BETWEEN BEING AND NOT-BEING:

NON-EXISTENT OBJECTS

AND THE INTERMEDIARY IN PLATO, FREGE, AND MEINONG

by

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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Philosophy in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

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Abstract

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Adviser: Professor Richard Mendelsohn

Talk and thought about non-existent objects pose problems of accounting for intentionality and meaning, and for answering the question whether statements about non-existent objects can have truth values. The focus and core of this dissertation is the interpretation of three theories: Plato's account of false statements in the *Sophist* and his notion of *eikôn* (image) in the *Republic*, Frege's distinction between sense and reference, and Meinong's theory of objects. The discussion is preceded by an examination of Parmenides' fragments. In this interpretation, Plato's notions of *eidôlon* (image) in the

Sophist and *eikôn* (image) in the *Republic* explain intentionality and meaning for complete statements and singular terms, even if no sensible object is denoted. Though Plato's theory of "interweaving" provides a clue for determining the truth and falsity of statements, it remains unclear if statements about non-existents can be true, and it is impossible to formulate statements equivalent to modern negative existence claims in Plato's terms. Frege's concept of sense as "mode of presentation" fulfills the role of cognitive content and meaning for sentences and singular terms that lack a reference. According to Frege, however, statements containing referenceless singular terms have no truth value. We argue that, contrary to Frege's view, it is desirable to account for true statements about non-existent objects, and we show that it is possible to construe them on the basis of Frege's theory. Meinong's concept of "Außersein" (out-of-being) and his theory of incomplete objects provide a way to account not only for an intentional object and meaning, but also for truth and falsity when talking about non-existents. If taken in terms of sets of properties, Meinongian objects are less eccentric than they appear prima facie. Plato's notions of *eidôlon* and *eikôn*, Frege's notion of sense, and Meinong's concept of incomplete objects are strikingly similar insofar as each of them constitutes a cognitive and semantic intermediary, which can be understood as presumed object that is determined by a set of properties.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

1.1. The Problem

The theme of this investigation is the problem of non-existent objects. While non-existents do not pose any difficulty in every day discourse, they have traditionally been the troublesome black sheep for philosophers. The problem of non-existence, ever since it was set on track by Parmenides, has many facets. One of the problems concerns the question of what the intentional object of a thought is if the object of this thought does not exist, that is, the question: What is this thought about? A thought about nothing cannot properly be called a thought. To solve this problem one may hold that the intentional object of this thought is a mental object. But this solution leads to two substantial difficulties. First, it violates the distinction between the idea and the object or content of the idea. Second, if non-existents are taken as merely 'in the mind', i.e., individual psychological states, then it is hard to account for successful communication about them, since meaning, at least for terms that do not denote any object, would be confined to the mind, thus private. But speakers who talk about such objects seem to intend to communicate about the same object, at least in a minimal sense, and not of their private thought-of-object. This consideration leads right to the semantic problem. In the case of a singular term or a proper name for which no object exists (such as 'Odysseus' or 'Pegasus'), the problem arises how this name can be meaningful when lacking a corresponding object.

Yet another problem arises when we question if we can make any true claims about non-existent objects. Obviously, in fiction and mythology, the question of truth and falsity is beside the point. But we also talk about fiction and mythology, and at least we intend to make true statements. Thus, someone who says

(1.1) Odysseus is described as prudent in the Odyssey

intends to make a true statement. Moreover, dictionaries and encyclopedias inform us about non-existent objects; thus, we may find an entry for "Odysseus," describing him as the main character of the Odyssey, and an entry for "Vulcan," described as a planet. If this information is of any value, it should be true. It is puzzling though, how any properties can truly or falsely be ascribed to a non-existent, since if an object does not exist, it does not have any properties. So can any truth value for the statement

(1.2) Vulcan is a planet

be determined? Furthermore, negative existence claims should be true of any object that does not exist. Thus, the statement

(1.3) Vulcan does not exist

should be true if Vulcan does in fact not exist. But of which object do we deny existence in (1.3)? And how is this truth value to be determined?

These questions touch on various areas of philosophy. The problem concerning an intentional object for thoughts and other mental states about non-existent objects is an issue for the philosophy of mind. Explaining the meaning of names and singular terms

that lack an existent object as denotation is a task for semantic theories. And questions of truth for statements about non-existents are of interest for logicians. Furthermore, the question of truth and falsity also involves epistemological considerations, since if there are any truths about non-existent objects, we face the question of how we can have any knowledge concerning things that do not exist. And last but not least, the question of non-existence is markedly connected with ontological concerns.

1.2 The Focus and Limit

The purpose of this thesis is mainly historical. The discussion is focused on the exposition and interpretation of three theories that deal with the problem of non-existence. We show that these theories provide a surprisingly similar approach to account for meaningful talk and belief about non-existent objects. The analysis and comparison is intended to add a fresh perspective, and to present the strategy pursued by these philosophers as one that can be employed as a viable basis for a solution to explain issues surrounding non-existents. Although non-existence is one of philosophy's oldest puzzles, it is still a topic of interest in contemporary philosophy of language and logic. Recently logicians have become interested in non-existence in connection with modal logic.

Philosophers with widely divergent attitudes have been concerned with the problem and devised strategies to avoid or solve it. An attempt to provide a

comprehensive exposition of the various solutions that have been proposed would go far beyond the confines of this thesis. For that reason, we have to limit this investigation to three theories that introduce intermediary notions as a solution to explain statements about non-existent objects. Thus, in the focus of our discussion are Plato's notions of *eidôlon* and *eikôn*, Frege's concept of sense, and Meinong's beingless objects and his notion of incomplete objects.

The choice of these three theories is not as arbitrary as it may seem at first. The criteria for our selection are, on the one hand, the similarities that allow for a comparison, and on the other hand, the differences that set the three philosophers apart with regard to their status and role within the history of philosophy, as well as their method and field of investigation. We will argue that Plato, Frege, and Meinong introduce concepts that are remarkably similar: These notions present an intermediary between the individual's mental state and the intended object. This intermediary takes the role as an immediate intentional object for mental states about non-existents. An intermediary also helps to explain the meaning of names that name non-existent objects. Moreover, the ontological status of these intermediaries is extraordinary insofar as they are neither existing nor non-existing. Yet, the three philosophers developed their notion independently and within a different context of inquiry. Accordingly, the concepts are differently motivated, and interestingly, in no case was the primary purpose to account for the semantics of non-existents. Their dissimilar approaches and perspectives make the parallel between these notions even more significant, and the comparison unusual and intriguing.

1.3 Analysis

Since Parmenides is the historic father of the problem regarding non-existence, a brief discussion of Parmenides in chapter 2 precedes our analysis. The presocratic philosopher's poem is interesting because he emphasizes the apparently obvious intuition that there cannot be anything that *is not*. We defend an existential interpretation of Parmenides' notion of 'being' on account of his ontology, according to which 'being' is spatial and temporal. Notably, Parmenides claims that it is impossible to talk or think about non-existents. Even if we interpret this statement more narrowly as meaning that what we think or say about non-existents cannot be *true*, the problem is that this makes the statements of the poem inconsistent. After all, there are many claims about the non-existent, and they are stated within what is declared as the 'Way of Truth'. So how can these statements in the poem be made, or, on the narrower interpretation, how can they be true, if it is declared as impossible to make these statements, or that these statements are true? This presents the problem: How can we explain statements about non-existents to be meaningful, and how can negative existence claims be true without being self-contradictory?

In chapter 3 we discuss Plato's notions of *eidôlon* and *eikôn*. Plato deals with non-existence and false belief in the *Sophist*. The dilemma of false thought (or false statements) is formulated in this way: A false thought states what-is-not. But if what-is-not is utterly nothing, then a false statement or false belief equals saying or thinking

nothing, hence it is not possible because thinking nothing is not even to think at all. To address this problem, Plato introduces the concept of an *eidôlon*, a presentation or image. As such it has some sort of being, it is something, an entity. Someone who makes a false statement is not saying nothing, but the object of this speech is an *eidôlon*, something that has being in the sense of a presentation or likeness. On our interpretation, Plato holds that not only false statements, but all statements have an *eidôlon* as immediate object; true statements create a correct *eidôlon* or presentation, false statements create an incorrect *eidôlon.* The *eidôlon* in the *Sophist* is a presentation of a complex object, namely a complete statement or thought, rather than a presentation of a singular particular. We argue that the *eikôn* in books 6 and 7 of the *Republic* is a presentation or image of a singular particular. Thus, both notions are of an intermediary: An *eikôn* takes the role of the immediate intentional object as it is an image or presentation of a particular, and it can take the role of word-meaning for singular terms. An *eidôlon* is the immediate object of a statement or belief, as such it is the meaning of a complete sentence. According to Plato's ontology in the *Republic*, images have being and are real, but to a lesser degree than Plato's *forms*, thus *eikones* and *eidôla* are also ontological intermediaries between the perfectly real and the utterly unreal. On this interpretation, *eikones* and *eidôla* are notably similar to Frege's sense and thought, respectively.

Moreover, in this chapter we discuss Plato's analysis of statements as the combination or 'interweaving' of forms with forms or of particulars with forms, and his examination of false statements. We argue that it is at least problematic to account for the

truth of statements about non-existents objects on Plato's view, and even though the simile of the cave indicates that people may be able to realize that a given *eikôn* does not have a corresponding original, it is impossible to construe an equivalent of a negative existence claim in Plato's terms.

Chapter 4 takes a close look at Frege's distinction between sense and reference. The distinction is essentially this: The reference of a sign or singular term is the object denoted. In addition, a name or expression also has a sense that is the 'mode of presentation'; thus the difference between different expressions that designate the same object lies in the sense. This distinction not only applies for singular terms, but also for sentences; according to Frege, the sense of a sentence is a 'thought', and the reference is a truth value. The distinction allows Frege to explain the informativeness of identity statements and the meaningfulness of names that lack an object as reference. We interpret sense as a set of properties that are associated with an object, and we argue that Frege's notion of sense, like Plato's notion of *eikôn,* is an epistemic and ontological intermediary. Despite the fact that the notion of sense can account for the meaningfulness of talk or thought about non-existent objects, Frege's theory presents some problems. On Frege's view, statements containing a term that lacks an object as reference have no truth value, hence all statements about non-existents are neither true nor false. We argue that Frege is mistaken in the assumption that we have no interest in the truth value when the thought is about non-existent objects, and we explore how a truth value for statements about non-

existents could be determined on the basis of Frege's theory. The last section of this chapter takes a look at the question whether Frege should be considered a Platonist.

The first part of chapter 5 provides an analysis of Meinong's motivation to account for non-existent objects and include them in a theory of objects. Based on ideas developed by Brentano and Twardowski, Meinong holds that every mental state has an intentional object and this object is distinct from the presentation that presents it. Furthermore, he maintains that there are true existential and attributive claims about non-existents. We provide an over-view of the different kinds of being distinguished, with special consideration of the notion of *Außersein* ('out-of-being'). We favor an interpretation on which this notion is ontologically neutral and applies not only to non-existent objects, but to all objects. Moreover, we understand this concept in terms of a set of properties. Within Meinong's earlier work, however, *Außersein* presents an epistemological problem, since it is impossible to know all the properties an object has. Meinong also draws a distinction between primary objects and objects of higher order; for the latter he uses the term *objective* ("Objektiv"). An *objective* is what is stated in a complete sentence, and we note that this notion is closely akin to Frege's concept of thought.

In his later work Meinong introduces the distinction between complete and incomplete objects. This distinction is partly epistemologically motivated and it solves the epistemological problem that the notion of *Außersein* presents for Meinong's earlier

theory. In his later theory Meinong substantially modifies some of his earlier views. Thus, according to this Modified Theory, as we will call it, the immediate intentional object of a mental state is an incomplete auxiliary object that also serves as word meaning. In this way, the auxiliary object is an intermediary between a mental state and the intended object, which Meinong now calls the 'target object'. We argue that the distinction between auxiliary and target object is closely akin to Frege's sense-reference distinction. In the final section of this chapter we examine truth and falsity for statements about non-existents based on the Modified Theory.

1.4. Result and Merit

The given analysis shows that Plato's *eikôn,* Frege's *sense*, and Meinong's incomplete object are remarkably similar in several aspects: They serve as immediate intentional object, they account for the meaning of names and singular terms, and as such they are useful notions to explain how we can talk or think about non-existent objects. Since these notions are not conceived as mere substitutes where an existing object is missing, but also take this role when there is an existent object, they serve an epistemological purpose. Thus, they are the means by which we can talk or think about objects of which we know little and with which we are only acquainted by hearsay; sometimes, we may be ignorant or even mistaken about the existence of such objects. An

intermediary notion is attractive because it does not require distinct theories to explain intentionality and meaning for existent and non-existent objects.

Although Plato's *eikôn,* Frege's *sense*, and Meinong's incomplete object are in an ontological twilight zone as they are neither existent nor wholly non-existent, they are not as mysterious as they appear *prima facie* when interpreted as merely assumed objects that are characterized by a partial set of properties that can be either descriptive or perceptual. Plato's concept of *eidôlon*, Frege's notion of *thought*, and Meinong's *objective* are clearly similar as they constitute a complex object that is stated by a complete sentence. These complex objects are the carriers of truth and falsity. And there are reasons that make it desirable for a theory to account for the truth value of statements about non-existents. In the end, a few problems remain unsolved and are open for further investigation.

Chapter 2

PARMENIDES' PUZZLE

2.1 Introduction

Parmenides reveals the problem that is at the core of this investigation: if all there is exists, how can we talk or think about objects that do not exist? In this chapter, we defend an existential interpretation of Parmenides' use of 'being' and its derivatives, which is also supported by his metaphysics and cosmology that characterizes 'being' as confined to space-time. Parmenides repeatedly claims that we cannot think or talk about what-is-not. This is puzzling since this statement is apparently self-contradictory: Saying about what-is-not that it is not and that we cannot say anything about it is saying something about it. Did Parmenides not notice this? Despite the different interpretations we can find, interpreters agree that it is significant that the proem introduces the goddess Justice (Dikê)[1], where she announces that she will reveal the truth as well as the fallacious beliefs of the mortals. The doctrine presented in the fragments is thus put into the mouth of the goddess. But we can only speculate that Parmenides was aware of the self-referential inconsistency in the poem, and if he was, that this is the reason that he lets the goddess make these claims. Even if the latter is the case, since the goddess is said to reveal the truth, there is a way for her to say

[1] Fränkel (1930) discusses the relevance of Dikê in Parmenides.

something true about non-existents, and she is able to convey it to the "mortal" reader of the poem. Whether or not it was Parmenides' intention, he identified a problem, namely how we can speak or think about something that does not exist, given that there is no such thing we speak or think about. And it is remarkable that this problem is still of interest for theorists today.

Parmenides' hexameter poem 'On Nature' survived only in fragments. It is traditionally divided into three parts, the Proem (fragment 1), the Way of Truth (fragments 2-8,50) and the Way of Seeming (fragments 8,51-61 and 9-19). For the purpose of this paper, little attention is devoted to the poetic and metaphoric features of the poem; thus only a few relevant aspects of the proem are mentioned. Our discussion is focused on the Way of Truth, and since most of the fragments of the Way of Seeming are concerned with nature and procreation, we only briefly discuss fragment 9. All fragments are quoted in the translation of Gallop (1984), except where indicated by an asterisk.

2.2 The Proem

Fragment 1:

The mares that carry me, as far as impulse might reach,
Were taking me, when they brought and placed me upon the much-speaking route

Of the goddess, that carries everywhere unscathed the man who knows;
Thereon was I carried, for thereon the much-guided mares were carrying me,
Straining to pull the chariot, and maidens were leading the way.
The axle, glowing in its naves, gave forth the shrill sound of a pipe,
(For it was urged on by two rounded
Wheels at either end), even while maidens, Daughters of the Sun, were hastening
To escort me, after leaving the House of Night for the light,
Having pushed back with their hands the veils from their heads.
There are the gates of the paths of Night and Day,
And a lintel and a threshold of stone surround them,
And the aetherial gates themselves are filled with great doors;
And for these Justice, much-avenging, holds the keys of retribution.
Coaxing her with gentle words, the maidens
Did cunningly persuade her that she should push back the bolted bar for them
Swiftly from the gates; and these made of the doors
A gaping gap as they were opened wide,
Swinging in turn in their sockets the brazen posts
Fitted with rivets and pins; straight through them at that point
Did the maidens drive the chariot and mares along the broad way.
And the goddess received me kindly, and took my right hand with her hand,
And uttered speech and thus addressed me:
‘Youth attended by immortal charioteers,

Who come to our House with mares that carry you,
Welcome; for it is no ill fortune that sent you forth to travel
This route (for it lies far indeed from the beaten track of men),
But right and justice. And it is right that you should learn all things,
Both the steadfast heart of persuasive truth,
And the beliefs of the mortals, in which there is no true trust.
But nevertheless you shall learn these things as well, how the things which seem
Had to have genuine existence, permeating all things completely'.

The proem describes a journey from darkness to light where the traveler is received by the goddess, Justice, at the 'gates of the paths of Night and Day'. The ascent from darkness to light is a common symbolism for the transformation from ignorance to enlightenment, as it also appears in Plato's allegory of the Cave. But darkness and light, and night and day, also anticipate the dichotomy of two contraries that is the theme of the remainder of the poem – being and not-being. The place where the goddess receives the traveler is, as Gallop (1984) puts it "… a point at which Night and Day meet, a place where opposites are undivided, and where the familiar contrast of human experience can therefore no longer be drawn. …Even the antithesis between Night and Day, which will later emerge as the foundation of all other mortal dualisms, …has there been transcended" (p. 7).

Not only is it significant that the traveler is received in that twilight zone beyond usual reach, but also that the philosophy of the poem is presented as the revelation of the goddess Justice, as such it gives the words legitimacy as being right, just, and true.[2] But as mentioned above, for Parmenides' philosophy it may do more: It may be a means to avoid the apparent contradiction of saying what cannot be said by elevating the language used (by the goddess) above the rules it states (for mortals). The end of the proem sets the stage for the remainder of the fragments that will disclose the "steadfast heart of persuasive truth" as well as "the beliefs of mortals, in which there is no true trust."

2.3 The Theme: To Be or Not to Be – That is the Question

Fragment 2 starts off with showing the 'way of truth' and laying out Parmenides' theme, the dichotomy of 'is' and 'is not':

Fragment 2:

Come, I shall tell you, and do you listen and convey the story,

What routes of inquiry alone there are for thinking:

The one – that [*it*] *is*, and that [*it*] *cannot not be,*

Is the path of Persuasion (for it attends upon truth);

[2] One of the oldest legal manifests, the Code of Hammurabi, was claimed to rest on divine order. According to the bible, Moses received the ten commandments directly from god. The entire Bhagavad Gita consists of a speech by the god Krishna.

5 The other – that [*it*] *is not* and that it is necessary that [*it*] *is not,**[3]

That I point out to you to be a path wholly unlearnable,

For you could not recognize what-is-not (for that is not feasible), *[4]

Nor could you point it out.

Two ways of inquiry are distinguished here. The first way consists of a conjunction of two statements that are expressed in the two that-clauses in fragment 2,3:

(2.1) [it] is

and

(2.2) [it] cannot not be.

This is identified as the way or path of truth, but what does Parmenides mean by that? There are two difficulties in understanding these lines (and similar expressions throughout the poem). The first difficulty is that Parmenides uses a finite form of the verb 'to be' (*esti*, i.e., 'is') in the first that-clause (2.1), where *esti* ('is') functions as the entire that-clause. If there is any subject to be supplemented (most translations, like the one given, insert 'it' as subject[5]), it is unexpressed and cannot be directly inferred from the context. Similarly, a subject is lacking in the second and double negated that-clause and in both clauses in line 5. The second difficulty is how 'is' and its negation 'is not' should

[3] Gallop: "The other – that [*it*] *is not* and [*it*] *needs must not be;"* cf. p. 22 and footnote 17.

[4] Gallop: "For you could not know what-is-not (for that is not feasible);" I prefer the term 'recognize' instead of 'know' for the Greek verb '*gignôskein'*; cf. p. 23.

[5] Barnes (1979), Kirk/Raven (1983), and Austin (1986). Tarán (1965) does not insert a subject and translates: "the one [says]: "exists"…;" Mourelatos : "the one, that – is – and ...;" Diels/Kranz (1951-2): "daß IST *ist...*[that IS *is...*]."

be understood. 'Is' can be read existentially, meaning 'exists',[6] alternatively, 'is' can be copulative or predicative, in the sense of 'is such-and such' or 'is F',[7] or a combination of existential and predicative meaning.[8] On yet another reading 'is' is veridical, meaning 'is true'or 'is the case'.[9] (A discussion of the arguments defending and criticizing these interpretations cannot be pursued here). Different solutions to these two problems will obviously yield different interpretations of the poem.

Let us turn to the first problem, the question what the subject of the 'way of truth' is, namely the subject of (2.1) and (2.2). Since Greek grammar allows for a sentence lacking an explicit subject, the problem concerns not merely the addition of a grammatical subject, but more importantly the question what the 'way of truth' is about. Most interpreters add a subject, and there are two genuine candidates for that subject: The traditional interpretation takes the subject to be the same as the subject of fragment 8, namely 'being', 'what is',[10] or 'all that exists' in the sense of reality.[11] Fine grained differences aside, according to this line of interpretation Parmenides makes an existential claim and (2.1) has to be understood as 'what is is' or 'being is'. The disadvantage of this reading is that the way of truth amounts to a mere tautology. The other and more

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[6] Tarán (1965), Barnes (1979), Owen (1960), and Gallop (1984).

[7] Mourelatos (1970) and Austin (1986).

[8] Furth (1968) and Kirk/Raven (1983).

[9] Kahn (1968-9).

[10] Following Diels (1897); this line of interpretation is also defended by Reinhardt (1916), Deichgräber (1959), and Zafiropoulo (1950).

[11] Woodbury (1958).

plausible candidate as a subject is, as Owen (1960) argued, 'what can be talked about or thought about'[12] with reference to fragment 6,1 ("It must be that what is there for speaking and thinking of *is*..."). On this reading, the way of truth in (2.1) holds that whatever we talk or think about, *is* (leaving the interpretation of 'is' open for now). The alternative to these two options is to take the supplemented 'it' as impersonal, in analogy to 'it's raining', thus Fränkel (1962)[13] takes (2.1) to mean "die Tatsache des Seins" ("the fact of being") or "Sein findet statt" ("being happens"), but this interpretation does not differ substantially in content from the traditional line following Diels (1897), namely that 'being is'. Similarly, there is the option that no subject needs to be supplemented because there is none.[14] The interpretation of lines 3 and 5 then depends entirely on the reading of 'is' (*esti*). Thus Tarán (1965) holds that there is no subject and the meaning of 'is' is purely existential: "Parmenides states that there are two ways of inquiry that can be conceived: one asserts "exists," the other asserts "exists-not." The concept of existence is here expressed by a verb, but Parmenides could equally have said "one way asserts Being"…" (p. 36 f.). But the only difference between Tarán (1965) and the traditional existential interpretation, i.e., 'being is', is that Tarán avoids the tautology. According to a predicative interpretation without subject, the claims in fragment 2 are understood as open sentences that instruct about the form of correct judgments (such as affirmation and negation). Mourelatos (1970) interprets 'is' as "speculative predication" meaning '----is--

[12] Following this line are Guthrie (1950), Gallop (1984).

[13] Also Gigon (1945), Diels/Kranz (1951).

[14] This view was first defended by Calogero (1932), and again by Raven (1963) and Mourelatos (1970).

--': "the copulas of the two routes are unresolved copulas. They should be represented with blanks on both the subject place and the predicate place" (p. 55). It seems to me that a predicative interpretation of 'is' with Owen's (1960) supplemented subject 'what we talk or think about' does not differ essentially from Mourelatos' (1970) reading since the subject 'what we talk or think about' does the same job as the first blank in Mourelatos' interpretation. A veridical interpretation without the supplement of a subject is defended by Jantzen (1976) who maintains with reference to Protagoras and Plato that the "formula like used expression *hôs estin* says that something is the case, and it says at the same time that something is true. It states a fact, and it states truth" (p. 115, my translation).

To make a long discussion short, the question is: what is Parmenides talking about? Is the 'way of truth' (i) an assertion of being or existence (which is further elaborated in fragment 8) and the negation of the opposite? This interpretation calls for an existential reading of 'is', either without supplementing a subject (Tarán, 1965), or taking 'being' as the subject (Diels, 1987). Or is 'the way of truth' (ii) an instruction *what* we ought to talk or think about, and respectively, what we cannot talk or think about. This reading takes 'what we can talk or think about' as subject with an existential reading of 'is'. Or is 'the way of truth' (iii) an instruction *how* we ought to talk or think, and respectively, how we ought not to talk or think, i.e., an instruction concerning syntax and logic. This solution is linked to a predicative reading of 'is' (Mourelatos, 1970, and Austin, 1986). Or is 'the way of truth' (iv) an assertion of what is the case? This option is obviously based on a veridical reading of 'is' (Kahn, 1968, and Jantzen, 1976). Our

choice is the second interpretation (ii), an existential interpretation of 'is' taking 'what we think and talk about' to be the subject. The most compelling reason for an existential reading of 'is' is Parmenides' identification of 'what-is-not' with 'nothing' in fragment 6, 1-2; this makes sense only on an existential interpretation. Taking 'what we think and talk about as subject is more informative than taking 'being' or 'existence' as subject, as in the first interpretation (i), on which Parmenides' claim merely affirms existence or being (Tarán's version avoids the tautology only formally). In our interpretation, Parmenides is saying that we cannot talk or think about what does not exist. Even though Austin (1986) makes a good case for the third option (iii), a predicative reading of 'is', according to which Parmenides gives instruction about the syntax and logic of negation,[15] the second option (ii) has the advantage of simplicity. And finally, on the fourth version (iv), the veridical reading, Parmenides' point is not very interesting. Given (2.1) is stated as the way of truth, it merely states again that [it] is true.

In our interpretation, the way of truth can now be paraphrased thus:

(2.3) what we talk or think about exists

and

[15] Austin argues that in addition to an ontology, Parmenides gives regulations concerning correct speech (and thought), prescribing statements of the form 'x is F' and prohibiting statements of the form 'x is not F'; the first is informative about x while the second says nothing about x. The apparent negative statements in fragment 8 (containing terms such as 'immovable', 'without beginning', etc.) are statements of the form 'x is F' since there is a difference between 'x is not F' and 'x is not-F'; the former is a negative statement while the latter attributes a negative predicate. Austin holds that Parmenides' use of *ouk estin* (is not) is not self-referentially inconsistent, but this form is used modally.

(2.4) it is not possible that what we talk or think about does not exist.

'What we talk or think about' could be any given object of thought or speech, e.g., if *x* is any given object of thought or speech, *x* exists. This gives an answer to the question: What are the objects of thought and speech? This question is implicit in the preceding line where the goddess announced that she will tell "what routes of inquiry alone there are for thinking," i.e., what is available for inquiry and thought. The answer in (2.3) states that the object of thought is something that exists, and (2.4) makes the stronger modal claim that it is impossible to talk or speak about what does not exist; this implies that what is an object of thought *must* exist. Hence, existing objects are the exclusive candidates as objects of thought and speech. The way of truth only allows us to think or say of an object of thought, *x*, that *x* exists, and it is impossible to think or say that *x* does not exist.[16]

This is one route; but initially 'routes of inquiry' were announced to be told, i.e., more than one. In fragment 2, two routes are presented as a mutually exclusive disjunction of the form 'either P or not-P', or more accurately 'either (P and Q) or (not-P and not-Q)', taking into account that each of the disjuncts consists of a conjunction.

The first route is the one that should be pursued, it is the path of truth. The second states just the opposite of the first, and this route is declared as false and unintelligible.

[16] This is also supported by fragment 8,8-9 and 8,34; we will return to this later in section 2.6 (p. 40 ff.).

Like the first route, the second route consists of the conjunction of two statements, namely the two that-clauses in fragment 2,5:

(2.5) [it] is not

and

(2.6) it is necessary that [it] is not.

Following the interpretation for (2.1) and (2.2), (2.5) holds that what we think or talk about does not exist. Thus (2.5) is the negation of (2.1), more obviously in the sparsely phrased Greek.[17]

Gallop renders (2.6) as "*[it] needs must not be,*" but this translation is not very clear.[18] The reading given for (2.6) above is more plausible since this version also emphasizes the modal contrast between (2.2) and (2.6): while (2.2) states an impossibility, (2.6) states a necessity, i.e., on the given interpretation (2.2) states the *impossibility* that what we talk or think about does not exist, and (2.6) states the *necessity* that what we talk or think about does not exist. Just as (2.5) is the contradictory of (2.1),

[17] There is a notable problem to understand and translate (2.2) and (2.5). The Greek phrase *hôs ouk estin* in (2.2) is rendered as "that it cannot " in Gallop's translation; the expression *ouk estin* is commonly used in the sense of 'is not possible', as Gallop understood it. The problem is that the exact same phrase *hôs ouk estin* is used in (2.5) where it is translated as 'that [it] is not'. So it can be argued that the translation is inconsistent. The difference is that *hôs ouk estin* in (2.2) is complemented by *mê einai* ('is not') whereas *hôs ouk estin* in (2.5) constitutes the entire subclause. The translation in (2.2) as 'is not possible' makes sense if compared to the contrary stated in (2.6).

[18] The Greek *chreôn esti* can be used as meaning "it is necessary" and there is no reason not to read it in this sense here. Austin translates (2.6) as "it is right for it not to be", Kirk/Raven (1983): "it is needful that [it] not be."

(2.6) is the contradictory of (2.2). This second route is described as ‘ wholly unlearnable’, i.e., it is not even intelligible.

The last two couplets of fragment 2 give the reason why the non-existent cannot be an object of thought or speech, and it is worth repeating them here:

Fragment 2, 7-8:

For you could not recognize what-is-not (for that is not feasible),

Nor could you point it out.

Here I altered Gallop’s translation by using the verb ‘recognize’ instead of ‘know’ (Gallop, Tarán, Kirk/Raven, Austin and others use ‘know’) for the Greek form of ‘*gignôskein*’. While the Greek verb can mean ‘to know’, it is often used in the sense of ‘recognize’ since it has the connotation of being familiar or acquainted with, as opposed to conceptual knowledge.[19] We find the term ‘recognize’ more suitable because Parmenides’ point is that if an object does not exist, there is no object we could possibly be familiar or acquainted with, and neither could one point out or show an object that does not exist. Thus, if we can neither recognize nor point to an object (since no such object exists), we cannot talk or think about it either. This is why the second route is not only deemed as false, but as “wholly unlearnable.”

[19] Cf. H.G. Liddell and R. Scott: *Greek-English Lexicon*, with revised supplement, Oxford, 9th edition (1996).

Having thus ruled out one of the two routes that were presented as alternative choices, the goddess finally makes clear which route ought to be taken at the beginning of fragment 6 (which led to our interpretation of the subject for fragment 2):

Fragment 6,1-2:

It must be that what is there for speaking and thinking of *is*; for [it] is there to be,

Whereas nothing is not; that is what I bid you consider,

…

The first line affirms the 'route of truth', i.e., that we must speak or think about what exists; but here it is strengthened as a modal proposition: it must be, or it is necessary[20] that what we speak or think about exists. The corresponding modal statement of the route of truth had claimed that it is impossible to think or speak of what does not exist. The support for this claim holds that "[it] is there to be," what exists is accessible or available for thought and speech; what does not exist, on the other hand, is nothing.[21] This gives a reason for the claim in fragment 2. In fragment 2 Parmenides had claimed that what-is-not cannot be recognized or pointed out: if it is utter nothing, it has no properties that can be recognized or pointed out. 'What-is-not' is equaled with nothing, hence to speak or think about what-is-not would be speaking or thinking about nothing, which is impossible

[20] The Greek impersonal expression *chrê* means 'it must be' or 'it is necessary'. Most translations have 'it is necessary' or 'necessarily' (Burnet, Diels/Kranz, Kirk/Raven,Tarán).

[21] 6,1-2 "*esti gar einai, mêden d' ouk* estin" literally says: "for [it] is is, but nothing is not." Kirk/Raven: "…; for it is there for being, but nothing is not." Tarán: "…; for there is Being, but nothing is not." Austin: "…. For it can be, whereas nothing cannot."

since that is not even speaking or thinking (this is a point Plato makes[22]). Thus, what exists is the only possible object of thought or speech.

2.4 Human Error

Line 4 of fragment 6 introduces yet another third route which is rejected:[23]

Fragment 6,4-9:

For <I restrain> you from that first route of inquiry,
And then also from this one, on which mortals knowing nothing
Wander, two-headed; for helplessness in their
Breasts guides their distracted mind; and they are carried
Deaf and blind alike, dazed, uncritical tribes,
By whom being and not-being have been thought both the same
And not the same; and the path of all is backward-turning.

This route holds that being and not-being are both the same and not the same. This position is a combination of the first route (2.1) '[it] is' and the second route (2.5) '[it] is not'. This view is ascribed to mortals who are described in rather unflattering terms as

[22] Theaetetus 188e-189; cf. chapter 3.

[23] A metrical gap in line 3 shows that something is missing, presumably the verb. Gallop follows Diels/ Kranz (1951) who supplemented <*eirgô*> ('I restrain'); 'the first route' must then be the one here discussed as 'second route', the route that is rejected. Alternatively, Cordero (1984) suggests to supplement a verb meaning 'you shall begin', and the 'first route' is then the route affirmed.

ignorant "uncritical tribes." The way this third route is stated strongly reminds us of Heracleitean philosophy in word and content, e.g., Heracleitus' fragment B 49a: "In the same rivers we step and we don't step and we are and we are not."[24] However, as Stokes (1971, pp. 109-27; 300-8) and others have argued, Parmenides' point is not merely a polemic attack against Heracleitus by restating his thesis, but the rejection of the common belief in change and motion, generation and perishing. While Heracleitus might well be included in the 'uncritical tribes', the aim of these lines is to render all belief in change, motion, etc., ad absurdum. Change, motion, coming into being, perishing, all constitute a combination of being and not-being as they attribute being and not-being to the same thing with respect to properties (in the case of change), location (in the case of motion) and existence (in the case of generation and perishing). Since for Parmenides existence is bound to the 'now', i.e., the present time,[25] the contraries of being and not-being both apply to the same object at the same time, and this violates what later came to be known as the law of contradiction.[26] A connection between the contrast of being and not-being and change, motion, generation and perishing, is also presented in fragment 8, 38-41:

Fragment 8,38-41:

…wherefore it has been named all things
That mortals have established, trusting them to be true,
To come-to-be and to perish, to be and not to be,

[24] Heracleitus, fragment B 49a (Diels/Kranz); cf. fr. 12 and C 1 (5) (Diels/Kranz): "All is the same and not the same."

[25] Fragment 8,5-8.

[26] Cf. Aristotle, De Interpretatione, 4 (17a2 ff) and Metaphysics, B (996b26-30).

And to shift place and to exchange bright color.

At the end of the proem (fragment 1,28-30) the goddess had announced that she will reveal the truth as well as "beliefs of mortals, in which there is no true trust." Among these false human beliefs we can now count change, motion, generation and perishing (along with the contraries that are part of the 'Way of Seeming,' i.e., fragments 9-19, which will not be discussed here). Humans have false trust in things as they appear and take these appearances "to have genuine existence, permeating all things completely" (fragment 1,30). Even though people do not typically entertain the paradoxical belief that things are and are not, or that things that exist do not exist, they commonly rely on sensation and draw the conclusion from the constant flux of different sense impressions that things are in constant change and motion:

Fragment 7:

> For never shall this prevail, that things that are not *are*;
> But do you restrain your thought from this route of inquiry,
> Nor let habit force you, along this route of much-experience,
> To ply an aimless eye and ringing ear
> And tongue; but judge by reasoning the very contentious disproof
> That has been uttered by me.

It is not clear if Parmenides dismisses sense perception per se as unreliable, but it is clear that we should not draw conclusions based on our habitual reliance on blurry and

confusing sense impressions. Instead, we should "judge by reasoning (*logos*) the very contentious disproof" of the goddess. This disproof consisted in analyzing the belief in change, motion, generation and perishing as equivalent to the belief that an object both is and is not, thus constituting a contradictory proposition. Moreover, since the first two routes, namely (2.1) "[it] is" and (2.5) "[it] is not," were presented as opposites, hence mutually exclusive propositions, this combination cannot be tenable. This excludes the third way that states that the object of thought and speech both exists and does not exist, and thus by way of elimination the goddess reaches her conclusion:

Fragment 8,1-2:

… A single story of a route still

Is left: that [*it*] *is*; …

2.5 Parmenides' Cosmology: What-Is

Now that it has been decided that only what-is can be the object of thought or speech, the goddess says that there are many "signs" on this route and provides a list of characterizing features. The subject of these features is 'what-is' (*to eon*):[27]

Fragment 8,2-49

…; on this [route] are signs

Very numerous: that what-is is ungenerated and imperishable;

[27] 'What-is' (*to eon*) occurs in fragment 8,3; 8,19; 8,32; 8,35; 8,37.

Whole, single-limbed, steadfast, and complete;
Nor was [it]once, nor will [it] be, since [it] is, now, all together,
One, continuous; for what coming-to-be of it will you seek?
In what way, whence, did [it] grow? Neither from what-is-not shall I allow
You to say or think; for it is not to be said or thought
That [*it*] *is not*. And what need could have impelled it to grow
Later or sooner, if it began from nothing?
Thus [it] must either be completely or not at all.
Nor will the strength of trust ever allow anything to come-to-be from what-is
Besides it; therefore neither [its] coming-to-be
Nor [its] perishing has Justice allowed, relaxing her shackles,
But she holds [it] fast; the decision about these matters depends on this:
Is [*it*] *or is* [*it*] *not*? But it has been decided, as is necessary,
To let go the one as unthinkable, unnameable (for it is no true
Route), but to allow the other, so that it is, and is true.
And how could what-is be in the future; and how could [it] come-to-be?
For if [it] came-to-be, [it] is not, nor [is it] if at some time [it] is going to be.
Thus, coming-to-be is extinguished and perishing not to be heard of.
Nor is [it] divisible, since [it] all alike *is*;
Nor is [it] somewhat more here, which would keep it from holding together,
Nor is [it] somewhat less, but [it] is all full of what-is.
Therefore [it] is all continuous; for what-is is in contact with what-is.

Moreover, changeless in the limits of great chains

[It] is un-beginning and unceasing, since coming-to-be and perishing

Have been driven far off, and true trust has thrust them out.

Remaining the same and in the same, [it] lies by itself

And remains thus firmly in place; for strong Necessity

Holds [it] fast in the chains of a limit, which fences it about.

Wherefore it is not right for what-is to be incomplete;

For [it] is not lacking; but if [it] were, [it] would lack everything.

The same is thinking and the thought that [*it*] *is*; *[28]

For not without what-is, on which [it] depends, having been declared,

Will you find thinking; for nothing else <either> is or will be

Besides what-is, since it was just this that Fate did shackle

To be whole and changeless; wherefore it has been named all things

That mortals have established, trusting them to be true,

To come-to-be and to perish, and be and not to be,

And to shift place and to exchange bright colour.

Since, then, there is a furthest limit, [it] is completed,

From every direction like the bulk of a well rounded sphere,

Everywhere form the centre equally matched; for [it] must not be any larger

Or any smaller here or there;

[28] This line is given in my own translation. Gallop: "The same thing is for thinking and [is] that there is thought."

For neither is there what-is-not, which could stop it from reaching
[Its] like; nor is there a way in which what-is could be
More here and less there, since [it] all inviolably *is*;
For equal to itself from every direction, [it] lies uniformly within limits.

The first few couplets (3-6) give a list of properties and the remainder of the fragment (6-33) provides supporting reasons for the subject having these features. The subject is said to be one, whole, continuous, single-limbed (of a single kind), complete, steadfast; it is denied past and future, and it is ungenerated and imperishable.

2.5.1 The Finite One

As indicated above, the subject of the description in this fragment is what-is (*to eon*), and since the subject is described as being 'one' and 'whole' it can only be that Parmenides is talking about reality as a whole, the universe that is "full of what-is" (8,24), and it is a densely filled universe as "what-is is in contact with what-is" (8,25), thus not permitting of any void between. A similar claim is made in fragment 4: "For you shall not cut off what-is from holding fast to what-is" (4,2). The subject is finite as it is said to be within limits, compared to a uniform well-rounded sphere (fragment 8,38-49). Traditional interpretation takes Parmenides' sphere as a spatial sphere and Sedley (1999) convincingly argues that not only the language suggests a spatial reading but a merely

metaphorical interpretation leaves Parmenides without substantial argument since no plausible metaphorical interpretation of "larger and "smaller" (in fragment 8,44-45) can be given. Moreover, "[it] is all full of what-is" (fragment 8,24) is more in accord with a spatial reading. The spherical shape of the subject explains a number of other features attributed to the subject. First and most importantly, it preserves the monism – the subject is one and whole. Second, it is uniform, equal to all sides, complete, and finite. And third, according to Sedley (1999), "…provided that Parmenides' sphere is imagined from inside, like the sphere of our phenomenal world, and not from outside, like a football, the need for empty space beyond need not be forced upon him" (p. 118).

The subject's finiteness is not just coincidental, but necessary ("for strong Necessity/Holds [it] fast in the chains of a limit," fragment 8,30-31). If not finite, the subject would not be complete, and if not complete, it would be lacking. But it cannot be allowed to be lacking, since then there would be a place where it *is not*. The imagery given for the boundary are "chains" and Justice does not "relax her shackles," indicating that it is a strong boundary that holds the mass of the sphere tight together, and since the sphere is densely filled, there is no room for motion – it "remains firmly in place" (fragment 8,30).

The Parmenidean cosmos can thus be imagined like the mass of a dense ball, chock full of being, so to speak – but what does it consist of? Parmenides' answer is that it is full of 'what-is'. Thus, all there is within the sphere has been boiled down to one

fundamental feature, namely that it *is*. On our existential interpretation this means that the sphere is full of existents, and according to Parmenides, existence does not allow of any degrees – either a thing exists or it does not, and one thing does not exist more than another ("…nor is there a way in which what-is could be / More here and less there, since [it] all inviolably *is*," fragment 8, 47-8, and "[it] all alike *is*," fragment 8,22). If '*is*' (or '*exists*' on the existential interpretation) uniformly applies to the entire body that makes up the sphere and all its parts, the subject is 'single-limbed', i.e., of one kind. Given that there are no gaps, it is continuous and since each of the parts uniformly *is,* no division can be made among these parts. Moreover, the claim that the subject is not "more here and less there" indicates that it cannot be divided as there is no part that has a property F, whereas another part is lacking F. Hence, the subject is not divisible.

As the goddess had shown in her previous argument that was discussed in chapter 2.3 and 2.4 above, the '*is*' does not allow of any alternatives, and the goddess reminds the reader of the earlier discussion in fragment 8,15-18 and reaffirms the route of truth: "… the decision about these matters depends on this: / *Is* [*it*] *or is* [*it*] *not*? But it has been decided, as is necessary, / To let go the one as unthinkable, unnameable (for it is no true / Route), but to allow the other, so that it is, and is true." Since what-is *is* as a whole, namely the whole sphere, and each of its parts *is*, the whole is indistinguishable from its

parts; this preserves the monism. Simply put, Parmenides holds that all there is, is, which on an existential reading means: all there is, exists.[29]

2.5.2 'Now'

The subject is denied past and future, rather it is said to be 'now'. This remark is controversial.[30] It could either mean that the subject is atemporal or timeless, as Owen (1966) holds, or that the subject is denied the *passage* of time, as Sedley (1999) maintains. It seems to us that the use of the term 'now' (*nyn*) indicates a temporal aspect, but one that is exclusive. This is an issue in the philosophy of time; presentism is known as the view that only the present exists, whereas neither past nor future exist, as opposed to eternalism, which holds that past, present, and future eternally exist, or the view, known as four dimensionalism, that time (as well as space) is a continuum. Moreover, it is a controversial issue whether there can be time without passage. A discussion of this, however, would take us too far afield.[31] It is obvious, though, that Parmenides defends presentism, and that he excludes the passage of time. What is, or what exists, is confined

[29] Parmenides' essential ontological claim that all there is, is, reminds us of Quine (1953); Quine says: "A curious thing about the ontological problem is its simplicity. It can be put in three Anglo-Saxon monosyllables: 'What is there?' It can be answered, moreover, in a word – 'Everything' – and everyone will accept this answer as true. However, this is merely to say that there is what there is. There remains room for disagreement over cases; and so the issue has stayed alive down the centuries" (p. 1).

[30] For a discussion see Fränkel (1930), Tarán (1965), Guthrie (1965), Kahn (1968), Owen (1966), Stokes (1971).

[31] For an overview of the different positions in the philosophy of time see Bourne (2007).

to the 'now', the present instance of time. This eliminates past and future, it eliminates what *was* and what *will be*, leaving only what *is*. What *was* cannot be said that it *is*, and what *will be* cannot be said that it *is* either. Past and future are thus dismissed since what *was* is not any more, it is not now, and what *will be* is not yet. For example, the desk in front of me exists right now, whereas the desk a minute ago does not exist any more, and the desk that will be here in a minute does not yet exist. Both, past and future would allow for the subject to be said that it *is not*, which is not permitted.

The temporal aspect, which does not allow for time passing, rules out any change and motion.[32] Change and motion, Parmenides believes, can only be perceived through the passage of time, but if the passage of time is halted, all change and motion ceases. Because Parmenides rejects the concepts of change and motion, he is considered the paradigm adversary of Heracleitus who holds that things are in a state of constant change. The difference between the two ontological frameworks rests on the aspect of time. Figuratively speaking, Heracleitus holds a video camera to reality, while Parmenides takes a snapshot of reality. Just as objects in a still photograph do not change or move, so motion and change are not pertinent within Parmenides' ontology. Change and motion were already dismissed in fragments 6 and 7 where they were analyzed as the contradictory combination of *is* and *is not*. Excluding the passing of time provides an independent argument against change and motion. Confining 'what-is' to the now, rules

[32] Cf. Zeno's paradoxes that render plurality, motion, and change as an illusion (in Diels and Kranz, 1951-2, p. 255-258).

out the temporal past and the temporal future, and the exclusion of past and future also prevents generation and perishing, but a separate argument is given against generation and perishing.

2.5.3 Ungenerated and Imperishable

The argument against the generation of 'what-is' starts with two questions in fragment 8,6-7: "…for what coming-to-be of it will you seek? In what way, whence, did [it] grow?" If the subject is generated, then it must be generated from something. Two reasons are given why what-is-not cannot be the origin of its generation. First, it would violate the earlier conclusion that it is impossible to speak or think of what-is-not. Thus, what-is-not cannot be said or thought to be the origin. Second, there is no sufficient reason why anything could be generated from what-is-not rather later than sooner, i.e., there is no cause or motivation that could have brought about the generation from what-is-not. Besides, any generation would violate the subject's confinement to the 'now'. The temporal constraint that excludes the passing of time does not even permit gradual or partial generation. Hence Parmenides draws the conclusion, "thus [it] must either be completely or not at all" (fragment 8,11).[33]

[33] Cf. fragment 8,33: "For [it] is not lacking; but if [it] were, [it] would lack everything."

The alternative is that the subject, what-is, is generated from what-is. This implies that there is another thing called 'what-is' in addition and distinguishable from the one that was generated. But "the strength of trust" does not "…ever allow anything to come-to-be from what-is / Besides it" (8,12-13). The argument is not concluded until 8,36, after it has been shown that what-is is one homogenous and continuous sphere; this monism precludes that there is yet another 'what-is'. Anything that *is* would be identical to the subject that *is*. Thus 8,29 states "Remaining the same and in the same, [it] lies by itself." Hence there could not be any other what-is besides the subject from which the subject could be generated: "…for nothing else <either> is or will be / Besides what-is, since it was just this that Fate did shackle / To be whole and changeless."

The same reasons that are effective against generation can also be used against perishing, and no explicit argument is given against perishing. If past and future are eliminated, the subject could not cease to be at some time in the future. Moreover, perishing would entail that the subject *is not,* but that is impossible. Any destruction of the subject would allow that it changes from *is* into *is not*, but change is not permitted. And finally, since the subject is said to be "either completely or not at all" (fragment 8,11), any partial destruction or perishing is ruled out as well.

2.5.4 What Is What-Is?

Traditionally the subject of the characterization in fragment 8, i.e., 'what-is', has been identified with reality. Thus Kirk et al. (1983) hold that "the upshot of Parmenides' subsequent argument [8,5-21] for these requirements [in 8,1-4] is a form of monism: it certainly transpires that everything there is must have one and the same character; and it is doubtful whether in fact anything could have that character except reality as a whole" (p. 249, parentheses added). Similarly, the description in fragment 8 has been taken to be a definition of 'being' or 'existence' (e.g., by Diels, 1897, and Tarán, 1965).

But what is the Parmenidean 'being' or 'reality'? Given that the subject is spatial, hence extended, we can speculate that Parmenides was a materialist and 'what-is' is to be understood as material existence, and since change, motion, and generation are excluded, 'what-is' can only be identified with some basic and inert matter. The universe, the sphere, is thus densely filled with this basic matter, which is all there is, and as it is confined to the 'now', all there is, is what exists 'now', i.e., in the present temporal instant. Sensation, on Parmenides' view, is then erroneous since it is occupied with the different ways this basic matter appears in material objects. Humans are unable to focus on the 'now' and perceive objects over time as they change and move. Alternatively, we can speculate that the Parmenidean reality is akin to a Platonic 'form', thus not being subject to change, motion, and generation, and sensation is not a suitable means of apprehending it, as sensation is occupied only with things as they appear. On this view,

Parmenides' sphere is metaphorical rather than spatial. Both interpretations remain speculative. Our existential interpretation of 'is' is more compatible with the first interpretation.

Parmenides stripped the subject, 'what-is', of all attributes, leaving only that it *is*.[34] If all objects are reduced in this way, i.e., if every object is deprived of all properties and remains only as essential 'being' or 'what-is', no object is distinguishable from any other. And since 'is' does not allow of any degrees, no parts can be distinguished, all that remains is an undistinguishable mass of 'what-is'. This reduction to the essential 'what-is' of the subject brings to mind the Cartesian reduction; Descartes thought he had the indubitable and self-evident truth caught in the *res cogitans* (thinking thing). Parmenides reduces the subject to a mere *res ens* (a thing that is): "[It] is." Despite the differences in motivation and result between Descartes' *res cogitans* and Parmenides' *res ens*, they have one thing in common: they both do not permit the opposite. For Descartes, "the statement "I am, I exist," every time uttered by me or conceived in my mind, is necessarily true,"[35] and since Descartes considers this a necessary truth, the statement "I do not exist" cannot possibly be true, it cannot be thought or said without contradiction. Likewise, for Parmenides, "[it] is" is necessarily true, and the opposite, "[it] is not" cannot possibly be true and cannot even be thought or said.

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[34] For our purpose, we cannot pursue the question whether or not 'is' constitutes a property for Parmenides.

[35] Descartes, Second Meditation, p. 44.

2.6 The Object of Thought

To recap, Parmenides not only holds that investigating what-is-not (i.e., on our interpretation, the non-existent) is an erroneous enterprise, but he even maintains that it is entirely unintelligible. If *a* is an object of thought or speech, *a* must exist and we can only think or say that *a* exists. Accordingly, what-is-not (what does not exist) cannot possibly be an object of thought or speech, and it cannot be said or thought that *a* does not exist (fragment 2 and fragment 8,8-9). The reason for the impossibility to think or talk about non-existents is that it is impossible to point out or be acquainted with non-existents given that there is no object to be acquainted with (fragment 2, 6-8). After all, what-is-not, or what does not exist, is nothing (fragment 6,2).

Fragment 3 (which consists only of one incomplete line) provides a further reason for the necessary connection between thought and an existing object:

Fragment 3:

> …because the same thing is there for thinking and for being.

This is Gallop's translation; most interpreters have similar renderings of this somewhat peculiar line.[36] Literally, the incomplete verse says " …because to think and to be is the same."[37] The reticent phrasing of this line raises the question of what is said to be the

[36] Tarán (1965): "for the same thing can be thought and can exist;" Barnes (1979): "for it is the same thing that can be thought and that can be;" Kirk et al. (1983): "for the same thing can be thought as can be."

[37] Cf. Vlastos (1953): "Thinking and Being are the same thing."

same. In consideration of the theme put forth in fragment 2, it is highly unlikely that Parmenides merely wants to affirm the existence of the mental act of thinking, i.e., the existence of the psychological process. So 'thinking' is best taken as meaning the object or content of thought (which is suggested by the translation of Gallop). Fragment 3 could then be paraphrased: what we think of is the same as what-is. We can also exclude that Parmenides wants to affirm the existence of mental objects or mental representations, since the warning to stay away from investigating the non-existent would not be an issue if all mental objects were considered existent. The most plausible way to read fragment 3 is that Parmenides maintains that the object of thought is the existing object itself, the referent. Hence, thought requires the existence of the object referred to. This is in accord with the claim that it is impossible to think or speak about a non-existent: if thought requires an existing referent that is the object of that thought, a non-existent would deprive the thought of a referent, hence make the thought impossible given there is no object that the thought is about. According to Parmenides' ontological account, all there is, exists, so nothing other than what-is (what exists) is available as an object of thought.

A similar claim is made in fragment 8, 35-36:

> The same is thinking and the thought that [*it*] *is*; *
> 35 For not without what-is, on which [it] depends, having been declared,
> Will you find thinking; …

The last two couplets (lines 35-36) confirm that thinking requires an existing object as referent, that we cannot think without an existing object that is the object of that thought.

There are different translations[38] for the first verse, fragment 8,34. According to one line of interpretation (Barnes, 1979, Kirk et al., 1983, Diels/Kranz, 1951-2, Austin, 1986) the claim in 8,34 affirms the identity of the object of thought and the referent. On the other reading (the one given here, as well as Tarán, 1965, Kirk et al.,1957) thinking of something is the same as the thought that the object we think of exists. Thus, thinking of an object entails the proposition that *it* [the object of thought] exists. This is the proposition (2.1) that was stated as the way of truth in fragment 2,3. Reference in thought entails that the referent (the object of that thought) exists – it entails the proposition (2.1); the thought that an object exists does not add anything new to the thought of that object. The second part (line 35) provides a reason: without something existing – as an object of thought – there is no thinking. Reference then implies existence, and that is so because without an existing object (as referent) there is no thought. Either line of interpretation amounts to this claim: In order to think of an object, there must be, or exist, this object.

[38] Differences in translation are due to different interpretations of the Greek term '*houneken'*. (i)'*Houneken'* (from *'hou heneken*') can indicate an efficient cause or logical reason in the sense of 'because of', 'why'; thus Barnes (1979): "The thing that can be thought and that for the sake of which the thought exists is the same." Kirk et al. (1983): "The same thing is there to be thought and why there is thought;" or it could indicate a final cause – thus Diels/Kranz (1951) translate: "Denken und des Gedankens Ziel sind eins" (thinking and the aim of thinking are one); Austin (1986): " The same thing is for thinking and is also that for the sake of which there is thought." (ii) After expressions of saying and thinking '*houneken'* can mean "that". This interpretation is reflected in this translation and Tarán (1965): "It is the same to think and the thought that [the object of thought] exists;" Kirk/Raven (1957): "what can be thought is only the thought that it is," and Gallop: "The same thing is for thinking and [is] that there is thought."

It is, however, not so clear what kind of existence the object of thought is supposed to entertain, especially in view of fragment 4,1-2:

Fragment 4, 1-2:

Look how things that are absent are firmly present to the mind; *[39]

For you shall not cut off what-is from holding fast to what-is.

What could be absent (or far off, on Gallop's reading) that is present to the mind? In fragment 7 sense experience was associated with human error and Parmenides rejected sense experience in favor of reason (*logos*). So it is possible that what 'is absent' means what is not accessible for sense experience and can only be grasped by the mind. One might think of abstract objects here, but that is not compatible with Parmenides' space-time account of existence since abstract objects are typically not in space-time. Objects in space-time, on the other hand, are potentially subject to sense experience. It is still plausible that Parmenides does not rule out that existent objects are potentially perceivable, but that a thing's existence, unlike color or sound, cannot be apprehended by sensation, but is only accessible by reasoning.

As we have seen, Parmenides maintains that there cannot be any non-existents; what-is-not is nothing. Moreover, he claims that it is impossible to think or talk about the

[39] This translation differs from Gallop, who translates: "Look upon things which, though far off, are yet firmly present to the mind; / For you shall not cut off what-is from holding fast to what-is;" Tarán (1965): "Behold things which, though absent, are nevertheless firmly present to the mind. For it cannot cut off Being from holding fast to Being;" Austin (1986): "Behold alike things absent from the mind and things present to it firmly. For you will not cut what-is off from gripping what-is."

non-existent, and further, that we cannot think or express of a thing that it does not exist, i.e., we cannot make negative existence claims. First, let us return to Parmenides' cardinal principle that thought or talk about the non-existent is impossible. This claim rests on the premise that the object of thought or speech is the referent, and if there is no referent, there cannot be a thought; thought about an object entails that the object exists. But how can Parmenides account for false beliefs about non-existents, the erroneous beliefs that he ascribes to "mortals knowing nothing" in fragment 6? If thought about the non-existent is strictly impossible, then we cannot even have false beliefs or thoughts about the non-existent.

One option is to hold that Parmenides uses the term 'thinking' (*noein*) in the sense of 'knowing' or 'apprehending the truth'; this interpretation is defended by Kahn (1968-9).[40] According to this analysis Parmenides maintains that *true* thought is necessarily about what exists. This leaves at least the possibility of false beliefs, rendering all belief about non-existents as false and belonging to human error. The problem, however, with this interpretation of '*noein*' as 'knowing' is that 'thinking' (*noein*) is mentioned together with expressions of 'saying';[41] and while '*noein*' can have the connotation of 'knowing', the terms for 'saying' have no such connotation. Furthermore, the term '*noein*' is used for false human beliefs in fragment 6,8, where it could not be meant in the sense of 'knowing'.

[40] For a discussion of '*noein*' in Parmenides, see von Fritz (1974).

[41] In fragment 6,1 and fragment 8,8 twice.

Another solution to account for human error is presented in fragment 8,38-41, which occurs in the context after the contention that without what-is there cannot be any thinking (fragment 8,35-36):

Fragment 8,38-41:

…,wherefore it has been named all things
That mortals have established, trusting them to be true,
To come-to-be and to perish, and be and not to be,
And to shift place and to exchange bright colour.

Thus humans invented names for things, but these names are at least misleading. But are they empty names, names and terms that have no referent, names that name nothing? It is clear that Parmenides does not have in mind fictional objects such as Pegasus or centaurs, but expressly considers change, motion, generation, and not-being as human illusions. Mortals are also said to be 'trusting them to be true' – humans mistakenly take these names to name genuine things. This raises some questions. Is Parmenides a skeptic concerning language by holding that all names are just names and language cannot capture what-is? If humans use these names, they have thoughts containing them and express these thoughts in speech. Given that Parmenides claims that it is *impossible* to think or talk about the non-existent, how can names be empty and name nothing? After all, it is thought and talk using empty names. Here we should be reminded that all that has been said after the proem so far, from fragment 2 through fragment 8,49, is under the headline 'The Way of Truth'; the goddess concludes the Way of Truth in fragment 8,50 by saying:

Here I stop my trustworthy speech to you and thought
About truth; from here onwards learn mortal beliefs.

So the impossibility to think or talk about the non-existent can pertain to the Way of Truth. Within the Way of Truth, then, there cannot be thought or speech about the non-existent. In other words, thought or speech about the non-existent cannot be true. Even so, that does not make thought or speech about the non-existent impossible, such thought would just not hold true.

The 'Way of Seeming', fragments 9 through 19, gives an account of human beliefs, which were declared as unreliable. There are two related problems with the opinions of mortals, one is the belief in the dichotomy of contraries, and the other is that humans invent names. The notions of change, motion, and generation have already been dismissed (in fragment 6, 4-9 and fragment 8,38-41) because they merge the contraries of being and not-being. The contrary between night and day, light and darkness, also belongs to the Way of Seeming:

Fragment 9:

But since all things have been named light and night,
And these [have been applied] according to their powers to these things and to those,
All is full of light and obscure night together,
Of both equally, since for neither [is it the case that] nothing shares in them.

The opposites of light and darkness are linked with other opposites ("all things have been named light and day), and they appear as opposites, but light and darkness are both present simultaneously, only they are perceived and named as mutually exclusive opposites by humans. Thus, human error can consist in perceiving what-is not as it *is*, but as it *appears*, and accordingly, names are given to these appearances, not to what-is. This would at least preserve the claim that it is impossible to talk or think about what-is-not, since then even erroneous thought or speech is about what-is.

2.7 The Puzzle

Parmenides presents a puzzle: Based on the ontological claim that all there is, is (or exists), he claims that it is impossible to think or talk about what-is-not, since if there is no such thing that is not (or does not exist), we would not be thinking or talking about anything. At the same time, he admits of human error. But how does human error come about, if all we can talk or think of is or exists? If we invent empty names that name nothing but illusions, such as change and motion, we would then be talking or thinking about nothing or the non-existent using an empty name. Plato picked up on this puzzle by questioning false statements that state what-is-not, since if they state nothing, there cannot be any false statements. If we interpret Parmenides that names are not empty, but pertain to things as they appear to erroneous human perception or illusion, what are we thinking or talking about – are we thinking about what-is or an appearance or illusion? Moreover, if only statements

or thoughts about what-is or what exists can be true, then stating or thinking anything using X as an empty name or a name for an erroneous appearance, is either false or neither false nor true. If it is false, then all statements made about non-existents, including that they do not exist, are false; that excludes any true negative existence claims. If these statements are neither true nor false, that also excludes true negative existence claims. Therefore, we cannot even truly say about the non-existent that it does not exist.

Parmenides is careful not to use a negative claim such as 'what-is-not is not'. Nevertheless, the question remains: How are meaning and truth conferred in Parmenides' poem? Notwithstanding the existential interpretation, let's just take *N* to be whatever Parmenides tells us to stay away from investigating. He says something about *N*, namely, that we ought not think or talk about *N*. Hence, the poem appears to be self-referentially inconsistent. On our existential interpretation, Parmenides' identification of the object of thought and what-is indicates that the object of thought or talk is the existing object. If we use empty names in our thought or speech, how can this thought or speech be meaningful? So how can Parmenides' claims be meaningful, if *N* is an empty name? If the names of our thought or speech name appearances and illusions, how can we talk about what-is? Moreover, given that thought or talk about non-existents cannot be true, how can Parmenides' own claims about what-is-not be true?

Was Parmenides aware of this dilemma? As we indicated above, we can speculate that he was aware of the inconsistency and that is why he has the goddess make the speech.

On this assumption, the proem (fragment 1) prepares the reader for a speech from another realm, and the language of the goddess can thus be considered a metalanguage for which the prohibitions stated do not apply. The apparent self-referential inconsistencies that constitute the puzzle are then not the result of Parmenides' failure to apprehend an inherent contradiction, but the clever use of the goddess' words to convey what mortals could not convey. Notably, humans are consistently referred to as 'mortals' as opposed to the immortality of the goddess. So the goddess can talk about the non-existent and her speech is meaningful and true because she is above mortal speech and the true-false distinction. For us mortals, however, it leaves the problem of explaining thought and talk about the non-existent, how we can meaningfully think or talk about it, and if we can even truly claim that the non-existent does not exist.

Chapter 3

PLATO'S NOTION OF EIDÔLON AND EIKÔN

3.1 Introduction

Our discussion of Parmenides advocated an existential interpretation of 'what-is' and 'what-is-not'; 'what-is' was used interchangeably with 'existent' and, respectively, 'what-is-not' with 'non-existent'. This was done with the intent to make Parmenides' point more clear. Moreover, it is a linguistic convenience; while Greek philosophers routinely use forms of the participle, noun and adverb of the verb 'to be', from the English 'is' we can only get 'being', used either as participle or as noun. The noun 'existence' and the participle 'existent' are less ambiguous and the latter allows of a plural, 'existents'. Whereas the Greek 'is' can function as copula or as a complete predicate to say of an object that it is real or exists, the English 'is' cannot stand as a predicate by itself but serves only as copula. As Meinwald (1992) has shown, in the dialogue *Parmenides* Plato established a distinction between different kinds of predication; his systematic account in the *Sophist* builds on this distinction and he was well aware of the different uses of 'is'. Moreover, since for Plato forms as well as images have 'being', the term 'existence' is inappropriate. Consequently, whereas substituting 'is' with 'exists' was helpful in the discussion of Parmenides, this substitution can only

lead to confusion in a discussion about Plato. Hence, for the most part I will keep as close as possible to Plato's use of 'is', rendering the participle as 'what-is' and the negative as 'what-is-not'.

Unfortunately, Plato neither gave a specific explanation of how we can talk or think about non-existent objects nor did he explain what we term negative existence claims, i.e., statements that deny the existence of an object, such as '*a* does not exist'. But Plato's discussion in the *Sophist*, together with books 6 and 7 of the *Republic*, provide an account applicable to our concern. Since the *Sophist* encompasses a number of subjects significant for Platonic philosophy, some of which will be disregarded for the present purpose, we will first briefly sketch Plato's dialogue.

The dialogue begins with the endeavor to give a definition of the sophist. After six failed attempts, the seventh and eventually successful division marks the sophist as the creator of images (*eidôla*). The art of image making (*mimetikê* or *eidôlopoiikê*) is then further divided into two kinds: the art of creating likenesses (*eikastikê*) and the art of creating appearances (*phantastikê*); this gives us two kinds of images (*eidôla*), namely likenesses, which are correct representations, and semblances, which are incorrect representations. Since Plato holds that the sophist is not much concerned with truth, he is identified as one who creates semblances, spoken images that are incorrect representations, i.e., the sophist utters falsehoods. For Plato this raises the problem of 'what-is-not' and thus the Parmenidean puzzle is introduced into the analysis of the Sophist. Plato contends that a

false statement states something that is not, but if what-is-not is nothing, then making a false statement is the same as stating or saying nothing, i.e., not making a statement at all. So unless one can explain how what-is-not *is* in some way, it is impossible to account for false statements and, a fortiori, false beliefs. It is, of course, unacceptable for Plato that there are no false statements and false beliefs. But if false statements are possible at all, a false statement must state something, so what is stated must *be* in some way. This leads to the paradox that, on the one hand, a false statement states what-is-not, and on the other hand, a false statement states something, and if it is something, it must *be* in some way. This is in contradiction to Parmenides' claim that there cannot be anything that is not. While Plato agrees with Parmenides that utter not-being cannot even be stated, he disagrees with Parmenides' identification of what-is-not with nothing (according to Plato's interpretation of Parmenides). On a preliminary solution, Plato holds that what is stated is an *eidôlon* – an image or representation, and as such it has 'being'. The notion of *eidôlon* is dropped for the subsequent discussion, but it is picked up at the end of the dialogue.

Since 'not-being' is obscure, Plato decides to first investigate what is meant by 'being', presuming that any elucidation of the notion of being will help to clarify not-being. So he surveys a number of different ontological accounts of 'being' by previous and contemporary philosophers, which fail to provide a satisfactory definition of 'being'. But Plato comes up with a working characterization for 'being'. Thus, 'being' can be understood as '*dynamis*' – any power to produce change or to be affected (247e). Plato introduces the principle that forms (*eidê*) or classes (*genê*) are not isolated, but they can combine (e.g., if

we say that a man is tall, we are combining the form of man and tallness). According to Plato, only this 'weaving together' (*symplokê*) of forms makes a statement possible (259e). The investigation of the relations among forms is the subject of dialectic. Plato then proceeds to analyze different kinds of predication using the verb 'is', and then turns to the problem of not-being. For Plato it is not only important that he can show that it is unproblematic to say that something is not, but also that he can establish the form when we say 'is not'. He singles out five forms or classes that are of importance above all: being, motion, rest, sameness, and difference. Since all of these forms, except being, are different from being, they can be said that they are not being. Plato concludes that not-being is not the opposite of being, only different from it. So the form or class of not-being turns out to be that of difference (257b ff). That makes it possible for Plato to say that motion *is* (insofar as it has being) and motion *is not* (insofar as it is not rest, i.e., it is different from rest). Transforming 'is not' into 'is different' allows Plato to refute Parmenides' claim that it is impossible to say that 'what-is is not'.

Plato then returns to the task to explain false statements and beliefs. He maintains that a statement always consists of a combination of subject and predicate, and the simplest type of sentence consists of a noun and a verb. He points out that without a subject, of which something is stated, a statement is not possible. He uses 'Theaetetus is sitting' as an example of a true statement and 'Theaetetus is flying' as an example of a false statement (263a ff). The true statement states about Theaetetus 'something that is as it is'. The false statement can now be analyzed as stating about Theaetetus 'something different from what is'. Thus,

the problem that triggered the discussion about not-being is solved; the difficulty at the beginning was that a false statement was supposed to state 'what-is-not', and if 'what-is-not' equals nothing, then false statements are impossible. But if 'what-is-not' means 'what is different from what is' or 'what is other than what is' then a false statement is possible, it states something.

As this obstacle is out of the way, Plato can come back to complete the definition of the Sophist. The distinction at the beginning of the dialogue had defined the Sophist as the creator of images (*eidôla*); when stating a falsehood, the Sophist does not say nothing, but he creates an appearance (*phantasma*), an incorrect presentation.

In section 3.2 we discuss Plato's formulation of the puzzle of falsehood and his account of a false statement as *eidôlon*. We argue that all statements create an image or *eidôlon,* and an *eidôlon* presents what we call a state of affairs. A true statement presents a state of affairs that does not hold, whereas a false statement creates an *eidôlon* that is a correct presentation of a state of affairs that holds, it coincides with a fact.

Since 'images' are given consideration as a special class of objects in Plato's hierarchy in the similes of the Line and Cave in books 6 and 7 of the *Republic*, section 3.3 examines the notion of image (*eikôn*) as presented in these books of the *Republic*. By extending Hamlyn's (1958) interpretation we maintain that all sensible particulars, i.e., physical objects, are presented as images, and that the image (*eikôn*) of the *Republic* thus

takes the role of an intermediary by means of which we are acquainted with an object. Furthermore, we argue that *eikones* can function as meanings for names and singular terms, thus modifying Plato's awkward theory of word meaning in the earlier dialogue *Cratylus*. As such, they can also be taken as the constituents of the *eidôlon* in the *Sophist*.

On our interpretation, the notion of *eikôn* in the *Republic* is comparable to the notion of *eidôlon* in the Sophist, insofar as both are images. Following Vlastos' (1965) interpretation, we take Plato's doctrine of 'degrees of reality' in terms of cognitive reliability or degrees of objectivity. Whereas the *eikôn* is an image of a particular, the *eidôlon* is an image of a state of affairs created by a sentence or statement. Section 3.4 discusses the ontological status of *eikones*, and we apply this status also to the *eidôla* of the Sophist. If our interpretation of *eikôn* and *eidôlon* is correct, these notions are similar to Frege's notions of sense and thought. Moreover, we maintain that Plato's notion of *eikôn* is comparable with Meinong's concept of incomplete object.

The last section 3.5 examines Plato's analysis of statements and the principle of '*symplokê*' (interweaving) of forms. The discussion also includes Plato's notion of difference that facilitates an unproblematic way to say 'is not' and his analysis of true and false statements. At the end we also examine if Plato's theory provides a way to explain talk or thought about what we call 'non-existent objects' as well as 'negative existence claims'.

3.2 False Statements as Eidôla

3.2.1 The Puzzle of Falsehood

> In the *Sophist* the problem of falsehood is introduced as a puzzle:
>
> We really are, my friend, engaged in a very difficult speculation. For this seeming and appearing without being, and this saying something, though it is not true, all this has always been and continues until now to be a very perplexing question. For how it can be said that saying or believing the false really is, and pronounce it without being involved in a contradiction, is indeed difficult (236 d9 ff.).

What is so perplexing about this problem? The puzzle rests on two assumptions, namely

(3.1) *what-is-not* equals *nothing*

and

(3.2) having a false belief is believing *what-is-not.*

These premises and the resulting paradox were formulated earlier in the *Theaetetus* (189a). If both premises hold up, then believing falsely, i.e., believing what-is-not, is the same as believing nothing, hence not having any belief at all, and that means that there is no such thing as a false belief. Since the problem has not been solved sufficiently in the *Theaetetus*,[1] Plato picks it up for closer inspection in the *Sophist*. Apparently Plato takes

[1] The solution in *Theaetus*189 c1 ff. holds that a false statement consists in interchanging in thought (*antallassesthai têi dianoiai*) what is with something else that is.

'what-is-not' as used in the same sense in both (3.1) and (3.2); in section 3.2.2 below we will take notice of this.

The first premise (3.1) is the part of the puzzle inherited from Parmenides. Plato holds that if *what-is-not* is utterly nothing, or absolute not-being (*to mêdamôs on*), it would indeed be impossible to think or even mention it, and thus apparently agrees with Parmenides. But Plato rejects premise (3.1) for two reasons. The first reason is given in (237b7ff):

> Stranger: …Tell me, we do not dare to pronuonce in any way what is absolutely not?
>
> Theaetetus: Why not?
>
> Stranger: Not just for the sake of argument or kidding, if one of the listeners, thinking seriously, needed to show where this expression 'what-is-not' is to be applied to, what, or towards what or what sort of thing do we think that he himself would show to the one asking?

If what-is-not is absolute not-being, the object of our talk or belief is lacking, there is nothing that is named by the term 'what-is-not', so a speaker could not indicate what he is talking about. Meaningful discourse about the absolute not-being would be impossible. The passage shows that Plato realized that in the absence of an object that is named by 'what-is-not', i.e., a referent for the expression, we could not meaningfully talk about what-is-not.

The second reason (237c7 ff.) why Plato seeks to discard premise (3.1) holds that as we speak or think about what-is-not, we implicitly assign attributes to the subject, such as number by using the singular or plural, and thus we speak of *something* (*ti*). Hence, if what-is-not is *something*, it cannot be absolute not-being. Thought or talk then implies that there is something (*ti*) we speak or think of. A similar point was made in *Theaetetus* (189a ff.) where thinking or believing (*doxazein*) is considered analogous to seeing, hearing, and touching. Seeing, hearing, and touching all require an object, seeing something that is (*on ti*), or hearing something that is, or touching something that is, and likewise, thinking requires an object, something that is. Though this comparison between sensation and thinking is a bit odd since the analogy does not hold in all aspects, Plato wants to point out that just as sensation needs an object that is sensed, so thinking or believing needs an object that is thought of, or as we may call it, an intentional object. But this reasoning leads immediately to another paradox. If what-is-not is something, then it must be in some way, and hence it leads to the contradictory claim that what-is-not is. So someone who talks about what-is-not runs into self-contradiction. One way to avoid this paradox would be to abandon premise (3.2) as well, but Plato does not reject (3.2) and instead takes on the task to resolve this paradox.

3.2.2 The Object of a False Logos

Plato uses the Greek term *logos* for a sentence, as well as for a statement or a belief, as he considers a belief as a silent *logos*; hence the term is sometimes also rendered as 'proposition' in English. A false *logos* has as its object 'what-is-not'. In ordinary Greek or in the language of Greek philosophers this is not a peculiar claim, rather it was in accord with ordinary understanding as well as standard philosophical doctrine.[2] But how is 'what-is-not' in this context to be interpreted? The claim that a false *logos* states what-is-not, taken by itself, suggests a veridical interpretation of 'what-is-not', i.e., what-is-not is used in the sense of 'what is not the case' or 'what is not true'. But since in premise (3.1) what-is-not is equated with nothing, the standard interpretation takes an existential reading of what-is-not, at least in this part of the dialogue. But neither the puzzle of false statements nor the paradox resulting from abandoning the first premise make any sense with a purely veridical interpretation or a purely existential interpretation. The formulation of the puzzle shows that Plato treated 'what-is-not' in (3.1) and in (3.2) in the same way, and this indicates that he maintains that any *logos*, whether true or false, has some kind of intentional object, namely *what* is stated or thought. The object of a *logos* is thus understood as an intentional object akin to an intended object that is expressed by a name or singular term. As we shall see in chapters 4 and 5, Frege treats sentences in a similar way as he maintains that a complete sentence

[2] Cf. Frede (1992, p. 397).

expresses a thought, and Meinong holds that the intentional object of a judgment is an *objective*.

For the reading of Plato, though, we have to be cautious when using the terms 'existence' or 'existential'. Nowhere in the *Sophist*, or for that matter elsewhere in Plato, can '*is*' properly be translated as 'exists' and respectively, '*is not*' as 'does not exist'.[3] The term 'exist' typically implies that the subject that is said to exist can be located in space-time, or is a material entity, and that goes not only for an innocuous understanding of the word 'exist', but also for most of philosophical practice. For Plato, however, the 'being' of something or a thing's 'being real' does not imply that it is a material object. On the contrary, forms and mathematical objects, for example, are considered as real entities.[4] In fact, it has traditionally been considered a trademark of Platonic philosophy that ideal objects, such as forms and mathematical objects, are considered as real entities. So the term 'exist' is at least problematic in connection with Plato. Instead of 'existential' we will use the term 'ontological commitment'[5] to indicate that the use of 'is' in this way carries ontological commitment in the sense that we commit ourselves to *something* (*ti*), an entity, without any implication that the entity is material or space-time bound. Owen (1970) holds that Plato's uses of 'is' in the *Sophist* can be distinguished as *complete* and

[3] Cornford (1937) frequently translates 'is' as 'exists' and thereby distorts a number of issues in the *Sophist*.

[4] Notably in the *Republic* 475e-480a, 509d-511e, and *Phaedo* 74a-76d where universals are considered as perfectly real entities.

[5] The term was coined by Quine (1953). He holds that 'ontological commitment' consists in saying that *there is something*; this is quite in agreement with Plato who maintains that if we speak of *something* we are committed to some kind of entity.

incomplete uses of the verb 'is'.[6] The complete use of the verb functions as a predicate by itself, whereas the incomplete use requires a complement, as in the case of 'is' being used as copula (e.g., in 'Socrates is white'). According to Ackrill's (1957) analysis, 'is' as used in an existential or complete sense can be understood as 'partaking in being' or 'sharing in being'. The complete use of the verb asserts ontological commitment, i.e., the subject is said to be something (*ti*) or an entity. The argument that leads to the puzzle requires that 'is' and 'is not' are used in the complete sense.

Now that a false *logos* is determined to be something, the task is to clear up the ambiguity that adheres to the expression 'what-is-not' and to show that 'what-is-not' is not a non-entity, i.e., nothing, but something (*ti*) that can properly function as the object stated by a false *logos*. The core of the problem of falsehood is the task to determine an object of the *logos* when the *logos* states what-is-not.

3.2.3 Eidôlon as Object of a Logos

Plato identifies the object of a false *logos* with an *eidôlon*, an image or presentation. This solves two problems, first, it pinpoints *what* is stated by a false *logos* since the *eidôlon* is something (*ti*) that functions as an intentional object; there is ontological commitment insofar as the *eidôlon* has being as *eidôlon*. Second, with the

[6] Owen, though, attaches an existential reading to the complete use of 'is'.

eidôlon as intentional object, meaning can be conveyed. At the beginning and the end of the dialogue (235d ff. and 264a8 ff.) two different kinds of *eidôla* are distinguished, namely *eikones* (likenesses), which are correct representations, and *phantasmata* (semblances), which are incorrect representations. For this distinction to make any sense, it has to be concluded that not only a false *logos* has an *eidôlon* as its object, but that any *logos* has an *eidôlon* as its object – the intentional object of a true *logos* is an *eikôn* (likeness), a correct representation, and the intentional object of a false *logos* is a *phantasma* (semblance), an incorrect representation. Moreover, at the end of the dialogue (264a8 ff.) Plato points out that a *logos* can be true or false, and accordingly distinguishes two kinds of 'image-making': the creation of correct images or presentations and the creation of incorrect presentations. A true *logos* then also creates an *eidôlon*.

A false *logos* states what is not, whereas a true *logos* states what is. Plato uses as an example of a true *logos*

(3.3) Theaetetus is sitting

and as example of a false *logos*

(3.4) Theaetetus is flying.

In Plato's analysis, any *logos*, even in the simplest form, consists of a subject and a predicate; a *logos* without a subject is impossible (263c9). Both of the above examples are about something, the subject, namely Theaetetus, and both state something. The true *logos* (3.3) "states [things] that are as they are about [Theaetetus] (263b 4)," it states what is. We may simply call this a state of affairs that holds, or a fact. The false *logos* (3.4)

"states [things] that are not as if they were" (263b9), and this is a state of affairs that does not hold. We will revisit some aspects of Plato's analysis in section 3.6; at this point it is notable that the object of a *logos* is an *eidôlon* depicting a state of affairs, and if the *logos* is true, it is a fact, if the *logos* is false, the object is also an *eidôlon*, but one that depicts a state of affairs that does not hold. The initial puzzle consisted in the apparent contradiction that, on the one hand, a false *logos* states what is not, and on the other hand, in order to account for false statements and beliefs at all, a false *logos* must state something. This puzzle is solved insofar as the false *logos* states what is not, namely what is not a fact, but what is stated is an *eidôlon*, and in particular, the kind of *eidôlon* that is an incorrect presentation, so the false *logos* states something. Since all *logoi* create *eidôla,* a true *logos* creates an *eidôlon*, in particular, the kind that is a correct presentation. But a true *logos* also states what is, namely a fact, so we have to conclude that the *eidôlon* of a true *logos* **is** a fact.

On a side note, there is an interesting similarity between Plato's *eidôlon* and Wittgenstein's *picture* ('Bild') in the Tractatus (1933). Wittgenstein claims that "we make to ourselves pictures of facts" (2.1), "the sentence is a picture of reality" (4.021), and "the picture is a fact" (2.141). Likewise, according to Plato we create images or pictures by means of sentences or statements, true statements create images or pictures of facts, and at the same time the image or picture is the fact. More important for our investigation, however, is the comparison with Frege's thought. Frege holds that a sentence expresses a thought, and the thought is the sense or 'mode of presentation'. It is

clear that Plato's *eidôlon*, like Frege's thought, is mind independent and not a purely subjective presentation or image, for otherwise false statements would not be communicable. Moreover, Plato's *eidôla* have an intermediary role as they are the link between a *logos* and what is stated by the *logos*. In case the *logos* is true, the *eidôlon* is the fact. Frege maintains that the referent of a thought is a truth value, and he also identifies a fact with a true thought (1918, p.35). And just as Frege's notion of thought as the sense of a sentence makes it possible to account for the meaning of sentences, so is Plato's *eidôlon* the answer to explain false statements as meaningful, despite the supposition that what is stated is not.

3.2.3.1 Word Meaning

In the discussion of true and false *logoi* Plato maintains that a *logos* always consists of the combination of a subject and a predicate. Since a *logos* thus consists of parts, we can presume that the *eidôlon* is a complex object consisting of parts. In his examples Plato uses as the subject Theaetetus, who is one of the persons present and involved in the dialogue, and therefore it remains unclear how we can talk about an object that cannot be pointed out. The *Sophist* does not give an answer whether names and singular terms create images just as a *logos* does, and if their role is analogous to that of a *logos*.

The *Cratylus* (430a ff.) offers an account of names or words being images or representations of the things they signify.[7] Here, too, images or representations play a role in linking language to the objects that are signified, but in this earlier dialogue Plato fails to consider the image as an intermediary that is distinct from the words and objects. This leads Plato to the rather bizarre supposition that the words and names themselves are the images that represent objects; on this account, the sounds of the letters that compose the word imitate features of the object signified, and there is a natural affinity between the sound of the words and the object. Crombie (1963) tries to downplay this strange conclusion, saying "Plato is of course well aware that languages are not in fact constructed in this way; what he is exploring is the suggestion that it might be a good idea if they were" (p. 376). But there is no indication in the dialogue that Plato is not serious about this and that he is merely trying to suggest how language should work ideally. The bizarre thesis, it seems, is due to the fact that Plato thought that language and what is signified by it are connected via images or representations, but he fails to distinguish between the image and the word itself.

Another peculiar thesis put forth in the *Cratylus* is that words or names can be true or false by themselves, apart from statements. This claim, as odd as it sounds, is less strange if we disregard this unusual use of the terms 'true' and 'false' and bear in mind that images, according to Plato, can either be correct or incorrect representations of the object depicted. This distinction is made for *eidôla* as they can be correct representations

[7] The terms used for 'image' or 'representation' are *mimêma, eikôn,* and *dêlôma.*

in the case of true statements and incorrect representations in the case of false statements. Similarly, he holds that words as images can either correctly or incorrectly depict an object. The purpose of the argument in the *Cratylus* is that words and names cannot arbitrarily be used, such that we could, for example, change a false statement into a true one by arbitrarily changing the meaning of the words. Nevertheless, the view that words are themselves images is at least strange, and apparently Plato abandoned or at least refined this theory later in the *Sophist*. For if he had continued to hold the account of meaning as given in the *Cratylus*, the analogous solution in the *Sophist* would have consisted in taking the *logos* itself as the image. But in the later dialogue the *logos* creates the image, the *eidôlon*, which is distinct from the *logos*, and it leaves us wondering how the objects that function as grammatical subjects of a *logos* are represented in the *eidôlon*.

3.3 Eikôn in the Republic

Plato's notion of *eidôlon* as image or presentation plays an important role in his account of false statements. The *Sophist*, however, lacks an analysis of the constituents of *eidôla* and an account of the ontological status of *eidôla*. Before we continue the discussion of the *Sophist*, this section examines Plato's notion of *eikôn* (image) in the simile of the Line in the *Republic* (509d-511e). Unfortunately, Plato is not very consistent with the use of terms. In the *Sophist* Plato uses the term *eikôn* for one kind of *eidôlon*, namely one that is a correct presentation. He uses the same term, *eikôn*, in the *Republic*,

but this notion as used here differs in some important aspects from the notion of *eikôn* in the *Sophist*. We will discuss these differences in section 3.3.2, and for the following it is best to disregard the sense in which the term is used in the *Sophist* and take the *eikôn* of the *Republic* as a distinct concept.

In the chronology of Plato's work the *Republic* lies between the *Cratylus* and the *Sophist*.[8] Since it seems that in the *Sophist* Plato gave up the theory of word meaning he held earlier in the *Cratylus*, we will argue that the notion of *eikôn* in the *Republic* presents a suitable candidate for the meaning of names and singular terms. In the Sophist, the *eidôlon* is the immediate object of a *logos*, and the aim of this section is to show that Plato's notion of *eikôn* in the Republic is a correlate to *eidôlon* on the level of names and singular terms, and thus the *eikôn* is well suited as the constituent of an *eidôlon*. Moreover, since *eikones* and *eidôla* are both conceived as images or presentations, the ontological status of the *eikôn* can shed light on the ontological status of the *eidôlon* in the *Sophist*.

The argument that runs from book 5 through book 7 of the *Republic* is primarily concerned with knowledge and the process of education. For Plato the question of knowledge is closely connected with what is, or what is real, and the question of what

[8] There are, of course, differences in accounts of the chronology of Plato's works, but none of them disagree on the chronology concerning the order of the *Cratylus,* the *Republic*, and the *Sophist*. For a table of different accounts of the chronology of Plato's works see Bormann (1973, p. 15).

objects there are that can be known, so the investigation naturally includes an account of reality, different kinds of objects and their corresponding states of mind.

3.3.1 The Hierarchy of Objects in the Simile of the Line

In the simile of the line Plato distinguishes two realms, the intelligible realm and the realm of appearances. Knowledge only pertains to the objects in the intelligible realm, whereas we form opinions (*doxai*) about objects in the realm of appearances. According to Gulley (1962, p. 62), the distinction between knowledge and opinion can be understood as the distinction between *a priori* and empirical knowledge, with the implication that one is not convertible into the other. The objects distinguished within the intelligible realm are forms and mathematical objects, within the realm of appearances are sensible or physical objects (such as artifacts, plants and animals) and images (*eikones*). For each of the objects, a distinct kind of cognition or way of apprehension is identified, forms are apprehended by intellection (*noesis*), mathematical objects are grasped by thinking (*dianoia*), sensible objects are linked with trust (*pistis*), and *eikones* (images) are apprehended by the state of cognition that is called imagination, *eikasia*. The fact that each type of object is linked to a distinct kind of cognition shows we are dealing with dissimilar kinds of objects, each distinct in its own way; it also indicates that the object is distinct from the cognition or mental state that apprehends it.

Plato takes a top down approach, from the intelligible realm, which is higher than the realm of appearances. The criteria of being higher or lower in the hierarchy are the level of clarity (*saphêneia*) and unclarity (*asapheia*) (509d) and the degree as the objects "partake of truth" (511e). Forms are on top, as the most superior of all objects, mathematical objects follow next, then sensible objects, with *eikones* (images) as the objects of imagination on the bottom of the hierarchy. Forms are highest in the hierarchy since they are most 'real', and moving down, each kind of object is less real than the previous higher one. Objects within the intelligible realm, i.e., forms and mathematical objects, are unchanging whereas objects in the realm of appearances are subject to constant fluctuation. Since Plato's notion of form plays a central role in his metaphysics and epistemology, it has received by far the greatest attention and controversial interpretation. Since the focus of this paper is the notion of *eikôn*, an analysis of the difficult notion of Plato's forms cannot be pursued, and forms are only given consideration insofar as necessary in the context of comparison. Furthermore, mathematical objects are altogether excluded from this discussion, since they are not relevant for our discussion.

3.3.2 The Relation Among Objects

The division of the line proceeds in unequal divisions that are made in the same proportion; this indicates that Plato envisioned a symmetry that holds between dissimilar

objects. So we can reasonably expect that the relation that holds between forms and sensible particulars is analogous to the relation between sensible particulars and *eikones*, which are compared to shadows or mirror images. The way the objects in the hierarchy are related to each other is such that an object on the lower level is an imperfect image or copy of the object on the higher level.

3.3.2.1 The Relation Between Forms and Particulars

For Plato, forms are abstract objects, and accordingly they cannot be apprehended by the senses, but they are grasped or intellected by the mind only, i.e., they are known *a priori*. Sensible particulars, on the other hand, are physical objects and they can be perceived through the senses, thus they are apprehended empirically. According to the criteria for the distinction between objects within the hierarchy, the apprehension of forms has a higher level of clarity than the perception of sensible objects. Forms, which are on the highest level are not images, they are the perfect archetypes; sensible objects in the lower realm are said to 'participate' in the forms, they are particulars that instantiate forms, as such they are imperfect images of the form. For example, a particular table instantiates the form 'table', which is ideal and perfect, and of which the particular is an image or copy. As such it is less perfect than the original. Three characteristics of forms are given by Pappas (1995, p. 127): uniqueness, i.e., there is only one of its kind, self-predication, i.e., the form is a pure exemplar of a property, and non-identity, i.e.,

individual things have a share in the form, but none of them is the form itself. Plato mentions 'Beauty' or 'Beauty itself' as an example of a form (475e ff.). There is only one form of Beauty, whereas there are many beautiful objects, they all have a share or participate in the form of Beauty. The beautiful object can never be as pure or perfect as the form, since in some aspects the object may be ugly or less beautiful, and the sensible object is subject to change, so an object that is beautiful at one time may be less beautiful or ugly at another time, whereas the form is unchanging. Finally, a beautiful object is not the same as Beauty itself.

Scholars who maintain what Nehamas (1975) calls the 'approximation view' hold that sensible objects, such as sticks being equal or straight, are never perfectly equal or straight, because they only approximate the form of Equality or Straightness. As Nehamas convincingly argues,[9] the imperfection that Plato attributes to the particulars compared to the forms is not due to the fact that particulars only approximate the ideal of the form. Rather, on Nehamas' view, particular sensible objects are imperfect because they are copies of the forms they instantiate: "Particulars are not imperfect copies of the Forms, as the approximation view would have it; they are imperfect; that is, copies of the forms. …[T]o be a copy for Plato is the same as to "fall short" of, to be imperfect in comparison to, the model. The copies' imperfection does not reside in the properties that make them copies, but in the way these perfect properties are possessed" (p.109). Copies can naturally not be exactly as the original, or else they would not be copies. If two items

[9] Nehamas' arguments against the approximation view cannot be repeated in detail here.

are exactly matching, they are not copies, but duplicates. Copies always fall short in some aspect compared to the original.

The distinction between forms and particulars, according to Nehamas, turns out to be the fact that "particulars possess their properties only in an incomplete manner, only in relation to other particulars, while the Forms possess them completely, in themselves…" (p. 116). This, however, holds only for incomplete, attributive and relational predicates (such as 'equal', 'tall', 'beautiful'), but not for complete predicates such as 'is a man', 'is a table'. Nehamas' argument is that Plato conceived forms in the *Phaedo* and the middle books of the *Republi*c for incomplete predicates only. While the *Phaedo* and the middle books of the *Republic* make only use of incomplete predicates, Plato uses the form of 'bed' and the form of 'table', i.e., complete terms that yield one-place predicates, as examples in book 10 of the Republic. In book 10 and later works forms are 'kinds' or 'classes'. It is clear that particulars that instantiate forms such as 'table', 'horse', 'man' (on Nehamas' explanation) are not imperfect compared to the form in the same way as particulars that instantiate forms such as 'equality' or 'tallness'. Socrates is a man not in relation to other things. But what exactly is the relation between 'Socrates' and 'man'? The individual Socrates falls under the larger concept of 'man' without being identical to the entire class of 'man'. For one form or class, there are many objects that instantiate the one form. In this sense, the individual Socrates, along with many other people, is an image or copy of the one form. It is not so clear, however, why the form 'man' is *perfect* and the particular, Socrates, is an *imperfect* copy, other than on an account of copies

always being imperfect compared to the original. In the Sophist, Plato singles out five kinds or classes that he considers most important, namely 'being', 'motion', 'rest', 'sameness', and 'difference'. He treats them as kinds or classes, analogous to 'man' or 'horse', but at least two of them, 'sameness' and 'difference' are relational properties. But since the relation between forms and particulars is not our main concern, we cannot further pursue a discussion of these difficulties. The point of interest here is that particulars are imperfect copies or images of forms, and we should expect that a similar relation obtains for sensible particulars and *eikones*.

3.3.2.2 The Relation Between Particulars and Eikones

Given that sensible objects stand in an image-like or copy-like relation to forms, *eikones*, images, are at the bottom of this kind of succession of relations. Thus, an *eikôn* stands in an image-like relation to a physical object, and the *eikôn* is an image or imperfect copy of a sensible object. Since we are familiar with pictures and representations of sensible object, the relation between the sensible objects and *eikones* of them is less difficult to grasp than the image-like relation that holds between forms and sensible objects. But what are *eikones*? After all, they enjoy a special place in the hierarchy of Plato's line. By *eikones*, Socrates says, he first means shadows, then reflections or semblances (*phantasmata*) in water or shiny surfaces, and then, he mentions laconically, all things like that (509e). Glaucon acknowledges understanding

too readily, because it is far from clear what is meant by these objects that are correlated with the state of cognition called imagination or *eikasia*.

Hamlyn (1958) offers an interesting and somewhat unusual interpretation of *eikasia* (imagination). To recall, the realm of appearances is distinguished into sensible or physical objects and *eikones*, and the state of cognition corresponding to the former is trust (*pistis*), whereas the state of cognition corresponding to the latter is *eikasia* (imagination). Hamlyn argues that Plato introduced the distinction between trust (*pistis*) and *eikasia* (imagination) for a good reason into the simile of the line and not as an afterthought for the purpose of symmetry. He maintains that " …having made that division [between intelligible world and world of appearances], Plato realised that the kinds of thing included within the world of appearance were not all the same. Some of them were, so to speak, more appearance than others" (p. 16, parenthesis added). Hamlyn's further reasons:

> I maintain that *eikasia* is at the least a being acquainted with *eikones*. Philosophers have sometimes been led to talk of sense-data in this context. They have suggested that even when we are subject to illusion, as when a straight stick appears to us bent in water, there must be something which is the direct object of our perception and about which we cannot be mistaken. This cannot be the stick, for we *are* mistaken about that. Similarly, if we look in a mirror and think that we see a man, we cannot really be seeing a man; yet there is something which we see. ….It is …

> clear that for Plato any mental function, like perceiving, does involve a kind of acquaintance, and he supposes that we are sometimes in situations which make it necessary to talk of acquaintance with an appearance (or a sense-datum), not a physical object (p. 17, Greek words given in transliteration).

So according to Hamlyn's interpretation, *eikasia* (imagination) is not only the means of apprehending *eikones*, but it is also the way we are acquainted with physical objects. This interpretation is supported by the fact that for Plato the very problem of perception is that our apprehension of physical objects by means of sensation rests on appearances, hence it does not yield knowledge about the true nature of the object.[10] Hamlyn thus provides a neat connection between the notion of *eikasia* in the Republic and Plato's criticism of perception. There is no reason, though, why we should take this to be a special case that occurs only on some occasions ("sometimes in situations…"), as Hamlyn holds. The interpretation makes perfect sense if *eikasia* is not the exception, but the way we normally apprehend physical objects, and Hamlyn does not give a reason why this should only sometimes be the case.

On the basis of Hamlyn's interpretation, we maintain that the apprehension of a physical object creates an *eikôn*, and the way we are acquainted with physical objects is not only sometimes, as Hamlyn claims, but always by means of an *eikôn.* According to Hamlyn, this pertains to cases in which our sensation gives a distorted image of the physical object,

[10] This is one of the points of Plato's criticism of perception in the *Theaetetus* (152c ff.).

such as the stick appearing bent in water, but in this case our visual sensation of the stick creates an *eikôn* of a bent stick, whereas our tactile sensation creates an *eikôn* of a straight stick, and we end up trusting that the physical object, the stick, has the feature as presented by the *eikôn* of our tactile sensation, namely being straight. (Of course, we may come to the same conclusion by observing the stick taken out of the water and still appearing straight, but in either case we hold that one *eikôn* created by our sensation is a more accurate image than another). If sometimes sensation creates an *eikôn* that is distorted, as in the case of the stick appearing bent in water, there is no good reason to maintain that in other cases we are acquainted with the physical object itself rather than with a more accurate image or *eikôn* of the object.

On our interpretation, the *eikôn* is the way we think of the object, the presentation of the object. Just as looking at a mirror, I do not see the object, as Hamlyn points out, but a presentation or mirror image of myself; moreover, the image reflects only some features of the object, but not the whole object, i.e., when looking in the mirror, I see my face, but not the back of my head. According to Plato, sensation always depends on a certain perspective, and even immediate sensation gives us only one aspect of the object, but not the whole object. The *eikôn* that presents a physical object is thus an imperfect, incomplete copy of the physical object that is so presented.

Eikones also account for the objects of memory. In the *Philebus* Plato defines memory as "the preservation of sensation" (34a), and what is preserved is the *eikôn* that is

produced by sensation. Similarly, in the *Theaetetus* (191d ff.) Plato compares the object of memory to the impression of a seal. What we see or hear can leave a memory sign in the mind, like the impression of the seal in wax; but this image can be wiped out, as is the case when we forget. Since *eikones* are images or presentations, they may be more or less detailed, and more or less accurate. Thus, the *eikôn* that is created by immediate sensation is more detailed and accurate than the preserved *eikôn* that is the object of our memory, which may be more or less faint.

If our interpretation is correct that we are acquainted with physical objects by means of *eikasia*, now the question arises what the position of physical objects and trust (*pistis*) is. For on that view, apparently all objects within the realm of appearances turn out to be objects of *eikasia*. But though our sensation of physical objects creates an *eikôn*, the physical object is still the original for the *eikôn*, which is an image or presentation. Hamlyn further claims that "…ordinary men do not take the whole of reality to consist merely of sense-data (or *eikones*); they do at any rate recognise the existence of physical objects, they have *pistis*, not merely *eikasia*" (p. 18, Greek words given in transliteration). But how, according to Plato, do we recognize that there are physical objects? The key term here is *pistis* (trust), which is the kind of cognition linked with sensible objects. *Pistis* means trust, faith, or confidence,[11] and it is by means of *pistis* that we are aware of physical objects. So

[11] cf. H.G. Liddell and R. Scott: *Greek-English Lexicon*, with revised supplement, Oxford, 9th edition (1996). Some commentators have translated *pistis* with 'belief' (e.g. Cornford, 1941), but since the term '*doxa*' is usually rendered as 'belief' as well, and '*doxa*' pertains to our cognition concerning all objects within the realm of appearances, i.e., physical objects

we merely have trust or presuppose that there is an original for the *eikôn*. And as all cognition within the realm of appearances, *pistis* is fallible, we can be mistaken in our trust or presupposition; moreover, since an *eikôn* can be more or less distorted, we can also confuse objects.[12]

Plato suggests that the relation between forms and physical objects is analogous to the relation between physical objects and *eikones*.[13] Sensible particulars, or physical objects, are imperfect copies of forms; *eikones* are imperfect copies of physical objects. They are imperfect insofar as they are images presenting only some features of the object, but not all of the features of an object. Furthermore, according to Plato, there are many instances of particular physical objects for one form, and by analogy, one and the same physical object can have different corresponding *eikones*; we can be acquainted with one and the same physical object by means of many different *eikones* that are all images of this object.

Plato's reference to shadows and mirror reflections as the objects of *eikasia* cannot be taken literally. Thus, Plato's reference to shadows and mirror reflections is metaphorical. It is intended to illustrate the image-like relation between the physical object and the way it

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and *eikones*, this translation is not only ambiguous, but it also misses the point that ultimately our recognition of physical objects rests on trust or faith.

[12] Cf. *Theaetetus* 193d ff.

[13] According to the simile of the Line, strictly speaking, the relation between physical objects and *eikones* should be analogous to the relation between forms and mathematical objects, but since Plato considers physical objects as copies or images of forms (cf. Nehamas, 1975), it can be argued that the insertion of mathematical objects was an afterthought for the sake of symmetry (cf. Hamlyn, 1958).

is presented to our cognition. The shadow or mirror image of an object resembles the object in some aspects, but it lacks other aspects of the object, or may even distort it. For instance, the shadow of an object lacks a number of details and color, and it can be larger or smaller than the original; the mirror image is a two dimensional depiction of a three dimensional object showing the object from one perspective only. Since there is a likeness between the shadow or the mirror image and the object, the likeness enables us, at least in many cases, to pick out the original. Similarly, there is a likeness between the *eikôn* and the physical object that is its original, but it lacks some of the properties of the original. Since the image is not an exact duplicate and can be more or less faint or distorted, we may sometimes fail to pick the corresponding original.

In the allegory of the Cave, the lowest stage is depicted as chained prisoners who are immovable and all they see are the moving shadows of statutes and artifacts. The shadows of artifacts represent *eikones*, and the chained prisoners have *eikasia*, they are considered to be on the lowest level of understanding or insight. Hamlyn maintains that the prisoners of the simile of the Cave do not represent the ordinary person, but the sophists and those who have been corrupted by the sophists. Moreover, according to Hamlyn's interpretation, *eikasia* turns out to be "not merely the taking of images for originals, but the taking of what *we* call 'images' as all that there is" (p. 20). Here Hamlyn's interpretation is a bit ambiguous. Is it that the sophists are among the group targeted by Plato as those on the lowest level, because these people take *eikones* to be all there is, i.e., that they are incapable of having trust (*pistis*) in physical objects, or rather, because they are only concerned with

eikones? The latter seems more convincing. The sophists, as Plato sees them, use their elaborate rhetorical skills to create images with no concern or even disregard for whether or not these images have any correlation to things in the world. Furthermore, the sophists may not be the only group depicted as chained prisoners. Plato compares the shadows in the cave to legal disputes in court (517d), and orators and lawyers in court were known to use rhetoric to persuade the audience.[14] And as Pappas (1995, p. 147) points out, the disapproval of poetry in book 10 of the *Republic* likely includes poets among the prisoners in the imagery of the cave. In Plato's view, sophists, lawyers, and poets are only concerned with the images they create, rather than talking about actual objects that are the originals for these images. It is most obvious that a poet or someone listening to poetry does not have any trust or *pistis* that the images have originals. The subject of poetry does not require this trust, and the existence of originals is irrelevant since the imagery created is the sole concern of poetry.

Though *eikones* are on the lowest level in Plato's hierarchy of objects, they are not purely subjective. Plato clearly distinguishes them as objects distinct from the kind of cognition that apprehends them, *eikasia* (imagination); if *eikones* were the kind of things that belong to an individual's state of mind, then there would be no reason to distinguish them as objects from the state of cognition that apprehends them. Furthermore, the prisoners in the allegory of the cave all look at the same shadows and are able to communicate about

[14] cf. the *Apology* (17a); *Phaedrus* (272d).

these objects. If *eikones* were purely subjective objects, then the sophists, lawyers, and poets could not successfully convey the images or *eikones* they create.

3.3.3 Eikôn as Meaning and Constituent of an Eidôlon

The crucial difference between Plato's investigation in books 6 and 7 of the *Republic* and in the *Sophist* is that in the *Republic* he is concerned with kinds of objects, i.e., kinds of singular objects, namely forms, mathematical objects, physical objects, and *eikones*, whereas in the *Sophist* the subject is a complex object, namely the object of a statement or *logos*. Hence the *eikôn* is an image of an individual object, e.g., a plant, animal, or artifact, whereas the *eidôlon* is an image of what we have called a state of affairs. Due to this difference, the sharp distinction between knowledge and opinion (*doxa*) Plato maintained in the *Republic* becomes more blurred in the *Sophist*, since a *logos* can combine a sensible particular and a form. For example, in the statement 'Socrates is a man' the particular individual Socrates is combined with the form 'man'.

Now, if our interpretation of *eikôn* is correct, sensation of a physical object creates an *eikôn*, and we are acquainted with a physical object by means of an *eikôn*. Thus, an *eikôn* is the way physical objects are presented to us. But sensation may not be the only way *eikones* are created; in the simile of the Cave, the sophists and poets are among the prisoners who are merely concerned with *eikones*, and since they are known to

be skilled in using language, they, too, create *eikones* by means or words or expressions. In the *Sophist,* the sophist is characterized as one who creates images, and since the issue in the *Sophist* are true and false *logoi*, he creates *eidôla,* which are the objects of statements. In the *Republic*, Plato's subject of investigation is the distinction between different kinds of singular objects, and by analogy, the sophist creates an image of a singular object, an *eikôn*.

So given that a *logos* creates an *eidôlon* that functions as the meaning of the sentence or statement, we now conclude by analogy that a name or singular term creates an *eikôn* that functions as the meaning of the name or singular term. In the *Cratylus,* the sound of the word itself was considered as image of the object designated, but if Plato had continued to hold this view, then the *logos* itself should also be the *eidôlon*; but according to the *Sophist*, a *logos* is not identified with the *eidôlon,* rather, the *logos* creates an *eidôlon* which functions as the immediate object of the *logos,* hence it also takes the role of the meaning of the *logos*. Now that Plato developed the notion of *eikôn* in the *Republic*, the *eikôn* is perfectly suited to provide the meaning of a name or singular term. So with this refinement, the sound of the word is not itself the image, but the sound of the word creates an image, an *eikôn*. Furthermore, an *eikôn* is conceived as an image or likeness, and so is an *eidôlon;* an *eikôn* fits well as the constituent of an *eidôlon*.

Admittedly, this interpretation works well for names or expressions that designate physical objects (*eikones* are, after all, images of physical objects in the simile of the

Line), but there is a problem applying it to words that designate forms (*eidê* or *genê*). To consider the sound of the word itself as image of a form is just as strange as it is for names or words denoting physical objects. And it is at least questionable if *eikones* can be images of forms since forms are abstract entities. In the similes of the Line and the Cave, mathematical objects are the next lower stage of objects that are in an image-like relation to forms, but they can hardly be seen as meanings; moreover, sensible particulars also stand in an image-like relation to forms, but they could not take the role of meanings for forms either, at least not on our interpretation, since we are acquainted with physical objects via *eikones*, so then *eikones* would also take the role of meanings for words denoting forms. The best we can think of as meanings for these terms are definitions that can be achieved by means of dialectic method, or that the meaning is the form itself, without an image as intermediary, such that a person who understands the meaning of the word thereby also understands the form or concept. This problem, however, cannot be further pursued in this context and should be the subject of an investigation on Plato's notion of forms.

In summary, on this interpretation *eikones* are the means by which we are acquainted with sensible particulars, i.e., physical objects, and thus, a physical object is presented to our thinking as an *eikôn*. The kind of cognition that connects us with the original, the physical object, is trust (*pistis*) or the presumption that there is an actual object of which we have an image. The *eikôn* created by sensation can be preserved, as is the case when we have a memory of an object, and it can also be created by names or

expressions. Like the *eidôlon,* which is an image or presentation on the level of statements as it depicts a state of affairs, the *eikôn* is an image or presentation on the level of singular objects as it presents a sensible particular. And just as the *eidôlon* functions as sentence meaning, the *eikôn* can be taken as the meaning of names and singular terms. The *eikôn* is a constitutent of an *eidôlon* representing sensible objects within the *eidôlon*. In the previous section we have compared Plato's *eidôlon* with Frege's thought and found that they are similar as they both present an intermediary between a statement and what is stated. Now we can also find a close affinity between Frege's notion of sense that is a 'mode of presentation' of an object, and Plato's notion of *eikôn,* which is an image or presentation of an object.

3.4 The Ontological Status of Images

In the *Sophist* Plato determines that a false statement states what is not, yet, it states something (*ti*), namely an *eidôlon*. In the *Sophist* he then tackles the problem how not-being can possibly be attributed to something, and how we can say that something is not without being involved in a contradiction. As we will see in section 3.5 of this chapter, Plato's solution consists in analyzing 'not-being' as 'being different'. The account in the *Sophist*, however, does not explain what kind of a thing an image or *eidôlon* is. Since *eidôla* and *eikones* are sufficiently similar insofar as they are images or

presentations, the ontological status of the *eikôn* in the Republic can also be applied for the notion of *eidôlon*.

3.4.1 Degrees of Reality

Reading Plato in English translations, numerous locations can be found where Plato says that forms are 'purely real' (477a, 478d, 479d), 'perfectly real' (597a) or 'really real' (597d); forms are said to be 'more real' than the objects of opinion (*doxa*), i.e., physical objects and *eikones,* which are said to 'fall in the middle between the purely real and the completely unreal' (477a). The hierarchy of objects in the simile of the Line suggests that Plato maintained that there are different 'degrees' of reality or being. In all these passages the English word 'real' is a translation for derivatives of the Greek word for 'is'. Moreover, sometimes 'is' or 'real' is used interchangeably with 'true', as in the *Theaetetus* and the *Sophist* where making a true statement or speaking truly is identified with saying 'what is'.[15] But commonly, neither 'real', nor 'being' nor 'true' are understood as having degrees. On a usual understanding a thing is either real or it is not real, and the same holds for being true and being.

So how is Plato's degree-of-reality doctrine to be understood? Vlastos (1965) proposes a plausible and accommodating sense in which Plato's degree thesis can be

[15] See section 3.2.1 and 3.2.2 above. Cf. also Rep. 389c.

understood. In this sense[16] 'real' is that which is cognitively reliable, or cognitively dependable, undeceiving. Vlastos' argument is based on the comparison between forms and sensible particulars. He argues that for Plato knowledge of forms is infallible, i.e., the connection of forms leads to necessary truths, whereas beliefs of sensible particulars are fallible and thus lead to contingent truths. The reason for that is that sensible particulars have a number of properties that can be ascribed or connected with them, i.e., if we say *a* is *F*, *a* is not purely *F*, but may be *F* in one respect but not in another. Moreover, sensible particulars are temporal objects, they can be *F* at one time and not be *F* at another time, and they are spatial objects, i.e., they can be *F* or not *F*, depending on location, and observer-position. Vlastos says:

> For whatever statements about *F* follow from the logical analysis of this character (and/or the analysis of characters to which *F* is logically related) would be *necessary* statements, hence, in Plato's language, "infallible" ones – statements which could never go wrong. Contrariwise, any statements we make about a sensible instance of *F* would be fallible precisely because the sensible instance does not admit of such necessary connection with its predicates (p. 13).

[16] Vlastos points out that there is another sense of 'real' where it functions as a value predicate. Vlastos excludes this other sense of 'real' from his investigation, and we follow in this since the sense considered by Vlastos is the one relevant for this thesis.

The degrees-of-reality theory, according to Vlastos, would better be called a *kinds*-of-reality theory since that is all Plato needs.[17] On Vlastos' interpretation, Plato's distinction of 'degrees of reality' is a consequence of Plato's epistemology. In support of Vlastos' reading it can be pointed out that Plato identifies the level of clarity and unclarity as distinguishing criteria for the division of the line. So the objects on the highest level in the hierarchy of objects are the most clear, whereas objects on a lower level are less clear and distinct. Hence, forms are most clear, physical objects are less clear than forms, and *eikones* are less clear than physical objects. The difference in degrees of cognitive reliability can thus be taken as degrees of objectivity, with forms as completely objective and unpolluted by observer position, and *eikones* as the least objective, as they are biased insofar as they give only a partial presentation of the object. Yet, as we have remarked in section 3.3.2.2, they cannot be entirely subjective since we can communicate about them.

3.4.2 How Real are Images?

Vlastos' interpretation concentrates on the comparison between forms and sensible particulars. Of course, in the realm of opinion, according to Plato, we cannot find necessary truths as our opinion about objects within the realm of appearances can at best

[17] Vlastos also criticizes Plato's account of relational predicates and proposes an emendation. This, however, has no impact on the application of Vlastos' interpretation to *eikones*.

lead to contingent truths. Following Nehamas (1975), we maintained in section 3.3.1.2 that the lower kind of object is an imperfect copy of the higher one. Presumably, a form is the ultimate original, it is the pure abstract notion of a property; presumably, according to Plato, the form can be intellected as it is. The notion of form and our knowledge of it, however, is a difficult issue for any interpretation of Plato, and for our purpose, we will leave it with this presumption. Sensible particulars never instantiate a form purely, as they have more than one property, and they are in this sense imperfect copies of forms. Forms are the originals for sensible particulars, which are imperfect copies of forms, and in turn, *eikones* are imperfect and incomplete copies of sensible objects.

Any copy or picture of an object is more incomplete than the original. *Eikones* are imperfect or incomplete copies of the objects they depict as they can never depict all the properties of the original. Now on our interpretation we have held that we are acquainted with sensible particulars by means of *eikones*, as the sensory impressions of physical objects create *eidôla*, so how can, on this interpretation, sensible particulars make cognitively more reliable objects than *eikones*? The notion of *eikôn* allows of degrees as well, as an image can be a more or less incomplete and a more accurate or distorting presentation of the original. In most cases, *eikones* that are created by immediate sensation are more detailed and accurate than *eikones* that are preserved by memory or created by names or singular terms. In this sense, some *eikones* can be more 'real' than others, and they are cognitively more reliable than others.

Sensible particulars are instances of forms, they 'participate' in forms. Forms are pure properties or concepts of kinds or classes. Thus, a sensible particular participates in a form insofar as it belongs to the class or insofar as it has the property, and typically particulars belong to a number of classes and have a number of properties. But what is an *eikôn*? Given that an *eikôn* is an imperfect copy of a sensible particular, it depicts only some of the properties and kinds in which the particular participates. Moreover, the *eikôn* cannot be an instance of a given form, but at best, an instance of an instance. Accordingly, an *eikôn* is the depiction of some connected properties that may or may not have an original, a sensible particular that has among its properties the ones that are depicted by the *eikôn*.

For Plato an *eikôn* is something, namely an object of our cognition. It is identified as the object of *eikasia*, as such it has 'being' or partakes in 'being', yet it is less real than forms or sensible objects. So ontologically the *eikôn* is an intermediary that lies in the middle between "pure being and what is completely not" (477a). But the *eikôn* is also epistemologically an intermediary by means of which we are acquainted with sensible objects. Moreover, on our interpretation the *eikôn* is the meaning of terms denoting sensible objects, as such it is an intermediary linking words with objects. The *eidôlon* in the *Sophist* has a similar position as the *eikôn* – it is an image of what is stated by a *logos*. The *eidôlon* is thus an intermediary between the sentence and what is stated by the sentence, a state of affairs. And in this way the *eidôlon* functions as immediate intentional object of a sentence and as sentence meaning. Like the *eikôn*, the *eidôlon* is an image,

and therefore we conclude that it has the same ontological status, namely residing in the middle between pure being and complete not-being. After all, the puzzle of false statements started with the problem that a false statement states what is not, yet, there is something that is stated. And the *eidôlon* as a solution in the *Sophist* fills the troublesome gap between being and not-being.

3.4.3 Eikôn and Eidôlon as Intermediary

Plato's notion of *eikôn* in the *Republic* and the notion of *eidôlon* in the *Sophist* thus take the role of an intermediary in three aspects: both are ontologically between being and not-being, both are the immediate intentional object of our cognition, and both are intermediary between the linguistic expressions (i.e., words and sentences) and the objects denoted, thereby also taking the role of the meaning of a name or sentence.

Previously, we have already compared Plato's *eidôlon* with Frege's notion of thought. Like Frege's thought, Plato's *eidôlon* functions as what is stated by a sentence, it takes the role of sentence meaning, and it neither belongs to the inner world of our consciousness as it is distinguished from the state of cognition that apprehends it, nor is it an object of the outer world of physical objects. Plato's notion of *eikôn*, on our interpretation, likewise matches Fregean sense, as the *eikôn* is the way we think of or are acquainted with objects, and like senses, *eikones* can be taken as the meaning of singular

terms denoting sensible particulars, and just as, on Frege's view, different senses can be 'modes of presentation' for one and the same object, different *eikones* can be images of one and the same sensible particular. One other similarity with Frege is worth mentioning. Frege speaks of a judgment as a leap from the thought to the True[18] – this has echoes of Plato's notion of trust (*pistis*), because the judgement on Frege's view seems to require a faith or trust in the accuracy of the thought. Now, the given interpretation of Plato may appear as a Fregean interpretation with the intended result that the similarity between Plato's and Frege's notions turn out to be analogous, but our interpretation of Plato has hopefully been shown as sound within Plato's thought.

Plato's notion of *eikôn* also bears a striking affinity to Meinong's incomplete objects, which will be discussed in chapter 5. Meinong's incomplete object is conceived as the immediate intentional object that presents an auxiliary object. The incomplete auxiliary object has only some of the properties of the target object. Likewise, Plato's *eikôn* is an imperfect copy of a sensible particular, and the imperfection is at least partly due to the incompleteness of the image compared to the original, as only some aspects of the object are presented by the *eikôn*. In the *Theaetetus* (194e-194a) Plato holds that false statements are the result of confusing objects because the images of the objects do not appropriately depict the objects, and here he uses the imagery of the archer who misses his target.

[18] Frege (1892a, p. 65; p. 78).

3.5 Statements: Symplokê (Interweaving)

In the *Sophist*, the problem of what-is-not was entangled with false statements. The notion of *eidôlon* had provided an explanation how a false statement that states what-is-not has nevertheless an intentional object. But Plato still has to clarify how something can be said to be and not to be without being involved in contradiction. He leaves behind the notion of *eidôlon* for now and investigates what statements are, i.e., what it means when someone makes a statement. Morover, the discussion tries to clear up a confusion that is connected with the ambiguity that adheres to saying 'is' and 'is not' in statements. Clarification of the form of being and how it is attributed is taken to illuminate the problem of not-being and how not-being can be attributed. For Plato, to say of a thing that it 'is' means that this thing participates in the form of being. By analogy, to say of a thing that it 'is not' means that this thing participates in a form. The problem is that there cannot be any form of not-being. According to Plato, the form of being encompasses everything, including all other forms, so there could not be any form that is incompatible with the form of being. Thus the task is to identify a form in which a thing participates when we say that it 'is not'.

3.5.1 The Interweaving of Forms

Plato realized that a statement does not merely consist in a singular term that denotes an object, rather, it is the connection of two items, namely a subject and a predicate (262aff), and he points out that a string of nouns does not constitute a statement. The most simple form of a statement consists of a noun and a verb. Thus, a simple statement or *logos* expresses a relation between those two items. In 259e 4-6 the Eleatic Stranger says:

> The isolation of everything from everything is the complete annihilation of all statements (*logoi*). For it is because of the interweaving of forms (*eidê*) with each other that we come to have a statement (*logos*).

Forms are thus not isolated and the ability of forms to combine or to be 'interwoven' makes statements possible. According to Ackrill's (1955) interpretation, the quoted claim (259e 4-6) has to hold for all statements or *logoi*, and he concludes that all statements must contain a *symplokê* (interweaving) of forms with each other. Since forms usually express the predicate, there are a number of statements that do not contain the combination of "forms with each other", but a combination of a particular with a form, as in the example "Theaetetus is sitting" given by Plato. So if a statement always contains the interweaving of forms with each other, Plato's own example would violate the statement above since it does not contain a combination of "forms with each other." In Ackrill's view, forms have therefore to be understood as the "meanings of general

words" (p. 207); on his interpretation "discourse is possible because the meanings of general words are related in definite ways" (p. 205). So Ackrill concludes that the task of the philosopher or dialectician is to pursue "through a patient study of language by noticing which combinations of words in sentences do, and which do not, make sense, by eliciting ambiguities and drawing distinctions, by stating explicitly facts about the interrelations of word meanings" (p. 207).

But we have to disagree with Ackrill. First, Ackrill's interpretation rests on a mistaken premise. The claim of the Eleatic Stranger does not say that the "interweaving of forms with each other" must be *contained* in every statement; rather it says that it is *because of* (*'dia'*) the "interweaving of forms with each other" that we can have statements. That is, since forms are capable of combining, statements are possible. That does not mean that every statement must explicitly contain two or more interwoven forms. According to Plato, particulars participate in forms, and in a statement that combines a particular and a form, the form that is the predicate of the statement must combine with the other forms in which the given particular participates. So derivatively, forms have to combine to make true statements possible. And second, it is hard to see forms as word meanings, since the ontological relations of forms with each other have to be considered as logically prior to our statements of these relations. That is, it is not because of the relation between word meanings that we can make true or false statements, but it is because there are such relations that we can make true or false statements about them. And Plato's concern in this context are true and false statements.

Plato maintains that only some forms combine while others do not combine. If all forms would combine with all others, contradictory statements such as ‘motion is at rest’ would follow. If, on the other hand, no form could combine with any other, we could not have any true statements and no philosophical theory about forms, such as motion or being, would be possible. The investigation of the relations between the forms, according to Plato, is the task for dialectic. Statements, as opposed to singular terms, combine different items. This combination can hold among forms, some of which combine or are compatible, such as ‘being’ and ‘motion’, and others do not combine or are not compatible, such as ‘motion’ and ‘rest’. The interweaving of forms with forms leads to logical truths, if the forms are compatible, or logical impossibilities, if the interwoven forms are incompatible. They are discovered *a priori*, and the investigation of these relations among forms is the dialectician’s business. But forms can also be combined or interwoven with particulars, such as in predicative statements like ‘Socrates is a man’. Here a particular, Socrates, and a form, the property of being a man, are ‘interwoven’ or combined. But since one object can be combined with many properties, e.g., Socrates can be said to be a man and wise, the forms ‘man’ and ‘wise’ have to be compatible. That is not to say that all instances of ‘man’ are also instances of ‘wise’. Given that particulars have many properties, i.e., they participate in many forms, the forms they participate in have to be compatible. Whereas these relations among forms can be discovered *a priori*, and are necessary connections, a particular may or may not combine with a property,

hence our belief about this connection is empirical, i.e., we have to find out if the particular actually has that property.

Since every particular is combined with at least one form insofar as it is an instance of a form, we implicitly weave together the form of which Socrates is an instance with another form, namely the predicate. So the statement in 259e does not require that all statements expressing relations between particulars and forms *contain* an explicit combination of forms, but rather that statements are only possible because forms are capable of combination.

3.5.2 Attributing Being

Plato's rather lengthy criticism of previous and contemporary philosophers leads to the result that being has to be established as a separate form or kind, as distinct from motion and rest, though he does not reach a definition of being. The principle of combination of forms by interweaving them can be such that some forms can be interwoven with several other forms (i.e., these forms are compatible), some cannot combine with each other (i.e., when the forms are incompatible), and some forms can combine with everything (254b-c). The form of being can combine with everything, it encompasses everything (250b).

Meinwald (1992) argues that in the *Parmenides* Plato draws attention to an important distinction between two different kinds of predication: Predication in relation to itself (*pros heauto*) and predication in relation to others (*pros ta alla*). Frede (1992) points out that Plato makes this distinction in 255 c ff. between two different ways in which being is attributed to things. In one way we say that something is of and in itself, [19] and in another way we say that something is with reference to something else. To use Frede's examples, 'Socrates is white' is of the second kind, since according to Plato, having a property is by participation to something else (namely a form); as Frede explains, "he is white, not by being this feature, but by having this feature. …The color, on the other hand, is said to be white, not by participating in, by having, this feature, but by being it. Similarly the color is a color, not by having this sort of feature, but by being this sort of feature. Hence it is not just white, but also a color, by itself" (p. 401). A minor difference between Meinwald's and Frede's analysis is that Meinwald holds that both kinds of predication are associated with participation, whereas Frede maintains that only predication of the second kind (in relation to others) is connected with participation. We have to side with Meinwald; predication of the first kind, i.e., saying of white that it is a color, is saying that white is a kind of color, hence it participates in the form of color. Forms can participate in other forms. Being attributed in the second way, in relation to something else, would be saying that white is different from pink. But 'is' in its first use has to be distinguished from the 'is' of identity, since saying 'white is a color' does not mean that 'white is identical with color'. The 'is' of identity, according to Plato, is

[19] '*auta kath' hauta*' (255c12).

attributing sameness in relation to others. This distinction between attributing being 'in itself' and in relation to others allows for different kinds of predication.

3.5.3 Not-Being

Plato now selects five forms, the very great kinds (*megista genê*), namely being, motion, rest, the same, the different. Investigating the relations between those, he will eventually refute Parmenides and account for the problem how something can be and not be. On Plato's analysis, it can be said that 'motion is', i.e., 'motion is being' since the form of being encompasses it, it is, so to speak a kind of being. The predication in 'motion is' is of the first kind, namely predication of the subject in relation to itself. In this case, 'is' functions as a complete predicate, i.e., what we have called the complete use of 'is'.[20] But since motion is different from being, i.e., it is a form distinguished from the form being, we can say that 'motion is not being'. Motion is different from being just as it is different from all the other forms, viz. it is different from the same, and rest. Using 'is not' in 'motion is not being' is predication in the second way, namely in relation to others. In other words, if X is different from Y, we say that X is not Y. So saying that X is not Y is unproblematic, because we are really saying that X is different from Y. So the denial of being is turned into the affirmation of difference. This is a significant move; in all cases of the interweaving of forms we affirm that one form is a kind of or participates

[20] Cf. p. 61.

in another form, either in itself or in relation to something else. So saying that X is not Y does not mean that X is not-being in relation to Y, rather it means that X is different in relation to Y; it says that X is something in relation to Y, namely different.

The form when we say ‘is not’ thus turns out to be the form of difference. Difference encompasses all forms just as being does, since each thing is different from all others. Difference, like motion, is being or a kind of being. This solves the apparent contradiction that seemed to adhere to saying ‘is not’. The misunderstanding that leads to the contradiction is that not-being was mistakenly supposed to be the opposite of being. ‘Is not’ as a predicate, however, requires a form. But there cannot be a form of ‘not being’ since it would be incompatible with being. For Plato, being encompasses all other forms, so there cannot be any form (such as not-being) that is incompatible with being. The apparent contradiction connected with the puzzle of false statements was that a false statement says what is not, yet, what is stated must be somehow. And if there were a form of ‘not-being’, it would be incompatible with being. In that case, a false statement would consist in the interweaving of incompatibles. This problem is avoided by analyzing what-is-not as what is different. And being and difference are compatible forms.

For Plato, the statement ‘motion is’ is the interweaving of two forms, namely motion and being; it states that motion participates in being or is a kind of being. So what has been called the complete use of the verb ‘to be’, is the connection of the subject with the form being. In this case, ‘motion is’, being is asserted in the first use of ‘is’, namely

by itself and not in relation to something else. The statement 'motion is different from rest' is also the interweaving of forms, namely the interweaving of motion and difference in relation to rest; motion is said to participate or to be a kind of difference in relation to rest. For Plato, there is no problem with this. But if not-being were the form instead of difference, motion would be said to participate in not-being in relation to rest; there is a problem here, since it implies the interweaving of being and not-being, two incompatibles. This however, is not because Plato confused or failed to see the distinction between complete and incomplete use of the verb 'is'. Rather, since motion, like everything else, participates in being or is a kind of being, it would be said to participate in both, being and not-being, hence two incompatibles are implicitly interwoven.

A *logos* always states the *symplokê* or interweaving of two items, either forms or particulars, but since the form of being encompasses everything, in all these cases being (namely a certain kind of being) is implicitly asserted since the interwoven items participate in or are kinds of being. According to Plato, saying 'is not' is analyzed as participating in difference or being a kind of difference (in relation to something). This avoids the interweaving of incompatibles because difference and being are compatibles. Thus, the form of being can be said that it is not, namely as it is different in relation to all other things. This, in Plato's view, refutes Parmenides' claim that it is impossible to say that what-is is not.

There is one difficulty here: Statements such as 'motion is different from rest', 'motion is different from being', seem to be denying the identity between those two forms. So there are numerous comments concerning the question whether or not Plato distinguished the 'is' of ordinary predication and the 'is' of identity. But Plato found it necessary to include both forms, the different and the same, among the 'greatest kinds'. So it can be assumed that he thought that 'motion is not rest' is not just saying that motion is not identical to rest, but that motion is a distinct or separate thing than rest. The 'is' of identity, e.g., when we say '*a* is *b*', on Plato's analysis, is saying that '*a* is the same in relation to *b*'. Whatever the reason for his distinction, though, the crucial move is that the denial of being is turned into an affirmation of difference and not into another denial. It allows for the interweaving, in this case, of forms. If saying 'X is not Y' is turned into 'X is not identical to Y' the question would be which forms are interwoven; 'motion is not rest' is not the interweaving of motion and rest, but the interweaving of motion and difference in relation to rest. (For Plato, there is no form of nonidentity). It asserts the interweaving of motion and difference; when stating 'motion is not identical with rest' we cannot say that motion is interwoven with sameness in relation to rest, because that is precisely not affirmed.

Nevertheless, ordinary negative predication seems to be different from 'motion is not rest'. In the statement 'Theaetetus is not flying' the 'is not' does not mean that Theaetetus is different in relation to flying. So Plato maintains that forms or kinds have different parts. Just as science or art as a kind can be divided into different fields, so can

the form of difference be divided into parts or kinds. Accordingly, the different in 'is not' in the statement 'Theaetetus is not flying' is a different kind of difference (257b ff.). The problem is that there seems to be a difference when particulars are combined with forms or forms are combined with forms. In 'Theaetetus is sitting', to use Frede's formulation (1992, p. 38), Theaetetus *is* not that feature (sitting), but that he *has* it. We have to conclude, that on Plato's account, particulars participate in forms differently than forms participate in other forms.

3.6 Truth and Falsity of Statements

As we have seen, according to Plato every statement or *logos* consists of the combination of subject and predicate. A simple sentence consists of a noun (subject kind) and a verb (predicate kind), and by making a statement we are interweaving them. The Eleatic Stranger now gives 'Theaetetus is sitting' as example for a true statement and 'Thaetetus is flying' as example for a false statement. Both are about something, namely Theaetetus, and both say something about him. Now he wants to eliminate the remainder of not-being that was attached to a false statement. As it turned out, since making a statement consists in the interweaving of two items, so we need an item about which we say something, the subject, and an item, something that gets said about the subject. In both cases, there is a subject, Theaetetus (a particular) and a predicate, namely the form or property of sitting and the form or property of flying respectively. And in both cases,

the subject is interwoven with the predicate, a form. So each statement is a proper *logos*, since it is the interweaving of items, and they are proper *logoi* independently of being true or false. So what is the difference between the true and the false example? The Stranger explains in 263b4-11:

> Stranger: The true [logos] says what is as it is.[21]
>
> Theaetetus.: Yes.
>
> Stranger: And the false [logos] says what is different from what is.
>
> Theatetus: Yes.
>
> Stranger: So it says that what is not, is.
>
> Thaetetus: Perhaps.
>
> Stranger: [The false logos says] what is different from what is about you.

But what does Plato mean by 'what is as it is'? On our interpretation above (in section 3.2), all statements or *logoi* create an *eidôlon*, which is a presentation of a state of affairs, and if the statement is true, the *eidôlon* is a correct presentation and coincides with a fact. Hence, if the *logos* is true, the *eidôlon* presents the state of affairs as it is, or like it is. And if the *logos* is false, the state of affairs presented by the *eidôlon* is different from the state of affairs that holds, or the fact. In other words, the *eidôlon* that presents something different from what is, is an incorrect presentation.

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[21] 263b4; the phrase *ta onta hôs estin* (something that is as it is) is ambiguous – it can also mean 'what is that it is'.

With Plato's theory of the *symplokê* or interweaving of items, what we have called 'state of affairs' turns out to be just that relation between items. In Plato's view, it is the relation of participation, either among forms, or between particulars and forms. So a 'state of affairs' is the relation of a form or a particular participating in a form, either as being 'a kind of' or as 'having that property'. Though Plato does not state any conditions for the truth or falsity of statements, a necessary, but not sufficient condition for the truth of a *logos* is the compatibility of the forms. If the *logos* states a relation between forms, the necessary condition is also sufficient since statements about forms are either necessary, if the forms combine, or impossible if the forms do not combine. But when interweaving particulars and forms, we can only arrive at contingent truths; a *logos* that states a relation between a particular and a form can only be true if the forms are compatible (i.e., if all the forms in which the particular participates are compatible with the property ascribed in the statement), but in addition, the particular has to actually stand in the relation to that form. In Plato's example, though none of the properties of Theaetetus is incompatible with the property of flying, the subject does not actually stand in that relation to the property of flying. The true *logos* 'Theaetetus is sitting' creates an *eidôlon* that presents Theaetetus related to the property sitting, it is a correct presentation given that the actual Theaetetus is in fact related to the property sitting. It presents Theaetetus as sitting. The false *logos* 'Theaetetus is flying' creates an *eidôlon* that presents Theaetetus related to the property flying, but given that Theaetetus is not related to that property, it is an incorrect presentation. In other words, he is presented differently than he is.

Previously, we have maintained that a particular is presented as *eikôn*, and we have left it open how forms are presented in the *eidôlon*, or if the forms themselves are part of the *eidôlon*. Plato makes his case easy by having the Stranger use Theaetetus, who is present and can be pointed out, as the subject in the examples. When he states the false example that Theaetetus is flying, he makes a point that the subject is "Theaetetus, with whom I am talking right now" (263a8). It is clear from this that he intends to talk about the object Theaetetus, not the *eikôn*, and that the truth or falsity of the statement depends on whether the relation holds between the object Theaetetus and the form. Thus Plato embraces a correspondence theory of truth, at least with regard to empirical statements involving objects within the realm of appearances, where a *logos* is true if it creates an *eidôlon* that is a correct or true presentation of a state of affairs, hence one that corresponds to the fact.

3.6.1 Statements About Non-Existents

Is it possible, on Plato's account, to talk about "non-existent" objects? The term "non-existent", of course, cannot appropriately be applied to Plato's theory, since on his view, all things have being, including images. But within Plato's theory, what we call "non-existent", can be considered as an *eikôn* (of the *Republic*), which does not present any particular, or for which there is no sensible particular as original. So Odysseus,

Pegasus, or the golden mountain, are *eikones* that have no corresponding original. And in the *Republic*, the sophists and poets are among the chained prisoners in the imagery of the cave, who are only concerned with *eikones*.

At the end of the *Sophist*, after it has been established that a *logos* is independent of being true or false, since it states something (as opposed to what-is-not or nothing), the Stranger finally returns to the definition of the sophist. *Logoi*, both true and false, cannot only be verbally stated, but can, as silent *logoi*, be parts of our opinions, thought or imagination. Thus, he can return to the sophist's art of image making. In 264d, he says:

> Since now the *logos* and false opinion have shown themselves as being, it is possible that there are imitations of what is and from this condition comes about the fallacious art.

The term "imitations" (*mimêmata*) has a negative connotation, indicating that the sophist creates incorrect presentations or *eidôla.* Plato also considers poetry as imitating art,[22] and it is clear that for Plato the speech or *logos* of the poet is an imitation or incorrect presentation, just as the speech of the sophist. Thus in the *Republic*, where Plato examines objects, the sophists and poets are among those who create mere images or *eikones* and lack the trust in corresponding originals. Likewise, in the *Sophist*, where Plato examines statements, the sophists are defined as the creators of false images that are the objects of these statements.

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[22] In books 2, 3 and 10 of the *Republic*, and *Ion.*

A proper *logos* was defined as consisting of subject and predicate. On our interpretation of *eikôn* and *eikasia* in the Republic we have maintained that sensible particulars are always presented as *eikones*, and that in our thought or talk about sensible particulars the *eikôn* is the immediate intentional object. Hence, the subject of the *logos* is presented as an *eikôn* in the image or *eidôlon* created by the *logos*. Now we can assume that the subject can also be provided by an *eikôn* that has no corresponding original, such as in statements about Odysseus or the golden mountain. With the example 'Theaetetus is sitting' Plato indicated that in order for a statement to be true, the relation or interweaving that is stated between subject and predicate must actually obtain between the particular and the form. But what about a statement such as

(3.5) Pegasus has wings?

The name 'Pegasus' stands for an *eikôn* that has no corresponding original. The *logos* stated in (3.5) is the interweaving of two items, namely an *eikôn* and a form, stated by the subject and predicate respectively. If the relation stated obtains, the statement should be true. Given the property ascribed by the predicate is a property depicted in the *eikôn*, the relation between subject and predicate obtains. So we could expect (3.5) to be true. But this is pure speculation, and considering Plato's contempt for the sophists and poets, it is questionable. At any rate, it remains open if Plato would consider a statement such as (3.5) as true, false, or as Frege does, as lacking a truth value altogether, when there is an *eikôn* and no sensible particular for which the relation can be stated.

We can presume that Plato deems it possible that people realize that the images or *eikones* are presentations of sensible objects, and that these images can be deceiving; in the imagery of the cave, the people who are released from the chains and recognize the artifacts that are the originals for the shadows represent this. Moreover, he surely thought that people are generally aware that characters of myth and fiction do not exist. On Plato's view then, are there any true statements akin to what we have called 'negative existence claims'? The statement

(3.6) *a* does not exist,

on our interpretation of Plato's theory, means that we say that the name '*a'* stands for an *eikôn* that has no corresponding original, i.e., there is no sensible particular that corresponds to this *eikôn*. But there is a problem to formulate negative existence claims in Plato's terms. It requires the use of 'is not' in a complete sense, analogous to the complete use of 'is' that asserts being of the object itself and not in relation to others. Since we cannot properly use the term 'exists' for Plato, the equivalent of asserting existence for an object *a* in Plato's framework would be

(3.7) *a* is

where 'is' is used in the complete sense, attributing 'being' to the object by itself and not in relation to something else. In analogy, a negative existence claim would be equivalent to

(3.8) *a* is not

where 'is not' is used in a complete sense. Given that 'is not' is analyzed as 'is different', (3.8) has to be stated as

(3.9) *a* is different.

But since difference is a relational property, *a* can only be asserted to be different in relation to something, hence, there is no complete use of ‘is not’. So (3.8) and (3.9) are not equivalent to (3.6).

Chapter 4

FREGE'S NOTION OF SENSE

4.1 Introduction

Frege's distinction between *sense* ('Sinn') and *reference* ('Bedeutung') marks a cornerstone in Frege's work, and it was of substantial influence on the philosophy of language and logic. Frege developed this distinction as he tried to explain how identity statements can be informative. In section 4.2 we discuss the puzzle of identity; we argue that despite Frege's incorrect *Begriffsschrift* analysis, according to which identity holds between signs and not objects, the distinction between sense and reference nevertheless solves the problem. Although Frege incorporates the *a priori*-empirical distinction in his formulation of the puzzle, we argue that this distinction is not essential to the puzzle and the difference in cognitive value for different identity statements. Thus, criticism of the puzzle that is based on this distinction can be refuted.

Section 4.3 examines the distinction between sense and reference and the problems this distinction presents. What makes the distinction between sense and reference attractive is that it not only explains the informativeness of identity claims, but it also accounts for the meaningfulness of singular terms that lack a reference, and explains why terms or expressions in oblique contexts cannot always be substituted *salva veritate* by expressions that have the same reference. The fact that the notion of sense

solves three problems at once confers upon the theory the advantage of explanatory strength. Frege considers sense as mind- and language- independent, and sense functions as meaning for singular terms. Sense is a 'mode of presentation' of the object denoted by a singular term, the reference, yet it is objective as opposed to a purely subjective 'idea'. We argue that the notion of sense is best understood as a set of properties that presents one aspect of the object denoted. One of the problems is that Frege contends that the given sense determines the reference; but if only some properties of the object are presented by the sense, how can a unique object be determined, as other objects may share that same set of properties? In section 4.3.3 we discuss the problems that arise for senses that lack a reference, namely for singular terms that name non-existent objects.

In section 4.4 we examine Frege's notion of thought and truth value. Frege considers a thought as the sense of a sentence. Moreover, he maintains that the reference of a sentence is its truth value, i.e., either true or false. Since the truth value as the reference of a sentence is considered as function of its parts, namely of the references of the terms, if the sentence contains a term that lacks a reference, the sentence does not have a truth value. Hence, statements about non-existents can neither be true nor false. We claim that it is a mistake that Frege considers empty singular terms as confined to fiction and thus he assumes that we are not interested in the truth value of statements containing reference-less terms. However, discourse about literature and even science contains empty singular terms, and presumably we intend to make true statements even if there is no reference. So it is desirable that these statements can have a truth value.

Section 4.4.4 deals with existence claims and negative existence claims. Frege does not offer an acceptable solution for statements that affirm or deny existence. However, Mendelsohn (2005) proposes a solution based on Frege's notion of sense and instances, which allows for existential claims to be informative and have a truth value. In section 4.4.5 we discuss a solution to account for truth values for attributive claims about non-existents using the notion of sense.

In the last section of this chapter, section 4.5, we revisit Plato with the question of whether or not Frege is a Platonist. We will highlight similarities as well as differences between Frege's notion of sense and thought and Plato's notions of *eikôn* and *eidôlon*. As a result, we consider Frege as Platonist, though in an unusual sense of Platonism.

4.2 Frege's Puzzle

Frege's puzzle is not about non-existent objects, rather it starts as a puzzle about the relation of equality or identity. He struggles with the question whether the relation holds between names or objects. Consideration of the relation of equality leads Frege to observe that a true proposition stating equality or identity such as

(4.1) The Morning Star is the Morning Star

differs from

(4.2) The Morning Star is the Evening Star.

According to Frege, the difference between these statements is not just trivial since one statement is not informative and can be discovered *a priori*, whereas the other is informative and is discovered empirically. Given that the names designate the same object, the puzzle concerning identity statements leads to the question: What is the difference between different names or expressions that designate the same object?

4.2.1. Identity Statements

The puzzle of identity is stated at the beginning of *On Sense and Reference* (1892, henceforth SR):

> Equality gives rise to challenging questions which are not altogether easy to answer. Is it a relation? A relation between objects, or between names or signs of objects? In my *Begriffsschrift* I assumed the latter. The reasons which seem to favour this are the following: $a=a$ and $a=b$ are obviously statements of differing cognitive value; $a=a$ holds *a priori* and, according to Kant, is to be labelled analytic, while statements of the form $a=b$ often contain very valuable extensions of our knowledge and cannot always be established *a priori* (p. 56).

Frege asks whether equality is a relation between objects or between names, and supports his finding from the earlier *Begriffsschrift* (1879, henceforth BS), namely that it is a relation between names or signs and not objects. It is rather curious, though, to claim that equality

holds between names or signs and not objects. After all, equality holds if what the signs stand for is the same object. Moreover, Frege uses the term 'equality' ("Gleichheit") and not 'identity' ("Identität"), but statements of the form '*a* is *b*' or 'The Morning Star is The Evening Star' are identity statements. The assertion that identity is a relation between names or signs (and not objects) is even more peculiar since the sign or name is precisely what is not identical but differs. The statement 'The Morning Star is The Evening Star' can hardly be considered as stating the relation of identity between the name 'The Morning Star' and the name 'The Evening Star'.

As an argument in favor of his earlier claim that the relation of equality holds between names Frege points out that if equality were a relation that holds between objects, then equality would hold of an object to itself. So the trouble is that if the relation is stated only of the object, there should not be any difference between $a=a$ and $a=b$ since they are about the same object.

In BS Frege said the following:

> Equality of content differs from conditionality and negation by relating to names, not to contents. Elsewhere, signs are mere proxies for their content, and thus any phrase they occur in just expresses a relation *in propria persona* so soon as they are joined together by the symbol for equality of content; for this signifies the circumstance of two names' having the same content. Thus, along with the introduction of a symbol for

> equality of content, all symbols are necessarily given a double meaning – the same symbols stand now for their own content, now for themselves (p. 10).

Here Frege speaks of 'equality of content', and his answer that equality of content relates to names and not to contents seems to be a self-contradiction. Despite this odd formulation, he notes that the relation signifies that two names have the same content and that symbols or names have a double function, to stand for the content and for themselves.

What does Frege mean by 'content'? He gives an example from geometry relating to the problem of identity. Simplified, the example involves two points *A* and *B* that coincide; while *A* and *B* fall on the same point in geometrical space, i.e., the point is the same, there are different ways of determining point *A* and *B*. He says that "[t]he name B thus has in this case the same content as the name A. … The need of a symbol for equality of content thus rests on the following fact: The same content can be fully determined in different ways; and *that*, in a particular case, *the same* content actually is given by *two ways of determining it*, is the content of a *judgment*" (BS p. 11). So by content Frege means the object, in this case the point in geometrical space. But according to this analysis, equality is stated as a relation between A and B *insofar* as they have *the same content*. So how can equality not be a relation concerning the content or object denoted by the sign?

The problem with Frege's formulation of the relation of equality is that he expresses the question as an exclusive disjunction; the alternatives are that equality or identity is a relation that holds **only** between signs or names, or that equality holds **only** between objects. Frege has to reject the second alternative. If equality were a relation that holds only between objects, there could not be any difference between A and B or between *a*=*a* and *a*=*b*. So he settles for the first alternative, but both alternatives are mistaken. The relation holds for names insofar as they have the same content or object.

Despite the unsatisfactory answer to the initial question, in BS Frege makes a crucial discovery: A and B are different ways of determining the same content. Likewise, in SR he realizes that *a*=*a* differs from *a*=*b* in cognitive value since the former is trivial and can be discovered *a priori*, whereas the latter is informative and is discovered empirically, and it may even contain "valuable extensions of our knowledge." Thus, the question of equality leads to another puzzle: What makes an identity statement interesting or informative?

4.2.2 Frege's Solution

Questions of *a prioricity* and analyticity aside for now, a person may know that

(4.1) The Morning Star is the Morning Star,

but the same person may be unaware that

(4.2) The Morning Star is the Evening Star,

hence, the two statements differ. According to Frege, (4.1) and (4.2) differ in "cognitive value." Whereas (4.1)'The Morning Star is the Morning Star' is trivial and not informative, (4.2)'The Morning Star is the Evening Star' is informative. Thus (4.2) might come as a surprise to someone who did not know that the two names refer to the same object, and at some time it may have been an important discovery in astronomy. Given that there is a difference in cognitive value between the two statements, and both names designate the same object, there must be a relevant difference between the two names, namely a difference in cognitive content.

But what constitutes this difference in the names? It presents a challenge to the so-called naïve theory or Mill's (1843) view that proper names are tags that stand for objects, i.e., that the only function of a name or singular term is to stand for or designate an object. If designating an object is all there is to a name, then there should not be any difference between the two names 'the Morning Star' and 'the Evening Star' and hence the two statements above would not differ. If there is a difference, however, then there must be more to a name (or singular term) than the object denoted by it. In BS Frege said that the names in the example from geometry are different ways of determining the same object, and using a similar example from geometry he declares in SR:

> A difference can arise only if the difference between the signs corresponds to a difference in the mode of presentation of that which is designated….It is natural, now, to think of there being connected with a sign (name, combination of words, letter), besides that to which the sign refers, which

> may be called the reference of the sign, also what I should like to call the *sense* of the sign, wherein the mode of presentation is contained. In our example, accordingly, the reference of the expressions 'the point of intersection of *a* and *b*' and 'the point of intersection between *b* and *c* 'would be the same, but not their senses. The reference of 'evening star' would be the same as that of 'morning star', but not the sense (p. 57).

This solution distinguishes two functions of a name or expression. One function of a name or expression is to denote an object (if there is one), i.e., the reference, and the other function of a name is to present the object in a certain way, which Frege calls the *sense* of a name. The distinction between sense and reference explains the difference between the two statements (4.1) and (4.2); while both names have the same reference, they differ in sense, i.e., the names present the object in different ways.

According to Salmon (1986), "…'Frege's puzzle about identity' is that, pace Frege, it is not a puzzle about identity. It has virtually nothing to do with identity" (p. 12). Salmon shows that analogous puzzles arise not only with identity predicates, but also with other predicates. To use Salmon's example, the sentence 'Shakespeare wrote *Timon of Athens*' is informative, whereas the sentence 'The author of *Timon of Athens* wrote *Timon of Athens*' is not informative. This example, unlike Frege's examples that contain proper names, involves a definite description in place of the proper name, but it ascribes the same property to the same thing in both cases. As Salmon indicates, this can also be done using proper names

without predicating identity, e.g., 'Hesperus is a planet if Phosphorus is' and 'Hesperus is a planet if Hesperus is'. But contrary to what Salmon claims, the puzzle is about identity, as it is about the informativeness of identity statements, and Salmon only demonstrates that the puzzle is not restricted to identity statements. The same question of informativeness also arises for other statement pairs, as Salmon's examples show.

According to Frege, these statement pairs differ in cognitive value. Substituting a singular term with another singular term that denotes the same object changes the cognitive value of the statement if the terms have different senses. As Salmon's examples show, this holds not only for identity statements, but also for other declarative sentences. Likewise, Dummett (1981, p. 125-6) and Mendelsohn (2005, p. 30) argued that the puzzle of substitution can be generalized and holds for other statements as well. Moreover, as Frege points out in SR, a statement may also change if names or singular terms denoting the same reference occur in oblique contexts, i.e., in that-clauses indicating indirect quotes, or that-clauses that ascribe beliefs or other propositional attitudes.[1] Hence, names or singular terms cannot always be substituted by names or singular terms that have the same reference, but have different senses and preserve truth.

[1] The change resulting from substitution in oblique contexts, though, is different from the change that occurs from substitution in declarative sentences. In the case of substitution within oblique contexts the truth value of the whole sentence containing the that-clause may change with the substitution. But this is due to the same factor, namely the substitution changes the cognitive value of the that-clause, just as the substitution in declarative sentences changes the cognitive value of the sentence.

4.2.3 A Prioricity

Frege holds that statement pairs of the form a=a and a=b differ in *cognitive value* ("Erkenntniswert"). But what does he mean by that? Unfortunately, Frege is not very clear about the notion of *cognitive value*. He merely says "…*a=a* and *a=b* are obviously statements of differing cognitive value; *a=a* holds *a priori* and, according to Kant, is to be labelled analytic, while statements of the form *a=b* often contain very valuable extensions of our knowledge…" (SR p. 56).

The connection of the puzzle with the *a priori*-empirical distinction, however, is misleading as it gives the impression that the *a priori*-empirical distinction is essential to the puzzle. Leaving aside any controversy concerning *a prioricity* and analyticity, according to Kant,

(4.1) The Morning Star is The Morning Star

is *a priori* and analytic while

(4.2) The Morning Star is The Evening Star

is empirical and at some time contained valuable information about a celestial body. As opposed to Salmon (1986), who holds that the fact that *a=a* is *a priori* and *a=b* is *a posteriori* is essential to the puzzle, we claim that this distinction is not relevant for the puzzle. For one reason, Frege (1914) makes the point concerning the difference in cognitive value between statement pairs of the form *a=a* and *a=b*:

> Can the mere difference in signs be a sufficient reason to assume a difference in what is designated? Where would it lead if 2+3 is considered as different from 5?… We continue to hold that "2+3", "3+2", "1+4", "5" designate the same number. …One could say: If we designate the same with the sign "2+3" [as with "5"], we would have to know it immediately and we would not have to calculate it. This is easier to see with higher numbers. It is not immediately obvious that 137+469=606, but this knowledge results from a calculation. This says a lot more than "606=606". By means of the former our knowledge is extended, by means of the latter it is not. Hence the cognitive content ['Gedankeninhalt'] of both sentences must be different (1914, p. 125, in my translation).

Since this example is taken from mathematics, the *a priori*-empirical distinction is not applicable. But in this passage Frege obviously tries to make the same point as in SR, namely that there is a difference in cognitive content[2] between statements of the form *a=a* and *a=b*. The two mathematical equations compared differ insofar as one gives us somewhat interesting information, it says *more* than the other. Only here *both* propositions are *a priori* according to the Kantian notion. Hence *a prioricity* does not account for the difference between '137+469=606' and '606=606' since both statements are known *a priori*. So *a prioricity* is at least not an essential feature that accounts for the difference in cognitive values between two statement of the form *a=a* and *a=b*.

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[2] In SR the German term is 'Erkenntniswert' for 'cognitive value, in this example he uses the term 'Gedankeninhalt' (i.e., content of thought) for what I translated as 'cognitive content'.

Just as the distinction between *a priori* and empirical is not essential to the puzzle, neither is the analytic-synthetic distinction. Frege's examples in SR and BS (as just discussed above) are from Geometry and Algebra, hence the statement pairs are synthetic. While neither *a prioricity* nor analyticity are essential to the puzzle, it is essential that the statement pairs differ in cognitive value, each gives us *different* information, due to the different names providing *different* information about the object. The *a priori*-empirical distinction in Frege's examples in SR only make this difference more obvious as it shows that the statements pairs containing different names for the same object may even differ in an epistemologically interesting way. Thus, the *a priori*-empirical distinction merely emphasizes the difference between the statements.

The difference in cognitive value can also be shown for empirical statements. Consider the following: A person may know that

(4.3) Hesperus is the Evening Star

and the same person may also know that

(4.4) Phosphorus is the Morning Star

without knowing that

(4.5) The Morning Star is The Evening Star.

None of these statements is known *a priori*. All of these statements are about the same object, namely the same planet, yet each of them differs in cognitive value from the other two. Accordingly, (4.5) cannot be inferred from (4.3) and (4.4). Each of these statements

constitutes a difference in *what* the person knows. Questions of *a prioricity* pertain to *how* a person knows what she knows, not *what* she knows. The comparison between statement pairs in which one of the statements is *a priori* only makes the difference in what we know more obvious, but *a prioricity* is not essential to this difference.

4.2.4 Informativeness

All statement pairs that constitute examples of the puzzle are such that statements of the form $a=a$ are not informative at all whereas statements of the form $a=b$ are informative. And Frege calls attention to the difference in cognitive value as statements of the form $a=b$ are informative and often extend our knowledge, as opposed to statements of the form $a=a$. Is it essential to the puzzle that one of the statements is not informative at all whereas the other one is? And what does it mean that a statement is informative?

According to Dummett's (1973) interpretation, "[Frege's] argument is set out in terms of the notion of 'cognitive value', that is, information content. …The notion of 'information' being appealed to here does not require any elaborate explication: I acquire information when I learn something which I did not previously know, and Frege is asking how it is possible that I may be in a position to know the sense of an identity-statement, i.e. to understand it, and yet learn something that I did not know before by being told that that statement is true" (p. 94). Dummett seems to suggest that an informative statement tells us

something new, something we did not know before. Accordingly, a difference in cognitive value occurs when one statement tells us something *new* whereas the other does not. Taken in this sense, however, a statement ceases to be informative once a person knows that it is true, and hence the difference between the statement pairs disappears once the truth of both is known.

This, however, is not what Frege meant. The difference between the statements is not established by the fact that one statement gives us previously unknown information. The point is that the statements differ, and this difference is highlighted and more obvious in consideration of the fact that one statement may even enhance our knowledge. Frege's problem is the question how identity statements can be informative at all, i.e., how can $a=b$ contain different information than $a=a$ given that one and the same object is denoted by both names. The difference in cognitive value shows that distinct names for the same object give us different information about that object. Therefore, knowing the object as named '*a*' differs from knowing the same object as named '*b*'.

The best way to take the notion of informativeness of statements or 'extending one's knowledge' is with Corazza and Dokič (1995) who hold that it means to put one in the position to draw new inferences. For example, if a person knows that

(4.6) Hesperus is the bright star in the evening

and she also knows that

(4.7) Phosphorus is Venus

the statement

(4.8) Hesperus is Phosphorus

puts her in the position to draw the inference that the bright star in the evening is Venus. In fact, according to Corazza and Dokič "the main point of the puzzle … [concerns] … propositional connection and, therefore, the very possibility of the (internal) justification of inference" (1995, p. 161). In this sense, *what* we know differs in the statement pairs because the statements allow for different inferences. The possibility of such inferences requires that a name or singular term is not merely a tag that denotes an object, but that it also contains some information about the object, and different names may contain different information about the same object. This also follows nicely from Frege's characterization of sameness of conceptual content in BS (p. 2-3); here he argues that the inferences that can be drawn matter.

4.2.5 Criticism of the Puzzle

Criticism against Frege's formulation of the puzzle points out that it ignores context and the different ways in which speakers use names in certain contexts.[3] A number of philosophers[4] held that senses are not needed, but that understanding of a name is a matter of the practice of using that name to refer to a certain object. Thus Owens (1995) argues that

[3] The locus classicus for this criticism is Strawson (1950), which is a criticism of Russell's theory of descriptions, but has likewise been held against Frege.

[4] E.g. Quine (1960), Putnam (1975), Kripke (1980), Davidson (1984).

Blind and Deaf can successfully communicate about Margaret Thatcher, even though they each identify the reference of the name in different ways, which they cannot share. Evans (1982) maintained that when using a name, a speaker must indicate which name she is using given that there are often objects that share the same name. Based on Evans, Owens argues that Blind can indicate to Deaf which name he is using, namely for the British politician, and he can do so independently of having to indicate the method by which he identifies the reference. In cases where there are two distinct names for the same object, there are, accordingly, two distinct practices of applying each name to that object. Regarding Frege's puzzle, Owens holds that "…there is no particular way in which someone must think of Hesperus in order to understand the name 'Hesperus'. Given this, it is quite easy to see how 'Hesperus=Phosphorus' might be news to a speaker but an analytical truth to his audience, even though they both understand the statement perfectly" (p. 148). Owens further gives the example that Mary thinks of both Hesperus and Phosphorus as the evening star, whereas Joan only learned yesterday that both names are used for the same object. When Joan tells Mary that 'Hesperus is Phosphorus', Mary understands Joan perfectly; but, according to Owens, "what was, for Joan, an empirical claim is, for Mary, an *a priori* truth" (p. 148).

Owens' argument, however, seems rather questionable. First, if 'Hesperus is Phosphorus' is an *a priori* truth for Mary just because she already knows the truth of the statement, then any identity statement would constitute an *a priori* truth as soon as a person knows it to be true, and furthermore, any declarative statement, once known to be true, would thereby become an *a priori* truth. But if there are any *a priori* statements, at least

according to the Kantian notion, and that is the one to which Frege makes reference, *a prioricity* does not depend on an individual's state of knowledge; rather, the notion of *a priori* pertains to the question of how a statement is knowable by anybody. Second, as we have argued, *a prioricity* is not essential to the puzzle, but it is important that the statement pairs differ in cognitive value. And even Mary, who knows the truth of both statements, knows something different with each, hence her knowledge of 'Hesperus is Phosphorus' enables her to draw different inferences in connection with other statements than her knowledge of 'Hesperus is Hesperus'.

Moreover, the puzzle does not suggest that the difference between two distinct co-referring names occurs as a difference between distinct speakers; that would indeed mean that not only Blind and Deaf, but also everyone else communicates in a different idiolect. Instead, the puzzle suggests that one and the same speaker knows the same object in cognitively distinct ways. According to Frege, while Blind and Deaf each have a different '*idea*' of 'Maggie Thatcher', they both connect a sufficiently similar sense with this name, as distinct from the sense of 'Margaret Thatcher'.

Of course, just as there are different names for the same object, sometimes two distinct objects may share the same name. The object denoted has then to be determined by the context, just as it is the case for indexicals such as 'I' or 'he'. Thus Hahn (1995) agrees that 'Joe Lambert = Joe Lambert' is normally trivially true and 'Joe Lambert = Karel Lambert' can be surprising for someone who was unaware that it is the same person, namely

the author of several books and the Irvine Professor. But Hahn points out that it is possible that there is someone else whose name is Joe Lambert, e.g., a real estate agent. Hahn concludes that without context names do not have a determinate reference and hence the statement pairs can neither be termed surprising nor *a priori*.

Hahn's argument, however, does not challenge the puzzle. First, Frege does not maintain that words and expressions have meaning and reference independent of context, as he advises "never to ask for the meaning of a word in isolation, but only in the context of a proposition" (1884b, p. x). For Frege, thus, a word may have a different meaning or sense in different contexts. We can imagine unusual situations in which 'Joe Lambert is Joe Lambert' comes as a surprise, e.g., if I met Joe Lambert at a party and also know of Joe Lambert the Irvine Professor, but I failed to realize that the person I met is the Irvine Professor. In this case, 'Joe Lambert is Joe Lambert' comes as a surprise, but on Frege's view, in this case the surprise is due to the fact that (due to context) I connected two different senses with the same name, and mistakenly assumed two distinct objects. And second, as we have maintained above, the puzzle does not rest on the *a priori*-empirical distinction. The puzzle is about the question how two distinct names that name the same object can possibly be surprising or informative. We can also imagine another situation, in which I mistake two persons with the same name to be one and the same person, e.g., if I mistakenly believe that my real estate agent Joe Lambert is now an Irvine Professor. But the problem that the same name can have two or more distinct references is not the subject of

the puzzle either. Rather, the puzzle is how names that have one and the same reference can lead to a change in cognitive value for the statement.

4.3 Sense and Reference

The distinction between sense and reference serves as a solution to several problems. The notion of sense as 'mode of presentation' of an object explains the difference in cognitive value in statement pairs when a name or singular term is substituted by another singular term that refers to the same object but has a different sense. Thus, sense accounts for the informativeness of identity claims, and it explains the change of truth value when names in oblique contexts are substituted by names with the same reference. But sense also explains how we can meaningfully communicate about objects that do not exist. According to Frege, a singular term may lack a reference but still have a sense.

4.3.1 Singular Terms

Frege treats grammatically well-formed expressions such as 'the teacher of Alexander', 'the least rapidly convergent series', 'the moon', 'the morning star', as proper names, such as 'Dr. Gustav Lauben', 'Hesperus', or 'Odysseus'. Like proper

names, these expressions are singular terms that have a single object as reference (if there is one) that is denoted by the term.[5] A singular term denotes a definite object as its reference and has a definite sense "wherein the mode of presentation is contained" (SR p. 57). The relation between sign, sense, and reference is such that "a proper name (word, sign, sign combination, expression) *expresses* its sense, *stands for* or *designates* its reference. By means of a sign we express its sense and designate its reference" (SR p. 61). Whereas a singular term, if meaningful, always has a sense, it does not always have a corresponding reference, e.g., the name 'Odysseus' or 'the least rapidly convergent series' have a sense, but no reference. A single reference may correspond to more than one sense, as is the case for two co-referential names, e.g., 'Hesperus' and 'Phosphorus'. In Frege's terms, the two names stand for the same object, but express different senses.

Sense is characterized by the following features: (i) Sense contains a 'mode of presentation' of the reference (SR p. 57); it determines the way we think of the reference, and thus provides the cognitive content. (ii) Sense can be grasped by any speaker of the language (SR p. 57), it is part of the "meaning" of a name or expression; it is independent of the language since the same sense can be expressed in different languages (SR p. 58). (iii) Sense is mind-independent and distinguished from what Frege terms 'idea', an individual's subjective association with the sense (SR 59-61). (iv) Variations of sense may occur due to context and speaker, but are not desired in scientific discourse or in a

[5] Concept words are treated differently, see Frege (1892b).

perfect language (SR p. 58 n.). (v) Sense determines the reference, if there is one (SR p. 58, 61).[6]

4.3.1.1. Sense as Mode of Presentation

One of the most salient problems for the theory is to understand just what senses are and how they can be grasped. Sense contains a 'mode of presentation', thus it does not merely present the object, but presents it in a certain way:

> The sense of a proper name is grasped by everybody who is sufficiently familiar with the language or totality of designations to which it belongs; but this serves to illuminate only a single aspect of the reference, supposing it to have one. Comprehensive knowledge of the reference would require us to be able to say immediately whether any given sense belongs to it. To such knowledge we never attain (SR p. 57-8).

Sense can be thought of as the name's association with some features or properties of the object, and thus it "illuminates a single aspect of the reference." Sense as the 'mode of presentation' presents the object in a certain way that contains only some of the properties of the object. Comprehensive knowledge of an object is unattainable since we never know all the properties of an object. A single sense then can only present the object as having some

[6] Cf. Dummett (1981, p. 159), Mendelsohn (2005, p. 35). Notably, Putnam (1975) criticizes this thesis.

properties, and Frege maintains that we cannot know all the senses belonging to an object. Since a single reference can be referred to by different names, we can think of the sense of a name as presenting one property or one set of properties associated with the object whereas a different name associates another set of properties with the same object. In our discussion of Frege's puzzle, we have claimed that the informativeness of identity statements is a result of different names providing different information about the same object. The information given by the name can thus be thought of as the features or set of properties that the sense of the name presents, i.e., the 'mode of presentation'. Besides, an object can also be given immediately trough intuition ('Anschauung') (BS §8).

A speaker who understands two names is able to grasp the sense of both names, yet associates one set of properties as the sense of one name and another set of properties with the other name. For example, with the name 'Hesperus' the properties associated might be that it is a bright star on the sky, one that can be seen in the evening, and with the name 'Venus' are associated the properties of being a planet in our solar system. In some cases the speaker may know that both sets of properties belong to the same object, i.e., she knows that both names refer to the same object, whereas in other cases that might not be so, namely when a statement such as 'Hesperus is Venus' is news to her.

Understanding a name or singular term puts us in a position to think about an object. And when thinking of an object, we always think of it as having certain features, something that is such-and-such. The sense of the name, as 'mode of presentation', then determines the

way in which we think of the object, i.e., sense determines *which* properties are associated with thinking of the object. A particular sense, as the 'mode of presentation', can be thought of as a particular set of features or properties, as opposed to another sense, that presents a different set of properties. The different sets of properties determine the different ways we think of the object.

> In a footnote to the passage quoted above Frege says:
>
> In the case of an actual proper name such as 'Aristotle' opinions as to the sense may differ. It might, for instance, be taken to be the following: the pupil of Plato and teacher of Alexander the Great. Anybody who does this will attach another sense to the sentence 'Aristotle was born in Stagira' than will a man who takes as the sense of the name: the teacher of Alexander the Great who was born in Stagira. So long as the reference remains the same, such variations of sense may be tolerated, although they are to be avoided in the theoretical structure of a demonstrative science and ought not to occur in a perfect language (SR 57-8, footnote).

Frege concedes that there are variations in sense, such that one person may take the sense of the name 'Aristotle' to be 'the pupil of Plato' while another person may take the sense to be 'the teacher of Alexander'. Though not desirable in theoretic or scientific discourse or in a prefect language, these variations do occur and are "tolerable" as long as the reference does not change. The footnote suggests that senses are descriptive, and thus senses have been taken to be descriptions. Notably, Kripke (1980) considered senses to be descriptions,

whereas others, e.g., McDowell (1977), Dummett (1981), and Evans (1982) have denied that senses can be equated with descriptions. Senses, though they often are, need not be descriptive. Surely, singular terms such as 'the Evening Star' or 'the least rapidly convergent series' present themselves as descriptive, but a name can just as well be associated with properties that are based on sensation. For example, if Mr. Smith was pointed out to me earlier I may think of him as the tall guy in a perceptual mode rather than in terms of a description. That is, I associate certain observable features or perceptual properties with the object pointed out as Mr. Smith.

4.3.1.2. Sense and Meaning

Frege maintains that the sense of a name can be "grasped by everybody who is sufficiently familiar with the language" (SR p. 57). Understanding a singular term in a given language is usually considered as understanding the 'meaning' of the term in that language. Moreover, when translating a word or singular term into another language, the 'meaning' of the term should be preserved, so when we say that the German term 'der Abendstern' means 'the Evening Star' in English, the two expressions, if correctly translated, should preserve the sense, i.e., they have the same meaning.

Direct reference theorists[7] hold that the 'meaning' of a name is the object denoted by the term. Frege's terminology is a bit misleading; he uses the German term 'Bedeutung' (which usually translates as 'meaning') as a technical term for the object denoted. In their first translation, Geach and Black (1952) rendered 'Bedeutung' as 'reference', but in the later (1980) edition they translate 'meaning'. Most commentators use 'reference' as translation for Frege's 'Bedeutung' and we follow this tradition.[8] The German term 'Sinn' has traditionally been translated as 'sense'. The distinction between 'Sinn' and 'Bedeutung' is far from obvious in German. Thus Husserl (1900-1, p. 292) noted that frequently we use the terms 'Sinn' and 'Bedeutung' synonymously, and Husserl himself uses the term 'Bedeutung' for what is 'Sinn' (sense) in Frege's terminology and the term 'Gegenstand' (object) for what Frege calls the 'Bedeutung' (reference). Moreover, the English 'meaningful' is usually translated as 'sinnvoll' (which literally means 'senseful') in German.

According to Frege, we 'grasp' a sense when understanding the name or singular term, as one might say we grasp the 'meaning' of a word when understanding it. Irrespective of the confusing terminology, Frege's sense carries what is usually termed the 'meaning' of an expression. If a name lacks a reference, is still meaningful given it has a sense. Moreover, Frege holds that "the same sense has different expressions in different languages or even in the same language." Sense then is independent of the language as the same sense can be

[7] E.g., Russell (1905), Kripke (1980), Salmon (1986), Soames (1988).

[8] E.g., Dummett (1981) and Evans (1982), to name a few. For the translation of Frege's terms see Beaney (1997) who keeps the German terms in his translation. Some commentators have done the same, e.g., Mendelsohn (2005).

expressed in different languages, just as words in different languages have the same 'meaning'. Hence, what Frege terms 'sense' is what is usually understood as the 'meaning' of a term.[9]

Given that Frege maintains that the same sense can be expressed in different languages, two names or expressions cannot only have the same reference but also the same sense. So he apparently holds that there are true synonyms and that perfect translation from one language into another is possible as long as the same sense is preserved. Synonymy is a controversial notion and some philosophers deny that there are true synonyms.[10] A discussion would lead too far in the present context,[11] but for us the question arises whether synonymy poses a problem for Frege's puzzle. Frege claims that "*a*=*a* and *a*=*b* are *obviously* statements of differing cognitive value" (SR p. 56, italics added). But given two signs can have the same sense, *a*=*a* differs from *a*=*b* only if *a* and *b* do not have the same sense. Synonymy, however, does not challenge the puzzle, as the puzzle arises for those cases where '*a*' and '*b*' have the same reference but differ in sense. Moreover, Frege does not make the generalization that *all* statements of the form *a*=*b* are informative, but rather that there are at least some true statements of the form *a*=*b* that are informative, and those are the ones that pose the problem for which the notion of sense is a solution.

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[9] Kaplan (1978) proposes that Frege's sense should be split into two varieties, content and character.

[10] Notably Quine (1969).

[11] See Mates (1950).

4.3.1.3. Sense is Objective and Mind-Independent

Frege emphatically distinguishes sense from what he calls an 'idea' – whereas sense is objective and can be grasped by anybody who understands the language, ideas are subjective:

> If the reference of a sign is an object perceivable by the senses, my idea of it is an internal image, arising from memories of sense impressions which I have had and acts, both internal and external, which I have performed. Such an idea is often saturated with feeling; the clarity of its separate parts varies and oscillates. The same sense is not always connected, even in the same man, with the same idea. The idea is subjective: one man's idea is not that of another. There result, as a matter of course, a variety of differences in the ideas associated with the same sense. A painter, a horseman, and a zoologist will probably connect different ideas with the name 'Bucephalus.' This constitutes an essential distinction between the idea and the sign's sense, which may be the common property of many and therefore is not a part of a mode of the individual mind. For one can hardly deny that mankind has a common store of thoughts which is transmitted from one generation to another (SR p. 59).

An idea, as opposed to a sense, is mind dependent, it belongs only to the individual who has the idea. An idea is said to be an internal image, but it seems to be more than that as

it is laden with feeling and memories, containing the individual associations a person may have in connection with thinking of an object. The "coloring and shading" inherent in poetry also belong to the idea as the feelings and associations provoked in the individual reader or listener are private. Even though, as Frege admits, "without some affinity in human ideas art would certainly be impossible" (SR p. 61), the ideas (emotions and individual associations) evoked are private, pertaining to the individual, and thus it "can never be exactly determined how far the intentions of the poet are realized" (SR p. 61). While sometimes we can make out differences between ideas, we can never be sure how similar or different ideas are because two individuals' ideas cannot be compared since "we cannot have both ideas together in the same consciousness" (SR p. 60). One single sense then may have more than one idea as different persons connect different ideas with the same sense, and the same person may connect different ideas with the same expression at different times.

Frege is not particularly interested in ideas. The discussion of ideas only serves to draw a distinction between *sense* and *idea*. Sense as 'mode of presentation' should thus not be confused with an individual's subjective way of thinking of an object. But why should sense be objective? Wouldn't a person having different ideas connected with the same object solve the puzzle? Not quite, it only solves one aspect of the puzzle. Surely, a person who has different ideas associated with the names 'Hesperus' and 'Phosphorus' and fails to connect these different ideas with the same object might be surprised that Hesperus is Phosphorus. But having different ideas does not suffice to explain the same inferences that can be drawn by different persons from the sense associated with a name. It is thus

important that senses are objective and that different senses can be grasped by any speaker of the language, as opposed to ideas, which are private.

Frege admits that there are variations in sense. But how can these variations be reconciled with the distinction between sense and idea and the claim that sense is objective and mind-independent? The variations in sense are not the same as the variations in ideas. Ideas always vary from person to person as they are subjective and belong to an individual's consciousness, at best they can be similar, but we cannot determine this since two persons' ideas cannot be compared. Different senses, on the other hand, even though variations occur, are not restricted to particular instances of an individual's inner experiences; thus any number of people may take the sense of 'Aristotle' to be 'the pupil of Plato' and any number of people may take the sense of 'Aristotle' to be 'the teacher of Alexander'; neither of these different senses is subjective or mind-dependent.

Frege maintains that the sense can be 'grasped' by everybody who understands the language (SR p. 57). It is not so clear, however, how we grasp a sense, and how different persons grasp the same sense. Sense is objective, hence sense is not a psychological phenomenon, nor does a person who grasps a sense invent or create it. We understand sense to be a set of properties, and sense as the meaning of a sign. Thus, when a person understands the meaning of the sign, we suppose that the person then knows the way an object is defined or described. Moreover, sense accounts for the meaningfulness of terms that have no reference; if one would merely associate an idea with such a name, then two

persons could not successfully communicate about non-existent objects. So it is an important feature of sense that it is objective and mind-independent, as opposed to an idea, which is private and belongs to an individual's mind.

Sense is thus an intermediary that stands between the sign and the object. A speaker, by using a sign, expresses the sense by means of which the object is denoted, and if communication is successful, the listener understands the sense and thinks of the same object. In addition, sense has also the role of an intermediary between an individual's mind, her idea, and the object. Sense is the connecting link between sign and object as well as between the person's psychological state and the object. Though an intermediary, sense apparently is closer to the object, given that it is a mode of presentation of the object and it lacks any subjective or psychological features.

4.3.2. Reference

The reference of a singular term or name is the object denoted by the term. The sign "*expresses* its sense" and "*stands for* or *designates* the reference". Sense is the carrier of meaning and while a name or singular term can have a sense but lack a reference, it is impossible for a name to have a reference but lack sense. A sequence of sounds or letters does not designate anything, i.e., they do not make up a 'sign' unless they have a sense. The dual function of a sign, namely expressing its sense and standing for a reference, cannot be

considered as two separate and independent functions of the sign, since the reference is designated *via* the sense that is expressed by the sign.

The reference is *what* we talk about when using a name, i.e., the reference is the intentional object:

> Idealists or skeptics will perhaps long since have objected: 'You talk, without further ado, of the Moon as an object; but how do you know that the name 'the Moon' has any reference? How do you know that anything whatsoever has a reference?' I reply that when we say 'the Moon,' we do not intend to speak of our idea of the Moon, nor are we satisfied with the sense alone, but we presuppose a reference. To assume that in the sentence 'The Moon is smaller than the Earth' the idea of the Moon is in question, would be flatly to misunderstand the sense. If this is what the speaker wanted, he would use the phrase 'my idea of the Moon.' Now we can of course be mistaken in the presupposition, and such mistakes have indeed occurred. But the question whether the presupposition is perhaps always mistaken need not be answered here; in order to justify mention of the reference of a sign it is enough, at first, to point out our intention in speaking or thinking. (We must then add the reservation: provided such reference exists) (SR p. 61-2).

Frege makes it clear that when making an assertion, such as 'the moon is smaller than the earth', we neither speak about the idea of the moon nor of the sense, but rather of the object, the reference. As Frege (1893, p. 17) points out, successful communication would be

impossible if everyone designated a different object, namely one's own idea. Likewise, any argument about the properties of the object (e.g. the moon) would be futile if people speak about their idea of the object rather than the object. The speaker, so Frege, *intends* to talk about the object, and *presupposes* an object as reference.

How is this presupposition to be understood? We understand Frege to mean that a speaker may not be acquainted with the object and even know very little about the object, yet the speaker intends to speak about the object, the reference. In fact, we frequently talk about objects we are not acquainted with and about which we know not much; for example, a person may speak about the Morning Star but know not much about it and is unable to point it out in the nightly sky, yet she intends to speak about the object, the Morning Star. In this case, as often, we merely presuppose that there is an object. The reference is the object, even if we are not acquainted with it and are unable to point it out. Frege's claim that we presuppose an object is a claim that is important for our discussion on referenceless sense, so we will return to this issue in the next section.

Frege maintains that sense determines the reference: "…to the sign there corresponds a definite sense and to that in turn a definite reference" (SR p. 58). That is, the sense of a singular term or proper name uniquely picks out the one object for which the sign stands. This is a problem; first, sometimes two distinct objects share the same name, and second, given that sense presents only one aspect of an object, namely a set of one or a few properties of the object, there may be other objects that share that same set of properties.

The first problem can be resolved easily. If two distinct objects share the same name or singular term, such as the name ‘Aristotle’, which can refer to the philosopher, or Mr. Onassis, the shipping magnate, or a number of other persons by that name, the name has a different sense when the philosopher is the reference than when Mr. Onassis is the reference. Surely, the name ‘Aristotle’ may have several senses that all share the philosopher as reference, and likewise, more than one sense may pick Mr. Onassis as reference, but none of the senses that pick out the philosopher Aristotle is the same as any of the senses that pick out Mr. Onassis as reference. Of course, misunderstandings happen, especially when two objects or persons share the same name; in cases where such misunderstandings take place and the speaker intends to refer to the shipping magnate whereas the listener takes the reference to be the philosopher, the two persons do not grasp the same sense. If the sense is the same, the reference has to be the same. This is also the case for synonyms and for translated expressions where two expressions have the same sense and therefore also have the same reference. In other words, if the same name has more than one reference, distinct senses correspond to the distinct references. Strictly speaking, this violates Frege’s claim that “to the sign there corresponds a definite sense and in turn a definite reference,” but the problem can be avoided by considering the names as homonyms, hence different names that have distinct senses and in turn distinct references.

The second problem is more troublesome: If we take the sense of ‘Hesperus’ to be ‘the bright star seen in the evening sky’, there may be a number of celestial objects that

share these properties. Likewise, to use Frege's example, taking the sense of 'Aristotle' to be 'the pupil of Plato', this property is also shared by Xenocrates and a number of other students of Plato. Given that sense presents "only one single aspect of the reference" (SR p. 58), this aspect, or this particular set of properties may be shared by more than one object. So how can sense determine the reference? According to Frege, a name or singular term can have at most one reference (at most, because he holds that not every sense has a reference), so not all the objects that share the properties presented by the given sense can be references. Frege owes an answer to this question. We can only conjecture that a person using a name or singular term is either acquainted with or *presupposes* a unique object, which possesses, in addition to the properties presented by the given sense, a number of other properties that are not all shared by other objects. Or, in Frege's terms, the person presupposes an object, which has a number of corresponding senses that do not, in their totality, correspond to any other object. And since, as Frege points out (in SR p.58), we are unable to attain comprehensive knowledge of the reference, we cannot know all the senses that belong to a reference, as it is impossible to know the complete set of properties an object has. Thus, sense has to be connected with the presupposition of a unique reference. But even so, it remains unclear how a single sense that presents one single aspect of the reference can pick a single reference.

4.3.3 Sense Without Reference

Frege maintains that some singular terms have a sense but no reference. Since sense accounts for the meaning of a sign, the notion of sense seems to present a useful tool to explain meaningful communication about non-existent objects. But there are some difficulties. Sense is said to be a 'mode of presentation' of the reference. If there is no reference, sense is a mode of presentation *of what*? Frege maintains that sense serves "to illuminate only a single aspect of the reference, supposing it to have one" (SR p. 58); but supposing it to have no reference, a single aspect *of what* is illuminated?

4.3.3.1 Isolated Senses

Sense without reference can of course be taken as mere presentation, a set of properties that are not possessed by any object, akin to Russell's (1905) description that describes nothing. But even so, the problem is that senses that lack a reference are isolated. A singular term that has a sense as well as a reference can be connected with another singular term that has the same reference. The two expressions are connected insofar as they have the same reference, and they are connected via the relation of equality. This relation enables us to draw certain inferences. Hence, if we know that *a* is F and *b* is G, and we also know that $a = b$, we can infer that *a* is G. In other words, the senses of any two co-referential names *a* and *b* can be connected as they are different modes of presentation of the same

reference, and we can conclude that anything that is said about *a* also holds for *b*. For instance, given that 'Aristotle' and 'the teacher of Alexander the Great' are co-referential names, from

(4.11) Aristotle is the pupil of Plato

we can conclude

(4.12) The teacher of Alexander the Great is the pupil of Plato.

If, however, two singular terms have only sense but no reference, these expressions and their senses are isolated, they are mere presentations. As a result, we cannot draw any relevant inferences that connect the singular terms and their senses. These singular terms cannot be considered as different modes of presentation of the same object – after all, there is no object presented. For example, given that 'Odysseus', 'Penelope's husband', 'the father of Telemachos', and 'the cleverest of the Achaeans' are all singular terms that have a sense but lack a reference, these senses are isolated since there is nothing to connect them. But if so, and if these senses cannot be understood as different modes of presentation of the same person, though a fictional character, it would indeed be very hard, if not impossible, to follow the story of the Odyssey, or for that matter, any other work of fiction. Frege (1906) makes it very clear that a fictional object such as Odysseus does not count as a reference: "One may say that Odysseus is not a historical person, and mean by this contradictory expression that the name 'Odysseus' designates nothing, has no reference" (p.84, my translation). So perhaps the name 'Outis', i.e., Greek for 'nobody', which Odysseus cleverly assumes to deceive Polyphemus, is most appropriate.

If sense is all there is to a singular term when no object as reference exists, then the senses of referenceless singular terms are isolated since they do not permit inferences. Hence there is no more reason to connect the sense of 'Odysseus' with the sense of 'Penelope's husband' than there is to connect the sense of 'Hamlet' with 'Penelope's husband'. In order to draw the inferences that connect the singular terms and their senses we need know that the terms have the same reference, i.e., by means of identity claims. But for these inferences to be valid, the identity claims have to be true. And that, as we shall see, is a problem for Frege, since he considers statements that contain singular terms that lack a reference as lacking a truth value. Alternatively, and that is not a convincing option, the senses of names that lack a reference are all connected with each other as all of them designate nothing. In that case, all identity statements containing names that lack a reference would be true, and 'Hamlet' is as much connected with 'Penelope's husband' as 'Odysseus' is. According to Frege, however, such identity claims have no truth value.

One may hold that when hearing or reading fiction, such as the *Odyssey*, we think and talk about what is described in the epic, in the sense of an indirect quote. So we are not thinking about an object, but about the description in the work of fiction. Critics and scholars, however, talk about fictional characters in a way that goes beyond what is actually described in the fictional work. In order to follow the story line of a fictional work or to have discourse that transcends the work, we must at least temporarily purport to think of an object

that connects different names and singular terms. After all, fiction is not about names or descriptions, but about characters, among other things.

4.3.3.2 Presupposing Reference

Even though Frege takes into consideration terms for which no reference exists, he mistakenly seems to believe that such terms are limited to the realm of fictional literature and myth. There are, however, terms, including singular terms, that have no reference – or may not have a reference – beyond what is intended as fiction. Thus, we can find scientific notions for objects that later turn out non-existent, such as luminiferous aether, the invisible virus of d'Hérelle, or the Planet Vulcan. Furthermore, we may find out that what we believed to be a historic person, artist, or writer, never existed. For instance, a number of scholars maintain that no man named 'Homer' wrote the Odyssey and that the epic was not composed by any one person.[12] Some of these scholars simply believe that Homer did not exist. Yet, for the longest time people believed Homer existed.

According to Frege, just as sense allows us to speak about things we know very little about, sense also allows us to speak about things that do not exist. If a singular term lacks a

[12] Butler (1897) claims that the Odyssey was written by a young woman from Sicily, Parry (1971) and others hold that the epic was the result of an oral tradition, Van Thiel (1988) maintains that the work, as we know it, is the combination of two epics.

reference, or if we know little about the reference, the term is still meaningful because it has sense. As we have seen above (in section 4.3.2), Frege maintains that the speaker intends to speak about the object (in his example, the moon) and presupposes a reference. Here is a part of the passage quote again:

> I reply that when we say 'the Moon,' we do not intend to speak of our idea of the Moon, nor are we satisfied with the sense alone, but we presuppose a reference. … Now we can of course be mistaken in the presupposition, and such mistakes have indeed occurred. But the question whether the presupposition is perhaps always mistaken need not be answered here; in order to justify mention of the reference of a sign it is enough, at first, to point out our intention in speaking or thinking. (We must then add the reservation: provided such reference exists (SR p. 61-2).

But he merely mentions this presupposition, and presupposing a reference does not play a significant role in his theory. Moreover, it remains unclear if we also presuppose a reference if there is none. Frege says that we can be mistaken in this presupposition. But what is the mistake in the presupposition? Is the speaker mistaken about the object she presupposes as the intended reference, i.e., does she presuppose the wrong object as reference? Given that sense determines the reference, once the speaker grasps the sense of a sign, the reference is determined by the sense; the presupposed reference is then the object determined by the sense. Any mistakes concerning the object that is denoted by the sign occur by misunderstanding the sense. Getting the object wrong then cannot be a mistake in the presupposition, but the mistake happens on the level of sense.

The mistake can then only be that a speaker presupposes a reference where there is none, unknown to her, since it is a mistake. The added parenthesis, "[w]e must then add the reservation: provided such reference exists," indicates that Frege holds that the presupposition is only made when the speaker mistakenly believes that a reference exists, but not when the speaker is aware that the reference does not exist. Thus, a person who knows that Odysseus does not exists makes no such presupposition. Apparently Frege maintains that when no reference exists, we are content with the sense alone: "Hence it is a matter of no concern to us whether the name 'Odysseus', for instance, has reference, so long as we accept the poem as a work of art" (SR p. 63). What is odd about it is that according to Frege we do not intend and presuppose a reference if there is none. But he holds that we do so when we are mistaken.

So on the one hand, a speaker who falsely believes a reference to exist (say speaker *A*), intends to speak about an object and presupposes an object as reference. On the other hand, a speaker who believes that no object as reference exists (speaker *B*) does not intend to talk about an object and does not presuppose any object either. Now which object does speaker *A* intend and presuppose if there is none? And what does speaker *B* talk about? Does *B* intend to talk about the sense of the singular term used? Besides, what is the intention of a speaker *C* who is not quite sure if there is a reference or not? For example, assuming that Homer did indeed not exist, numerous people since antiquity have mistakenly intended to talk about and presupposed a reference that does not exist. The scholars, on the

other hand, who are convinced that Homer did not exist, according to Frege, do not intend to talk about an object, nor do they make any presupposition. But *who* or *what* do these scholars claim did not exist?

In the preceding section we have shown that it is a problem to connect senses if there is no reference. Presupposing an object as reference has the advantage that the senses of the singular terms 'Homer' and 'the famous Greek epic poet" can be connected as belonging to the same presupposed reference. Thus, the speaker who believes (mistakenly or not) that Homer existed, has no problem to connect the senses of 'Homer', 'the famous Greek epic poet', and 'the author of the Odyssey' as connected to the same presupposed object or reference. But if a speaker can mistakenly intend and presuppose a reference, which does not exist, why did Frege not extend this principle to speakers who are undecided or even convinced that the reference does not exist? The presupposition then has to be taken in the way Strawson (1950) suggested, namely that a speaker *pretends* to refer to something without *implying* that there is a reference. Similarly, Cartwright (1987) suggests that we purport to refer when using names that have no reference. When we are not acquainted with an object and know very little about it, we also merely presuppose a reference that happens to exist, but we presuppose it without any knowledge nor necessarily with any conviction that the reference actually exists. Likewise, we even mistakenly presuppose an object that does not exist, so presupposing an object that does not exist without implying that it exists is not a far step away.

The problem with presupposing a reference that does not exist is, of course, that one has to account for a non-existent object that is presupposed. Prima facie, Frege's theory that a sense can lack reference circumvents this problem. But his claim that we mistakenly presuppose a reference raises the question *what* it is that we presuppose, given that this reference does not exist. The sense of a singular term that has a reference presents only one aspect or set of properties of the reference, one that may be shared by other objects. Yet, the reference of the singular term is a unique object, and unless we are acquainted with the reference, we have to presuppose a unique object that has the properties presented by the given sense, among other properties that are not shared by other objects. A speaker who uses a name or singular term that has a reference presupposes just that. But so does a speaker who uses a name or singular term that has no reference, i.e., she presupposes a unique object that has the properties presented by the given sense. The speaker is mistaken in her presupposition, according to Frege, if there is no such object. But this presupposition is a *mistake* only if the speaker has the additional false belief that there exists a reference. A speaker who is aware that the object, the reference, does not exist, makes the same presupposition, but she has the additional correct belief that the reference does not exist. So the mistake lies not in the presupposition, but in the additional belief concerning the existence of the reference.

One may, of course, object to this analysis that the mistake in the presupposition lies not in an *additional belief* concerning the existence of the reference, but that a speaker who falsely believes a reference to exist makes the presupposition, whereas a speaker who is

aware that no reference exists does not even make this presupposition. According to Frege, all we have when talking about a non-existent object is the sign and the sense, whereas when talking about an existent object we have the sign, the sense, and the reference. An argument in favor of our analysis is that the sense of a singular term *implies* uniqueness, but it does not imply existence. Obviously sense does not imply existence, as terms that have sense may lack a reference. The sense of 'Homer' implies uniqueness just as the sense of 'Aristotle', but neither sense implies the existence of the reference. As we have argued above (in section 4.3.2), in order for a given sense to determine the corresponding reference, we have to presuppose a unique object that has the properties determined by the given sense, unless we are acquainted with the reference. Given that we presuppose a unique object when the sense does have a reference, and when mistaken we presuppose a unique object that does not exist, it is surprising that Frege did not extend the principle of presupposing a reference to cases when there is no reference.

Furthermore, the sense of a name or term does not change when we find out that the reference does not exist. If, for instance, the sense of 'Homer' is 'the famous Greek epic poet', the sense does not change with the discovery that Homer did not exist. Scholars who claim that Homer did not exist do not thereby deny that no person ever existed who was named 'Homer' nor do they deny that there may have existed someone named 'Homer' who was a also poet, but they maintain that the particular sense of the name 'Homer' has no existing object as reference.

4.3.4. Concepts

In this section we will only briefly note Frege's discussion of concepts in the posthumously published 'Comments on Sense and Reference' (1982-1895, henceforth CSR). Here Frege makes clear that the distinction between sense and reference applies not only to singular terms and sentences, but also extends to concept words:

> To every concept word or proper name corresponds as rule a sense and a reference, as I use these words. … The reference of a proper name is the object it designates or names. A concept-word refers to a concept, if the word is used as it is appropriate in logic (CSR p. 25, my translation).

Just as proper names, concept words also have a sense and a reference (except in fiction, where, according to Frege, words only have a sense).[13] The reference of a name is an object, and the reference of a concept word is a concept (CSR p. 25). Thus, two different concept words may differ in sense but have the same reference, namely the same concept (e.g. 'equus callabus' and 'horse'). The logical relation between concepts and objects is such that objects "fall under a concept" (CSR p. 25). The objects that fall under a concept are the extension of the concept. Moreover, just as a name can be substituted for another name with the same reference without changing the truth value of the sentence, so can a concept word be substituted for another concept word with the same extension without changing the truth value of the sentence (in a truth functional context). However, Frege points out that the

[13] SR p. 63, CSR p. 25.

extension of a concept word should not be confused with its reference. Extensions are objects, whereas the references of concept words are concepts.

Concepts and objects are fundamentally different (CSR p. 27), and the relations that hold between concepts are different from the relations that hold between objects. Concepts are predicative in nature, and thus concept words often take the place of the predicate in a sentence. But Frege notes that the subject-predicate distinction is misleading, since concept words can also take the position of the grammatical subject in a sentence. Proper names, as opposed to concept words, cannot be used as predicates, but they can only be part of predicates. We find Dummett's (1981) explanation helpful:

> Any English writer, advancing such a doctrine, would find it natural to employ, in place of the word 'concept', the word 'property', and it is often useful to make this substitution in considering what Frege says about concepts, in order to avoid the misleading suggestions of the English word 'concept'. It remains preferable to retain the word 'concept' when translating Frege or giving an account of his views, because the use of 'property' would involve other corresponding changes: where Frege says that an object 'falls under' a concept, we should have to say that it 'had' a property, and so forth (p. 173).

The sentence 'Socrates is a man' is thus analyzed as an object *a* (the object denoted by the proper name 'Socrates') falling under a concept *F* (being a man), i.e., the object *a* has

the property *F,* symbolized as *Fa*. Frege has much more to say about concepts,[14] but for our concern it is sufficient to point out that concept words, like proper names, have a sense and a reference. The reference of a concept word is not an object (or objects), but a concept. It remains unclear, however, what sort of things concepts are. We will return to this question in section 4.5.

4.3.4 The Ontological Status of Sense

While Frege explains the notion of sense with considerable lucidity in terms of the function that sense fulfills, he is rather taciturn concerning the ontological status. Thus, the function of sense is to stand as an intermediate between the sign and the object denoted. Moreover, insofar as sense is an objective 'mode of presentation' of the object, it is also an intermediate between the object and an individual's subjective the idea:

> The reference of a proper name is the object itself which we designate by its means; the idea, which we have in that case, is wholly subjective; in between lies the sense, which is indeed no longer subjective like the idea, but is yet not the object itself (SR p. 60).

Since Frege does not clearly explain what senses are ontologically we can only infer that he views sense also as an intermediate ontologically. The closest he comes to explaining what senses are is by means of an analogy (SR p. 60). In this analogy someone observes the moon

[14] In CSR and especially in Frege (1891) and (1892b).

through a telescope; the moon itself is compared to the reference, the image in the telescope is compared to the sense, and the observer's retinal image is compared to the idea. Whereas the retinal image is subjective as it belongs to the individual observer, Frege says that "the optical image in the telescope is indeed one-sided and dependent upon the standpoint of observation; but it is still objective, inasmuch as it can be used by several observers. At any rate it could be arranged for several to use it simultaneously" (SR p. 60). This analogy, again, focuses on the fact that the intermediary is objective, rather than what ontological status it has. Moreover, the analogy works well insofar as the telescope image is a representation of the moon, it depicts a certain aspect of the moon and yet the same image can be observed by different observers; like sense, the telescope image is an intermediate between the object, the moon, and the retinal image that is confined to the individual. The analogy, however, is somewhat problematic when a sense lacks a reference; after all, the telescope has to be pointed at some object in order to obtain an image in the telescope.

Senses are neither physical objects nor an individuals' mental states, but somewhere in between; they are a part of a collective consciousness, or as Frege puts it, "a common store of thoughts which is transmitted from one generation to another" (SR p. 59). Since Frege also applies the sense-reference distinction to concepts, senses cannot be identified with concepts. The notion of sense is less mysterious, though, if we consider senses as features or sets of properties by means of which we think of objects. Given that concepts take the role of predicates, concepts are elements of senses.

4.4 Thought and Truth

> Frege extends the distinction between sense and reference also to entire sentences:
>
> We now inquire concerning the sense and reference for an entire declarative sentence. Such a sentence contains a thought. Is this thought, now, to be regarded as its sense or its reference? Let us assume for the time being that the sentence has reference. If we now replace one word of the sentence by another having the same reference, but a different sense, this can have no bearing upon the reference of the sentence. Yet we can see that in such a case the thought changes; since, e.g., the thought in the sentence 'The morning star is a body illuminated by the Sun' differs from that in the sentence 'The evening star is a body illuminated by the Sun.' Anybody who did not know that the evening star is the morning star might hold the one thought to be true, the other false. The thought, accordingly, cannot be the reference of the sentence, but must rather be considered as the sense (SR p. 62).

And in a footnote to the above passage he adds:

> By a thought I understand not the subjective performance of thinking but its objective content, which is capable of being the common property of several thinkers (SR, footnote, p. 62).

4.4.1. Thought – The Sense of a Sentence

As a thought is the sense of a sentence, the same features that apply for the sense of singular terms also apply for a thought: (i) it contains a 'mode of presentation' of the reference; it determines the way we think of the reference; it thus provides the cognitive content. (ii) A thought can be grasped by any person; it is independent of the language since the same thought can be expressed in different languages. Hence, a thought is not *created* by someone who thinks it, but it is *grasped* by someone who thinks it. (iii) A thought is mind-independent and distinguished from "the subjective performance of thinking." It is independent of the individual thinker as the same thought can be grasped by different persons. A thought is different from an individual's idea ("*Vorstellung*") that contains emotions, mood, fragrance and the like. (iv) Like variations of sense for singular terms, variations of thought may occur due to context and speaker, but are not desired in scientific discourse. And finally, (v) one should expect that thought as the sense of a declarative sentence determines the reference of the sentence, if there is one, just as the sense of a singular term determines the reference.

Since a thought is conceived as the sense of a sentence, it is distinguished from an idea or the process of thinking, i.e., the mental act. Thoughts are thus objective and mind-independent; we do not make up thoughts by thinking them, but according to Frege, we discover them. Thus, thoughts are timeless, objective entities. Like the sense of a singular

term, a thought neither belongs to the inner world of a person nor to the things in the world around us ("Dinge der Außenwelt").

A proper name is said to *express* its sense, and a sentence *expresses* a thought. Frege thinks of a thought as composed of senses, so only the senses, and not the references are relevant for the thought. In a declarative sentence, if a word is substituted for another word that has a different sense but the same reference, the thought, i.e., the sense of the sentence, changes, but not the reference. According to Frege, subordinate clauses that state a belief or a direct or indirect quote designate a thought within the sentence in which they are embedded. The words in those subordinate clauses then do not have their "customary reference," but their "indirect reference" which coincides with their sense (SR p. 59). This explains the difference between substituting words or expressions in declarative sentences and in *oblique* contexts, i.e., indirect speech. The reference of the declarative sentence changes only when a word is substituted for another word that has a different reference. Within a subordinate clause, however, if a word is substituted for another word that differs in sense but has the same reference, the thought that is designated by the clause changes. And since the words within the subordinate clause do not have their customary reference, but their indirect reference, substitution of a word within the subordinate clause changes the reference of the whole sentence (SR p. 67). For example, 'John believes that the Morning star is bright' does not have the same reference as 'John believes that the Evening Star is bright'; John might believe that the Morning star is bright, but he may not believe that the Evening Star is bright. In this context the term 'Morning Star' cannot be replaced with

'Evening Star' since the terms do not have their customary reference but their indirect reference, which coincides with their customary sense. A change in sense then changes the reference of the whole sentence. The distinction between sense and reference for sentences provides an explanation for the fact that co-referential terms cannot be replaced in *oblique* contexts without changing the reference of the entire sentence. Though this is not without problems, we will not pursue a further discussion of Frege's analysis of *oblique* contexts and substitution in such contexts.

More important for the present investigation is another aspect of the distinction between sense and reference for sentences. Just as singular terms that lack a reference still have sense, so do sentences that contain empty singular terms:

> The sentence 'Odysseus was set ashore at Ithaca while sound asleep' obviously has a sense. But since it is doubtful whether the name 'Odysseus,' occurring therein, has reference, it is also doubtful whether the whole sentence has one. Yet it is certain, nevertheless, that anyone who seriously took the sentence to be true or false would ascribe to the name 'Odysseus' a reference, not merely a sense; for it is of the reference of the name that the predicate is affirmed or denied. Whoever does not admit the name has reference can neither apply nor withhold the predicate. But in that case it would be superfluous to advance to the reference of the name; one could be satisfied with the sense, if one wanted to go no further than the thought. If it were a question only of the sense of the sentence, the thought, it would be

> unnecessary to bother with the reference of a part of the sentence; only the sense, not the reference, of the part is relevant to the sense of the whole sentence. The thought remains the same whether 'Odysseus' has reference or not (SR 62-63).

Sentences that contain words or expressions that have no reference, express a thought, as long as they have sense.

4.4.2 Truth Value – The Reference of a Sentence

Whereas a thought is the sense of a sentence, the reference of a sentence is its truth value. This is perhaps the most peculiar claim in Frege's theory. By truth value of a sentence Frege means "the circumstance that it is true or false. There are no further truth values. For brevity I call the one the True, the other the False. Every declarative sentence concerned with the reference of its words is therefore to be regarded as a proper name, and its reference, if it has one, is either the True or the False" (SR p. 63). What makes this contention so odd is that all true statements have the same reference, namely the True, and likewise, all false statements have the same reference, namely the False. Moreover, given that sense is the 'the mode of presentation' of the reference, it appears strange to consider a thought as a mode of presentation of either the True or the False. Since statements state relations between objects (or concepts) and predicates, one may expect the reference of a sentence to be a state of affairs or fact. And Frege maintains that a fact is a thought that is

true (1918, henceforth TT, p. 35). A fact then is a certain kind of thought, namely a thought that refers to the True.

Frege saw no problem in having only two references for all thoughts. He holds that "from this we can see that in the reference of the sentence all that is specific is obliterated. We can never be concerned only with the reference of a sentence; but again the mere thought alone yields no knowledge, but only the thought together with its reference, i.e. its truth value" (SR p. 65). According to this, we have to conclude that the thought combined with the True as reference make up a fact.

Frege's motivation to consider truth values as references is that he believes that when we seriously inquire whether a name that is part of a sentence has a reference, we are concerned with the truth value of the sentence. He maintains that the truth value cannot be part of the sense of a sentence; the relation between sense and reference of a sentence cannot be the relation between subject and predicate. The connection between subject and predicate, he points out, only leads to a thought and one "never passes from sense to reference, never from a thought to its truth value. One moves at the same level but never advances from one level to the next" (SR p. 64). The advance to the next level is a judgment.

Frege's argument in support of the contention that the truth value is the reference of a sentence is that the truth value remains unchanged if parts of the sentence are replaced by

parts that have the same reference. In SR he goes through great length to explain the exception, namely the shift in truth value when co-referential terms are substituted in oblique contexts. As we have mentioned in the previous section, Frege explains this by distinguishing between 'customary reference' and 'indirect reference'.

The mere fact that substitution of co-referential parts in a declarative sentence does not change the truth value of the sentence, however, does not show that the truth value *is* the reference of a sentence. It only shows that substitution of co-referential parts does not change the reference of a sentence, whatever it is; and if the truth value was connected to the reference, then the truth value remains unchanged if the reference remains unchanged. In that case, however, the truth value would have to be accounted for, and the way it relates to the statement would have to be clarified. But in TT Frege outright rejects the correspondence theory of truth and any other attempts to define truth. Instead, he holds that truth is not definable. The question of truth is something that arises for a thought, i.e., the sense of a sentence: "[w]hen we call a sentence true we really mean its sense is" (TT p. 19). Though he holds that truth is unique, entirely different, and not comparable to perceptible properties, he still reluctantly holds that truth is a property of a thought.

4.4.3 The Trouble With Truth Values

The sense of a sentence is composed of the senses of its parts, and the reference of the sentence is composed of the references of its parts. This allows for a sentence that contains a term that has no reference to express a thought and the lack of a reference has no impact on the thought expressed. But if a part of the sentence lacks a reference, the whole sentence lacks reference, i.e., the sentence has no truth value. Frege makes it clear that he adheres to a two-valued system, that is the lack of a truth value does not constitute a third value (such as neither true nor false) besides true and false. Rather, a sentence such as 'Odysseus was a man' simply lacks a truth value. Frege says:

> The thought loses value for us as soon as we recognize that the reference of one of its parts is missing. …In hearing an epic poem, for instance, apart from the euphony of the language we are interested only in the sense of the sentences and the images and feelings thereby aroused. Hence it is a matter of no concern to us whether the name Odysseus,' for instance, has reference, so long as we accept the poem as a work of art (SR p. 63).

Frege is correct that in his claim that when dealing with a work of fiction we are not interested in whether or not the singular terms have references or the sentences are true or false. This would indeed be a complete misunderstanding of the work of art. But Frege is mistaken in his claim that "[t]he thought loses value for us as soon as we recognize that the reference of one of its parts is missing" (SR p. 63). There is, for example, discourse *about*

literature in which scholars are interested in the truth value of statements containing empty singular terms. If someone talks *about* the epic and maintains that 'Odysseus cleverly deceived the Cyclops' he is interested in the truth of his statement. Now here one may still hold that the scholar is not making a statement about 'Odysseus' or the 'Cyclops', but about the epic, i.e., he gives an indirect quote and we can analyze the statement as saying 'In the epic it says that Odysseus cleverly deceived the Cyclops'. According to Frege, the name 'Odysseus' then does not have its customary reference, but its indirect reference which coincides with its sense. The statement can then be true if that is what is said in the epic. But this analysis does not always work so well, even when we talk about fiction. 'Odysseus is depicted as a prudent man in the Odyssey' cannot be analyzed as 'in the epic it says that Odysseus is depicted as a prudent man in the Odyssey'. Whoever claims that 'Odysseus is depicted as a prudent man in the Odyssey' is not indifferent concerning the truth value of this statement, nor does he want to say that 'the sense of the name 'Odysseus' is depicted as prudent in the Odyssey', but he makes a statement about the character named 'Odysseus' and how he is depicted in the epic, i.e., the name 'Odysseus' is used *de re*. But what is 'the character named 'Odysseus''? Supposedly, a presumed fictional person. Now if someone mistakenly thought that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are epics about historical persons, he might also claim that 'Odysseus is depicted as a prudent man in the Odyssey' and mistakenly presuppose an object, a historical person, that is depicted as a prudent man in the *Odyssey*. This person would also presuppose that his statement is true if that object is indeed depicted as a prudent man in the *Odyssey* (regardless of whether or not he thinks that the historical person Odysseus was a prudent man). There seems to be no substantial difference

between the two persons making this statement; each of them intends to make a true statement, each of them talks about a presupposed object, neither of them intends to talk about the sense of the name 'Odysseus', and presumably, the statement is true if Odysseus is indeed depicted as a prudent man in the *Odyssey*. The only difference is that one person is aware that Odysseus did not exist whereas the other person mistakenly thinks that Odysseus was a historical person.

To recall, in section 4.3.3.2 (on p. 147) we have noted that Frege maintains that we presuppose an object as reference when using a proper name. According to Frege, we make this presupposition when there is a reference, and he holds that sometimes we are mistaken in this presupposition, i.e., when there is no reference. We have held that it is more plausible that we presuppose a unique object when using a proper name, whether or not the sense has a reference. The mistake rather lies in an additional belief concerning the existence of a reference. If no reference exists, we presuppose a unique object without being convinced that this object exists, or with the additional belief that this object does not exist. The literary critic, for example, who claims that 'Odysseus is depicted as prudent in the Odyssey' presupposes a unique object when talking about Odysseus, but without any conviction that this object ever existed, whereas a person who believes that Odysseus was a historical person has the additional false belief that this object existed. Both speakers intend to make a true statement. The literary critic intends the statement to be true without making any mistakes concerning the existence of Odysseus. Contrary to what Frege claims, there are

situations in which we even talk about fictional characters without losing interest in the truth value of the sentence.

Frege's other misconception is that he apparently maintains that the only occurrence of terms that lack a reference is in fictional literature and myths. In CSR he states that "for fiction the sense is enough, the thought, even without reference, without truth value, is enough, but not for science" (p. 32). But even in scientific inquiry we occasionally find terms, including singular terms, that later turn out to be without reference. For example, based on calculations, the 19th century astronomer Leverrier inferred the existence of an unknown planet in an orbit outside of Uranus and was later given credit for the discovery of Neptune. The same astronomer also proposed the existence of a planet 'Vulcan' in order to explain part of the advance of the perihelion of Mercury; since the general theory of relativity explains this phenomenon, the planet Vulcan has been considered as non-existent since the early 20th century. Ironically, Frege (1884a) mentions Leverrier: "When Leverrier posed the question if there are planets outside the orbit of Uranus, he did not question if his idea of a planet outside the orbit of Uranus originated or could originate as a result of an affection of his self" (p. 20). Obviously, Leverrier and other astronomers were concerned with more than the idea or the sense of statements about Neptune and Vulcan. According to Frege, Leverrier was *mistaken* is his presupposition concerning Vulcan; but at any rate, the later finding that 'Vulcan does not exist' constitutes a scientific discovery.

A similar argument can be made with regard to the Homeric question. Though we are not in a position to judge whether scholars who claim that Homer did not exist are correct, for the sake of this argument we suppose they are right. If they are correct, they are making an important claim by saying 'Homer did not exist', and they are interested in the truth of this statement. Furthermore, if someone is correctly convinced that Homer did not exist, does that imply that she cannot make any true statement about Homer? According to Frege, if the name 'Homer' has no reference, a statement containing Homer is neither true nor false, since if the name then has no reference, the thought containing it does not have a truth value. So if the name 'Homer' has indeed no reference, then statements such as

(4.13) Homer is the alleged author of the Odyssey

(4.14) Homer did not write the Odyssey[15]

(4.15) Aristotle admired Homer

are neither true nor false. While (4.15) can still be interpreted as an indirect quote,[16] this is not so for (4.12) and (4.13). So if it turns out that Homer did not exist, there are no true statements about Homer (in subject position).

One way to avoid the lack of reference for singular terms, hence the lack of truth values, can be found in Frege (1893). Here it was desirable for him that statements containing definite descriptions have a truth value. In SR, however, Frege had maintained

[15] Because of the difference in scope of the negation, 'Homer is not the author of the Odyssey' is not the same as judging 'Homer is the author of the Odyssey' as false. But Frege had no scope distinction.

[16] If we interpret (4.15) as indirect quote, the name 'Homer' has its indirect reference, i.e., the sense, and not its customary reference.

that statements containing proper names that lack a reference lack a truth value. The same should be expected when there is no object that is described by a definite description, i.e., if the definite description has no reference, the sentence should also lack a truth value. To avoid this consequence, Frege (1893) introduced a definite description operator. On this account, a definite description, 'the *F*', refers to the one and only element of a set *F*. If the set is empty, the description refers to the (empty) set. If we apply this to proper names, i.e., analyze a proper name as a definite description,[17] the reference of a proper name is the sole element of a set, and if the set has no element, the name still has a reference, namely the empty set.[18] But this leads to very strange consequences, as on this analysis identity statements such as

(4.16) Odysseus is Santa Claus

(4.17) Homer is Vulcan

would turn out true, as all names have the same reference, namely an empty set (and the number of weird statements can be continued). So this is not a viable solution.

[17] Russell (1905) contends that proper names are often abbreviated definite descriptions; but Russell holds that if there is no object described, the description describes nothing.

[18] For a detailed analysis, see Mendelsohn (2005), pp. 96 ff.

4.4.4. Existence Claims

Frege (1884 b) maintains:

> Neither in 'A is identical with itself' nor in 'A exists' does one learn anything new about A. Neither statement can be denied (p. 62).

On this view, existence statements, if true, are trivially true just as $a=a$ is trivially true. Mendelsohn (2005, p. 101 ff.) points out that there is a close similarity between the paradox of identity and the paradox of non-existence: If identity holds only for objects, if $a=b$ is true, it is trivially true and not informative, and $a=b$ is indistinguishable from $a=a$. Frege's puzzle deals with the question how identity statements can be informative. Similarly, if existence is a property of objects, '*a* exists' is trivially true. So how can existence claims be informative? So given '$a=b$' is true and it is indistinguishable from '$a=a$', then '*b* exists' is indistinguishable from '*a* exists'. For identity statements, Frege' notion of sense explains the informativeness of identity statements.

Frege treats existence not as a property of objects, but as a second level property, a property of concepts, i.e., a property of properties. That is to say 'horses exist' amounts to saying 'there are horses' (there are *F*s, or expressed by the existential quantifier). Since concept words can be understood in terms of their extension, 'horses exist' is true if there is at least one object that falls under the concept 'horse', i.e., if the concept has at least one instance. Likewise, 'unicorns exist' amounts to 'there are unicorns'. The statement is false,

if there is no object that falls under this concept, i.e., the concept has no instance, and accordingly 'Unicorns do not exist' is true if no object falls under the concept.

As Mendelsohn notes, the same cannot apply for proper names since Frege considers proper names as fundamentally different from concept words; singular terms cannot stand for predicates or what is asserted of an object. Thus 'Frege exists' or 'Homer exists' cannot be explained as an object falling under a concept. But if existence is a property of objects, then both existence claims are trivially true. Obviously, however, existence claims are informative.

Salmon (1998) and Mendelsohn (2005) remark that 'Homer exists' can be analyzed in the way Frege indicates earlier in the dialogue with Pünjer (1884a) and as he treated identity in BS and in his discussion of the puzzle of identity at the beginning SR. On this view, the statement is not about an object, but about the name 'Homer' and states that the name has a reference. But as Mendelsohn notes, this is problematic since on this interpretation the statement is about the *name*. In the statement 'Homer exists', however, the name 'Homer' is used *de re*, and affirms the existence of a particular Homer, and not the existence of the name or someone with the name, e.g., some Homer Smith of New Jersey or anyone else who is named 'Homer'. Similarly, 'Homer does not exist' states that the name does not have a reference. But again, the statement denies the existence of a particular object (the famous Greek epic poet), it does not deny that any object or person was ever named 'Homer'. According to SR, the name 'Homer' has a particular sense that determines a

unique reference for the name and it differs from the sense that determines, for example, Homer Simpson. That is, scholars who deny that Homer existed, do not deny that anybody ever lived with the name 'Homer'. So the affirmation of existence cannot be about the name, but existence is stated about the object.

Moreover, as Mendelsohn argues, according to SR, 'Odysseus' has a sense even if it lacks a reference. Thus the sentence 'Odysseus exists' has a sense, it expresses a thought, one that differs from 'the cleverest of the Achaeans exists' as the two thoughts have different cognitive values (for a person may believe one but not the other). But if the sentences are analyzed as ''Odysseus' has a reference' and ''the cleverest of the Achaeans' has a reference', the thoughts do not differ significantly since they are about words.

Mendelsohn (2005) detects that Frege missed a viable solution to explain the informativeness of existence claims by using the notion of sense:

> From the perspective of the sense/reference theory, the informativeness of existence statements is an issue to be dealt with at the level of sense, not at the level of reference. With the sense/reference distinction at hand, Frege should have located the informativeness of ['Odysseus exists'] in the sense of 'Odysseus'. This would have enabled him to draw on the predicative character of *Sinne* [senses] and unify his treatment much as Russell was able to. At the level of reference, the sharp distinction between *Eigennamen* [proper names] and *Begriffswörter* [concept words] would be honored, but at

> the level of sense, the difference would be bridged by these predicative *Sinne* [senses]. For the singular term, the thought that *Odysseus exists* would be that a certain way of determining things has *one instance*, and for the general term, the thought that *Men exist* would be that a certain way of determining things has *at least one instance.* Using the term 'instances' would not bring objects into the picture because, as Frege said, the thought remains the same whether or not it in fact has instances (p. 119-20).

On this proposal the claim 'Homer exists' expresses a thought and is informative, as it is true if there is one instance that is determined by the sense of the name 'Homer' in this sentence. That avoids the problem that 'Homer exists' turns out true if we find someone in New Jersey who is named 'Homer', since it is required that there is an instance of 'Homer' that is determined by the specific sense of 'Homer' in this sentence. Similarly, 'Homer does not exist' is true if there is no instance that is determined by the sense of 'Homer' in this sentence. It avoids the problem that 'Homer does not exist' turns out true only if nobody ever was named 'Homer'. So existence claims are informative and have a truth value, and so do negative existence claims.

4.4.5 Attributive Statements About Non-Existents

Mendelsohn's proposal affords a solution for explaining the informativeness of existence and negative existence claims and a truth value for such statements. But that still

leaves us wondering about statements other than existential claims. Negative existence claims are sometimes valuable extensions of our knowledge, as for instance in science or history, but why would anybody care that claims other than negative existence statements about non-existents have truth values? Frege maintained that we are not interested in the truth value of a statement once we recognize that a reference is missing. Hence he was satisfied that statements such as 'Odysseus was Penelope's husband' are neither true nor false, but simply lack a truth value.

Frege holds that identity statements of the form $a=a$ hold *a priori* and are analytical, hence are logical truths. The statement

(4.18) Odysseus is Odysseus

is an identity statement of the form $a=a$, and it should thus be trivially true. But since the name lacks a reference, according to Frege, (4.18) is neither true nor false. Therefore, there are no logical truths, and the truth of statements of the form $a=a$ ultimately depends on the empirical knowledge that a has reference.

Now consider our example

(4.19) Odysseus is depicted as prudent in the Odyssey.

On Frege's view, (4.19) does not have a truth value, though it expresses a thought. As we have noted in the previous section, a classicist or literary critic commenting on the epic would intend this statement to be true. Yet, the commentator would not also have to believe that Odysseus existed. Moreover, the commentator infers (4.19) from a number of episodes

in the epic, whereas the epic does not literally state ‘Odysseus is depicted as prudent’. If so, (4.19) cannot be analyzed as an indirect quote in which the name ‘Odysseus’ has its indirect reference. And if Odysseus was a historical person, the statement is true if indeed the commentator is correct that this person is depicted as prudent in the epic. So even if Odysseus was a historical person, (4.19) does not state that the historical person was prudent, but that he was depicted as prudent in the epic. The question of truth then depends on how Odysseus is depicted, so it should not matter for the truth of (4.19) if Odysseus existed and if he was indeed prudent.

Furthermore, if someone had never heard of Odysseus and we inform this person by saying

(4.20) Odysseus is a fictional character,

this is only useful information if it is true. But if statements such as (4.20) are neither true nor false, dictionaries and encyclopedias should not contain any names or expressions that have no reference, or else indicate that the entry is neither true nor false (which makes the entry more or less worthless). According to Frege, a dictionary or encyclopedia would inform us about the meaning, i.e., the sense of the name. As we take sense to be a set of properties, the dictionary gives us the sense or the senses of the name or singular term by indicating the properties by means of a description, or providing another singular term that can be identified with the name in question. So under the name ‘Aristotle’ the dictionary provides a list of properties or singular terms that are identified with ‘Aristotle’: “Greek

philosopher and scientist. A student of Plato and tutor to Alexander the Great."[19] If the dictionary is correct, these properties are correctly associated with the name 'Aristotle'. Now if a property is associated with a name, then a statement ascribing that same property should be true, for example,

(4.21) Aristotle is a Greek philosopher

(4.22) Aristotle is the tutor to Alexander the Great

should be true. Likewise, the dictionary provides a list of properties for the name 'Odysseus': "The king of Ithaca and central figure of the Odyssey." If the sense of the name 'Odysseus' is correctly associated with these properties, statements ascribing these same properties, should be true, thus

(4.23) Odysseus is the king of Ithaca

(4.24) Odysseus is the central figure of the Odyssey

should be true. Given that the set of properties associated with the name 'Odysseus' includes the properties ascribed in (4.23) and (4.24), the statements should turn out to be true.

Likewise, some statements should turn out false. Thus,

(4.25) Odysseus is a horse with wings

should be false, since the sense or the senses associated with the name 'Odysseus' are incompatible with the properties ascribed in (4.25). For some statements, such as

(4.26) Odysseus had high blood pressure

[19] Oxford American Dictionaries, Version 1.0.1 by Apple Computers.

it is impossible to determine the truth value since the property ascribed in (4.26) is neither included or implied in any of the senses connected with 'Odysseus', nor is it incompatible with any of the senses of 'Odysseus'.

The problem is that if attributive claims with a name or singular term as subject have no truth value, then we cannot give any correct descriptions that are connected with that name, and then any arbitrary description or identity statement would be just as good as any other. In section 4.3.3 we have argued that senses that lack a reference are either isolated and cannot be connected at all, or they are all connected. Presupposing a reference would make it possible to connect different senses and disconnect them from other senses. But how then should we analyze statements such as

(4.23) Odysseus is the king of Ithaca?

For Frege, this is an atomic statement of the form *Fa*. The problem is that, according to Frege, if the individual constant *a* does not denote, *Fa* lacks a truth value. In classical first order logic individual constants denote, hence the existential generalization $(\exists x)Fx$ permits the inference *Fa*. So classical logic has a truth value for (4.23), but it imposes existential commitment, and the statement turns out to be false if Odysseus did not exist.

Mendelsohn (1989) shows that free logic provides a way to interpret statements containing proper names in subject position in a way that avoids existential commitment. Free logic allows the inference *Fa* from $(\exists x)Fx$ only if *a* exists. Moreover, Mendelsohn

(1989) argues that the atomic statement *Fa* is ambiguous and can be analyzed in two ways. One interpretation has a large scope reading that is symbolized as

$(\exists x)\ (ax\ \&\ Fa)$

and the other has a small scope reading , symbolized as

$(x)\ (ax \supset Fx)$.

The small scope reading does not carry existential commitment. And as Mendelsohn argues, there is nothing about the atomic statement that tells us which reading should be assigned. Obviously, the small scope reading is interesting for non-denoting names. Hence (4.23) can be analyzed with the small scope reading, leaving out the existential commitment. Moreover, the conditional in the small scope reading captures the presupposition, since the antecedent is not affirmed.

If Mendelsohn (1989) is correct and atomic statements are ambiguous in scope, our statement

(4.23) Odysseus is the king of Ithaca

can be symbolized as atomic statement *K*o (where '*K'* stands for the property of being the king of Ithaca, and 'o' is an individual constant for Odysseus)[20]. *K*o is ambiguous and can be read as either with large scope, symbolized as $(\exists x)\ (ox\ \&\ K\text{o})$, or it can be read with small scope, symbolized as $(x)\ (ox \supset Kx)$. But what does the individual constant 'o' stand for, given that it does not denote? Based on Mendelsohn's (2005) interpretation of existence

[20] Here we follow Mendelsohn (1989, p. 614) using lower case 'o' for the individual constant.

statements, as discussed in the preceding section (4.4.4), we take ‘o’ to be determined by the sense of the name ‘Odysseus’, and the variable *x* as instance. Moreover, we want to keep the implication of uniqueness for proper names. Considering that (4.23) is ambiguous, there are two readings for it:

On the large scope reading (4.23) can be interpreted as

(4.27) There exists exactly one instance of the sense determined by the name ‘Odysseus’ in this sentence, and it is the king of Ithaca.

This interpretation carries existential commitment, and it is false if there is no instance of Odysseus. But with the small scope reading we get

(4.28) If there is exactly one instance of the sense determined by the name ‘Odysseus’ in this sentence, then it is the king of Ithaca.

This reading does not implicitly affirm the existence of a unique instance of ‘Odysseus’, and makes it possible that (4.23) can be true if the sense of ‘Odysseus’ in this sentence implies that he was the king of Ithaca. Likewise,

(4.19) Odysseus is depicted as prudent in the Odyssey

is true regardless of the name having a historical person as reference or not, and might be affirmed as true by someone who also believes that Odysseus did not exist, without thereby having two contradictory beliefs. Likewise, the small scope reading affords a way to affirm the truth of

(4.20) Odysseus is a fictional character

without also affirming the existence of a reference for the name 'Odysseus', which would be rather incongruous in this case. Some statements about non-existents can then be true, and similarly, some can be false. On this interpretation,

(4.25) Odysseus is a horse with wings

is false, since the sense of the name 'Odysseus' is incompatible with the predicate.

As we noted in sections 4.3.2 and 4.3.3.2, Frege mentions that we presuppose a reference (SR p. 61-2), but he remains vague about it, and he does not develop this idea any further. We argued that such a presupposition when using proper names implies uniqueness, but it does not imply existence. The ambiguity of statements of the form *Fa* allows both interpretations, i.e., with or without existential implication, and the small scope reading makes it possible to account for both truth values without also implying existence.

4.5 Frege – A Platonist?

Platonism or realism is generally understood as the acceptance of non-spatial, timeless, and mind-independent entities. Frege's doctrine of numbers, concepts, sense, thought, and truth as belonging neither to the subjective, psychological world, nor to the realm of real objects in the world suggests that he is a Platonist. Burge (1992) considers Frege as a Platonist in just that sense, not only with regard to numbers, but also with regard to truth, functions, and thought content.

Dummett (1973) says:

> The appeal to the name/bearer relation as prototype is an expression of Frege's realism, the belief that all our linguistic expressions relate to constituents of reality, and that it is therefore in virtue of an objective reality, independent of us, that our sentences are true or false. The referent of a relational expression, say 'ξ is larger than ζ', is as much a constituent of reality as the objects, say Jupiter and Mars, between which the relation holds (p. 408).

As we have seen in the preceding sections, Frege makes it very clear that the notions of sense and thought are objective and mind independent. Thus, senses and thoughts are grasped and not created by us. Senses as meanings are mind and language independent, objective, and thoughts are timeless and do not require a thinker. Likewise, truth is independent of anyone recognizing a thought as true, it is an irreducible property of a thought.

Not everyone agrees that Frege is a Platonist. Carl (2001), for example, points out that Frege himself never uses the term 'entity' for concepts, senses, or thoughts, neither does he speak about their 'existence'. Carl argues that Frege's objective-subjective-distinction is not an ontological classification into distinct kinds of entities, but relates to a distinction in discourse. According to Carl, Frege's concern is not ontological, but epistemic. As Frege rejects psychologism, it is important for him that truth and the

objects of thought are mind- and language independent since it justifies the objectivity of knowledge, and specifically the objectivity of scientific discourse and logic. We may add that Mendelsohn (2005) points out that Frege's rejection of the correspondence theory of truth makes it uncertain whether Frege was a genuine realist or a realist at all, since the correspondence theory usually goes hand in hand with realism.

Carl's analysis is correct in pointing out that Frege' primary concern was not ontology, but rather the objectivity of meaning and truth. Frege makes it clear that sense presents an intermediary between the purely subjective and the object that is the reference. But there are some remarks that are about the ontological status of sense: "[T]houghts are neither things of the outer world nor ideas" (TT p. 29). Since a thought is the sense of a sentence, we can assume that the same holds for the sense of a singular term. Moreover, in SR (p. 59-61) and TT (p. 26-33) Frege emphasizes the distinction between sense and idea. Senses, as opposed to ideas, do not belong to the subjective consciousness of a thinker, a thought is independent of whether or not someone has this thought. They are in a third realm, between the purely subjective ideas and real objects:

> A third realm must be recognized. What belongs to this corresponds with ideas, in that it cannot be perceived by the senses, but with things, in that it needs no bearer to the contents of whose consciousness to belong. Thus the thought, for example, which we expressed in the Pythagorean theorem is timelessly true, true independently of whether anyone takes it to be true (TT, p. 29).

Given that Frege's focus and emphasis is on the distinction between subjective and objective, does that mean that he was not a Platonist? Carl cites Reck's conception of Platonism, according to which Platonism involves a "clean separation of metaphysics, semantics, and epistemology" (Carl 2001, p. 10; Reck 1997, p. 131), and Carl argues that according to this concept of Platonism Frege is not a Platonist. But according to this conception of Platonism, Plato is not a Platonist either.

Frege has been considered a Platonist partly on account of his doctrine of numbers and concepts. (Since we did not discuss numbers in the chapters on Plato and Frege, we have to omit numbers here as well). There is some affinity between Fregean concepts and Plato's forms. According to Frege, concepts are language and mind independent, and objects "fall under a concept." Likewise, Plato's forms are mind independent, and individual particulars 'participate' in forms. And like Frege's concepts, Plato's forms take the predicate position in statements. But there are some important differences as well. Whereas Platonic forms are real entities, it is not so clear if on Frege's account concepts are real. That is, it is not as clear as Dummett (in the above quote) sees it. As Dummett correctly observes, concepts are references, like objects, so they seem to be entities, but did Frege consider them as real? Though Frege holds that the reference of a concept word is a concept, he contends that relations stated between concepts have to hold for the extensions of these concepts, i.e., for the instances of the

concepts. Relations that hold for Plato's forms, by contrast, are entirely independent of individual particulars.

Given that we interpret Frege's sense as a set of properties, it is at least doubtful whether a set of properties constitutes an entity in an ontological sense. On Frege's sparse explanation, sense and thought can at best be taken as something that lies in between a real entity and a non-entity. In chapter 3 we have argued that there is a strong similarity between Plato's notion of *eidôlon* and Frege's thought, and between Plato's *eikôn* and Frege's sense. Though for Plato *eikones* as well as *eidôla* are entities, they are, like Frege's sense and thought, between the fully real and the utterly unreal. The similarity is also apparent in the role of sense and *eikôn* as semantic and epistemic intermediaries: they present the way we think of objects, a such they present only one aspect of the object; senses, insofar as they are a set of properties that present only some of the object's properties, and *eikones*, insofar as they are imperfect copies or images of an object. In this function, senses as well as *eikones* enable us to talk or think about objects that are not available for immediate sensation. As we have argued in chapter 3, Plato's distinction into different kinds of objects is in proportion to degrees of clarity and unclarity, and we followed Vlastos' (1965) interpretation that the different degrees of reality are determined by cognitive reliability. On our interpretation based on Vlastos, we have held that Plato's degrees of reality can be understood as degrees of objectivity, with forms as purely objective, and *eikones* as least objective, yet, not wholly subjective. In view of this interpretation, Frege's approach is quite similar to Plato's, as both are epistemic

distinctions, although Frege, as opposed to Plato, does not recognize degrees of objectivity. For both, Frege and Plato, the epistemic intermediary is tied to an ontological intermediary, entities in a realm between the fully real and the utterly non-real. While Carl (2001) is correct that Frege's focus was not ontology, Frege does not ignore the ontological question for senses. Like Plato, he ties the epistemic intermediary together with an ontological intermediary.

These similarities between Frege and Plato, however, do not pertain to what is generally understood as Platonism. If Platonism can be understood as the acceptance of intermediaries that are neither completely real nor purely psychological, and these intermediaries have an important semantic and epistemic role, then Frege is a Platonist. One little difference is worth mentioning. As we have argued in chapter 3, Plato's *eidôla* are akin to Frege's thought insofar as they are what is expressed by a sentence. But according to Plato, an *eidôlon*, at least a false one, is created by a speaker, whereas Frege's thought, even if false, is not created, but grasped. Nevertheless, this should not lead to the conclusion that in that sense Frege was more genuinely a Platonist than Plato.

Chapter 5

MEINONG'S THEORY OF OBJECTS

5.1. Introduction

Meinong is mainly known for his theory of objects as put forth in his earlier works, *Über Annahmen* ('On Assumptions', 1902), henceforth ÜA, and *Über Gegenstandstheorie* ('On a Theory of Objects', 1904), henceforth GT.[1] Here Meinong argues that besides the realm of existing objects there are objects that do not exist. Meinong distinguishes three types of non-existent objects: a) objects whose non-existence is an empirical fact, such as a golden mountain or Odysseus, and b) objects whose existence is impossible because they contain a contradiction, such as a round square; for these two kinds of objects Meinong introduced the term '*außerseiend*' ('out-of-being'). In addition, he distinguishes a third kind, namely c) objects which do not exist 'like a house or tree' but '*subsist'* ('bestehen'), such as relations (e.g., equality or diversity), numbers, and classes; included in this third kind are also what Meinong calls '*objectives*' ('Objektive') which roughly resemble what others have called propositions

[1] The first edition of *Über Annahmen* ('On Assumptions') was published in 1902, the second, revised edition in 1910; *Über Gegenstandstheorie* ('On a Theory of Objects') was published in 1904.

or states of affairs.[2] The extravagance of the theory may be best summarized by Meinong's own paradoxical formulation:

> There are objects concerning which it is the case that there are no such objects (GT p. 490).

Before long Meinong was known as an eccentric who wanted to clutter the universe with non-existents such as golden mountains and round squares. Thus Russell (1918) considers the theory as well motivated but rejects it as a solution. He maintains that we need "a vivid instinct as to what is real" and criticizes that "Meinong is rather deficient in just that instinct for reality" (p. 223).

Since Meinong's motivation to account for non-existent objects is partly motivated by Brentano's (1874) intentionality thesis and Twardowski's (1894) distinction between the content and the object of a mental state, we will discuss the two accounts in section 5.2. Section 5.3 is an examination of Meinong's motivation to include non-existents into a general theory of objects. Meinong's reason to include non-existent objects is based on four theses: Following Brentano, he maintains that (1) all mental states are directed to or about an object, and in agreement with Twardowski he holds that (2) the intentional object of a mental state has to be distinguished from the presentation of the object. Furthermore, Meinong contends that there are true claims about non-existent objects. Since we can truly deny the existence of a non-existent object, Meinong

[2] Simons (1995) refers to Meinong's 'Objektiv' as 'state of affairs'.

concludes that (3) the object is independent of its existence (GT p. 494).[3] Moreover, since we can make true attributive statements about non-existent objects, Meinong holds that (4) objects have their properties independent of their existence.[4]

The first part of section 5.4 gives a summary of the different kinds of being Meinong distinguishes, with special consideration of the controversial notion of *Außersein* ('out-of-being'). According to Meinong, objects such as the round square and the golden mountain have *Außersein.* In the second part of section 5.4 we examine Meinong's distinction between primary objects, for which Meinong uses the term *objecta* ('Objekte'), and complex objects, which he calls *objectives* ('Objektive'). *Objecta* are the objects typically denoted by singular terms, whereas *objectives* are the objects of judgments, hence typically expressed by complete statements. Following Russell (1907), some interpreters have taken *objectives* to be propositions, others have taken them to be the same as states of affairs. We maintain that there is an affinity between *objectives* with both propositions and states of affairs, but there are some differences in certain other aspects and thus *objectives* cannot generally be substituted with either of the other notions. We also compare *objectives* with Plato's concept of *eidôlon* and Frege's thought, and we show that there are some interesting aspects in which Meinong's *objective* resembles both Plato's and Frege's notions.

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[3] Findley (1963, p. 43 ff.) terms this the principle of indifference, and we follow Findley with this terminology.

[4] Meinong adopted this 'principle of independence' from Mally (1904).

Section 5.5 is about what we call the Modified Theory, the theory formed in Meinong's later work *Über Möglichkeit und Wahrscheinlichkeit* ('On Possibility and Probability'), which was published in 1915. This later turn was initiated by considerations about possibility and probability and it compelled Meinong to modify and significantly revise his earlier theory. He realized that in most cases it is impossible to present an object with all the properties the object has, and maintains that our presentation of an object in most cases only includes some of its properties. Hence, an object is presented by means of an intermediary incomplete object. Thus, if the *so-being* of the pure object is understood as a set of properties, the incomplete object by means of which it is presented is a subset of the pure object that has *Außersein.* The incomplete object serves as auxiliary object for presentations, it is the immediate object by means of which an intentional object, which is now called the target object, is presented. Whereas Meinong held in his earlier work that the intentional object is the meaning of a name or word, on the Modified Theory he substantially revised this explanation of meaning and maintains that the auxiliary object is the meaning of the word. Simons (1995a) argues that with the distinction between auxiliary and target object Meinong developed a distinction closely akin to Frege's sense-reference distinction, and there are a number of relevant parallels between the two theories.

Meinong did not elaborate the distinction between auxiliary object and target object and its implications. In section 5.6 we will consider how claims about non-existent

objects, according to the Modified theory, can be true. The theory of objects is based on the contention that there are true negative existence claims and true attributive claims about non-existent objects. On the Modified Theory, attributive statements about non-existent objects are not only true, but also informative. If we analyze a true claim about a non-existent object as one in which the predicate attributes a property that is part of the set of properties that determine the object, we can account for true statements in a way similar to the approach we took on the basis of Frege's theory.

5.2 The Brentano-Twardowski Theses

5.2.1 Brentano on Intentionality

In reference to Aristotle and Medieval scholars, Brentano (1874) pointed out that mental states are intentional, i.e., it is characteristic for mental phenomena that they have reference to some object, that they are *about* some object, and it is precisely this quality that distinguishes mental phenomena from all others (p. 88 ff.). Brentano distinguishes three classes of mental phenomena: Presentation ('Vorstellung'), judgment, and the 'phenomena of love and hate', i.e., emotional dispositions such as hope and desire (p. 194 ff.). A presentation or idea is the most fundamental and logically prior to the others since nothing can be judged or desired which is not an object of our presentation; the difference between a presentation and judgment as well as the emotional dispositions lies in that the latter two add

a different mode of consciousness. Whereas a presentation is neutral regarding acceptance or denial of the object, a judgment requires the presentation and adds affirmation or denial, such that the object of the presentation is denied or affirmed.[5] Thus, statements of the form

(5.1) A exists

are analyzed not as presentation but as judgment. In this case, A is presented and affirmation is added to it. Likewise,

(5.2) A does not exist

is a different judgment, namely the denial of the same object of presentation, which was affirmed in (5.1). In both cases, the object of our presentation is A. Brentano says that "the object affirmed is not the combination of an attribute "existence" with "A" but "A" itself. By the same token, when we say, "A does not exist," there is no predication of the existence of "A" in a negative way - no denial of the conjunction of an attribute "existence" with "A." On the contrary, "A" is the object we deny" (1874, p. 208). Thus, Brentano analyzes existence claims and negative existence claims as the affirmation or denial of the object, i.e., it is not the existence of the object that is affirmed or denied, but the object is affirmed or denied in the form of a judgment. Every mental act is thus either a presentation or is based on a presentation.

As mentioned above, Brentano's repeated theme is that all mental acts are in relation to some object. If, as any conventional theory of relations holds, a relation requires the

[5] As similar view can be found in Frege. In SR (1892a) he says: "Judgments can be regarded as advances from a thought to a truth value" (p. 65).

existence of at least two things or terms related, Brentano notes that consciousness cannot be a relation in the usual sense. Mental reference may sometimes have as its object something that does not exist, in this relation only one part of the relation (which he calls the *fundament*), but not the other part (which he calls the *terminus*) of the relation exists:

> If someone thinks of something, the one who is thinking must certainly exist, but the object of his thinking need not exist at all. In fact, if he is denying something, the existence of the object is precisely what is excluded whenever his denial is correct. So the only thing which is required by mental reference is the person thinking. The terminus of the so-called relation does not need to exist in reality at all (1874, p.272).

For this reason Brentano calls mental reference "relation-like" ('relativlich'), but later comes to the conclusion that other relations, such as comparisons (e.g., in size or number) do not require the existence of both parts related either.

According to Brentano, relations in which the existence of the *terminus* is not required show that the latter is thought of indirectly, or in *modo obliquo*, whereas other objects are thought of directly, or in *modo recto*. Thus, presentations do not only differ by virtue of the object presented, but a further discrimination lies in this mode of presentation. In the case of mental relations, the only thing existing that is needed is the subject who thinks, and the *terminus* of the relation, the thing thought of, is sometimes in direct, sometimes in oblique mode. A thing denied is thus presented in oblique mode. The same is the case with past and future objects, which, strictly speaking, do not exist. But what is that

thing presented in oblique mode? – It seems that this is an 'immanent' object, a presented object, and apparently a presented object is thus considered as a 'thing' or an 'object' just like, say, a physical object, namely the intentional object of a mental state.

Though Brentano distinguishes in his later work object from content, his notion of object remains ambiguous in the sense that it means the mind independent object on the one hand, and a mentally presented object on the other hand. All we know about the object of such a mental presentation is its causal relationship to this presentation. On this view, we have, for example, some presentation of Odysseus, which is part of the content or the intentional object of our thought or talk, independent of the existence of this object. Whether or not our presentation of the object is caused is immaterial to the presentation. On Brentano's view, one can say that if the presentation is not caused, the (mind independent) object does not exist, but if it is caused, the object does exist. For Brentano's concept of consciousness and presentation it is irrelevant whether or not an object exists; all that matters is that we can mentally refer only to things and not to non-things. Given that Brentano contends that objects such as Pegasus or Odysseus are presented in *modo obliquo*, we might be tempted to consider them as mere presentations or presentations of presentations. The problem with this view is that all presentations must have some intentional object, so we cannot say that the intentional object of the presentation is the presentation itself or another presentation. On Brentano's account, a mental object cannot be the presentation of the object, as he makes a point that consciousness is not merely a relation to something in the mind, but a relation to some object. He points out that a thought-of-

object is different from the object, so a thought-of-Pegasus is different from Pegasus, as the former exists and the latter does not.

In 'Supplementary Remarks'[6] Brentano struggles with the problem to reconcile his core claim that all mental states are about something and the observation that mental states can also be about things that do not exist. Thus he states:

> All mental references refer to things.
>
> In many cases, the things to which we refer do not exist. But we are accustomed to saying that they then have being as objects. This is a loose use of the verb "to be," … All it means is that a mentally active subject is referring to those things (1911, p. 291).

But it remains unclear what a thing is in this "loose" sense of being. Hence, the main difficulty in Brentano's theory is the ambiguity of his concept of object. He lacks an adequate distinction between the mental phenomenon and the mind independent intentional object. Besides, if all mental acts constitute a relation to some object, and in some cases the relation is indirect, i.e., a presentation in *modo obliquo*, it is far from clear how this notion elucidates what the object is that is presented in oblique mode, or what the object of my mental reference is when I am thinking about Pegasus, given that I am not thinking about a thought-of-Pegasus. Brentano's work has been of great influence on his students Meinong and Husserl. The very issues that are left unclear or unresolved by Brentano inspired both

[6] In the Appendix to the 1911 edition of *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* (1874).

Meinong and Husserl to develop a theory that extends Brentano's intentionality thesis and addresses the problems unanswered.

5.2.2 Twardowski's Distinction Between Act, Content, and Object

Twardowski (1894) tries to clarify the ambiguity that adheres to Brentano's notion of *presentation* ('Vorstellung'). In one sense we understand 'presentation' as the *act* of presenting an object, i.e., the psychological process, and in another sense 'presentation' means what is presented, 'the presented' ('das Vorgestellte'), i.e., the object before the mind or the mental phenomenon that Twardowski terms the *content* of the presentation. But 'what is presented' or the 'object that is presented' is also ambiguous, and the ambiguity lies in what is understood as the 'object' of a presentation; this can either be the aforementioned content, which is the mental phenomenon, and it can be the mind independent object that is so presented. To avoid any confusion between the two, Twardowski suggests that we "say that the content is presented *in*, the object presented *through*, the presentation" (1894, p. 17). He thus makes a threefold distinction between act, content, and object.

Twardowski gives four reasons for the distinction between the content of a presentation and its object. First, he holds that the content of a presentation has to exist, the object does not necessarily have to exist, such as a golden mountain. We can even have a presentation of an object uniting contradictory properties, such as a round square, the object

of which cannot possibly exist. The second reason is that the content of a presentation is mental, whereas the object may be an extended physical object. The properties of the extended physical object, such as size, weight, being made of gold, cannot be present in the mental object. The mental object that is the content of one's thought is purely mental. As a third reason he points out that the same object may be presented in many ways, i.e., as different contents, e.g., the city of Salzburg may be referred to as the birth place of Mozart or the ancient site of Juvanum. Finally, as a fourth reason Twardowski maintains that a single presentation may have many objects, e.g., the presentation of a triangle has all possible and actual triangles as objects. The first two of these reasons are taken up by Meinong as arguments to defend the theory of objects, and a variation of the third and forth reason reoccur in Meinong's Modified Theory.

Twardowski embraces Brentano's rather unusual analysis of judgment, according to which a judgment is either the affirmation or the denial of an object; the same object that is presented in a mere presentation, is affirmed or denied in a judgment. But Twardowski gives it an unusual turn: An affirmative judgment of an object is the same as affirming the existence of the object:

> Now, this mental activity [of making a judgment] which is directed toward an object is bound up with the existence or nonexistence of the object in a peculiar way. For, the object is judged; but in being affirmed, its existence appears also to be affirmed. If the object is denied, its existence appears also to be denied. … By means of the assertion of the existence of A, A itself is

> thus already affirmed; but by means of the denial of the existence of A, A is also denied, and this could not be the case, if we were dealing here with a connection between A and the characteristic "existence" (1894, p.6).

Existence is thus not a 'characteristic' or property of an object, but it is tied to the judgment of an object. On Twardowski's view, the content of a judgment *is* the existence of an object.

Twardowski maintains that every presentation and judgment not only requires act and content, but also an object. The object of a presentation or judgment is neither the 'mental picture' nor the content, but the object itself. This also holds in cases in which the object does not exist, including objects that cannot possibly exist, such as a round square. According to Twardowski, the expression 'objectless presentation' is a misconception as the non-existence of the object is confused with an object not being presented (1894, p. 22 ff.). The existence of an object has to be sharply distinguished from its being presented. In order to have a presentation, an object must be presented, and in order to make a judgment, one must have a presentation of the object that is judged. That is, when we make the judgment *'A does not exist'*, the object that is judged (and does not exist) must be presented in order to be judged. And importantly, an object (including one that does not exist) has properties and can stand in relations. Thus even an impossible object such as a round square has the properties of being round and square and can stand in relation to a mental act. But what is an object? Twardowski holds that "the object is something different from the existent; some objects have existence in addition to their objecthood ['Gegenständlichkeit']" (1894, p. 35).

In short, whether real or not real, whether existent or not existent, possible or impossible, anything that is presented through a presentation, affirmed or denied, is an object.

As mentioned, the object should not be confused with the content of a presentation. The relation between the presentation and the object is basic and irreducible, and not one of resemblance. With reference to Aristotle who held that the relation between the presentation and the object is merely formal, Twardowski maintains that the only way resemblance can be found is one that holds among complexes. If the object is made up of constituents, the content consists of constituents and any resemblance is a mere structural one, insofar as the constituents of the presentation that are built together are similar in structure to the way the constituents of the object are built together. The elements of the presentation themselves are entirely dissimilar to the elements of the object. This view has been criticized because it is not clear how we can have a presentation of the unity of these elements. It is not only the presentations of (physical) properties such as red, round, and tasty that I have of an apple, but also the unity of these presentations of properties that constitute my presentation of an apple. And the only resemblance between my presentation of an apple and the object lies in the structure of the unity of the composition of the elements of the presentation on the one hand, and the composition of the elements of the object on the other. It is notable that Twardowski thought that the content of a presentation shows a higher order complexity in its structure than the object. But it is obscure how this can account for the unity in the content since the structure of the elements of the content cannot exhibit the unity of the object because a relation between contents is not itself a content (1894, p. 93).

Twardowski's analysis of the function of names is connected to his act-object-content distinction. Names have a threefold function: first, a name "makes known that the user of the name is presented with something; it signifies the existence of a mental act in the speaker" (1894, p. 93). Second, the speaker intends to produce in the listener the same mental content, and it is the *content* that is identified as the *meaning* of a name. In other words, the content is expressed and understood by the name. Unfortunately Twardowski does not provide much further explanation on this. Given that the *content* is the object before the mind or the mental phenomenon, it is unclear how, if language can be successful, it is possible that the *same content* is shared by the speaker and the listener. The *content* is not an individual's subjective presentation, but rather objective, much like Frege's sense that is the meaning. And third, the function of a name is to designate the object. The terms 'Salzburg' and 'the birthplace of Mozart', though they express different contents, designate the same object, just as for Frege two expressions may differ in sense and yet designate the same object. But unlike Frege's sense that may have no reference, on Twardowski's view every name designates an object just as every presentation or judgment is connected with an object. Thus, the connecting joint or nexus ('Bindeglied') between the intentional act and the mind independent object is the presentation we have of it. Through this intermediate presentation we have access to objects outside our mental world – whether or not the latter exist.

Despite Twardowski's very clear distinction between content and object, the two notions remain problematic. Twardowski's *content* is in some relevant aspects similar to Fregean *sense*, only on Twardowski's view it remains unclear whether *content* is objective and it remains at least unclear if it is mind independent, unlike *sense*, as Frege distinguishes between *sense* and *idea*. But if Twardowski's *content* is mind independent and objective, as his analysis of language suggests, he does not explain it. Moreover, Twardowski's thesis that all mental acts have a corresponding object, even if the object does not exist or is impossible to exist, raises the question of what such an object is that does not exist. Meinong adopts this thesis as well as some of Twardowski's arguments for it and focuses attention on just these objects including those that do not exist or cannot possibly exist.

Meinong also adopts and expands on Twardowski's thesis that objects have the properties they have (including the properties of roundness and squareness of the round square), even if these objects do not exist. It is notable that Twardowski held that not all properties of an object are part of the presentation, as no object can adequately be presented, but only some of the properties are presented, yet they are presented as a unity. Meinong's later theory of incomplete objects is similar insofar as he also holds that we cannot be aware of all the properties of an object. But while he follows Twardowski in the distinction between content and object, Meinong's incomplete object is distinct from the content in which it is presented, whereas on Twardowski's view the incompleteness occurs in the content.

5.3 Meinong's Motivation for the Theory of Objects

Meinong's puzzling thesis that the realm of objects is far more vast than the realm of existent objects is one of the few points widely known about Meinong's work, and it is just as widely rejected. Mostly it is rejected, almost with a slight sense of ridicule, as the naive attempt to expand the universe by adding non-existent objects in order to account for the reference of terms that name non-existent objects. However, Meinong's thesis is not at all motivated by an attempt to explain language or meaning, rather he is concerned with mental attitudes and their corresponding intentional objects; an explanation of reference and meaning is a corollary by-product of the theory. Meinong's primary interest lies in psychology and he saw the need for a theory of objects because all mental states are directed toward an object. Mental states such as beliefs, desires, and judgments are not only about existing objects, but can be about non-existing objects as well. Therefore, according to Meinong, a theory of objects has to include all objects. His demand for a general theory of objects is based on four theses: (1) All mental acts are directed to an object, even if the object does not exist. (2) The object of a mental state is mind independent. (3) Existence and non-existence is external to the object. (4) The object has its properties independent of its existence.

5.3.1 The Intentionality Thesis Extended

As we have seen in the preceding, Brentano paved the way by saying that the distinguishing feature of mental states is that they are directed to some object. Meinong adopts the thesis that all mental states are about something, an object. And just as we have attitudes (such as beliefs and desires) about existing objects we also have attitudes about non-existing objects. So we can wish for or think about a golden mountain, or even make literary judgments about a poet Homer, perhaps in ignorance whether or not he existed. Moreover, the attitudes we have to real objects need not differ from the attitudes we have to non-existing objects. Whether or not the object exists does not make a qualitative difference for my attitude when thinking of or wishing for an object, i.e., whether or not the object exists, I still have a belief, desire, or make a judgment about this object.

According to Meinong, it is impossible to have a belief, desire, thought or any other mental state without an intentional object. There has to be an object for a mental state regardless of whether or not the object exists. Meinong points out that knowledge ('Erkenntnis'), for instance, always has an object, namely what is known ('das Erkannte'), and the psychological process alone does not make up the matter of fact of knowledge ('Erkenntnistatbestand'), but knowing is confronted with what is known as something 'relatively independent' (1904, henceforth GT, p. 485). Meinong wonders which field of study has as its subject matter *objects*. He notes that science and even metaphysics are restricted to existent objects. Meinong calls this a prejudice in favor of the actual, and we

have it mainly for practical interests. But even metaphysics, a field that is traditionally concerned with investigating objects as such and that has as its subject matter the totality of objects, is only concerned with the totality of existent objects. On Meinong's view, the totality of existent objects, however, including those that existed in the past and will exist in the future, is by far smaller than the totality of objects. He maintains that the totality of objects encompasses all objects that can be objects of intentional states, regardless of whether they exist or not, and he finds that we lack a theory of objects that includes *all* objects. This white spot on the map of investigation prompts Meinong's theory of objects. He also fends off possible and perhaps expectable criticism that a theory for which the existence or non-existence of its subject matter is irrelevant lacks a sense of reality by referring to mathematics. Mathematics is highly developed and of great use, nevertheless it is of no relevance whether the subject matter exists or not, given that the objects of mathematics cannot be said to exist.

The intentionality thesis holds that every belief, desire, judgment, assumption, and everything we know is about an object. Since we have mental attitudes that are directed toward non-existent object, we still have to account for an intentional object regardless of its existence. So we can formulate

Thesis 1: All mental states are directed to an object *a,* regardless of whether *a* exists or not.

5.3.2 The Distinction Between Content and Object

Meinong, following Twardowski's arguments, maintains that the object has to be distinguished from the content of a mental act. The distinction between content and object holds for non-existent objects as well as existent objects. Meinong, like Twardowski, takes the fact that we think about non-existent objects as one reason for the distinction between object and content. In case of a thought about a non-existent object, the object of a presentation cannot be part of the content of a presentation in which it is presented simply because the presentation exists while the object does not exist. Thus, objects are not literally contained in the ideas that present them.

According to the Aristotelian Medieval tradition, non-existent objects have being in thought.[7] Meinong considers this solution as misleading. The claim that something exists in thought is equivalent to the proposition that there exists a thought about that object. So in saying 'unicorns exist in thought' we just mean that there exists, in the primary sense, a state of mind in which unicorns are presented. Meinong explicitly distinguishes cases in which

[7] Thomas Aquinas maintained that what has no being in reality, has being in the mind, which he termed '*ens rationis*' ('an object of the mind'), Summa Theologiae I/II 8, ad 3; cf. De ver. I, 5 ad 2; De ver. 2, 11,5. Aristotle, Metaphysics 1067b25; Physics 225a20. He held that in one sense not-being can be understood concerning the categories, such as not-human, not-big; in another sense not-being pertains to what is expressed in a false statement; in a third sense what has not-being is what is in potentiality, as opposed to the actual (Met. 1069b27). Aristotle's commentator Alexander of Aphrodisias says that "what has being in thought is not-being" (In Arist. Met. comm., ed. By M. Hayduck. Comm. in Arist. Graeca (CAG) I (1891) 779,10).

being is attributed to something in the primary sense (e.g., when saying that this table exists) and cases in which we say that something exists in thought. He uses the term '*pseudo-being*' or '*pseudo-existence'* for the wider sense in which we attribute being as 'being presented in thought'. Since virtually anything can be *pseudo-existent*, there must be a distinction between existence in the primary sense and *pseudo-existence*. Physical objects, for instance, have existence in the primary sense and because they can also be thought of they can have *pseudo-being*. Non-existent objects, such as a golden mountain or a round square, are not existent in the primary sense, but since we can think about these objects, they have *pseudo-being*. Now one could hold that the only sense in which existence can be attributed to them is *pseudo-being*, that is to say that precisely because such objects do not exist, all that exists is a thought-of object, or something that has merely *pseudo-being*. But as we shall see in section 5.3.3, Meinong rejects this option since he believes that we do not think of or make judgments about thought-of-objects. Moreover, this solution violates the intentionality thesis or renders it absurd; if thinking of an object requires an object we think of, then the intentional object cannot be the thought-of-object, since then the thought-of-object would already be required in order to have a thought. The intentional object must then be independent of the mental phenomenon.

Meinong's second reason that the object of an idea cannot be part of it is that in the case of physical objects the objects and their properties are extended and physical and it would be absurd to hold that they could literally be part of mental acts and experiences. A judgment or a state of grief can be 'lived through,' but extended physical objects, such as a

mountain or a church steeple, cannot be lived through, hence they cannot be contained in the content of an idea. A physical object then cannot be part of the content; the existence of the object itself, such as the actual mountain or the church steeple, must be distinguished from its existence in thought. The content is that in which ideas of distinct objects differ, it is real, present, and it exists as opposed to an object such as a round square that is not real and does not exist. Moreover, the content is mental, as opposed to a physical object that is not mental (1899, p. 384). Hence, whether or not the object exists, either way it cannot be part of the presentation that presents it.

Similar reasoning applies to ideas about past or future objects. The existence of an object is temporal, i.e., an existing object belongs to the past, present, or future. Strictly speaking, an object can only exist in the present since objects of the past do not exist any more and objects of the future are not yet in existence. In this sense, past or future objects cannot be part of the presentation, which exists in the present. But this is not Meinong's full point. For objects or events that belong to the past or future he uses the term *persistence* ('Persistenz') - a concept of being that is unpolluted with the subjectivity of the position of the observer. For example, for a certain astronomical constellation it makes no difference whether someone apprehends it or if this apprehension occurs at the same time, before, or after (ÜA p. 76 f.). For Meinong, the grammatical time reference that we usually use in sentences has nothing to do with the existence of the object. The object persists, i.e., it has a timeless existence at a certain position in the time series. But even on this view, to say that the (*persistent*) object is part of the content or idea would have the consequence that the

object could only be in the same time position as my idea, i.e., the present, and it would then be impossible to locate the object temporally, which is not the case (ÜA p. 77).

In summary, based on the premises:

Premise 2.1 The mental presentation of a non-existent object *a* exists as mental phenomenon, whereas the object *a* does not exist,

Premise 2.2 An existing object *a* is extended and cannot be part of the mental phenomenon that presents it,

Premise 2.3 An existing object *a* is located at a certain position in time which may not be the same position in time of the mental phenomenon that presents it,

Meinong's second thesis can be stated as:

Thesis 2 The intentional object *a* has to be distinguished from the content by means of which it is presented (1899, p. 385).

5.3.2.1 The Connection Between Content and Object

As we have seen, contents are mental, real and present, while the object might not be real and present, and importantly, is not mental. Meinong points out that it is not easy to recognize contents as they seem to hide behind the object. Contents are the mental kind of

things we directly experience or "live through" ('erleben'), and a presentation is primarily directed towards a certain object, and this object is more obviously accessible to us. Since we have a presentation of an object that is such-and-such, which is easy to discern, it is not easy to determine the content element of the idea. Usually, we do not see presentations ***and*** objects, but presentations ***of*** objects. When living through contents, the focus of attention is the object.

Meinong uses the term 'adequateness' for states of mind (ÜA p. 262 ff.). An idea is adequate to a given entity when it presents it as it really is. But resemblance is in most cases excluded since the content of a presentation is mental and can thus not be red, round, or square. This excludes illustrative sense data and images from being contents. The difficulty remains to understand how we can have objects before our minds, if the mind consists of mental acts and the objects lie outside, e.g., the Eiffel Tower, and nothing in our experience can tell us to what the presentation is directed. According to Meinong, if *a* and *b* are two distinct objects that cannot be "lived through", reference to *a* is a different experience than the reference to *b*; Meinong says that we "feel different" ('es ist uns anders zu Mute') (1906, p. 59). As said, the relation between content and object is one of adequacy. The content, though not in real touch with the object, points to the object unambiguously, and picks out the object. This does not mean, though, that only one content is adequate to one object; rather, one object might be presented via different contents.

In summary, Meinong wants to draw a clear distinction between content and object. Like Brentano, he believes that every mental act is directed towards an object, and the object need not have existence. Contents are always real, existent, and mental, and by means of them we have access to objects; they are the inner experiences by means of which we can refer to the external object. Content and object are related such that they fit each other, they are adequate, whereby there is no need of a resemblance between the mental content on the one hand, and, say, an extended physical object on the other. The notion of adequacy is a problem as it is not clear how we can pick the right object from the content we 'live through'. We have noticed a similar problem in Frege, namely the question how a given sense can determine the reference.

5.3.3 True Statements About Non-Existents

The intentionality thesis together with the distinction between content and object constitutes one of the reasons that motivated Meinong's theory of objects. The other reason for Meinong is that he believes that there are facts concerning non-existent object, for instance the fact that Odysseus does not exist or that the round square is round. Hence, we can make true statements about non-existent objects.[8] Here it is noteworthy to recall that

[8] In GT Meinong speaks about what we know (i.e. truths), rather than true statements; in ÜA he also uses the term 'fact' which is complicated as it is tied to his notion of *objective* ('Objektiv'). A judgment or belief has as its object an *objective,* which is akin to what others have called *proposition* or *state of affairs*, but with some notable differences. According to

Frege thought that statements about non-existents cannot be true; according to Frege, if a term has no reference, the sentence has no reference and thus no truth value. Russell (1905), on the other hand, held that all statements with non-referring terms or descriptions that describe nothing are false. By contrast, Meinong does not question the possibility that statements about non-existents can be true, instead he takes is as obvious that we can make true statements about non-existents, for instance that a golden mountain is golden, or that a round square is round,[9] and above all, that a golden mountain or a round square do not exist.

5.3.3.1 True Negative Existence Claims

Meinong's argument is that there are definite facts concerning non-existent objects, and they are just as much fact as any other fact involving existent objects, hence, it is possible to make true statements about non-existent objects. Meinong distinguishes two types of statements, namely those that concern the *being* or *not-being* of an object, i.e., existence and negative existence claims, and those that concern the *so-being* ('Sosein') of an object, i.e., attributive statements.[10] Statements of the first kind are statements of the form

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Meinong, true judgments have as their objects *'factual objectives*' ('tatsächliche Objektive') and a *factual objective* **is** a fact ('Tatsache'). To simplify matters, we will use the term 'statement' for now where Meinong uses the terms 'judgment' and '*objective*'.

[9] This is what Routley (1980) calls the characterization postulate: "the object which is f is f…" (p. 532). Cf. p. 45 ff.

[10] In ÜA Meinong coined the terms 'Seinsmeinen' (belief or intention of being, expressed by an existential claim) and 'Soseinsmeinen' (belief or intention of so-being, expressed by

(5.3) *a* exists

and

(5.4) *a* does not exist.

Meinong realizes that the fact that an object does not exist is especially troublesome, since it leads to an apparent paradox, expressed in Meinong's explicit contradictory formulation: "There are objects concerning which it is the case that there are no such objects" (GT p. 490). The puzzle is the apparent contradiction to say of an object that *it* does not exist. On Meinong's view, in order to negate the being of *a*, *a* or the 'being of *a*' must somehow be given in order to make that judgment about *a*. In order to make the judgment that ascribes not-being to an object, I first have to "grasp" the object.[11] Hence the contradiction that *a* is and *a* is not. As we have seen in chapter 3, Plato observed a similar problem concerning false statements, namely the paradox that a false statement states something that is and is not, for which he found the notion of *eidôlon* as solution, which has

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an attributive claim), as well as 'Seinsobjektiv' (objective of being) and 'Soseinsobjektiv' (objective of so-being). Again, for now we use the term 'statement' or 'claim' where Meinong uses the term objective.

[11] GT p. 491: "In order to judge about an object that it is not, it seems that at first I have to grasp the object in order be able to attribute not-being to it, more precisely, to ascribe [not-being] to [the object], or to deny [not-being] of [the object]." Meinong's German formulation is hard to translate, since he uses the verb 'zuurteilen' and 'aburteilen' which I have rendered as 'ascribe' and 'deny' respectively; the German expressions, however, are derived from 'urteilen' (to judge). The translation may mistakenly suggest that we can not only ascribe or deny *being* to an object, but also ascribe or deny *not-being* of an object, just as we can ascribe or deny a property. But Meinong chose the terms carefully (and the German is unusual and a bit artificial in this context) as they contain the root 'Urteil' (judgment); as we will see in the next chapter, according to his doctrine, the being or not-being of an object is part of the judgment, not part of the object.

'being in some way'. Similarly, Meinong reasoned that in order to truly negate the existence of *a*, *a* has to have a kind of being that differs from existence.

According to Meinong, objects such as Odysseus, the round square, or the golden mountain, also differ from abstract objects such as relations and numbers; the latter have a kind of being for which he uses the term *subsistence* ('Bestand'). So if we negate the existence of Odysseus, the golden mountain and the like, the notion of *subsistence* is not suitable. Meinong considers two notions of being that could be used to avoid the contradiction and rebuts them. First, one could maintain that the object whose existence is denied has 'existence in thought', or in Meinong's terms, the object has *pseudo-being*. But he rejects *pseudo-being* as a solution for the problem of the intentional object for non-existents. He argues that the fact stated by a negative existence claim would then concern the *pseudo-existing* object. Meinong points out that if I claim that 'Odysseus does not exist', I do not think of the presentation, but I rather think of the object and deny that it exists.[12] Moreover, according to Meinong, the thought-of-Odysseus exists (as a psychological event) and Odysseus has *pseudo-being* (as a presented object in that thought), but not every non-existent object has *pseudo-being*, since that requires that someone actually entertains a thought about this object in which the object is presented. It may be the case, however, of many non-existent objects that no one thinks about them. If it is a fact that Odysseus or the

[12] Meinong (GT, p. 491) uses the example 'Blue does not exist', but this example is rather problematic, besides, it would require further explanation with reference to Meinong's account of color.

golden mountain do not exist, these facts do not cease to be facts for the time no one thinks about the objects involved, and then become a fact again once some person has a thought about this object. Meinong finds that it is doubtful that an object must be thought of in order to exist, but it is even more absurd to hold that an object must be thought of in order to not exist. Facts, including the non-existence of objects, are mind-independent, and hence the notion of *pseudo-being* is not a viable solution to account for facts or true statements concerning non-existents.

The other notion of being Meinong considers is a wider notion, for which he uses the term *quasibeing* that extends to everything, including non-existent objects. This is Russell's (1903, p. 449) view where he maintains that since we can make propositions about Homeric gods, chimeras, relations, these are entities of some sort, hence being is a general attribute of everything. Existence, by contrast, is then restricted to only some entities. Meinong used the notion of *quasi-being* (*quasi-transcendence,* or *quasi-content)* which, like Russell's 'being' applies to everything.[13] *Quasi-being* is distinguished from other types of being by not having a contrary (otherwise we would have to make the implausible assumption of an infinite series of higher order *quasi-being*). But as we will see in section 5.4, Meinong gives up the notion of *quasi-being* and replaces it with the notion of *Außersein.*

[13] ÜA pp. 59, 95, 220, 228, 264, 277, 286, 312.

Meinong distinguishes between 'snow' and 'there is snow outside'; the former can hardly be considered a fact while the latter states a fact (ÜA p. 45, 69). The difference is that 'snow' is an object of presentation, whereas 'there is snow outside' is what Meinong calls an '*objective'* ('Objektiv') by which he means what is judged, believed etc., in short, what is stated. When we make a statement of *being* or *not-being*, the *being* or *not-being* rests with the *objective*, not with the object. When thinking of an object, the existence or non-existence of the object is not thereby implied, as one can think of an object without even considering its existence or non-existence (ÜA p. 240). In Meinong's terms the object is *außerseiend* ('out-of-being'), he holds that the "pure object stands beyond being and not-being" (GT p. 494). Of the two claims we can make about the being of an object, e.g., either stating that the object exists or stating that it does not exist, one of the two is true for the object (GT p 494).[14] The being or not-being is not a part of the nature of the object, but it is part of what is stated (the *objective)*. Meinong holds that an object is independent of its being and not-being. Findley (1963, p. 42 ff.) terms this the principle of *Indifference*.

According to the *Indifference* thesis, existence or non-existence is not part of the object itself, although in some special instances, such as the round square, the contradictory properties of the object imply its impossibility, hence its not-being. But the not-being of the round square does not affect the object or its roundness. The *Indifference* thesis seems to suggest that existence (and subsistence) is not a property of the object. But Meinong remains

[14] The same holds for subsistence; for Meinong, some objects do not exist, but subsist (e.g. mathematical objects).

unclear about that. In his later work (1915), which we discuss in section 5.5, he distinguishes between *nuclear* and *extra-nuclear* properties.[15] Unfortunately Meinong does not give precise criteria for the distinction between *nuclear* and *extra-nuclear* properties. Parsons (1978) suggests that when it is disputable that something is a property, it is *extra-nuclear*. Routley (1980) considers *nuclear* properties as characterizing features that characterize the object as **what** it is (p. 47 f.). For example, the property 'golden' is a *nuclear* property of the golden mountain. It is clear from the *Indifference* thesis that if existence is a property, it is an *extra-nuclear* property.[16] Though Meinong claims that the being of an object is not a part of the nature of the object, but is associated with an *objective*, he also holds that every object is either existent or non-existent. This suggests that he does not deny that existence is a property of objects.[17]

Meinong distinguishes between an object, i.e., an intentional object, and a fact. A fact is what is stated or thought *about* an object, usually expressed in a statement or judgment. For instance,

(5.5) this desk in front of me

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[15] Meinong follows Mally (1912) in this distinction between '*konstitutorische'* and '*außerkonstitutorische'* properties. Findley translates the terms as 'nuclear' and 'extra-nuclear'. Parsons (1974, 1978, and 1980) uses Findley's translation and tries to clarifiy the distinction. Routley (1980) adopts the distinction as the distinction between characterizing and non-characterizing properties.

[16] Routley (1980) argues that existence is a property, though not a characterizing property (p. 180 ff.)

[17] Lambert (1983) points out that Meinong did not deny that being and not-being are properties of objects.

is an intentional object, whereas

(5.6) this desk is in front of me

(5.7) this desk is next to the chair

(5.8) this desk exists

are judgments or statements that express facts. In Meinong's view, the desk's existence or its being next to the chair are not properties or part of the object, but the intentional object – the desk – is independent of its being next to the chair and it is also independent of its existence. Whereas the desk's independence of its being next to the chair seems intuitively acceptable, there is some intuitive awkwardness to the idea that the desk in front of me is independent of its existence. Meinong's point is that there are true negative existence claims about objects that do not exist, and these objects are genuinely the intentional objects of true statements. Negative existence claims are true for all objects that do not exist (and there are virtually infinitely many of those). A negative existence statement of the form

(5.9) *a* does not exist

is just as much a statement about an object *a* as an existence statement of the form

(5.10) *a* exists.

As we will see in section 5.4.1.5, the pure object has *Außersein*, a kind of being that is outside of existence or non-existence. This notion solves two problems. First, it accounts for an intentional object even if this does not exist, and even if this is impossible to exist (such as the round square). If what counts as an object is independent of its ontological status, then this kind of object can function as the intention of a mental state, regardless of

whether it exists. And second, it solves the apparent paradox that is connected with true negative existence claims. If existence is external to the intentional object of which existence is denied, existence can be denied of the object without contradiction. Moreover, though Meinong does not specifically make this point, it is clear that affirmative existence claims are informative. Given that the object is independent of being, affirming the existence of an object adds something to the object, and is, according to Meinong, an empirical judgment (cf. ÜA 77).

In summary, based on the premise that there are facts concerning the being of non-existent objects, expressed by true negative existence claims, i.e., from

Premise 3.1 '*a* does not exist' is true of any non-existent object *a,*

Meinong arrives at the *Indifference Thesis* :

Thesis 3 : An object *a* is independent of being and not-being.[18]

[18] This is one of Meinong's important and controversial theses. See Routley (1980), Lambert (1983), Parsons (1980).

5.3.3.2 True Attributive Claims About Non-Existent Objects

The second kind of *objectives* or statements, statements of *so-being*, are attributive claims of the form

(5.11) *a* is F

such as

(5.12) this desk is in front of me

(5.13) the round square is round

(5.14) Odysseus is prudent.

In the preceding section we discussed the first kind, statements concerning the *being* of objects; the problem was that if we deny existence, the object whose existence is denied has to be given in some way, it has to have some kind of being. Statements of the first kind, those that assert or deny the existence of an object, can be true, and it seems unproblematic to hold that such claims state a *fact*, for instance the *fact* that Odysseus does not exist, even though this fact concerns a non-existent object. According to Meinong, statements of the second kind, those that ascribe a property to an object, i.e., statements concerning the *so-being* of the object, can also be true and state a *fact*, independent of whether or not the object exists. Whereas one may find it already problematic to hold that statements such as (5.13) or (5.14) are true, it seems intuitively strange to maintain, as Meinong does, that they state *facts*, namely the *fact* that the round square is round and that Odysseus is prudent.

In the discussion of Frege in chapter 3 we found it a shortcoming that Frege held that statements about non-existents (i.e., where the name lacks a reference) always lack a truth value. Meinong does not provide any argument in favor of the possibility that there are truths concerning non-existents, rather he takes it as a given and it serves as premise for the theory. On his view, we can truly ascribe properties to an object that does not exist, i.e., statements of the form '*a* is F' may be true regardless of whether or not the object *a* exists. But in order for this to be possible, the object must have these properties despite its non-existence. So Meinong concludes that the object has its properties independent of its existence. In geometry, to use his example, we are dealing with objects that do not exist, nevertheless there are truths about geometrical figures and we can discover the properties of geometrical objects; hence they have their properties independent of their ontological status. Meinong acknowledges that in empirical matters we are mostly not interested in the properties of objects if they do not exist, nevertheless the same principle holds here, namely that objects have the properties they have independent of their ontological status.

In the preceding section we have discussed the *Indifference* thesis, namely that the being or not-being is external to the object itself. Given the object *a* of any mental state is *außerseiend* ('out-of-being'), existence or non-existence is also irrelevant to **what** the object is. Meinong adopts this *Principle of Independence*, namely the thesis that the *so-being* of an object is independent of its *being,* from Mally (1904), and Meinong considers it a "welcome

addition" (GT p. 494) to the *Indifference* thesis.[19] What the object is, the *so-being* of the object, consists in a number of properties and determinations, and these are genuinely possessed by the object regardless of its ontological status. The notion of *Außersein* is Meinong's solution to the question concerning the ontological status of non-existent objects that are the intentional objects of mental states and the subject of true statements, either existential or attributive. Needless to say, *Außersein* raises a number of questions and problems that will be addressed in section 5.4.1.5.

In summary, Meinong holds that there are truths concerning the *so-being* of objects, namely attributive statements about non-existent object can be true, so we can formulate

Premise 4.1 '*a* is F' can be true even if the object *a* does not exist,

from which Meinong concludes the *Independence Thesis*:

Thesis 4 An object *a* has its properties independent of its being or not-being.

The *Indifference Thesis* and the *Independence Thesis* are both based on the view that there are facts or truths about non-existent objects. According to the *Indifference Thesis* what counts as an object is independent of the object's ontological status, i.e., its being or

[19] Mally, however, abandoned the principle later (1912).

not-being; after all, it is unproblematic to make true negative existence claims about non-existent objects, and affirmative existence claims about existing objects are informative. According to the *Independence Thesis* the object has its properties independent of its ontological status. The theses of *Indifference* and *Independence* have received considerable attention by contemporary theorists, e.g., Routley (1980), who defends these principles, as well as by Parsons (1980), Lambert (1983), Zalta (1985/6), and Jacqette (1996).

4.3.4 Statements About Non-Existents are About Non-Existents

Both theses are based on the premise that there are true statements about non-existent objects and that these statements are genuinely about non-existent objects. The premise for the *Indifference Thesis* holds that there are true negative existence claims of the form '*a* does not exist' and these claims are about a non-existent object *a*. Meinong (1906/7, p. 244) rejects an argument by Heymans (1905, pp. 44-9) who holds that negative existence statements are not about non-existent objects, but they are rather, like any other true claim, about 'reality'. Heymans maintains that negative existence claims, such as

(5.15) ghosts do not exist

can be transformed into

(5.16) no real object is a ghost.

Thus, (5.15) is not about ghosts (which do not exist), but about the totality of actual or real objects (which exist). On this view, what appears as subject in (5.15), ghosts, is interpreted as a predicate and the statement is thereby rendered into a claim about the realm of existent objects. Similar solutions have been proposed by Russell (1903, p. 174) and Moore (1922, p. 212ff.); according to Moore, 'unicorns are unreal' is analyzed as 'the property of being a unicorn belongs to nothing'. According to this interpretation, negative existence claims are not about non-existent objects, but are attributive claims (or in Meinong's terms, judgments of *so-being*) about existent objects. This solution avoids the need of an intentional object of which existence is denied, and the truth or fact stated is not about a non-existent object, but about the realm of existent objects. Hence, it challenges the premise for the *Indifference Thesis* and Meinong rejects it. He says:

> Especially in this case, if I am not mistaken, there is no need for a theory of objects to realize that, if once someone thinks of ghosts and denies their existence, and then someone thinks of something real, regardless of this being more or less determined, and realizes that it is not a ghost, in each case one entertains two fundamentally different thoughts. And that the second thought may in practice likely say the same as the first, does not entitle us to hold that the first is the second or the first is not as significant as the second. But if that is the case, then no transformation can change the fact that something that is not at all a part of reality can be the subject of a judgment and specifically also a subject of knowledge (1906/7, p. 245).

Meinong thus holds that even on non-theoretical grounds there is a difference between the two thoughts (5.15) and (5.16). The thought that ghosts do not exist, he argues, and the thought about some actual object and recognizing that it is not a ghost are two entirely distinct thoughts. In other words, when having the thought that ghosts do not exist we are not really having a thought about any other actual objects, less so about *all* existent objects, and find that their properties differ from the properties of being a ghost, as it is possible that we are not thinking about anything else but ghosts. Meinong argues that the difference between (5.15) and (5.16) is not merely a matter of linguistic expression; he criticizes Heymans' analysis as an obvious case of an overestimation of logical equivalencies, and though these are often useful for the purpose of logic, they prove to be "disastrous in theory" (1906/7, p. 245). He points out that logical equivalences may still express different thoughts:

> The difference between [logically] equivalent thoughts that is often neglected for practical reasons is always in some sense a difference in objects (1906/7, p. 245).

Meinong's rebuttal of Heymans' analysis concerns expressions that stand for a class or kind of objects that does not exist, namely ghosts, but the same analysis can be given for negative existence claims concerning individual objects. Thus

(5.17) Pegasus does not exist

can be analyzed as

(5.18) no real object is Pegasus.

According to Meinong, though the two statements are logically equivalent, they express different thoughts and are about different objects. (5.17) is a statement about Pegasus, and not about all objects that are not Pegasus. In Heymans' analysis, the subject of (5.15), 'ghosts', is moved into the predicate position in (5.16). For Meinong, the statements are thus about different objects, hence, they constitute distinct thoughts. And the same holds for the statement pair (5.17) and (5.18).

It is interesting that Meinong maintains that two statements, though logically equivalent, express different thoughts; Frege would certainly agree, even in terminology, since he, too, would consider (5.15) and (5.16) as expressing different thoughts. But more so, according to Frege even if the object is the same, the thought differs when the sense by means of which the object is presented differs. Concerning the difference between (5.15) and (5.16), Meinong sees the difference between the thoughts as a result of a difference in the objects the statements are about. The difference between the two statements is that they are about different intentional objects. Meinong's theory, at this point, does not provide the tools to account for a difference in thought when the object remains the same, and he does not mention it here; besides, in the given context it is not relevant. The point of his argument is that true negative existence claims are genuinely about non-existent objects.

Unfortunately Meinong only defends the premise for the *Indifference Thesis*, namely that true negative existence claims are about non-existent objects and his discussion is rather brief. He does not give a similar argument in favor of the premise for the *Independence*

Thesis; the premise for the *Independence thesis* claims that there are true statements of *so-being* about non-existent objects, i.e., statements of the form '*a* is F' even if the object *a* does not exist. Meinong does not give an argument that statements of the form '*a* is F' are genuinely about the object *a* if *a* does not exist. That is, he does not consider an analysis similar to Heymans' for statements of the form '*a* is F' that analyze the non-existent object that is in subject position as predicate of the statement. Meinong does not discuss Russell's (1905) theory of Descriptions and, of course, Meinong could not have known Quine (1953).[20] According to Russell (1905), a predicative statement containing a definite description or a proper name (that is a disguised definite description) in subject position is analyzed as a conjunction of predicates that hold for exactly one variable *x*. This account also moves the subject into the predicate position replacing the subject by a variable. Likewise, Quine holds that "to be assumed as an entity is, purely and simply, to be reckoned as the value of a variable" (1953, p. 13). On Quine's account, the subject of a statement of the form '*a* is F' is moved into predicate position, most notably in Quine's formulation that the alleged object named 'Pegasus' translates into a predicate 'pegasizes'.

Since Meinong did not consider these explanations, we can only conjecture that he would have embraced Kripke's (1972) well-known criticism of Russell. Kripke argues that when we talk about 'Aristotle' we do not mean *anything* that fits the description, but the

[20] In the second edition of ÜA (1910) all of Meinong's references to Russell pertain to Russell's criticism of Meinong in Russell (1904) and (1907).

object *Aristotle*, even if *he* does not fit the description associated with *him*.[21] Since Meinong's concern is neither logic nor language, but intentional mental states, we presume that he would have criticized the Russell-Quine solution in a way similar to his rejection of Heymans' analysis of negative existence claims. Meinong holds that even if two statements are logically equivalent, they may still express different thoughts. Transforming the subject into the predicate position may produce a statement that is logically equivalent, but one that expresses a different thought. The object we think of when thinking of Pegasus is not *any one thing* that is such and such, but a specific object, namely Pegasus.

Moreover, on the Russell-Quine view, statements that lack a value for the variable, i.e., an actual object as instantiation for the bound variable *x,* turn out false. Hence, all positive attributive claims about non-existent objects are false. For Frege, who did not transform the subject into a predicate, all predicative statements of the form '*a* is F' are neither true nor false if *a* is a singular term that lacks a reference. For Meinong, by contrast, it was not even a question that attributive statements about non-existent object can be true. He considers it as obvious that

(5.19) the golden mountain is golden

(5.20) the round square is round

[21] Regrettably, Kripke pays little attention to names that lack reference; he considers Wittgenstein's example of what it means to say 'Moses did not exist' (p.31 ff.). According to Kripke, the proper name 'Moses' is a rigid designator and Moses may have existed even if he did not do any of the things attributed to him. The question remains who or what we are talking about if Moses did in fact not exist.

are true. Moreover, since Meinong maintains that non-existent objects can be the objects of knowledge, there have to be at least some truths about these objects. It is not so clear whether these truths about non-existents are confined to negative existence claims and trivial truths such as (5.19) and (5.20). Given the *Independence Thesis*, we can conclude that Meinong holds that there are other than trivially true attributive claims about non-existents, but the *Independence Thesis* is based on the very premise that is in question here. Nonetheless, the *Independence Thesis* even holds on the premise that there are only trivial truths about non-existent objects such as (5.19) and (5.20). If (5.19) is true, then we truly ascribe the property of being golden to an object, the golden mountain, which does not exist. Meinong concludes that if the golden mountain has that property of being golden despite its non-existence, then the golden mountain has this property independent of its existence or non-existence. According to the Russell-Quine account, (5.19) would be false, and on Frege's view (5.19) would be neither true nor false. The consequence of the Russell-Quine and Frege's view is that truths of the form '*a* is *a*' are not always true.

5.4. The Meinongian Universe

On a Meinongian definition, an object is defined as something that has properties and can be the intention of a mental state; existence is not included in this definition. Objects that do not exist are genuine objects and they are mind- and language-independent. The claim that "*there are"* such objects has earned Meinong the most

adamant criticism. According to Meinong, there is a vast number of such objects since there are virtually infinitely many non-existent objects, and as he points out, existent objects make up only a small portion of all objects. Thus, the theory is notorious for "cluttering the universe" with non-existent objects; Meinong tries to vindicate the unfamiliar idea that existence is irrelevant to an object by referring to mathematics where it is of no concern whether the objects (such as numbers or geometrical objects) exist or not. Nevertheless, Meinong draws a distinction between mathematical and other abstract objects on the one hand, and non-existent objects, such as the golden mountain or Odysseus, on the other hand. Though neither numbers nor relations can be said to *exist*, he maintains that they are different kinds of objects than unicorns, Vulcan, or Odysseus. On his view, non-existent objects are not all equal.

5.4.1. Kinds of Being

The distinction between different kinds of non-existent objects also calls for a different kind of being they entertain. In the preceding we have already briefly mentioned the different concepts of Meinong's complex theory of objects. In this section, we discuss the different kinds of being, especially Meinong's notion of *Außersein.*

5.4.1.1. Pseudo-Being

Meinong uses the term *pseudo-being* or *pseudo-existence* for the thought-of-object, the presentation of the object that has being insofar as the state of mind that presents the object exists; the content of a psychological phenomenon is a psychological phenomenon, and if the psychological state exists, so does the content of it as something psychological. Meinong also calls this the object of "inner perception" (ÜA p.403) or the "immanent object" (ÜA p. 404). The *pseudo-existent* object, as the presented object of one's psychological experience, is thus subjective and akin to what Frege calls an 'idea' – it belongs to an individual's mind and cannot be shared among different individuals.

It is clear that with the distinction between object and content *pseudo-being* is the kind of being that belongs to the content and not to the object. Any object we think of is thereby *pseudo-existent*, including non-existent objects. There is an important distinction between *pseudo-being* and the other kinds of being, namely *existence, subsistence,* and *Außersein: Pseudo-being* is mind dependent as it relies on an accompanying psychological process, whereas this is not the case for *existence, subsistence,* and *Außersein*. As we noted above in section 5.3.2, not every object is *pseudo-existent*; first, even existing objects may not have *pseudo-being* since someone actually has to think of an object for the object to have *pseudo-being*. And second, Meinong holds that when making statements about non-existent objects, we do not make a claim about a thought-

of-object. Hence, the intentional object cannot be the *pseudo-existent* object, and the notion of *pseudo-being* cannot replace *Außersein* as the being for non-existent objects.

5.4.1.2. Quasi-Being

Meinong uses curious terms such as *quasi-reality*, *quasi-meaning,* and *quasi-transcendence* when, in a given context of general considerations, he does not want to commit to reality, meaning, or transcendence respectively. So for example, he speaks of 'reality or quasi-reality' for what is the object of a judgment when it is not relevant or remains open whether or not the judgment is correct and affirms what is real (ÜA p. 226, p. 263, p. 266). Accordingly, *quasi-being* is a kind of ontologically non-committal being that pertains to everything, akin to Russell's (1903) general notion of being.

According to Findley (1963, p. 47 f.), Meinong dismisses the notion of *quasi-being.* On Findley's interpretation, "Meinong rejected the doctrine of *Quasisein*, because he could not conceive that there should be a variety of being to which no corresponding non-being was opposed" (p. 47). When Meinong introduces the notion of *Außersein,* he says:

> This being [*Außersein*] would have to apply to every object as such: a not-being of the same kind could not correspond to it; for a not-being in this new sense would again immediately be followed by difficulties analogous to those that occur for not-being in the usual sense, for the elimination of which

> the new conception serves in the first place. For this reason I found the term "*Quasisein"* to be a quite useful expression for this somewhat unusual being (GT p. 492).

In the subsequent passage (GT 492-4) Meinong poses the question of how a kind of being, which has no contrary, can properly be considered being, and if such a notion should not rather be avoided. Meinong solves the problem with the notion of *Außersein* (GT 493 f.). So Meinong replaces *quasi-being* with the concept of *Außersein*. Since *Außersein* is not, strictly speaking, a kind of being of an object, but rather the object insofar as it is outside of being, neither being nor not-being are opposites of *Außersein*.

5.4.1.3 Existence

Meinong maintains that only singular objects or individuals can *exist*, existence thus applies only to what Meinong terms *objectum*' ('Objekt')[22] (as opposed to higher order objects such as *objectives*). This does not imply, of course, that all singular objects exist since there are singular objects that do not exist (such as the golden mountain or Odysseus). Now we usually also say of classes or kinds that they exist, e.g., we claim that 'lions exist',

[22] Meinong uses the term 'Gegenstand' (object) as a general term for objects including singular objects and objectives; the German word 'Objekt', since of Latin origin, is usually translated by the Latin word 'objectum' (so by Findley). Cf. ch. 5.4.2.

but in this case, what is said to exist are the individuals that instantiate the class; accordingly, we would not say that 'lion exists', but either claim of a particular individual that 'this lion exists' or claim of some individuals that they exist by saying that 'lions exist'.[23] The class term 'lion', in Meinong's scheme, can also refer to the concept, but then this thing does not exist, but subsists, i.e., in that case one would say that the concept 'lion' subsists.

Existence, Meinong says, is "in principle empirically known" with the exception that sometimes negative existence can be known *a priori,* e.g., that the round square does not exist (ÜA p.77). It is in the nature of existent objects, he says, that they are potentially perceivable (1899, p.397). This suggests that Meinong considers existent objects as physical objects that are bound to space and time. While he clearly states that existence is bound to time, he does not explicitly mention that existent objects are extended and thus bound to space. But we take his claim that existing objects are capable of being perceived to indicate just that; moreover, his examples, ranging from "my desk" to "the church steeple," support that interpretation.

Meinong holds that existence is a *peculiarity* ('Eigenart')[24] that some objects have, and objects that lack that peculiarity, "cannot exist at all":

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[23] Cf. Mög. 206-207.

[24] Meinong's term 'peculiarity' here suggests that he did not exclude that existence is a property. As we pointed out in section 5.3.3.1, according to the later (1915) distinction

> Without doubt, existence is bound to a certain peculiarity of objects, insofar as objects that lack this peculiarity cannot exist at all; in my view, for this peculiarity we find the term "reality" is most suitable. These real objects, such as table, chair, as well as presentation and desire, are opposed to ideal objects whose being, if they have one at all, can be nothing other than subsistence. Among these are numbers, figures ['Gestalten'], the relation of cause and effect, and many others, including objectives. But what can exist, must, so to speak, first of all subsist; and if one presents in thought something existing at time *t*, say today the steerable airplane, and attaches a different and sufficiently past date in time *t'*, then one has in a simple way grasped an object that lacks existence, but not subsistence (ÜA p. 74).

This passage is problematic, to say the least. In the first part it is claimed that the possibility to exist depends on a 'peculiarity' that an object has, and if an object has this 'existence-peculiarity' the object exists and is 'real', whereas if it lacks that peculiarity it "cannot exist at all." Apparently he is saying here that an object that lacks the existence-peculiarity cannot possibly exist. This makes sense for ideal objects such as numbers and other abstract objects that cannot possibly *exist*, and the modal claim seems to be intended for just these objects. Ideal objects lack the existence-peculiarity and are incapable of existing. But what about objects that are not ideal and could possibly exist but never actually exist (e.g., Homer, my younger sister whom I didn't have, or the golden mountain)? – According to Meinong's

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between nuclear and extra-nuclear properties, existence can be taken as an extra-nuclear property.

theory, these objects are *ausserseiend*, i.e., they are neither existent nor subsistent. But since some objects that do not actually exist could have possibly existed or could possibly exist, it seems just false to say that they cannot possibly exist. The modal claim that objects that lack the existence peculiarity cannot exist at all draws a clear distinction between existent and subsistent objects if subsistence pertains to abstract objects such as numbers only, otherwise the distinction is at least weak.

According to the above quote (ÜA p.74) subsistence is not restricted to abstract objects. The problem is that Meinong's claim that "what exists, must, so to speak, first of all subsist" obliterates the distinction between existing and subsisting objects. An object then subsists before and after its existence, and it remains unclear, if while it exists, it also subsists. In the second part of the above quote Meinong uses the example of an object A that exists at time *t* but is thought as being at time *t'* when it did not actually exist. Meinong seems to suggest that we think about two distinct object, namely object A at a time *t* (in short, object A*t)*, and object A at a time *t'* (in short, object A*t'*). Whereas A*t* (e.g., a 1970 Boeing 747) *exists*, A*t'* (e.g., a 1968 Boeing 747) *subsists* – so the latter has the same kind of being as mathematical objects? Moreover, given that a 1968 Boeing 747 did not actually exist, its existence at that time is not impossible as it could have existed if engineers had worked faster with more resources etc. .

One possibility is to maintain that A*t* and A*t'* are not singular objects, but that there is an object A that is part of two distinct *objectives* indicating time. A*t* and A*t'* are then

analyzed as *objectives*, namely the *objective* expressed by 'A exists at time *t*', and the *objective* expressed by 'A exists at time *t*''. Meinong draws attention to the distinction between an object that exists and an existential objective: "My desk is an existing thing at a certain time: but that it exists at that time, that subsists now as well as in all future and past, even though it was inaccessible to the knowledge of past times and will be vanished from the future knowledge. It is not less timeless than that the right angle is larger than the acute angle" (ÜA 64-5). But if A*t* and A*t'* are analyzed as objectives ('A exists at time *t*' and 'A exists at time *t"*') then neither A*t* nor A*t'* exist, but both subsist, namely as objectives. Besides, this is not Meinong's take, as he continues by clearly stating that A*t* and A*t'* are singular objects (*objecta*):

> If you take A as the object in question apart from the temporal determination, then you have the *objectum* A*t* presented as an existing object, the *objectum* A*t'* presented as a merely subsisting object (ÜA p. 74, italics added).

The problem is that Meinong holds that existent objects are not only bound to time, but that they are rigorously bound to the present:

> All existence, that is of course obvious, belongs to either the past, present, or future: it was, it is, or it will be. And this comes so close to the thought of existence that it has to be said more precisely: only what is present exists in a

> strict sense, whereas what was or what will be does not properly exist (ÜA p. 76).[25]

Thus, only objects that exist in the present are existent, whereas existence does not apply to past and future objects.[26] As we remarked in chapter 2 on Parmenides, in the philosophy of time this view is known as presentism. Like Meinong, Parmenides maintains that whatever "is" (i.e., "exists" on our interpretation) is in the present of the time-space continuum, with the important difference of course, that Parmenides claims that this is all we can think or talk about, whereas Meinong holds that there is a vast number of objects outside of the realm of existents.[27] This strict sense of the notion of existence causes considerable confusion in Meinong's treatment of past objects. Being confined to time distinguishes existent objects from subsistent objects; the latter are not temporal, and Meinong notes that it would be absurd to consider a relation, such as the difference between red and green, as belonging to a certain time (ÜA p.75). He contends that subsistent objects cannot be temporal, but this is inconsistent with his analysis that an object A*t'* - an object that is thought as attached to a time when it did not actually exist – subsists. After all, the object A*t'* that was claimed to subsist, clearly belongs to a time, namely *t'*. Besides, strictly only objects that exist right now are existent, so an object A*t* that actually existed at time *t*, but does not exist any more,

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[25] Cf. ÜA pp. 64, 73, 75.

[26] Routley (1980) holds that true claims about past and future objects constitute common claims about non-existent objects: "Another familiar but striking case of discourse where properties are attributed to non-existent items is provided by talk of purely past and future items" (p. 31).

[27] Parmenides, fragment 8,5; we discussed Parmenides' time constraint in section 2.5.2.

is also subsistent (for instance a particular 1975 Boeing that has been taken out of service and recycled).

Meinong concedes that the existence of an object at a particular time *t* is independent of the observer's position in time; for instance it is not relevant for a particular astronomical object if it is recognized before, during, or after its existence (ÜA p.76 f.). For this purpose, but to add to the confusion, Meinong uses the term *persistence* ("Persistenz"): "My desk persists at an absolute, objective time *t*, but this persistence remains unchanged, whatever point in time it may be observed" (ÜA p.77). It is surprising that Meinong does not consider A*t'* as *außerseiend*, as he mentions this kind of being just a few pages later (ÜA p.80). Moreover, he could have solved the problem of objects that existed in the past rather easily based on his own theory. Given that he maintains that existence and subsistence are not grasped with the object, but are part of an *objective* (i.e., a claim that is believed, stated, or thought), he could count as existent objects all those for which a true existential claim (in past or present tense) can be made, as he also maintains that grammatical tense has nothing to do with existential thought (ÜA p.77). As we shall see in chapter 5.5, problems of this kind do not occur for the Modified Theory, according to which A*t* and A*t'* can both be analyzed as incomplete objects.

Meinong also draws a distinction between *real* and *ideal*. The English 'real', though homonymous, does not quite accurately translate what Meinong means by the German '*real*'. Meinong's use of the German term '*real*' is not to be confused with what he terms

as *'wirklich'* which is also rendered as 'real' in English, but '*wirklich'* means real in the sense of 'actual'. Findley (1963) suggests that Meinong's use of '*real*' is closer to what can be understood as 'concrete'. In other words, objects that are *real*, have spatial-temporal properties, whereas *ideal* objects are characteristically not spatial-temporal. It is quite obvious, that existent objects are *real*. But not all *real* objects are existent. In GhO (p. 394) he maintains that objects are still called *real* even if they do not actually exist, but it is in their nature that they could exist. So possible existents are admitted to the realm of the *real*. And given that he holds that existent objects are "in principle empirically known" he determines the *real* as that which is by nature perceivable (GhO p. 397), so apparently he means physical objects that may or may not exist; the golden mountain would thus be a *real,* yet not existent object. As examples for real objects he gives "a house, a chronograph, a book, and of course also color, sound, electricity and the like" (GhO p.394). He contrasts *real* objects with *ideal* objects that cannot correctly be called existent, and as examples he names "lack, boundary, things of the past ['Vergangenes'] and the like" as "traditional examples for the not-real, namely the ideal". It is unclear exactly what tradition he is referring to here. It is rather puzzling that he considers objects that do not actually exist but could exist as *real*, whereas objects that do not exist any more are taken as *ideal*. But he is not consistent with the classification of past objects as ideal objects. In GhO (p. 382) he notes that things that existed or will exist but do not exist in the present can be *real*. Moreover, he claims that *ideal* objects are by nature not perceivable, and points out that it is just obvious that objects, namely *ideal* objects, that "cannot exist at all", can "even less be

an object of perception" (GhO p. 397). *Ideal* objects are thus by nature incapable of being perceived.

It is tempting to conclude that the real-ideal distinction coincides with the existent-subsistent distinction. This is Findley's (1963) interpretation; he holds that the distinction between real and ideal objects is "based on the distinction between existence and subsistence" (p. 115). This interpretation makes the distinction between existence and subsistence more lucid. Real objects are then objects that either exist or not, and ideal objects are objects that either subsist or not. Meinong holds that there are *real* objects that do not exist, e.g., the golden mountain. And whereas mathematical objects typically subsist, there are ideal object that do not subsist, e.g., the round square. The only problem is that Meinong considers past objects as subsistent. As we have seen in the preceding, objects that belong to the class of existents are restricted to those that actually exist in the present, whereas those that are only potentially existent and those that existed in the past are subsistent. *Real* objects, on the other hand, include not only existents, but also potentially existents, so past and future objects are *real*. It is just as odd to consider past and future objects as subsistent as it is odd to consider them as *ideal*. If we think of abstract objects, such as numbers and relations, as *ideal,* it makes sense that these objects cannot exist at all and are not perceivable, but it is hard to see how that should also hold for past objects, e.g., my late grandmother. Surely it is not true of her that she could not exist at all, since she did actually exist, and it is not true of her that she is by nature not perceivable, since she was in

fact perceived while she existed. Strangely, she is in the class of subsistent objects alongside with numbers and other abstract objects.

Meinong's analysis of past objects as *ideal* and subsistent can be considered a mistake he made before he had developed the notion of *Außersein*. The distinction between existence and subsistence is obscured by Meinong's rigorous present time constraint on existent objects, on account of which past objects are subsistent. Given that Meinong includes past or possible existents among objects that are real, it is hard to see why he would consider past objects as subsistent. The theory of objects was motivated by an attempt to account for objects that are the intentional objects of mental states. When someone is thinking of Aristotle, the intentional object is not a now subsisting person, but the philosopher who existed, and historians and archeologists are typically not concerned with things subsisting now, but they investigate the nature of objects as they existed in the past, though not existent any more. If an object, before and after it exists, subsists, the distinction between subsistence and existence cannot lie in the nature of the object. The notion of subsistence would be more distinctive if it applied only to abstract objects such as relations and concepts that pertain to or hold for other objects. It seems that Meinong struggled for a while with the classification of past objects and objects that are *real* but neither exist in the present nor existed in the past (such as A*t'*), and of objects that existed but do not exist any more. After he fully developed the notion of *Außersein*, these objects can be accounted for without obscuring the distinction between existence and subsistence.

5.4.1.4 Subsistence

Meinong uses the German term '*Bestand*' and the related verb *'bestehen'*, which are translated as 'subsistence' and 'subsist'. Though the terms have no special philosophical tradition, they are used for relations that 'hold' ('bestehen') between objects. He points out that language indicates that equality between 3 and 3, and difference between red and green, can be said to subsist ('bestehen'), but cannot exist like a house or a tree (GhO p. 382; ÜA p. 73). Likewise, mathematical objects do not exist, but subsist. Meinong notes that when we have a group of objects, such as four nuts, their similarity, difference, or number does not *exist* in addition to the nuts, but the similarity or difference holds or *subsists*.

Abstract objects such as numbers, concepts, relations, and also Meinong's *objectives* are considered as subsisting. Meinong holds that these are genuine objects that have a kind of being that differs from existence. Subsistent objects are not mental objects, they are not mere contents of mental states, but their being is mind independent. In the previous section we held that Meinong's classification of past objects was a mistake that can be corrected with the notion of *Außersein.* Accordingly, Meinong seems to have *ideal*, abstract objects in mind when he characterizes subsistence. He describes subsistent objects as timeless and they are by nature not perceivable.

Whereas existence was said to be "in principle empirically known", subsistence is "in principle known a priori" (ÜA p. 77). With this he means existential claims and claims stating subsistence of an object ("Seinsobjektive"); existential claims, such as

(5.21) this house exists,

are empirically known, whereas claims stating the subsistence of an object, such as

(5.22) number 3 subsists

are known *a priori*. The exceptions are some negative existence claims that can be known *a priori*, and some claims stating subsistence can be based on empirical evidence with regard to the existence of an object. Of the first kind of exception are negative existence claims about objects that involve a contradiction, such as the round square. Of the second kind are claims about empirical *objectives*.

5.4.1.5 Außersein

The doctrine of *Außersein* is the most peculiar element of Meinong's theory. There is no suitable translation for *Außersein*; literally its meaning can be approximated by 'out-of-being', 'beyond being', or 'extra-being'. As we have seen in chapter 5.3.3, the *Außersein* of objects is motivated by true claims about objects that neither exist nor subsist, and true negative existence claims. In order to truly ascribe properties to an object or to negate an object's existence, the object must be "given" somehow in order for the object to have properties truly ascribed or to be truly denied its existence.

Außersein presents the apparently eccentric and outlandish part of Meinong's theory, and he has been criticized and even been ridiculed on account of it. But on a closer look, this concept is less outlandish than it seems. First of all, the question is what exactly Meinong means by this notion, and there are two different ways to interpret it. On one interpretation, *Außersein* is a genuine and special kind of being that applies to objects that are neither existent nor subsistent. In this sense, *Außersein* is devised especially and exclusively for non-existents (such as the golden mountain) and non-subsistents (such as the round square), and it is a kind of being that carries ontological commitment that is parallel to – though distinct from – existence and subsistence. It is likely that this interpretation got Meinong his notoriety for being out of touch with reality. This line of interpretation is supported by Meinong's claim that *Außersein* is a third level of being besides subsistence and existence (GT p. 492). But the relevance of this claim as evidence for this interpretation is compromised by Meinong's subsequent statement that this kind of being applies to all objects.

On another interpretation, *Außersein* is ontologically neutral, and objects that are *außerseiend* are considered as beyond or outside of any being. In this sense, the notion has a function somewhat akin to Husserl's *epoché* by means of which objects are disconnected from any ontological commitment. We find this interpretation far superior to the first, not only because it is intuitively less awkward, but also because it is better supported by Meinong's writing. Thus he says:

> The term [*Außersein*] stems from the effort to explain this curious 'there is' which seems to apply to objects most alien to being ['seinsfremdeste Gegenstände'], without the need of making reference to a new, third kind of being besides existence and subsistence (ÜA p. 79).

He admits that the creation of the term *Außersein* is somewhat "barbaric", though hard to improve, but he holds that the word *Außersein* is a suitable means for the theory of objects "by virtue of its natural indeterminateness" (ÜA p. 79, p. 80). Moreover, Meinong maintains:

> Given the object as such is *außerseiend* and we recognize this, then this entails already a grasping of the object that is unrestricted by the barriers of being (ÜA p. 234).

These remarks clearly indicate that *Außersein* has to be regarded as an ontologically neutral notion, and therefore it applies to all objects, existent as well as non-existent, and subsistent as well as non-subsistent. Furthermore, given the concept of *Außersein* is ontologically neutral, it cannot have any ontological contrary, i.e., as Meinong holds, there cannot be any not-being of this kind. The *außerseiende* object is thus outside or independent of its being, and that is exactly what motivated the notion, namely the *Indifference Thesis* and the *Independence Thesis*: An object *a* is independent of being and not-being (the *Indifference Thesis*), and an object *a* has its properties independent of its being or not-being (the *Independence Thesis*).

As we have maintained in section 5.4.1.2 on *quasi-being*, Meinong does not reject the notion of *quasi-being*, but he replaced it with *Außersein*. There is, however, a slight difference between the two notions. Whereas he used *quasi-being* as a noncommittal notion when it was undecided or irrelevant whether or not the object exists, *Außersein* is purposely noncommittal; the latter takes the object as detached from any being, while the former leaves it open whether or not the object exists.

There are still some open questions. First, we may ask what is left if the object is detached from any kind of being. This is similar to Plato's query how something is not nothing if it has no being, or in Meinong's terminology, if its being is taken away. And second, we may ask how *Außersein* can be a meaningful positive notion if it constitutes just a lack of being. Meinong's answer to the first question is that the *außerseiende* object is the pure *so-being* ('*Sosein'*) of the object. Thus, we consider the *außerseiende* object as merely a set of properties. This is clearly stated in Meinong's formulation in his later work on Probability (1915): "It can readily be seen as obvious that the nature of every object can be analyzed, so to speak, as a collective of determinations of so-being varying in number between 1 and ∞ …" (Mög. p. 168). We have more to say about this statement in section 5.5.

Perszyk (1993) argues that Meinong tacitly endorses a model on which non-existents are sets of properties. Perszyk's argument is based on Meinong's later notion of incomplete objects. But given that according to Meinong *Außersein* pertains to the pure object in its *so-*

being, independent of any determination of being or not-being, not only non-existent objects, but any pure object is characterized or given by a set of properties it has. That includes also existent and subsistent objects. So if I look at this desk in front of me as a pure object that is *außerseiend*, it is a bundle of properties, such as being a desk with a certain color, shape, hight etc., and likewise, the *außerseiende* golden mountain is constituted of the properties of being a mountain and golden. The *being* (or *not-being*) of an object is external to the pure object; thus, existence is not a property, or at least not a nuclear property of the pure object. The pure object consists merely of its *so-being*, whereas the *being* of the object, i.e., its existence or subsistence, can only be grasped by an *objective*, namely an existential thought or claim about the object, such as '*a* exists' or '*a* does not exist'. Hence being or not-being is a matter of the *objective*, and cannot be an essential part of the object (GT p. 493). Meinong says:

> … it can perhaps be said that the pure object stands "beyond being and not-being." … [T]he object is by nature *außerseiend*, though of its two objectives of being ['Seinsobjektive'], its being and its not-being, at any rate one subsists (GT p. 494).

The being or not-being of the object can either be its existence (as in the case of the desk in front of me), its non-existence (as in the case of the golden mountain), its subsistence (as in the case of a mathematical object), or even its non-subsistence (as in the case of the round square as the round square does not even subsist). According to Meinong, *objectives* that are true subsist; hence, of the two *objectives* of being, i.e., being or not-being, one is true. And the being could either be existence or subsistence.

The notion of *Außersein* loses its mysteriousness if we consider the object that has *Außersein* as a bundle or a set of properties, i.e., in Meinong's terms, the *so-being* of the object. Given that we also took Frege's sense to be a set of properties, *Außersein* reminds us somewhat of Frege's sense or a Russellian description. But there is one important difference – a description may present only some of the properties of an object, and Frege's sense contains only one aspect of an object, hence only some of the properties of the object, whereas Meinong's *außerseiende* object is the object with all its properties, or the complete set of all the properties an object has. The *außerseiende* object would thus be akin to a complete description or the totality of senses. Given that the *außerseiende* object is the intentional object of a mental state by which it is presented, this poses a serious epistemological problem since we never have comprehensive knowledge of all the properties of an existing object. If the *außerseiende* object is the direct object of our intentions, it turns out, oddly enough, that existent objects pose just as much of a problem as non-existent objects. Meinong realized this problem later, and attempted to solve it in his Modified theory, namely with the doctrine of incomplete objects that function as direct intentional objects and contain only some of the properties. But since the Modified Theory does not abandon *außerseiende* objects, which serve as target objects for incomplete objects, the question remains what to make of them.

The second question is how *Außersein* constitutes a positive notion given that it is a lack of being or outside of the determination of any kind of being. Meinong holds the following:

> It has to be decided whether *Außersein* constitutes itself a determination of being or just the lack of one. To hold on to the latter is not only urged by the lex parsimoniae, but also by the fundamental lack of a negative corresponding to the presumptive positive which falls outside of any analogy (ÜA p. 80).

We have already seen that Meinong does not consider *Außersein* as a determination of being, but rather as the detachment from being. Nevertheless, he considers it as a positive notion, despite its lack of a corresponding negative.[28] Since *Außersein* is not merely the lack of being, but a set of properties, it is not a negative notion. Interestingly, Meinong calls it a "presumptive positive", and he notes that the lack of an opposite constitutes a striking similarity between *Außersein* and what he calls '*meinen'*; the latter is mostly found translated as 'to mean'. Meinong uses the term in the sense of ' to intend' and as a special case of an *assumption* ('Annahme'), in the sense of 'to suppose', and as such it lacks the character of conviction or belief in the factuality of the object.

In Meinong's doctrine, an *assumption* is an intermediary realm between presentation and judgment. It lacks the moment of conviction and even the conviction of the opposite

[28] ÜA p. 242 and GT p. 493.

does not affect the *assumption*.[29] Whereas the object of an *assumption* is an *objective*, i.e., what is expressed by a statement or claim, the object of *meinen* can also be a singular object. *Meinen* does not imply that the object is part of reality or that there is in fact such an object, and even if I am convinced of the opposite, namely that there is in fact no such object, I still *meine* this object. This is the case when making negative existence claims such as

(5.23) Odysseus does not exist.

When this is a judgment, it contains the element of conviction that this object, Odysseus, does in fact not exist, but in order to deny its existence, the object must somehow be given, and the way it is given is by the presumption of an object without any commitment to its being or not-being. *Meinen* is thus the way we 'grasp' the object. The object so 'grasped' is *außerseiend*, whether or not the object exists and whether or not a true judgment affirms or denies the existence of the object. In other words, the same analysis as for (5.23) also holds for judgments that affirm the existence of an object, such as the judgment

(5.24) Uranus exists.

The object of this judgment, Uranus, is an *außerseiendes* object that is presumed without any implication of being or not-being. Notably, as we have discussed in chapter 4.3.3.2, Frege (1884b, p. 17) holds that when making statements about objects, we do not intend to talk about the idea or the sense, but we *presuppose* a reference.

[29] ÜA 6-7. Meinong refers in a footnote to Frege's conception of assumption in 'Funktion und Begriff' (p. 142f. in Beaney's translation). Frege represents this by the horizontal line.

Given that we take the pure *außerseiende* object as characterized by a set of properties, (5.23) has to be analyzed as the judgment that denies that there exists an object that has these properties. The denial of existence is part of the judgment, and it is not part of the object 'Odysseus'. (5.23) is true if there is no instance that has all the properties of the set that characterizes the *außerseiende* object 'Odysseus' Likewise, (5.24) has to be analyzed as a judgment that asserts that there exists an object that has the properties that characterize the *außerseiende* object 'Uranus'. The claim is true if there is one instance that has all the properties of the set that characterizes 'Uranus'. This analysis is reminiscent of Mendelsohn's solution for true existential claims on the basis of Frege's account. Only for Meinong it is simplified since the *außerseiende* object is based on the complete set of all the properties that determine the object. Though Meinong does not point this out, the notion of *Außersein* has the advantage that affirmative existence claims can be informative. If grasping the object implies the object's existence, then all true existence claims are trivially true. In Meinong's doctrine of *Außersein,* the object is outside or detached from any kind of being, therefore existence claims are informative since the object of which the judgment is made includes only its *so-being*, but not its being or not-being.

Understanding the *außerseiende* object as characterized by a set of properties, a presumed object that is such-and-such, makes the notion of *Außersein* appear less extravagant than some critics of Meinong would have it. Though Meinong contends that we "grasp" the object by "*meinen",* it still is a question how we grasp a set of properties by intending or presuming an object. Given that the 'pure object' consists only of a set of

properties, we conjecture that at least some of the object's properties are given either perceptually, or by descriptions or definitions. It is notable what Meinong has to say about definitions. When giving a definition, he says, we "form" or "build" an object by means of an *objective of so-being*, but he adds in parentheses that this is metaphorically speaking because objects cannot be made up by us, but they can "only be grasped out of the infinite amount of things that are *außerseiend*" (ÜA p. 274). Now with this addition in parentheses he apparently wants to rule out that definitions can be entirely arbitrary, though his claim is not without problems. The point is that we grasp the object by means of the attribution of properties (in Meinong's terms, an *objective of so-being*), in other words, a description, and he maintains that this kind of definition is not a judgment, but an assumption.[30] The problem remains that for most objects we cannot give complete descriptions.

5.4.2 Objects

Meinong adopts Ameseder's (1904) division of all objects into the two general classes of *objecta* and *objectives:*

[30] The other kind of definition he distinguishes in this context (ÜA p. 274) is an analytic claim, where the property attributed is "in conformity with" the object grasped, and he holds that this kind of definition is a judgment. This raises problems that lead away from the issue in this section. In his later theory (1915, p. 205 ff.) he gives a more detailed analysis of analytic claims. Cf. section 5.5.6.

> Without regard to an experiencing subject and his experiences it can be stated that each object has its general and specific nature; and according to this natural constitution objects are divided into two large groups, objecta and objectives… . At this point rational evidence cannot be reached that the disjunction of all objects into objecta and objectives is a complete one (ÜA p. 61).

Meinong uses the German word 'Gegenstand' (object) as a general term for objects in the wider sense. All objects are divided into two kinds, for one of which he uses the German term 'Objekt'; this is mostly translated into English by the Latin word '*objectum*' in order to distinguish it from 'object' ('Gegenstand'). For the other kind Meinong uses the word 'Objektiv' which constitutes a very specific notion for Meinong and is usually kept as '*objective'* in English translations.

5.4.2.1. Primary Objects: Objecta

> An *objectum* is the object a judgment or belief is **about (**what is '**be**urteilt'). Thus, in (5.25) this desk is brown

'this desk' is an *objectum*, it is the object this judgment is **about**. *Objecta* typically stand in the subject position in sentences, they are typically expressed by singular terms, hence they are singular, individual objects, though of course they can also occur as a plurality of singular objects, as in

(5.26) these desks are brown

where the judgment is about 'these desks', which are *objecta. Objecta* are the kinds of things that have being or not-being, they are existent, subsistent, or neither, and in any case they are *außerseiend*. Since judgments and the like are about *objecta*, *objecta* are constituents of **what** is judged, and what is judged, e.g., that this desk is brown, is an *objective*. *Objecta* are the primary objects of judgments, assumptions, beliefs, and desires. The distinction between *objectum* and *objective* becomes more lucid once we look at the much more difficult notion of *objectives*.

5.4.2.2. Higher Order Objects: Objectives

When making judgments, we judge **about** *objecta*, (in Meinong's terms, what is '**be**urteilt'). But Meinong holds that when making a judgment we judge something, and **what** is judged (what is '**ge**urteilt'), the object of a judgment, assumption, or the like, he calls *objective* ('Objektiv') (ÜA p. 44 ff.). So the *objective* of the judgment expressed by

(5.27) this desk is brown

is **what** is expressed by this sentence, or **what** is judged, namely that 'this desk is brown'. As opposed to (5.27),

(5.28) this brown desk

is not a judgment, hence, this brown desk is not an *objective*, but an *objectum.* Since all *objectives* are based on primary objects about which they are, all *objectives* are objects of

higher order whereas the primary objects they are based on are also called the 'material' of the *objective* (ÜA p. 62 f.; GhO p. 189). In simple sentences the object of an *objective* is an *objectum.*

An *objective* can also have another *objective* as its object, as is the case in embedded clauses such as

(5.29) it is the case that this desk is brown.

The *objective* expressed in (5.29) is that 'it is the case that this desk is brown', and the object of this *objective* is another *objective* expressed by the that-clause ' that this desk is brown'. *Objectives* are thus always expressed by complete sentences or that-clauses.[31] In (5.29), the *objective* 'this desk is brown' has the role of a primary object **about** which the judgment is (which is '**be**urteilt'). Hence *objectives* can be in both positions, namely **what** is judged (what is '**ge**urteilt') and **about** which is judged (what is '**be**urteilt'). Meinong maintains that we can get virtually infinitely many higher order objects, as we can form the higher order object

(5.30) he said that it is the case that this desk is brown

and so on. But whereas every *objective* can have yet another higher order object above it, so to speak, Meinong holds that the same is not the case going the other direction toward lower order objects, as we would always end up with an *objectum* as the object. In our series of

[31] Meinong (ÜA p. 48) contends that the word 'that' (German 'daß') that introduces lower order clauses is originally a demonstrative pronoun pointing to an *objective*. A similar view has been held by Davidson (1968-9).

examples (5.27), (5.29), and (5.30), we end up with 'this desk', an *objectum* as primary object, for which there is no lower order object below. *Objecta*, as opposed to *objectives,* can only be the things we judge **about**.

There is some controversy as to what Meinong's *objectives* are. Most notably Russell (1904) has identified Meinong's *objectives* with propositions. What counts in favor of this interpretation is the fact that *objectives* are expressed by complete sentences or that-clauses, and that *objectives,* though incapable of existence, *subsist*, and are characterized as ideal objects that are timeless and mind-independent. This makes them also appear similar to what Frege has called a 'thought'. However, Meinong follows Ameseder (1904) not only with the classification of objects into *objecta* and *objectives*, but also with the following characterization of the difference:

> Every object has being (or not-being). But there are objects that not only have being (in this widest sense), but also are being, and these objects are the objectives, whereas what has being, without being being, is thereby characterized as objectum (ÜA p. 61).

Thus, *objectives* **are** the being or not-being of objects. For the example above,

(5.27) this desk is brown

the *objective* **is** the desk being brown. Meinong holds that an *objective* can also be called a 'fact' ('Tatsache'), so the *objective* here is the fact that this desk is brown. While this can hardly be said of propositions, in this aspect *objectives* seem to be just what others have

called states of affairs.[32] But there are some problems with the identification of *objectives* and states of affairs as well. Before discussing these problems, however, some other features of *objectives* should be expounded.

Meinong distinguishes between *objectives of being* ('Seinsobjektive') and *objectives of so-being* ('Soseinsobjektive'). An *objective of being* is the object of a judgment of the form

(5.31) *a* exists

whereas an *objective of so-being* is the object of a judgment of the form

(5.32) *a* is F.

According to Meinong, the *objective* of (5.31) **is** the existence of *a,* and whereas *objecta* can exist, the existence of an *objectum* subsists, namely as an *objective*. The *objective* of (5.32) **is** the *so-being* of *a*, namely being F, and the fact that *a* is F, or that this desk is brown, *subsists*. Meinong maintains that *objectives* are neither psychological nor physical entities, but they are *ideal* objects that are incapable of existence, but can only subsist (ÜA p. 102).

Given that *objectives* of true judgments are also facts, it is important to note that what Meinong calls 'fact' ('Tatsache') is not restricted to *objectives* about *real objecta*, but includes those about *ideal objecta* as well. Thus, the *objective* that 2 is smaller than 3 is a fact in Meinong's terminology (ÜA p.69). Factuality ('Tatsächlichkeit') does not coincide

[32] For example, Stumpf, Lotze and Husserl, to name just a few contemporaries of Meinong, use the notion of state of affairs.

with 'reality' ('Wirklichkeit'). *Objectives* can also be factual if they involve non-existent or non-subsistent objects, such as the golden mountain or the round square. Hence,

(5.33) the golden mountain does not exist

is true or factual, the *objective* stated in (5.33) is a fact. According to Meinong the *objective* stated in (5.33) **is** the non-existence of the of the golden mountain, and it subsists as such. The *objective* in this case is an *objective of being* ('Seinsobjektiv'). Likewise, an *objective of so-being* ('Soseinsobjektiv') such as

(5.34) the round square is round

is true or factual, even though it involves an impossible object that does not even subsist, and the *objective* stated in (5.34) **is** the being round of the round square, and it is a fact.

A true judgment has a factual *objective* as its object, whereas a false judgment has a nonfactual *objective* as its object. According to Meinong, *objectives* are either factual or nonfactual, and he holds that an objective "must carry factuality in itself, that is, as far as I can see, as a basic property, for which there is no definition, and, at least as of now, there is no description" (ÜA p.70). Though it may seem that truth and falsity cannot properly apply to *objectives,* but only to judgments, assumptions, and beliefs, Meinong occasionally also refers to 'true *objectives*' (ÜA p. 94; p.336). But a true *objective,* in Meinong's view, is simply one that is factual, and a false *objective* is one that is not factual:

> An objective is simply called false, insofar it is not true, or also, insofar it coincides with no factual objective, or finally also, insofar it is not factual (ÜA p.94).

Truth and falsity, on Meinong's account, are not additional 'modal properties' of *objectives*, rather the notion of truth and falsity is based on factuality (ÜA p.95). As mentioned above, there is an aspect in which *objectives* resemble Russellian propositions: they are abstract objects that are expressed by complete sentences or that-clauses, they can be true or false, and in this sense factual and nonfactual *objectives* are akin to true and false propositions. On the other hand, *objectives* **are** the being or not-being of their primary objects, factual *objectives* are facts, and in this respect they resemble states of affairs. Meinong does not outright reject any similarity between *objectives* and states of affairs, but he objects to a general identification of *objectives* with states of affairs. He holds that though we can easily substitute *objectives* with states of affairs when the *objective* in question is factual, such as the *objective* that this desk is brown, the substitution does not work for *objectives* that are not factual. That the diagonals of a square are unequal or that sharks are mammals, he says, can hardly be called states of affairs. Hence, according to Meinong, the term state of affairs is applicable only for the special case of factual (i.e. true) *objectives* (ÜA p.101). Likewise, as we have seen in the previous chapter, Frege holds that a fact is a thought that is true.

Nonfactual *objectives* are a problem, not least because Meinong says little about them, despite the considerable attention he devotes to *objectives* in his extensive work. Factual *objectives* subsist, they are facts, and Meinong holds that "an *objective* is factual insofar as it subsists" (ÜA p. 69). Moreover, he says that "…it is not existence that is to be

negated of objectives of false judgments, but at any rate it is only subsistence that is to be negated…" (ÜA p.63). This indicates that **only** factual *objectives* subsist, whereas nonfactual *objectives* do not subsist. Morover, nonfactual *objectives* are obviously not facts, and that leaves the question: what are nonfactual *objectives*, and what kind of being do they entertain if they do not subsist?

Sierszulska (2005) maintains that *objectives* belong to *Außersein*, and she has received rather harsh criticism from Jacquette (2006) for this claim. On Sierszulska's interpretation, *Außersein* is ontologically neutral and objects in that category are pure objects considered purely in their *so-being*, and in that sense her interpretation of *Außersein* is the same as the one we have maintained in the preceding section. In his criticism of Sierszulska's interpretation Jacquette holds that "if objectives are supposed to be *abstract entities*, as Sierszulska says, then surely they subsist, and thereby possess the mode of *being* that the Scholastic tradition regards as peculiar to abstract entities. What I do not understand is how Sierszulska or Meinong on Sierszulska's account could consistently have it both ways – making *Außersein* a realm of ontically neutral 'semantic' objects in her terminology, while at the same time treating objectives in particular as abstract entities belonging to *Außersein*." But as opposed to what Jacquette seems to think, on Meinong's account not all abstract objects, or in Meinong's terms, *ideal* objects, are subsistent. The notorious round square, for instance, does not even subsist, but it is *außerseiend*. The round square would not pose a problem if it could just be subsumed under abstract objects with the implication that they all subsist. Moreover, on Sierszulska's interpretation, as on ours, *Außersein* and

subsistence are not mutually exclusive, but *Außersein* encompasses all objects whether or not they are existent or subsistent. Besides, Jacquette criticizes Sierszulska's claim that *objectives* do not belong in the category of *objecta*. According to Jacquette, "[i]f objects generally are intended by acts of judgment and assumption (and emotion and presentation), and if not all objects exist anyway, notoriously including such beingless objects as the golden mountain and round square, then it should certainly be no stretch to regard objectives as subsumed also by the general category of objecta; on the contrary, it should be obligatory to categorize them as such, precisely as Meinong asserts." But here he fails to see the distinction between Meinong's general term 'object' ('Gegenstand') and the more specific term *objectum* ('Objekt'); the very reason for the correctness of Sierszulka lies where Meinong follows Ameseder in the distinction between *objectives* and *objecta* within the general category of objects, namely that some objects have being, without being being, and those are *objecta*, and some objects have being and are being, and those are *objectives* (cf. section 5.4.2). While *objectives* can function as primary objects of judgments, as *objecta* do, it is quite clear that though both fall under the general category of objects, *objecta* can only have being, but cannot be being, which distinguishes and excludes *objectives* from the category of *objecta* since *objectives* are characterized as being the being of a primary object. Jacquette holds a passage in ÜA (p. 61)[33] against Sierszulska's claim that *objectives* do not belong in the category of *objecta.*

[33] "…[E]very *object* has being (or not-being). But there are *objects* that not only have being (in this widest sense), but also are the being, and these objects are the *objectives*, whereas what has being, without being being, is thereby characterized as *objectum.*" ÜA, p. 61, my translation and italics added. Cf. section 5.4.2.

But Jacquette gives the quote in his own translation where he does not distinguish between *objects* ('Gegenstände') and *objecta* ('Objekte'), thereby missing the point of the distinction.

Sierszulska's interpretation that *objectives* belong in the category of *Außersein* has merit, given that *Außersein* accounts for intentional objects that neither exist nor subsist. After all, *objectives* are the intentional objects of judgments, assumptions, and the like, but nonfactual *objectives* do not even subsist, and since *objectives* are incapable of existence, they do not exist either. So the only way to account for nonfactual *objectives* is *Außersein*. But textual support in Meinong is only indirect. First of all, when talking about *Außersein* or the *Außersein* of the pure object, he always uses the general term 'object' ('Gegenstand') that includes both *objectives* and *objecta*. Secondly, he speaks of the "pure objective" (ÜA p.94), which can be taken to be akin to the "pure object", and the pure object is *außerseiend.* Moreover, Meinong holds that just as a presentation does not lack an object because the object does not exist, a judgment does not lack an *objective* because it is not factual (ÜA p.45). Given that the object in the case of a presentation of a non-existent object is *außerseiend*, the analogy suggests that the nonfactual *objective* is also *außerseiend*. The problem lies not in Sierszulska's interpretation, which is correct, but with Meinong's theory, as he does not explain what a 'pure *objective*' is. To recall, the pure object is beyond or outside of the determination of being, it is the object taken only in its *so-being*, or as we have maintained, a set of properties. Accordingly, the pure

objective that is *außerseiend* has to be considered as standing outside of any determination of being, and what remains is only the *so-being* of the *objective*.

This raises two problems: First, how can the *objective* be outside of any determination of being, if an *objective* **is** being or not-being? Here we may add that Meinong, when claiming that an *objective* is being or not-being, he carefully adds "in the widest sense" to 'being' (ÜA p. 61; p. 72). But what is this 'widest sense' of being? – We can only conclude that this widest sense of being includes also *Außersein*. And second, what is the pure *so-being* of an *objective* – a set of properties? We can only suppose, since regrettably Meinong owes a clear answer, that the pure *objective* includes only its constituents, such as *objecta* and modality, but excludes the *objective's* subsistence or non-subsistence, i.e., its factuality or non-factuality. In this sense, the *außerseiende objective* comes close to what others have called a proposition. While Meinong reserves the identification of *objectives* with states of affairs only for factual *objectives*, he does not object to a classification of *objectives* as propositions; he maintains that Bolzano's "Satz an sich" ('proposition as such') is closely akin to an *objective,* and he says that "a *Satz* is an apprehended *objective,* one that is possibly uttered, but one that is at least formulated in words" (ÜA p. 99-100).[34]

[34] Since the German term 'Satz' can mean a statement, sentence, or a proposition, it is difficult to make out a distinction between 'sentence', 'statement', and proposition. In the given quote 'sentence' is the appropriate translation, whereas Bolzano's 'Satz an sich' means a proposition.

Meinong's *objective* is in some sense comparable to Plato's *eidôlon*. To recall, Plato struggled with the question what is said by a false statement; Plato raised the problem that a true statement states what-is, namely a fact, whereas a false statement states what-is-not, but that cannot be a non-entity given that we do not say nothing when making a false statement. The *eidôlon* accounts for an entity that is the intentional object of a statement, and if the statement is true, the *eidôlon* coincides with what-is or a fact; similarly, Meinong's *objective* **is** being, and a factual *objective* coincides with a fact. Plato's *eidôlon* also accounts for the intentional object of false statements, it is an entity or something (*ti*), while at the same time it is what-is-not. Likewise, Meinong's notion of *Außersein* holds for objects that are entities, but are neither existent nor subsistent, hence these objects are entities beyond being or not-being. For Meinong, the intentional object of a false statement or judgment is a nonfactual *objective*, and though it does not even subsist, it is *außerseiend*, so in the same strange way that Plato's *eidôlon is* (insofar as it is an entity) and at the same time it *is not* (insofar as it is the object of a false statement that states what-is-not), Meinong's pure *objective is* (insofar as it is an entity that is *außerseiend*) and it *is not* (insofar as it neither exists nor subsists). The difference between Meinong's *objectives* and Plato's *eidôla* is that Meinong considers his *objectives* as abstract or ideal objects, whereas Plato's *eidôla* cannot strictly be counted among abstract objects akin to forms. Nevertheless, both *objectives* and *eidôla* are mind independent entities that are independent of their ontological status.

In chapter 2 we noted a similarity between Plato's *eidôlon* and Wittgenstein's notion of *Bild* ('picture') in the *Tractatus.* This similarity also holds between Meinong's *objective* and Wittgenstein's *Bild* ('picture'),[35] or, for that matter, with what Wittgenstein has called a '*Sachverhalt*' (which in Ogden's translation has been rendered as 'atomic fact', but we prefer the translation 'state of affairs' used by Pears and McGinnis). Of course, the overlapping of concepts and terminology between Meinong and Wittgenstein is blurred, and in the present context an interpretation of the *Tractatus* would lead us too far afield. Some differences and details aside, this much can be said: For Wittgenstein, a *picture* can be true or false, and it is expressed by a sentence,[36] likewise, Meinong's *objective* can be true or false, and it is expressed by a complete sentence or a that-clause. *Pictures* can be taken to be states of affairs, and at *Tractatus* 2.141 Wittgenstein maintains that "the picture is a fact;" but given that a picture can be false, that can only hold for true pictures since false ones can hardly be said to be facts.[37] Likewise, Meinong maintains that *objectives* are facts if they are true or factual. It is striking that Wittgenstein also uses the terms 'Bestehen' and 'Nichtbestehen' which we have rendered

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[35] Jacquette (2006) also points out the similarity between Meinong and Wittgenstein.

[36] Here again there is the difficulty of the German word 'Satz' ('sentence' or proposition', depending on context and interpretation). In 4.021 Wittgenstein says "[t]he *Satz* is a picture of reality" where it makes sense to take 'Satz' as 'proposition', and in 4.023 he states that "[t]he *Satz* is the description of a state of affairs," where the term more likely refers to 'sentence'.

[37] On Bradley's (1992) interpretation, Wittgenstein's *facts* ('Tatsachen') are a subclass of *states of affairs* ('Sachverhalte') since some *states of affairs* are not actual, but merely possible. As opposed to this interpretation, the statement in 2.141 can also be interpreted as taking pictures as existing mental states, and as such they exist and are facts.

as ‘subsistence’ and ‘not-subsistence’ in Meinong.[38] On a Meinongian translation, *Tractatus* 2 would read: “What is the case, the fact, is the subsistence of states of affairs” (our translation). Here Meinong would be ready to replace ‘state of affairs’ by ‘objective’.

Meinong’s *objective* has in common with Frege’s ‘thought’ that both are mind independent and can be apprehended or grasped by anyone; both are expressed by a complete sentence or that-clause, and both are the intentional object of a statement, i.e., what is stated or expressed. Both, Frege’s *thought* and Meinong’s *objective* are abstract and timeless entities, and their ontological status is at least similar. According to Meinong, *objectives* are not created or made up, but they are apprehended or grasped (*‘erfasst’)*, and similarly, *thoughts* are not created by an individual thinker but discovered. Frege holds that a *thought* belongs neither to the “outer world” nor is it an *idea* that is part of the inner world of an individual’s consciousness. Hence, *thoughts* are neither existing psychological states nor are they existing objects. Frege’s *thought* is some kind of entity, yet, it is not existent, but between being and not-being. Likewise, Meinong’s *objective* is an entity, yet it does not exist, but at best subsists. Furthermore, just as a *thought* is closely and indefinably connected with truth, *objectives* are closely and indefinably connected with factuality (which is what the truth of an objective is). Of

[38] Ogden, as well as Pears and McGinnis have ‘existence’ and ‘nonexistence‘ for ‘Bestehen’ and ‘Nichtbestehen’ respectively; Black renders ‘Bestehen’ and ‘Nichtbestehen’ in this context as the ‘holding’ and ‘not holding’ [of states of affairs], which is akin to Meinong’s *subsistence* and *non-subsistence*.

course, *objectives* do not have a truth value as reference as Frege's *thoughts* do, and the latter cannot be said to **be** the being of a primary object. It is nonetheless striking that Frege maintains that a fact is a true *thought*, just a as Meinong holds that a true or factual *objective* is a fact.

5.5 The Modified Theory

Meinong's theory of objects was largely developed in ÜA. As we have seen in the previous sections, *objecta* have being or not-being, as they are either existent or non-existent, subsistent or non-subsistent. The notion of *Außersein* is not some middle ground between being and not-being, but rather the realm outside of being or not-being, and the *außerseiende* object is independent of its being or not-being, it is the object only insofar as it has certain properties. Meinong had considered an *objective* as either true, i.e., factual, or as false, i.e., non-factual.[39] In his later and largest work 'Über Möglichkeit und Wahrscheinlichkeit' (On Possibility and Probability), henceforth Mög. (1915), however, Meinong realized two problems. One concerns *objectives,* in particular the dichotomy between truth and falsity, i.e., factuality and non-factuality. In the introduction to Mög. he notes that probability cannot be found in reality ('Wirklichkeit', p. 2). The *objective* expressed by

[39] Meinong also admits logical truths and impossibilities; for Meinong, $a=a$ is a logical truth, regardless of whether or not *a* stands for an existing object.

(5.35) the next throw of this die will show 5

has a probability of 1:6. But this probability cannot be found in the actual event of throwing the die. In reality the actual throw will either show 5 or not, in other words, the statement is either true or false. Meinong maintains that probability (like truth and falsity) applies to *objectives*, but an *objective* that is probable is neither true nor false, and probability lies in between truth and falsity.[40] Thus, if truth and falsity are absolute and exclusive, there is no room for probability. Since probability allows of different degrees, these degrees of probability lie in between truth and falsity, where truth is the "upper limit of probability" (Mög. p. 44). True and false are only two (1 and 0) of the values we can take; they are the extremes, whereas degrees of probability lie in between.

Meinong distinguishes between a subjective and an objective (i.e. unsubjective) meaning of probability. Subjective probability is understood as degrees of belief or conviction. For objective (unsubjective) probability, such as the probability in (5.35), Meinong uses also the term possibility.[41] Possibility is a property of *objectives* (an unsubjective property), but here again, if the disjunction of *objectives* into factual (true) and non-factual (false) is absolute and exclusive, there is no room for degrees of possibility. Although true and false, i.e., in Meinong's terminology, factual and unfactual,

[40] Meinong also notes the etymological connection between the German term 'wahr' (true) and 'wahrscheinlich' (probable), which cannot be duplicated in English. The German 'wahrscheinlich' means 'seeming true' or 'appearing as true', as also occurring in the Latin 'verisimile' (Mög. p. 37).

[41] Since is of no further importance, we disregard Meinong's discussion of subjective probability.

are the extremes on the scale of possibility, if they are the exclusive values, the notion of probability becomes obsolete. Meinong holds the following:

> …if one thinks of the totality of degrees of probability as depicted on a straight line, then reality must stand on one end of this line in such a depiction, whereas the other end of this line, similarly to every line of measurement, must be limited by zero. Insofar reality is the maximum of possibility, and possibility is "lowered reality" (Mög. p. 90).

In this sense then, there are different 'degrees of reality'. With this notion of reality that allows of degrees, the similarity between Meinong and Plato is obvious and salient and we will discuss it below. But Meinong eventually prefers the term 'factuality' instead of 'reality, since 'reality', in his view, applies more naturally to existential *objectives* and *objectives of so-being* about 'real' objects, whereas 'factuality', in Meinong's use, also includes *objectives* of subsistence and *objectives* about ideal objects, and possibility can also apply to these objectives. Thus, he says:

> Factuality is the maximum of possibility, and possibility is "factuality of lesser degree, lowered, or so to speak "uncompleted factuality" (Mög. p. 92).

The appropriate means to apprehend or 'grasp' *objectives* that are not taken to be factual or whose factuality is left open, are assumptions (Mög. p. 91). The later theory, though, modifies the theory of *objectives* substantially, as factuality and unfactuality are not treated any more as absolute and exclusive notions as they were in his earlier work.

As we have tried to show in 5.4.1.3, the earlier account lacked a way to incorporate possible existence and led Meinong to rather peculiar and unclear modal statements concerning existence.

The second problem that Meinong recognizes in connection with possibility concerns *objecta*. Meinong notes that according to the law of the excluded middle, an object either exists or does not exist, and an object either has a certain property or it does not have it. But then, strictly speaking, there could not be any possibility at all. So Meinong maintains that the law of the excluded middle applies only to certain objects, namely those are actual objects that are part of reality. As we have seen in the previous chapter, *objectives,* though they may have other *objectives* of lower order as their primary objects, are ultimately bound to *objecta*; and even though possibility is primarily a matter of *objectives,* "the differentiation of what is accessible to possibility" is the 'material' of an *objective*, namely an *objectum* (Mög. p. 167). This raises the question what sort of object allows for possibility-*objectives*. Meinong's solution lies in the distinction between complete and incomplete objects, and this distinction, as we shall see in the following sections, constitutes a significant amendment to his theory of objects.

5.5.1 Meinong's Rationale for Incomplete Objects

On our interpretation of Meinong's theory of objects in ÜA, the pure object that is *außerseiend,* is the set of properties the object has. To support this interpretation, we cited (in section 5.4.1.5) the following passage:

> It can readily be seen as obvious that the nature of every object can be analyzed, so to speak, as a collective of determinations of so-being varying in number between 1 and ∞ … (Mög. p. 168).

These determinations include all the properties an object has, namely what an object is and all the attributes it has, but according to Meinong, they also include all negative determinations, namely what an object is not and all the properties it lacks. So even for any ordinary object, such as this desk in front of me, the number of determinations turns out to be virtually infinite. And the infinite number of positive and negative determinations is not restricted to real and actually existent *objecta*, but holds for ideal and subsistent *objecta* as well. Including negative determinations does not seem very plausible, as we will argue below (in section 5.5.3); but the same problems also occur for any finite, but potentially very high number of properties an object can have. The first problem, the one that triggered this question for Meinong in this context, is the question how an *objective* of the form '*a* is F' can be said to be *possible*, given that *a* either has the property F or it does not. The statements

(5.35) the next throw of this die will show 5

and

(5.36) it will rain tomorrow

express possibilities. (5.35) has a probability of 1/6, and (5.36) has a higher or lower probability depending on the current weather conditions. Factually, the next throw of his die will either show 5 or it will not, and it will either rain tomorrow or it will not. Meinong's argument is that we do not know which is true, as neither (5.35) nor (5.36) has been determined yet.

A very similar second problem arises, notwithstanding negative determinations, for a given *objectum a* that is exactly determined by all the properties it has, say the set of properties {D, E, F,…}, since we may not know all the properties *a* has. Even for an object that is given to immediate sensation, e.g., this brown door, we may know some of its properties, such as it being a door and brown, but we may not know other properties, such as the exact height or weight, let alone the number of screws it has or the molecular structure of its material. This is a serious epistemological problem concerning intentional objects. If thinking, judging, or making an assumption about an object implies that we somehow apprehend or grasp ("erfassen") the object, how can we ever grasp an object if it is not possible to grasp all the properties an object has? On Meinong's account, existing and subsisting objects have an infinite number of determinations, and it is impossible for the human intellect to grasp an object with all its properties. (Even if this number is not infinite, but large, it would be impossible to be aware of all the properties of an object).

Meinong's solution is the notion of incomplete objects. These are objects that are not completely determined as they have only some properties, thus, they are accessible by our intellect. And whereas in Meinong's earlier theory (in ÜA and GT) the intentional object itself was accessed by means of presenting it, now he amends the former account and maintains that the object that is presented is an incomplete object. Since objects, in Meinong's view, have an infinite number of properties, he realizes that it would be impossible to present a complete object. To use Meinong's example again, the brown door may just be presented as being brown, rectangular, extended, but not all of the actual door's determinations are included, and the object presented is an incomplete object. Though this new conception was prompted by considerations about possibility, the modification of the theory of objects is therefore essentially motivated on epistemological grounds.

5.5.2. Complete and Incomplete Objects

Complete objects are objects that are completely determined in their *so-being*, namely by all the properties they have. Existing objects are thus always complete as they are completely determined by the properties they have, and we may add, on Meinong's account, also by all the properties they lack. Incomplete objects, by contrast, are not completely determined in their *so-being*, i.e., not all their properties are determined. For example, if we think of 'the triangle', this object is neither equilateral nor equiangular nor

is it right angled nor obtuse angled. 'The triangle' is an incomplete object and these determinations (equilateral, right angled etc.) are open.

Every complete object is also determined in its being (or not-being), hence every complete object either exists or does not exist, either subsists or does not subsist. Incomplete objects, on the other hand, are not determined in their being (unless their nature excludes being, as for example the round square).[42] Whether they exist, subsist, or neither exist nor subsist is open as many of their properties are also open. While complete objects make up all of reality ('Wirklichkeit'), 'there are' also incomplete objects, and 'there are' is to be understood in the sense of mere *Außersein* (Mög. p.181). This confirms our interpretation of *Außersein* as an ontologically neutral concept. Incomplete objects are perfect candidates for *Außersein* as they are undetermined with regard to being. That does not imply, though, that they are the only objects that have *Außersein*, since existent and subsistent objects are also *außerseiend.* The pure object that is *außerseiend* consists of a set of properties, and as it turns out now, the set of properties may be complete or incomplete.

Objects that neither exist nor subsist are always incomplete, and this constitutes a modification for the notion of *Außersein*. In section 5.4.1.5 on *Außersein,* we noted that given that an *außerseiendes* object is understood in terms of a set of properties an object

[42] Since the round square has contradictory properties, it does not subsist. (Mög. p. 180)

has, it is somewhat similar to Russell's descriptions or Frege's sense, conceding the difference that a Russellian description or Fregean sense presents only some of the properties of an object. With Meinong's concept of incomplete objects we can now drop this difference and maintain that an incomplete object is no more outlandish than a description or a Fregean sense. We also claimed in this previous section that the *außerseiende* object is akin to a complete description or the totality of senses. As we noted, this poses a significant epistemological problem, which Meinong recognized in his later work. On Meinong's modified account, the notorious round square (that is *außerseiend)* is an incomplete object consisting only of two determinations or properties, namely being a square and being round. The Modified Theory with the notion of incomplete objects presents only a slight, but nevertheless important modification for Meinong's concept of *Außersein*, and it is a substantial modification for his epistemology and account of meaning and language.

5.5.2.1 'Implection'

Incomplete objects can be more or less incomplete. If we take 'something red', for example, we have an incomplete object, but on further investigation we can augment the object by adding further determinations, such as 'red sphere' or 'red sphere of ivory'; each of the so augmented incomplete objects is less incomplete than the object before its augmentation. Meinong uses the term '*implection*' ("Implektion") to indicate that the

incomplete object before its augmentation is part of the augmented object, but it is not a part of it in the same way a shaft and a blade are parts of a knife. The unaugmented incomplete object does not exist or subsist as part of the augmented object, but it is *implected* in the augmented object. As we think of incomplete objects as sets of properties, the augmented object is a set of properties that also includes the properties of the *implected* object. In other words, the set of properties of the *implected* object is a subset of the set of properties of the augmented object.

There is, however, a restriction concerning the properties that are shared by the *implected* object and the augmented object. As we mentioned in section 5.3.3.1, Meinong distinguishes between *nuclear* and *extra-nuclear* properties,[43] but the criteria for the distinction are not very clear. According to Routley (1980, p. 47 f.), nuclear properties are properties that characterize the object as **what** it is. In Meinong's example, the incomplete object 'something red' has 'red' as a nuclear property, and since the object is a simple object, it also has the property of simplicity, and since it is incomplete, the property of incompleteness. But simplicity and incompleteness are *extra-nuclear* properties. Whereas the *nuclear* properties of the *implected* object are also possessed by the augmented object, the *extra-nuclear* properties are not transferred to the augmented object. Thus, the *nuclear* property 'red' (in the above example) that is possessed by the *implected* object 'something red' is also possessed by the augmented objects 'red sphere' and 'red sphere of ivory'; the

[43] Mög. p. 176-7. We adopted Findley's translation of 'nuclear' and 'extra-nuclear' properties for '*konstitutorische'* and '*außerkonstitutorische'* properties.

extra-nuclear property 'simple' is not possessed by the augmented objects. Since incomplete objects can be *implected* in complete objects, the property of incompleteness is also an *extra-nuclear* property that is not possessed by the complete object. Moreover, only complete objects exist, yet an incomplete object that does not exist may be *implected* in a complete object; so if existence is a property, it is an *extra-nuclear* property.

5.5.3 Auxiliary Objects and Target Objects

According to Meinong, the way we access objects is by means of a presentation. As we have seen in chapter 5.3.1-2, every presentation presents something, and what is presented is distinct from the content of the presentation and from the psychological act of presenting. The intentional object is presented via the content of the presentation, but our consciousness is always focused on the object, not on the content. Every presentation must have the *presence* ('Präsenz') of an object presented, and accordingly, the object presented is *present* ('präsent'). On Meinong's earlier account, it was the intentional object that was *present*, but on the Modified Theory it turns out that complete objects cannot be *present* because of their complexity. Only some of the complete object's determinations can be *present*, whereas all others are *impresent* ('impräsent'). Hence, what is *present* is not the intended complete object, but rather an incomplete object. The incomplete object is, in Meinong's terms, *quasi-present*, and the *quasi-present* incomplete object functions as an *auxiliary object* ('Hilfsobjekt) by means of which we

are able to intend an object that is now called the *target object* ('Zielobjekt') (Mög. p. 196).

The importance of incomplete objects lies in their role as auxiliary objects, since this is the only way for us to 'grasp' objects:

> For this we only need to be aware of the already familiar fact that complete objects can never be present because of their infinite number of determinations. Thus, in order to grasp them we are always and without exception dependent on auxiliary objects. And since our intending, as we also know, is in most cases directed towards complete objects as those that are the only ones that can exist or subsist, this shows the dominant position of auxiliary objects in our thinking (Mög. p.196-7).

Existent and subsistent objects are always complete, and they can only be grasped via auxiliary objects. Incomplete objects can also be target objects; non-existent objects, for instance, are typically incomplete, yet they can be intentional objects. But even incomplete objects may have too many determinations to be presented at once (for example the non-existent target object Odysseus). Meinong points out that very different auxiliary objects can work for one single target object. Given that the auxiliary object is incomplete and consists of only some determinations, the same target object may be grasped by means of an auxiliary object that has one set of properties or by another auxiliary object that has a completely different set of properties. The presentation, or

more precisely, the quasi-presentation, is accurate, if the auxiliary object is *implected* in the target object.

On our interpretation of *Außersein,* the pure object is merely a set of properties, the object in its *so-being*. Complete objects are thus complete sets of properties, and accordingly, incomplete objects are incomplete sets of properties. An incomplete object that is *implected* in a less incomplete augmented object is a subset of the augmented object, and likewise, an incomplete object that is *implected* in a complete object is a subset of the object that is *außerseiend.* Meinong considers existent objects as complete, as they are completely determined in all their properties. The problem is, however, that it is hard to see that even existent objects can be complete, if these objects are not only determined by the properties they have, but also by the properties they lack, making the properties infinite in number. It is therefore implausible to include the lack of properties in the determinations of an object. Meinong's argument that it is impossible to grasp all the properties of an object also holds if an object has a huge, but finite number of properties that cannot all be presented or known. Furthermore, the incomplete object is an object that presents just a few of the object's properties in which it is *implected*, i.e., a subset of the complete object's properties. But the incomplete object *implected* could, on Meinong's view, also be a subset of the properties an object lacks. It is hard to conceive this brown table as presented by means of an incomplete object that includes only the lack of some properties, such as 'not-red', 'not-chair', 'not-round', etc. Not only is it implausible to include the lack of properties among the determinations of an object, it does not make any sense for Meinong's theory of incomplete

objects either. The argument in favor of incomplete objects, which is epistemologically motivated, does not require that objects have an infinite number of properties, and the same argument can be made if objects have a large number of properties that cannot all be known or presented at once.

5.5.4 Language and Meaning

In his earlier theory Meinong dedicates one chapter to language (ÜA pp. 21-41), where he distinguishes between expression ('Ausdruck') and meaning ('Bedeutung').[44] When a speaker utters a word, he expresses a presentation ('Vorstellung') and he intends or refers to the object of this presentation. For example, the word 'sun' expresses my presentation, and the object of this presentation is the meaning or reference of the word. Presentations, as we have seen, are the sort of things that we experience or 'live through', and by means of these experiences we are able to access or grasp objects. So Meinong summarizes:

> [A] word refers to something insofar it expresses a presenting experience, and the object presented through this [experience] is the meaning (ÜA p. 28).

[44] In ÜA Meinong uses the German term 'Bedeutung' in the same way as Frege, where it has been rendered as 'reference'; in Mög., however, the term becomes ambiguous.

Thus, the intended object is the 'meaning' ("Bedeutung") of the word. Words are signs, these signs produce a presentation in the listener (or reader), and the object of this presentation is the meaning or reference. Meinong discusses only nouns or subject expression, but not verbs or predicate expression, and he only mentions that there are words that have no object as meaning, such the exclamation "oh!" He does, however, take the meaning of sentences into consideration. Complete sentences or that-clauses typically express judgments or assumptions, and the 'meaning' of the sentence is the object of the judgment or assumption. The object of a judgment or assumption, according to Meinong, is an *objective*. Thus, he develops this notion in the chapters immediately subsequent to the chapter on language and meaning.

Meinong realizes that the distinction between auxiliary and target object is relevant for language and meaning. Since on the Modified Theory most complete objects cannot be presented, but can only be accessed through incomplete auxiliary objects as intermediaries, auxiliary objects must also function in this intermediate position in determining the intended object. Accordingly, Meinong amends his earlier notion of meaning:

> When thinking of this barometer on my desk, I can grasp this (complete) object in many different ways, that is, with the assistance of very different auxiliary objects… But usually especially someone who listens to speech about the barometer will simply keep to the meaning of the word, and the speaker will do so very often, if perhaps not as regularly. But meanings of

> words are objects, and we can now add: meanings of words are very often auxiliary objects (Mög. p. 197-8).

Thus, whereas word meaning according to ÜA was the intended object, the auxiliary object now takes the role of word meaning. The word expresses a presentation, and the meaning is the object presented; according to the Modified Theory, the object presented is in most cases an incomplete auxiliary object, hence the auxiliary object is the word meaning. The intended object is now the target object. That is, Meinong holds that this is so "very often"; when the target object itself is sufficiently incomplete, as for instance 'the triangle' or 'the golden mountain', an auxiliary object is not required. Existent objects are complete objects with virtually infinitely many properties, and therefore they are always presented by means of auxiliary objects.

Simons (1995) noticed that there is a striking similarity between Frege's sense-reference distinction and Meinong's distinction between auxiliary objects and target objects. Meinong's incomplete auxiliary object is closely akin to Frege's sense, and Meinong's target object is closely akin to Frege's reference. According to Frege, sense determines reference, and a similar relation holds between auxiliary and target object. Meinong says: "Of course it depends on the auxiliary object which target object the corresponding presentation can grasp and then actually grasps" (Mög. p. 206). For Meinong, if the presentation (or quasi-presentation) is accurate, the auxiliary object is *implected* in the target object.

Auxiliary objects are the immediate objects of what is presented to our consciousness, and Meinong conceived them as objective and language independent. After all, the word as a sign produces this presentation, hence different signs (in different languages) may produce the presentation of the same incomplete auxiliary object. And since auxiliary objects are often (and for existing or subsisting objects always) the only means of grasping the target object – insofar as the auxiliary object is *implected* in the target object – we would hardly ever successfully intend a target object if the auxiliary object was purely subjective. Besides, communication could not be successful if the auxiliary object that determines the target object were confined to an individual's mind, since in that case it is hard to see how we would ever talk about the same target object. Therefore, the incomplete object that functions as auxiliary object must be mind- and language- independent. There are, however, as Meinong admits, variations. In the passage cited above (Mög. p. 197-8) he notes that the listener "will simply keep to the meaning of the word" – and here 'meaning' has to be taken in the sense of the intermediate auxiliary object – and "the speaker will do so very often, but perhaps not as regularly". So the meaning, i.e., the auxiliary object, is objective, but there are variations as listeners or speakers may not adhere to it. Why Meinong maintains that speakers keep to the meaning less regularly than listeners remains unexplained and inexplicable. Frege also concedes that there are variations in sense, as sometimes different speakers may associate different properties with the same name or singular term.

Meinong holds that an *objective* is what is expressed by a complete sentence or that-clause. To recall, on our interpretation, a factual *objective* subsists, and coincides with a fact, and if it is not factual, it is *außerseiend*. An *objective* is thus the object of a sentence, and it is also the meaning of a sentence. In ÜA Meinong held that objectives are ultimately about *objecta*. Now with the Modified Theory he tries to explain *objectives* that are possible and thus neither factual nor unfactual, and he maintains that the primary objects of this kind of *objectives* are incomplete objects. Meinong, however, does not clarify if incomplete auxiliary objects are also the primary objects of *objectives* that are about complete *objecta*.

5.5.5 Auxiliary Objects as Intermediary

Simons' (1995) article (that is appropriately titled 'Meinong's Theory of Sense and Reference) sheds a new light on Meinong, and he points out that Meinong's account in Mög. is a significant modification:

> Meinong's changes of mind were not as mercurial as those of his dashing opponent Russell, but in the course of his long philosophical career he did modify his views on many things, slowly, but in the end most radically (p. 175).

Simons shows in some detail the change in Meinong's account of language and meaning, arguing that Meinong's analysis of language is analogous to Frege's sense-reference

distinction. According to Frege, a word or sign expresses a sense by means of which we refer to an object. Similarly, according to Meinong's Modified Theory, a word expresses a presentation that presents an incomplete object by means of which we intend a target object. Like sense, the auxiliary object is the meaning of the word.

There are a number of other aspects in which auxiliary objects and senses are remarkably alike: Sense is the way we think of an object that is the reference, it is the 'mode of presentation', and likewise, the incomplete auxiliary object is the way we think of an intended object, the way an object is presented; moreover, different senses correspond to one and the same reference, just as different incomplete objects can function as auxiliary objects for one and the same target object. Like senses, auxiliary objects are intermediaries between mental states and objects, and thus both are epistemic intermediaries. Furthermore, Frege's senses have an extraordinary ontological status – they are not abstract concepts, they do not exist, yet they are somewhat in between existence and non-existence. Meinong's auxiliary object, as any incomplete object, is *außerseiend*, and thus is outside of existence or subsistence. In chapter 5.4.2.2 we already noted the similarity between Frege's thought and Meinong's *objective*.

There is also a remarkable similarity between auxiliary objects and Husserl's (1913) notion of *noema*, and since we have observed an affinity between incomplete

objects and Fregean senses, the comparison can also be extended to senses.[45] According to Husserl (who was, like Meinong, a Brentano student), to every mental act (*noesis*), corresponds a *noema*. The *noema* serves as an intermediate entity by means of which the act is directed towards an external object (if there is one). So the *noema* is the immediate intentional object of the mental act. Similarly Meinong's auxiliary object is the immediate intentional object of a mental act. For Husserl, to each mental act or *noesis* there corresponds a definite *noema*, but the same does not hold conversely – one and the same *noema* might be instantiated by different acts, e.g., when temporally distinct acts are directed towards the same object. Moreover, while each *noema* has a definite object, different *noemata* may correspond to one and the same object. Likewise, for Meinong, the same target object may be presented by means of different auxiliary objects. One component of a *noema* is what Husserl calls '*noematic sense*': it is the object in the "mode of its determinations" ('der Gegenstand im wie seiner Bestimmtheiten', 1913 p. 321), which is closely akin to what Meinong terms the *so-being* of the object. *Noematic sense* also functions as meaning of an expression, and so does the auxiliary object.

[45] Mohanty (1982) gives a detailed comparison between Frege's sense and Husserl's *noema*, where he also points out the differences. Cf. also Føllesdal (1969) and Küng (1972).

5.5.6 Some Implications of the Modified Theory

Unfortunately, Meinong did not develop the concept of auxiliary objects or its implications for language, meaning, and truth, as the Modified Theory is only a digression within a book on possibility. It seems, though, that he had a hunch that his newly found distinction has further implications, so he mentions in passing Mill's distinction between 'denotation' and 'connotation' (Mög. p. 206), but without further discussion, and he briefly discusses and defends Kant's notion of analyticity. For our concern, two issues are relevant. One is the question of how we can meaningfully talk or think about non-existent objects, and the other question pertains to the truth of statements about non-existents.

Concerning the first question, Meinong's earlier theory provides an explanation of statements about non-existent objects. On this view, non-existent objects are *außerseiend,* and we interpreted this notion in terms of sets of properties. On Meinong's earlier account, the meaning of a word is the object itself, so when making statements about non-existent objects, the meaning of the name that names the non-existent object is the object that has *Außersein*. According to the Modified Theory the incomplete auxiliary object takes the role of the meaning of a name or singular term, and this auxiliary object is *außerseiend*. According to Frege, who holds that in those cases where there is no existing object, there simply is no reference and the word or expression has only sense but no reference. For Meinong, as opposed to Frege, statements do not lack an intentional

object, since auxiliary objects are connected to a target object, and the target object can also be an incomplete object.

When the target object is an incomplete object and it is sufficiently incomplete to be presented, there is no need for an auxiliary object (e.g., the triangle or the round square). But even non-existent or non-subsistent target objects may have more determinations or properties than can be presented at once. So even non-existent objects are often grasped via an auxiliary object; the target object is then also an incomplete object, but it is less incomplete than the auxiliary object (for instance, Pegasus may be presented as a horse with wings as the auxiliary object, but there may be further determinations such as the color or gender of Pegasus). If the target object is non-existent, it is an incomplete object that has *Außersein*, and it is an assumed object that has an incomplete set of properties. As we have argued in chapter 4, the problem for senses that lack reference is that two or more senses cannot be considered as different 'modes of presentation' of the same reference, since there is no reference. In section 4.3.3.2 we discussed Frege's claim that we 'presuppose' a reference, and that it is unproblematic to extend this presupposition to cases in which there is no existent object as reference. Meinong's target object is much like a presupposed object that is given by means of a set or subset of properties. For Meinong, the two auxiliary objects 'the father of Telemachos' and 'the king of Ithaca' are different auxiliary objects that are both implected in the same target object; the latter is *außerseiend,* it is also incomplete but less incomplete than the auxiliary objects.

The second question concerns the truth of judgments about non-existent objects. In the earlier theory Meinong held that there are true judgments about non-existent objects, and that was part of his motivation for his theory of objects. But on the earlier theory *objectives* were either factual or nonfactual, whereas the Modified Theory allows for *objectives* to be neither factual nor nonfactual, but probable, and this consideration motivated the notion of incomplete objects. Does that mean that judgments about incomplete objects (i.e., when the target object is incomplete) are, as a rule, neither true nor false? This would be similar to Frege who held that statements about non-existents are neither true nor false. Though Meinong does not give a specific answer to this question, there is no indication that he renounces or modified the *Indifference Thesis* or the *Independence Thesis*, according to which there are true statements about non-existents. Moreover, the fact that an object is incomplete does not imply that all judgments about this object are neither true nor false, but rather that some are neither true nor false. Meinong's example of the incomplete object 'the triangle' shows that some judgments are neither true nor false (e.g., 'the triangle is equilateral'), but others might still be true (e.g., 'the triangle has three sides') or false (e.g., 'the triangle has four sides').

True negative existence claims do not pose a problem for Meinong's earlier theory. According to the account in ÜA, existence is not a part of the pure object, but it is part of the *objective* that asserts or denies existence of the object. On this view, existence is truly asserted if there exists an object that has the properties that characterize this

(*außerseiende*) object, and existence is truly denied if there exists no object that has the properties that characterize this (*außerseiende*) object. On the Modified Theory, since all auxiliary objects are incomplete and can therefore not exist, existence can only be asserted or denied for the target object. Accordingly,

(5.37) Odysseus does not exist

has to be analyzed as denying the existence of the target object that is determined by the auxiliary object. In other words, (5.37) is true if there is no existing object that has all the properties of the set that is determined by the subset, i.e., the auxiliary object. In case of proper names or singular terms, the auxiliary object determines a specific or unique target object; this avoids the problem that the claim is false if there is any other object that happens to have the properties that are presented by the auxiliary object.

It is more problematic that Meinong takes it for granted that attributive claims about non-existent objects can be true. Although Meinong does not discuss the problem of truth and falsity of statements about non-existent objects or defend the *Independence Thesis* in view of the Modified Theory, his discussion of Kant's analytic-synthetic distinction gives us a clue. Concerning Kant's distinction, he asks the following question:

> But how could anything at all be attributed to the subject-object at all, if it is not applicable to it and insofar does not belong to it? Accordingly, every true affirmative judgment would have to be analytic (Mög. p. 205).

Meinong's explanation of Kant's distinction is based on the distinction between *constitutive* or core determinations and *consecutive* determinations.[46] In order to grasp the appropriate target object, there must be some essential or core properties, which Meinong calls the 'core of presence', and all other properties are additional or consecutive. So Meinong contends that a judgment is analytic if the predicate is a part of the 'core of presence' that is the basis for grasping the subject, otherwise, it is synthetic. For our purpose it is not important to further discuss Kant's distinction and the merit of Meinong's interpretation of analyticity. But Meinong's analysis of analyticity first of all shows how true statements can be informative. On the Modified Theory, the incomplete auxiliary object that presents the target object consists of a different set of determinations than the incomplete predicate, and though both are *implected* in the target object, the judgment is informative. But it also indicates that Meinong held that judgments can be true, analytically or synthetically, if the predicate states any of the determinations of the target object in subject position.

This analysis should also hold for statements about non-existent objects. Though non-existents are incomplete objects, they nevertheless have a number of properties or determinations. Accordingly,

(5.38) Odysseus is the father of Telemachos

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[46] Meinong's distinction between *constitutive* ('konstitutive') and *consecutive* ('konsekutive') properties is not the same as the distinction between *nuclear* ('konstitutorische') and *extra-nuclear* ('außerkonstitutorische') properties. All *constitutive* and *consecutive* properties are *nuclear* properties (Mög. p. 176).

is true given that ‘the father of Telemachos’ is part of the determinations of the target object ‘Odysseus’. Presumably, a judgment is false if what is stated in the predicate is inconsistent with the determinations of the object, hence

(5.39) Odysseus is a winged horse

is false. But given the target object ‘Odysseus’ is incomplete, we can find some statements for which we cannot establish truth or falsity, for example

(5.40) Odysseus had high blood pressure.

Having high blood pressure is none of the determinations or properties of the incomplete object named by ‘Odysseus’ (and cannot be inferred from any of these determinations either), nor is this property incompatible with the properties of the incomplete target object. Thus, it is impossible to determine whether or not this judgment is true. For Meinong, the value would lie between true and false, i.e., it would be a degree of probability.

Sets of properties, especially larger ones, also allow for inferences. Hence, even if Odysseus is not explicitly described as ‘prudent’, this property may be inferred from the set of properties given by the descriptions in the epic, and the statement

(5.41) Odysseus is prudent

can be true. For example, it is also quite possible that someone with medical expertise concludes from the description of a fictional character that this character is bipolar, even though this property is not explicitly stated in the work of fiction.

Given that incomplete objects can take the role of target objects, and the truth value can be determined in terms of the relation between the set of properties that determine the target object and the properties ascribed by the predicate, the Modified Theory allows for true statements about non-existent objects.

Chapter 6

SUMMARY AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

In the preceding discussion we have argued that Plato's notion of *eikôn*, Frege's notion of *sense*, and Meinong's notion of *incomplete object* are similar in relevant aspects. Plato's *eikôn* is an image that presents a sensible particular, as such it is an epistemic intermediary by means of which we think of objects. Since *eikones* serve as immediate intentional objects, they can take the role of the object when there is no sensible particular. An *eikôn* is an imperfect copy of a sensible particular, as such we take it to present only some of the properties of an object, and it may depict the object in a distorted way. If there is no sensible particular, i.e., when we think of a non-existent object, the *eikôn* is a combination of properties that are not instantiated by any particular. We have argued that *eikones* are more plausible candidates as images that function as word meaning than the words themselves being images, as Plato maintains in the *Cratylus*. *Eikones* are on the lowest stage of objects in Plato's hierarchy, and thus they are, on our interpretation, less cognitively reliable or less objective than sensible particulars or forms. Nevertheless, they are not completely subjective since in Plato's view sophists and poets convey these images to their audience.

Fregean *sense* is a 'mode of presentation' of an object, and different words or terms express different *senses* even if the object denoted, the reference, remains the same.

Sense is thus an intermediary between the sign or word and the object denoted, and *sense* fulfills the function of word meaning. According to Frege, *sense* presents one aspect of an object, and we take *sense* in terms of a set of properties, descriptive or perceptual. Moreover, *sense* presents an epistemic intermediary as it is the way we think of an object. By means of expressing and understanding *sense* we are able to communicate about objects with which we are not familiar, and since words that have no reference still have *sense*, *sense* also provides a means to communicate meaningfully about non-existent objects. Frege holds that when using a name or singular term we intend the object and presuppose a reference if there is one; we maintain that the presupposition of an object should also extend to cases when there is no existing object as reference. In order to follow the story of any fictional work we have to connect different *senses* with the same presupposed, though fictional and not existing, reference. According to Frege, *senses* are objective, hence they are neither purely subjective mental objects, nor do they exists like a physical object, rather, they are ontologically between the subjective world of experience and the physical world.

Meinong contends that the pure object has *Außersein*, as such the object is independent of its being or not-being and has its properties independent of its being or not-being. In Meinong's terminology, the *außerseiende* object is the object in its *so-being*, and accordingly we take *Außersein* in terms of a set of properties of an object. We consider *Außersein* as an ontological neutral notion. In what we have called the Modified Theory, Meinong realized that some objects are not completely determined in their

properties, and further, even those objects that are completely determined cannot be presented with the totality of all their determinations or properties. For this reason, he devises the notion of *incomplete objects*. An *incomplete object* is an object, which is determined by some of an object's properties, i.e., as a subset of all properties. According to Meinong's Modified Theory, the *incomplete object* is the immediate intentional object; it takes the role of an auxiliary object that stands between the presentation and the target object that is intended. The auxiliary *incomplete object* also functions as meaning of words or singular terms. Like Frege's *sense*, the *incomplete object* is an epistemic and semantic intermediary, and since all *incomplete objects* are *außerseiend,* it is ontologically beyond being and not-being.

The notions of *eikôn, sense,* and *incomplete object* are intermediaries for objects that are expressed by names or singular terms. In addition, Plato, Frege, and Meinong developed similar concepts that provide an object expressed by a complete sentence or thought. For Plato, a statement (*logos*) or thought creates an *eidôlon*, an image. If the statement is true, the *eidôlon* is a correct representation and coincides with a fact, or in Plato's terms, it coincides with what is; if the statement is false, the *eidôlon* creates an incorrect representation, and even though a false statement states what-is-not, a false statement does not state nothing, but something, namely an *eidôlon.* Moreover, according to Plato, a statement combines items, namely forms and particulars. The statement is true if the relation stated between the items holds, and false, if the relation stated does not hold. For statements that involve only forms the truth or falsity can be determined *a*

priori, but statements that involve particulars, the truth has to be determined empirically, that is, the relation stated has to hold between the particular and the form that are connected. On our interpretation, non-existent objects are *eikones* that have no corresponding sensible particular. We conjecture that if the relation between such an *eikôn* and a form obtains, the statement should be true. But this is speculation and admittedly questionable. Denying the existence of an object, on Plato's account, translates into denying that there is a sensible particular corresponding to the *eikôn*. It seems problematic, though, to construe negative existence claims on the basis of Plato's theory. He analyzes not-being as difference; a claim denying the existence of an object would require the negative equivalent of the complete use of attributing 'being' to an object, but since 'being different' is a relational predicate, there is no complete use of 'being different'.

Frege extends his distinction between sense and reference also to sentences; thus he maintains that the sense of a sentence is a thought, and the reference is a truth value, namely the True or the False. It is rather peculiar that Frege takes the truth value to be the reference of a sentence. He also claims that a fact is a true thought. Since a thought is determined by the senses of the sentence, and the truth value is determined by the references of the sentence, a sentence that contains a name or expression that lacks a reference also lacks a truth value, i.e., such a sentence is neither true nor false. Accordingly, statements about non-existent objects express a thought, but they are neither true nor false. We find it desirable, though, to account for the truth value of negative

existence claims and for the truth value of at least some attributive statements about non-existents. We found that by using Frege's notion of sense and instances it is possible to formulate negative existence claims in a way that allows for a truth value. Likewise, with a small scope reading that does not imply existence and the notion of sense and instance we can formulate attributive statements about non-existents that can be determined as true or false.

Meinong's *objectives* are complex or higher order objects that are expressed by complete sentences. *Objectives* are distinguished into *objectives of being* and *objectives of so-being*. According to Meinong, an *objective* **is** the being or the *so-being* of the primary object. Sentences that are true express *factual objectives,* and false sentences express *unfactual objectives*; a *factual objective* coincides with a fact. Moreover, *objectives* are abstract objects that have *Außersein,* and if factual, an *objective* subsists. We noted that there are some aspects in which *objectives* resemble propositions, and some aspects in which they resemble states of affairs, but they cannot quite be identified with either notion. Since Meinong was motivated to develop the theory of objects and the notion of *Außersein* based on the contention that there are truths about non-existent objects, his theory allows for true negative existence claims and true attributive claims about non-existents. Moreover, with the Modified Theory it is unproblematic to formulate true negative existence claims as well as attributive claims about non-existents that can be determined as true or false.

It is remarkable that Plato, Frege, and Meinong, despite the differences in background and purpose of their investigations, conceived so closely similar notions. We find that a theory that makes use of an intermediary notion presents a viable means to explain thought and talk about non-existent objects. If we take this intermediary as a set of properties that can be given descriptively, such a notion is less mysterious and eccentric than it appears prima facie. Given the intermediary has also an epistemic role, it not only accounts for an intentional object where no object exists, but also for an intentional object about which we are for the most part ignorant. Moreover, it is advantageous if the immediate intentional object is an intermediary that also functions as meaning of the name or expression, since occasionally a speaker or listener is ignorant or in error of the existence of an object.

An intermediary notion may also present ways to account for at least some truths about non-existents. While truth and falsity are not relevant within works of fiction, we maintain that there are incentives to determine truth values for statements concerning non-existent objects. Above all, denying the existence of an object constitutes part of our knowledge about the world and sometimes constitutes a valuable discovery. Furthermore, claims *about* fiction, such as literary criticism, are made at least with the intention of making a true statement. Besides, if encyclopedias and dictionaries give information about non-existent objects by means of descriptions or a list of attributes connected with the name or expression, then this information is useful only if it is true. We do not purport that an intermediary notion, such as Plato's *eidôlon* and *eikôn*, Fregean sense, and

Meinong's incomplete object, solve all the difficulties non-existents pose. But hopefully we have shown that it can be useful as a basis to develop a theory that explains a number of problems surrounding non-existent objects.

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