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BAKER’S THEORY OF MATERIAL CONSTITUTION
AND THINKING THINGS INTO EXISTENCE

Abstract
The paper provides a critical evaluation of Lynne Rudder Baker’s nonmereological theory of material constitution in light of the “thinking into existence” objection, formulated by Theodore Sider and Dean W. Zimmerman. Although Baker responds to it, she focuses on its specific versions presented by Sider and Zimmerman and does not address the source of the problem. Baker maintains that beliefs, social practices, and conventions can bring a new intention-dependent object into existence. However, as I argue, the thinking into existence objection shows that constituted objects, if there are any, are ontologically independent of beliefs, social practices, and conventions. In fact, Baker’s theory doesn’t give us any reason for believing that intention-dependent objects are any more real than fictional objects.

Keywords: material constitution, ontology, fictional objects, thinking into existence

In this paper, I critically evaluate Lynne Rudder Baker’s nonmereological theory of material constitution in light of the “thinking into existence” objection, raised most powerfully by Theodore Sider (2001) and Dean W. Zimmerman (2002). Baker’s response to the objection focuses on its specific versions formulated by Sider and Zimmerman and does not address the source of the problem. In section 1, I give a brief summary of Baker’s theory of material constitution and then, in section 2, discuss both the thinking into existence objection and Baker’s response to it. In section 3, I apply the thinking into existence objection to fictional objects and argue that the objection raises a much more serious problem for Baker’s theory than she addresses in her response. I close with a brief recapitulation of the conclusion (section 4).

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