

# **Austere Realism**

**Contextual Semantics Meets Minimal Ontology**

**Terry Horgan and Matjaž Potrč**

**A Bradford Book  
The MIT Press  
Cambridge, Massachusetts  
London, England**

© 2008 Massachusetts Institute of Technology

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form by any electronic or mechanical means (including photocopying, recording, or information storage and retrieval) without permission in writing from the publisher.

MIT Press books may be purchased at special quantity discounts for business or sales promotional use. For information, please e-mail [special\\_sales@mitpress.mit.edu](mailto:special_sales@mitpress.mit.edu) or write to Special Sales Department, The MIT Press, 55 Hayward Street, Cambridge, MA 02142.

This book was set in Stone Serif and Stone Sans on 3B2 by Asco Typesetters, Hong Kong, and was printed and bound in the United States of America.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Horgan, Terry, 1948–.

Austere realism : contextual semantics meets minimal ontology / Terence E. Horgan and Matjaž Potrč.

p. cm.—(Representation and mind series)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-262-08376-8 (hardcover : alk. paper)

1. Ontology. 2. Realism. 3. Semantics. I. Potrč, Matjaž. II. Title.

BD311.H67 2007

149'.2—dc22

2007032259

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

## Preface

This book grows out of our collaborative philosophical interaction with one another during the past decade. Matjaž spent the academic year 1996 as a Fulbright Scholar in Terry's department at the University of Memphis. Philosophy of psychology was his main interest, which led to a conference in Ljubljana, Slovenia on Horgan and Tienson's 1996 book *Connectionism and the Philosophy of Psychology* and to the publication of the conference proceedings in Potrč 1999b. Discussion spread to other areas of philosophy, including metaphysics, vagueness, and the origins of analytic philosophy and phenomenology—which led to a conference on vagueness in Bled, some of whose papers are collected in Horgan and Potrč 2000, 2003, and to a conference on origins whose proceedings are collected in Horgan, Potrč, and Tienson 2002. Our conversations about metaphysics, which continued over several years on different occasions of Terry's visiting Slovenia, led to four coauthored papers (Horgan and Potrč 2000, 2002, 2006a, 2006b) and then to this book. The book contains material adapted from these papers and also from Barnard and Horgan 2006; Horgan 1993b, 1998b, 2001b, 2002; Horgan and Timmons 2002; and Potrč 1999a. We thank the editors of the journals in which these papers appeared for their kind permission to adapt material from them. Other papers and books containing ideas that are echoed in this book include Horgan 1986a, 1986b, 1991, 1995a, 1995b, 1996, 2000; Potrč 2000, 2002b, 2002d, 2003, 2004a; and Potrč and Strahovnik 2004a, 2004b, 2005.

We are grateful to a number of friends and collaborators for helpful discussion about these matters over the years. Special thanks to Robert Barnard, Wilhelm Baumgartner, David Chalmers, Jonathan Dancy, Norman Gillespie, Mitch Haney, Helen Daly, Rafael Hüntelmann, Jenann Ismael, Dale Jacqueline, Barry Loewer, Michael Lynch, Cole Mitchell, Laurie Paul,

Maria Reicher, Mark Richard, Steve Schwartz, Jonathan Schaffer, Herman Stark, Vojko Strahovnik, Danilo Šuster, Tadeusz Szubka, Bill Throop, John Tienson, Mark Timmons, Armando Verdiglione, and Timothy Williamson. Helpful critical papers about work of ours reflected in this book include Lynch 2002; Reicher 2002; Szubka 2002; Tienson 2002; Williamson 2002; and Richard 2006. Our thanks too to Hilary Putnam, who in 1986 directed a very enjoyable NEH Summer Seminar on “Philosophical Problems about Truth and Reality” at Harvard, replied in Putnam 1991 to Terry’s seminar essay containing an early articulation of ideas in the present book (Horgan 1991), replied to Matjaž’s Pecs, Hungary realism presentation in 2003, and in 1986 urged Terry to write a book on these themes; better late than never.