

METAPHYSICA

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL FOR ONTOLOGY & METAPHYSICS

Editors: RAFAEL HÜNTELMANN (Cologne)
UWE MEIXNER (Regensburg) • ERWIN TEGTMEIER (Mannheim)

Volume 2 (2001) • No. 2

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Website: www.Metaphysica.net
www.Metaphysica.de

Frequency of publication: METAPHYSICA is published in two volumes annually. The price of a single volume is DEM 44,00 (EUR 22,50), in subscription DEM 76,00 (EUR 39,00) plus postage and dispatch costs. Order from: Verlag J.H. Röll GmbH, PO Box 9, D-97335 Dettelbach, Germany.

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ISSN 1437-2053

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INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL FOR ONTOLOGY & METAPHYSICS

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E.J. LOWE

Dispositions and Laws

Dispositional versus categorical properties

Many philosophers like to distinguish between ‘dispositional’ and ‘categorical’ *properties*, but then puzzle over the relation between them. Some of these philosophers maintain that all dispositional properties have categorical ‘bases’ — that is, that dispositional properties are always ‘grounded in’, ‘realised by’, or ‘supervene upon’ categorical properties of their bearers, or categorical properties and relations of the microstructural constituents of their bearers. Some of these same philosophers go on to argue that dispositional properties are ‘second-order’ properties — that is, that a dispositional property is the property of having some first-order categorical property in virtue of which its bearer is disposed to behave in some specific way in suitable circumstances.¹ Other philosophers contend that there can be ‘pure’ dispositional properties or powers, which have no categorical basis at all, or even, more radically, that *all* properties are dispositional.² Yet others (notably, C.B. Martin) maintain that all properties have both a dispositional and a categorical (or ‘qualitative’) *aspect*, so that it is an

¹ For a view of this kind, see Elizabeth Prior, *Dispositions* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1985). See also Elizabeth Prior, Robert Pargetter and Frank Jackson, ‘Three Theses about Dispositions’, *American Philosophical Quarterly* 19 (1982), pp. 251-7.

² See D.H. Mellor, ‘In Defense of Dispositions’, *Philosophical Review* 83 (1974), pp. 157-81.

error to suppose that the dispositional/categorical distinction is a distinction between *types of property*.³

I am not persuaded that any of these views is correct, but of all of them I find the last the least implausible, especially insofar as it denies that the dispositional/categorical distinction is properly to be construed as a distinction between types of property. I should also say, however, that I do not particularly favour using the term ‘categorical’ to express the distinction at issue, preferring the term ‘occurrent’, for reasons which will emerge in due course.

Predicates and properties

It is a familiar — but insufficiently emphasised — point that not every meaningful predicate expresses a real (that is, an existing) property. We know this as a matter of logic, because the predicate ‘is non-self-exemplifying’ is perfectly meaningful — and, indeed, is truly applicable to some things — and yet there cannot, on pain of contradiction, be such a property as the property of being non-self-exemplifying: because if such a property exists, it must either exemplify itself or not exemplify itself — and if it does, then it doesn’t, and if it doesn’t, then it does. Either way, then, we have a contradiction: so such a property does not exist. This, of course, is just a version of Russell’s paradox. But given that not every meaningful predicate expresses an existing property, we need a way of determining, if possible, when precisely it is that a meaningful predicate does express an existing property. In other words, we need an answer to the following question: when is it that we are entitled to say that the property of being *F* exists, where ‘*F*’ is some meaningful predicate? This is a far from easy question to answer.

Elsewhere, I have tried to defend the following answer to this question: the property of being *F* exists just in case (i) there is some property which is exemplified by all and only those things which are *F* and

³ See, especially, Martin’s contributions to D.M. Armstrong, C.B. Martin and U.T. Place, *Dispositions: A Debate*, ed. Tim Crane (London: Routledge, 1996). See also C.B. Martin and John Heil, ‘The Ontological Turn’, *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* XXIII (1999), pp. 34-60.

(ii) there is something which is F .⁴ There is nothing circular about this proposal. It is true that it specifies the existence conditions of the property of being F in terms which involve quantification over properties. But that is unexceptionable, because my aim is not to state what it is for properties in general to exist — only what it is for there to exist the property of being F , where ‘ F ’ is a quite specific meaningful predicate. Satisfaction of these existence conditions is a far from trivial matter — and it certainly does not appear that the proposal commits us to the absurdity of supposing that every meaningful predicate expresses an existing property. The idea behind the proposal is the seemingly common-sense one that the property of being F is what all and only the F s have in common, if indeed they do all have something in common. The proposal allows room for the possibility that in many cases the F s do *not* have something exclusively in common — for instance, that there is nothing that all and only *games* have in common. I should emphasise that I am, of course, talking here about properties in the sense of *universals*, not in the sense of property-instances, ‘tropes’, or (my own preferred term) *modes*. I should also remark that foregoing proposal will need some adjustment in order to accommodate the distinction that I shall be making shortly between dispositional and occurrent *predication*. But before coming to that I want to turn to some more general matters of ontology.

The four-category ontology

Some metaphysicians favour sparse ontologies where properties are concerned — some implausibly denying the existence of properties altogether, others only acknowledging the existence of properties in the sense of *universals*, and yet others only acknowledging the existence of properties in the sense of tropes or modes (that is, properties as *particulars*, or ‘particularised’ properties). Some metaphysicians are equally sparing concerning the bearers of properties, that is, concerning *substances* or ‘objects’. Some of them maintain that objects are just

⁴ See my ‘Abstraction, Properties, and Immanent Realism’, *Proceedings of the Twentieth World Congress of Philosophy, Volume 2: Metaphysics*, ed. Tom Rockmore (Bowling Green, OH: Philosophy Documentation Center, 1999), pp 195-205.

bundles of properties, either bundles of universals or bundles of tropes. My own position is more liberal, both with regard to properties and with regard to substances. I favour a ‘four-category’ ontology, which seems also to have been favoured by Aristotle, at least in the *Categories*. According to this ontology, there are both universals and particulars. Particulars fall into two distinct categories: individual substances on the one hand and modes (or tropes) on the other, with substances being (in a certain sense which I have defined elsewhere) *ontologically independent* entities while modes are ontologically dependent upon the substances which are their ‘bearers’.⁵ Equally, universals fall into two distinct categories: substantial universals, or *kinds*, and non-substantial universals, or *properties*. (I ignore relations for the time being, for the sake of simplicity, but in fact I take these to be non-substantial universals whose particular instances are relational tropes.) Individual substances are particular instances of substantial universals, or kinds, while modes are particular instances of non-substantial universals, or properties. This is not the place for me to undertake a full-scale defence of this four-category ontology: I have defended it elsewhere.⁶ We shall see shortly how the ontology bears upon the question of the nature of dispositions and their relation to laws.

Dispositional versus occurrent predication

I have already indicated that I am opposed to drawing a distinction between dispositional and categorical (or occurrent) *properties*, as though what is at issue here is a distinction between types of property. Rather, I want to distinguish between dispositional and (as I prefer to call it) occurrent *predication*.⁷ And, as I have already remarked, not

⁵ For more on the notion of ontological dependence in play here, see my *The Possibility of Metaphysics: Substance, Identity, and Time* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), Ch. 6.

⁶ For more details, see my *The Possibility of Metaphysics*, Ch. 9, or my ‘Form without Matter’, *Ratio* 11 (1998), pp. 214-34.

⁷ See further my *Kinds of Being: A Study of Individuation, Identity and the Logic of Sortal Terms* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), Chs. 8-10, much of which is based on my earlier papers ‘Sortal Terms and Natural Laws’, *American Philosophical Quarterly* 17

every predicate expresses a corresponding existent property. The distinction in question is exhibited in such pairs of sentences as ‘This piece of rubber is *stretchy*’ and ‘This piece of rubber is *stretching*’, or ‘This stuff *dissolves* in water’ and ‘This stuff is *dissolving* in water’. Now, my view is that, even when a predicate *does* express a real property, it expresses *one and the same* property (in the sense of *universal*) irrespective of whether the predication involved is dispositional or occurrent in character. But before I try to explain what is behind this suggestion, let us look at some further examples.

Consider, then, properties of shape and colour, which many philosophers regard as paradigm examples of categorical and dispositional properties respectively. Thus, for example, the property of being square is often held to be a paradigmatically categorical property, while the property of being red is often held to be a dispositional property — the property of being disposed to induce ‘red’ sensations in normal percipients in normal viewing conditions, or something like that. (Here I am setting aside the deeper question of whether colour properties really exist; let us suppose for present purposes that they do.) But I would urge that each of the predicates ‘is square’ and ‘is red’ has both a dispositional and an occurrent interpretation. Thus, I suggest, a surface which ‘is red’ in the *dispositional* sense is one which, nevertheless, is *not* red, in the *occurrent* sense, in a darkened room or under blue light: in those circumstances, I suggest, the surface is grey or black in the occurrent sense. If we used verbs instead of adjectives to express colour, as some languages do, this would be more obvious. We could then render more explicit the distinction between the occurrent and dispositional senses of our ambiguous colour predicate ‘is red’ by saying that a surface which is not *redding* under blue light may nonetheless be a *reddy* surface — just as we say that a piece of rubber which is not *stretching* may nonetheless be *stretchy*. Equally, I think that a surface can be both occurrently and dispositionally *square* — but, again, that this should not be conceived of as a distinction between different types of property of the surface. For example, a rubber eraser may be ‘square’ in the dispositional sense while also being ‘trapezoid’, say, in

(1980), pp. 253–60, and ‘Laws, Dispositions and Sortal Logic’, *American Philosophical Quarterly* 19 (1982), pp. 41–50.

the occurrent sense, when it is subjected to certain distorting stresses. (Note, however, that I don't want to say that a surface is occurrently non-square simply when it *looks* non-square to some observer, because I take it that squareness is a primary property whose possession by an object has nothing to do with its relation to observers.)

*The ontological ground
of the dispositional/occurrent distinction*

I have said that I don't regard the dispositional/occurrent distinction to be one between types of property, but this is not to say that I do not think that it has any ontological ground at all. Quite the contrary. My proposal is simply this. *Occurrent* predication involves the attribution to an object of some *mode* of a property: that is, it involves the attribution to an object of a property-instance or trope which instantiates some property (in the sense of *universal*). By contrast, *dispositional* predication involves the attribution of some property (in the sense of *universal*) to an object's substantial *kind*. Thus, for example, to say that a certain piece of common salt is water-soluble is, on my view, to say that this object is something of a water-soluble kind. This is a proposal which is reminiscent, incidentally, of one which W.V. Quine has advanced, although only as part of a general attempt to downgrade the scientific significance of our talk of dispositions — an attempt with which I have no sympathy.⁸

More precisely, the proposal is this. A sentence of the form '*a* is occurrently *F*' means '*a* possesses a mode of *Fness*', whereas a sentence of form '*a* is dispositionally *F*' means '*a* instantiates a kind *K* which possesses *Fness*'. Thus, according to this view, properties (in the sense of *universals*) primarily characterise *kinds*, and only derivatively or indirectly characterise individual substances or objects. Properties, however, can derivatively or indirectly characterise individual objects in either of two quite different ways. One way in which properties can indirectly characterise individual objects is inasmuch as those objects

⁸ See W.V. Quine, 'Natural Kinds', in his *Ontological Relativity and Other Essays* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969).

Freiheit als Selbstursächlichkeit. Ein fruchtbares Mißverständnis bei Thomas von Aquin?

Durch das berühmte Streitgespräch, das Thomas Hobbes im Jahre 1645 in Paris mit dem Bischof John Bramhall führte, zieht sich wie ein roter Faden die Frage, ob frei zu sein für einen Menschen lediglich heißt, frei zu sein, das zu *tun*, was er tun will, oder ob frei zu sein für einen Menschen darüber hinaus auch und vor allem heißt, frei zu sein, das tun zu *wollen*, was er tun will. Im Gegensatz zu Hobbes, nach dessen Ansicht es eine über die *Handlungsfreiheit*, die darin besteht, daß man so handeln kann, wie man handeln will, hinausgehende Freiheit des *Willens* nicht gibt, vertritt Bramhall die Auffassung, daß es ohne Willensfreiheit auch keine Handlungsfreiheit geben kann, jedenfalls keine Handlungsfreiheit die diesen Namen verdient. Nach Bramhall hat die Handlungsfreiheit ihre Grundlage in der Freiheit des Willens, die der Handelnde nach ihm dann und nur dann besitzt, wenn es nicht durch irgendwelche von seinem Willen unabhängige Faktoren bestimmt ist, sondern er selbst darüber bestimmt, wie er handeln will.¹ Hobbes, für den „wahre Freiheit“, wie er betont, „nicht darin besteht, daß man sich (in seinem Wollen) selbst bestimmt, sondern darin, daß man das tut, worauf sich das Wollen richtet, zu dem man bestimmt ist“ („true liberty [...] doth not consist in determining itself, but in doing what the will is determined unto“)², hält diese Auffassung für abwegig. Die Rede davon, daß man Herr über sich selbst ist oder sich selbst bestimmt, ist für ihn nur leeres Geschwätz: „This ‚dominion over itself,‘ [...] and this, ‚determining itself,‘ [...] are confused and empty words.“³ Wer von Selbstbestimmung spricht, muß sich nach Hobbes fragen lassen, was jemanden, der sich angeblich selbst bestimmt, denn

¹ Zu den unterschiedlichen Freiheitsauffassungen von Hobbes und Bramhall vgl. Hobbes 1966: 4f., 30, 32, 34f., 38f., 40f., 42f., 44f., 47f., 50f., 54, 113, 278f., 292f.

² Hobbes 1966: 35.

³ Ebd.; vgl. 293.

dazu bestimmt hat, sich selbst zu bestimmen.⁴ Offenbar befürchtet Hobbes, daß es auf einen unendlichen Regreß hinausläuft, wenn man sich in dem Sinne selbst bestimmen zu können glaubt, daß man nicht nur etwas *tun* kann, wenn man es tun will, sondern auch etwas *wollen* kann, wenn man es wollen will. Auch nur davon zu sprechen, daß man etwas *wollen* kann, wenn man es wollen will, ist nach Hobbes unsinnig: „[...] to say, I can will if I will, I take to be an absurd speech.“⁵

Der Streit um die Konzeption einer als Selbstbestimmung verstandenen Freiheit ist bis heute nicht beigelegt. Galen Strawson beispielsweise bezeichnet es in seinem Buch *Freedom and Belief* als töricht, Freiheit an die seiner Meinung nach unerfüllbare Bedingung zu knüpfen, daß man „hinsichtlich seines Charakters und seiner Motivation *causa sui*“⁶ ist, sich also in dieser Hinsicht selbst bestimmt. Robert Kane hingegen hält es zwar für sinnvoll, Freiheit als Selbstbestimmung zu konzipieren, räumt denjenigen, die an dieser Freiheitskonzeption Anstoß nehmen, jedoch ein, daß sie insofern nicht unproblematisch ist, als sie die fragwürdige Vorstellung von dem sich an seinen Haaren selbst aus dem Sumpf ziehenden Baron von Münchhausen heraufbeschwört.⁷ Wie er in seinem Buch *Free Will and Values* gesteht, vermißt Kane in den am Begriff der Selbstbestimmung orientierten Freiheitstheorien eine Erklärung dafür, wie der sich selbst bestimmende Mensch als Ursache dessen zu fungieren vermag, wozu er sich selbst bestimmt. Ohne eine solche Erklärung sind in seinen Augen Freiheit als Selbstbestimmung definierende philosophische Theorien ebenso obskur wie theologische Theorien, die Gott als eine *causa sui* definieren.⁸

Der Begriff der *causa sui*, den Robert Kane und Galen Strawson in ihren Abhandlungen zum Freiheitsproblem beiläufig erwähnen, ist ein Schlüsselbegriff der Freiheitslehre des Thomas von Aquin. In Thomas von Aquins Werk findet man an mehreren Stellen eine Definition des Begriffs „Freiheit“, der zufolge frei zu sein Ursache seiner selbst

⁴ Vgl. Hobbes 1966: 34f.

⁵ Hobbes 1966: 39.

⁶ Strawson 1986: 59.

⁷ Vgl. Kane 1985: 11.

⁸ Vgl. ebd.

zu sein heißt: „Liberum est quod sui causa est.“⁹ Thomas beruft sich für diese Definition auf einen Satz im ersten Buch der *Metaphysik* des Aristoteles, der lautet: „Denjenigen Menschen nennen wir frei, der um seiner selbst willen und nicht um eines anderen willen da ist“ (ἄνθρωπος, φαιμέν, ἐλεύθερος ὁ αὐτοῦ ἕνεκα καὶ μὴ ἄλλου ὄν: *Met.* A 2, 982 b 25f.).¹⁰ In seinem Kommentar zur Aristotelischen *Metaphysik* zitiert Thomas diesen Satz in der aus dem 12. Jahrhundert stammenden anonymen lateinischen Übersetzung, die man zur Unterscheidung von den beiden Übersetzungen, denen man die Namen „translatio vetus“ und „translatio vetustissima“ gegeben hat, als *translatio media* zu bezeichnen pflegt.¹¹ In dieser Übersetzung lautet der fragliche Satz: „ut dicimus, homo liber qui suimet et non alterius causa est“¹². Wie seine Erläuterung dieses Satzes zeigt, ist sich Thomas zwar darüber im klaren, daß in ihm nicht von der *metaphysischen* Freiheit dessen die Rede ist, der einen freien Willen hat, sondern von der *sozialen* Freiheit dessen, der keines anderen Knecht, sondern sein eigener Herr ist¹³; überall dort, wo er diesen Satz außerhalb seines *Metaphysik*-Kommentars sinngemäß zitiert, führt er ihn jedoch an, um mit ihm seine Theorie der Willensfreiheit zu untermauern. Abgesehen davon, daß er hierdurch den Sinn dieses Satzes verschiebt, mißverstehet er ihn auch insofern, als er das Wort „causa“, das als Wiedergabe des griechischen ἕνεκα im Ablativ steht, als ein im Nominativ stehendes Wort auffaßt. Er mißdeutet also den Ausdruck „suimet causa“, der in dem fraglichen Satz soviel wie „um seiner selbst willen“ bedeutet, im Sinne von „Ursache seiner selbst“.

Es gibt Mißverständnisse, die furchtbare Folgen haben, aber auch solche, die sich als fruchtbar erweisen. Von welcher Art das Mißverständnis ist, dem Thomas von Aquin bei seiner Fehlinterpretation des Satzes zum Opfer gefallen ist, mit dem Aristoteles erläutert, was es für

⁹ *S. c. g.* II 48; vgl. *De ver.* 24, 1 c (Siewerth 1954: 227); *S. th.* I 83, 1, obi. 3, I-II 108, 1 ad 2; *Comp. theol.* I, tract. 1, cap. 76.

¹⁰ Übersetzung: H. W.

¹¹ Vgl. hierzu Chenu 1960: 245f.

¹² *Arist. Lat.* XXV-2: 11, 1f.; Thomas von Aquin, *In Met.*, lib. I, lect. 3, textus Arist. nr. 29.

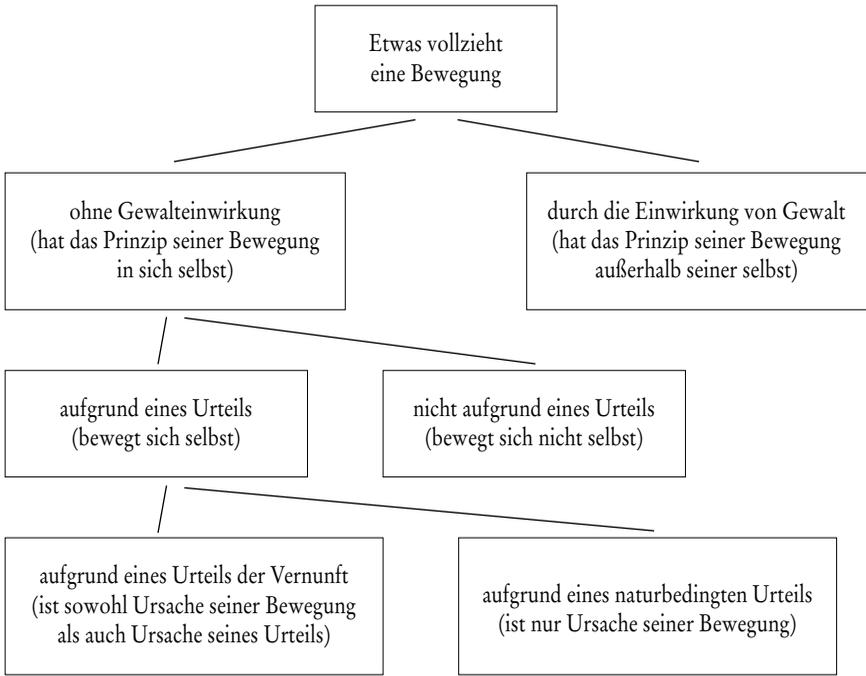
¹³ Vgl. *In Met.*, lib. I, lect. 3, comm. nr. 58.

einen Menschen heißt, frei zu sein, muß eine Prüfung der Freiheitstheorie zeigen, die er auf seinem Verständnis dieses Satzes aufbaut.

Fast alle Texte, in denen Thomas den fraglichen Satz zitiert, haben das *liberum arbitrium* zum Thema, d.h. das Vermögen zur freien Entscheidung. Daß der Mensch dieses Vermögen besitzt, versucht Thomas im ersten Artikel der *quaestio* 24 der *Quaestiones disputatae de veritate* durch folgende Überlegung einsichtig zu machen¹⁴: Alles, was irgendeine Bewegung vollzieht — wobei das Wort „Bewegung“ in einem weiten Sinne zu verstehen ist, in welchem es auch auf tierische Verhaltensweisen und auf menschliche Tätigkeiten zutrifft —, hat je nachdem, ob es die betreffende Bewegung ohne Gewalteinwirkung vollzieht oder durch die Einwirkung von Gewalt, das Prinzip dieser Bewegung entweder in sich selbst oder außerhalb seiner selbst. Alles, was das Prinzip einer Bewegung, die es vollzieht, in sich selbst hat, vollzieht diese Bewegung je nachdem, ob es sie aufgrund eines Urteils vollzieht oder nicht, entweder so, daß es sich selbst bewegt, was die Menschen und die Tiere tun, oder so, daß es sich, was die leblosen Dinge tun, nicht selbst bewegt. Alles, was sich selbst bewegt, bewegt sich je nachdem, ob es die Bewegung, die es vollzieht, aufgrund eines durch seine Natur bedingten Urteils vollzieht oder aufgrund eines Urteils der Vernunft, entweder in der Weise selbst, daß es zwar die Ursache der von ihm vollzogenen Bewegung ist, aber nicht die Ursache des Urteils, aufgrund dessen es diese Bewegung vollzieht, oder in der Weise, daß es sowohl die Ursache seiner Bewegung als auch die Ursache seines Urteils ist. Ersteres ist bei den Tieren der Fall, letzteres beim Menschen.

Im Gegensatz zu den Tieren, die lediglich in dem Sinne Ursache ihrer selbst und damit frei sind, daß sie ihr Verhalten aufgrund eines nicht von ihnen selbst verursachten, sondern ihnen von Natur aus mitgegebenen Urteils (d.h. durch ihren Instinkt) selbst verursachen, ist der Mensch nach Thomas in dem Sinne Ursache seiner selbst und damit frei, daß er die Tätigkeiten, die er ausführt, aufgrund eines Urteils selbst verursacht, das als ein Urteil seiner Vernunft auch seinerseits wiederum von ihm selbst verursacht ist. Die spezifisch menschliche Freiheit besteht nach Thomas also in der Fähigkeit des Menschen, sich

¹⁴ *De ver.* 24, 1 c (Siewerth 1954: 227–229). Vgl. auch *S. c. g.* II 48 („Item ...“).



so in seinem Tun und Handeln selbst zu bewegen (oder selbst zu bestimmen), daß er sich dabei zugleich in seinem Urteil darüber, was er tun und wie er handeln soll, selbst bewegt (oder selbst bestimmt).

Wie ist eine solche Selbstbewegung (oder Selbstbestimmung) im Urteilen, als welche Thomas im 48. Kapitel des zweiten Buches der *Summa contra gentiles* den Vollzug einer freien Entscheidung beschreibt, möglich? An allem, was sich selbst bewegt, lassen sich nach Thomas zwei Teile unterscheiden, von denen der eine bewegt und der andere bewegt wird. Was diejenige Selbstbewegung betrifft, die darin besteht, daß sich der Mensch im *Handeln* selbst bewegt, so ist der bewegende Teil der Verstand, mit dem der Mensch darüber urteilt, wie er handeln soll, und der bewegte Teil der Wille, mit dem der Mensch den Vollzug der Handlung, die er nach dem Urteil seines Verstandes vollziehen soll, anstrebt. Im Handeln bewegt sich der Mensch nach Thomas also in der Weise selbst, daß er sich durch seinen von seinem

Verstand — genauer gesagt: durch seinen von einem Urteil seines Verstandes — bewegten Willen zum Handeln bewegt.¹⁵ Daß sich der Mensch auch im *Urteilen* selbst bewegt, müßte demnach heißen, daß sich der Mensch nicht nur durch seinen von einem Urteil darüber, wie er handeln soll, bewegten Willen zum *Handeln* bewegt, sondern daß er sich auch durch seinen von einem Urteil darüber, wie er sich ein solches Urteil bilden soll, bewegten Willen zum *Urteilen* darüber bewegt, wie er handeln soll. Dieser Auffassung scheint Thomas in der Tat zu sein. Denn er schreibt dem Menschen die Fähigkeit zu, über sein Urteil darüber, wie er handeln soll, zu reflektieren und es damit zum Gegenstand eines neuen Urteils zu machen, mit dem er darüber urteilt, ob eine von ihm vorläufig als gut beurteilte Handlungsweise unter dem Aspekt, unter dem er sie als gut beurteilt, auch wirklich als gut beurteilt zu werden verdient.¹⁶ Sich über seine handlungsbezogenen Urteile ein Urteil zu bilden vermag der Mensch nach Thomas insofern, als er zu erkennen vermag, mit welchen Mitteln er das Ziel erreichen kann, das er durch sein Handeln erreichen will.¹⁷

Was die Fähigkeit des Menschen, sich im Urteilen selbst zu bewegen, mit seiner Fähigkeit zu tun hat, die der Erreichung eines von ihm gewollten Ziels dienlichen Mittel zu erkennen, und welche Rolle der Wille bei dieser Selbstbewegung spielt, geht aus dem ersten (und einzigen) Artikel der *quaestio* 6 der *Quaestiones disputatae de malo* hervor. Wie Thomas in diesem Artikel darlegt, wird der Wille, was den tatsächlichen Vollzug eines Willensaktes im Unterschied zu seiner inhaltlichen Bestimmtheit betrifft, die er durch sein Objekt erfährt, durch sich selbst bewegt, und zwar in der Weise, daß der Mensch sich dadurch, daß er aktuell ein bestimmtes Ziel, wie z.B. die Erhaltung seiner Gesundheit, erreichen will, dazu bewegt, die ihn zu diesem Ziel führenden Mittel, die er potentiell will, ebenfalls aktuell zu wollen. Um sich hierzu bewegen zu können, muß der Mensch Überlegungen darüber anstellen, welches die Mittel sind, die ihn zu dem angestrebten Ziel führen; und um diese Überlegungen anstellen zu können, muß er sie anstellen wollen, wozu es nach Thomas wiederum einer Überlegung

¹⁵ Vgl. *S. c. g.* II 48 („Item ...“).

¹⁶ Vgl. *S. c. g.* II 48 („Item ...“, „Adhuc ...“).

¹⁷ Vgl. *De ver.* 24, 1 c (Siewerth 1954: 228f.).

Species and Dimensions of Pleasure

There are ontological investigations and analyses of various sorts. One of them is classificatory. Just as the botanist classifies plants into genera and species, so too the ontologist can try to classify the furniture of the world in a systematic way. The highest genera in such a system are called *categories*. This paper aims at a classification of the first species of the genus of pleasure, where pleasure is taken to be a mental quality. Classificatory ontology is not necessarily “ontology for ontology’s sake”. Sometimes a new ontological scheme brings to light hidden presuppositions in other philosophical areas and, perhaps, even in the philosopher’s culture as a whole. It may show that some ontological species have been invisible because of a blind spot in the dominant ontology. I think that this has been the fate of some species of pleasure. Utilitarianism, preference utilitarianism included, has been blind to certain types of pleasure, in particular pleasures in activities.

1. Pleasure and related categories

What is pleasure? The contrary of pleasure is displeasure or pain. However, pleasure and displeasure have, like positive and negative electric charges, something in common. They are both *affective phenomena*, the one with a positive sign the other with a negative sign. Affective phenomena contain or depend on non-affective parts; they depend on pure *cognitions*. In my opinion, when one is in an affective state one is always directed at something. By ‘cognizing’, I mean not only perceiving and thinking (seeing an evaluatively completely neutral thing, seeing that some natural state of affairs obtains, thinking of an evaluatively completely neutral state of affairs, etc.), but also having sensations. I am of the opinion (see section 3) that to have an affectively neutral sensation is to cognize it. Often, but not always, affective phenomena also contain conations. There are two basic kinds of conations, desires and aversions. In other words, conations, like affective

phenomena and unlike cognitions, often have a polar opposite.¹ However, in what follows I am not going to discuss all the aspects of affective phenomena. I am only going to discuss the *affective aspect* of affective phenomena.

Famous philosophers have referred to the polarity of affective phenomena in different ways. Spinoza talked about joy and sorrow, Hume about approval and disapproval, Kant and the utilitarians about feelings of pleasure and pain, and Brentano about love and hate. These choices reflect different views and emphases. I myself shall use ‘*pleasure*’ as a *genus* term for the affective aspect of positive affective phenomena and ‘*displeasure*’ as the corresponding negative *genus*. One consequence of my terminological choice is that the affective aspects of enjoyments and states like being in love are called pleasures.

Some pleasures may be called ‘*pleasure that*’, some ‘*pleasure in*’, and some ‘*pleasure sensations*’. I can be happy *that* something has happened, I can feel pleasure *in* seeing something, and I can *have* pleasurable taste sensations. All these different phenomena fall under the genus concept of pleasure. Obviously, the pleasure involved in a *pleasure that* or a *pleasure in* is not an existentially self-sufficient phenomena, but is merely an aspect of a larger complex whole. Many mental phenomena contain both cognitive, conative, and affective parts. *Pleasure that* and *pleasure in* always contain both cognitive and affective parts; *pleasure that* and *pleasure in* are existentially dependent upon cognitions. In this they are similar to conations. A conation (desire or aversion) is always directed at something, i.e. it is dependent upon something cognized; be it something supposed, represented, presented or sensed. We can have *pure cognitions* (cognitions free of all conations and pleasures) but *pure conations* (conations free of all cognitions) are impossible.

There is a tendency to take it for granted that all our desires are desires for pleasure or for the reduction or elimination of displeasure. In John Stuart Mill’s famous words:

¹ Note that I am not claiming that all *specific emotions* have a polar opposite. For comments on this problem, see e.g. Kevin Mulligan, “The Spectre of Inverted Emotions and the Space of Emotions”, *Acta Analytica* 18 (1997), pp. 89-105; esp. §5. Here, I would also like to take the opportunity to thank KM for several discussions related to this paper.

that to think of an object as desirable (unless for the sake of its consequences), and to think of it as pleasant, are one and the same thing; and that to desire anything, except in proportion as the idea of it is pleasant, is a physical and metaphysical impossibility.²

I happen to think that Mill is wrong, but even if he is right, pleasure (= the affective aspect of a positive affective phenomena) is nonetheless distinct from desire. A desire is always a conation *for* something, and a rational desire is necessarily future-directed. When we have a desire, we experience a *conscious tendency*, a striving for something which we either want to have, want to do, or want to come into existence, but when we feel we *need not* have such a tendency. We may, for instance, be in a state of pleasure without having any desire for the pleasure to continue. There are, though, a lot of subtleties in the relationship between affections and conations, but they will not be explored here. I only want to claim that *some mental phenomena have “three dimensions”*: cognitions, conations, and an affective aspect. *Pleasure is the same as positive affective aspect.*³

The question to be dealt with in sections 2 to 7 is: What are the highest species and dimensions of pleasure?

2. Bentham and Mill on pleasures

Jeremy Bentham once made a long list of different kinds of pleasures and pains, both complex and simple.⁴ He distinguished fourteen main species of simple pleasures, namely pleasures of sense, wealth, skill, amity, a good name, power, piety, benevolence, malevolence, memory, imagination, expectation, relief, and pleasures dependent on association. Some of these pleasures he divided into different sub-species, but he left some questions unanswered. Are all the different simple pleasures different in the way the different *infima species* of color hues are different color hues? Are the simple pleasures different only because

² Mill, *Utilitarianism*, Fontana: London 1962, p. 293 (chapter IV).

³ This means that my views on pleasure belong to the so-called “quality-of-consciousness theories of pleasure”; see W.P. Alston’s article “Pleasure” in *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Macmillan: New York 1967. Cf. note 13.

⁴ Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation*, chapter V.

one and the same kind of pleasurable feeling is connected with different cognitive states or sensations?

According to the *pluralistic* view, pleasures in smells and pleasures in tastes are different species of the genus pleasure in the way that the yellow hue and the green hue are different species of the genus color hue. According to the *monistic* view, there is one and only one kind of pleasure, a kind of feeling which can be connected with a lot of other mental states, among them smell sensations and taste sensations. On both these accounts of pleasure, pleasure can of course vary in intensity and duration. The monistic view implies that the affective aspects of all pleasures of the same intensity and duration are of equal worth; the pluralistic view is compatible with such a claim but does not entail it.

John Stuart Mill thought that Bentham's monistic view was wrong. As a rectification, Mill proposed his distinction between higher and lower pleasures:

The comparison of the Epicurean life to that of beasts is not felt as degrading, precisely because a beast's pleasures do not satisfy a human beings conception of happiness. Human beings have faculties more elevated than the animal appetites, and when once made conscious of them, do not regard anything as happiness which does not include their gratification. --- But there is no known Epicurean theory of life which does not assign to the pleasures of the intellect, of the feelings and imagination, and of the moral sentiments, a much higher value as pleasures than to those of mere sensation. It must be admitted, however, that utilitarian writers in general have placed the superiority of mental over bodily pleasures chiefly in the greater permanency, safety, uncostliness, etc., of the former — that is, in their circumstantial advantages rather than in their intrinsic nature.⁵

Like Bentham, Mill was not really interested in making clear the ontological difference between “the mental pleasures of the intellect” and “the bodily pleasures of sensation”. He was only interested in their *value difference*. However, it is hard not to regard such a value difference as being founded on some difference between natural kinds of pleasures. How can one *kind* of pleasure be more valuable than another *kind* if there is no essential natural difference between them?

According to Mill, there are two different supreme kinds of pleasures, mental and bodily. Might there be more? Kant made a distinc-

⁵ Mill, *Utilitarianism*, Fontana: London 1962, p 258 (chapter II).

tion between *three* kinds or objects of pleasures (“Lust”).⁶ I shall, firstly, propose a quadripartite classification of pleasures into:

- (i) sensory pleasure in objects, events, and states of affairs,
- (ii) non-sensory pleasure in objects, events, and states of affairs,
- (iii) sensory pleasure in activities and accomplishments, and
- (iv) non-sensory pleasure in activities and accomplishments (summary in section 6); as I am using the terms above, actions are not regarded as events.

Secondly (in section 7), I will expand this classification by introducing yet another distinction: pleasure connected with self-awareness versus pleasure not connected with self-awareness.

3. *Sensory pleasures*

Most discussions about pleasures take it for granted that some sensory pleasures, in particular bodily sensations, can be taken as typical examples of pleasures; and that, therefore, they are the proper point of departure.⁷ Such sensory pleasures are often tacitly assumed to be *necessarily pleasant*. But is it an analytic truth that sensory pleasures are pleasant? Experiences which we traditionally denote by ‘sensory pleasure’ contain, I will argue, a duality in which pleasure is merely one of the two aspects.

What I am trying to nail down with regard to pleasure has been brought out clearly in a discussion about whether or not *pains* are *necessarily unpleasant*.⁸ The view that pains are *not* necessarily un-

⁶ Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, Hafner Press: New York 1951, §5; translation J.H. Bernard. Kant distinguished between the *pleasure of the pleasant* (which arises when the sensual desires which we share with the animals are satisfied), the *pleasure of the good* (which is connected with our interest in morals), and the *pleasure of the beautiful* (which is the result of a free play of the faculty of imagination).

⁷ As Alston says in his article “Pleasure” (in *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Macmillan: New York 1967): “The heavy emphasis on the bodily sensation theory in recent philosophical discussion has tended to obscure the fact that there are a number of other theories that belong to the same family”, p. 342.

⁸ R.J. Hall, “Are pains necessarily unpleasant?”, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* vol. XLIX (1989) pp. 643-659.

pleasant has empirical backing. Some people in pain who have been given morphine have reported that they still have the same pain sensation, but that this sensation is no longer unpleasant or painful. The old concepts cannot really handle the new situation; a sensation which is not painful should of course, ideally, not be called a pain sensation. But lacking adequate concepts for this wholly new kind of sensation, people sometimes take recourse to seemingly contradictory sentences like 'The pain sensation is not painful any more'. I think that this empirical finding about pains should be taken very seriously for the following reasons.

Let us look at the ordinary distinction between (i) a meaningful word as a whole, (ii) its linguistic meaning in abstraction from the sign, and (iii) the word as a pure meaningless sign, i.e. as mere sound or inscription. This tripartition can easily be understood if we think of two different kinds of experiences. First, almost everyone can see that different sounds or inscriptions which belong to different languages can be very similar in spite of obvious differences (e.g. English 'yellow', German 'gelb', and Spanish 'amarillo'). Second, when we start to learn a new language we do perceive only pure sounds and inscriptions; only later do they become real words with linguistic meaning. Any person familiar with experiences like these is able to understand the distinction between a word, its meaning, and the sounds and inscriptions. The same, however, I think, cannot be said of a person living in an absolutely mono-lingual community. Of course, in such a community the distinctions are not pragmatically needed, but, and that is my point, they are probably extremely hard to make even for a good philosopher living there. He must make thought experiments in order to find the distinctions, and I think that what we are able to imagine is in part dependent upon what, in fact, we have earlier perceived.

To me, at least, the morphine observations referred to were astonishing in a way which is similar to the astonishment which, I think, arose in people in mono-lingual communities when they for the first time heard about the existence of other languages. If the rumors were true, they needed new distinctions within their own language. Henceforth, it would be useful to be able to talk *about* different languages and distinguish between a word and its two parts, the meaning on the

DALE JACQUETTE

Truth and Fiction in David Lewis' Critique of Meinongian Semantics

1. Semantics of Fiction

In 'Truth in Fiction', David Lewis raises four objections to a Meinongian semantics of fiction. Lewis does not deny that a Meinongian logic of fiction could be made to work, but identifies disadvantages in Meinongian semantics as a reason for recommending his own possible worlds alternative.¹

Lewis's essay first appeared in 1978, but has recently been republished in his *Philosophical Papers*, to which he has added a series of "Postscripts to 'Truth in Fiction'".² Lewis indicates his continued commitment to his original critique of Meinongian semantics and his analysis of modal story-contexting, while offering only minor modifications to the original analysis and exploring its further implications. The questions Lewis raises about the interpretation of fiction as a result are as pertinent to philosophical semantics today as when he first presented his objections.

A Meinongian semantics is a theory that explains the meaning of sentences without ontological prejudice.³ It analyzes the meaning of the sentence '*a* is *F*' in the same way and by reference to the same semantic principles, regardless of whether or not *a* happens to exist.

¹ David Lewis, "Truth in Fiction", *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 15, 1978, pp. 37-46; rpt. in Lewis, see note 2.

² Lewis, "Truth in Fiction", with Postscripts to "Truth in Fiction", in Lewis, *Philosophical Papers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), Vol. I, pp. 261-280. All parenthetical page references in text and notes to this edition.

³ Lewis refers to Terence Parsons, "A Prolegomenon to Meinongian Semantics", *The Journal of Philosophy*, 71, 1974, pp. 561-580, and Parsons, "A Meinongian Analysis of Fictional Objects", *Grazer Philosophische Studien*, 1, 1975, pp. 73-86. See also Parsons, *Nonexistent Objects* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980). There are other developments of Meinongian semantics of fiction, some of which are indicated in the notes below.

Meinongian semantic domains admit existent and nonexistent objects, including objects ostensibly referred to in fiction, and permits reference and true predication of constitutive properties to existent and nonexistent objects alike. A Meinongian theory thus interprets the sentence ‘Sherlock Holmes is a detective’ as true, on the grounds that what we mean by the putative proper name ‘Sherlock Holmes’ is a nonexistent object described in the fiction of Arthur Conan Doyle that truly has the property of being a detective in the same way and in the same sense as an existent detective.⁴

Lewis proposes an alternative to Meinong’s object theory that considers the truth of a sentence in a work of fiction only within an explicit story-context. He explains truth in fiction by (selectively) prefixing (most) problematic sentences with the operator, ‘In such-and-such fiction ...’. ‘Sherlock Holmes is a detective’, for example, on Lewis’s analysis, becomes, ‘In the Sherlock Holmes’ stories, Sherlock Holmes is a detective’. This is by no means a trivial transformation that reduces the truth of sentences ostensibly about fictional objects to tautologies, analytic, or other *a priori* truths. For it does not follow logically or analytically that Sherlock Holmes in the Sherlock Holmes stories is a detective, since the stories might have described Sherlock Holmes as something other than a detective. The effect of Lewis’s proposal is to relocate the truth conditions for a sentence in or about fiction from the immediate content of the sentence to the fictional

⁴ A more precise and thereby necessarily narrower characterization of the story-telling context, in light of the author’s many imitators, and the occurrence of Sherlock Holmes in multiple story-telling contexts, can be written as, ‘In the stories and novels of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Sherlock Holmes is a detective’. There is, moreover, no obvious reason to limit story-telling context from above or below, allowing more general inclusion of related writings beyond those the author actually composed or even contemplated, such as ‘In all of world literature at any time now or in the future, Sherlock Holmes is a detective’, and more specific and to that extent potentially uninteresting but nevertheless semantically valuable contexting of propositions to the very sentence of a work of fiction in which the proposition is expressed, as in ‘In the ninth sentence of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s *A Study in Scarlet*, Sherlock Holmes is a detective’. See Dale Jacquette, “Intentional Semantics and the Logic of Fiction”, *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, 29, 1989, pp. 168–176. Jacquette, *Meinongian Logic: The Semantics of Existence and Nonexistence* (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1996), pp. 256–264. See also Barry Smith, “Ingarden vs. Meinong on the Logic of Fiction”, *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 41, 1980, pp. 93–105.

context in which the sentence appears or to which it applies. The advantage he sees in modal story-contexting is that it avoids the need for nonexistent Meinongian objects.

2. *Lewis's Challenge to Meinong*

Why should logic not be Meinongian? What is so bad about nonexistence? Why is it undesirable to refer to nonexistent objects, and why should it be a problem for nonexistent objects to have properties just as existent objects do? How does it help to explain the possession of a property by an existent object to say that the object exists?

Lewis's modal story-contexting of truth in fiction is in some ways simpler, but in other ways more complex, than the Meinongian theory he criticizes. It is simpler in excluding nonexistent objects. But it entails further complications of its own by requiring a distinction between the semantics for sentences about existent objects as opposed to sentences ostensibly about nonexistent objects. A Meinongian theory by contrast offers a unified ontically neutral account to explain the meaning of sentences regardless of whatever objects may happen actually to exist or not exist. Lewis's theory is further complicated by virtue of positing modal semantic structures of fictional worlds inhabited by objects that do not actually exist.⁵ To choose between a Meinongian or Lewis-style semantics of fiction, we must therefore come to terms with conflicting intuitions about potentially incommensurable aesthetic and philosophical values that might cause us to prefer one explanatorily comparable semantic theory over another. If Lewis, as he admits, has no knockdown objections to offer against a Meinongian theory of fiction, then the preferability of Lewis-style modal sto-

⁵ Lewis, p. 264: "As a first approximation, we might consider exactly those worlds where the plot of the fiction is enacted, where a course of events takes place that matches the story. What is true in the Sherlock Holmes stories would then be what is true at all of those possible worlds where there are characters who have the attributes, stand in the relations, and do the deed that are ascribed in the stories to Holmes, Watson, and the rest. (Whether these characters would then *be* Holmes, Watson, and the rest is a vexed question that we must soon consider.)" Lewis provides a more detailed explanation of the modal apparatus for the interpretation of his story-contexting prefixes in his *Analyses* 0,1,2. See note 14 below.

ry-contexting over a Meinongian semantics strongly depends on whether he has successfully uncovered any significant disadvantages in Meinongian semantics as compared with modal story-contexting. Lewis accordingly considers four problems in a Meinongian logic of fiction:

- The problem of distinguishing properties predicated of nonexistent Meinongian objects versus existent entities, and hence of distinguishing the referents of predications involving existent entities versus predications involving nonexistent Meinongian objects.
- The problem of distinguishing a multiplicity of otherwise individually indistinguishable indefinitely numbered nonexistent Meinongian objects posited in a work of fiction by means of a nonspecific term of plural reference in the absence of adequate identity conditions.
- The problem of restricting the range of quantifiers in comparing the properties of nonexistent Meinongian objects in a work of fiction with those of other nonexistent Meinongian objects in another work of fiction, or with the properties of existent entities.
- The problem of interpreting inferences about the properties of nonexistent Meinongian objects in a work of fiction, especially in conjunction with true propositions about the properties of existent objects that may also be mentioned in the story.

The objections are related, and in different ways call attention to the same underlying skepticism about whether properties can reasonably be attributed to the nonexistent objects described in a work of fiction. All four objections, however, can be answered or refuted, thereby blunting Lewis's charge that a Meinongian semantics is at a theoretical disadvantage in comparison with modal story-contexting. A comparison of Meinongian object theory semantics with Lewis-style modal story-contexting, moreover, shows that the two are not incompatible. By itself, without Meinongian object theory, Lewis's proposal is subject to equally powerful counter criticisms. Lewis-style story-contexting needs to be combined with a Meinongian semantics of fiction in order to avoid Lewis's objections to Meinongian object theory, and to avoid Meinongian objections to Lewis's story-context-prefixing.

3. *Real and Fictional Objects and Properties*

Lewis's first objection depends on a peculiar definition of Meinongian semantics. Lewis describes a Meinongian theory of fiction as one that interprets 'Holmes wears a silk top hat' and 'Nixon wears a silk top hat' as completely on a par, taking descriptions of fictional characters at face value as having the same subject-predicate form. "The only difference," Lewis claims, "would be that the subject terms 'Holmes' and 'Nixon' have referents of radically different sorts: one a fictional character, the other a real-life person of flesh and blood." (p. 261). Lewis rejects this way of contrasting real and fictional objects. He asks:

For one thing, is there not some perfectly good sense in which Holmes, like Nixon, *is* a real-life person of flesh and blood? There are stories about the exploits of super-heroes from other planets, hobbits, fires and storms, vaporous intelligences, and other non-persons. But what a mistake it would be to class the Holmes stories with these! Unlike Clark Kent *et al.*, Sherlock Holmes is just a person — a person of flesh and blood, a being in the very same category as Nixon. (pp. 261-262).

Yet a Meinongian can and should regard Sherlock Holmes, despite being a fictional character, as as much a flesh and blood human being as Richard Nixon. Lewis does not further explain what he means by a Meinongian semantics. But it is central to Meinong's *Gegenstandstheorie* that nonexistent objects can have the same constitutive properties in the same sense as existent entities, regardless of their ontic status. The existence or nonexistence of an object is something else again. Contrary to Shakespeare's brooding Prince Hamlet, to be or not to be is not always the question.

A nonexistent object, in a Meinongian semantics, can be a detective, a winged horse, or anything else that thought might freely intend. Sherlock Holmes for a Meinongian is as much flesh and blood as Richard Nixon. Of course, Sherlock Holmes's flesh and blood is not real actually existent flesh and blood, any more than, more particularly, say, Sherlock Holmes's left eye is a real actually existent eye, or his violin is a real actually existent violin. The fact that Sherlock Holmes is as much flesh and blood as Richard Nixon is no embarrassment to Meinongian object theory. Lewis distinguishes between the ontic categories of the referents of 'Sherlock Holmes' and 'Richard Nixon' by saying that

Holmes is “a fictional character” whereas Nixon is “a real life person of flesh and blood”. This is partly true and partly false. There is indeed a difference in the ontic status of the referents of the proper names ‘Sherlock Holmes’ and ‘Richard Nixon’. It is true to say that Holmes is fictional, and to say that Nixon by contrast is ‘a real life person’. But it is not true to say that Nixon by contrast with Holmes is a ‘person of flesh and blood’. Lewis more or less rightly argues that it would be a mistake to say that Holmes is something other than “a person of flesh and blood, a being in the very same category as Nixon” (p. 262). But a Meinongian logic of fiction is not required to say that Holmes is not made of flesh and blood, and Meinongians will more typically insist that Sherlock Holmes, despite being a fictional nonexistent Meinongian object, is as much flesh and blood as Richard Nixon.

Thus, Lewis’s first problem disappears. If we take Lewis’s insight a few steps further, however, we might ask about a work of fiction in which the author declares in all sincerity that Holmes is an actually existent entity or real-life being. What are we to say then about the properties and ontic status of Holmes? Existence, unlike the property of being a detective or playing the violin, is not a property that authors can freely bestow on their fictional creations by their narratives.⁶ Meinong’s object theory accordingly makes an important distinction between nuclear (*konstitutorische*) and extranuclear properties (*ausserkonstitutorische Bestimmungen*).⁷ Nuclear or constitutive properties

⁶ An account of the unassumability of existence in Meinongian semantics is given by Richard Routley, *Exploring Meinong’s Jungle and Beyond*, interim edition (Canberra: Australian National University, 1981), pp. 47-48, 180-187. A useful discussion of related topics appears in Kit Fine, “The Problem of Non-Existents”, *Topoi*, 1, 1982, pp. 97-140. Fine, Critical Review of Parsons’ *Non-Existent Objects*, *Philosophical Studies*, 45, 1984, pp. 95-142.

⁷ Meinong introduced the distinction between *konstitutorische* and *ausserkonstitutorische Bestimmungen* (constitutive and extraconstitutive properties) in *Über Möglichkeit und Wahrscheinlichkeit: Beiträge zur Gegenstandstheorie und Erkenntnistheorie* (Leipzig: Verlag von Johann Ambrosius Barth, 1915), rpt. *Alexius Meinong Gesamtausgabe*, eight volumes, edited by Rudolf Haller and Rudolf Kindinger in collaboration with Roderick M. Chisholm (Graz: Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt, 1969-1978), VI, pp. 176-177. Findlay, in *Meinong’s Theory of Objects and Values*, p. 176, proposed the English translations ‘nuclear’ and ‘extranuclear’. See Jacquette, “Nuclear and Extranuclear Properties”, *The School of Alexius Meinong*, edited by Liliana Albertazzi, Dale Jacquette, and Roberto Poli (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, forthcoming).

From ‘Gaps in our Knowledge’ to ‘Gaps in Reality’: On the logic of anti-realism

I

The issue between realism and anti-realism has a long pre-history that includes most of the salient episodes in Western post-hellenic philosophical thought. At various times it has been a chief topic of debate in metaphysics, ontology, epistemology, ethics, and (more recently) philosophy of language and logic. Thus realists have confronted a range of opponents on a range of different philosophical terrains, from the Platonist doctrine of transcendent (supra-sensory) ‘forms’ or ‘essences’ to Lockean radical empiricism, Berkeleian idealism, Humean scepticism, Kant’s attempt to trump all these through a theory of ‘transcendental idealism’ conjoined with ‘empirical realism’, and a whole wide array of latterday (e.g., phenomenalist, descriptivist, and ‘strong’-constructivist) variants.¹ Sometimes the protagonists may appear to switch sides or at any rate to switch labels, as for instance when empirically-minded philosophers of mathematics reject the realist (= ‘Platonist’) idea of a realm of objective mathematical truths or of abstract entities — numbers, sets, classes, etc. — which are somehow conceived as existing quite apart from our methods of proof or discovery-procedures.² Still the debate may fairly be said to turn on a few basic issues which continue to divide realists from anti-realists as they have for the past two millennia and more. Michael Devitt puts the realist case in the

¹ For recent discussions, see William P. Alston, *A Realist Theory of Truth* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996) and Michael Williams, *Unnatural Doubts: epistemological realism and the basis of scepticism* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996).

² See for instance Paul Benacerraf and Hilary Putnam (eds.), *The Philosophy of Mathematics: selected essays*, 2nd edn. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); also — for a strong defence of the objectivist case in mathematics, logic, and other formal sciences — Jerrold J. Katz, *Realistic Rationalism* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998).

simplest possible and least controversial terms — ‘least controversial’, that is, for anyone *except* a convinced anti-realist — when he defines ‘commonsense realism’ as the belief that ‘[t]okens of most observable common-sense physical types objectively exist independently of the mental’.³ To which he might have added: independently of our various beliefs, theories, paradigms, conceptual schemes, preferential descriptions, and so forth.

Thus, according to the realist, the universe and all its furniture — from electrons, atoms and molecules to galaxies and supernovae — must be thought not only to exist but also to exert its various powers, properties, causal dispositions, etc., irrespective of our various statements or beliefs concerning it.⁴ Those statements and beliefs are *true* (objectively so) just to the extent that they pick out real-world objects, processes, or events and just on condition that they predicate the right sorts of property. Otherwise they are *false* — objectively so — even if they are borne out by the best evidence to hand or to the best of our currently available knowledge. Thus our statements should be thought of as ‘truth-bearers’ which acquire their truth-value from the way things stand in reality, or from the existence of those various ‘truth-makers’ (at whatever point on the scale of magnitude from microstructural to astrophysical) which may very well lie beyond our utmost powers of epistemic grasp. In other words the objectivity of truth is a matter of its ‘verification-transcendent’ character, or the fact that it holds quite apart from our various (no matter how advanced or sophisticated) proof-procedures, sources of evidence, or methods of empirical enquiry. So the statement ‘there exists another solar system in

³ Michael Devitt, *Realism and Truth*, 2nd edn. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 24.

⁴ See for instance D.M. Armstrong, *Universals and Scientific Realism*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978); J. Aronson, R. Harré and E. Way, *Realism Rescued: how scientific progress is possible* (London: Duckworth, 1994); Roy Bhaskar, *A Realist Theory of Science* (Leeds: Leeds Books, 1975); Michael Devitt, *Realism and Truth* (op. cit.); Rom Harré and E.H. Madden, *Causal Powers* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1975); Jarrett Leplin (ed.), *Scientific Realism* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984); Stathis Psillos, *Scientific Realism: how science tracks truth* (London: Routledge, 1999); Wesley C. Salmon, *Scientific Realism and the Causal Structure of the World* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984); M. Tooley, *Causation: a realist approach* (Blackwell, 1988).

some region of the expanding universe beyond our furthest radio-telescopic reach' is a statement that cannot be verified or falsified by any means at our disposal but which, all the same, we can know to possess an objective truth-value (true or false) despite this lack of evidence.⁵ So likewise with mathematical statements concerning well-formed yet unproved (or unprovable) theorems which the realist will take to be valid or not in virtue of the fact that mathematical truths are objective and hence in no way restricted to the class of those for which we happen to have found some adequate proof-procedure. This argument extends to issues in philosophy of history and other such areas of discourse where — according to the realist — we can make any number of perfectly intelligible but unverifiable statements (such as 'Mark Antony scratched his left ear unnoticed three times during the Battle of Actium') which are true or false as a matter of fact despite our possessing no evidence either way.⁶

Such is at any rate the realist case in its basic metaphysical form, a case which is then very often filled out with various kinds of epistemological or causal-explanatory content. Thus scientific realists will also want to say (like Devitt) that the physical sciences afford us knowledge of the world and its properties, causal powers, microstructural attributes, and so forth; that this knowledge exhibits real signs of progress despite occasional setbacks or wrong theoretical turns; that such progress comes about through our increasing depth-explanatory grasp of just those salient properties and powers; and that scientific realism is the only theory which can account for all this — along with the manifest success of science in various fields of endeavour — unless

⁵ I take this example from Scott Soames, *Understanding Truth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

⁶ See especially Michael Dummett, *Truth and Other Enigmas* (London: Duckworth, 1978); also Dummett, *The Logical Basis of Metaphysics* (Duckworth, 1991); Michael Luntley, *Language, Logic and Experience: the case for anti-realism* (Duckworth, 1988); N. Tennant, *Anti-Realism and Logic* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987); Timothy Williamson, 'Knowability and Constructivism: the logic of anti-realism', *Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 38 (1988), pp. 422-32; Kenneth P. Winkler, 'Scepticism and Anti-Realism', *Mind*, Vol. 94 (1985), pp. 46-52; Crispin Wright, *Realism, Meaning and Truth* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987).

by invoking some kind of miracle or massive cosmic coincidence.⁷ They will therefore reject any version of the argument (whether in its Berkeleyan idealist or latterday positivist, phenomenalist, or ‘constructive-empiricist’ guise) which holds that we had much better avoid such metaphysically over-committed realist talk and in stead make do with whatever is given in the way of direct empirical evidence plus covering statements which wisely refrain from invoking ‘causal powers’, ‘laws of nature’, or suchlike occult forces.⁸ For, according to the realist, this is just another version of the old disreputable strategy by which early-modern thinkers like Copernicus and Galileo were persuaded to bring their theories into line with the dictates of orthodox religious faith. That is to say, it adopts a line of least resistance which ‘saves the (empirical or phenomenal) appearances’ while declining to venture any theory or hypothesis concerning the reality ‘behind’ those appearances, such as — for example — might issue in the statement ‘the earth revolves around the sun rather than the sun around the earth’. Nor will the realist be much impressed by various contemporary updates on this line of argument, whether they come from philosophers of science (like Pierre Duhem) whose thinking still bears a very marked theological slant or else from those — among them constructive empiricists like Bas van Fraassen — who consider it just a matter of plain good sense and sound scientific practice.⁹

Thus van Fraassen allows that we can safely treat as ‘real’ those objects and events that fall within the range of unaided (technologically unassisted) human observation or whose magnitude, velocity, or

⁷ See for instance Richard Boyd, ‘The Current Status of Scientific Realism’, in Jarrett Leplin (ed.), *Scientific Realism* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), pp. 41-82; also entries under Note 4, above.

⁸ This argument has been developed most influentially by Bas C. van Fraassen, *The Scientific Image* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980); see also his *Laws and Symmetry* (Clarendon, 1989).

⁹ van Fraassen, *The Scientific Image* (op. cit.); Pierre Duhem, *The Aims and Structure of Physical Theory*, trans. Philip Wiener (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1954) and *To Save the Phenomena: an essay on the idea of physical theory from Plato to Galileo*, trans. E. Dolan and C. Maschler (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969). On Duhem, see also Christopher Norris, ‘Truth, Science and the Growth of Knowledge’, in *Reclaiming Truth: contribution to a critique of cultural relativism* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1996), pp. 154-79.

other parameters are not such as to render them invisible to the naked eye. Otherwise — as regards (say) atoms, molecules, or the rotation of remote galaxies — we should rather take a sensible empiricist line and treat them as more-as-less useful posits which may indeed figure crucially in our current-best theories but whose reality (and the truth of our statements concerning them) remains a moot question. Indeed van Fraassen sees nothing but a foolish display of ‘empty strutting’ and ‘courage not under fire’ in the realist’s affecting to take greater risks through such bold conjectures while in fact standing to lose no more than does the sober constructive empiricist if those conjectures should eventually turn out to conflict with the empirical evidence.¹⁰ On the contrary, the realist responds: this is truly a case of ‘nothing ventured, nothing gained’ since if science is to make progress then it can come about only through the willingness to offer depth-explanatory causal hypotheses that go beyond the strict empiricist remit and which *do* therefore run that additional risk. Moreover — again — there is no making sense of the advancement of scientific knowledge to date were it not for the typical pattern of change by which a duly cautious, empiricist approach to issues concerning (e.g.) the existence of atoms and other microphysical entities has at length given way to a realist conception borne out by more powerful techniques of observation or more adequate means of theoretical grasp.¹¹

Of course it is always possible at any stage for hardline positivists like Ernst Mach or constructive empiricists like van Fraassen to adopt a sceptical stance and decree that we should not — on pain of ‘meta-physical’ error — lend credence to claims that go beyond the evidence of unaided human observation.¹² However in that case they will invite

¹⁰ van Fraassen, ‘Empiricism in the Philosophy of Language’, in Paul Churchland and Clifford Hooker (eds.), *Images of Science: essays on realism and empiricism, with a reply from Bas C. van Fraassen* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985); p. 255.

¹¹ See Note 4, above; also M. Gardner, ‘Realism and Instrumentalism in Nineteenth-Century Atomism’, *Philosophy of Science*, Vol. 46 (1979), pp. 1-34; Mary Jo Nye, *Molecular Reality* (London: MacDonald, 1972); J. Perrin, *Atoms*, trans. D.L. Hammick (New York: van Nostrand, 1923).

¹² Ernst Mach, *The Science of Mechanics* (London: Watts, 1893); also — for a good recent survey of the field — C.J. Misak, *Verificationism: its history and prospects* (London: Routledge, 1995).

the realist response that such an argument is both grossly anthropocentric (equating what exists with what happens to fall within the range of our perceptual modalities) and based on a naively empiricist appeal to the supposed self-evidence of the senses.¹³ For if one thing has emerged from recent work in neurophysiology and cognitive psychology it is the fact that even our most ‘direct’ observations are shaped or informed by a vast amount of preconscious interpretative processing.¹⁴ However this need not be taken to entail — on the standard Kuhnian account — that scientific realism lacks any kind of credibility since observations are always theory-laden and theories always underdetermined by the best empirical evidence.¹⁵ Rather it allows for just the opposite conclusion, i.e., that these merely contingent limits on our knowledge have *no bearing whatsoever* on the issue as to whether those theories and observations are capable of yielding true statements with regard to the nature and structure of physical reality.

Thus the truth-value of statements such as ‘every acid is a proton-donor’ or ‘the charge on every electron is negative’ depends entirely on the way things stand with respect to acids, protons, electrons, or charge characteristics and is wholly unaffected — so the realist will argue — by any past, present, or future best-possible state of knowl-

¹³ See especially Paul Churchland, ‘The Ontological Status of Observables: in praise of the superempirical virtues’, in P.M. Churchland and C.M. Hooker (eds.), *Images of Science: essays on realism and empiricism, with a reply from Bas C. van Fraassen* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985); also Christopher Norris, ‘Anti-Realism and Constructive Empiricism: is there a (real) difference?’ and ‘Ontology According to van Fraassen: some problems with constructive empiricism’, in *Against Relativism: philosophy of science, deconstruction and critical theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), pp. 167-95 and 196-217.

¹⁴ See for instance W. Russell Brain, *The Nature of Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959); Rodolfo Llinas and Patricia Churchland, *The Mind-Brain Continuum: sensory processes* (Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press, 1996); A.D. Milner, *The Visual Brain in Action* (Oxford U.P., 1995); David Rose and Vernon G. Dobson (eds.), *Models of the Visual Cortex* (Chichester: Wiley, 1985); J.Z. Young, *Philosophy and the Brain* (Oxford U.P., 1987).

¹⁵ Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd edn. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970); also W.V. Quine, ‘Two Dogmas of Empiricism’, in *From a Logical Point of View*, 2nd edn. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1961), pp. 20-46 and Sandra Harding, *Can Theories be Refuted? essays on the Duhem-Quine thesis* (Dordrecht & Boston: Reidel, 1976).