

World-Dependable Existence in Modal Meinongianism

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Abstract

In this paper, I propose an interpretation for the semantics of intentionality that Graham Priest uses in constructing his Modal Meinongianism, in *Towards Non-Being*. More precisely, I will focus only on the issue of existence as a metaphysical notion. In this regard, my claim is that the monadic predicate of existence is not capable of constructing a full-fledged metaphysical notion of existence, or, in other words, it is not well equipped to account for all the modes of being that Modal Meinongianism implies. In trying to support my claim, I will use a strategy of reasoning that employs a hierarchical conceptual structure, meaning that there are some primary concepts that determine the meaning of all the others. In this case, noneism is the primary notion. By using this type of reasoning, I will conclude that existence can be interpreted as world-dependable, meaning that the ontological nature of a world determines the ontological nature of the objects in its domain. In this case, existence can be seen as simple membership in a particular world.

Keywords

Graham Priest, Modal Meinongianism, Noneism, Existence, Modality, World Semantics

1. Introduction

In his book *Towards Non-Being* (2005), Graham Priest aims to build a better version of the Principle of Characterization (CP), initially designed by Alexius Meinong. The motivation for such an effort is to accept a metaphysical perspective, named “noneism”. In this case, Priest said that “Even when I had come to accept that noneism is a perfectly coherent and common sense view, I did not immediately accept it” (Priest, 2019: p. 685). The reason behind that hesitation was that noneism proved insufficient on its own. Noneism states that there are some

objects that do not exist, yet we can still talk about them in a coherent manner. The problem is determining which predicates should be assigned to non-existent objects. Priest's answer is CP, but not in its initial version, because this version has some unavoidable shortcomings. So, Priest decides to build a better version of CP by constructing a semantics of intentionality. Intentionality is understood as the ability of thought to direct itself towards any object, regardless of its kind (Priest, 2005: p. 5). If our mind can think about anything, then we can think about non-existent objects and impossible objects as well. Because of this, the aforementioned semantics needs to take into account every type of object that an intentional act can be about. Being aware of such a necessity, Priest comes up with a better version of CP by using modality. The modal version of *CP says that an object has all of its properties, but not necessarily at the actual world, but at any world that can "realize the way the agent represents things to be in the case at hand" (Priest, 2005: p. 85). Now, let us examine the main ingredients of this semantics of intentionality, so that it is clear how Priest manages to build a better version of CP.

2. Graham Priest's Modal Meinongianism—Core Ideas

The basic requirements to start the semantics for intentionality are: a set of possible worlds P , a set of impossible worlds I , such that $P \cap I = \emptyset$, the actual world $@$, which is part of the possible worlds, a non-empty domain of objects D , and a function δ that assigns every non-logical symbol a denotation. Given such ingredients, given a certain constant c , δ assigns to it an object from D , but it is important to note that δ treats logical expressions of the form " $A \rightarrow B$ " as atomic formulas at impossible worlds, which means that they receive extension and coextension. At the same time, given a predicate P , and a closed world w , it follows $\delta(P, w)$, which is to be written as $\{\delta^*(P, w), \delta^{\circ}(P, w)\}$, thus, making it clear that extension and coextension are explicitly defined. Additionally, given a certain intentional verb Ψ , $\delta(\Psi)$ presents itself as a function that maps each particular domain d to a binary relation on C : $R \frac{d}{\Psi}$ (Priest, 2005: pp. 16-17). Lastly, this semantics uses neutral quantification (Π , for the universal quantifier, and Σ , for the existential quantifier) and a monadic predicate for existence, Ex . If quantifiers are neutral, then they do not imply any ontological commitment. The ontological commitment is expressed by the first-order predicate of existence (Priest, 2005: p. 14).

Now, this semantics is capable of logically representing sentences like:

A: Some dragons exist.

B: Hera slaps Zeus.

C: I imagine a horse running forward and backward at the same time.

And the logical representation is:

A: $\Sigma x (Dx \ \& \ Ex)$

B: hSz

C: $a\Phi H(O_H)$

The intentional operator from sentence C is an example of how a special intentional operator works in this semantics. This special operator in this case is the representational operator, Φ , which reads: "... represents ... as holding (in the matter at hand)" (Priest, 2005: pp. 84-85). The way it works is as follows. Firstly, we assume that $A(x)$ is any condition or set of properties. If so, then someone could use that set of properties to intend an object of thought. If it is intended, then it is particular or well-defined. If it is well-defined, then it is instantiated. If someone uses $A(x)$ to think about an object, then we can use C_A to rigidly designate it. Consequently, we might reach the following logical expression $@ \not\models^+ a\Phi A(C_A)$, given the fact that $@ \not\models^+ A(C_A)$ may not hold. If $@ \not\models^+ a\Phi A(C_A)$, then $@R\Phi^{\delta(a)} w, w \not\models^+ A(C_A)$. This means that whatever I am thinking about the object C_A , it does not mean that its truth should be established in the actual world, because the condition or the characterizing set of properties could be instantiated in a non-actual world, by usage of the right representational operator Φ and due to a relevant agent a (Priest, 2005: p. 85). Differently put, in the actual world, a subject represents an object as having a set of properties, but the instantiation of those properties does not necessarily happen in the actual world, even if the agent is in the actual world. And because of the unrestricted ability of thought to direct itself towards any object, this semantics has to include impossible worlds as well, in order to make it possible to characterize impossible objects.

Thus, the modal version of the Principle of Characterization is formulated, and it states that: "we just do not assume that an object characterized in a certain way has its characterizing properties at the actual world, only at the worlds which realize the way the agent represents things to be in the case at hand" (Priest, 2005: p. 85). One of the initial problems of CP was the possibility to derive the existence of anything that has a set of properties—"if $A(x)$ is any property, or conjunction of properties, we can characterize an object, C_A , and be guaranteed that that $A(C_A)$. This is the *Characterization Principle* (CP) in its most naïve form" (Priest, 2005: p. 83). If the initial CP was unrestricted, this means that I could think about any set of properties (for instance, being round and being square) and add to that set the property of existence, which ultimately leads to acknowledging that an object exists and satisfies contradictory properties. Actually, the problem is that such an object must be part of the ontology of the actual world. But with the modal version, such an object is part of an impossible world, thus avoiding the inclusion of inconsistent objects in the ontology of the actual world.

The introduction of impossible worlds was necessary to ensure that the new version of CP could accommodate any object an intentional act can be about. Surely, the notion of "impossible worlds" has other usages, such as solving the problem of logical omniscience, but in this case what matters is its role in making a modal version of CP. But what is an impossible world?

In trying to provide an answer to such a question, Francesco Berto has done some research and he has found that the term "impossible" can be defined in four ways. In his article, "Modal Meinongianism for Fictional Objects" (2008), Berto

presents his findings. According to his findings, term “impossible” can be understood as: *a*—in opposition with the term “possible”, meaning that “impossible” is defined as “ways in which things could not have been”, if the term “possible” is defined as “ways in which things could have been”; *b*—given a certain logic, *L*, an impossible world is a situation in which its laws fail; *c*—an impossible world is a situation in which only the laws of the classical logic fail; *d*—impossible worlds are just cases in which some contradictions are true (Berto, 2008: pp. 209-210). Given the fact that Priest adheres to dialetheism in constructing this semantics of intentionality, it could be natural to assume that Priest understands the term “impossible” as “some true contradictions”—“Priest is known for championing the position of dialetheism” (Ferguson & Başkent, 2019: p. 2). Dialetheism is the claim that some sentences are simultaneously true and false (Priest, Berto, & Weber, 2024).

When discussing impossible worlds, one should also consider their ontological nature and establish if they have the same metaphysical category as possible worlds. In searching for an answer to such questions, Martin Vacek’s analysis might be suitable for providing us with some relevant considerations. Vacek states that the ontological nature of impossible worlds can be considered in two main ways: modal realism and modal anti-realism. Modal realism claims that impossible worlds are concrete or exist in the same way as the actual world. Such a view might seem a bit radical. There is also a moderate version of modal realism, which is called “modal ersatzism”, and its main claim is that impossible worlds exist, but they lack spatio-temporal dimensions. The other main view, modal anti-realism, claims that impossible worlds cannot exist as the actual world does (Vacek, 2023). The other concern about impossible worlds is whether they have the same metaphysical category as possible worlds. And here, also, the obvious answer is that there are mainly two cases. Firstly, impossible worlds have the same ontological nature as possible worlds, a case which is called “Parity Thesis”. Secondly, impossible worlds are different from possible worlds, and a particular way in which they are different might imply that impossible worlds are abstract, whereas possible worlds are concrete. This is called “hybrid genuine modal realism” (Vacek, 2023).

In the case of Priest’s Modal Meinongianism (MM), it is clear that the Parity Thesis (PT) is respected, because he claims that “in the context of noneism, the obvious policy is to take all worlds other than the actual to be non-existent objects” (Priest, 2005: p. 139). So, possible and impossible worlds have the same ontological status, which is non-existence. But what is their concrete ontological status? According to Nicola Ciprotti, “Priest explicitly declares that MN is compatible with regarding worlds either as *abstracta* or some sort, e.g. maximally consistent sets of interpreted sentences or propositions, or as *concreta*, e.g., mereological sums of spatio-temporal particulars, along the lines famously championed by David Lewis” (Ciprotti, 2014: p. 18). So, it is not clear what their precise ontological status is.

In order to better explain it, let us take sentence A and try to see what the

ontological nature of a non-actual world is. The Sentence “Some dragons exist” can be true at a possible world, w . This possible world is a non-actual world, which means that it does not exist. So, dragons, which are non-existent objects, exist at a possible world, which is a non-existent object. How can this be understood?

The predicament in this case originates from a distinction that Priest makes between predicates that entail existence and predicates that do not entail existence. This distinction is introduced as a consequence of accepting noneism. More precisely, there are predicates which entail existence, such as “hug”, and if a hugs b , then both a and b must exist. Also, intentional predicates are existence-entailing. If a worships b , then a must exist, but b may or may not exist. Furthermore, there are some non-intentional predicates that do not entail existence, such as identity. An object is identical with itself, irrespective of its existence. For other predicates, it could be debatable whether they are existence-entailing or not. One example that justifies this observation could be a case in which a experiences b , and b is just an illusion. In this case, Priest does not provide an answer, but only a question—“does it follow that b exists?” (Priest, 2005: p. 60). Also, he mentions that it is not his purpose to further debate or discuss this topic. What he adds to this discussion is that the following constraint—“if $(q_1 \dots q_i \dots q_n) \in \delta^* (P, @)$ then $q_i \in \delta^* (E, @)$ —applies only at the actual world” (Priest, 2005: p. 60). So, if an object has existence-entailing properties, that object must be part of the domain of the actual world. If this is so, how could one understand the following claim: “As a matter of fact, it seems to me that existence-entailing is world-invariant, at least at possible worlds. Thus, for example, if a hits b at such a world, w , then a and b exist at w ” (Priest, 2005: p. 60).

It seems a bit strange, because existence-entailing was supposed to apply strictly to the actual world, but if in a possible world a predicate implies a physical interaction between two objects, then those objects must exist in this possible world. For now, this distinction between predicates that entail existence and predicates that do not entail existence is somehow unclear or unfinished. And the reason for confusion and unclarity is the way existence is understood.

3. Existence—A Cause for Predicaments

Priest defines existence as being concrete or having spatio-temporal properties. Therefore, if an object exists, it is concrete. Non-existent objects are non-concrete. If, to this definition of existence, it is added the distinction between predicates that entail existence and predicates that do not entail existence ($\textcircled{1}$), then a predicate that entails existence is actually entailing being concrete or having spatio-temporal properties. Let us use sentence B in order to see how the definition of existence and the distinction $\textcircled{1}$ work together.

Sentence B says: “Hera slaps Zeus”. “To slap” is obviously a regular predicate, which implies a physical interaction between two objects. If a physical interaction

¹The symbol “ $\textcircled{1}$ ” will stand for “predicates that entail existence and predicates that do not entail existence”.

is implied, then that predicate entails the existence of the objects it is about. Therefore, Hera and Zeus exist. Therefore, they are concrete or they have spatio-temporal dimensions. Even worse, the non-actual world where Hera and Zeus exist has to be concrete as well because it is assumed a metaphysical sameness between a world and its denizens. So, the possible world where Hera slaps Zeus is concrete or exists, because there is an identity between the terms “to exist” and “to be concrete”. But Hera and Zeus are non-existent objects, and a possible world is a non-existent object. So, something must be wrong, because otherwise a contradiction is reached: a non-existent object exists.

Ciprotti uses the same conditions, which are the definition of existence and the distinction \oplus , to claim that MM is incompatible with PT. In his own words, “I intend to show that MN sits badly with PT, and therefore that, in order to make MN a consistent view, impossible worlds are to be regarded as *abstract* not concrete entities” (Ciprotti, 2014: p. 14). His argument begins with an example about a fictional object and reaches the intermediate conclusion that possible worlds must be concrete. Given the acceptance of PT, then impossible worlds should also be concrete. But one cannot accept concrete impossible objects. So, it is better or more efficient to consider impossible worlds as being abstract (Berto & Jago, 2019: p. 55). Such a conclusion is reached by understanding that Priest leaves room for establishing the nature of non-actual worlds in any way, be it as concrete objects, be it as abstract objects (Ciprotti, 2014: p. 14). In the end, the actual problem is not the distinction \oplus , but rather the definition of existence. The distinction \oplus is just a way of using the definition of existence.

In order to support the claim that existence is actually a cause for some predicaments, other interpretations or readings of Priest’s proposal can be taken into account. For instance, Wolfgang Barz (2015), in his article “Two-Dimensional Modal Meinongianism”, provides a solution to the problem of cross-world identity and the characterization of non-existent objects. Those problems had been initially pointed out by Fred Kroon (2012), in the article “Characterization and Existence in Modal Meinongianism”. In essence, Kroon claims that Priest’s MM makes room for accepting that non-existent objects might possess properties that should only apply to existent objects (Kroon, 2012: p. 25). If so, then the central idea of MM fails to reach its purpose, which was to make a clear distinction between existing and non-existing objects (noneism). Returning to Barz’s proposal, he conceives a different semantics for MM, in order to clearly make a distinction between how terms refer in the actual world and how terms refer in possible worlds, this being a strategy to deal with the problem of cross-world identity and the characterization of non-existent objects (Barz, 2015: p. 13). The intricacies of his proposal are not the purpose of this discussion. What actually matters is that Barz took Kroon’s arguments as valid observations and tried to solve the problems they had presented.

The last perspective that I am going to take into consideration regarding some possible shortcomings of Priest’s MM belongs to Otávio Bueno and Edward N.

Zalta. In their article, “Object Theory and Modal Meinongianism”, [Bueno and Zalta \(2017\)](#) claim that Priest’s MM is not well equipped to justifiably use the names of fictional objects. Their argument begins with the claim that *CP is the fundamental idea of MM. Its workings imply using an accessibility relation, by which the object of an intentional act is placed in its corresponding world. The problem that Bueno and Zalta are trying to point out is that MM cannot justify the usage of the names of fictional objects. More precisely, they claim that MM does not have an explicit way of justifying the fact that the name of a fictional object denotes exactly the object implied by the characterizing set of properties. For instance, the name “Sherlock Holmes” uniquely denotes the object it is supposed to denote, but MM does not have a clear reason to make it so. The fact that the name of a fictional object denotes its denotation is just an assumption. And such a conclusion seems to be right, since Berto and Priest proposed a change in MM, so that names that make reference to fictional objects could surely have a unique reference. The changes that they propose are the following: *a*—“if something satisfies $A(x)$ at @, $\exists xA(x)$ denotes one such thing”; *b*—“if not, it picks out some non-existent object or other which satisfies $A(x)$ in the situation one is envisaging” ([Berto & Priest, 2014](#): p. 195). Even with such changes, Bueno and Zalta are not inclined to accept that MM can properly and reasonably use names for fictional entities: “But this further refinement of MM still doesn’t address our objection (...). But their theory doesn’t entitle them to use the name ‘Holmes’ in this way” ([Bueno & Zalta, 2017](#): p. 6).

In short, Bueno and Zalta show that MM cannot justifiably make use of names of fictional entities. And even if it could, it would be inconsistent, because MM would treat non-existent objects as existent objects, since non-existent objects become referable entities with properties in non-actual worlds. If non-existent objects and existent objects are the same in their ability to be the reference of a name, then they are equally treated, and because of that MM fails to achieve its purpose, which is to make a distinction between existent and non-existent objects.

So, the definition of existence and the distinction \otimes might lead to considering that MM is inconsistent in several ways. Actually, the origin of the problems can be reduced to two different sentences, in which the term “exist” is used with the same meaning:

α —this semantics of intentionality does not allow non-existent objects to have existence-entailing properties; and

β —existence-entailing is world invariant (at least at possible worlds), meaning that if *a* hugs *b* in a non-actual world, then both *a* and *b* exist at that world.

Returning to sentence B, if Hera slaps Zeus, then, according to β , they must exist. Or, existence is to be concrete. Moreover, there is an assumption that the nature of an object must be the same as the nature of the world it occupies. So, the world in which Hera slaps Zeus is also concrete. Given PT, impossible worlds are also concrete. Hence, impossible objects are concrete as well, which means that

impossible objects exist. However, α states that non-existent objects do not have existence-entailing properties, or they do not exist. Therefore, it is challenging to reconcile these two claims without conflict. Additionally, we should not overlook the unclear ontological nature of non-actual worlds.

In the following section, I will propose an interpretation that might lead to resolving the conflict between those two claims, while working with an assumption about the precise ontological status of non-actual worlds.

4. Upside Down—World-Dependable Existence

In order to show that the predicate of existence is not sufficiently broad to account for all the modes of being that MM implies, I need to first discuss these modes of being. While discussing this, I will arrive at an answer regarding the imprecise nature of non-actual worlds.

As it has been shown, to exist is to be concrete. Only the actual world and its objects exist or are concrete. There is an identity between “to exist” and “to be concrete”. But noneism implies the possibility to talk about non-existent objects as well. So, in what ways can one conceive the precise ontological status of non-existent objects? Well, Priest is definitive about this and claims that whatever is not concrete does not exist. So, non-existent objects are not concrete objects. In this case, the natural follow-up could be to say that they are abstract. But Priest says that if an object is not concrete, it does not necessarily mean it is abstract (Priest, 2005: p. 139). The usual dichotomy might be concrete-abstract, without a third possibility. In order to understand Priest’s apparently confusing claim, it will be necessary to talk about fictional and abstract objects.

In the category of non-existent objects, Priest includes fictional objects, abstract objects, and non-actual worlds. An abstract object is an object that does not exist and cannot exist. A fictional object is an object that does not exist, but it can exist. Priest’s way of defining these terms makes appeal to counterfactuals as well: “an abstract object is one such that, *if it did exist, it would still not causally interact with us*. Conversely, a concrete object is one such that, *if it did exist, it would causally interact with us*” (Priest, 2005: pp. 136-137).

In this case, my proposal is that, in order to make clear what is the ontological status of non-actual worlds, one should work with another distinction. Usually, the distinction concrete-abstract is applied, but MM needs a different approach. Instead, I will use the distinction existent-non-existent. My reasoning for such a choice is that MM is susceptible to being interpreted by using a hierarchical conceptual scheme, meaning that some concepts are primordial, and these concepts decide the meaning for the other secondary concepts. The fundamental concept of MM is noneism, and noneism implies the distinction between existent objects and non-existent objects. If this is so, then the term “existent” refers only to concrete objects, while the term “non-existent” refers to both fictional and abstract objects. So, this is why Priest can claim that, if an object is not concrete, it does not necessarily mean it is abstract. Because it can be fictional as well. If the

category of non-existent covers fictional and abstract entities, and non-actual worlds belong to that category, then it is assumed that possible worlds are fictional entities and impossible worlds are abstract entities.

Even if this result is taken as an assumption, there are some reasons to consider that possible worlds are fictional and impossible worlds are abstract. One reason could be that, if non-existent includes only fictional and abstract, and non-actual worlds include only possible and impossible, then, given their definitions or understanding, it is plausible to consider that possible worlds are fictional entities, whereas impossible worlds are abstract entities. Another reason might be a favorable interpretation of Priest's following claim: "The worlds that realize the Holmes stories are replete with things that, were they to exist, would be standard physical objects, like people and hansom cabs. Were these worlds with their denizens to exist, we would be able to interact causally with them" (Priest, 2005: p. 139). Here, I believe, it is a clue to considering the fact that possible worlds behave like fictional objects, due to the usage of the phrase "were they to exist", and obviously the definition of the term "fictional object". I believe the same line of reasoning can be applied for impossible worlds as well, and if an object like a round square was part of such a world, were it to exist, it would not be possible for it to causally interact with us. But now if an impossible object exists, it means that it is concrete, but the world it occupies is abstract. How can this be understood?

Returning to the applied strategy of reasoning, noneism defines modality, meaning that it takes into account impossible worlds and says that every other world, except the actual one, is non-existent, and modality defines modes of being. The modes of being are concreteness, fictitiousness, and abstractness. All that remains is to reconsider the notion of existence. With this in mind, let us mention again those three sentences:

A: $\Sigma x(Dx \& Ex)$

B: hSz

C: $a\Phi H(O_H)$

Existence is expressed by the monadic predicate of existence, Ex . This predicate has access to the general domain of objects, D , which means that it applies uniformly. So, Hera and Zeus exist in the same way as impossible objects exist, and also in the same way as real, actual objects exist. However, MM does not want to reach such a conclusion, as it would be entirely against its core notion of noneism, since not only does everything exist, but everything exists in the same way. Nevertheless, given the fact that MM implies three modes of being, the latter consequence is avoided. Objects have a different existential status or mode of being. If this is the case, then the monadic predicate of existence is not well equipped to express such a difference or to account for all the modes of being that MM implies. More clearly, in every case in which existence is attributed to an object, the same monadic predicate is used. Furthermore, if an object is characterized by a predicate that entails existence, existence means the same uniformly. Therefore, the monadic predicate of existence cannot account for all the modes of being used in

MM, a result which was my claim.

In the given interpretation, if a strategy of reasoning that uses a hierarchical conceptual structure of MM is applied, then noneism (being the primary concept) leads to acknowledging three modes of being, since existence is clearly different from non-existence. Also, it has been assumed that, given the primary distinction between existence and non-existence, possible worlds are fictional objects, and impossible worlds are abstract objects (PT still holds, because all non-actual worlds are non-existent). If the objects from the actual world are concrete, then the other two modes of being would be fictitiousness and abstractness. Therefore, if there are three modes of being and only the monadic predicate of existence, which applies in the same manner for every object from D , then this predicate cannot account for the metaphysical understanding of existence. Or, the metaphysical understanding of existence seems to matter the most, because noneism must make use of it in a consistent way.

There is still one question, which does not have an answer. If impossible worlds are abstract entities, given the distinction between existence and non-existence, then an object that makes part of such a world is concrete, because it exists there. In order to make things clearer, I believe Sentence C can be useful. Sentence C says that “I imagine a horse running backwards and forwards at the same time” and its logical representation is the following:

$$C: a\Phi H(O_H)$$

If it is true that, at an impossible world, iW , an object has that set of properties, and because in that set of properties there is a property which entails existence, then this object must exist. And, if to exist is to be concrete, then this object is concrete. But the world it occupies is abstract. And this is a problem because it is assumed that there must be a metaphysical identity between the objects of a world and the world itself. Obviously, there is not.

Maybe a way to make things understandable is to use the same strategy of reasoning. If noneism decides modality, and modality decides the modes of being, maybe the modes of being decide the meaning of existence. Hence, modes of being could be a superior notion to existence. Simply said, being is larger than existence. Such an idea should not come as a surprise, because Meinong was the first one to claim that the *Sosein* (set of properties) of an object is independent of its *Sein* (existential status, which might be none). But Priest does not use this distinction in its full meaning. He says that “a non-existent object cannot have existence-entailing properties, like standard extensional ones, at the actual world, anyway” (Priest, 2005: p. 82). Interestingly, Priest acknowledges the difference between being and existence and uses it in a different way by proposing the distinction \otimes . In this case, the two aforementioned sentences can be revisited and reconsidered.

- α —this semantics of intentionality does not allow non-existent objects to have existence-entailing properties; and
- β —existence-entailing is world invariant (at least at possible worlds),

meaning that if a hugs b in a non-actual world, then both a and b exist at that world.

If the modes of being decide what existence should mean and if noneism is to be respected, then to exist is just to be concrete. In this case, sentence α is not changed in any way, because the term “existence” is used properly, with its given or original meaning. However, in the case of sentence β , the term “existence” does not mean to be concrete. In this case, it actually means “being”. So, being-entailing is world-invariant, meaning that if a hugs b in a non-actual world, then both a and b are at w . Basically, sentence β preserves or defends the notion of being part of a non-actual world in the same manner. Specifically, Hera and Zeus do not exist in w , but they are in the same way part of the same world w . So, “ a and b exist at w ” does not mean that those objects are concrete. It just means that they are part of a non-existent world in the same way. This also answers our remaining question. An impossible object does not exist or is not concrete, but it rather makes part of an impossible world, which is an abstract object. So, existence, expressed by the monadic predicate Ex , may very well be just a simple membership in a particular world. In this interpretation, it is assumed that a particular world already has its ontological status shaped, which means that there is room for further research. More precisely, if the monadic predicate of existence just reflects a pre-established ontological status, how is this status decided or prefigured?

For instance, if sentence $C: a\Phi H(O_H)$ were to be interpreted in order to make it true, then it would become obvious that in the actual world such a sentence cannot be true, since the intentional predicate Φ is a binary predicate and it can be true only when both of its values are true or part of its extension. The object O_H is an impossible object, which means that it should be placed in an impossible world. So, only by using an accessibility relation between the actual world and an impossible world, the intentional predicate Φ can be true and, thus, the entire sentence. But if it is true and if the object in cause has properties which entail its existence, then the object must exist. Therefore, it has to be concrete, since to exist is to be concrete. Also, the impossible world should be concrete. In order to escape such undesirable consequences, I have proposed an interpretation in which the predicate of existence merely reflects a pre-established ontological status. If impossible worlds are abstract, it means that the monadic predicates say that an object belongs to an abstract world, the object in itself being abstract as well. But if the world is already abstract, how was this decided? Also, what does it mean for a fictional object and an abstract object to belong to a non-actual world? These are questions which remain unanswered and might become the starting point of further research.

The core problem is that MM uses the monadic predicate of existence for expressing all the modes of being. If existence is world-dependent, to exist in the actual world is to be concrete, to exist in a possible world is to be fictional, and to exist in an impossible world is to be abstract. As a starting point to discovering what it means for a non-existent object to be fictional or abstract, I have proposed

that the monadic predicate of existence, *Ex*, simply expresses membership in a particular world. The problem is that this semantics cannot make use of the same predicate of existence in order to account for all the modes of being. If the metaphysical understanding of existence is more important than the syntactical rules that govern the behavior of the monadic predicate of existence, then there is room for improvement or proposing a positive answer to this problem. My interest in this paper was only to point out the problem, not to solve it.

5. Conclusion

Priest's Modal Meinongianism could be considered a solution to the problem of noneism, which is the assigning of properties to non-existent objects. The semantics of intentionality he uses to make a better CP achieves its purpose. But in constructing a better CP, this semantics might be considered insufficiently clear in some cases. I talked only about the imprecise nature of non-actual worlds and the meaning of existence. My claim is that the monadic predicate of existence is not able to account for all the modes of being that MM implies. My result is a negative one, meaning that I only pointed out a problem, if my reasoning can be found acceptable, together with all of its assumptions. A positive answer to the problem of existence in MM might be a case of further research.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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