account of vagueness will describe this as a case in which it is vague whether the traveler is on Mt. Everest because we do not know which of the many candidate referents is uniquely picked out by ‘Mt. Everest’.<sup>29</sup> On

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<sup>29</sup>This account is called ‘epistemicism’. See, e.g., Williamson (1994, 2010). For discussions of vagueness with respect to things like Mt. Everest, see, e.g., Tye (2000), Williamson (2003), and Akiba (2004) and Heller

this account, there is a unique referent of ‘Mt. Everest’, it alone is Mt. Everest, but we do not know in this instance whether the traveler is standing on it. On both the linguistic account and the epistemic account, there is no vagueness in the way the world is. On both accounts, each candidate referent of ‘Mt. Everest’ has precise boundaries. If the vagueness is metaphysical, however, then there is a single referent picked out by ‘Mt. Everest’ but this entity itself has vague boundaries. If so, then it is vague whether the traveler is on Mt. Everest because it is vague whether the traveler is standing within the imprecise boundaries of this unique referent.

Let us consider an example that will demonstrate why the immaterialist seems committed to metaphysical vagueness. Kelly’s mother becomes pregnant, an embryo develops into a fetus, and some time later, a baby is born and develops as a typical human organism does. According to the variety of immaterialism I prefer, at some point in this process, just one simple immaterial being, Kelly, comes to exist. If it is vague at what point Kelly comes into existence, it will either be because of linguistic, epistemic, or metaphysical vagueness. Both linguistic and epistemic vagueness require that there be many candidate referents for some term in question. In this case, we want to know what the referent of ‘Kelly’ is. Since Kelly is an immaterial entity, and there is just one immaterial entity that comes into existence, there will *not* be many candidate referents for ‘Kelly’. There is just a single referent, for only one immaterial entity will be qualify for being a candidate referent of ‘Kelly’. And if it is vague whether Kelly exists and there is just a single candidate referent of ‘Kelly’, then this immaterial entity itself must have vague boundaries. Since immaterial entities are not located, these boundaries must be *temporal* rather than *spatial*. So, if it is vague whether Kelly exists, then it is a matter of metaphysical vagueness.

Some find commitments to metaphysical vagueness worrying. It has been argued that metaphysical vagueness entails vague identity, which entails a contradiction.<sup>30</sup> So, if the

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(1996).

<sup>30</sup>See Evans (1978) and for discussion Lewis (1988). Russell denies that vagueness is a feature of the world independently of our language and conventions (1923).

immaterialist endorses the idea that it is vague at what point immaterial beings come into existence, the immaterialist is committed to problematic, metaphysical vagueness.<sup>31</sup> In order to avoid this problem, the immaterialist should hold that the immaterial being comes into existence at a single point in time. This option seems problematic because it appears that in endorsing this option, the immaterialist is committed to unacceptable arbitrariness: it would be arbitrary to identify a single point in time during the development of an human organism at which an immaterial being comes into existence.<sup>32</sup>

In Kelly's case, the human organism develops normally, and then there is some time, time  $t_n$ , at which the Kelly comes into existence. If we were to closely examine the organism's development, its gradual nature is arguably such that there is nothing significantly different between times  $t_{n-1}$  and  $t_n$  that could explain why Kelly comes into existence at  $t_n$ . If there is nothing significantly different between times  $t_{n-1}$  and  $t_n$  that could explain why Kelly comes into existence at  $t_n$ , then it is arbitrary at what point the immaterial person comes into existence. If it is arbitrary at what point the immaterial person comes into existence, then the immaterialist is incorrect to think that the immaterial being comes into existence at a single point in time, for coming into existence does not happen arbitrarily.

I suggest that the immaterialist is not committed to it being arbitrary at what point the immaterial person comes into existence even if she grants that the immaterial being comes into existence at a single point in time. In order to resist the objection, the immaterialist should deny the claim that there is nothing significantly different between times  $t_{n-1}$  and  $t_n$  that could explain why the Kelly comes into existence at  $t_n$ . If we narrow the scope of our investigation into the development of the human animal to only the material developments, then we are not going to account for any non-material facts that distinguish time  $t_n$  from  $t_{n-1}$ . The significant difference between the times is that at time  $t_{n-1}$ , there are no mental states associated with this organism, no subjective experience associated with this organism,

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<sup>31</sup>For more discussions of vagueness, see, e.g., Sider (2003), Lewis (1986), Evans (1978), Heller (1996), Hawley (2002), Barnes (2005), Tye (2000), Williams (2008), and Korman (2015, Ch. 9).

<sup>32</sup>Cf. Brenner (forthcoming, Objection 6).

and therefore no being to have these mental states. At time  $t_n$ , there are mental states and subjective experience associated with this organism, and *the subject* of these experience, who has these mental states. Even though this constitutes a drastic and significant immaterial change, it does not need to be accompanied by drastic and significant material changes. There may be, for example, a small change in the way the brain functions that allows it to give rise to thoughts and experiences that was not possible before this point. But insofar as it is possible for an insignificant material change to give rise to a significant immaterial change, then there is nothing arbitrary in saying that the immaterial being comes into existence at a single point in time.<sup>33</sup> This single point in time, the first moment of consciousness, is the time at which there is suddenly a thinking, immaterial person who is the subject of experience, but it need not be an arbitrary point in time.

If immaterialism is true, and if immaterialism is to be consistent with the judgment that persons come into existence, then the immaterialist should hold that persons come into existence at a single, precise point in time. The success of this strategy will depend on whether consciousness itself is a matter of vagueness. If there are cases of borderline consciousness or instances in which it is vague whether there is some conscious being, then this will undermine my suggestion that persons come into existence at a precise point in time.<sup>34</sup> If the immaterialist avoids a commitment to metaphysical vagueness, it comes by denying that it is vague at what point immaterial persons come into existence. In response to the charge of arbitrariness, then, the immaterialist is committed to it being possible for small, material changes to give rise to significant immaterial changes. If this is implausible or if there can be cases of borderline consciousness, then the immaterialist of this variety will be saddled with a commitment to metaphysical vagueness.

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<sup>33</sup>For a discussion of the relationship between these kinds of changes, see Hawthorne (2002) and (Merricks 2001b, Ch. 4).

<sup>34</sup>For discussions of borderline consciousness, see Tye (1996), Papineau (2003, §4.8), and Antony (2006, 2008).

#### 4.3.5 Taking Stock and Looking Ahead

If we go as far as accepting that persons are immaterial entities, we should further accept that persons are *simple* immaterial entities. An alternative is to hold that persons are *composite* immaterial entities. This option, however, is unacceptable for the very same reason that some materialist ontologies are unacceptable; they are irreconcilable with the claim that there is just a single person rather than a multitude, or none, as the problem of the many entails. In order to avoid the problem of the many, we should hold that persons are simple. If persons are simple, we don't face the difficulty of selecting among many candidates with similar parts to identify the person. Instead there is just one candidate for being the person – the simple immaterial entity generated by the brain. This simple immaterial entity is the sole subject of experience, unifying information from the material brain. In addition, the immaterialist can resist the charge that she is committed to metaphysical vagueness. So, we should conclude that persons are simple immaterial entities.

#### 4.4 Immaterialism Solves the Grounding Problem

I've just argued that immaterialism is preferable to animalism because immaterialism, unlike animalism, offers a solution to the problem of the many. I must also demonstrate that immaterialism is preferable to *constitutionalism*. Recall, however, that constitutionalism will be threatened by the grounding problem. I have shown in Chapter 3 that the strategies to solve the grounding problem as it arises for ordinary objects are unsuccessful when applied to the case of persons. We should instead endorse immaterialism, which solves not only the problem of the many but also the grounding problem. Here I will motivate immaterialism in light of the grounding problem and argue that no analogous problem can be used to challenge immaterialism.

#### 4.4.1 The Immaterialist Solution

Paradigm cases of the grounding problem involve things like statues and pieces of alloy. The statue is not the very same object as the piece of alloy but, as the story goes, they seem to share all the same parts. We are prompted to think that the statue and the piece of alloy are not one and the same object because they seem to have different persistence conditions. The piece of alloy can survive being melted down, but the statue cannot. What grounds this difference in persistence conditions? What is it about the statue that gives it *this* modal profile, and what is it about the piece of alloy that gives it *that* modal profile? Some argue that the statue and the piece of alloy are different kinds of things, and their sortal difference explains their modal difference. Some argue that the statue and the piece of alloy in fact have different parts and are therefore not the very same object. Some argue that the statue and the piece of alloy have different forms. The grounding problem also arises for materialist ontologies according to which persons are material objects that occupy the very same space as the human organisms that constitute them but are not identical to those organisms. Some responses to the grounding problem fail to do the requisite work in identifying some difference between the statue and the piece of alloy that grounds their difference in modal profiles because we can still reasonably ask what grounds *that* difference. Other responses appear to identify a difference that could plausibly ground the modal difference but will yield the unacceptable result that there are really a multitude of persons where there appears to be just one. Either way, constitutionalists are not able to respond successfully to the grounding problem.

If immaterialism, of the variety I endorse, is correct, then persons and organisms do *not* occupy the same space. They also share no parts. Any difference in persistence conditions between the person and the organism, then, can easily be grounded in the fact that they are different kinds of things. The person will be a simple immaterial entity with the modal profile associated with such things, and the organism (if an object at all) will be a differ-

ent kind of object with the modal profile of things like organisms. If my preferred version of immaterialism is true, then the grounding problem will not even arise for persons and organisms, for they do not occupy any of the same space, and they share no parts.

Someone might propose that there's no person-organism grounding problem, but perhaps there's an immaterialist grounding problem instead for other versions of immaterialism. Recall the discussion of bundle theory; one might endorse a version of immaterialism according to which persons are composite immaterial entities. If so, there is some logical room for there to be both bundles of immaterial parts (like mental states) and persons, which are distinct from the bundles but still have the mental states as parts. Perhaps this would be a kind of immaterial constitutional view: there are bundles of immaterial parts and entities constituted by but not identical to those bundles.

The grounding problem will arise for the immaterialist only if three conditions are met: first, the bundle of immaterial parts is itself a composite object (not merely a plurality of mental states), second, the person is constituted by but not identical to this bundle, and third, the person shares parts with the bundle. On one version of the bundle theory, the bundle is just a plurality of mental states, not a single composite object.<sup>35</sup> If this is the case, the first condition is not met, and there is no grounding problem, for the plurality of mental states may compose only the person. We don't have a case where a person and something else are composed of the same parts – the person is the composite immaterial entity whose parts are the mental states.

On a different version of the bundle theory, the bundle is a composite object, whose mereological parts are mental states, and the person is constituted by the bundle, call this version *immaterial constitutionalism*. This meets the first two conditions. One might be tempted to endorse immaterial constitutionalism if bundles have all of their parts (mental states) essentially. If persons merely are these bundles, then persons do not survive any change in mental states. If persons are constituted by a bundle of mental states, then the

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<sup>35</sup>Cf. Benovsky (2014).

person may continue to survive through a change in mental states. In this case, one bundle will be replaced by another, but the person persists through a change in which bundle constitutes it. (This would be analogous to the materialist constitutionalist case if persons can survive despite coming to be constituted by a different organism.) In this case, and if the third condition is met and both persons and bundles share mental states as parts, then the grounding problem will arise for this version of immaterialism.

Just as constitutionalists about statues and pieces of alloy face the challenge of grounding the difference in modal profiles, immaterial constitutionalists face an analogous challenge. In virtue of what does the person persist through change in mental states (parts) but the bundle does not? The immaterial constitutionalist may be even worse off than the material object constitutionalist. At least the material object constitutionalist can try to appeal to something like creative intentions (in cases of artifacts) or forms (like the hylomorphist) to try to solve the problem. While I've argued that these solutions are ultimately unsuccessful, they aren't even available as a first-pass response to the immaterialist constitutionalist. No one is piling up immaterial simples in certain arrangements with creative intentions, and hylomorphism is a theory about composite *material* objects. We're no better off positing both immaterial constitutionalism *and* a new version of hylomorphism, especially since the strategies were dubious even in the case of material objects.

Fortunately we can do all the work the immaterialist constitutionalist wants to do without the associated grounding problem. An immaterialist can either hold that the person just *is* the bundle, as mentioned above, or the immaterialist can hold that persons are simple immaterial entities and share parts with no other immaterial object. This simple view leaves open whether there are such things as immaterial composite bundles, and if there are such things, they won't be *persons* or *person-like*. If the grounding problem is to threaten immaterialism, then, it will threaten only a version of immaterialism on which a person is composite and is not identical to an immaterial bundle but nonetheless shares parts with the bundle. This is not the immaterialism we should prefer. Nor should we prefer a bundle theory, as

we saw in §4.3. Instead, in order to solve both the problem of the many and the grounding problem, we should hold that persons are simple immaterial entities.

#### 4.4.2 Why Immaterialism?

My critiques of animalism and constitutionalism by appeal to the puzzles of the problem of the many and the grounding problem lend support for immaterialism. In addition, I have argued for the simplicity of the person in defense of the claim that persons are simple immaterial entities. One might note that a lot of work is being done by the simplicity. It allows us to avoid the bundle-theory version of the problem of the many and the grounding problem. It might be suggested that it's the simplicity doing the theoretical work rather than the immateriality. Perhaps we should endorse a simple ontology but not a simple immaterialist ontology. Indeed, simplicity is doing a lot of work, but the simplicity of the person is plausible only once we've endorsed immaterialism.

Suppose instead that persons are simple *material* entities. That is a strange kind of thing for a person to be. The nature of the non-personal material simples that we're familiar with is unlike the nature of persons. We don't examine material simples and find things that think or exhibit consciousness. In order for simplicity to be viable, we need simplicity of something that can think or exhibit consciousness. Unlike material simples, immaterial simples are good candidates. Immaterialism may be motivated by the difficulties of understanding consciousness or mentality in terms of material things, so if there is any good candidate for being the kind of simple entity that can think, it will be the immaterial simple rather than the material simple. This is, admittedly, a bit speculative, and one may prefer holding a simple material personal ontology over a simple immaterial personal ontology. Chisholm discusses the simple material view and challenges, "if this philosophic hypothesis seems implausible to you, you try to formulate one that is less implausible."<sup>36</sup> Since neither option strikes me as particularly plausible on its face, I propose that immaterialism is the preferable choice

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<sup>36</sup>See Chisholm (1978, 32).

because of our knowledge of material simples and their lack of consciousness.<sup>37</sup> We know that material simples have things like mass and charge. We don't study material simples and learn that they have conscious experiences or that they are thinking. Nothing about the study of material simples prompts us to attribute consciousness to a single material simple.

Now, of course, one might object that we *also* know some things about some *immaterial* simples, which are not conscious. Take, for instance, numbers or forms, if such things exist. Those immaterial simples do not think or exhibit consciousness, so the immaterialist might face the same challenge of explaining why *persons* are a different kind of immaterial simple. In response, the immaterialist should point out that persons, unlike numbers or forms, are concrete entities. They are not abstract. And we reasonably resist the idea that *abstract* entities can think. But surely concrete entities can think, and so we can accept that simple, immaterial, concrete entities can think even if abstract immaterial entities cannot.

And anyone who holds the view that persons are material simples must either explain how material simples in fact think and exhibit consciousness despite our failing to find any additional evidence of this beyond philosophical hypothesizing or explain how persons are a fundamentally different kind of material simple. If they are a fundamentally different kind of material simple, we should expect to have found evidence of this as well. What other kinds of material simples might there be that have escaped our careful attention? We should expect that material simples will be like the material simples we do find, which have properties like mass and charge, but arguably not *consciousness*. An option is to hold that consciousness runs deep and that all material simples are conscious.<sup>38</sup> If we take this option, we run into a problem of far, far too many thinkers. If we're concerned with retaining an ordinary count of thinkers, letting everything all the way down to material simples qualify as a thinker surely

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<sup>37</sup>Lowe endorses a view according to which we are simples, but he describes them as "psychological" as opposed to "material" or "immaterial" (1991) and (1996, §§1-2). He admits to being a substance dualist, although of a "non-Cartesian" variety (1996, §2.3). So, while he holds that persons are simples, he does not commit himself to the claim that persons are *material* simples. If so, then perhaps this is another personal ontological option – deny that persons are material simples and hold that they are "psychological" simples. Insofar as I've taken 'immaterial' to contrast with 'material', I see Lowe's view as compatible with my own.

<sup>38</sup>We find discussions of this in Nagel (1979) and Chalmers (1996, Ch. 8).

isn't the answer.

#### 4.5 Some Costs of Immaterialism

I have argued that endorsing immaterialism puts us in the best position to respond successfully to puzzles in personal ontology. Since we aren't beholden to a materialist personal ontology, we are likewise not devastated by the same challenges in the problem of the many and the grounding problem. I have also shown that the puzzles cannot be successfully wielded in new forms against immaterialism. If we look to immaterialism as a solution to these puzzles, there are some other theoretical commitments we must take on as well. We should endorse a version of immaterialism according to which persons are *simple*; a composite immaterialist view would be subject to the problem of the many and perhaps also the grounding problem. We should also maintain that the immaterial person comes into existence at some precise moment of the proper functioning of the brain. The person, then, has not always existed.

I have argued that we should prefer an immaterialist ontology for its problem-solving power. Some may consider the cost too high; we save persons at the expense of materialism, and we might still end up with revisionary ontologies of ordinary objects. Perhaps that seems expensive, but in order to provide a personal ontology that retains our judgments about what we are, we need to make some sacrifices. Sacrificing materialism may be necessary. Here I will address some other potential costs of endorsing immaterialism. In particular, I will sketch some possible answers to the following questions: If immaterialism is true, then is the person located? If so, then where? If immaterialism is true, does that mean that persons don't have arms or legs? If immaterialism is true, what happens at the death of the body? Does the person go out of existence? Does immaterialism fare well with respect to religious conceptions of the afterlife? My project here is to weigh in on some options for responding to these questions and indicate my preferred strategies. I don't take my preferences to be required commitments for immaterialists; in most cases, the other options are available to immaterialists of different varieties. The aim is rather to demonstrate that

endorsing immaterialism does not require unacceptable responses to such questions.

#### 4.5.1 Where are you? What parts do you have?

I suggested throughout that the personal ontology we endorse should accord with many judgments we ordinarily make about ourselves. Most importantly, I've focused my attention on defending the claim that there really is exactly one person in situations where we judge there to be just one: there is one person writing this dissertation, Kelly is the only person in her kitchen, and you are the only person sitting in your chair. Specifically, I've defended a *uniqueness* claim – there is just *one* person in each of these situations. We might also wonder whether the immaterialist can defend a *location* claim – there is one person *where* we take there to be one. Ordinarily we take things to be located because they occupy space. The immaterialist has a harder time explaining how it can be the case that Kelly is sitting in her chair, for simple immaterial entities are not composed of anything material that occupies a region of space. In response, the immaterialist might hold that persons are located in virtue of having parts that are located or deny that the person truly is located at all. But, as we saw, the immaterialist who holds that persons have material parts cannot solve the problem of the many.

If being located requires having material parts, then the immaterialist should deny that persons are located at all.<sup>39</sup> By taking this option, the immaterialist can uphold the uniqueness claim but seemingly must reject the location claim. Now surely this is letting some of common sense go by the wayside. We ordinarily take ourselves to be located, to weigh a certain amount, to be a certain height, and exhibit other physical characteristics. Perhaps persons are fundamentally and wholly immaterial entities with no material parts whatsoever. If so, immaterialist might hold that the person is “located” because the person has a particular location of action. If this is the case, then the person, strictly speaking, is not located anywhere, but it is meaningful to speak as if the person is located because the person

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<sup>39</sup>Smythies (1989, 92-102), in contrast, argues that persons are located in “non-physical” space. I won't take up that discussion here.

acts through some material stuff, which is located. When the immaterialist wants to hold that Kelly is sitting in her chair, it must really be that the body that Kelly acts through is sitting in her chair. When Kelly is on the Metro, it must really be that the body that Kelly acts through is on the Metro. While *literally* Kelly is not either sitting in her chair or on the Metro, appealing to Kelly's location is a useful way to identify which part of the world Kelly is interacting with.

The immaterialist might also try to make sense of a person's location in terms of having material things non-mereologically. An immaterialist should be able to say that persons have brains and arms and legs.<sup>40</sup> I'll quote Lowe here to illustrate what this is supposed to mean, although Lowe is speaking about the self. We might adopt the same strategy and apply it to persons:

But what, now, is it for the self to 'have' a certain body as 'its' body? Partly, it is just a matter of that self having certain physical characteristics which supervene upon those of that body rather than any other - though it is clear that this fact must be derivative from some more fundamental relationship. More than that, then, it must clearly also be a matter of the self's perceiving and acting 'through' that body, and this indeed must be the crucial factor which determines which body's physical characteristics belong also to a given self. But what is it to perceive and act 'through' a certain body rather than any other? As far as agency is concerned, this is a matter of certain parts of that body being directly subject to the agent's (that is, the self's) will: I can, of necessity, move certain parts of my body 'at will', and cannot move 'at will' any part of any body that is not part of mine. (Here it may be conceded that someone completely paralysed may still possess a certain body, though only because he could once move parts of it 'at will', and still perceives through it; but someone completely paralysed from birth - if such a condition is possible - could only be said to 'have' a body in a more attenuated sense.)<sup>41</sup>

What it means for a person to have a body might be for a person to have as a medium for their actions some material stuff. She won't have someone else's body or other inanimate objects as the same kind of medium for her actions.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup>Of course, this may really mean saying that persons have some simples arranged brain-wise and arm-wise and leg-wise. But they still have some material things.

<sup>41</sup>See Lowe (1996, 37).

<sup>42</sup>Of course persons might use their bodies to then in turn use someone else's body or inanimate objects to mediate their actions, but this is not the same kind of medium for their actions.

Now, of course, is a natural place to bring up issues of personal agency and mental causation as they arise for the immaterialist. I do not pretend that I've shed any light on these complicated issues whatsoever, nor will I take them up here. What should be noted, however, is that in response to the problem of the many and the grounding problem, the immaterialist should arrive at this place: persons are simple immaterial entities. If this entails some complicated story about the relationship between persons and their bodies and between persons and the material world in general, then this is a cost that the immaterialist of this variety must take on. Others have defended their preferred personal ontologies and accounts of mental causation against challenges.<sup>43</sup> In the grand scheme of things, we would need to weigh all considerations – those from philosophy of mind as well as the metaphysics of material objects – in order to determine which personal ontology does the best job of according with our theoretical commitments, our intuitions, and empirical data. My project here is to sketch the options as they arise in response to metaphysical puzzles like the problem of the many and the grounding problem. A final verdict in the grand scheme of things has yet to be rendered.

#### 4.5.2 How do you persist through time?

You, according to the variety of immaterialism I prefer, are an immaterial person brought into existence by the brain at a precise point in time. One might reasonably inquire about the necessary and sufficient conditions for your persistence, once you come into existence. The immaterialist has the same options available to other ontologies: (i) you have biological persistence conditions, (ii) you have psychological persistence conditions, or (iii) it is brute how you persist.<sup>44</sup>

The immaterialist should reject the claim that you have biological persistence conditions.

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<sup>43</sup>See Foster (1991, Ch. 7-8), Yandell (1995), Hasker (1999, Ch. 7), Lowe (2003, 1996), Swinburne (2013), *Contemporary Dualism: A Defense* (2013), and Part Three of *The Waning of Materialism* (2010).

<sup>44</sup>Another option in logical space is to hold that persons have the same persistence conditions of ordinary material objects that are not biological entities, but this will fare poorly for everyone and is not especially relevant for the persistence of simple, immaterial entities.

First, biological persistence conditions are most appropriately had by material objects; if anything has biological persistence conditions, it will be a thing like an organism. Second, it is an advantage of immaterialism that it permits your having *non*-biological persistence conditions. When we revisit Kelly's transplant case, we want to say that Kelly goes with her cerebrum and her body is left behind without her. The immaterialist can hold that the immaterial entity goes with the cerebrum. It would be strange to argue that the immaterial entity stays with the biological body. Denying that your persistence conditions are biological accords well with the idea that you usually go with your consciousness, which in turn, accords well with immaterialism.

So, instead, perhaps the immaterialist should hold that your persistence conditions are psychological. This would accord well with the case of Kelly's transplant. But holding that immaterial entities have psychological persistence conditions will be challenged by cases like the homebody/adventurer example in §4.3.3. If, in fission cases, some new immaterial entity comes into existence, then both the homebody and the adventurer will be psychologically continuous with the original immaterial entity. If so, then the homebody is numerically identical to the original immaterial entity, and the adventurer is numerically identical to the original immaterial entity. But, if fission resulted in there being two immaterial entities, the homebody and the adventurer, then the homebody is not the very same immaterial entity as the adventurer. Therefore, giving psychological conditions of the persistence of the immaterial entity yields a contradiction in this case. Even if the immaterialist denies that a new immaterial entity comes into existence in cases of fission, defending psychological persistence conditions of immaterial entities might be problematic in another way. It seems possible that some immaterial entity could cease to have psychological features of any kind without going out of existence. But if some immaterial entity with psychological features at an earlier time is the very same immaterial entity without psychological features at a later time, then persistence conditions of immaterial entities are not psychological.

The final option, then, is to hold that the persistence of immaterial entities is a matter

of bruteness. There will be some fact of the matter as to whether some immaterial entity at an earlier time is the very same immaterial entity at a later time even if there is nothing further that grounds this fact.<sup>45</sup> This option, which does not require psychological continuity, allows for the possibility that the very same immaterial entity could exhibit vastly different personalities, like an immaterial-entity-swap case. Our intuitions in that case might push us *away* from such an immaterialist view, then, for it fails to preserve the the attractive judgment that we go with our psychologies. This, however, is a problem for everyone, including materialists who endorse a bruteness option.

The very same options, biological conditions, psychological conditions, or bruteness, are available to the materialist who tries to account for our persistence. Materialists who endorse biological persistence conditions will face the same problem in Kelly’s transplant case – if our persistence conditions are biological, not psychological, Kelly does not go with her cerebrum, regardless of what ontology we endorse. Endorsing psychological persistence conditions leads to the problem of branching continuity and a failure to secure the one-to-one relation of identity. And if it’s a brute fact whether some entity at  $t_2$  is numerically identical to some entity at  $t_1$ , then it doesn’t matter whether this entity is material or immaterial, it’s still a matter of bruteness. As a result, immaterialism at least fares no *worse* than competing views given their options for accounting for your persistence.

Immaterialism, then, doesn’t come for free, but I argue that it isn’t too expensive. Endorsing immaterialism allows us to uphold the judgment that there really is just one person in ordinary situations where we take there to be just one. We don’t need to commit ourselves to there being either far more persons than we take there to be or there being *no* persons. These options are unacceptable, and we can avoid them if we endorse immaterialism. While some might object that the immaterialist is being revisionary about our physical characteristics, including our location and our parts, this shouldn’t entail that endorsing immaterialism

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<sup>45</sup>Lowe holds that it might be the case that the persistence of simple entities (he says ‘simple substances’) across time is “primitive” or “ungrounded” (1989), (1991, 90), (1996, 41), and (2001). Lund also argues in favor of the primitive nature of diachronic identity (2014, §3). Madell argues that personal identity is “unanalyzable” (1989, §1) and (2014).

requires rejecting the ordinary judgments about ourselves that are most important. We can still make sense of “having” arms and legs – we have them not as parts but as items within our direct control. The revision might be revisionary about how we understand the exact relationship between ourselves and our bodies, but it is not revisionary about what we are essentially.

Consider the alternative: we could endorse a materialist ontology. The materialist, too, must offer some kind of revision about ordinary claims we make, like ‘Kelly is the only thinker sitting in her chair’. Given the puzzles we’ve examined, we know that we need to be skeptical of the materialist who tries to maintain that Kelly is the only thinker. The materialist is unable to maintain this claim. Implicit further is the idea that there is just one chair that Kelly is sitting in, but we also know that the materialist cannot defend *this* idea – either there are millions of chairs or none. Now the materialist has this advantage over the immaterialist: the materialist can defend the claim that Kelly is literally sitting in a chair. The immaterialist cannot do this. The materialist can also say that Kelly has arms and legs, literally, as parts.<sup>46</sup> But the materialist would then be committed to Kelly’s having millions of arms and legs, and this is no more ordinary than holding that Kelly has no arms or legs.

If you’re keeping score, the immaterialist and the materialist each have one commonsense judgment retained in the case of Kelly. The immaterialist gets the right count of persons, and the materialist gets the ordinary judgment about where Kelly is literally located. Neither gets the claim that Kelly has *exactly* two arms and two legs *as parts*, but both can maintain that Kelly has arms and legs. And if given the choice between the uniqueness claim – Kelly is the only thinker – and the literal location claim – Kelly is in her chair – we should take the option that secures the uniqueness claim. Certainly immaterialism comes with its own, independent baggage. But with respect to the topic of this project, this is some additional support for immaterialism: puzzles in personal ontology can be solved by appealing to immaterialism and cannot be solved by appealing to materialism.

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<sup>46</sup>Some materialists will hold this, but others, like Olson (2007, §9.3), deny that there are such things as arms and legs.

With respect to consistency with ordinary judgments about what parts we have and where we are located, literally, the immaterialist does not fare especially well, but this is an appropriate trade-off for getting the right judgment about how many persons there are. And the immaterialist can still maintain that we are located and have arms and legs in some sense. Once we've endorsed immaterialism, there are further decisions to be made for how to account for the identity of persons across time. While the same options available to the materialist are also available to the immaterialist, we should see how these options play out with respect to the possibility of personal survival of bodily death.

#### 4.6 Surviving Death

One issue very entwined with diachronic personal identity is whether we can survive the death of our physical bodies. Hereafter I'll use the phrase 'surviving death' to mean the continued existence of a person after the time that the person's physical body dies. Without settling questions about what exactly death of the physical body is, we know that this death happens, and it is reasonable to wonder whether the death of the body means our own death as well. My purpose in pursuing this issue is to consider whether further evidence for particular personal ontologies is provided by considering their consistency with religious conceptions of surviving death. If immaterialism best accords with religious conceptions of surviving death, then some might see this as further evidence in favor of immaterialism. Or, if immaterialism does not accord as well as other ontologies with religious conceptions of surviving death, then some might see this as further evidence *against* immaterialism.

Now, of course, some will find this to be of no consequence whatsoever, but these considerations are relevant for those who are concerned with particular religious notions of surviving death. But we need not appeal to a religious afterlife to explain our concern with surviving death. We might wonder whether it is possible for our bodies to be reanimated after death or whether it is possible for us to "come back to life" in some new, technologically-constructed bodies. Rather than invoking a deity to do the work of resurrection, perhaps we might find

hope for resurrection in the future of human technological and/or medical advancement.

At any rate, whether we can survive death will depend on what kinds of things we are and how we can persist through time. In everyday circumstances, we seem to persist uninterrupted. I existed yesterday, I exist today, and I expect to exist tomorrow, all without taking a break from existence. Surviving death may be a different matter – depending on what surviving death entails, it may be that our existence is *gappy*. A person's existence is gappy just in case the person exists at two times  $t_n$  and  $t_m$  and there is some time between  $t_n$  and  $t_m$  at which that person does not exist. If person's body dies in 2017 and the person goes out of existence and comes back into existence at a later resurrection in the afterlife, and there is some time in the interim at which this person does not exist, then this person has a gappy existence. If a person's body dies in 2017 and the person goes out of existence and comes back into existence at a later reanimation of their cryogenically-frozen body, and there is some time in the interim at which this person does not exist, then this person has a gappy existence. If a person's body dies in 2017 and the person goes out of existence and comes back into existence at a later re-instantiation of their mental life in some other body, and there is some time in the interim at which this person does not exist, then this person has a gappy existence. So, our investigation need not be religious, though I'll focus on religious conceptions of surviving death.

Here I will highlight a difficulty that arises if surviving death involves gappy existence. As I will argue, this will be a challenge for materialists and immaterialists alike. If we should favor immaterialism because we're committed to the possibility of surviving death, then we have no reason to favor it if surviving death entails having a gappy existence. As I will further argue, we also need not prefer immaterialism if we're committed to the possibility of surviving death even without gappy existence. My intention here is to rather sketch the relative costs and benefits of endorsing different ontologies and how they accord with surviving death. It will, in particular, highlight some unique challenges for the immaterialist as well as familiar challenges for the materialist.

#### 4.6.1 The Challenge of Gappy Existence

Some accounts of personal identity across time provide the resources for explaining how personal existence might be gappy. We might appeal to a Lockean psychological continuity account of identity across time and endorse the following *psychological continuity thesis* for someone like Kelly: Kelly at  $t_1$  is numerically identical with Kelly\* at  $t_n$  if and only if Kelly\* is psychologically continuous with Kelly.<sup>47</sup> Now suppose there is some time between  $t_1$  and  $t_n$  at which Kelly does not exist. Kelly\* will pick up just where Kelly left off, and it may seem to Kelly\* as if no time has passed at all. If this is successful, then Kelly and Kelly\* are one and the same person whose existence is gappy.

The psychological continuity thesis seems to get something right about personal identity. We expect that our persistence has something to do with our psychologies, and it seems like existing in the future will involve the continuation of our psychological lives. But psychological continuity alone cannot suffice for identity across time. We can imagine cases in which psychological continuity can “branch” into more than one continuer.<sup>48</sup> Suppose that Kelly’s brain is transplanted into another body. Call the resulting individual (the individual whose experience is as of having a new body) ‘Kelly Newbody’. Kelly and Kelly Newbody are psychologically continuous, due to a successful brain transplant. The psychological continuity thesis entails that Kelly and Kelly Newbody are numerically identical because Kelly Newbody is psychologically continuous with Kelly.

But then suppose that Kelly’s brain is split into its two hemispheres, and each hemisphere is transplanted into new, respective bodies.<sup>49</sup> Call the resulting individuals ‘Kelly Two’ and ‘Kelly Three’. Let us call Kelly Two and Kelly Three ‘psychological continuants’ of Kelly. Assuming that the transplants were successful, both Kelly Two and Kelly Three will be psychologically continuous with Kelly. Kelly Two would report having memories of being

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<sup>47</sup>For Locke’s discussion of psychological continuity, see Locke (1979, esp. 2.xxvii).

<sup>48</sup>See (Parfit 1984, Part Three).

<sup>49</sup>This thought experiment is prominent in Parfit’s work – see esp. (1971) – and was discussed earlier by Wiggins (1967) and Shoemaker (1963).

Kelly, and it will seem to Kelly Two that Kelly Two *is* Kelly. Likewise, Kelly Three would report having memories of being Kelly, and it will seem to Kelly Three that Kelly Three *is* Kelly.

According to the psychological continuity thesis, Kelly and Kelly Two are numerically identical, and Kelly and Kelly Three are also numerically identical. However, Kelly Two and Kelly Three are not numerically identical, according to both the psychological continuity thesis as well as the fact that Kelly Two and Kelly Three have different properties; at the very least, their perceptual experiences will differ. Identity, however, is a transitive relation, so if Kelly and Kelly Two are numerically identical and Kelly and Kelly Three are numerically identical, then Kelly Two and Kelly Three must be numerically identical. The psychological continuity thesis entails both that Kelly Two and Kelly Three are numerically identical and that Kelly Two and Kelly Three are not numerically identical, which results from the duplicate psychological continuants. This is a problem: two distinct persons both are and are not numerically identical.<sup>50</sup> Call this the ‘duplication problem’. As I will argue in the following sections, the duplication problem will arise again when we try to reconcile different accounts of personal identity with the possibility of gappy existence.

Before I do that, a few words on how the problem *won't* be solved: One apparent solution is to stipulate that the psychological continuity thesis holds only in cases where there is no competition among psychological continuants. This would amount to adding an ‘only A and B’ clause to the psychological continuity thesis; Person A at  $t_1$  is numerically identical with Person B at  $t_2$  if and only if B is psychologically continuous with A and B is the sole psychological continuant of A. This is a case where *only A and B* stand in this psychological continuity relationship.

When B is the only psychological continuant of A, then the psychological continuity thesis together with an ‘only A and B’ clause entails that B is A. But if B and C are both psychological continuants of A, then, according to the modified account, neither B

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<sup>50</sup>We can avoid this conclusion if we hold that one person has a disunified psychology as discussed in §4.3.3.

nor C satisfies the conditions for numerical identity with A. This is because B and C are competitors; each is a candidate for numerical identity with A. Since B and C are not numerically identical, it cannot be the case that each is numerically identical with A. So adding the ‘only A and B’ clause to the psychological account is consistent with the fact that identity is a transitive relation and we do not arrive at the contradiction that B and C are numerically distinct according to the unmodified psychological continuity account but are numerically identical in virtue of the transitivity of identity.

However, we should not endorse the option of adding an ‘only A and B’ clause to fortify the psychological continuity thesis.<sup>51</sup> The addition of the clause, though a remedy against the problem of branching, is an implausible modification. In the absence of a competitor, we would judge that a psychological continuant is numerically identical with the psychological predecessor. If B is a continuant of A, we would judge that B is A. And if C is a continuant of A, we would judge that C is A. The mere existence of another continuant should not threaten the identity relationship between continuant and predecessor. The ‘only A and B’ clause entails that factors extrinsic to B can affect B’s identity conditions.

But extrinsic features should be irrelevant in considerations of numerical identity. If A and B are one and the same individual, facts about extrinsic relationships are irrelevant to the fact of identity. The question of whether some continuant B is numerically identical with a predecessor A is a question that should be answered without reference to any other individual. So, adding an ‘only A and B’ clause fixes the problem of branching but does so at the expense of also modifying our understanding of what factors are relevant to the identity relation.<sup>52</sup> Any plausible principle that protects against branching will reflect an intrinsic feature of the persons in question, but this is impossible given a mere psychological continuity account, for the continuants will be intrinsic duplicates in all relevant respects.

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<sup>51</sup>For more discussion of the non-branching criterion of personal identity, see Shoemaker (1980).

<sup>52</sup>Another possible remedy for the branching problem is adding a ‘closest continuant’ clause to the psychological continuity account, see Nozick (1981). With this modification, the account would be that Person A at  $t_1$  is numerically identical with Person B at  $t_2$  if and only if B is psychologically continuous with A and B is more closely related to A than any other continuant of A. This clause likewise requires that matters extrinsic to an individual determine that individual’s identity conditions.

#### 4.6.1.1 Other Accounts of Persistence

Other criteria of personal identity have been proposed, such as having the same first-person perspective as some earlier individual or being causally related to an earlier individual.<sup>53</sup> Suppose that personal identity depends on sameness of first-person perspective; person  $P_1$  at  $t_1$  is the same person as person  $P_2$  at  $t_2$  if and only if  $P_1$  and  $P_2$  have the same first-person perspective.<sup>54</sup>  $P_1$  and  $P_2$  may be constituted by different bodies, but the persons are ultimately identical in virtue of having the very same first-person perspective.

This account is supposed to avoid the duplication problem. Lynne Rudder Baker notes, “It is logically possible that a body just like mine constitutes someone else who has a first-person perspective that is qualitatively indistinguishable from mine, but that first-person perspective would not be mine. Nor would that person be me.”<sup>55</sup> Baker is right to point out that qualitatively identical bodies can have qualitatively identical first-person perspectives. Those individuals would have qualitatively identical experiences, but they are not one and the same person. Suppose someone, Jones, dies at  $t_1$ , and at a later time,  $t_n$  a body qualitatively identical to Jones’ body is brought into existence, and this body constitutes a person with a first-person perspective qualitatively identical to Jones’. Now either this person is or is not Jones. If he is numerically identical with Jones, then having a first-person perspective constituted by a body qualitatively identical to one’s body at an earlier time suffices for personal identity. But then nothing prevents this re-constitution from happening twice, resulting in the duplication problem.

Since having a qualitatively-identical first-person perspective and begin constituted by a qualitatively-identical body is not sufficient for personal identity, we have no other criteria to look to in this case. If identity is defined in terms of having the very same first-personal perspective, and since qualitatively identical first-person perspectives are not necessarily *the same* first-person perspective, we will be unable to determine whether a person has come

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<sup>53</sup>For these accounts see, respectively, Baker (2000) and Corcoran (1999).

<sup>54</sup>See Baker (2000, 132).

<sup>55</sup>See Baker (2000, 133).

back into existence once he has gone out of existence if we endorse Baker's view. All that is entailed by this account is that someone comes into existence, but we don't know whether it is Jones himself.

Perhaps appealing to some kind of causal relationship can account for personal gappiness. Kevin Corcoran argues for a view on which "a person persists [...] just in case her physical organism persists and preserves a capacity to subserve a range of intentional states, at least some of which must be irreducibly first-person."<sup>56</sup> Corcoran also argues that we can determine what counts as persistence of a physical organism in terms of that organism's causal relationships.<sup>57</sup> He suggests that what matters for the persistence of an organism is that the constituting body at  $t_1$  stands in a life-preserving causal relation to a constituting body made of different material at  $t_2$ , and he proposes that his account of persistence allows for an afterlife.

Once we have granted that a constituting body can stand in the right sort of causal relationship with a body composed of different material and thereby constitute the same person through time, we should again worry about the lurking duplication problem. What is supposed to prevent a body at  $t_1$  from standing in a life-preserving causal relation to two different bodies at  $t_2$ ? It is possible that there be two individuals who are constituted by two bodies that each stands in the right sort of causal relationship to some earlier individual. And each resulting body would have the capacity to subserve the relevant range of intentional states, including first-personal intentional states. Even if we grant that the right causal relationship can hold between the constituting bodies across a temporal gap, we still have not managed to avoid the problem that two continuants can stand in the right relation to a single, earlier predecessor.

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<sup>56</sup>See Corcoran (1999, 335).

<sup>57</sup>See Corcoran (1999, 335).

#### 4.6.1.2 Agnosticism about Gappy Existence

The duplication problem illuminates the challenge that arises if persons can have gappy existence. If a person dies at some time and at some later time, two candidates for being that person come into existence, we would need criteria to appeal to in order to settle which candidate is the surviving person and which is an impostor. Absent criteria to appeal to, we cannot settle the matter and must remain agnostic as to whether the person survived or whether two different persons came into existence. The psychological features we discussed above are *qualitative* criteria: psychological features, first-person perspectives, or continuation of a life. These features can be re-instantiated by more than one continuant. But coming back into existence after going out of existence must involve re-instantiation of these features if these qualitative features are the criteria of identity across time. If we can't determine which of two person-candidates is the surviving person, then we likewise would fail to determine whether just a *single* person-candidate is the surviving person, absent a competing candidate.

We won't be able to determine whether some person has gappy existence, then, if personal identity depends on qualitative features. For such accounts of personal identity will give rise to the duplication problem. In order to determine whether some person has gappy existence, we would need to appeal to some non-qualitative features that cannot be duplicated. One criterion of personal identity that could be considered nonqualitative is the criterion that some individual A is identical to some other individual B if and only if A and B have the same haecceity.<sup>58</sup> A haecceity is a metaphysical component of an individual and only that individual. If A and B are identical, then, they share this metaphysical component of *being* A. If there is a question about whether B is numerically identical to A, the matter is settled if we know that B also has the metaphysical component of being A. If we can determine whether some individual satisfies these criteria with respect to some other individual, then we would know whether or not the individuals are identical.

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<sup>58</sup>For discussion of haecceities in general see Adams (1979) and Carmichael (2016). For application to the case of distinguishing persons, see Taliaferro (1996, 207-209).

This is unhelpful, however, since these nonqualitative criteria are *uninformative*. We would only know whether the individual satisfies the criteria if we already knew that the individuals in question were identical. Our only hope for avoiding agnosticism about personal gappiness therefore lies in informative nonqualitative criteria of personal identity. These would be criteria that can be applied and checked without having already settled the matter of identity and that are not features or aspects of individuals. It is unclear what these criteria would be. They cannot be haecceities, which are uninformative, and they are not criteria that invoke psychological continuity or the like. Since we have no proposals for what these criteria would be, we are not in a position to determine whether some person has survived across temporal gaps. So, even if there are nonqualitative criteria of identity, we would not know whether this person has survived.

Likewise if there are *no* criteria of identity over time, there may be some fact of the matter as to whether some person in the afterlife has survived death or merely just come into existence, but we will not be able to settle the matter. Being able to settle the matter would depend on our ability to appeal to criteria of identity and determine whether persons in the afterlife meet these criteria, and this would apply to the bruteness view of immaterial persistence through time as well. This is impossible without criteria of any kind. In this case, too, we cannot know whether some person has a gappy existence.

The immaterialist will face similar worries about gappy existence in cases like the following: Suppose Richard is an immaterial person who goes out of existence at the death of his body, say, at time  $t_0$ . Richard does not exist at  $t_1$ . Then, later, at  $t_2$  suppose Richard's body (or a qualitatively-identical body, or a body that has most of the same parts as Richard's body had at death, or some atoms-arranged-Richard's-body-wise) comes back into existence. Now there will be a functioning brain that provides experience to a person who is qualitatively identical to Richard at  $t_0$ , call him 'Richard\*'. Is Richard the very same person as Richard\*? Has Richard come back into existence? Well, we don't know, do we? For there at  $t_2$  there could come into existence two bodies qualitatively identical to Richard's body at

$t_0$ , and two persons generated by the respective brains. We have no recourse in explaining which of these two persons is really Richard, who survived bodily death and temporal gaps because each seems to have an equal claim on being Richard, especially if we suppose that each resurrected body has an equal share of the parts that Richard's body had at time of death. Each may think that he alone is Richard, and we cannot explain in virtue of what just one is truly Richard and the other is not.

Regardless of our preferred ontology, we will not know whether persons are coming *back into existence* after some temporal gap or whether they are entirely new entities that are coming into existence for the first time.<sup>59</sup> The materialist and the immaterialist alike face the same options for the criteria of diachronic personal identity: psychological criteria, which can be duplicated, non-qualitative criteria, which are uninformative, or no criteria, which will not help us settle the matter.

While we cannot settle the matter, there may still be a fact of the matter. If personal identity across time, and even across temporal gaps, is a matter of bruteness, then there will be a fact of the matter as to whether Richard\* is numerically identical to Richard. And an appeal to bruteness is available to any of the ontologies we've examined so far. The animalist may argue that it is brute whether some organism in the afterlife is numerically identical to some organism prior to death. A constitutionalist may argue that it is brute whether some organism in the afterlife constitutes a first-person perspective that is numerically-identical to first-person perspective prior to death. And the immaterialist may argue that it is brute whether some immaterial entity in the afterlife is numerically-identical to some immaterial entity prior to death. Even someone who prefers a psychological continuity view may appeal to bruteness and argue that at most one psychological continuant is a *genuine* continuant.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup>Penelhum notes that our temptation in this kind of case is to say that these persons are coming back into existence but argues that it is impossible for anything to go out of existence and then come back into existence. In this case, then, we would need to either deny that any of these persons are identical with persons who existed prior to death or think of persons as the kinds of things that can have gaps, analogous to how a melody can have gaps between the notes (1957).

<sup>60</sup>We might find such an account on a Lockean memory-criterion view according to which numerical identity depends on *genuine* memory. While such accounts are accused of circularity, they are no worse off than analogous appeals to bruteness. Penelhum argues that a robust memory-criterion view precludes the

None of the available criteria give us reason to prefer one ontology over the others, for none settle the matter for us. And all can maintain that personal identity, even across temporal gaps, is a matter of bruteness. If surviving death involves gappy existence, then endorsing the claim that we can survive death would give us no reason to prefer any particular ontology over another.

#### 4.6.2 Surviving Death with No Temporal Gaps

We should also investigate the topic of surviving death if it does not involve gappy existence. If surviving death does not involve gappy existence of the person, then there is no time between time  $t_i$  at which the person initially comes into existence and time  $t_f$  at which the person finally goes out of existence (if at all) at which the person does not exist. At some point between  $t_i$  and  $t_f$ , the person's body dies. In order for the person to continue to exist, then persistence conditions of a person must be consistent with the possibility of outlasting the death of the body.

The constitutionalist may appeal to persistence conditions in terms of the continuation of the same first-person perspective, or they may appeal to persistence conditions in terms of relevant causal relations. Animalists will appeal to persistence conditions of the human organism. The immaterialist, depending on the variety, may appeal to psychological persistence conditions or persistence conditions of the immaterial entity. For the constitutionalist and the animalist, the person must continue to exist with (or *as*) some kind of material object, for the persistence in each case depends on some kind of material existence. So, either the person instantaneous gets a new body, or the person's body is whisked away and replaced by a lookalike on earth.<sup>61</sup> The immaterialist can hold that the person continues to exist even without a body.

Assuming the constitutionalist, the animalist, and the immaterialist can each hold that persons can survive death without a commitment to gappy existence, then we can consider

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possibility of disembodied existence (1970).

<sup>61</sup>Van Inwagen holds that in this case the person would continue to exist *as a corpse* (1978, 121).

particular Christian conceptions of what the afterlife is like and measure them against each view. John Cooper provides a sustained discussion of traditional Christian conceptions of biblical anthropology and the nature of the afterlife and notes some common themes and points of divergence within Christianity.<sup>62</sup> Christians of most denominations affirm that there will be a resurrection of the body, but what happens between death of the body on earth and later resurrection of the body is disputed. Some affirm an “intermediate state” during which persons continue to exist between the time of death on earth and later resurrection. Others hold that persons do not exist during the time between death and resurrection. Still others hold that bodily resurrection is immediate, and there is no time at which persons exist unembodied, nor do persons have gappy existence.

There has been much discussion as to how views of the afterlife accord with different conceptions of the nature of human persons.<sup>63</sup> We’ve already seen the challenge that arises if persons can have gappy existence. Even though there is a fact of the matter, we would need to remain agnostic about whether some person has survived death in cases where it *appears* that someone has survived. So, the remaining questions are whether affirming an intermediate state should prompt us to endorse immaterialism and what other challenges might arise for the immaterialist if surviving death is possible. If there is an intermediate state, it is often understood to be a state in which persons exist “present with the Lord” somehow.

Cooper argues that the intermediate state requires a commitment to a person continuing to exist beyond death, capable of having experiences, and that this must be possible without a bodily organism.<sup>64</sup> Baker, in defense of a constitutionalist conception of personal survival of death, notes that persons can exist in an intermediate state by having an *intermediate body*, which is a material body that constitutes a person in between the time of death

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<sup>62</sup>See Cooper (2000).

<sup>63</sup>See, for instance, Cooper (2000, Ch. 5-9), Merricks (2001a), Corcoran (2001), Davis (2001), Hasker (2001), Baker (1995), Zimmerman (2004), and van Inwagen (1978).

<sup>64</sup>See Cooper (2000, 162).

of the physical body on earth and later resurrection.<sup>65</sup> An animalist might also suggest that an intermediate state is possible by bringing the human organism back to life.<sup>66</sup> The immaterialist can hold that the person exists in the intermediate state without a body – the person exists unchanged, as a simple immaterial entity. The constitutionalist and the animalist, here, have an additional burden – they must postulate an intermediate body or an early partial resurrection. The immaterialist will face a different burden – explaining how the person can have experiences in the intermediate state if the person has no associated brain function. The immaterialist might make a move similar to the constitutionalist and claim that there is an intermediate brain generating experiences. Or the immaterialist might hold that it is possible to have experiences even without a brain.<sup>67</sup>

At later resurrection, then, the animalist can hold that resurrection of the body amounts to full resurrection of the organism. If the intermediate state is a state during which the organism is only partially conscious, then the resurrection could be the time at which the organism is *fully* conscious once more. The constitutionalist has a slightly more complicated story – the intermediate body must be replaced with a new, resurrection body. Assuming that the person survived by coming to have a new, intermediate, body, then there is no reason to think the person wouldn't surviving coming to have a new, resurrection body. The immaterialist can hold that the person comes to have a resurrection body, either supplementing the intermediate brain or wholly a new body that is joined to the immaterial simple. Given the immaterialist line I prefer, that persons come into existence at the proper functioning of the brain, this must be protected against in the case of the resurrection.<sup>68</sup> It must be the case that the person continues to exist and that the resurrection brain does not generate anyone new.

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<sup>65</sup>See Baker (1995, 498-499).

<sup>66</sup>One might object that this would not longer be an “intermediate” state and that this sounds just like complete resurrection, but the animalist could hold that the organism is brought back to life but is still asleep or only partially conscious.

<sup>67</sup>Hasker argues that God can surely sustain the conscious experiences of an immaterial entity even absent the previously-associated brain (2001).

<sup>68</sup>The immaterialist who holds that persons have always existed and are not generated by brains (as discussed in §4.3.4) will not think that persons are generated by brains in the afterlife.

The constitutionalist, animalist, and immaterialist alike faces challenges in explaining how it is possible for persons to survive death. With respect to offering accounts that are consistent with the intermediate state and later resurrection of the body, each can appeal to divine intervention to do the necessary work, for instance, providing persons with intermediate bodies, partially-resurrecting the human organism, or ensuring that resurrection brains are not the kind of brains that generate new persons. As a result, being committed to this conception of the afterlife does not necessitate endorsing any of these ontologies in particular. If we conceive of an afterlife that includes gappy existence of the person, likewise, the constitutionalist, animalist, and immaterialist are on par. Each is saddled with agnosticism about whether some particular person has survived. Appeal to the divine might solve the problem in this case – perhaps God knows whether the person in the afterlife has survived with gappy existence or is a new person that just came into existence. But this divine appeal is available for everyone in this case, too.

If the immaterialist wants to defend the view that persons can survive bodily death, then they can hold that immaterial simples can continue to exist even after the person's body has died. This is not without its challenges, for the immaterialist must maintain that immaterial entities that were generated by functioning brains can continue to exist even in the absence of that brain. For consistency with Christian conceptions of surviving death, the immaterialist must further hold that persons can be joined up later with resurrection bodies and resurrection brains that do not themselves generate new persons. If there is an intermediate state, the immaterialist must likewise hold that persons can have experiences independently of a functioning brain. If there is not an intermediate state but still time between bodily death and later resurrection, then the immaterialist must rely on divine guarantee that persons come back into existence. None of these challenges is insurmountable, especially if we're already relying on appeals to the divine. But the immaterialist isn't necessarily better off than competitors in explaining how persons can survive death.

## 4.7 Conclusion

So, what are we? Recall that a satisfying answer to this question will be a philosophically-respectable personal ontology that preserves the judgments about ourselves that we take to be most important. In order to find such an answer, I have proposed that we should give immaterialism another look. Independently of issues in philosophy of mind, immaterialism can be strongly motivated by examining issues in material object metaphysics. While these puzzles normally require revisionary concessions about what objects exist and what their natures are, some metaphysicians are willing to make such concessions. We saw the problem of the many: applied to ordinary objects, like tables, we must claim either that there are millions of chairs or that there are no chairs. These aren't great solutions, but they're necessary to take on in order to solve the problem. We also saw the grounding problem: applied to things like statues and pieces of alloy, we must deny that statues exist or explain how material objects can occupy exactly the same space and apparently share all of their parts but still differ in modal profile. Many available "solutions" provide no solution at all, and it's undesirable to deny that statues exist. Some solutions come at the expense of embracing a multitude of objects co-located with the statue. Still, the options should be taken seriously, and some are willing to pay the associated costs in order to preserve their ordinary object ontologies.

The cost of a materialist *personal* ontology, however, is too high. We cannot plausibly make the same concessions about persons that we are tempted to make about material objects. The problem of the many requires holding either that there are far too many persons or no persons. Both of these options are unacceptable. The grounding problem requires explaining how a person and an organism can share all the same material parts and occupy the same space but still have different modal profiles. They certainly *seem* to have different modal profiles, so we're prompted to conclude that they are distinct objects. We cannot deny that persons exist, nor can we provide a satisfactory explanation of what difference between them grounds their difference in modal profiles while protecting against a multitude

of thinkers. I've argued that the only way to solve these puzzles is to endorse immaterialism. Material personal ontologies don't allow access to the acceptable solutions that immaterialism provides. As a result, we should take immaterialism seriously because it gives us an answer to the question 'what are we?' and still yields the right count of persons even in the face of metaphysical challenges. Immaterialism, then, solves puzzles in personal ontology.

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