# PART I THE METAPHYSICAL SIDE

# Chapter 1

# THE COMMITTAL THEORIES (I)

## 1.　　Synopsis

In this chapter I deal mostly with the theories committed to fictional entities inspired by Alexius Meinong's ideas concerning nonexistent entities. First, I evaluate Meinong's doctrine of nonexistent entities and its possible application to fiction. This evaluation ends with a dilemma, both horns of which are equally unsatisfactory.

Meinong is concerned to understand the nature of nonexistent entities as entities that are beyond the realm of being—*außerseiende* entities, as he puts it. He interprets these entities "Platonistically." Either one accepts this position, but then no theory of *fictional* entities is gained, or else one gives a phenomenological slant to Meinong's ontology of *außerseiende* entities. This last approach enables one to hold a Meinongian phenomenological theory of *ficta*, but at the cost of implausibly attributing to thought two ontological powers, the generative and the ascriptive.

I consider also two recent types of theories that in one way or another can be traced back to Meinong, namely the *possibilist* and the *abstractionist* theory of fictional entities. The abstractionist proves to be more promising than the possibilist theory for *ficta*, unlike *possibilia*, are likely to be abstract rather than concrete entities. *Ficta* not only are not, but cannot be, involved directly with the causal order of the world.

After considering different versions of Neo-Meinongian abstractionism, both the set-theoretical and the genuinely Platonic, I am in a position to outline what I take to be the best possible Neo-Meinongian abstractionist theory of *ficta*. In this theory, a *fictum* is a *set of properties*, those properties which are ascribed to it in the relevant fiction. Since the properties belong to the set as its members, they are *internally* predicated of it and, accordingly, internally predicated of the *fictum*. Moreover, a *fictum* may also have properties in

the *external* mode of predication, sometimes even the very same properties ascribed to it in the relevant fiction.

I try to show how this theory can deal successfully with a series of data that come both from the commonsensical idea of what a *fictum* is and from linguistic intuitions regarding sentences that appear to concern *ficta*: the "nonexistence" datum, the "incompleteness" datum, and the "analyticity" datum. I claim, however, that the best Neo-Meinongian abstractionist theory provides at most necessary, but not sufficient, conditions for the individuation of a fictional entity.

Finally, I present a weakened version of Neo-Meinongian abstractionism, according to which a *fictum* is a one-one set-*correlate*. This doctrine is definitely more adequate than the best Neo-Meinongian abstractionist theory since it acknowledges that a *fictum* is something over and above a set of properties. Yet it does not altogether solve the problems that forced that theory to provide only necessary conditions for the individuation of a *fictum*.

## 2.        Meinong's Theory of Objects and its Application to Ficta

As is well known, Meinong put forward an apparently astounding theory of objects. To start with, in his view spatiotemporally existing objects such as this stone and this chair are flanked by non-spatiotemporally existing, or *subsisting*, objects such as numbers and other mathematical entities: that is, all the items that have traditionally been called *abstracta*. Taken together, these entities are those which populate the real world; in other words, they are the entities that actually exist.[1] Yet over and above them are many other entities that fail to exist actually. As Meinong says, "there are objects of which it is true that there are no such objects" (1971[1904]: 83).

This remark has led many commentators to think that Meinong's doctrine is contradictory: how can it be that there are things which at the same time are not there?[2] But Meinong's *dictum* is only apparently paradoxical. As many have stressed, once one distinguishes between the two uses of the locution "there are" which that *dictum* contains, no paradox arises. Although, theoretically speaking, in a Meinongian perspective this distinction of uses may be accounted for differently, let me interpret it in the following way. On the one hand, the first occurrence of "there are" in the above *dictum* represents a contextually *unrestricted* use of the particular quantifier, where the quantifier is

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[1]  Cf. Meinong (1971[1904]: 79–80).
[2]  Cf. Salmon (1982: 39 n. 41).

interpreted in an existentially unloaded way. In other words, the variable bound by such a contextually unrestricted use of the quantifier ranges over all entities, existent or not. On the other hand, the second occurrence of the locution represents a contextually *restricted* use of the same quantifier, a use in which the quantifier is interpreted in an existentially loaded way. That is, the variable bound by this contextually restricted use of the quantifier ranges only over entities that exist.[3] This restriction presupposes that there is a first-order property of *existence* that is possessed precisely by the above-mentioned beings only, not by any entity whatsoever.[4] The nature of this property can further be conceived of in a variety of ways. According to one very plausible interpretation, it is the property of *being involved in the causal order of the world*.[5] As a consequence, beings that actually exist spatiotemporally are those for which it is actually the case that they are *directly* involved in the causal order of the world; beings that actually exist non-spatiotemporally, that actually *subsist*, are those beings for which it is actually the case that they are only *indirectly* involved in the causal order of the world.[6] As a result, what Meinong's *dictum* says is that in the overall ontological domain there are entities which fail to occur in the subdomain containing only entities that have the above-mentioned first-order property of *existence*: in a nutshell, there are things that do not exist.[7]

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[3] Cf. Parsons (1980: 7).

[4] Cf., for example, Orilia (2002: 137). For a recent revival of this idea, cf. McGinn (2000).

[5] For this thesis, cf. Castañeda (1989b: 241–2), (1990c: 461). A similar first-order property of existence is also contemplated both by Geach (1969a: 58), (1969b: 65) and by Williamson (1990: 173), (2002).

[6] Frege took the characterization of *subsistence* given in the text, namely that of being indirectly involved in the causal order in the world, as straightforwardly stating what *abstracta* are, thereby distinguishing them from *concreta*. Literally, Frege speaks of *abstracta* as entities that merely produce effects, thus distinguishing them from *concreta*, entities that both produce and undergo effects. Cf. Frege (1986[3]: 370–3), (1967: 212). Yet Frege's distinction between producing effects and both producing and undergoing effects can be suitably mapped onto the distinction I present in the text between being indirectly and being directly involved in the causal order in the world.

[7] Another possible interpretation of Meinong's *dictum* appeals to a distinction between two particular quantifiers, a nonexistential ("Meinongian") and an existential one. Parsons (1980: 6) and above all Routley (1980: 176–80) are tempted by this interpretation. It says that the *dictum* speaks about things falling within the scope of the first but not the second particular quantifier. Yet this interpretation unnecessarily increases the number of quantifiers and, consequently, also the second-order properties they designate. Moreover, it can be derived from the distinction between an existentially unrestricted and an existentially restricted particular quantifier. As Lewis says, "loaded quantification is simply a restriction of neutral quantification" (1990: 25).

In view of the mere fact that they belong to the overall ontological domain, one could say that, in spite of their nonexistence, the actually nonexistent entities have another "existential" first-order property. This would be the "existential" property that any entity whatsoever possesses. Thus, the difference between those entities and the actually existing ones would be that, over and above this further all-embracing "existential" property, the latter entities would also possess the above-mentioned property of *existence*. In so distinguishing between the properties of *being* and of *existence*, the early Russell seems to have been committed to this position.[8]

Yet Meinong would disagree. To his way of thinking, entities that are such that there are no such beings fail to have any kind of "existential" first-order property. In his own words, such entities are "beyond being and non-being" (1971[1904]: 86). This does not mean that Meinong draws no further distinction between the entities that are beyond the realm of being—the *außerseiende* entities, as he puts it. On the one hand, there are those entities which, though they actually fail to exist, *could* have existed: namely, *possible* entities. This is the case of the golden mountain: although in the real world there is no golden mountain, it could have existed. On the other hand, there are those entities which fail to exist not only really, but also *possibly*: namely, *impossible* entities. This is the case of the round square: not only in reality, but also as a possibility, there is no such thing as a round square, for nothing can exist that is round and square at the same time.[9]

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It is true, though, that the thesis I espoused here—that there is just one and the same particular quantifier, which sometimes occurs unrestrictedly and sometimes restrictedly—could be interpreted in another way. According to this alternative reading, the particular quantifier always means one and the same second-order property of existence. But sometimes the quantifier is restricted, binding a variable that ranges only over the entities existing *in the real world*, whereas sometimes the quantifier is unrestricted, binding a variable ranging over entities existing in *all* possible worlds. For such a reading, cf. Bradley (1992: 46, 52–4). Note, however, that this reading not only presupposes Modal Realism, according to which possible worlds are full-fledged individuals—cf. Lewis (1973), (1986: 148–9). More problematically, this reading does not seem to account for Meinong's *dictum*. Meinong intends the variable bound by the particular quantifier expressed in the first occurrence of the locution "there is" in that *dictum* not merely to range over possible entities (in Lewis's terms, over entities inhabiting some possible world or other). Rather, it is meant to range over entities that are "beyond being and non-being," hence even over entities that are impossible.

[8]  Cf. Russell (1937²: 43–4, 449–50). Another way to interpret the first-order property that any entity possesses is to take it as the property of *being (identical with) something or other*. This is what Salmon (1987: 64–5) proposes, though in an utterly non-Meinongian framework, where only *one* first-order existential property is at issue. For a commitment to that property within a framework closer to that of Meinong, cf. Williamson (2002).

[9]  Cf. Meinong (1971[1904]: 82).

Now, a theory that allows for *außerseiende* entities will also be ontologically committal as far as fictional entities are concerned.[10] If we allow our discourse on golden mountains and round squares to be ontologically successful, we should also allow the same for our fictional discourse. From an intuitive point of view, it is quite understandable that we have qualms about allowing for golden mountains and especially round squares. Yet from the same intuitive point of view we are undoubtedly more prepared to allow for Sherlock Holmes, Desdemona and King Arthur, that is to allow for *fictional entities*, the characters that novels and myths are about. Such entities seem to be entirely respectable.

In the framework of Meinong's theory, it is natural to take fictional entities as a subset of *außerseiende* entities because this accounts for what I would call the "nonexistence" datum of fictional entities: the fact that such individuals do not exist or, to put it more neutrally, the fact that certain negative existentials apparently about such individuals are true.[11] This is the "tragic" discovery a child makes when he learns that there is no Santa Claus. Yet it is also the comforting thought we all repeat to ourselves when watching a horror film that all the monsters on the screen thankfully do not exist.

Yet such a conception of fictional entities obviously inherits all the problems that arise with the idea of *außerseiende* entities. Needless to say, entities that are "beyond being and non-being", *Meinongian objects* (as they have subsequently been called), immediately appeared to be ontologically problematic. How can there be entities that do not actually exist, sometimes not even as a possibility?

To address this question, it must first be seen *what* these entities are. A *Meinongian object* is an entity endowed with the properties it possesses insofar as these same properties characterize, describe it. In other words, a Meinongian object satisfies what Richard Routley has called the *Characterization Postulate*: "According to the Characterization Postulate objects, whether they exist or not, actually have the properties which are used to characterize them, for example, where *f* is a characterizing feature, the item which *f*s indeed *f*s." (1980: 46).[12] So, the round square is both round and square if we describe it by means of these properties, or, what amounts to the same thing, if we denote it by means of the definite description "the [thing which is a] round square."

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[10]  It is indeed natural to take Meinong as maintaining a committal theory of fictional entities. But a word of caution is in order here due to the fact that, at least in the early phase of his thought, he seems to have favored a purely "make-believe"—hence a noncommittal— theory of fiction. Cf. on this Kroon (1992: 503–10).

[11]  For this more cautious formulation of the datum, cf. van Inwagen (1990: 247).

[12]  This formulation is implicit in Meinong (1971[1904]: 82).

Nevertheless, endorsing the Characterization Postulate does not dispel another question: how can it be that Meinongian objects possess the properties by means of which they are characterized? On behalf of Meinong, one might respond that it is language itself that lets objects have certain properties by so characterizing them. This is hardly credible since how is it that language has such *ascriptive* power?[13]

There is, however, an even more extraordinary consequence that the Characterization Postulate seems to entail: change the description and you obtain a different Meinongian object. Insofar as it possesses the properties of *being golden* and *being mountainous*, the thing which is described as golden and as a mountain is different from, for example, the thing which through being denoted by the description "the round square," possesses the different properties of *being round* and *being square*. As a result, it appears that language has the power not only of assigning properties to Meinongian objects, but also of *generating* these objects by referring to them through different descriptions, that is, descriptions involving different properties. This is difficult to accept. Remember that our original question was: how can it be that there are *außerseiende* entities? It now seems that this question could be addressed by Meinong by saying that language has the capacity to generate these entities by referring to them descriptively. But, to put it more strongly, this comes across as a very bizarre view. It is common knowledge that what ultimately led Russell to dispense with Meinongian objects through his theory of definite descriptions is the fact that commitment to such objects seems to entail the ascription to language of this ontologically generative power.[14]

Meinong would reply that language has in fact neither this ascriptive nor this generative power: language is inert in that its only function is to express the thoughts that lie behind it.[15] Elaborating on this, one could say that, according to him, it is the thought underlying language that has such powers. In brief, in this elaboration Meinongian objects are *intentional objects*. As such, Meinongian objects would be brought into the overall ontological domain in consequence of their having the properties that enable us to describe them.

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[13] Note, moreover, that assigning to language this ascriptive power easily leads to making a Meinongian object into a contradictory entity. Russell was the first to notice this when he said that the nonexistent object allegedly designated by the description "the existent present King of France" is forced also to exist by the Characterization Postulate. On this problem, cf. n. 64 below. For other related problems raised by the Postulate, cf. Priest (2005).

[14] Cf. Russell (1905a: 482).

[15] According to Meinong, a linguistic term designates (means) an object only insofar as it expresses a presentation, whose content in turn presents that object. Cf. Meinong (1977[1910²]: 27). On this as well as on the later modifications of Meinong's semantic theory, cf. Simons (1990: 162–3, 183).

First of all, as Franz Brentano originally said, intentional objects are the targets of thought: every thought has an object it is "directed" at, whether or not that object exists; this entity is the intentional object of the thought.[16] This would account for the *generative* power of thought. As Brentano would say, by "in-existing" in the thought, that is, by depending for its own being on the thought that thinks it, the intentional object is brought into the overall ontological domain. Adopting Brentano's conception of intentional objects, Meinong would have agreed with him in attributing this generative power to thought. Moreover, in the thoughts that are "directed" at them, intentional objects are indisputably conceived of as having certain properties. One would therefore conclude that Meinong would have gone beyond Brentano in maintaining that thought also has the *ascriptive* power: intentional objects are the entities that possess the properties they are *conceived* of as having.

This elaboration amounts to what I would call a Meinongian *phenomenological* conception of *außerseiende* beings: entities that are "beyond being and non-being," "are there" with the properties they have as a result of being thought of as having those properties.[17]

If Meinong had endorsed the phenomenological conception of *außerseiende* items, he would have outlined thereby a certain theory of fictional entities. According to the phenomenological conception, Meinongian entities are *außerseiende* items that an act of thought brings into being with the properties they are conceived of as having in that act. As a result, fictional entities would be a particular subset of the set of the *außerseiende* intentional objects, the set of those *außerseiende* intentional objects which are brought into being by an act of thought of a specific kind, namely an act of imagination. We may call this a Meinongian *phenomenological* theory of *ficta*.[18] Although it has been merely sketched out, it is obvious that this theory would be able to account also for the "nonexistence" datum of fictional entities. According to the Meinongian phenomenological theory, fictional entities do not exist since they are *außerseiende* objects of our imagination.

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[16] Cf. Brentano (1924: 88). Brentano's thesis is revived by Meinong (1971[1904]: 76).

[17] For such an elaboration, cf. Bencivenga (1985/6).

[18] According to Kroon (1992), in the mature phase of his thought Meinong defended a similar theory: fictional beings "are there" insofar as they are posited by thought, and they possess properties ascribed to them in the relevant fiction insofar as it is pretended of them that they possess such properties. A similar interpretation of Meinong's conception of fictional entities is given by Raspa (2001), who holds that for Meinong, *ficta* are higher-order nonexistent objects produced by human fantasy. A genuine phenomenological theory of *ficta* as objects of imagination was also held by Sartre (1940). Yet this theory is not Meinongian since for Sartre imagination does not posit *außerseiende* beings. On Sartre's theory, cf. Thomasson (1999: 21–3).

Yet, because it attributes both generative and ascriptive power to thought rather than to language, the phenomenological conception of Meinongian objects does not convincingly address the problems that originally faced language. An agnostic on *außerseiende* beings might indeed retort that if one moves back from language to thought, one still has to face the very same question as to what enables *thought* to have those powers.

As I have said above, according to the Meinongian phenomenological theory of *ficta*, fictional entities are taken to be a subset of Meinongian objects conceived phenomenologically. As a result, the general problem of what enables thought to have both generative and ascriptive power remains open as regards this theory. How can it be that a thought, let alone an imaginative thought, brings a fictional entity into being with the properties it is imagined as having?

Be that as it may, it does not seem that Meinong pursued the phenomenological path to *außerseiende* beings. In his opinion, not only language but also thought lack both generative and ascriptive power. Certainly, Meinongian objects are intentional objects insofar as they are thought of in an act of thinking. Yet in such acts thought grasps independently constituted entities.[19] Consequently, not only are such entities independent of the thoughts that are "directed" at them, but they also have the properties such thoughts conceive them as having regardless of those acts of conceiving.

On behalf of Meinong, various philosophers have tried to account for his position. They defend a principle of object-generation that appeals not to thought but to properties themselves. This is the Principle of the Freedom of Assumption, which may be formulated in various ways. In its weakest formulation, the principle says that for any collection of properties there is (in the above-mentioned nonexistential sense of the particular quantifier) an object that has all of them. In Meinong, this generation principle is expressed as follows: an object corresponds to every being-so.[20] I would say that this defense of Meinong is a *Platonist* conception. For the Principle of the Freedom of Assumption starts by assuming that there are properties (in a hyperuranic realm as it were) and it makes *außerseiende* objects depend for their own "being" on the existence of those properties. Moreover, the way this principle

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[19]  Cf., for example, Meinong (1978: 153–4).
[20]  Cf. Meinong (1972[1916]: 282). A stronger formulation of the principle says that for any collection of properties, there is an object that has all *and only* those properties; according to an even stronger formulation, for any collection of properties, there is *just one* object that has all and only those properties. Cf. Zalta (1983: 6). I think that the last formulation expresses best the intuition that Meinong wanted to defend, though this is irrelevant for my present purposes. Without doubt, further stronger formulations of the principle are possible: cf., for example, Parsons (1980: 19), Rapaport (1978: 175), Zalta (1983: 12).

generates Meinongian objects trivially ensures that they possess the properties they are characterized as having. A certain Meinongian object is, so to speak, made to belong to the overall ontological domain by the fact that it possesses all the properties involved in any instantiation of the Principle of the Freedom of Assumption.[21]

Endorsing the Principle of the Freedom of Assumption thus excludes the view that thought has powers which, in the absence of any convincing explanation, would make it something magical. Yet, as we have seen above, attributing such powers to thought allowed us to develop a theory of fictional entities as a subset of *außerseiende* intentional beings: fictional entities are those intentional beings which are thought of in an act of imagination. In contrast, the objects generated by means of the Principle of the Freedom of Assumption are merely *außerseiende* beings, but not *fictional* entities. On behalf of Meinong, a supporter of the Platonist conception might reply that the Platonist framework confirms that, for Meinong, fictional entities are simply a subset of *außerseiende* beings. Yet no hint is given as to how, within the general realm of *außerseiende* beings, entities that are fictional are generated. However it manages to do so, thought limits itself in *grasping* a (previously constituted) *außerseiende* being, regardless of whether it is a fictional entity or not.

Thus, the review of Meinong's position shows that it can lead to at least two different conceptions of Meinongian objects, one more akin to the historical Meinong—the Platonist conception—and another assigning to thought an ontological role—the phenomenological conception. With respect to the issue of fictional entities, this leads to the following dilemma. If one endorses the phenomenological conception, one arrives at a phenomenological theory of fictional entities as *außerseiende* objects of imagination. This yields a specific theory of fictional entities, but it attributes to thought—in particular, to the imagination—the unexplained power of generating such entities and of ascribing properties to them. On the other hand, if one endorses the Platonist conception, there is no mystery as to how there can be *außerseiende* objects endowed with certain properties, but it is not made clear how the overall realm of *außerseiende* beings can have a subset of *fictional* beings.

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[21] A full-fledged Platonist would tend to reject the idea that the Principle of the Freedom of Assumption is a principle of object-*generation*, for he or she would take it to be a principle of object-*description*: it indeed says that for any collection of properties, there is "out there" a certain object that has them. Yet as Deutsch (1991) has shown these two interpretations of the principle are not incompatible. For that, for any objects and collections of properties, there is an object that has a certain collection of properties matches a stipulation to the effect that there is an object that has those properties.

## 3.        The Possibilist Conception

As we have seen, the Principle of the Freedom of Assumption allows us to have Meinongian objects at our disposal. Yet it still seems incredible that objects so derived from (collections of) properties are *außerseiende* beings. Why must we acknowledge that entities so introduced are homeless entities (to use Meinong's own characterization)?[22] In particular, why should fictional objects, which in Meinong's framework are a subset of Meinongian objects, be homeless entities? This does not even fit in with common usage. In speaking of fictional characters, we do not describe them as homeless. What we often say is that they inhabit fictional worlds, the worlds of imagination described in the literary works that tell us about them.

Nevertheless, speaking of fictional *worlds* suggests that there is a natural candidate for a place in which to locate, if not Meinongian objects as such, at least those Meinongian objects which are fictional entities: that is, possible worlds. From this perspective, fictional objects are *possibilia* or entities that do not actually exist, not because they are "beyond being and non-being" but, rather, because they exist in possible worlds different from the real world.

The first advantage of the possibilist theory of *ficta* is that the "nonexistence" datum is accounted for, but not in the radical and implausible way chosen in Meinong's theory. *Ficta* are not found among us because they live in possible yet unactual worlds; that is, they do not exist in that they do not exist *actually*, but only *possibly*.

This possibilist perspective, moreover, allows us to retain the link between fictional objects and properties which is pointed to by the Principle of the Freedom of Assumption. Fictional characters are possible individuals who, in the possible unreal world in which they exist, possess all the properties that characterize them in a given piece of fiction. Accordingly, Sherlock Holmes is the possible individual who, in the possible world in which he exists, does all the things that are ascribed to Sherlock Holmes in Conan Doyle's novels.[23]

It has been objected, however, that being possible is not a necessary condition for being a fictional object. Since fiction is the realm of the *conceivable*, fictional objects may well be *impossible* objects. Take a character who, in the fiction that narrates his or her story, has contradictory or at least incompatible

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[22] Cf. Meinong (1975[1907]: 8–27). See on this Chisholm (1982b).

[23] Cf. Lewis (1978). For a novel defense of this position, cf. Kroon (1994); see also Priest (2005). There are further subtle aspects as regards the problem of individuating both which properties a story really ascribes to a fictional character—what are the properties a story both explicitly and implicitly attributes to a *fictum*?—and which possible worlds are exactly those which the *possibile* that a *fictum* is equated with inhabits. For an attempt to improve Lewis's position on this point, cf. Currie (1990: chap.2).

properties, not only in the weak sense that such properties are ascribed to the character in different parts of the fiction, but in the strong sense that such an ascription occurs in the very same part of the fiction. Imagine that I start a story about a wooden steel cannon.[24] This is an impossible object. If we insist on taking this very small part of the fiction in question as contributing to the determination of the fictional world that this object inhabits, that world will be not a possible world, but—paradoxically—an impossible one.[25]

Moreover, being possible is not a sufficient condition either. As many have noted,[26] different possible worlds may contain different possible individuals, each satisfying the properties that are ultimately acknowledged as effectively characterizing the *fictum* in a certain story. So, *which* among all these *possibilia* is the *fictum* in question?

The possibilist fictionalist might reply that this problem is just a version of the general question of identity conditions for nonexistent entities. In this respect, merely possible individuals as such are no better off than fictional entities. Take for instance the actually uninstantiated property of *being a golden mountain*. What determines whether or not the merely possible individual that instantiates that property in a certain possible world *w* is the same as the merely possible individual instantiating it in a different possible world *w*\*?[27] If we have not previously individuated the possible golden mountains in question and found them to be the same or different entities, this question is in principle unanswerable. So, says the possibilist fictionalist, suppose we have a workable criterion of identity for merely possible individuals. This criterion can, for example, be given in terms of an actually uninstantiated individual essence, that is a property which, though nothing actually has it, is possessed by a certain individual in all the possible worlds in which this individual exists and may be possessed only by such an individual.[28] As a result,

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[24] This example comes from Twardowski (1982[1894]: 106).

[25] Lewis is tempted to account for "blatantly impossible" *ficta* (such as the one presented here) in terms of impossible possible worlds, but he himself immediately admits that speaking of impossible possible worlds does not provide a serious solution to the problem represented by those characters. He is however not impressed by the *ontological* side of this problem, for he holds that from the *semantic* point of view, not only sentences about blatantly impossible *ficta* but also sentences about "venially impossible" *ficta* (those whose inconsistency arises from slips of the storyteller's pen) are accountable for within a possibilist framework. Cf. his (1978: 45–6), (1983: 277–8). That there are inconsistent *ficta* is also acknowledged by Parsons (1980: 184), Santambrogio (1992: 311) and Orilia (2002: 177).

[26] Starting from Kripke (1973: 40), (1980: 157–8).

[27] As regards *possibilia* themselves, this question can be traced back to Kaplan (1973: 505–6). See, moreover, Rosenkrantz (1984: 142–3).

[28] For this definition of an (actually uninstantiated) individual essence, see Rosenkrantz (1984), (1985/6: 199–200).

if an individual inhabiting a possible world *w* and an individual inhabiting a different possible world *w\** have the same individual essence, they are the same individual. For instance, with respect to the actually uninstantiated individual essence constituted by the property of *being the offspring of a certain sperm of Philip II of Spain and of a certain ovum of Elizabeth I of England*, if both *a* in *w* and *b* in *w\** are the offspring of those (actually existing) gametes, then they are the same entity, the same possible individual. Once that criterion is adopted for *possibilia*, the possibilist fictionalist could go on to say that it may also hold for fictional entities. Suppose, in fact, one writes a story about the offspring of the above-mentioned gametes, a son of King Philip and Queen Elizabeth who united the crowns of Spain and England. As is well known, in reality Philip and Elizabeth had no children. So why should the protagonist of this story not be that same possible individual who is individuated by the above actually uninstantiated individual essence?

Let me put to one side the fact that this reply would enable the possibilist fictionalist to account for a very small number of fictional characters. For most of what we commonsensically accept as fictional characters, there undoubtedly are no suitably individuated possible individuals who correspond to those characters (to put the matter in theoretically uncompromising terms). If this were the problem with the view, the possibilist fictionalist could reply to it by relaxing the individuation condition for fictional objects. Instead of looking for an individual essence, the possibilist fictionalist might point to a similarity relation holding between different possible individuals, each located in a different possible world, and claim that *the* fictional character is actually nothing but an appropriate plurality of such *possibilia* linked by that similarity relation.[29] The real difficulty confronting this view is another. There is a reason why being possible provides neither necessary nor sufficient conditions for being fictional: a fictional entity *cannot* be a possible spatiotemporal individual. For it cannot be an actually spatiotemporally existing individual either. Let me explain.

As everyone knows, the mythical sword Excalibur which King Arthur extracts from a rock does not exist. Its nonexistence would not be threatened by someone discovering an object with all the properties that the Breton cycle ascribes to Excalibur. (As a matter of fact, a sword in a rock exists in St. Galgano's abbey in Tuscany.) Its similarity to Excalibur notwithstanding, that object could *not* be Excalibur.[30] Now, this means that a certain fictional object cannot be identical with any actually spatiotemporally existing individual, not

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[29] Counterpart theorists actually provide this reply. According to them, *possibilia* are counterparts of actually existing individuals. Such counterparts are each located in a distinct possible world, understood as a full-fledged entity. Cf., for example, Kroon (1994: 211–2).
[30] Cf. again Kripke (1980: 157).

even one that shares all its properties. Yet if a fictional entity cannot be the same as an *actually* spatiotemporally existing individual having precisely the properties the relevant story attributes to it, how can it be identical with a *possibly* spatiotemporally existing individual having (in the possible world in which it exists) those very same properties? If it is not identical with the one, a fortiori there is no likelihood at all of its being identical with the other.[31]

As a consequence, the offspring of a certain sperm of Philip II of Spain and of a certain ovum of Elizabeth I of England that is the subject of a fictional story is not the same as the possible individual who has as his or her individual essence the property of *being the offspring of a certain sperm of Philip II of Spain and of a certain ovum of Elizabeth I of England*. At first sight, this may seem paradoxical. Yet a moment's reflection will show us that the fictional offspring is already *actually* the offspring of those gametes,[32] whereas the possible offspring evidently is not: he or she is merely *possibly* such an offspring.[33] If this is the case with respect to a *fictum/possibile* pair whose members are seemingly identical, it is all the more so with respect to all other *ficta/possibilia* pairs, such as the one involving the fictional golden mountain—the thing described in a fictional story as golden and a mountain—and the possible golden mountain—the thing (if it is *one* thing) that is both golden and a mountain in a possible yet unactual world. All these pairs contain *different* items.

## 4.      The Neo-Meinongian Abstractionist Conception

The above-mentioned criticisms are all well and good, but what is the essential reason for which a fictional object cannot be identical either with an actually or with a possibly spatiotemporally existing entity? The natural answer is that both a really and a possibly spatiotemporally existing entity are *concrete* entities: that is entities which are, respectively, actually or possibly involved directly in causal relations.[34] Yet a fictional object is not such an entity. Not only is a fictional object never actually encountered, it *cannot* be encountered either. (It is not only a false belief for children to think that Santa Claus is coming tonight; that belief is a *category* mistake.)

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[31]  As Kripke has envisaged (see previous footnote). Cf. also Kaplan (1989b: 609).

[32]  In a sense to be explained later, by appealing to the so-called "internal mode of predication" of a property.

[33]  This observation is intended to cope with a problematic remark by Kaplan (1989b: 610 n. 107), who wonders whether in such a case the story would refer to the possible offspring. This is equivalent to wondering whether the possible and the fictional offspring are the same individual.

[34]  On possible entities as concrete items, cf. Cocchiarella's (1982: 183–5) interpretation of the early Russell.

So, if a fictional entity is not a concrete entity, what can it be? Again, the fact that it is something one *cannot* encounter naturally suggests the following answer: it is an *abstract* entity, that is an entity which is neither really nor possibly involved directly in causal relations.[35] This is in fact the answer given by several Neo-Meinongians. They, too, make *ficta* subsets of Meinongian entities. But, unlike Meinong, they conceive of them as abstract entities. Let us consider the main available options in detail.

According to one option, a fictional entity is a Meinongian object, which in turn corresponds to a set of properties. In particular, a fictional entity corresponds to the set of all the properties that are mobilized in the relevant fiction. Literally speaking, this position holds that a Meinongian object—and hence a fictional object as well—is a set-*correlate* rather than a set.[36] For it is generated via a particular application of the Principle of the Freedom of Assumption, according to which, for any collection of properties, there is a certain Meinongian object possessing all those properties. Yet, for the time being, I shall consider this option as asserting that a Meinongian object—hence a fictional object—is simply a set of properties rather than a correlate of such a set. For, in consequence of being taken as a set (of properties), a fictional entity genuinely is an abstract entity.

According to another option, a fictional entity is once again a Meinongian object, which is generated via an application of the Principle of Freedom of Assumption by mobilizing a certain collection of properties. But this time the entity that is generated via that application is taken to be something like a generic object or a Platonic type, which concrete entities (may) instantiate.[37] From this standpoint, a fictional entity is a thing like the generic triangle or

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[35] In (1996), Linsky and Zalta attenuate the concrete/abstract distinction by viewing *concreta* as contingently—and (ordinary) *abstracta* as necessarily—abstract beings. I suspect that this move makes no significant difference. Since *possibilia* are concrete entities in the sense that they may be directly involved in the causal order of the world, they may also not be so involved. They may be said to have at most a contingently indirect involvement with the causal order of the world and, hence, to be contingently abstract beings in Linsky-Zalta's terminology. On the other hand, *ficta* turn out to be paradigmatic cases of necessarily abstract beings in that, for them, it is necessarily the case that they are at most indirectly involved with the causal order of the world.

[36] This is the position literally held by both Rapaport (1978) and Parsons (1980). I will evaluate it in the next section. In point of fact, there is room to doubt that this position does not amount to identifying *ficta* with property sets. Cf. Smith (1980: 99).

[37] Cf. Zalta (1983). For a similar position, cf. Santambrogio (1990, 1992). Yet Santambrogio's theory intends to be less ontologically committal. For him, one is entitled to speak of generic objects as targets of *aboutness₂* only insofar as there is a notion of aboutness—say, $aboutness_2$— that is different from the one involved in reference to ordinary individuals—call it $aboutness_1$.

the generic bed, namely, that which all the specific triangles or all the specific beds respectively have in common. Simply put, a *fictum* is that particular type which is characterized by all the properties attributed to it in the relevant narration. In virtue of being one such type, a fictional entity is an *abstractum*.

Let me first observe that, in both options, the properties mobilized by applying the Principle of the Freedom of Assumption are to be understood not so much as *entia* endowed with causal powers, but rather as anything that can be legitimately represented via a lambda predicate, that is, a predicate of the kind $[\lambda a_1, \ldots, a_n A]$, where $a_1, \ldots, a_n$ are variables that possibly occur freely in the open sentence $A$.[38] This is because the entities that are to be ranked among the constituents of a Meinongian, hence of a fictional, object, include not only entities such as *being a horse*, which can be conceived as a causally effective property, but also entities such as *being a hobbit, being a non-horse, being a round square*, and even *being propertyless*, which for different reasons obviously cannot be conceived as causally effective items. This is particularly relevant as far as fiction is concerned because (as we will see shortly) a story may be so imaginative, or even paradoxical, as to contain sentences such as "Once upon a time there was . . . (a hobbit, a non-horse, a round square, a propertyless being)" which at least *prima facie* commit one to causally inert properties supposedly instantiated by the protagonist of the story.

The above observation has two implications: first, there are no linguistic uses in fiction where one merely pretends to express properties; second, though there are fictional entities, there are no fictional properties that one genuinely expresses in such uses. I believe that once one acknowledges that in fiction (as everywhere else) one can mobilize not only actually uninstantiated properties but also both actually and possibly uninstantiated properties, the second consequence is generally acceptable. On the other hand, the first consequence sounds more problematic. Take the famous first lines of the poem *Jabberwocky* in Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking-Glass*, "Twas brillig, and the slithy toves/ Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:/ All mimsy were the borogoves,/ And the mome raths outgrabe." Is it not the case that the predicates here simply pretend to express properties?[39]

I do not think so. As regards so-called "fictional" predicates, it seems to me that, theoretically speaking, either we understand them or we pretend to

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[38] According to Orilia (2002: 148), both Castañeda and Parsons take every lambda predicate to express a property. However, in this respect I add the adverb "legitimately" since some neo-Meinongians who accept Russell's theory of types do not believe that *every* lambda predicate effectively represents a property. Cf., for example, Zalta (1983).

[39] I thank Kendall Walton for having pointed out (in conversation) this problem to me. As Fred Kroon (in correspondence) has reminded me, this problem was first raised by Kripke (1973).

understand them.[40] Yet the second option is hardly viable. Perhaps we merely
have a quasi-understanding of singular terms that do not designate actually (or
possibly) spatiotemporally existing objects as pretending to refer to individu-
als. Yet the condition for this quasi-understanding is that we fully understand
the predicative terms those singular terms are linked to in fictional contexts.
Therefore, only the first option is still available. However, if we understand
those predicates, we give them a meaning and whatever this meaning is, it is
the meaning of a predicative term, hence a good candidate for a property (per-
haps both actually and possibly uninstantiated). One might suspect that the
properties in question are too private to be accepted as such since anyone
could understand such predicates differently, hence associate with them dif-
ferent properties. Yet (as we see in Chapter 3) there may be a criterion for rul-
ing out property privacy: in order for a predicative term to express a property
*P*, a sentence such as "*S* think(s) of a *P*" must possibly be true (in its *de dicto*
reading) for *any* subject *S*.[41]

Let me now go back to my main line of argument. The Neo-Meinongian
conception of *ficta* has a definite advantage over Meinong's own position.
As a Meinongian object, a *fictum* owes its being to an application of the
Principle of the Freedom of Assumption: given a specific collection of
properties, those which pertain to a personage according to a piece of fic-
tion, a fictional entity is generated as that entity which has all those properties.
This is something Meinong would have agreed with. But Neo-Meinongians
go beyond him in that they conceive of Meinongian objects—hence
also fictional entities—as abstract entities, sets and types in the case in
point. This makes Meinongian objects no longer *außerseiende* beings, as
Meinong had maintained, but really existing beings. In Meinong's own
terms, abstract entities actually *subsist*; that is they really exist but in a non-
spatiotemporal way.

In Meinong's favor, one could say that this conception of Meinongian
objects is inadequate, above all as far as *ficta* are concerned. It does not
account for the "nonexistence" datum of *ficta*, which is, on the contrary,

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[40]  We quasi-understand them, as Gareth Evans would say. On quasi-understanding expres-
sions in fiction, cf. Evans (1982: 363).

[41]  As an example of a fictional predicate, Walton gives us a phrase such as "_ is a fictional
character" (1990: 423). Certainly, one has to see this example in the context of Walton's non-
committal theory of fictional beings. For according to such a theory, it is merely make-
believe that there is a fictional individual, "of which" one may further predicate in
make-believe that it is such. But the point is that, even if one accepts such a theory, that pred-
icate is not fictional but simply expresses an actually (and perhaps even possibly) uninstan-
tiated property. If I am an eliminativist about—say—holes, when I claim that there are no
holes I do not say that the predicate "being a hole" is fictional, but rather that the property it
expresses is actually (and also possibly) uninstantiated.

explained by Meinong's theory of Meinongian entities as *außerseiende* entities. It is intuitively acknowledged that Don Quixote and Sancho Panza do not exist; yet if *ficta* (*qua* Meinongian objects) are abstract individuals, they do exist.

Nevertheless, Neo-Meinongian abstractionists may well reply that their theory saves the "nonexistence" datum. What we really mean by saying that those characters do not exist is that there is no chance of our encountering them in the outside world. But this means further that they do not exist *spatiotemporally*. This is successfully accounted for by a theory which claims that *ficta* are abstract entities and so entities that actually exist but non-spatiotemporally. They subsist—exist non-spatiotemporally—yet they do not exist—meaning that they do not exist spatiotemporally.

At first sight, this answer might leave one perplexed. It was stated above against the possibilist fictionalist that there are some *ficta* which are impossible entities. But if they are impossible they definitely do not exist, even non-spatiotemporally, in the actual world because they do not exist in any possible world.

All the same, the Neo-Meinongian abstractionist can easily reply to this doubt. If a Meinongian object contains inconsistent features, as some *ficta* do, then it will be impossible in a sense that is compatible with its nature as an abstract entity, and hence compatible with its non-spatiotemporal *actual* existence. That is, it will be impossible not in the primary sense that it exists in no possible world, but only in the secondary sense that it is impossible for there to be a concrete being having all its features.[42]

The Neo-Meinongian abstractionist conception of fictional objects turns out to be the most promising among those hitherto considered. It accounts for the "nonexistence" datum of fictional entities without either implausibly locating these nonexistent items in a possible world different from the actual world, as the possibilist conception does, or—oddly—locating them in the realm of the entities "beyond being and non-being" (which is really a way of not locating them at all) as in Meinong's conception, whether that conception is understood platonistically or phenomenologically. Fictional entities are *actually* existing entities such as you and me, this stone and this chair. Unlike these individuals, however, they have no spatiotemporal connotation for they are abstract entities, that is, entities of the same general kind as the number 4 or the letter A.

Up to now, I have treated on a par the two Neo-Meinongian abstractionist theories of fictional objects presented here—let me call them the *set-theoretical* and the *genuinely Platonic* doctrines. However, once we take it for granted that a fictional object is an abstract entity, it is time to ask whether

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[42] For the definition of the corresponding notions of possibility, cf. Zalta (1983: 75–6).

it is better to conceive of it as a set of properties or as a generic object. My answer is that the *set-theoretical* doctrine is preferable. The reason is that there are two further data, the "incompleteness" datum and the "analyticity" datum, which the *set-theoretical* doctrine addresses more adequately than the Platonic. This needs to be explained.

Let me start with the "incompleteness" datum. This datum amounts to the indisputable fact that, if a story says or even implies nothing as to whether one of its characters has or lacks a given property $P$,[43] it is pointless to ask whether or not that character has $P$. Take the story of Gertrude, the Nun of Monza, as recounted by Alessandro Manzoni in his novel *The Betrothed*. The story tells us that attracted by Egidio, a young man courting her, one day Gertrude responds to his greeting ("the miserable girl replied"). Although there is then no literal reference to sexual intercourse between Gertrude and Egidio, the clear implication is that it did take place. Therefore, if we are asked not only whether Gertrude responded to Egidio's greetings, but also whether she had sexual intercourse with him, it is correct to answer both questions in the affirmative: Gertrude has both the properties of *responding to Egidio's greetings* and of *having had sexual intercourse with Egidio*. On the other hand, the story not only says but also implies nothing about whether Gertrude plays chess. So, it is pointless to ask whether or not Gertrude has the property of *being a chess player*. Now, it may sound natural to interpret the "incompleteness" datum as suggesting that a fictional entity is an *incomplete* entity in the sense that, for any property $P$ about whose possession or lack of it by the entity the relevant story says or implies nothing, that entity has neither the property nor its complement *not-P*. For example, Gertrude is incomplete in that she has neither the property of *being a chess player* nor its complement.[44]

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[43] It is clear that the fictional "world" that a story yields contains not only what is said explicitly, the *explicit* propositions, but also what is left implicit or is in some way implied by the explicit propositions, that is, the *implicit* propositions. One may take the implicit propositions as derived from the explicit propositions through relevant entailment [cf. Zalta (1988: 124–5)] or according to the principles of a paraconsistent logic [cf. Deutsch (1985) and Orilia (2002: 198)]. Due to these options, one will be able to maintain that stories are logically closed sets of propositions. Alternatively, one may take it that such a derivation holds by means of a strong inductive argument or by appeal to some rationality principle [cf. Phillips (1999: 280, 287)]. The question of how far the subset of the implicit propositions in a story must go amounts to the question of determining a principle of story composition, that is, of "determining precisely which propositions are contained in a given story" [Phillips (1999: 274)]. Yet, whatever its solution, this question arises apart from the issues focused on here, namely, the issues regarding what kind of things fictional entities would be if there were any and whether fictional characters really exist.

[44] This is what in Voltolini (1994: 91–4) I treated as the essential incompleteness of a (fictional) entity. Moreover, I explained *ficta*'s incompleteness by means of *predicative* negation

The "incompleteness" datum is in some way reversed by the "analyticity" datum. As we have just seen, the "incompleteness" datum makes clear that it is pointless to ask whether or not a fictional entity has a property about whose possession or lack thereof the relevant story is silent, that is, it neither says nor implies that the entity either has or lacks the property. On the other hand, the "analyticity" datum makes clear that it is pointless to ask whether or not a fictional entity has a property such that the relevant story says or implies that entity has it, or a property such that story says or implies that entity lacks it. For in the former case the answer is trivially affirmative and in the latter it is trivially negative. Still using the example from Manzoni's novel, it is both trivially the case that Gertrude responds to Egidio's greetings and trivially not the case that she resists his approaches. Now, it may sound tempting to interpret this datum as suggesting that a statement "F is P"—where "F" designates a certain *fictum F* and "_ is P" designates a property such that the relevant story says or implies that *F* has it or else says or implies that *F* lacks it—is either analytically true or analytically false. "Gertrude responds to Egidio's greetings" is analytically true; "Gertrude resists Egidio's advances" is analytically false.[45]

Now, the *set-theoretical* doctrine of fictional entities directly accounts for both data. As to the "incompleteness" datum, this doctrine holds that a *fictum* lacks both a property *P* and its complement *not-P* and that it is therefore incomplete if neither property belongs to the property set that constitutes that *fictum*.[46] As to the "analyticity" datum, the sentence "F is P"—where "F" designates a certain *fictum F* and "_ is P" designates a property such that the relevant tale

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(negation mobilized by negative properties: *being not-P*). This enables us to put aside Russell's well-known doubt that, *qua* Meinongian objects, *ficta* violate the Law of Excluded Middle according to which either a sentence or its contradictory is true and there is no other possibility. See on this Russell (1905a: 485, 490). Indeed, when incompleteness is so explained, a Meinongian object clearly involves no violation of the Law of Excluded Middle, which uses the *propositional* sense of negation ("it is not the case that *P*"). For example, the incompleteness of Gertrude leads to the fact that of the sentential pair "Gertrude is a chess player" and "it is not the case that: Gertrude is a chess player", as well as of the pair "Gertrude is a non-chess-player" and "it is not the case that: Gertrude is a non-chess-player", the first members of these pairs are false whereas their second members are true. Thus, both pairs contain genuinely contradictory sentences. See Simons (1990: 182, 184). Accordingly, it is not the case that, as both Smith (1980: 101) and Farrell Smith (1984/5: 317) maintain, Meinongian or at least fictional objects require a restriction on the Law of Excluded Middle.

[45] On the analytical nature of the way in which the characterizing properties are predicated of a certain *fictum*, see Bonomi (1979: 46–8). I say only that it may sound tempting to thus interpret the datum in question because one may confine oneself to noting that the datum suggests that the sentences in question are *unrevisable*. In other words, the datum might at most point to a cognitive, rather than a semantic, sense of analyticity. Eco (2000) is tempted to interpret it in this way. See also Priest (2005: 147–8).

[46] Cf. Parsons (1980: 183).

says or implies that *F* has it—is analytically true if *P* belongs to the property set which constitutes that *fictum*, and analytically false otherwise.[47]

On the other hand, no such direct account is provided by the genuinely Platonic doctrine. As to the first datum, one may well agree with the Platonist that, *qua* type, a *fictum* is an incomplete entity in that, for many properties and their respective complements, a type possesses neither.[48] Yet, unlike the defender of the set-theoretical doctrine, the Platonist seems to provide no clear criterion for deciding, for *every* pair consisting of a property and its complement, whether the *fictum* fails to have both properties. Once a set of properties is given, it is immediately clear whether the individual identical with that set has a certain property or its complement. In contrast, given a Platonic type, it is not immediately clear whether the individual identical with that type has either property. Moreover, as to the "analyticity" datum, the genuinely Platonic doctrine of fictional entities may well say that it is necessarily the case that a *fictum* has a property whose possession by it is either stated or implied by the relevant story. For a type such as the P, P′, P″ . . . cannot but have the properties *P, P′, P″* . . . by means of which is characterized. Yet what the datum in question points out is not necessary possession, but rather *trivial* possession. By saying that a *fictum* has a property attributed to it within a narrative body one makes no discovery about it; no genuine information about it is conveyed. In other words, if that narrative body says or implies that a certain character has a given property, then it is trivial that character has that property. On the other hand, such triviality is clearly accounted for by saying that any sentence "F is P", where the singular term "F" designates a set of properties and "_ is P" designates one of those properties, is analytically true. In this approach, the sentence is trivially true insofar as the property which constitutes the meaning of that predicate belongs to the set that constitutes the meaning of that singular term. Now, this makes the sentence analytically true, not merely in the sense criticized by Willard Van Orman Quine that the sentence is true in virtue of its meaning, but rather in the old Kantian sense that the meaning of the predicate is contained in the meaning of the subject.

Thus, among the Neo-Meinongian abstractionist theories of fictional objects, the set-theoretical doctrine deals more intuitively than the genuinely Platonic doctrine with the "incompleteness" and the "analyticity" data. At this point, however, two further intertwined questions arise. First, what does it mean for a *fictum* to possess the properties the relevant story assigns to it? Second, in

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[47]  Cf. Castañeda, for example, (1985/6: 58–9).

[48]  This is indeed the traditional doctrine of the incompleteness of Platonic types, which was accepted by Meinong with respect to Meinongian objects. On this cf., for example, Chisholm (1982b: 49–52). See also Reicher (2005:177–84).

what sense can a *fictum* possess properties over and above those which are assigned to it in the relevant story? Without doubt, both questions arise with respect to Meinongian objects in general. Yet, wherever possible, I intend to address them directly to that particular subset of the set of Meinongian objects whose members are, according to Neo-Meinongians, fictional entities.

As to the first question, let me first recall that Meinong appealed to the Principle of the Independence of the *Sosein* from *Sein*. This principle is fully compatible with Meinong's Principle of the Indifference of a (Meinongian) object to being, namely the above-mentioned thesis of the *außerseiende* nature of a (Meinongian) object.[49] According to the first principle, it is possible for a Meinongian object to have the properties by which it is characterized—to have its *Sosein*—even though it does not actually exist. Thus, the round square can be both round and square, the golden mountain can be both golden and a mountain, even though neither actually exists.[50]

Many have found this principle disconcerting. Properties such as *being round* and *being square*, *being golden* and *being a mountain*, seem to be (as the early Russell would have said) *existence-entailing* properties: if an object has one of them it must actually exist. How, therefore, can a Meinongian object, which is *außerseiend*, have those properties? Insofar as it actually exists, Mont Blanc is a mountain. But how can the golden mountain be a mountain as well and not actually exist?[51]

Neo-Meinongian abstractionists try to answer this question by discarding Meinong's Principle of Independence. As we have seen, for them Meinongian objects actually exist, in the non-spatiotemporal way that pertains to abstract entities. Consequently Meinongian objects, like other actually existing entities, have properties. Thus, insofar as a fictional entity is a Meinongian, hence an abstract, object, it has all the properties it is characterized as having (in the relevant story), just as any other actually existing entity has. Hamlet is no less a prince than Charles, Prince of Wales is.

Nevertheless, this is just part of the answer to the first question (what does it mean for a *fictum* to have the properties the relevant story assigns to it?). In order to consider the complete answer that Neo-Meinongians give to it, we must take into account the second question formulated above (in what sense can a *fictum* possess other properties?). To fictional objects are not only ascribed the properties that are predicated of them in the relevant narration. Independently of their occurrence in certain stories, they are endowed with other properties as well. For instance, Hamlet is not only said to be an apparently mad prince bent on revenging his father's murder, as in

[49]  For these labellings, cf. Lambert (1983: 13–23).
[50]  Cf. Meinong (1971[1904]: 82).
[51]  Cf. Cocchiarella (1982: 197), Williamson (2000: 202–4).

Shakespeare's tragedy. Outside of the play, he is said to be a host of other things: for example that he was created by Shakespeare, that he has been approved of by many people, that he has been a model for other fictional characters, that he does not exist spatiotemporally, and—last but not least—that he is a fictional character. So fictional entities appear to have not only the properties that are attributed to them in the relevant narration, but other properties that are not story-related. How is this possible?

Following a suggestion of Meinong's, set-theoretical abstractionists are in a position to deal with this question by at the same time completing the answer to the first question. On the one hand Meinongian objects, hence fictional entities, have *nuclear* properties, that is the properties that belong to the sets in which those objects consist. Accordingly, one may also call them *constitutive* properties. This was Meinong's own terminological choice. As far as fictional entities are concerned, the nuclear properties that constitute the sets in which these entities consist are those which are ascribed to them in their respective narratives. Over and above these properties, however, Meinongian objects also possess properties that do not belong to the sets that constitute them. These are therefore called *extranuclear* or—in Meinong's own terminology—*extraconstitutive* properties. As far as fictional entities are concerned, these are precisely the properties that are attributed to such entities *outside* the relevant narration: in the case of Hamlet, *being created by Shakespeare*, *being approved of by many people*, *being a model for other fictional characters*, *having no spatiotemporal existence* and—last but not least—*being a fictional character*.[52]

Certainly, it is hard to find a criterion for distinguishing between the nuclear and the extranuclear properties of a Meinongian object. Nonetheless, let me put this problem to one side[53] since those who have doubts about Meinong's Principle of Independence would still be dissatisfied. They would not find that this property distinction has made their original problem disappear. Let us grant that there is no problem about Hamlet's being a prince since he is not an *außerseiende* but, rather, an abstract entity. Yet how can he be a prince *in the same sense* as Charles, Prince of Wales? He also lives in Denmark, or so Shakespeare tells us. But how is it that if one had gone to Denmark, there would never have been the possibility of meeting him as there would be in respect of an actually existing real Dane?

There is a traditional reply to this problem, which goes back to Meinong's pupil Ernst Mally. In the abstractionist camp, it has appealed above all to Platonists. In this reply, it is not the case that Meinongian

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[52]  Cf. Meinong (1972[1916]: 176), Parsons (1978, 1980).
[53]  In Voltolini (2001: 498–500), I recall some of the traditional difficulties affecting the search for such a criterion. See also Reicher (2005: 177–84).

objects possess properties of two *kinds*, the nuclear and the extranuclear. There is just one kind of property that they, like any other individual, possess. But there are two *modes* in which properties of one and the same kind can be predicated of individuals, Meinongian or not. These two modes can be labelled in different ways: determining/satisfying,[54] constituency/exemplification,[55] encoding/exemplifying,[56] internal/external.[57] For the sake of simplicity, I adopt here the last one.[58] According to Mally's abstractionist followers, properties that make up the nature of a Meinongian object are *internally* predicated of it, whereas they are *externally* predicated of an individual that is not a Meinongian object. So, actually spatiotemporally existing individuals have properties only in the external mode. Moreover, a Meinongian object can have properties not only in the internal but also in the external mode (possibly, the very same properties).

It has been widely debated which of the two distinctions, the "kinds of property" and the "modes of predication" distinction, is the better. Some philosophers have wondered whether the one can in fact be reduced to the other.[59] Others have even questioned whether the "modes of predication" distinction is tenable.[60] I do not want to deal here with these issues regarding Meinongian objects in general.[61] Yet it seems that the "modes of predication" distinction provides a better explanation than the "kinds of property" distinction of how *ficta* can have the properties that are ascribed to them. For example, internally Hamlet is a prince and an inhabitant of Denmark, but Frederik of Denmark has those very same properties externally. This is why if we go to Denmark and look through the list of Danish princes we will find Frederik, but there has never been any possibility of finding Hamlet. Moreover, it is true that Hamlet also has all those properties which are assigned to him outside of any fictional story given that he has all of them not internally, but externally.

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[54] Cf. Mally (1912: 64, 76).

[55] Cf. Rapaport (1978: 162).

[56] Cf. Zalta (1983: 12).

[57] Cf. Castañeda, for example, (1989a: 200).

[58] I do not, though, use it in the same way as Castañeda but rather as Rapaport and Zalta; namely, as if there were just *one* kind of external predication, not an (indefinite) number of such predications, as Castañeda would prefer [cf., for example, Castañeda (1989a)].

[59] As Fine (1982: 98–9) has noted, the two distinctions match each other, the "modes of predication" distinction being preferable where nonexistent objects are at issue.

[60] This is because it is apparently subject to semantic paradoxes such as those raised by Romane Clark and Alan McMichael [for which, cf. Rapaport (1978) and Zalta (1983) respectively]. I think the distinction does avoid the paradoxes, but I cannot go into this issue here in a systematic fashion. For a brief discussion of this point, See Chapter 3.

[61] As regards Meinongian objects in general, in Voltolini (2001) I opt for the "modes of predication" distinction.

Let me attempt to give some other reasons why the "modes of predication" distinction applies better to fictional entities than the "kinds of property" distinction. These reasons can be traced back to the fact that, as I said in the Introduction, fiction is the realm where the impossible is, so to speak, possible. Put differently, anything that can be imagined, whether it appears to be possible or not, can be a subject of fiction. So there may well be a novel starting with the following sentence:

(1) Once upon a time there was a fictional object.

This hypothetical novel represents a typical case of a *metafiction*, that is a fiction that has fiction itself as its subject. Twentieth-century art is full of such cases; in this respect, Luigi Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author* is paradigmatic. Now, this example can hardly be dealt with in terms of the "kinds of property" distinction. Since in the above sentence of the novel the property of *being a fictional object* is assigned to the character that sentence deals with, this property would have to be a nuclear property of that fictional entity. But, as such a character is a *fictum* with the same right as Hamlet and Don Quixote, that property would also have to be an extranuclear property of that entity. So, this property would at the same time be a nuclear and an extranuclear property. As a result, no distinction between kinds of property would any longer subsist. On the other hand, this case is neatly accounted for in terms of the "modes of predication" distinction. One and the same property, *being a fictional object*, pertains both internally and externally to the same character.[62]

Moreover, twentieth-century art has given us not only metafictional but also highly paradoxical novels. Therefore, there may well be a one-sentence story that says:

(2) Once upon a time there was an individual having no property.

Uninviting as it may be, this is a story like any other. Its protagonist is assigned the "second-order" property[63] of *having no property*. Yet, if we step outside the story, it is simply be false that such a fictional entity has no property, for it has precisely (at least) the property of *having no property*. As a result, it would be not only the case that one property, *having no property*, is at the same time both nuclear and extranuclear. More problematically, that *fictum* would at the same time possess the property of *having no property* (for this is assigned to it in the story) and not possess it (for it is false that it has no property). Once again, the situation is easily dealt with in terms of the "modes of predication" distinction. One and the same property, the

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[62]  For a similar problem, cf. Priest (2005: 83–4).

[63]  For this notion of a second-order property (clearly distinct from the one regarding properties of properties), cf. Kim (1998: 19–20).

"second-order" property of *having no property*, is at the same time internally possessed but not externally possessed by the same *fictum*.[64]

Clearly, it is not the case that a supporter of the "kinds of property" distinction cannot account for these and even more difficult cases. Again following a suggestion from Meinong,[65] it may be claimed that, for every extranuclear property, there is a watered-down (*depotenzierte*) nuclear property corresponding to it.[66] Consequently, in the metafictional example of (1) there are two properties at issue: the extranuclear property of *being a fictional object* and its corresponding watered-down nuclear property, which are both possessed by the same *fictum*, whereas in the paradoxical example of (2) there are again two properties, the extranuclear "second-order" property of *having no property* and its corresponding watered-down nuclear property, which, are not possessed and possessed respectively by the same *fictum*.

As many have noted, this answer seems highly *ad hoc*. There is no need to introduce this very large collection of watered-down nuclear properties except for the purpose of saving the "kinds of property" distinction.[67] In fact—as Russell replied to Meinong's use of a similar strategy[68]—no one can grasp what a watered-down counterpart of an extranuclear property could be. What exactly is, say, the watered-down property corresponding to the (allegedly extranuclear) property of *being a fictional object*? In respect of *ficta*, this perplexity is increased by the fact that there is no explanation for why some of the properties assigned to a *fictum* within a story have to be watered-down nuclear properties. Suppose there were another metafictional story starting with the sentence:

(3) Once upon a time there was a fictional golden mountain.

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[64] For many such examples, see Fine (1982). As Castañeda has already noted (1989b: 247–8), the "modes of predication" distinction vindicates Meinong's (1975[1907]: 223) reply to Russell's (1905a,b) basically similar objection that Meinongian objects contravene the Principle of Non-contradiction, in that the existent present King of France both does and does not exist. The point is that the existent present King of France is a Meinongian object which exists internally but fails to exist externally (in the sense that externally it fails to exist spatiotemporally).

[65] Cf. Meinong (1972[1916]: 291). Here Meinong elaborates his reply to Russell's problem of the existent present King of France (see previous footnote). He says that that one must distinguish between the property of *being existent* (that the existent present King of France possesses) and the property of *existing* (which the King lacks). Cf. Meinong (1975[1907]: 223).

[66] This is precisely what Parsons has done by again considering the case of the existent present King of France and distinguishing between the extranuclear property of *existence* and its watered-down nuclear variant. Cf. Parsons (1980: 42–4).

[67] For similar doubts about this thesis in its general form, cf. Parsons himself (1980: 44). In fact, Parsons seems to admit that a distinction should sometimes be drawn between *including* a property and *having* it (1980: 171). In my view, this distinction seems equivalent to the distinction between internal and external predication.

[68] To be exact, with regard to Meinong's distinction (cf. n. 65) between the properties of *being* existent and existing: cf. Russell (1907: 439).

The properties ascribed to the protagonist of this story by means of the predicates "_ is golden" and "_ is a mountain" are obviously the ordinary properties of *being golden* and *being mountainous*. According to the supporter of the "kinds of property" distinction, they have to be taken to be nuclear properties. Yet it seems also that the property ascribed to that protagonist by means of the predicate "_ is fictional" is the ordinary property of *being fictional*. Thus it seems that it is only the fact that, in the framework of the "kinds of property" distinction, the ordinary property of *being fictional* is taken to be an extranuclear property that forces the supporter of that distinction to take the property ascribed to the *fictum* in the above sentence to be not the ordinary property of *being fictional*, but an unwieldy watered-down nuclear property.

When considering *ficta*, moreover, being *ad hoc* is not the most difficult problem that the appeal to watered-down nuclear properties has to face. Once we have watered-down nuclear properties, nothing prevents us from imagining a more complicated both metafictional and paradoxical story starting with the following sentence:

> (4) Once upon a time there was both a fictional and a watered-down fictional object.

According to the proponent of the "kinds of property" distinction, the property ascribed in the story to its protagonist through the predicate "_ is a fictional object" is the watered-down nuclear property corresponding to the extranuclear property of *being a fictional object*. However, if this is the case, the property ascribed in the story to its protagonist by means of the predicate "_ is a watered-down fictional object" cannot be the very same watered-down nuclear property, but must be *another* nuclear property. Now what can this property be? If the proponent of the "kinds of property" distinction maintains that what is designated by that predicate is something like a *doubly* watered-down nuclear property, then obviously an infinite regress arises. Suffice it to consider another story starting with the sentence:

> (5) Once upon a time there was a fictional, a watered-down fictional, and a doubly watered-down fictional object.[69]

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[69] Evidently, this regress is not vicious. Yet it shows that the "kinds of property" approach is committed to an unnecessary number of *n*-ly watered-down properties. (I owe this remark to Francesco Orilia). As Jacquette (1996: 83–4) points out, moreover, infinite regress affects the application of the "kinds of property" distinction to Meinongian objects in general. For Russell's problem, originally regarding the existent present King of France, comes up again with respect to the existent-in-an-*undepotenzierte*-way present king of France, as well as with respect to the existent-in-an-*undepotenzierte*-(*undepotenzierte*-way)-way present king of France, etc.

To my mind, all these problems affecting the "kinds of property" distinction and especially its application to *ficta* show that the "modes of predication" distinction is the right distinction for a Neo-Meinongian abstractionist to adopt with respect to Meinongian objects in general and *ficta* in particular.

Yet at this point it seems that a further question arises. Of the two Neo-Meinongian abstractionist theories considered so far, the set-theoretical and the genuinely Platonic, I said above that the first seems to fit with our intuitions regarding *ficta* better that the second, especially as far as the "incompleteness" and the "analyticity" data are concerned. But set-theoretical abstractionists *à la* Terence Parsons defend not the "modes of presentation" but the "kinds of property" distinction. Taken as sets of properties, Meinongian objects, and hence fictional entities, possess both nuclear properties—those properties which belong to such sets—and extranuclear properties—those properties which do not belong to such sets. Can the set-theoretical approach to Meinongian objects, hence to *ficta*, therefore opt for the "modes of predication" distinction?

The answer is that this position is not only possible, but highly recommendable. Platonists such as Edward Zalta admit that in their framework the "modes of predication" distinction is primitive: there are no further notions in terms of which the different notions of internal and external predication can be analyzed.[70] This may lead one to suspect that the distinction is again *ad hoc*. In fact, it is adopted in order to account for how a Meinongian object can possess properties differently from an ordinary object. But if one does not allow Meinongian objects one can peacefully dismiss the distinction. Yet once a Neo-Meinongian abstractionist endorses the set-theoretical proposal, it becomes clear what it means for a property to be internally vs. externally predicated of an entity. Internal predication is nothing other than set-membership: a property is internally possessed by an object iff it belongs to the property set which constitutes it.[71] A property can, however, also be predicated of an object in a non set-theoretical way, that is, whenever we say that the object instantiates or exemplifies a property. This is what normally happens with ordinary individuals, which are not sets; but it may happen with sets as well. This is external predication.

As stated previously, moreover, the set-theoretical doctrine deals better than the genuinely Platonic doctrine with both the "incompleteness" and the "analyticity" data. Adopting the "modes of predication" distinction in a set-theoretical framework reinforces this conclusion. As to the "analyticity" datum, it is worth recalling that the Kantian explanation of what analyticity amounts to—namely that a sentence is analytically true iff the meaning of

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[70]  Cf. Zalta (1983: 12).
[71]  Cf. Castañeda (1989a: 200) and Rapaport (1978: 162).

its singular term contains the meaning of its predicative term—perfectly matched the case of a sentence in which a property belonging to a set is predicated of that set. In other words, a sentence is analytically true iff the property that is the meaning of its predicative term belongs to the set that is the meaning of its singular term. Now, if saying of a fictional object that it has a certain property internally is equivalent to saying that this property belongs to the set constituting that object, then what is analytically true is the sentence asserting that this property is possessed internally by that object. Accordingly, the "analyticity" datum is clearly accounted for in this "mixed" approach which adopts the "modes of predication" distinction within a set-theoretical framework. Naturally, the same holds for the "incompleteness" datum. With regard to a property about which the relevant story neither says nor implies that a certain *fictum* has or lacks it, it is false to state both that the *fictum* has it internally and that the *fictum* has its complement internally since neither the property nor the complement belong to the set constituting this *fictum*. Consequently, the *fictum* is incomplete.

To sum up, I take this mixed approach to Meinongian objects, which combines a set-theoretically based conception of these entities with the "modes of predication" distinction interpreted along the above lines, to be the best Neo-Meinongian abstractionist theory of fictional entities. Among Neo-Meinongian doctrines, William Rapaport's theory is closest to this approach.[72]

## 5.      The Insufficiency of the Neo-Meinongian Abstractionist Position

I will now summarize the results obtained so far in respect of the best Neo-Meinongian abstractionist theory of fictional entities, which could be described as an assemblage of parts of those Neo-Meinongian abstractionist theories actually presented in the literature. First, making *ficta* into

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[72] I say "closely resembles" since—as I said in n. 36—according to Rapaport's theory Meinongian, hence fictional, objects are set-correlates rather than sets themselves. Rapaport's theory owes a lot to Castañeda's theory of guises, the set-correlates which are Castañedean equivalents of Meinongian objects. On the set-theoretical characterization of internal predication, see Castañeda (1989a: 200). On the treatment of the "analyticity" datum, see his (1985/6: 58). Finally, on the treatment of the "incompleteness" datum, see his (1989a: 185–7). However, Rapaport differs from Castañeda in reducing external predication to just one form of predication, exemplification. Moreover, Castañeda is even further from abstractionism than Rapaport for, according to the former, guises are concrete rather than abstract entities. See next section.

abstract entities explains their nonexistence in that it takes them to be actually but non-spatiotemporally existing entities. Furthermore, making them into sets of properties—those properties which are assigned to them in the relevant narration—rather than generic objects accounts more effectively both for their being incomplete entities and for the analytical character of the sentences in which these properties are ascribed to them. Moreover, taking those properties to be ascribed to *ficta* in the internal mode of presentation allows us to explain why one and the same property can be possessed both by an actually spatiotemporally existing object and by an actually non-spatiotemporally existing object such as a *fictum*. For the actually spatiotemporally existing object possesses externally what the *fictum* possesses at least internally. I say "at least" because a fictional object may also possess properties externally, sometimes the very same properties it also possesses internally. Finally, once this "internal/external" mode of predication distinction applies to *ficta* taken as sets of properties, it is not baffling at all. Although external predication is ordinary exemplification, as regards both *ficta* and actually spatiotemporally existing individuals internal predication is just set-membership: a property is possessed internally by a *fictum* iff it belongs to the property set that constitutes that *fictum*.

These are all positive results, ones that a satisfactory theory of fictional objects must include. Yet they are insufficient. Being a certain set of properties is definitely a necessary condition for the individuation of a *fictum* since the set is one of its constituents; change the set and you obtain a different *fictum*.[73] No matter which property is internally possessed by a *fictum*, insofar as that property is a member of the set which constitutes that *fictum*, if that entity had not possessed that property it would not have been that *fictum*. It is quite obvious that Yolanda, the daughter of the Black Corsair, could not have failed to be the Corsair's offspring (by being instead his niece, or someone else's daughter). But this heroine in one of Emilio Salgari's adventure novels, very popular in countries where Romance language are spoken, could not even have been such, that the Corsair had not bestowed that name on her (but, say, had named her "Concetta"). Both *being generated by the Corsair* and *being called "Yolanda"* are indeed for Salgari's heroine internally possessed properties, hence members of the set constituting that character. However, being a certain set of properties is not a sufficient condition for a *fictum*'s individuation. In this respect, two problems arise. First, there may be a property set without any *fictum* (I call this the "no-*ficta*" problem). Second, one and the same property set may be

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[73] For this thesis, cf. Parsons (1980: 28).

matched by different *ficta* (I call this the "many-*ficta*" problem). Let me address them in turn.

The attentive reader will have noticed that in dealing with the Neo-Meinongian abstractionist theories of fictional objects, although I have always tried to focus on these entities, the results obtained hold also for Meinongian objects in general. In fact, the best Neo-Meinongian abstractionist theory will hold that *a Meinongian object* is a set of properties at least internally predicated of it. So, with respect to this theory the same question arises as with Meinong's original position: what makes a Meinongian object a *fictional* entity since by itself a set of properties is not a fictional object? This is the "no-*ficta*" problem. Take the following example.[74] In the past, interpreters of the Bible erroneously took the name "Moloch" to refer to a mythical monster, whereas modern philology has shown that it is in fact used as a common noun either for kings or for human sacrifices. Now, notwithstanding this philological error, there is undoubtedly a set $M = \{F,G,H \ldots\}$ constituted by the properties that past interpreters mistakenly understood the Bible to assign to a certain character. However, that set is not identical with a fictional character because within the realm of fictional characters there is no such entity as Moloch.

A defender of the best Neo-Meinongian abstractionist theory of fictional entities might try to circumvent the "no-*ficta*" problem by saying that a *fictum* is a Meinongian object whose constitutive properties are the properties *effectively* mobilized in a fiction. That is, if a fiction *effectively* narrates that certain properties are possessed by an individual, then the set containing all those properties coincides with a fictional entity. Since in the "Moloch" case the Bible effectively performs no such narration, there is no such fictional character as Moloch.

Yet this reply just moves the issue one step back. Since the Neo-Meinongian abstractionist says that the properties which turn a set of properties into a fictional object are the properties mobilized in a fiction, the difficulty is that there may well be one and the same set of properties mobilized by another fiction and different characters.

This is the "many-*ficta*" problem. It is not only the case that a set of properties does not by itself generate any *fictum*; it may also be that it matches more than one *fictum*. Take the famous example in which Jorge Luis Borges imagines that a man called Pierre Menard happens to write a text that is word for word identical with Miguel Cervantes' *Don Quixote*. Suppose one idealizes this case so that not only is Menard taken to be totally unconnected with Cervantes (neither knows anything about the other), but

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[74]  Which I borrow from Kripke (1973).

the two literary works mobilized by such texts are imagined to coincide not only in their explicit but also in their implicit truths.[75] One may, for example, take the two works in question to be rather abstract works so that their implicit truths are mostly composed of general truths about the world. Or one may even suppose that Menard does not live some centuries after Cervantes but is his completely unknown next-door neighbor. In that case, one and the same set of properties matches different characters. If we take Borges' example as one of these cases, Cervantes' Don Quixote and Pierre Menard's Don Quixote are two distinct characters who, nonetheless, share all the properties attributed to them in the respective works. It would be useless for the Neo-Meinongian abstractionist to appeal to the fact that the properties in question are mobilized in a fiction. For such a mobilization yields different characters.[76]

The Neo-Meinongian abstractionist might deny that in this case two different *ficta* are in question: since the set of properties is the same, so is the fictional object.[77] But this is hard to accept. As I said above, in the idealized version of the "Menard" case, Pierre Menard is imagined to be a person completely unconnected with Cervantes, an individual who in writing his story just happens to repeat the words that were used by Cervantes in writing *Don Quixote*. One could even imagine that Borges' case reformulated in terms of a Twin-Earth experiment. Notwithstanding their spatial difference, Earthians and Twin-Earthians may well share the same mathematics. Hence, Earthians may conceive of the very same set-theoretical entities that are conceived of by Twin-Earthians. In particular, if Earthians comprehend a certain set of properties, the set constituted by the same properties that Twin-Earthians comprehend is the same. Yet it would be hard to admit that they share the same fictional characters and, more generally, the same fictional

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[75] All this is, of course, hard to maintain in the real Borges example, where Menard not only is well aware of Cervantes (oddly enough, he intends to compose the very same literary work as Cervantes did), but also lives some centuries later. As a result of, the implicit truths of Menard's *Don Quixote* would hardly coincide with the implicit truths of Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, which of course refer to seventeenth-century Europe. To my knowledge, Currie (1990: 77–8) was the first to raise this problem. Moreover, in order for the expected idealization to hold, the involved *ficta* must also share all their relational properties. Naturally, this hardly holds for the real "Menard" case, where Cervantes' Don Quixote has the relational property of *mastering Sancho Panza$_1$*, whereas Menard's Don Quixote has the distinct relational property of *mastering Sancho Panza$_2$*.

[76] Cf. Lewis (1978: 39). For a repeat of this objection, see Fine (1982: 132) and Thomasson (1999: 56).

[77] Cf. Parsons (1980: 188). In the "Menard" case, the Neo-Meinongian abstractionist would also maintain that there is just one literary work at issue.

"world" (though, of course, the texts their fictions are made up of would be syntactically identical).[78]

Therefore, given both the "no-*ficta*" and the "many-*ficta*" problems, it turns out that a fictional object cannot coincide with a set of properties. Being (constituted by) a set of properties is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the individuation of a *fictum*. There must be something over and above being a certain set of properties that makes an entity a fictional entity, and so different *ficta* may correspond to one and the same property set.

If this is the case, one might think that the best Neo-Meinongian abstractionist conception of *ficta* can survive in a weak form. It is true that for the above reasons a *fictum* cannot be a set; but it can be something like a set-*correlate*. I take this to be a weakening of a Neo-Meinongian abstractionist theory of *ficta*. Yet it is still closer to the actual Neo-Meinongian theories than the above conception. We have already seen that Neo-Meinongian theories are committed to some version or other of the Principle of the Freedom of Assumption. According to that principle, for any collection of properties there is a Meinongian object that has those properties. As a result, a Meinongian object is really a correlate of a property set rather than such a set itself.[79] From this perspective, since a fictional object is nothing but a special case of a Meinongian object, it is a set-correlate as well.

As stated in the previous section, the set-theoretical Neo-Meinongians favor a conception of Meinongian objects as set-correlates rather than mere sets. I think that Hector-Neri Castañeda's doctrine of Meinongian objects gives the most systematic account of what a set-correlate may be. On Castañeda's theory, *individual guises* (his theoretical version of Meinongian objects) are the ontological results of the application of a certain operator *c* to a certain set of properties (the so-called *guise core*). These properties are therefore internally predicated of the guise.[80] Castañeda characterizes such an operator as a *concretizer*, for its function is that of converting an abstract entity such as a set into a concrete entity such as a guise.[81] I prefer, however,

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[78] Fine (1982: 133–5) raises another similar problem, based on the qualitative identity of two distinct characters belonging to the same story. Fine's contrary opinion notwithstanding, this seems to me a weaker problem for Neo-Meinongians. For they may say that the two characters C and C' in question at least differ in the fact that the former has internally the property of *being distinct from C'* which the latter obviously lacks, whereas the latter has internally the property of *being distinct from C* which the former obviously lacks.

[79] As I said above (n. 36), this is really the core of both Rapaport's and Parsons's original doctrines. Cf. Rapaport (1978: 162) and Parsons (1980: 18 and n. 1, 54–5) respectively.

[80] Cf. Castañeda (1989b: 240).

[81] In (1986: 334–5), Castañeda gives an argument for the difference between sets (of properties) and individual guises which relies on their different behavior with respect to existence. To say that a set of properties exists, that is, that all its properties are located in space-time, is not to say that the guise constituted by this set exists. See also (1985/6: 53).

to consider this operator as an *individuator* as Castañeda himself sometimes labels it.[82] Given the above definition of concreteness as "(possibly) being directly involved in the causal order of the world", I strongly doubt that a guise can really be a concrete entity.[83] This is why I take Castañeda's doctrine to be a way of weakening Neo-Meinongian abstractionism rather than a rejection of it. Generally speaking, I take a set-correlate (such as a guise) to be an abstract-based entity rather than a concrete one. But let me put this issue to one side. For the weakening of the best Neo-Meinongian abstractionist theory of fictional entities seems to constitute a real improvement over this theory by claiming that, though a *fictum* is indeed constituted by a property set, it is something over and above that set. So why cannot a set-correlate, such as a Castañedian guise, be the model for a fictional entity?

Yet the way a guise is constituted in Castañeda's doctrine shows that it is a *one-one* set-correlate: for each set of properties, there is just one guise corresponding to it. As a result, our two previous problems unfortunately return in a new form. First, as I have already suggested, guises are Castañeda's counterparts of Meinongian objects *in general*. So again the question arises: how can *those* guises which are fictional entities be singled out from the general domain of guises? It is clear that the individuator is unable to do this because it limits itself to the general function of converting a set into a guise. Thus, we can have a guise or, in general, a one-one set-correlate and yet fail to have a *fictional* entity.[84] Moreover, although the individuator can at most generate *one* guise out of a property set so that there is a one-one correspondence between property sets and guises, *different* fictional entities may be correlated to one and the same property set, as the "Pierre Menard" case shows.[85] These problems do not depend on the fact that set-correlates are Castañedian guises, but rather on the fact that they are one-one set-correlates. Consequently, the above problems would arise again with respect to any other non-Castañedian theory of *ficta* as one-one set-correlates.

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[82] Cf. Castañeda (1975: 138–40).

[83] I have criticized this conviction in Voltolini (1995). Orilia takes the operator as a concretizer since he sees it as representing a mental operation acting directly on properties (2002: 148).

[84] Castañeda is aware of this problem for he tries to locate in a specific type of external predication what makes a *fictum* out of a guise. In fact, in Castañeda's view a *fictum* may be just a single guise but is normally, instead, a system of guises tied together by a specific type of external predication, *consociation*. Cf. Castañeda (1989a). On this point, cf. Orilia (2002: 158–9).

[85] Undoubtedly, if—following Castañeda—one takes *ficta* to be systems of consociated guises, one may tie consociation to contextual factors such as different thinking individuals. As a result, in the "Menard" case one may obtain different *ficta* as different systems of identical guises consociated via different authors. (I owe this suggestion to Francesco Orilia). Yet this would provide no solution to a further idealized "Menard" case where the two authors think only one and the same single guise.

To sum up, the weak Neo-Meinongian abstractionism proposed by Castañeda is definitely superior to Neo-Meinongian abstractionism *tout court* because it understands that a *fictum* must be something over and above a property set. Yet the conception of guises as one-one set-correlates outlined by weak Neo-Meinongian abstractionism is still not sufficient to give us fictional entities.

Therefore, in order to see what makes an entity a fictional entity, one has to look to other factors beyond both the set-theoretical and the guise-theoretical ones. Two such factors immediately come to mind. First, there is the *fictum*'s creator: Cervantes' Don Quixote and Pierre Menard's Don Quixote are different *ficta* because Cervantes and Menard are different individuals. Secondly, there is the fictional work that tells its story: Cervantes' Don Quixote and Pierre Menard's Don Quixote are different *ficta* since the fictional works of these authors are different despite their syntactical identity. It is to these factors that we now turn.