HOW TO ALLOW FOR *INTENTIONALIA* IN THE JUNGLE

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In this paper I will first contend that semantically based arguments in favour of or against problematic entities—like those provided, respectively, in a realist Meinongian and in an antirealist Russellian camp—are ultimately inconclusive. Indeed, only genuinely ontological arguments, specifically addressed to prove (or to reject) the existence of entities of a definite kind, suit the purpose. Thus, I will sketch an argument intended to show that there really are entities of an apparently specific kind, i.e. *intentionalia*, broadly conceived as things that may actually exist as well as actually not exist. Finally, I will try to explain why that argument proves the existence of only some sorts of *intentionalia*, by showing how this is related to the fact that, as some have correctly maintained, *intentionalia* have no intrinsic nature.

I

Within a venerable philosophical realist tradition tracing back to Meinong, it has often been thought that the best way to ground the existence of problematic entities is to appeal to arguments of a semantic kind. According to this tradition, the semantic analysis of relevant parts of our language (if not of our mental contents) shows that we are forced to admit such entities in the overall universe of what there is. From Russell onwards, the opposite, antirealist, ontological camp has accepted that the challenge should take place on the semantic terrain. Within this camp, it has been maintained that the semantic analysis of those parts of language entails no commitment to those entities. The relevant sentences can be offered an ontologically non-committal paraphrase. Realists have replied that those paraphrases are inadequate, for they either yield unintuitive results or are not general enough, since

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not all the relevant sentences can be satisfyingly paraphrased that way.

In this form, the realist–antirealist debate has come down to the present. As a consequence, both factual problems and problems of principle have been left open. Factual problems reside in the fact that any semantic analysis, whether realist or antirealist, seems to fit just until it is shown, from the antirealist side, that there is a further antirealist paraphrase capable of dealing better with the very same sentences, and from the realist side, that the best paraphrase on the market has still some flaws. Problems of principle consist instead in the fact that the method of paraphrase is ontologically neutral, as we will immediately see.

First of all, as many have stressed, a paraphrase is not ontologically eliminative in itself. Granted, paraphrases have often been intended in this way. Russellian paraphrases of sentences containing definite descriptions have been taken as paradigmatic cases of this way of intending the paraphrase strategy. They aim at ruling out the commitment to often problematic entities that sentences containing definite descriptions seem to have. Yet other paraphrases are ontologically introductive. Take, for instance, Davidson's analysis of action sentences. To paraphrase

(1) Luke kissed Lara

as (1′) There is something that is identical with a kiss and that Luke gave to Lara

introduces a commitment to events that (1) does not seem to have.[1]

By itself, this already shows that taking a paraphrase either in an eliminative or in an introductive way depends on one's prior ontological convictions.[2] In this sense, Russell is paradigmatic. He put forward eliminative paraphrases of sentences apparently committed to often extravagant entities, basically because he believed that those entities contravene "our robust sense of reality" (*IMP*, p. 170).[3] This ontologically prior conviction prompted him to pay no attention to the fact that, by itself, his method of paraphrasing away descriptions may not rule out a prior commitment to non-existent entities. Take sentences like:

[1] *Cf.* Davidson 1967. For this example and its moral, *cf.* Varzi 2001, p. 34.
[2] *Cf.* Varzi 2001, p. 37, and 2002b.
[3] *Cf.* Marconi 1979, pp. 273–4.

(2) What was hallucinated by Mary last night was terrible.

(2) utilizes the non-existence entailing property of *being a thing Mary hallucinated last night*. Since the particular quantifier merely denotes the second-order property that a property has of *being instantiated*, one may well paraphrase (2) as:

(2′) There uniquely is a thing that was hallucinated by Mary last night and that thing was terrible

and get a true sentence. For (2′) limits itself to implying that the non-existence entailing property of *being hallucinated by Mary last night* is instantiated. As a result, (2′) does not rule out the commitment to a non-existent entity that (2) seems to have (*cf.* Voltolini 2001).

Secondly, the fact that a paraphrase depends on one's prior ontological convictions does not exhaust its ontological neutrality. In point of fact, a paraphrase and the sentence it paraphrases limit themselves to being same-saying. This meaning-equivalence may be traced back to the fact that the paraphrase is believed to reveal, *à la* Russell, what the sentence it paraphrases really means. But it may also be traced back to the fact that that paraphrase is believed to posit an equivalence with the use the paraphraser makes of the sentence to be paraphrased; put more simply, the paraphrase is taken by its proponent to be a means to reform linguistic use.[4] *Sic stantibus rebus*, it is true that the sentence to be paraphrased is to be read in terms of its paraphrase, but the opposite is true as well! As a result, if it is true that one can paraphrase a sentence by means of an apparently noncommittal paraphrase, it is also true that the paraphrase can be "read back" in terms of the apparently ontologically committal sentence it paraphrases. As Amie Thomasson puts it,

> [It does not] follow that, if we have a statement that appears to commit us to entities of a certain kind *K*, if it has the same meaning as a paraphrase that does not involve quantifying over *K*s, we need not accept that there are *K*s. If the two really have the same meaning, then the apparently less committing paraphrase can be transformed back into the original committing sentence, and as long as

[4] The difference between these two ways of intending a paraphrase corresponds to the difference between a hermeneutical and a revolutionary reading of a paraphrase. *Cf.* on this Burgess and Rosen 1997.

these connections of meaning are preserved, we have not thereby avoided commitment to any entities. (Thomasson 2003, p. 152 n. 30)[5]

So, the *ontological* problem of the existence of entities of a certain kind does not seem to be ultimately solved by the fact that ontologically problematic sentences can be paraphrased.

At first blush, a realist may feel relieved. If the issue of the existence of certain entities is not solved by appealing to linguistic paraphrases, is not the fact that certain parts of language seem to commit us to those entities a good guide to ontology? Yet the antirealist would immediately retort that the above considerations disqualify this way of reasoning. Those parts of language show something ontologically relevant only if one has already espoused the relevant ontology.

We have thus ended up with an impasse. The moral is indeed that if one wants to have, or to dispense with, a certain kind of entities, there is no semantic shortcut. In order to show that there are, or are not, such entities, one has to find genuinely ontological, not semantically camouflaged, arguments.[6]

Quite recently, Ben Caplan has stressed precisely this point. He has tried to show that ontological arguments based on linguistic evidence can be undermined by an inflationist strategy which annihilates their scope. Caplan first reports the following argument by Peter van Inwagen. Take existentially quantified sentences like:

(3) Some characters occur in novels whose plot is simple; others occur in novels whose plot is complex.

These sentences may be taken to belong to a rough critical theory. Now, they force us to admit that there are fictional entities. Since we believe in such a theory, and that theory contains sentences like (3) which precisely quantify over fictional entities, we must believe that there are such enti-

[5] *Cf.* also Varzi 2001, p. 174. True enough, holding that a paraphrase and the sentence it paraphrases are synonymous undermines the informative value a paraphrase is supposed to have. Yet this reinforces the opinion of those who think that paraphrases are ontologically useless.

[6] As Schiffer 1996, p. 152, rightly stresses, in order for terms to have " 'algorithms for elimination' built into them", they must be effectively referentless, in so far as ontologically genuine reasons have preliminarily shown that there are no such things as their purported referents.

ties (*cf.* van Inwagen 1979).

Yet, Caplan goes on, since we also believe in other rough theories of the same type which contain similar quantifications, we should also admit that there are further entities of some other kind. For instance, since we believe in a certain naive astronomical theory, we are forced to also admit *mythological entities*, for such a theory contains quantifications like:

(4) There is a hypothetical planet whose orbit has been thought to lie between Mercury and the Sun, but there has never been any hypothetical planet whose orbit has been thought to lie between Mercury and Venus.

The truth of (4) leads us to believe that (unlike other potential candidates of the same kind) there is a hypothetical planet—Vulcan—taken as a mythological entity.[7] Moreover, says Caplan, since we believe in another naive theory of someone's mental activity, we are forced to admit that there also are *imaginary entities*. In a recent paper, Nathan Salmon supposes that, if there uniquely were a present Emperor of France, he would bear the name "Nappy" (*cf.* Salmon 1998). Granted, Salmon thinks that there is no such person. Yet by advancing the above supposition, Salmon enables us to believe a theory—a simple theory of the very mental life of Salmon himself—that commits itself to the existence of imaginary entities. For that theory contains the true generalization:

(5) There is an imaginary Emperor that Salmon has imagined to rule France, yet there has never been any imaginary Emperor that Salmon has imagined to rule Canada.

[7] Granted, there is some unclarity in the way Caplan (as well as Salmon 2002 before him) presents the case. The theory quantifying over mythological entities is the theory *which is created by means* of the relevant astronomical speculations, not the theory *which is believed* to be true in those speculations (for this difference between theories, *cf.* Braun 2005). At most, the astronomical theory believed to be true should bring one to quantify over not mythological entities, but intentional entities (as are probably the imaginary entities Caplan mobilizes in his following example). This lack of clarity partly depends on the fact that in this example mythological entities have an unclear metaphysical status (are they more similar to fictional or to intentional entities?). Caplan implicitly acknowledges this problem when he says that a possible paraphrase of (4) would embed (4) itself in a context of the kind "according to creationism on creatures of myth". For by so saying he implicitly admits that the theory that quantifies over mythological entities is *not* an astronomical theory. *Cf.* his 2004.

The truth of (5) indeed leads us to believe that (unlike other potential candidates of the same kind) there is an imaginary Emperor—Nappy—taken as an imaginary entity.[8]

Caplan clearly poses a dilemma. If we take ontological arguments ultimately based on linguistic considerations at face value, we must accept in the overall domain of what there is all the kinds of entities to which those arguments seem to commit us, no matter how implausible those entities are. Or we reject all such arguments, hence all the kinds of entities those arguments seem to commit us to. Perhaps strict Meinongians would rest content with such a dilemmatic conclusion, for they would endorse its inflationist horn. Yet this would force them to buy implausible entities. Perhaps one can accept that the supposition of Nappy as an imaginary entity brings "him" into existence. Yet what if that supposition were told this way: suppose someone introduces a new name into language, "Nappy", in order to deceive their interlocutors that there is an individual so called who performs certain things (rules France, etc.). That someone is definitely not imagining something. Which theory of the existence of an imaginary individual should, therefore, their interlocutors believe, over and above their sharing the mistaken belief that there is an individual so called? For a similar story and this moral, see Smith 1984:

> Suppose I wish to annoy John. I invent a proper name at random and say to him: "There is a beautiful girl called 'Susan Simpkins' waiting for you in your bedroom." John has one or more mental acts whose object is, as he thinks, Susan Simpkins. But there is no such thing as Susan Simpkins, existent or non-existent. John is simply … making a mistake.[9] (P. 196)

II

At this point, I think that, in order to defend the existence of entities of a certain kind, one has to find a case-by-case argument. This is to say, one has to find an argument supporting the existence of entities of a certain kind without *eo ipso* defending the existence of entities of another

[8] *Cf.* Caplan 2004. Kroon 1996 defends the same line of reasoning and extends it also to non-quantified sentences like "*N* is a fictional character".

[9] As I hinted at in the text, Salmon intends to present the "Nappy" case as an example of a genuinely non-referential name. However, he does not completely refrain from thinking that his referential practice leads to the existence of a certain imaginary object. *Cf.* Salmon 1998, pp. 305–6.

kind; this would rather be the task of another argument. To put it metaphorically, not only is the Meinongian jungle various and not uniform, but one also has to see, form by form, whether there really are all the forms of the jungle. Genuine ontological arguments are arguments of this type, for they try to prove the existence only of the kind of entities they want to defend.

Bearing this in mind, let us see which kinds of entities Caplan really discusses. He appears to confront entities of three different kinds: fictional, mythological and imaginary entities. To be sure, fictional and mythological entities have traditionally been taken to be very similar. One may well say that mythological entities are fictional entities whose nature was not originally acknowledged as such. From this point of view, the discovery that Santa Claus does not exist amounts to the discovery that, previous appearances notwithstanding, Santa Claus is not a person but a fictional character. So for all the ancient deities. Yet the mythological entities which Caplan deals with are not such entities, but rather scientific postulates of scientific theories that turned out not to exist: failed posits. Considered this way, they are rather objects of belief, or better, objects which the beliefs constituting certain scientific theories are about. As objects of belief, they are intentional objects: the objects which certain intentional states like beliefs are "directed upon". Intentional objects are the entities which Brentano is (rightly or, as I suspect, wrongly) originally taken to have conceived as entities that may actually exist as well as actually not exist. One may indeed think of the Sun and Mercury, actually existent celestial bodies, as well as of Vulcan, the actually non-existent posit of a certain scientific theory, if not *even* of the Nappy of Salmon's story.[10] If this is the case, Caplan's mythological entities are not typologically different from his imaginary entities, which indisputably are intentional objects: objects *of* other intentional states like imaginings.

Thus, Caplan's line of discourse actually utilizes two general ontological categories: fictional objects and intentional objects. We may therefore take Caplan's argument as supporting the thesis that, if a linguistically based ontological argument proves the existence of fictional objects,

[10] *Cf.*, for example, Crane 2001, Place 1996. Brentano [1874] 1924 actually put things in too controversial a way to be legitimately taken as the first sustainer of this conception of *intentionalia*. For not only does he limit himself to saying that the intentional object may not be a reality, but he adds that it is immanent to the act which thinks of it; the object "in-exists" in the act. See below, p. 96.

either it also proves the existence of intentional objects, or it proves the existence of neither kind of entities. I take this as a way to make us see that, in general, a genuine ontological proof for objects of a certain kind cannot be a proof for entities of another kind; thus, a proof for *ficta*[11] cannot also be a proof for *intentionalia*, as the latter entities seem to be entities of another kind from *ficta*. In point of fact, as items that may actually exist as well as actually not exist, intentional objects seem precisely to have nothing to do with *ficta*.[12] In what follows, I will therefore try to see whether an argument specifically in favour of *intentionalia* can be put forward.

Let me start with the following premiss: in the overall domain of what there is, there also are the metaphysically possible worlds. I take those worlds in the weakest possible way. In saying that there are such worlds, I do not indeed want to commit myself to a Lewisian modal realism, according to which possible worlds exist as genuine and primitive individuals.[13] This move would be rather devastating for my purposes. As is well known, modal realism prevents any object from occurring in more than one possible world: every object is world-bound; at most, it is flanked by counterparts existing in different possible worlds. Yet, as we will later see, for my purposes I need that one and the same object can occur in different possible worlds. I will thus commit to possible worlds while maintaining that, as many have held,[14] possible worlds are abstract entities; typically, consistent and maximal sets of propositions (or states of affairs). Taken this way, the existence of possible worlds is no more problematic than that of sets. Notoriously, among *abstracta*, sets have been benignly regarded even by fans of ontological desert-landscapes, like Quine.[15]

[11] For a genuinely ontological argument in favour of fictional entities, *cf.* Voltolini 2003. The argument goes like this: fictional entities occur in the identity conditions of fictional works, which are complex entities made by syntactically individuated texts plus their semantic interpretation; we are prompted to accept the existence of fictional works so conceived; thus, we are forced to accept the existence of fictional entities as well.

[12] This statement will have to be qualified by what I will positively consider in sec. III, namely that in actual fact *intentionalia* have no intrinsic nature. See in particular n. 28.

[13] *Cf.* for example Lewis 1973, 1986.

[14] *Cf.* for example Adams 1974, Plantinga 1979a, 1979b.

[15] *Cf.* Quine 1960. To be sure, if one even disliked sets, I may retreat to an even weaker premiss, saying that there are the metaphysically possible states of affairs. Now, one may conceive metaphysically possible states of affairs in a very deflationary way, definitely not a set-theoretical one: metaphysically possible states of affairs are nothing

Let me now add the following premiss: at least some of the epistemically possible worlds are a subset of the metaphysically possible worlds. What indeed is an epistemically possible world in which (an object there called) Hesperus is other than (an object there called) Phosphorus? As Kripke maintained, such a world is nothing but a metaphysically possible world different from the actual world, in which, however, subjects are in a situation epistemically indistinguishable from that in which they are in the actual world (*cf.* Kripke 1971, 1980).

From these two premisses together, I can draw the conclusion that there are epistemically possible worlds. What is this conclusion for? Well, let it be followed by this further premiss: if there are epistemically possible worlds, there also are possible actually non-existent objects. As Kripke writes, the epistemically possible worlds in which Hesperus is not Phosphorus are obviously not worlds in which Venus is not Venus—there is no such metaphysically possible world. Rather, they are the metaphysically possible worlds in which subjects are in an epistemically indistinguishable situation from that which they entertain in the actual world: they have the very same two cognitive perspectives, the "evening star" and the "morning star" perspectives. Yet in those worlds these perspectives, rather than being flanked, as in the actual world, by the one and the same object Venus, are respectively matched by two distinct objects existing in such worlds (and perhaps called "Hesperus" and "Phosphorus", respectively).[16] Perhaps one of these two objects is again Venus, yet the other is surely not such. Among such epistemically possible worlds, there is at least one world in which this other object is not an actually existent object that finds itself in a position different from that which it actually has. Rather, it is an actually non-existent object; hence, a possible actually non-existent entity. To show that there is such a world, consider the epistemically possible world in which, differently

but the instantiations by objects of modal properties of the form *possibly F*. One might think that this conception circularly introduces *intentionalia* through the rear door: does not one already appeal to intentional objects precisely as constituents of metaphysically possible states of affairs? Yet it is one thing to have *intentionalia* in the identity conditions of metaphysically possible states of affairs, quite another to say that there are metaphysically possible states of affairs. The premiss of my argument would simply *ontologically* appeal to the existence of metaphysically possible states of affairs. Reference to their identity conditions would at most show that, *metaphysically*, they are not set-theoretical entities.

[16] *Cf.* Kripke 1971, 1980.

than in the actual world, a subject is confronted with an object existing there by means of the very same epistemic perspective she unsuccessfully entertains in the actual world—the "golden mountain" perspective. Now, that object cannot be an actually existent object that is a golden mountain in that world but not in the actual world. For to be a golden mountain is an essential property for an object, namely, a property an object possesses in all the worlds in which it exists. Hence, that object must be an actually non-existent *possibile*. Thus, if there are epistemically possible worlds, there also are *possibilia*.[17]

Now, by means of the previous conclusion plus the above further premiss, I can obviously derive that there are possible actually non-existent entities. This allows me to achieve a philosophically very interesting result, namely, a proof of the existence of *possibilia*. Granted, the present strategy does not seem the most straightforward way to prove the existence of such entities. Traditionally, other strategies have been mobilized, like the strategy of moving from the desire to account for the truth of the following statement:

(6) It is possible that there is an object different from any object that actually exists.

Yet as a matter of fact, this apparently more direct way is more contro-

[17] An actualist detractor of *possibilia* would immediately reply that allowing for epistemically possible worlds that also are metaphysically possible does not mean allowing for *possibilia*. For, if such worlds are abstract actually existent entities, as I have previously admitted, then they are representational entities that do not contain *possibilia*, but just (propositional) descriptions of them. Yet *per se* abstractionism about possible worlds involves no rejection of *possibilia*, but simply of a modal realist conception of them (for which see n. 13). One may well be abstractionist about possible worlds and allow for *possibilia* by, e.g., endorsing combinatorial possibilism, according to which possible worlds are maximal and consistent sets of propositions (or states of affairs) whose building blocks are entities that may exist as well as not exist (*cf.* Bradley 1989; for the compatibility between a combinatorialist and a set-theoretical standpoint on possible worlds, *cf.* Lycan 1993, pp. 4, 14). In order for abstractionists to reject *possibilia*, they must also hold that whenever a representational-like member of a possible world, whether a proposition or a state of affairs, appears to have a *possibile* as a constituent, it rather contains a mere generic description of it. Yet since these abstractionists wouldn't hold this as far as an actually existent object is concerned, the burden of proof is on them to explain why a *possibile* requires this different treatment. Put differently and succinctly, why, for these abstractionists, does the epistemically possible world in which the *possibile* Vulcan revolves around the Sun involve the Sun itself but just a generic description of Vulcan?

versial.[18] One may now note that this is not astonishing at all, since this strategy starts again from language in order to achieve ontological results.[19] Independently of all that, however, I intentionally chose the other strategy I illustrated above, for it enables me to pass from possible to intentional objects, which is my real purpose in this context.

I am now ready to add another premiss: that those actually nonexistent possible objects existing in epistemically possible worlds are, in those worlds, intentional objects precisely existing there. In the "Hesperus–Phosphorus" case, the two objects existing in the epistemically possible world in question are objects that the subject *sees*, which she has a perception *of*. The same holds as regards the epistemically possible world containing a golden mountain that the subject is confronted with in such a world: this object is seen by that subject. Now, if the *possibilia* in question are objects of perception in those worlds, then in those worlds they are intentional objects which precisely exist there.

To be sure, one might hold an "immanentist" thesis on *intentionalia*, as was probably defended by the early Brentano (*cf.* note 10). According to this thesis, *intentionalia* cannot ever coincide with entities existing in the outer reality, for they are nothing but the inner correlates of intentional states, the objects immanent to those states. Yet this thesis is rather problematic, as the later Brentano already envisaged. When I think of an existing object, for instance when I think of George W. Bush, it is precisely Bush, the flesh-and-blood individual, that I am thinking about, not an immanent entity—a "thought-of Bush";[20] a fortiori, this is the case when I see an object. Thus, once immanentism on *intentionalia* is ruled out, the above premiss is justified.

At this point, let me introduce another premiss: that the intentional objects which exist in the epistemically possible worlds in question are the very same intentional objects which are intended but do not exist in the actual world. The Hesperus a subject sees in the relevant epistemical-

[18] For a criticism of the idea that such statements commit one to *possibilia*, *cf.* Plantinga 1979a, pp. 269–72.

[19] This problem also affects what is generally considered the best argument in favour of *possibilia*, namely McMichael's argument concerning iterated modalities, at least in so far as this argument relies on the difficulty, for detractors of *possibilia*, to account semantically for sentences like "it is possible that there be a person *X* who does not exist in the actual world, and who performs some action *Y*, but who might have not performed *Y*." *Cf.* McMichael 1983.

[20] *Cf.* Brentano 1930, pp. 107–9.

ly possible world, and the Phosphorus, different from that Hesperus, which that subject again sees in that world, are respectively nothing but that the two intentional objects that very subject intends in the actual world before knowing that the first as well as the second intentional object actually appear as (different) aspects of the (contextually) only object actually existing, Venus, and that they do not therefore exist in the actual world.

This thesis is actually the hardest to swallow. First of all, let me focus on the fact that, with respect to the "Hesperus–Phosphorus" case, not only in the relevant epistemically possible world but also in the actual world there really are *two* distinct intentional objects. Simply, unlike what happens in that world, those *intentionalia* do not actually exist. To see that this is the case, let us go back to the "golden mountain" case. In this latter case, we will certainly be disposed to saying that, while in the relevant epistemically possible world the object a subject intends in her perception exists, in the actual world the object that very subject intends does not exist. For here that subject at most hallucinates such an object. Now, in the "golden mountain" case, in the actual world the subject intends only one intentional object. Yet at least before the discovery that leads a subject to legitimately say that Hesperus is no other than Phosphorus, for that subject there undoubtedly are two distinct intentional objects. That subject believes that she sees a certain celestial body at dusk, and she also believes that she sees another celestial body at dawn. The discovery in question can be thus described as the discovery that such distinct intentional objects actually appear as aspects of the (contextually) only thing that really exists, namely Venus.[21]

Secondly, I claim that those actually non-existent intentional objects literally are the very same intentional objects that exist in the relevant epistemically possible world. Here again, let us start from the "golden mountain" case. What makes the relevant epistemically possible world a merely (metaphysically) possible world rather than the actual world? Well, the fact that one and the same epistemic perspective entertained by a certain subject—as we already know, for that subject the two worlds, the actual and the possible, are epistemically indistinguishable—actually turns out to be unsuccessful. But what does it mean for that perspective

[21] This entails that sentences of the kind "Hesperus is Phosphorus" do not express a relation of (self)-identity, but a weaker relation subsisting between different entities. For this thesis, *cf.* e.g. Voltolini 1997.

to be successful in the possible world? Well, that the object which that subject intends in that world exists in such a world; *quâ* existent, in that world that object is *seen* by that subject. As a result, to say that in the actual world the very same perspective is unsuccessful means that that very object actually does not exist; *quâ* non-existent, in the actual world that object is only *hallucinated* by that subject. I mean, *if* we use the notion of an intentional object in the way it has been hitherto presented—namely, the notion of something that may (actually) exist as well as (actually) not exist—in order to account for the notion of success or failure of a certain epistemic perspective, then this use forces us to talk of one and the same intentional object with respect to the actual world as well as to the possible world which is epistemically indistinguishable from the former.[22] The two worlds, the possible and the actual, differ inasmuch as one and the same intentional object, respectively, exists and does not exist in them. *Mutatis mutandis*, the same holds in the "Hesperus–Phosphorus" case, in which, as we have seen, *two* intentional objects are involved.[23]

[22] Of course, if we did not appeal to that use, then the ensuing two things would follow. In an externalist framework, the identity of epistemic perspective would not be hand in glove with an identity in cognitive states; one would rather say that in the actual world the subject has a cognitive state not individuated by an outer object, while in the possible world the subject has a cognitive state so individuated. Whereas in an internalist framework, that identity of perspective would be hand in glove with a mere identity in narrow content—that is, identity in a content that is non-individuated in terms of outer objects. Only in this latter case, the very same epistemic perspective could be satisfied in different epistemically possible worlds by different objects, respectively, existing in those worlds. Hence it would be indeterminate which of these objects the (actual non-existent) intentional object would be identical with (see immediately below in the text).

[23] My perspective seems very close to the one recently defended by McGinn 2004. At first blush, McGinn deals precisely in the same way with a case which is exactly like the "golden mountain" case I have presented here, but for the fact that the epistemically possible world is the delusive one while the actual world is the veridical one. According to McGinn, in the actual world a subject is directed towards the very same intentional object she is directed towards in a possible world which for that subject is precisely alike but for the fact that in such a world that subject entertains a hallucination (*ibid.*, pp. 235–6). On a closer look, however, the two perspectives are not identical. For McGinn, the intentional object that is the same both in the actual and in the possible world is in *both* cases a non-existent one; in the veridical world, moreover, that object is flanked by possibly more than one existing object which the subject in question also intends (*ibid.*, pp. 231–4). So conceived, the intentional object is more akin to a narrow content, as McGinn himself notes (*ibid.*, p. 242), than to a *possibile*. His contrary reassurances notwithstanding, for McGinn non-existent intentional objects are indeed metaphysically

Notice that I have not directly presented an identity claim between a non-existent intentional object and a *possibile*. If I had done that, I would have faced an indeterminacy problem that many authors have raised.[24] Consider this situation. In the real world, a certain subject hallucinates the golden mountain. By so doing, she intends a certain intentional object *IO* that she conceives as uniquely having the property of *being a golden mountain*. Yet what reason is there in order to think that *IO* is identical with *O*, the possible actually non-existent object that in a certain possible world *W* uniquely has that property, rather than with *O**, the further possible actually non-existent object that in another possible world *W** uniquely has that property? Apparently, none.

Yet I have *first* held that there is an identity between a possible object existing in a certain merely possible world and an intentional object existing in that world, and *then* I have maintained that there also is an identity between that intentional object and a certain actually non-existent intentional object. By so doing, I have obtained the identity between that possible object and the actually non-existent intentional object by transitivity. Thus, I have bypassed the indeterminacy problem. In the first step of the above reasoning, there is no indeterminacy. For, as I previously said, the possible object in question is the object which is seen in the world where that *possibile* exists, hence it is in that world an intentional object which exists there. In the second step, there is no indeterminacy as well. For I directly appeal to an identity between intentional objects, although they are located in different worlds.

To be sure, one might retort that in the second step a new indeterminacy question arises. What allows one to establish that the intentional object which does not actually exist is the same as the intentional object which exists in the relevant possible world? Yet in the second step of the above reasoning there is no such further indeterminacy question either. For when one such question arises with respect to the identity of intentional objects, the problem is that one has no criteria to decide whether the object that a certain subject intends is the same as the object *another*

different from intentional objects that exist (e.g. the former, but not the latter, are mind-dependent entities: *cf.* McGinn 2000). Last but not least, McGinn is not disposed to account similarly for the "Hesperus–Phosphorus" case. Rather than saying that in such a case a subject primarily intends two distinct intentional objects, he claims that a subject intends one and the same existent object via two distinct senses (2004, pp. 243–4).

[24] *Cf.* Linsky and Zalta 1996, p. 285; Williamson 1998, p. 208.

subject, or the very same subject at *another* time, intends. Yet in the present case there is no such problem. For in the two worlds at issue, the actual and the possible, from the subject's side everything is completely the same: in her identical epistemic perspective, at one and the same time the very subject intends a certain intentional object either in the real or in the possible world. What changes is only what really obtains—the intentional object exists only in the possible world.

At this point, given the identities the two last premisses state, plus the premiss concerning the existence of *possibilia*, the upshot is that there are actually non-existent intentional objects. Indeed, if there are *possibilia*, and moreover, if these *possibilia* are identical with intentional objects existing in the same possible worlds where those *possibilia* exist, and finally, if these *intentionalia* are in turn identical with actually non-existent intentional objects, then there are actually non-existent intentional objects. Let me sum up as follows the whole argument that has developed:

(i) All metaphysically possible worlds exist.
(ii) At least some epistemically possible worlds are a subset of the metaphysically possible worlds.
(iii) There are epistemically possible worlds. [From (i), (ii)]
(iv) If there are epistemically possible worlds, there also are actually non-existent possible objects.
(v) There are actually non-existent possible objects. [From (iii), (iv)]
(vi) The possible objects that actually do not exist but exist in epistemically possible worlds are, in those worlds, intentional objects which exist there.
(vii) The intentional objects which exist in those epistemically possible worlds are identical with the intentional objects which do not exist in the actual world yet are intended there.
(viii) Hence, there are actually non-existent intentional objects. [From (v), (vi), (vii)]

If this argument is sound, I have just to repeat the afore-mentioned anti-immanentist thesis on intentional objects in order to establish that there also are actually existent intentional objects: when I see Bush, e.g., it is Bush himself, the actually existent individual, whom I perceive; thus Bush, not an "intuited Bush", is the intentional object of my perceptual state. If this is the case, the whole thesis that there are intentional objects,

conceived as entities that may actually exist as well as actually not exist, appears to be proved.

III

Recently, several authors have maintained that *ontological* investigations understood as aimed at proving the existence of entities of a certain kind, are different from *metaphysical* investigations, understood as aimed at determining the nature of entities of a certain kind, if there are any.[25] I am also in favour of this distinction. My previous attempt at proving the existence of intentional objects indeed presupposes that the issue regarding their nature has been fixed, independently of whether there really are such entities. In point of fact, as far as metaphysics is concerned, I have presupposed the "Brentanian" thesis that intentional objects are entities that may actually exist as well as actually not exist.

However, the following point must be noted. The above conception of *intentionalia* includes among them not only actually existent items—that is, entities that exist (contingently as well as necessarily)—but also actually non-existent items—that is, entities that contingently do not exist, such as the golden mountain, as well as entities that necessarily do not exist, such as the round square. Now, the above argument proves that there are all the *intentionalia* that actually exist. Yet, among the *intentionalia* that do not actually exist, it does not prove that there are those *intentionalia* that fail necessarily to exist. For by means of that argument I have proved only that there are those actually non-existent *intentionalia* that are identical with (certain) *possibilia*.

Yet I now want to stress that ontological arguments in favour of *intentionalia* can only prove the existence of *some* objects of this sort. This depends on the fact that, at a metaphysical level, appearances notwithstanding, it is actually improper to rank *intentionalia* as entities of a specific kind, such as events or numbers. In the previous section, I pretended that *intentionalia* were that kind of thing, to be distinguished from other kinds. In point of fact, however, this is not correct. Metaphysically speaking, *intentionalia* are *schematic* entities, i.e. entities that share no intrinsic nature.[26] Let me expand on these points.

[25] *Cf.* Thomasson 1999, Varzi 2002a, p. 226.

[26] *Cf.* Crane 2001, pp. 15–17. Also McGinn 2004 defends this idea. Yet, as we have seen before (*cf.* n. 23), for him—depending on whether they exist or not—*intentionalia*

To begin with, the schematicity of the intentional object shows itself in the fact that an object is intentional only in so far as the thought of it is the target of an intentional state. This leaves *intentionalia* to be entities of any kind: individuals as well as events, numbers as well as institutions. For any such entity can be thought of. This is ultimately why, again staying at a metaphysical level, we must reject the "Brentanian" immanentist thesis on *intentionalia* and instead contend that intentional objects are entities that may actually exist as well as actually not exist.

Now, as a result of this metaphysical situation, on the ontological side there cannot be any *general* proof for the existence of *intentionalia*, but only partial proofs. Such proofs indeed have this structure: first, it must be proved that there are entities of a certain specific kind; second, it must be shown that some of those entities are thought of; hence, one may conclude that there are intentional objects as well, namely, those entities of that specific kind that are thought of. What I have previously given was precisely a proof of this sort: first, I proved that there are entities of certain kinds—non-existent *possibilia*, actual existents of many sorts; second, I showed that some of those entities are also thought of; hence, I concluded that there are intentional objects, namely those very thought-of entities—i.e., both thought-of non-existent *possibilia* as well as thought-of *actualia* of many sorts.[27,28]

Hence, it is not a coincidence that the above argument does not prove the existence, for example, of impossible *intentionalia*. Since *intentionalia*

have a different nature. To my mind, this is not *eo ipso* the case. Venus and Vulcan are thought-of entities of the same kind—*concreta*—although the first actually exists while the second does not.

[27] Crane seems to think that, since *intentionalia* are schematic objects, there cannot be any such things: "an intentional object is not a kind of object.... After all, intentional objects are not, as such, things" (2001, p. 26). As such, this seems to me a mistake: schematicity makes it the case that there cannot be a general ontological proof for schematic objects, not that there can be no proof at all for such objects. Yet Crane himself should agree with my line of argument. For he believes that there are actually existent *intentionalia*, i.e. thought-of entities of certain specific sorts. See again his 2001, p. 26.

[28] An obvious consequence of this way of putting things is that, if there are fictional objects and some of those objects are thought of, then there are *intentionalia*. So it could be said that, provided that there are thought-of *ficta*, despite what I said in the previous section, if one proves that there are *ficta* one also proves that there are *intentionalia*. This is entirely correct. Yet since I square with abstractionists like Thomasson and Zalta in holding that *ficta* are actually *existent* entities, it still remains that a proof for *non*-existent *intentionalia* should be provided; which the argument from (i) to (viii) in the previous section was intended to give.

are schematic objects, one would need a further argument having the same structure as that argument. Now, whenever one such argument is not available—as I strongly believe it must be the case with *impossibilia*—a further consequence follows: one must be ready to admit that, appearances notwithstanding, there are cases of intentional states that do not really have the property of being about something, hence that do not really have an intentional object.[29] Intentional states apparently "directed upon" *impossibilia* are paradigmatic instances of those cases, yet they are not the only examples.

Consider the example described by Chisholm, that of Diogenes looking for an honest man.[30] Given the "Brentanian" conception of *intentionalia*, one would be tempted to assign an intentional object to Diogenes' quest as well. Yet here the indeterminacy issue presented in the previous section appears particularly pressing: why say that Diogenes is looking for *O*, the object which has the property of *being a honest man* in the possible world *W*, rather than that he is looking for *O**, the object which has the property of *being a honest man* in the possible world *W**? I said earlier that one such question may be bypassed by first establishing an identity between a possible object and an intentional object existing in the same possible world and then appealing to the identity between intentional objects across different worlds as grounded in the identity of epistemic perspective (whether successful or unsuccessful) of one and the same subject in such different worlds. This would be the case in the "golden mountain" example, in which, by means of a perspective experientially identical to that unsuccessfully entertained in the actual world, in the relevant possible world the subject would be confronted with an object existing there. Yet in the "Diogenes" case it would be hard to single out a class of worlds as linked by an identity of epistemic perspective. Possible worlds in which Diogenes' quest was satisfied are, from the cognitive point of view, too heterogeneous with respect to the real world to determine one such class. In all these worlds, Diogenes would have representations that would, respectively, count as a (fulfilled) search for a honest man, yet these representations would be too different for one to

[29] This does not mean that they lack intentionality altogether. Simply, they will fail to have *reference* intentionality—the property of being about something—but they will still have *content* intentionality—the property of having a content that makes them semantically evaluable. For this distinction between intentionalities, *cf.* Kim 1996, p. 21.

[30] *Cf.* Chisholm 1957, 1967.

say that in each of these worlds he is in the same epistemic perspective as he is in the actual world.[31]

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