

Ordinary Objects

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Amie L. Thomasson

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著者:Amie L. Thomasson

出版者:Oxford University Press, USA

出版时间:2007-06-11

装帧:Hardcover

isbn:9780195319910

Arguments that ordinary inanimate objects such as tables and chairs, sticks and stones, simply do not exist have become increasingly common and increasingly prominent. Some are based on demands for parsimony or for a non-arbitrary answer to the special composition question; others arise from prohibitions against causal redundancy, ontological vagueness, or co-location; and others still come from worries that a common sense ontology would be a rival to a scientific one.

Until now, little has been done to address these arguments in a unified and systematic way. *Ordinary Objects* is designed to fill this gap, demonstrating that the mistakes behind all of these superficially diverse eliminativist arguments may be traced to a common source. It aims to develop an ontology of ordinary objects subject to no such problems, providing perhaps the first sustained defense of a common sense ontology in two generations. The work done along the way addresses a number of major issues in philosophy of language and metaphysics, contributing to debates about analyticity, identity conditions, co-location and the grounding problem, vagueness, overdetermination, parsimony, and ontological commitment.

In the end, the most important result of addressing these eliminativist arguments is not merely avoiding their conclusions; examining their failings also gives us reason to suspect that many apparent disputes in ontology are pseudo-debates. For it brings into question widely-held assumptions about which uses of metaphysical principles are appropriate, which metaphysical demands are answerable, and how we should go about addressing such fundamental questions as "What exists?." As a result, the work of *Ordinary Objects* promises to provide not only the route to a reflective understanding of our unreflective common-sense view, but also a better understanding of the proper methods and limits of metaphysics.

"*Ordinary Objects* is well worth reading because it sheds new light on how to preserve the credibility of familiar things."--Marianne Djuth, *The Review of Metaphysics*

"In *Ordinary Objects*, Amie Thomasson mounts a spirited and vigorous defense of the reality of ordinary objects."--Terry Horgan, *Times Literary Supplement*

"*Ordinary Objects* is a fine book.... [Thomasson] writes insightfully and persuasively, and she has a realistic view of what metaphysical arguments can and cannot demonstrate... she approaches metaphysical theorizing more systematically than many other recent writers, drawing attention to the ways in which questionable assumptions in one area of philosophy are undergirding seemingly powerful arguments in another. Everyone working in metaphysics should make time for this volume."--R. W. Fischer, *Metaphilosophy*

"In *Ordinary Objects*, Thomasson pursues an integrated conception of ontology and metaontology. In ontology, she defends the existence of shoes, ships, and other ordinary objects. In metaontology, she defends a deflationary view of ontological inquiry, designed to suck the air out of arguments against ordinary objects. The result is an elegant and insightful defense of a common sense worldview."--Jonathan Schaffer, *Philosophical Books*

"Amie Thomasson has written a lovely book which is certain to irritate many professional metaphysicians. But it is not just irritating: it is challenging...This book would be good supplementary text for upper-level metaphysics classes or seminars in which the sorts of arguments to which Thomasson replies are also read."--Alan Sidelle, *The Philosophical Quarterly*

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