

Arguing for Non-identity: A Response to King and Frances

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I defend my paper ‘The Non-identity of a Material Thing and Its Matter’ against objections from Bryan Frances and Jeffrey King.

Jeffrey King and Bryan Frances are both critical of my paper, ‘The Non-identity of a Thing and its Matter’ (Fine 2003), though in rather different ways. King engages in carpet bombing; his aim is to destroy every argument in sight, even to the extent of showing that the linguistic data cited by the paper favours the monist rather than the pluralist. Frances, by contrast, engages in strategic warfare; by ‘taking out’ certain key arguments, he attempts to demolish the paper as a whole.

I remain unmoved—and, I hope, unscathed—by their attacks. King’s carpet bombing may cause a great deal of collateral damage but not to its intended target; and Frances’s strategic bombing may hit its target but without inflicting much harm. Still, their papers raise many interesting issues not discussed—or, at least, not properly discussed—in my original paper; and I am grateful to them for providing me with the opportunity to take these issues into account.

My response will be in three main parts: I begin by outlining the central line of argument of my original paper (Sect. 1); I then discuss King’s criticisms of the paper (Sects 2, 3, 4); and finally I turn to Frances’s criticisms (Sect. 5). I have tried to make my response reasonably self-contained and to bring out the independent significance of the issues under discussion but it would be helpful, all the same, if the reader had all three papers at hand.

1. Outline of the argument

Consider a piece of alloy and a statue that always coincide. Are they the same (the monist position) or not the same (the pluralist position)? There is the following argument for the pluralist position—what King calls the ‘master argument’ or ‘MA’ for short:

- (1) The statue is badly made
- (2) The piece of alloy is not badly made
- (3) Therefore, by Leibniz's Law, the statue and the piece of alloy are not the same.

The monist may respond by arguing that MA is not a legitimate instance of Leibniz's Law; and there are two main grounds on which its legitimacy may be questioned. According to the first, the predicate 'badly made' in premisses (1) and (2) induces a shift in the reference of the subject-terms 'the statue' and 'the piece of alloy'. Instead of having their 'standard' reference, as in the conclusion, they have a special 'non-standard' reference. Thus the distinctness of the objects established by (1) and (2) is not that of the objects that are spoken of in the conclusion. According to the second line of response, the use of the subject-terms in the premisses (1) and (2) induces a shift in the meaning of the predicate 'well-made'. Thus even though the reference of the subject-terms is the same, the predicate in (1) means something like *badly made with respect to being a statue* while the predicate in (2) means something like *badly made with respect to being a piece of alloy*. The truth of the premisses does not therefore establish that the referents of the subject-terms are distinct.

These responses of the monist are the starting-point for my own paper. I first argue that the assumption of referential shift is incompatible with the monist position. For given that there is referential shift, the non-standard referents of the subject-terms must be taken to coincide with their standard referents. I then argue that the assumption of predicational shift is anomalous to the point of absurdity. We might understand my argument here in terms of two extreme points of comparison. On the one hand, there are familiar cases of a noun-phrase inducing predicational shift (as when 'the professor is qualified' is taken to mean that he is qualified *for a professor*). On the other hand, there are absurd cases of predicational shift, as when 'Bush won the election' is taken to mean that the Absolute won the election *in Bushy fashion*. What I argue is that the predicational shift posited by the monist is unlike the familiar cases (hence the anomaly) and that it can only be seen to work by making it analogous to the absurd cases (hence the absurdity).

2. King on referential shift

In my original paper, I argued that the proponent of referential shift should take the nonstandard referent of 'the statue' to be a material thing distinct from but coincident with its standard referent—in violation of the monist position which I took him to be defending. It is clear that he should take the two to be distinct if he is to have a response to the master argument. And my reason for thinking that he should take the nonstandard referent to be a material coincident was that we may correctly say such things as 'the badly made statue is composed of bronze' or 'is lying on the floor', thereby indicating that the nonstandard referent has the same underlying spatial and physical attributes as the standard referent.

This argument clearly presupposes that the nonstandard referent of 'the badly made statue' (as in 'the badly made statue is lying on the floor') is the same as the nonstandard referent of 'the statue' (as in 'the statue is badly made') and King questions whether this is a presupposition that the reference-shifter should make. He claims:

But there is simply no reason to think this. Indeed, the neo-Fregean [i.e. the reference shifter] is compelled to deny it given what he must say about the paradigmatic cases of reference shifting. (King 2006, pp. ??)

For, King goes on to argue, the Fregean will not take the standard referent of 'the feared author' to be 'the nonstandard referent of 'the author' in 'the author is feared'; and so, by the same token, the neo-Fregean should not take the standard referent of 'the badly made statue' to be the nonstandard referent of 'the statue' (King 2006, fn. 5).¹

The reader will have noticed that King's argument is curiously indirect at this point. He argues that *this* is what the Fregean should say in a case involving an intensional verb and, given the analogy between this case and the statue case, that *this* is what the neo-Fregean should say in the statue case. But this leaves his argument open to the charge that this is not what the Fregean should say in the intensional case or that the two cases are not appropriately analogous. One would have thought it much more straightforward to show that it follows directly from a general Fregean position that the standard referents of 'the badly made statue' and the 'the statue' should be the same.

So let us consider the matter in this light. According to the Fregean view, there will be certain expressions that induce a shift in reference of certain terms that occur within their scope. Which terms shift their ref-

¹I have chosen the example from footnote 5 rather than from the text ('the author believed by Sam to be smart') since, as King himself points out, it avoids certain, possibly irrelevant, points of difference from the sortal case.

erence and how they shift their reference will turn on the details of the case. But the general idea is that reference will shift in the service of semantic evaluation. If a governing expression ‘calls’ for a certain kind of referent then the governed terms will shift their reference in such a way as to supply it.

Our monist neo-Fregean takes ‘(is) badly made’ to be a reference-shifter. It is a predicate that is presumably only truly applicable to ‘non-standard’ objects (the nonstandard referents of such expressions as ‘the statue’). Consequently, when attached to a term such as ‘the statue’ that normally refers to a standard object it will induce a shift in reference so that the term now refers to a corresponding nonstandard object of which the predicate might be true. Predicates such as ‘is a statue’ or ‘is lying on the floor’, on the other hand, will not be reference-shifters. They will presumably only be truly applicable to ‘standard’ objects and it would therefore be completely gratuitous to suppose that their application induces a shift in reference.

What then should the neo-Fregean make of the term ‘the badly made statue’? What should he take to be its standard referent? Presumably this should turn on the (standard) extension of the predicate-term ‘badly made statue’. So of which objects should this term be taken to be true?

The neo-Fregean here faces a difficulty. For the predicate-term ‘badly made’ will only be truly applicable to nonstandard objects while the predicate-term ‘statue’ will only be truly applicable to standard objects. Thus there is a mismatch in the range of applicability of the two predicate-terms which must somehow be resolved if the composite predicate-term is to have a significant range of applicability.

The Fregean resolves such mismatches through considerations of scope: the reference of the governed term is taken to shift according to the semantic needs of the expression by which it is governed. If, as English grammar suggests, the predicate-term ‘statue’ occurs within the scope of the expression ‘badly made’, the extension of ‘statue’ should accommodate itself to the semantic needs of ‘badly made’; and since ‘badly made’ is ‘looking for’ nonstandard object, the term ‘statue’ must somehow be understood to pick out such objects. Thus the reference of ‘the badly made statue’ will turn out to be a nonstandard object on this view.

However, this resolution of the mismatch is not altogether satisfactory. For if ‘statue’ is to be in the scope of ‘badly made’, then ‘badly made’ must be a predicate modifier rather than a predicate, as it is in sentence ‘the statue is badly made’. Thus a shift in the reference of the

expression ‘badly made’ — though perhaps relatively innocuous — is also required.

If we insist that ‘badly made’ and ‘statue’ should both appear as predicates in the term ‘badly made statue’, then neither can be taken to be in the scope of the other; the two are simply ‘conjoined’. But then general Fregean principles are not available to resolve the mismatch. We must either ‘raise’ the referential type of ‘statue’ or ‘lower’ the referential type of ‘badly made’; and there is nothing in the general Fregean approach to favour one as opposed to the other.

If I am right, then the neo-Fregean position is most plausibly taken to recommend that ‘the badly made statue’ should receive its nonstandard referent, since it is only this view which is conformity with the facts of English grammar and which provides the most uniformly satisfying account of the semantic behaviour of the expression ‘badly made’ in the two contexts ‘the statue is badly made’ and ‘the badly made statue’.

But this conclusion is also independently plausible, on the basis of general semantic principles that should be acceptable to Fregeans and non-Fregeans alike. For consider the following three sentences (of the general form indicated on the right):

- (4) The statue is badly made (the H is G)
- (5) The statue is a badly made statue (the H is a GH)
- (6) The badly made statue is lying on the floor (the GH is F)

Let us suppose that sentence (4) is true. The subject-term ‘the statue’ will then refer to the single object α and the predicate-term ‘badly made’ will be true of α . For the purposes of the argument, we make no assumption at this stage as to whether α is a standard or nonstandard referent though, in order to secure unique reference, we should suppose that the subject-term is appropriately ‘filled out’ — as with ‘the statue in the room’. It is now very plausible to assume that the predicate-term ‘badly made statue’ in (5) is only true of α . Indeed, it is for this reason that we cannot correctly say ‘the car is a badly made statue’ or ‘the statue in the other room is a badly made statue (in this room)’. But given that the predicate-term ‘badly made statue’ in (5) is only true of α , it is very plausible that the subject-term ‘the badly made statue’ in (6) can only refer to α . Thus the very plausible general principles implicit in this line of reasoning lead us to conclude that the referent of the term ‘the badly made statue’ in (6) cannot be different from the referent of the term ‘the statue’ in (4); and so, given that the latter lacks its standard referent, then so does the former.

I cannot therefore agree with King's bald claim that 'there is simply no reason to think this [that the referent should be nonstandard]'. There is ample reason to think it, both on the basis of what the neo-Fregean position itself requires and on the basis of general semantic principle.

But what of the analogies? Given that the standard referent of 'the badly made statue' should be a nonstandard object, then should the standard referent of 'the feared author' be a nonstandard object for the Fregean? And do we therefore have an equally valid objection to the Fregean position?

I think not; and that is because I do not think that the two cases are as analogous as King supposes. For the Fregean, an intensional verb like 'fears' will have both a *de re* and a *de dicto* use. Under the *de dicto* use, it will not be correct to say that 'the author is feared' unless he is feared as an author. Under the *de re* use, on the other hand, it will be correct to say 'the author is feared' whether he is feared as an author or in some other way (thus on this use it will be correct to say 'the author is feared by his family' even though he is feared as an overbearing father rather than a hypercritical author). The *de dicto* use of 'fear' will be reference-shifting while the *de re* use will not be.

The Fregean may now appeal to this distinction in explaining how 'the feared author' is capable of referring to a standard object—that is, to an ordinary individual—for, when 'fears' has its *de re* use, the reference of 'the feared author' will be determined in the usual way without appeal to referential shift. However, the Fregean will also believe that 'the feared author' is capable of referring to a nonstandard object—i. e. to a sense—for this is what it will do under the *de dicto* use of 'fears'. It is presumably this nonstandard reading of the term that is in play for him in such sentences as 'the monster feared by the young children does not exist' or 'the monster feared by the young children is not the same as the monster feared by the older children'; and the Fregean may well take it to be an advantage of his view that he can account in this way for the use of terms that would otherwise not refer.

Nothing analogous to the *de re/de dicto* distinction seems available in the case of such predicates as 'badly made'. What would correspond to the *de re* use of 'fears' would be a use of 'badly made' in which we could correctly say 'the statue is badly made' even though it was the piece of alloy rather than the statue that was badly made. Such a use of the term is far-fetched to say the least and would not, in any case, appear to be relevant to its use in such contexts as 'the badly made statue'.²

It is for this reason that I do not believe that the analogies between the Fregean and neo-Fregean positions are as close as King seems to think and they certainly do nothing to undermine the force of the present arguments against the neo-Fregean position. But I should mention that, in addition to these linguistic arguments, there are arguments of a more metaphysical character—not discussed in the paper—against the neo-Fregean position. Recall that the neo-Fregean is a monist; he therefore thinks that the nonstandard referent of ‘the statue’ is not a material thing distinct from but coincident with its standard referent. Presumably then, it is not a material thing at all, for if it were a material thing that was not coincident with the standard referent then what material thing would it be? And given that it is not a material thing, then presumably it does not exist in space or time, for if it did exist in space or time then what kind of immaterial spatial or temporal thing could it be? Thus the nonstandard referents must be abstract objects, radically different in kind from the standard references; and it is to objects such as these that predicates such as ‘badly made’ or ‘damaged’ will apply.

The classic Fregean will hold a related view. The standard referents of such terms as ‘the author’ or ‘the Pantheon’ will be regular ‘flesh and blood’ individuals while the nonstandard referents will be abstract senses; and it is to such abstract objects that intensional terms like ‘fears’ and ‘admires’ will apply. However, it seems to me that the supposition of a radical difference in kind between the standard and nonstandard referents has much more plausibility in the intensional than in the sortal case. It is, in the first place, not altogether implausible that intensional terms such as ‘fears’ or ‘admires’ should apply—or, at least, apply most directly—to ‘objects of thought’, such as senses, rather than to regular objects. There are also some plausible considerations in favour of this view. A monster can be feared even though there are no flesh and blood monsters and this suggests that the object of the fear is an object of thought rather than a regular object. Moreover, it is plausible that the object of the fear would be the same even if there were a regular flesh and blood monster that ‘answered’ to the fear; and so this suggests that in every case of a fear or an intensional attitude the object of the attitude should be taken to be an object of thought rather than a regular object (this is version of the argument from illusion). Or again, one way for me to fear the author is to fear that the author will attack

²I should note that the Fregean suffers from a related difficulty, since he cannot get ‘the feared author’ to refer to the person who is feared *as* an author rather than simply feared. And so he too is not completely off the hook!

me. But the object of the fear in the latter case is naturally taken to be a proposition and so one might well think that the object of the fear in the former case should be a component of the proposition—which, on a Fregean view of propositions, will be a sense.³

Things are very different for the neo-Fregean. It is utterly implausible to suppose that terms such as ‘badly made’ or ‘damaged’ apply—or apply most directly—to abstract objects. For how can an object be badly made or damaged without belonging to the material world? And nor do there appear to be any arguments that the neo-Fregean might use to make his position more palatable. In contrast to ‘fears’, ‘badly made’ does not apply to ‘non-existents’ and does not lend itself to a correlative propositional construction; and so, in particular, nothing like the argument from illusion or from the implicit propositional character of these terms could be made to work. Thus we see that even if the neo-Fregean were to insist that the term ‘the badly made statue’ should refer to a regular object, he would still have to confront the sheer metaphysical implausibility of his overall position.

A much more plausible account of referential shift in these cases would take the nonstandard referents not to be senses or abstract objects of some other kind but some form of combination of the standard referent with a sort—in much the same way as it has been supposed that the nonstandard reference in certain intensional contexts might be some form of combination of an individual with a ‘guise’ (as in the views discussed by King on ref. p. 12). But in this case, of course, it is hard to see what objection there could be to treating the nonstandard referent as a further material object, distinct from but coincident with the standard referent.

I have so far discussed the possibility that expressions such as ‘badly made’ might be reference-shifters for the monist. But what of the predicate ‘admired’, which is also one of my examples? Is it not plausible, as King suggests (ref. pp. 11–13), that the neo-Fregean might see the referential shift in this kind of example as merely a special case of the referential shift to which the Fregean is already committed?

I think not. For the Fregean will presumably concede that there is a *de re* use of ‘admires’. On this use, it will be correct to say, for example, that ‘the 3rd Earl Russell is admired’—even though he is admired as Bertrand Russell and not as the 3rd Earl. But on this use, according to the monist, it should be correct to say ‘the statue is admired’—even though it is the *piece of alloy* and not the *statue* that is admired. There is

³ I am merely arguing for the plausibility of these arguments; I would not, at the end of the day, wish to endorse them.

no such use, however. Thus if referential shift is posited to account for the failure of substitution in these cases, it is not of a sort that the Fregean would have previously been inclined to recognize.⁴

3. King on predicational shift

King regards predicational shift as the most plausible monist response to the master argument—at least for most of the cases that I consider—and it is to this that we must now turn.

In responding to my arguments against predicational shift, King appeals to the category of ‘gradable adjectives’—or GAs, for short. Paradigm examples include ‘expensive’, ‘fast’ and ‘short’. He mentions four diagnostic tests for being a GA (ref. p. 18–19): their application should be sensitive to context; they should admit of degree modifiers (as in ‘very expensive’); they should be modifiable by ‘for’ phrases or the like (as in ‘expensive for a present’); and they should occur in comparative constructions (as in ‘more expensive than’). He then suggests (ref. p. 20):

The monist should claim that Fine’s predicates, ‘badly made’ etc., are GAs. Thus, they may express different properties relative to different contexts in virtue of different standards being provided by the contexts. This is what happens in the relevant versions of MA, and so explains why we get predicational shift between premisses in them.⁵

There is indeed a *prima facie* difficulty for my argument here. But what is interesting is how King thinks that I should respond to it. He thinks that I must claim that the ‘monist is forced to hold that her GAs (“badly made”, etc.) exhibit strange behaviour in “statue”/“piece of alloy” sentences not exhibited by clear cases of GAs’ (Ref. pp. 17, 22). His thought seems to be that the monist will have a response to the master argument for the clear cases of GAs and so it is necessary for me to draw some distance between my own cases and the clear cases if the master argument for my own cases is to be sustained.

⁴I actually have some difficulty in understanding how King could have thought that anything but a putatively *de re* use of the ‘admired’ was in question since otherwise there would have been an independent reason, having nothing to do with the issue at hand, for thinking the master argument invalid in this case. As will later become clear, I believe that King is guilty of a similar failure to distinguish the different sources of shift in his discussion of predicational shift.

⁵The category of gradable adjectives, or gradable phrases, is unnecessarily narrow for the purposes of the point that King wishes to make. After all, I could have presented my argument with the predicate ‘very badly made’, which would not have passed the second and fourth of his diagnostic tests. What matters, for his purposes, is that the predicates used in the master argument should admit of an unproblematic form of sortal modification.

But the proposal he makes on my behalf is very strange, perhaps to the point of incoherence, and King has no difficulty in making mince-meat of it. For what is he imagining? Do I hold that my predicates ('badly made', etc.) are GAs or not? If I deny that they are GAs (as King suggests I might do on p. ?? [23 ms]), then I go against the evident linguistic facts (as he convincingly spells out on p. ?? [20-1 ms]). And if I accept that they are GAs, then what possible reason could I have for thinking that the GA-type relativity of the clear cases could be safely invoked in defusing the master argument yet not the relativity in my own cases?

I may have been partly responsible for this strange interpretation of my position. For I contrasted what I called 'clear cases of respect-relative predicates' (p. 214), such as 'qualified', with my own cases, such as 'badly made' (and King cites this passage in justifying his interpretation on p. 22, ref.). But in drawing this contrast, I did not wish to deny that 'badly made' might have a relative use (as I later indicate on the same page). It is just that there appears to be a default understanding of 'badly made' in which one can make sense—at least if one is a pluralist—of an object as such being badly made, but no default understanding of 'qualified' in which one can make sense of an object as such being qualified.

In any case, let me explain how a proper pluralist response to King's objection should go. We are faced with contrasting sentences of the form $\phi(s)$ and $\phi(t)$ (e.g., 'the statue is badly made', 'the piece of alloy is badly made') which differ in their truth-value. The pluralist, in the cases of interest to us, will attribute the difference in truth-value to a difference in reference. The monist—should he subscribe to predicational shift—will attribute the difference in truth-value to a difference in the relativity of the predicate. Let us call that relativity to which the monist appeals in accounting for the difference in truth-value in these contested cases *sortal relativity*. This form of relativity, we might say, is indicative of sortal status; it does the work of indicating what sort of object is in question.

The predicate ϕ may also admit of an unproblematic relativity to a sort—as in the case of GAs. This form of relativity is, in general, indicative of the sortal standard (as in 'fast *for a car*') by which the application of the predicate is to be judged. The monist of the kind defended by King wishes to treat the problematic sortal relativity that is indicative of sortal status as a special case of the relativity to a sort that is indicative of a sortal standard.

In responding to such a monist, the pluralist should deny that the one form of relativity can properly be seen as a special case of the other. He must argue, in other words, that the monist is required to posit two separate forms of relativity, one indicative of sortal status and the other indicative of sortal standard. Thus in ‘the car is cheap for a Rolls’, relativity to *a car* will indicate the sortal status of the object in question while relativity to *a Rolls* will indicate the sortal standard in question.⁶

What is important about this response to King is that it should be taken to apply across the board to all GAs. All will be alike in admitting a relativity to a sortal status and to a sortal standard and the pluralist will therefore not expect to find any relevant difference in their behavior. There will indeed be a significant difference between the two forms of relativity, which is what my arguments were intended to show, but not between the GAs themselves. King’s argumentative strategy against me is therefore misguided; the difference in the behaviour of apparent GAs that he is so concerned to deny is not one that the pluralist should endorse.

I have so far talked of how the pluralist should respond to the Kingly monist but not how the response is to be defended. If GAs are used as the predicates in the master argument, then the pluralist must show that relativity to sortal status cannot be seen as a special case of relativity to a sortal standard. I will later say something on this question. But it would clearly be preferable from a dialectical point of view to sidestep the issue altogether and to use predicates that involved no obvious relativity to a sort. In my original paper, I had attempted to take care of this difficulty by implicitly adopting the default interpretation of ‘badly made’ under which it meant something like ‘badly made for an object of its kind’; and I had thought that the reader would appreciate that this is what I had in mind. But I now see that this choice of example is itself somewhat contentious and that it would be preferable to avoid any hint that some independent form of relativity might be in play.

How might a better example go? There are two other kinds of examples that might be used. Under the first, the predicates in question have felicitous application to the one subject-term but not to the other. Thus we can say that the door is open or shut but we cannot very well say that the plastic from which it is made is open or shut; a penny can be genuine or counterfeit but not the piece of metal, and I can spend the penny

⁶This response should perhaps have been evident from the paper. On p. 214–15, I wrote: ‘We can indeed talk of the respects in which a thing may be damaged or well made or Romanesque. It is merely that these respects are not properly taken to include the status of the thing as a sort.’ King (fn. 19) construes me as meaning that there are no sortal standards for these predicates but what I wished to exclude was the specification of sortal *status*.

but not the piece of metal; the statue can be of Goliath but not the piece of alloy from which it is made; and so on. As I mentioned in the original paper (p. 207), these various sorts gives rise to their own 'sphere of discourse'; and predicates within one sphere will often not have felicitous application to objects belonging to other spheres.

The application of none of these predicates is in an obvious way relative to a sort and so King's strategy of seeing the sortal relativity hypothesized by the monist as an unproblematic form of relativity will not even get off the ground. However, these predicates give rise to a curious problem of their own when used in the master argument. For what is meant by 'felicitous application'? If it is a matter of *meaningful* application, as I had originally supposed (p. 207), then we will not be able to construct a sound version of the master argument. For even though one of the premisses (say, 'the door is shut') may be true, the other premiss ('the piece of plastic is not shut') will lack a truth-value.

We may get round this problem by adopting a meta-linguistic version of the argument. The first premiss will now state that the sentence 'the door is shut' is true, the second will state that the sentence 'the piece of plastic is shut' is not true, and the conclusion will state that the subject-terms 'the door' and 'the piece of plastic' do not refer to the same thing. We no longer have an instance of Leibniz's Law, which should be stated in the object-language, but the meta-linguistic version of the argument will equally well serve the dialectical purposes of the original object-language version. For the question, in either case, is what might account for the difference in the truth-value of the premisses. The pluralist will claim that it is a difference in the reference, the monist will claim otherwise; and the pluralist objections to the monist will be the same whether the object-language or the meta-linguistic version of the argument is in question.

All the same, it is of interest to see if a more satisfactory object-language version of the argument might also be given. This turns out to be somewhat more difficult.⁷ One example is of the two letters from Fine 2000 (mentioned on pp. 207 and 218 of the original paper). I had imagined that two people simultaneously write two different letters on the two sides of the same piece of paper. These letters will then differ in which sides are the front and back, by whom they are written, and to

⁷ It is very much easier to come up with an example if only the extreme form of monism is in question (under which the existence of *temporary* coincidents is denied). Al might first make the piece of alloy, for example, and Sam might later make the statue. It is then clear that Al made the piece of alloy but did not make the statue. Frances, in giving his own version of the master argument at the end of his paper, does not seem to appreciate that my aim was to refute the more moderate form of monism.

whom they are addressed. I myself find this example completely convincing. But another example, which does not involve two coincident objects of the same sort, is given by the predicate 'destroyed by'. We might imagine that Sam destroys the statue by squeezing it in a vice without thereby doing anything to prevent the continued existence of the piece of alloy and that Al simultaneously destroys the piece of alloy by zapping it with rays that turn the alloy into another very similar alloy but without thereby doing anything to prevent the continued existence of the statue. It is then clear that Sam destroyed the statue but did not destroy the piece of alloy. And again, none of these predicates seem in any obvious way to be subject to sortal modification.

Thus rather than dealing with King's line of objection head on, we can simply deal with it through a change in example. I am surprised that King is not himself more alert to this possibility. For one thing, I mention some of the cases discussed above in the course of the paper. Although King pursues a 'divide and conquer' strategy (ref. p. 4)—appealing to referential shift in the case of intensional verbs and predicational shift in the case of GAs—for some reason he ignores the cases of mine that fall into neither of these two categories. But what makes his oversight even more surprising is that he himself attempts to come up with more satisfactory examples right at the end of his paper.

One of his examples is the Donatello case.⁸ Given that the statue was made by Donatello but the piece of alloy was not, it would appear to follow that the statue is not identical to the piece of alloy. King's wonders how the monist might respond to this argument and his discussion of this point is curious in the context of my own paper. He writes (ref. p. 46):

Here, 'made by Donatello', is not a gradable adjective, and so the predicational shift story told here as to why certain versions of MA are invalid is not applicable. Further, it is not clear that a referential shift strategy is plausible in this case either. It may be that in this case or others, the monist must simply deny that both premisses are true.

But why does he here presuppose that his story on predicational shift is the only one that might be told? Why should the monist not appeal to some other form of predicational shift, not sanctioned by the status of the predicate as a GA and perhaps not even naturally expressible in ordinary language? King does not say. And given that the monist does appeal to some other form of predicational shift, then what of my argu-

⁸He attributes the example to Timothy Williamson; it is also implicit in footnote 28 of my paper. My earlier example of 'destroyed by' gets round the difficulties he sees in 'created by'.

ments against that position? Are they cogent or not? Again, he does not say.

By not following through on these questions, King has deprived himself of the opportunity of considering the arguments of my paper in their strongest light. I believe that had he done so, using his own example or ones that I have already mentioned, then he would have found that the arguments of the paper are largely untouched by his objections.

4. Some other issues

I have argued that King's objections to my argument against predicational shift are largely misguided or irrelevant—misguided if GA-type predicates are in question and irrelevant if they are not in question. However, it will be worth discussing some of his particular objections in more detail since this will help to illustrate some of the points already made and to bring out some further points of interest.

Additional descriptive material

In my paper, I claimed that the 'behaviour of sortal terms [for the monist] ... is also anomalous as a species of opacity. For all the familiar cases of opacity are ones which can be triggered by appropriate descriptive material' (p. 213). King disagrees.⁹ He argues that the sentence 'the dog that was raised by Oriana and became a police dog is intelligent' is 'most naturally read as claiming that the dog in question is intelligent *for a dog* (and not as claiming that it is intelligent for a dog raised by Oriana etc.)' (ref. p. 24). That may be but the question was whether the opacity was capable of being 'triggered' by 'appropriate descriptive material'; and it might be argued that the opacity in this case is capable of being triggered by the descriptive material even if not naturally (as King comes close to conceding in fn. 17) or, alternatively, that this particular descriptive material is not 'appropriate'. Indeed, it is plausible that, in the case of any GA, there will always be some appropriate descriptive material that is capable of setting a standard by which the opacity might be triggered.

If King is going to argue against me on this point then it should have been in the other direction. For given that 'badly made' is a GA, its application—as with any other GA—will be sensitive to additional descriptive material. Thus we might say 'the statue produced by the three year old is well made' meaning well made *for a statue produced by*

⁹At least, I *think* he disagrees. King does not cite the part of the paper to which he is objecting but this claim of mine appears to be the closest to what he might have had in mind.

a three year old. Of course, in the context of the paper, I did not think of this as a relevant to the default understanding of ‘well made’. But no matter, for if we use a less problematic example, such as ‘destroyed by’, then it is clear that there can only be sensitivity to the sortal head and not to the additional descriptive material. Whether the statue is destroyed by someone does not depend upon how it might additionally be described.

It therefore seems, once we control for other forms of relativity, that the behavior of sortal terms will be anomalous for the monist in just the way I described.

Explicit relativity

King takes me to be making two other points about how the behaviour of sortal terms is anomalous for the monist. The first is ‘that unlike other cases of GAs, in the case of his examples ... one cannot use prepositional phrases to supply the standards relative to which the monist claims something is said to be well made or damaged’ (ref. p. 25). The second is ‘that the sentences “the statue is not damaged as a piece of alloy” and “the piece of alloy is not well made as a statue” are odd to the point of being infelicitous’ (ref. p. 27).¹⁰

King claims that ‘on this first point, Fine is clearly mistaken’ for ‘surely one can say things like “This is well made for a piece of alloy”’ (p. ??). But King has misconstrued what I wished to say. My examples, like any other GA, will admit of explicit relativity to a sortal standard. It is just that they will not admit of explicit relativity to sortal status.

Of course, King’s monist will deny that there is any difference. To say ‘the statue is well made’ is just to say that it is well made for a statue. Now I can agree that the equivalence is very plausible in this particular case. But I do not think that it is plausible in general. To say ‘the vehicle is well made’ is not just to say that it is well made for a vehicle. I am not even sure what it is for something to be well made for a vehicle. But if the vehicle happens to be a bicycle, then the natural understanding of what it is for the vehicle to be well made is that it should be well made for a bicycle, not a vehicle. This seems clearly to indicate that the role of a sortal term in determining sortal status is to be distinguished from its role in setting a sortal standard.

¹⁰ He says repeatedly that I do not ‘clearly distinguish’ the two claims (ref. pp. 25, 27). But I do distinguish them, though obviously not clearly enough for King. For I first attempt to argue for the second and weaker of the claims (p. 214) and then to argue for the first and stronger of the claims (p. 215).

There is a great deal more to be said on the question. But as I have already mentioned, the issue is best finessed through a change of example. If we take our earlier predicate, ‘destroyed by’, it is then clear that we cannot felicitously talk of something’s being destroyed by someone ‘as’ or ‘for’ a statue or ‘as’ or ‘for’ a piece of alloy.¹¹

We turn to the second point and, in discussing this point, let us simply grant to King that the ‘for’ phrase will indicate the required form of relativity. It would then appear to be very embarrassing for him that one cannot felicitously say ‘the statue is well made for a piece of alloy’ given that, on the monist’s view, the statue is indeed a piece of alloy.¹² Now on King’s view the sentence is indeed true, given that the piece is alloy is well made. What explains the infelicity is that we do not typically ‘believe that the statue is or even could be the piece of statue’ (ref. p. 29); and, of course, the sentence could not be true unless the statue was the piece of alloy and it could not even be possibly true unless the statue could be the piece of alloy.

King’s defense attributes a curious form of semantic ignorance to the speakers of the language. It follows from the semantics of the language and certain basic facts to which we can assume that the speakers are privy that the sentence is true and yet that the speakers do not believe that it is true and do not even believe that it could be true! But how? It is not like the cases that arise in the theory of direct reference (as with the co-referentiality of ‘Cicero’ and ‘Tully’) and nor is the inference from the semantics and the basic facts to the truth of the sentence especially complicated. Indeed, if this line of defense were to be accepted in general then the study of semantics, as we know it, would come to a halt—since we would not be in a position to test the predictions of truth and falsehood made by the semantics against our ordinary judgments.

To make matters worse, it appears that according to the monist there is strong evidence that we *do* believe that the piece of alloy is the statue. Suppose we were looking at a piece of alloy of somewhat indistinct shape (an all too common occurrence in art galleries nowadays). I might then inform you that ‘the piece of alloy is a statue’. And the ‘is’ here, for the monist, is presumably the ‘is’ of identity or, at the very least, should be taken to require the identity of the piece of alloy and

¹¹ King is puzzled by the fact that I use ‘as’ rather than ‘for’ to indicate the required relativity to a sort (King 2006 footnotes 16 and 20). But my purpose was to indicate sortal status rather than a sortal standard and, to this end, the preposition ‘as’ is more appropriate.

¹² I myself did not attach much importance to this point as part of the general criticism of monism though it is clearly of great importance to King’s particular defense of monism (ref. p. 25).

the statue. So it looks as if the monist is obliged by his own principles to credit us with a belief in the identity of the statue and the piece of alloy!¹³

Implicit relativity

A third objection that King raises concerns a sentence such as ‘The item Nicole admired is well made’ made in the circumstances in which Nicole admires the piece of alloy without realizing that it is a statue. King agrees with me that in this circumstance the sentence can only be interpreted as requiring for its truth that the piece of alloy be well made for a piece of alloy (ref. p. 40). But he then argues that ‘clear cases’ of GAs also share this feature. So, for example, the sentence ‘the item Nicole admires is expensive’, made in the circumstance in which Nicole admires a pencil, without realizing that it is a birthday gift for Missy, ‘can only be interpreted as requiring for its truth that the pencil is expensive for a pencil.’ He does not think these cases are a problem for the monist since the audience does not presuppose or believe that the statue is the piece of alloy or that the pencil is a birthday gift and nor does the speaker make clear that she presupposes this (ref. pp. 40–41).

There are actually two cases here. In the first, we have the ‘default’ interpretation of ‘well made’ or ‘expensive’ in which no particular standard for being well made or expensive has been set. In the second, a particular standard for being well made or expensive is implicit from the context. The pluralist can agree that the truth-conditions of the two sentences will be analogous in the first case; it will be required either that the piece of alloy be well made for a piece of alloy or that the pencil be expensive for a pencil. King’s thinking that the pluralist will think otherwise is based upon a misunderstanding of his position.

However, the pluralist *will* see a disanalogy between the two sentences in the second case, but one turning on the difference between ‘statue’ and ‘birthday present’—the one being a sortal term and the other not—rather than on the difference between the two GAs, ‘well

¹³ I should mention in this connection that King’s rock/ski run type examples do not appear to work in the way he intends (ref. pp. 30–33). The sentence ‘the rock is smooth for a ski run’ suffers from a double infelicity, one arising from our not even realizing the coincidence of the rock and the ski run, and the other arising once we recognize the coincidence and are therefore prepared to judge that the rock ‘is’ a ski run. The infelicity of ‘the piece of alloy is well made for a statue’ is analogous to the second form of infelicity, since the sentence is being considered in a context in which the facts of coincidence are already taken to be known, and not to the first form, as is King’s intention. I might add that in his discussion of this example, King seems to presuppose that our ordinary judgement that the rock is a ski run should be taken to entail that the rock and the ski run are one and the same. But the pluralist, of course, will not accept this; he will take the ‘is’ here to be some sort of ‘is’ of constitution.

made' and 'expensive'. True, it will not be appropriate to say 'the item Nicole admires is well made', meaning well made *for a statue*, unless it is presupposed that the item is a statue and, similarly, it will not be appropriate to say 'the item Nicole admires is expensive', meaning expensive *for a birthday present*, unless it is presupposed that the item is a birthday present. But in the first case, it must also be true if what I say is to be appropriate that Nicole admire the statue rather than the piece of alloy whereas there is no such requirement in the second case. Even if Nicole does not realize that the pencil is a birthday present, there is no impropriety in saying that the item Nicole admires is expensive for a birthday present.

In any case, my principal concern in the passage under consideration was not with the anomalous behaviour of my predicates but with the question of how a semantics along monist lines might be developed. The pluralist has no difficulty in accounting for the truth-conditions of 'the item Nicole admired is well made' under the default interpretation, since the subject-term 'the item Nicole admires' refers to a statue rather than to a piece of alloy, and so what we are saying is that the *statue* is well made. But the monist does have a difficulty, since the subject-term 'the item Nicole admired' does not refer to a statue rather than to a piece of alloy. How then do the standards appropriate to pieces of alloy rather than to statues get into the picture?

It is clear that the question of what we presuppose has nothing to do with this question. Perhaps I and my audience know next to nothing about the particular item. We just speculate, given that Nicole is a woman of impeccable taste, that the object of her admiration is likely to be well made. There is then nothing in what we presuppose that would favour the one standard over the other. Nor is King's presuppositional story adequate to account for the impropriety of saying that the item Nicole admires is well made for a statue, given that what she admires is a piece of alloy. We are therefore left with the difficulty I had raised.

I have not discussed all of the objections made by King but I hope it is clear from the ones I have discussed what I might say about the others. The royal road that King takes us down is well made and there is much on the way that is to be admired, but it does not take us to where we want to go.

5. Frances on soundness

King is principally concerned with the validity of the master argument – that is, with whether the conclusion of non-identity genuinely follows

from the premisses. Frances, on the other hand, is principally concerned with soundness, that is, with whether the premisses are true. He believes that the monist should dispute the truth of the premisses in many of the arguments that I offer, not the validity of the argument itself. Frances's position is complicated by the fact that he is willing to concede that the premisses of the arguments may also be used to convey something true. However, he thinks that in these case the arguments will not be valid. Of course, *any* monist is obliged, by his very position, either to reject the truth of the premisses in an instance of the master argument or the validity of the argument. But perhaps what is most distinctive about Frances's form of monism is his greater willingness to disagree with the pluralist or with his more conservative ally on whether the premisses are true.

Thus he asks in the statue/alloy case why the monist should assent to the sentences 'the piece of alloy is well made' and 'the statue is badly made' (ref. p. 7).¹⁴ He seems to think that, absent a special explanation of what these sentences might be taken to convey, the monist can simply deny their truth and that, once given a special explanation under which both premisses are true, it will be apparent that the argument is not valid.¹⁵ But why think that any special explanation of this sort is required? Surely there is a natural understanding of these sentences in which both are true and no natural understanding in which either is false (at least if the piece of alloy is flawless and the statue without redeeming features). And so why is it not sufficient simply for the pluralist to appeal to our natural understanding of these sentences? It has to be admitted that some of my examples are more convincing than others in this regard. Thus if the statue is valuable, then one *might* on this account say that the piece of alloy is valuable and, if the piece of alloy is damaged, then one *might* on this account say that the statue is damaged. But we are under no temptation, it seems to me, to say that the statue is well made on account of the piece of alloy being well made and, if we turn to my destruction example, then there seems to be no possible basis upon which the monist could dissent from the judge-

¹⁴ He also asks 'How can the monist even understand Fine's thought experiment given that it includes the stipulations "The piece of alloy is *not* badly made" and "The statue is badly made"? Does it not simply follow from these stipulations that the statue is not the piece of alloy?'. The answer is 'no' if these stipulations are understood in the ordinary way, without regard for considerations of opacity. If we wanted to give a description of the case clearly acceptable to both sides, we might simply say that the statue is badly made for a statue and the piece of alloy is well made for a piece of alloy.

¹⁵ I hope I interpret Frances correctly here. He writes 'it is up to the pluralist ... to reveal the natural reading of (21)–(24) [the sentences in question] in which they are true and ... cause trouble for the monist' (ref. p. 9).

ment that the statue was destroyed by Sam while the piece of alloy was not.

Of course, the monist will have a response to these cases even should he accept both premisses. For he may appeal to referential or predicational shift in explaining how the truth of the conclusion is not thereby secured. Indeed, Frances himself makes just such an appeal in discussing some of the ways in which both premisses might be true (ref. pp. 8–9). However, for me this was the beginning of the argument against the monist, not the end. For the central point of my paper was to show that such responses could not be sustained (p. 202); and this is an aspect of my view that Frances does not take into account.¹⁶

Frances also attempts to argue more positively for the monist conclusion by analogy with other cases.¹⁷ Consider the argument from ‘Superman flies’ and ‘Clark Kent does not fly’ to ‘Superman is not identical to Clark Kent’ or from ‘Ralph the reporter did an exposé of Nixon and Carl the cowboy did not do an exposé of Nixon’ to ‘Ralph the reporter is not identical to Carl the cowboy’ (assuming, in the second case, that the same person lives a double life as a cowboy and a reporter). Most philosophers, he thinks, will reject the second premiss of these arguments; and this makes it plausible that we should reject the second premiss in the sortal arguments as well (ref. p. 3).

I am not sure how much corroborative value to attach to these analogies. They involve some obvious differences of linguistic construction (sortal terms versus titular names versus terms in apposition); and it is not at clear that they will have the same bearing on the question of substitution.

For what it is worth, my own view is that there are ways of understanding the analogous arguments in which the premisses will be true and the inference to the non-identity of the objects will be justified. The view calls for a thorough discussion but let me just mention one consideration in its favor. Suppose I ask how many super-heros there are and suppose that the same person ‘doubles’ as Superman and Batman.

¹⁶In particular, the argument about Al that Frances discusses in section 4 of his paper is not properly understood as an argument from Leibniz’s Law or even as a free-standing objection to monism, as Frances seems to suppose. It was meant, rather, to be part of a larger argument whose aim was to show that the hypothesis of predicational shift could not reasonably be extended to a variety of other linguistic constructions.

Like King, Frances concludes his paper with an attempt to refute monism by simple appeal to Leibniz’s Law without appreciating that it is at just this point in the dispute between monism and pluralism that the central arguments of my paper are meant to come into play.

¹⁷He writes ‘when we explore the Superman (and related) arguments to see what is wrong with them, we will acquire good reason to think the Rover [statue/clay] arguments are just as flawed—and we will have a good idea exactly what the flaws are’ (ref. p. 3).

Then surely it is in order for me to count Superman and Batman as two super-heros, not one.¹⁸ But if this is right, then neither Superman or Batman can be identical to Clark Kent (or the person who is Clark Kent), for if one were then so would the other and they would be identical after all. A similar point holds in regard to reporters. Suppose Ralph holds two separate jobs as a reporter for the Times and for the News of the World. If I were to ask how many reporters there are, then surely it is in order to count the number of reporters for the Times and add it to the number of reporters for the News of the World. So again, Ralph cannot be identical to either reporter.¹⁹ Now given that there are super-heros and reporters not identical to the people who are the super-heros and reporters, it is only natural to suppose that 'Superman' might sometimes be a name for a super-hero as opposed to a reporter and that 'Ralph the reporter' might sometimes be a term for a reporter as opposed to a person. It is also natural to suppose that, in saying 'Superman can fly', I might be saying something about the super-hero and that, in saying 'Ralph the reporter made an exposé of Nixon', I might be saying something about the reporter. In such a way, it seems to me, the soundness of the arguments in these cases can be vindicated. Thus there is indeed an analogy with the sortal case but one that favours the pluralist!

One final possibility is for Frances's monist to appeal to some form of error theory. We judge that the statue is not well made even though it is and we judge that the statue was destroyed by Sam even though it was not. Frances talks of 'conversational oddity' here (ref. p. 4) but that is far too pale a term. Cases of conversational oddity are ones in which something is true but would be odd to say. Thus we can agree with Frances that the sentence 'people travel thousands of miles to see a chair' is true but that it would be an odd thing to say and even misleading unless it were made clear that the chair in question was the Chair of St Peter in the Vatican Basilica. But what is in question—at least for the most difficult examples that the monist must confront—are cases of error, that is, cases in which things are judged to be true when they are false.²⁰

¹⁸ And do not think it helps here to count by a relation other than identity since we would then have to count by a relation that was 'stricter' than identity, and there is no such relation.

¹⁹ We might take these personages or 'people-in-a-role' to be *qua objects* in the sense of Fine 1981 and Fine 1999.

²⁰ In discussing this question (ref. p. 5), Frances only looks at 'easy' cases ('insured', 'Romanesque', etc.) in which nothing more than conversational oddity might be involved.

There are grave difficulties for an error theory even if we tolerate its imputation of error. For one thing, it is not clear in which direction the error lies. We judge that the piece of alloy is well made and that the statue is badly made. But what of the object itself, is it well made or badly made? Or again, we judge that the statue was destroyed by Sam but that the piece of alloy was not. But was the object itself destroyed by Sam or not?

Even more serious is the fact that any plausible error theory must point to some truth that lies in the vicinity, so to speak, of the falsehood. The error theorist is therefore under an obligation to provide a systematic account of what that truth is and if, as is plausible, he does this in terms of relativizing the predicates he will face the very same difficulties that I posed for the proponent of predicational shift. Nor can the error theorist sensibly deny that a systematic account is available, as Frances's discussion sometimes seems to suggest, for, given that there is a systematic account of the relevant truths according to the pluralist, then how can their systematic character somehow be lost under the error theorist's reconstruction of those truths? Probably his best strategy is to be some sort of fictionalist: monism is true even though in talking of the material world we make-believe that pluralism is true. The semantics of the fictional monist can then ride piggy back on the pluralist semantics.

Frances seems to have a rather tolerant attitude towards the imputation of error or the presence of linguistic strain (ref. p. 6).²¹ He writes

Everyone who takes these metaphysical issues seriously ends up saying something odd. For instance, the pluralist says that the statue has a mass of 14kg, and that the hunk of clay has a mass of 14kg, but when you put them both on an accurate scale at the same time, the scale will read just 14kg. Similar difficulties arise with many other sentences, for example, 'Tom knocked two objects off the table, the statue and the hunk'.

He then adds 'the presence of linguistic strain in the monist's defence is not that much of a weakness: everybody has that problem'. And 'hair-splitting ("Your linguistic strains are much worse than mine") is not going to carry much weight, even when the claims are true'.

My own view could not be more different both in detail and on general methodological principle. Although objections from 'double effect' are commonly made against the pluralist, they strike me as being with-

²¹ Actually, he talks only of conversational oddity and 'linguistic strain', not of error. But it is no mark against a theory that it predict conversational oddity in cases where it is thought to exist and so he must have in mind some kind of conflict between what the theory predicts and our actual linguistic practice.

out merit. If they present any difficulty at all, then it is difficulty for monist and pluralist alike. For consider: when I put the statue on the scales, I also put the legs of the statue on the scales, its head, and its torso. Now these objects—the statue and its various parts—are all distinct, even for monist, so why does the scale not record the sum of these weights? Or if the statue is on the table, then so are the legs of the statue and its feet and toes. So again, given that these objects are distinct, why do I say that there is only one object on the table?

These cases therefore present a general difficulty, which only seems worse for the pluralist because of his more expansive ontology. It is of course possible that, even though the cases present a general difficulty for both monist and pluralist, they also pose a special difficulty for the pluralist. But when we look at how these puzzles might be solved, this does not seem plausible. Thus in weight case, what we should say is that just as the number of objects in two sets is only the sum of the numbers in each of the sets when the sets do not overlap, so the weight of two things is only the sum of the weights of each thing when the things do not materially overlap. Similarly, in the table case, we should claim that our ordinary use of ‘object’ is often restricted to salient objects. Since the piece of alloy and the various parts of the statue are not salient—they are ‘eclipsed’, so to speak, by the statue—it will be correct to say that there is only one object on the table. Thus the natural solutions to these puzzles simultaneously solve the difficulties for monist and pluralist alike and make it implausible that the pluralist faces any special difficulty.

In general, I think that the data—linguistic and otherwise—overwhelmingly favours the pluralist position. But even if they did not, I would still be inclined to adjudicate the issue between the two views in terms of how best they explain or conform to the data. Frances might think of this as ‘hair-splitting’, but better to split hairs than cut through thin air.

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