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WORLD-DEPENDABLE EXISTENCE
IN MODAL MEINONGIANISM – WHY CAN HERA SLAP ZEUS
AND EVERYTHING BE ALRIGHT?

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 take into account only 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, differently said, 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, which employs a hierarchical conceptual structure, meaning that there are some first concepts, which determine the meaning for all the others. In this case, *noneism* is the primary notion, which imposes how other notions, such as modality and existence, will be defined. By using this way of reasoning, I will conclude that existence can be interpreted as world-dependable, meaning that the ontological nature of a world decides the ontological nature of the objects of its domain. In the pursuit of an argument for my thesis, I will begin with a short presentation of the core ideas of modal meinongianism. Afterwards, I will clarify the specific problems I am interested in and justify their necessity for being discussed. Lastly, I will formulate my argument, show its limits, and suggest a case of further research.

Keywords: Graham Priest, modal meinongianism, noneism, existence, modality, world semantics

Introduction

In his book, *Towards Non-Being* (2005), Graham Priest has as a purpose to build a better version of the Principle of Characterization (CP), initially

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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, 685). The reason behind that hesitation was that noneism proved insufficient by itself. Noneism states that there are some objects which do not exist, and we can still talk about them in a coherent manner. The problem is which predicates should non-existent objects receive. 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, irrespective of its kind (Priest 2005, 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, 85). Now, let us see the main ingredients of this semantics of intentionality, so that it can be clear how Priest manages to build a better version of CP.

Graham Priest's Modal Meinongianism – Core Ideas

The basic requirements to start the semantics for intentionality are the following: 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 mention that δ treats logical expressions of the form "A → 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[2] w, it follows δ (P, w), which is to be written as {δ+ (P, w), δ- (P, w)} – thus, making it clear that extension and coextension are explicitly defined. Additionally, given a certain intentional verb Ψ, δ(Ψ) presents itself as a function that maps each particular domain d to a binary relation on $C: R_{\Psi}^{\overline{d}}$ (Priest 2005, 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, 14).

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

A: Some dragons exist.
B: Hera slaps Zeus.
C: I imagine a horse running forward and backwards at the same time.

And the logical representation is:

A: $\Sigma x(Dx \& Ex)$, meaning that there are some objects, which satisfy the predicates of being a dragon and of existing.

B: hSz, which means that Hera (h) slaps (S) Zeus (z).

C: $@ \Vdash^+ a\Phi H(O_H) \rightarrow @R\Phi^{δ(a)}wi, wi \Vdash^+ H(O_H)$, meaning that, at the actual world @, somebody (a) is imagining (Φ) that the following set of properties H = {horse, running backwards, running forward} can be predicated about an object, O_H, and because such an object cannot be part of the actual world, by an accessibility relation to an impossible world ($@R\Phi^{δ(a)}wi$), it is true at that impossible world that there is a horse which runs backwards and forward at the same time.

The intentional operator from sentence C is an example of how a special intentional operator works in this semantics. This special operator in cause is the representational operator, Φ, which reads: "… represents … as

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2   Closed worlds = {possible and impossible worlds}.

holding (in the matter at hand)" (Priest 2005, 84-85). The way it works is like this. 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. So, if someone uses $A(x)$ to think about an object, then we can use "C_A" to rigidly design it. Consequently, we might reach the following logical expression @ $\Vdash^+ a\Phi A(C_A)$, given the fact that @ $\Vdash^+ A(C_A)$ may not hold. If @ $\Vdash^+ a\Phi A(C_A)$, then @$R\Phi^{\delta(a)}w$, $w \Vdash^+ A(C_A)$. 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, 85). Differently said, at 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 must 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, 85). On of the initial problem 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, 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 satisfy contradictory properties. Actually, the problem is that such an object must make part of the ontology of the actual world. But with the modal version, such an object makes 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 in order to make sure 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, the 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, 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 & Bașkent 2019, 2). Dialetheism is the claim that some sentences are true and false at the same time (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy 2024).

When talking about impossible worlds, one should also talk about 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. Shortly, Vacek says that the ontological nature of impossible worlds can be considered in two main ways, which are the modal realism way and the modal anti-realism way. 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 if 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 of possible worlds, a case which is called "Parity Thesis". Secondly, impossible worlds are different than 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 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, 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, 18). So, it is not clear what is their precise ontological status.

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 is originated in a distinction that Priest makes between predicates that entails 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 is identity. An object is identical with itself, irrespective of its existence. For other

predicates, it could be debatable if they are existence-entailing or not. One example that stands as a justification for such an 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, 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 $(q_1…q_i…. q_n) \in \delta^+ (P, @)$ then $q_i \in \delta^+(E, @)$* – applies only at the actual world" (Priest 2005, 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, 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.

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 (⊕[3]), then a predicate that entails existence is entailing being concrete or having spatio-temporal properties. Let us use sentence *B* to see how the definition of existence and the distinction ⊕ work together.

Sentence *B* says: "Hera slaps Zeus". "To slap" is obviously a regular predicate, that implies a physical interaction between two objects. If a

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[3]   The symbol "⊕" will stand for "predicates that entail existence and predicates that do not entail existence".

physical interaction is implied, then that predicate entails the existence of the objects which is about. Therefore, Hera and Zeus exist. Therefore, they are concrete, or they have spatio-temporal dimensions. Even worse, the non-actual world Hera and Zeus occupy 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 ℗, 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, 14). His argument begins with an example about a fictional object and reaches the intermediary 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 and Jago 2019, 55). Such a conclusion is reach 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, 14). In the end, the actual problem is not the distinction ℗, but rather the definition of existence. The distinction ℗ 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, in his article, "Two-Dimensional Modal Meinongianism" (2015), 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, in the article "Characterization and Existence in Modal Meinongianism" (2012). 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, 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 problem of cross-world identity and the characterization of non-existent objects (Barz 2015, 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" (2017), Bueno and Zalta 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. His workings imply using an accessibility relation, by which the object of an intentional act is places in its corresponding world. The problem that Bueno and Zalta are trying to point out is that MM cannot justify the usage of name of fictional objects. More precisely, they claim that MM does not have an explicit way of justifying the fact that a name of a fictional object reaches exactly the object implied by the characterizing set of properties. For instance, the name "Sherlock Holmes" uniquely denotes the object is supposed to denote, but MM does not have a clear reason to make it so. The fact that a name of a fictional object reaches 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 @, $\varepsilon x A(x)$ 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, 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 and Zalta 2017, 6).

In short, Bueno and Zalta show that MM cannot justifiably make use of name 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 what concerns the 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 difference between existent and non-existent objects.

So, the definition of existence and the distinction ℗ 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 w.

Returning to sentence B, if Hera slaps Zeus, then, according to β, they must exist. Or existence is to be concrete. Moreover, there is this assumption that the nature of the object has to 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. But α says that non-existent objects do not have existence-entailing properties, or they do not exist. So, it is a bit difficult to make those two claims not being in a conflict. Also, let us not forget about the unclear ontological nature of non-actual worlds.

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

Upside Down – World-Dependable Existence

To show that the predicate of existence is not sufficiently wide to account for all the modes of being that MM implies, I need to firstly talk about these modes of being. While talking about this, I will reach to 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 truly categorical about this and claims that whatever is not concrete does not exist. So, non-existent objects are not concrete objects. In this case, the normal 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, 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 which does not exist and cannot exist. A fictional object is an object which 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, 136-137).

In this case, my proposal is that, in order to make clear what is the ontological status of non-actual world, 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 of being interpreted by using a hierarchical conceptual scheme, meaning that some concepts are primordial, and these concepts decides 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 both to 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.

More precisely, noneism needs modality and shapes modality in accordance with the distinction existence-non-existence. In this case, non-existent worlds are either fictional or abstract. Therefore, an object can be concrete, fictional or abstract. These are all the modes of being that MM makes use of. If noneism shapes modality, then modality shapes the existential status of objects of their modes of being.

Returning to my proposal, 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 favourable 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, 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 he occupies is abstract. How can this be understood?

Returning to the applied strategy of reasoning, noneism defines modality and modality defines the 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: $@ \Vdash^+ a\Phi H(O_H) \rightarrow @R\Phi^{\delta(a)} wi, wi \Vdash^+ H(O_H)$

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. But obviously MM does not want to reach such a conclusion, because it would be entirely against its core notion, which is noneism, since not only that everything exists, 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 so, 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. This 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 than 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 forward at the same time", and its logical representation is the following:

C: $@ \Vdash^+ a\Phi H(O_H) \rightarrow @R\Phi^{\delta(a)} wi, wi \Vdash^+ H(O_H)$

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 it 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 decides 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 one – at the actual world, anyway" (Priest 2005, 82). Interestingly, Priest acknowledges the difference between being and existence and uses it in a different way, by proposing the distinction ℗. In this case, the two annoying 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 *w*.

If the modes of being decides 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 ways, 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 answer to our remaining question. An impossible object does not exist, or it is not concrete, but it rather makes part of an impossible world, which is an abstract object. The assumption here is that the assigning of properties to non-existent objects makes use of being as a fundament or support. In other words, it is assumed that non-existent objects can have properties only if they have a being (obviously, other ways to deal with this issue are not excluded). In this case, I can imagine a horse that runs at the same time forward and backwards, because this object will have a being in an abstract world. Therefore, existence of objects can be conceived by making appeal to the nature of the world. Nevertheless, if existence is world-dependable, this does not actually solve the core problem.

The core problem is that MM uses the monadic predicate of existence for expressing all the modes of being. If existence is world-dependable, 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. But this semantics of intentionality cannot make use of the same predicate of existence to account for all the modes of being. If the metaphysical understanding of existence is more important than the syntactical rules that govern the behaviour 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.

Limits of My Argument and a Case of Further Research

My claim was that the monadic predicate of existence cannot account for all the modes of being that MM implies. In the attempt to defend such a claim, I used a strategy of reasoning which presupposed a hierarchal conceptual structure, by which noneism is the fundamental concept, and every other concept is defined or understood in accordance with what noneism claims. The main claim of noneism is that some objects do not exist, but we can still talk about them. How we can do that is more complicated than it seems. Priest proposed a modal version of CP, in order to make sure that he has a proper solution for assigning properties to non-existent objects. By using both possible and impossible worlds, Priest constructed a better version of CP. His purpose has been achieved, but the semantics of intentionality he formulates has some shortcomings. The identified and discussed shortcomings are the unclear ontological nature of non-actual worlds and the confusing understanding of existence, together with the distinction ℗. Applying the strategy of reasoning, I claimed that noneism can define modality, meaning that the distinction existence-non-existence is primary, which further leads to considering possible worlds being fictional objects, and impossible worlds being abstract objects. Since there are only three metaphysical categories and all of them were derived from the way modality had been understood in accordance with noneism, it could be claimed that modality decide the modes of being or the existential status of objects. And if existence is expressed by using the same monadic predicate for all cases, then my argumentation has finished here. The predicate of existence is not capable to express all the modes of being.

   In doing so, I have assumed several things. For instance, I assumed that fictional objects cover the entire category of possible objects, and that abstract objects cover the entire category of impossible objects. Also, if there are not sufficient justifications for considering that possible worlds are fictional, and impossible worlds are abstract, this result might be taken as an assumption, since my purpose was not to establish the precise ontological nature of non-actual worlds. Another assumption is that there has to be a metaphysical match between objects and their worlds. At the same time, Priest uses implicitly the distinction between being and existence, by introducing the distinction ℗. Lastly, the main assumption is actually the plausibility of using a hierarchical

conceptual scheme, in order to build an interpretation in which concepts are defined in accordance with a higher notion.

In the end, my result, if it is reasonable, just shows that MM needs to reflect the metaphysical understanding of existence in its semantics as well. Not just implicitly, but also explicitly. So, all I did was to point out a possible problem.

A case of further research might be built around this problem, because the difference between being and existence must be made explicit. The three modes of being are evidently different understandings of existence. To be concrete is just to exist, Ex. To be fictional is to not exist, but to have the possibility of existence, which logically might be represented as: $\sim Ex \& \Diamond Ex$. To be abstract is to not exist and not be able to ever exist, which logically might be represented as: $\sim Ex \& \Box \sim Ex$. If the definitions of the terms "fictional" and "abstract" change, and a counterfactual approach is employed, then the logical representations of being a fictional object and being an abstract object are the following: $Ex \rightarrow Cx$ and $Ex \rightarrow \sim Cx$, where "Cx" stands for "capable of entering in causal relations with the actual world". Also, if the definitions of those terms are categorical, maybe it is more suitable to have the following logical representations: $\Box(Ex \rightarrow Cx)$ and $\Box(Ex \rightarrow \sim Cx)$. Nevertheless, these logical representations show even more that there is a difference between being concrete, being fictional and being abstract. If they are correct or suitable for the beginning of a solution in this case, it remains to be decided.

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 its assumptions. A positive answer to the problem of existence in MM might be a case of further research.

Even so, in this interpretation, it is understandable why Hera can slap Zeus, and everything be alright. In this particular case, slapping is a joyful manner of expressing the fact that Zeus and Hera are both non-existent objects, which make part of the same world, in the same manner. This further means that they have the same mode of being, which is decided by the particular world they make part of. Having the same mode of being might be what Priest had in mind when introducing the condition represented by sentence β.

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