

Witold Marciszewski  
**THE PROBLEM OF EXISTENCE OF  
INTENTIONAL OBJECTS**

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1. THE HISTORY OF THE PROBLEM

The relations between semantics and ontology are similar to that of two relatives, where one needs the other, yet is ashamed of them at the same time, due to their poor reputation. The coveted one is semantics, whereby ontology, as the most speculative discipline of philosophy, is the one enjoying infamy. Ontology comprises deliberations concerning various types, i.e. categories of beings, which, according to some, also include so-called intentional objects. This is a matter of great importance for philosophical psychology, for epistemology, as well as for semiotics. Therefore, dismissing the aura of disapproval, which surrounds some of the ontological deliberations, we will refer to them in this paper, in accordance with the needs dictated by the problems of semiotics, and especially to semantics, i.e. the discipline of semiotic research, which pertains to the relation between language and reality.

What importance has the concept of an intentional being for semiotics? It has numerous connections to the issue of intensionality, whose symbol (not proof, though) may be the following etymological relation: both words *intentio* and *intensio* stem from the same Latin verb *intendo*, the first as a gerund, the second as a passive adverbial participle (there are even authors, such as G. Bergmann, who tackle the issues of intensionality under the heading of "Intentionality"). In order to at least roughly explain, what this is about, let us remind ourselves in that which is mental, i.e. in representations, judgements etc. we distinguish the act and its contents. The crowning

argument in favour of this distinction is the fact that various acts may have the same contents; if for example two people think that it is getting dark, then there are two acts of the mind, but the contents here is the same. The notion of the contents comes from psychological considerations, but exceeds psychology, since the proper object of this discipline are the acts of the mind; their products are of at least equal interest to other fields of science, and among them, semiotics has a prominent position. There is a relation between the contents of the psychological acts and the contents of the language statements. This relation is two-fold: the contents of the statement intermediates between the contents of the author's psychological act, which for the contents of the statement is a sort of causative factor, and the contents of the psychological act of the recipient, invoked by the contents of the received statement. The content in the traditional Latin terminology was called *intensio* (hence the English *intension*), and all which is presently called intensionality is connected with this concept, which is of key importance for semantics. *Intentio* on the other hand, in this time-honoured terminology, is a mental act directed towards a certain object. This object was called by Brentano intentional and identified with the contents, whereby other authors, who, such as Kazimierz Twardowski, distinguished between the object of the thought from the contents of the thought, saw this relation between contents and intensionality in a more complicated way, yet always treating these notions as inseparable. Therefore, the semantics' need of ontology is manifested by the problems of intensionality in such a manner that in order to locate precisely the notion of the contents of a statement, one needs to refer to the notion of the objects of mental acts, and the notion of the object is the basic idea of ontology.

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After all these initial remarks, which were supposed to justify taking up of the issue of intentionality for the purpose of semantic research, now is the time for more semantic deliberations. It is advisable to start with the classical formulations of Franz Brentano. A natural link in our considerations would be to present the views of Twardowski, Meinong, Hesserl and Ingarden, yet this would be a too vast topic, requiring a separate discussion, I will therefore limit myself to mentioning them sporadically, registering the presence of such or other problem in the philosophy of these classical authors dealing with intentionality.

Brentano formulates the idea of an intentional object in the following manner:

”Every mental phenomenon is characterized by what the Scholastics of the Middle Ages called the intentional (or mental) inexistence (Inexistenz) of an object, and what we might call, though not wholly unambiguously, reference to a content, direction toward an object [...] or immanent objectivity (Gegenständlichkeit). Every mental phenomenon includes something like an object within itself, although they do not all do so in the same way. In a presentation something is presented, in judgement something is affirmed or denied and so on.” After the word ”object” in the place marked with an ellipsis there is also, in brackets, an important explanation that Brentano, when speaking of an object, does not mean as a real object; this fragment has been marked as a reference of the editor, Oskar Kraus, who informs us that the same view was expressed by Meinong and Husserl, but Brentano himself departed from it later on (Brentano 1924: 124f).

In the quoted text Brentano interchangeably uses the words ”content” (Inhalt) and ”object” (Objekt). Differentiation between content and object, which has become a permanent attainment of philosophy, was first introduced by Brentano’s student, Kazimierz Twardowski, who presented i.a. the following arguments: 1. the content of the presentation belongs to the mind, whereby the object expressed with the use of this content is nothing mental; 2. therefore, the content is something real, which always exists, whenever we present something to ourselves, and the object does not exist in certain cases (e.g. if it is equipped with mutually exclusive properties). By saying that the object is not something mental, Twardowski did not mean that it needs to be something tangible outside of the mind; to be an object of presentation is not the same as to exist, and if we are speaking of existence, then we need to modify the meaning of this word by adding a relevant adjective, such as ”phenomenal” or ”intentional” (Twardowski 1971; cf. also Findlay 1963).

Such distinction between actual and intentional existence saves us from falling into the contradiction being the assertion that the object of presentation sometimes does not exist together with the assertion that each presentation has its object (and since it has it, then the object must exist). In such cases, when speaking of non-existence, we mean actual existence, and when ascribing existence we mean intentional existence.

This is how the issue was perceived in the times of Brentano and Twardowski. Further development thereof went in two directions. On the field of phenomenology, Husserl and Ingarden conducted extensive and thorough ontological analyses, which made it possible for Ingarden to apply the notion of the intentional object in semiotics, theory of literature, theory of music, etc. Apart from systematic movement there also developed an analytical-critical

trend propagated by British authors. These analyses brought some authors such as J. N. Findlay and G. E. M. Anscombe, to an even more deepened theory of intentional objects, and made others, such as A. N. Prior, to pose a number of questions.

Before we discuss these doubts, it is worth taking into account a certain methodological feature of ontological investigations. In order to have the right to say something like, "there are intentional objects" or "there are real objects" etc., two conditions must be met. Firstly, one needs to defend the postulated type of objects against the Ockham's razor, i.e. one needs to demonstrate that we need it for some theoretical reasons; only under this condition we will not expose ourselves to the allegation of multiplying entities beyond necessity. Secondly, one needs to show that by solving a problem thanks to such ontological theory, we do not get entangled in new theoretical difficulties, such antimony or glaring vagueness of notions. In other words — one needs to collect the "pros" and dismiss the "cons". The two following fragments will be devoted to these two tasks.

## 2. "PROS"

The arguments presented in favour of accepting intentional beings as a sort of objects, are of rather ontological or rather logical character. The word "rather" is to indicate that in this case both types of considerations are interconnected, and the bridge between them is the issue of ontological engagement of language, since this is a semantic-logical problem. Therefore, we will be dealing with the predominance of one aspect or the other, and not with purely ontological or purely logical analyses. In the present considerations the semantic-ontological aspect shall prevail, which at the same time will serve as an excuse to omit the ontological argumentation, meticulously and subtly developed by Meinong, Twardowski, Ingarden, Findlay and others.

In informal speech there seems to be used without any limitations a certain equivalent of the principle of existential generalisation, which on the basis of sentence  $F(a)$  allows the acknowledgment of sentence  $(\exists x) F(x)$ . Proof of such an intuitive application of this principle seems to be the following circumstance. When we ask about the veracity of the sentence *Dwarfs are very big*, then we will usually get the answer that the sentence is false; yet the sentence *Dwarfs are very small* is not considered to be false in the same manner as the previous one (this generalisation is based on numerous experiments with students, with whom in class I discuss the issue of strong and weak interpretation of general sentences). It is apparent

that the person answering does not apply here a strong interpretation of general sentences, in which case both of the above sentences are equally and identically false. He neither employs, however, the weak interpretation, by application whereof the two sentences are equally and identically true (as assertions on an empty set of beings contained in some set). The respondent acts as if certain sentences concerning dwarfs were true and other were false, i.e. as if he refused to acknowledge the emptiness of the name appearing as the subject, which further justifies the application of the principal of existential generalisation.

In order to describe this phenomenon better, it will be convenient to use the logical theory, i.e. Leśniewski's ontology. The above is supported by the fact that Leśniewski's system, unlike the classical logical calculi, reproduces a certain property of natural languages deprived of articles, such as Polish (on the margin it is worth noting that in such languages there are intuitive solutions like Russell's description theory, aimed at dealing with fictitious "beings," since the notion of description contains the idea of the definite article). What is meant here is the fact that the construction of all sentences formed by the functor "there is" is the same, irrespective of the fact whether by translation into the language of sets we will render "there is" with the use of the symbol of inclusion or identity, or belonging to the set. Therefore, moving from *a is b* sentences to *there is a* sentences, we will not have to, if we employ ontology's formalism, add each time which of the translations is correct in a given case.

The following sentence is the (only) axiom in ontology:

$$a \in b \equiv (x)(x \in a \rightarrow x \in b) \ \& \ (Ex)(x \in a) \ \& \ (x, y)(x \in a \ \& \ y \in a \rightarrow x \in y).$$

Symbol  $\in$  is read as *is*. The right side of this axiom is a conjunction, the first element whereof ascertains that whatever is *a* is also *b*, and the second element thereof ascertains the existence of *a* (we will in short render it as *ex a*), the third one says as much that there is one *a* at most (in short *sol a*). The last two elements characterise the concept material for our considerations, i.e. the concept of an object (the phrase *a is an object* will be noted in short as: *ob a*). Below is a relevant preposition:

$$ob \ a \equiv ex \ a \ \& \ sol \ a,$$

which follows from the ontology's axiom and the following definition:  $ob \ a \equiv (Ex)(a \in x)$ . And from this preposition there instantly follows the next one:

$$ob a \rightarrow ex a,$$

meaning: if something is an object, then it exists.

Let us create language  $M$ , composed of Leśniewski's ontology and a certain number of names, which may be substituted for variables in the ontology.<sup>1</sup> Let these be names taken from Homer's *Odyssey*. Certain sentences of language  $M$  are composed of these types of expressions, for example: *Odysseus is the father of Telemachus*. If someone acknowledges this sentence, being a substitution of the  $a \in b$  formula, then he should also acknowledge its consequence, i.e. *ex Odysseus*. The following formula presents itself as the basis for acknowledgement of these types of sentences:

(MR) Sentence  $S$  may be acknowledged as a thesis of language  $M$ , if  $S$  is in the text of the *Odyssey*.

This will, of course, be another kind of acknowledgement than the one concerning empirical sentences such as, for example, *The Sigismund's Column is cylindrical in shape*. There may appear the question, whether in such a case it is admissible to speak of acknowledgement, whether the use of the word is not metaphorical here. This question cannot be answered by reference to the common understanding of the sense of the phrases "to acknowledge a sentence" or "to believe that," since this sense is too loose, the scope of the notion too blurred to decide the matter in a definite manner. There is no other thing to do than to use a regulating definition, making sure that it corresponds to certain presupposed conditions. Such a natural condition seems to be the fact that our concept of acknowledgement should be aware of the difference in the approach towards the sentence *Odysseus is the father of Telemachus* and such sentences as *Odysseus is the father of Penelope* and *Odysseus is 180 cm tall*. Indeed, the notion of acknowledgement is useful for description of these differences, since we will say that the first of the abovementioned sentences is acknowledged; as to the second one — the negation thereof is acknowledged, and as to the third one — neither the sentence nor its negation is acknowledged. No other term specifying the approach towards a sentence is capable of fulfilling this role.

Another criterion concerning the accuracy of the regulating definition of acknowledging will be the fact of whether a concept defined this way will meet the conditions of some general characteristic of acknowledgement. Such characteristics are constructed on the basis of logical pragmatics and

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<sup>1</sup>Such language, deliberately constructed for the purposes of the study of intentional objects, has been introduced by K. Ajdukiewicz (Ajdukiewicz 1965).

the so-called epistemic pragmatics. We will present this here as a means of example the **U** system from *Podstawy logicznej teorii przekonań* (*The Basis of Logical Theory of Beliefs*) for the reader to be able to ascertain, whether having adopted such characteristic, he would agree to use the word "acknowledgement" in the sense specified thereby, with respect to the approach, which he has with respect to sentences like: *Odysseus is the father of Telemachus* (cf. Marciszewski 1972). Let us assume that  $Bxp$  be an abbreviation for "x believes that p" (in other words: x acknowledges p; for certain technical reasons, however, we have adopted here the form of the reported speech). This expression is characterised by the following set of axioms from the **U** system:

$$(U.1) \ Bxp \rightarrow \neg Bx(\neg p)$$

$$(U.2) \ Bx(p \rightarrow q) \rightarrow (Bxp \rightarrow Bxq)$$

$$(U.3) \ p \text{ is a tautology} \rightarrow Bxp.$$

From those axioms there result i.a. the following prepositions:

$$(U.6) \ Bxp \ \& \ Bxq \rightarrow Bx(p \ \& \ q)$$

$$(U.7) \ Bx(p \vee q) \rightarrow \neg(Bx(\neg p) \ \& \ Bx(\neg q))$$

$$(U.8) \ Bx(p \rightarrow q) \ \& \ Bx(\neg q) \rightarrow Bx(\neg p).$$

Moreover, two negative assertions are adopted:

$$(U.4) \ \neg(x)(p)(Bxp \rightarrow p)$$

$$(U.5) \ \neg(x)(p)(\neg Bxp \rightarrow Bx(\neg p)).$$

It is now easy to verify, whether acknowledgement of the **M** language sentences on the basis of the rule formulated above meets the above postulates with respect to meaning; if yes, then the one who still questions the aptness of such an extension of the concept of acknowledgement that it still covers the **M** language sentences, would have the obligation to propose a different set of postulates — such that would eliminate the acknowledgement of the **M** language sentences, without elimination thereby of the undisputable cases of acknowledgement.

The (MR) rule refers, as an example, to the language of the text of the *Odyssey*. In order to equip it with the desired level of generality, it should be extended to any and all texts, both mythological texts as well as fiction, scientific texts and everyday speech. What is more, we will considerably simplify the process of formulation of certain prepositions, if we extend the notion of text even further, so that it covers, apart from actual texts, i.e. written and spoken texts, also potential texts, i.e. texts expressed "in the mind", which have been realised in writing or in speech. And so for example, if somebody thought *Spring is late this year*, then even if he does not share this observation with somebody out loud, it still constitutes a

certain text, albeit a potential one. The language of such a text is this part of the language of the author, which has been used for production of the potential text.

Objects, whose existence is ascertained as a result of acknowledgement of some sentence by the rule similar to (MR), whereby acknowledging is understood within the sense of the **U** system, shall be called here intentional objects, and their existence shall be called intentional existence.

Before this kind of rule is formulated in all generality, certain terminological information is indispensable. The terms "intentional object" and "intentional existence" within the meaning derived from a rule similar to (UR), without precise determination, however, how acknowledgement should be understood, have been introduced by Kazimierz Ajdukiewicz in the paper titled *On the Notion of Existence* (1950).<sup>2</sup> This paper employs and uses this idea to define intentional existence by addition of this kind of rule to Leśniewski's language of ontology.

A much broader concept of the intentional object is presented in the works of Roman Ingarden; it covers the objects of all texts, the meanings of expressions, as well as the objects of thoughts, observations etc., also the works of art, music, and others. In other words — intentional objects in such a broad understanding are any and all products of the consciousness, i.e. of the mind, both psychological products (as described by Twardowski), as well as psycho-physical products; the former is described by Ingarden as primal intentional objects, whereby the latter is described as secondary (cf. Ingarden 1960a: 180).

Brentano, who was the first to assimilate the scholastic term of "esse intentionale" into the modern philosophy, included therein only certain psychological products, and therefore it was this class of objects that are subordinate to the class by Ingarden's notion, and exclusive, if we keep understanding text as an actual text, with the class of objects distinguished by Ajdukiewicz's notion.

Extension of the notion of text to potential texts makes it possible to include them into Ajdukiewicz's class of intentional objects at least some certain intentional objects as understood by Brentano, and the set created in this manner will be the (proper) part of the set of intentional objects as understood by Ingarden. Such proper notions of an intentional object have been adopted in the present deliberations and shall be subject to further analysis. The following phrase has been adopted as the criterion of

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<sup>2</sup>Ajdukiewicz's "W sprawie pojęcia istnienia" (Ajdukiewicz 1965) is the Polish translation of this paper.



intentional existence.

(IC) If in an actual or potential text of language  $L$  there appears sentence  $S$  in the form  $a \in b$  and if acknowledgement of this sentence meets the requirements imposed by system  $\mathbf{U}$ , then it will be possible to acknowledge this sentence as true in language  $L$ , and in consequence it will be possible to acknowledge sentences in the form  $ob_i x$ ,  $ex_i x$ .

Letter  $i$  accompanying symbols  $ob$  and  $ex$  is used to indicate that the sense of the words "meaning" and "existence" used here is different than in the contexts of when we are speaking of actual existence, i.e. existence ascribed on the basis of empirical criteria.

The following conclusion results from the criterion (IC) and the prepositions of the  $\mathbf{U}$  system:

Con (IC) If a sentence  $a \in b$  in  $L$  is internally contradictory or has internally contradictory consequences in language  $L$  (i.e. in the form  $p \ \& \ \neg p$ ), then there is no basis to acknowledge sentence  $ex_i a$  in  $L$ .

We will present this relation with use of an example. The following sentence shall be an example of a sentence of internally contradictory consequences:

(p) *Ameteros is a son of a childless mother.*

The following logical sentences result from (p):

( $Ey$ ) (*y is Ameteros' mother*) in short:  $F(y)$

$\neg$  ( $Ey$ ) (*y is Ameteros' mother*) in short:  $\neg F(y)$ .

Therefore, on the basis of U.3 and U.2 we have to agree with the assertion that:

1)  $Bxp \rightarrow Bx(F(y) \ \& \ \neg F(y))$ ,

but on the basis of U.3 it is also true that

2)  $Bx \neg(F(y) \ \& \ \neg F(y))$ , wherefrom it further follows that due to U.1

3)  $\neg Bx(F(y) \ \& \ \neg F(y))$ .

Substituting 1 and 3 in the law of transposition we obtain the following:

4)  $\neg Bxp$ .

If one assumes that Ameteros, being the character in sentence (p) is not featured in any sentence of language  $L$  and sentence (p) is not acknowledged, as it has been demonstrated above, then there is no basis to accept sentence  $ex_i$  Ameteros.

As it follows from the above, the reservation present in (IC) that only those sentences should be considered acknowledged which are acknowledgeable within the meaning of system  $\mathbf{U}$ , has material consequences: it provides no opportunity for sentences resulting in a contradiction to create intentional objects. The criterion of intentional existence provided by Ajdukiewicz

does not entail such consequences, since its requirement is limited to the condition of the sentence belonging to an actual text of a certain language (e.g. the text of the *Odyssey*), as being formulated in *oratio recta*. It will be then necessary to acknowledge the sentence  $ex_i Ameteros$  if for example the sentence *Ameteros is a son of a childless mother* appears in the text.

Thus the result could be different, if we introduced some other characteristics of acknowledgement, different from the one constituting the **U** system. The specification obtained thanks to the **U** system does not need to be the only proper one, its advantage is, however, the fact that it makes it possible to employ the notion of intentional model, which proves to be extremely convenient for certain semantic analysis. This is confirmed, for example by the deliberations of Jerzy Pelc, presented in the monograph titled *O użyciu wyrażen<sup>3</sup>* (*On the Use of Expressions*). It would not be possible, if one allowed acknowledgment of sentences contradictory towards one another, since this type of language would be deprived of a model. Application of the notion of a model opens possibilities for the specification of those intuitions connected with the notion of the contents of the text, which were developed by R. Ingarden, when he described the content of a literary work as a set of intentional things, persons and events, etc. (Ingarden 1958). This instantly brings to mind the idea of an intentional model, which would make it possible to describe in more detail than previously various relations between the contents and the operations on texts, such as an abstract, a translation, or continuation of a text (for this purpose one could employ the relation of inclusion of one model in the other, the isomorphism of models, the extension of models, etc.) Moreover, such formulation of the criterion of intentional existence which does not entail the consequence that intentional objects are sometimes internally contradictory, seems to be consistent with common intuition, even with the intuition of children listening to stories. One does not need fairy tales to be probable, as it is expected in realistic novels; quite to the contrary — the less probable they are, the better (they are then more stimulating for the imagination), yet the improbability should not reach its upper limit being the logical impossibility. If we tell a child that the Wolf ate Grandma and then a minute later we tell them that the Wolf did not eat Grandma, than we will be confronted with an accusation that there is something fishy going on. Thus, the world of fairy tales, myths and tales may be one of many possible worlds, although it is never an actual world; and the degree of dissimilarity to the actual world is one of the criterions of

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<sup>3</sup>Pelc 1971, chapter IV.

distinguishing literary genres.

It needs to be emphasized here that conclusion Con (IC) is not tantamount to a firm assertion that what is contradictory cannot be attributed "esse intentionale". This formulation is more cautious: it advises only to refrain from ascribing this manner of existence to what would correspond to expressions present in any text which are contradictory with respect to one another. Such a presentation of the case, not closing the problem yet, is a reflection of the fact that the full data necessary for determination of the ontological status of internally contradictory items, for example hornless unicorns, are not available. It seems on one hand that since we sometimes think of contradictory items then they are the objects of our thoughts and therefore are intentional objects. Yet, do we indeed think of them in the same way we think of actual or possible objects? It is after all said sometimes, for example by determination of necessary sentences, that these are sentences whose negation "is impossible to think of", and this means as much that their negation results in a contradiction; therefore behind this we have an intuition that it is impossible to think of contradictory objects. Thus, there are two meanings of the word "think" and this ambiguousness and instability is inherited by the expression "intentional object," i.e. "the object of the thought." The (IC) criterion prevents introduction of the contradictory to the realm of intentional objects, and at the same time it avoids determining whether this means of prevention is to be merely tactical, used until a relevant substantial solution is found, or it is to be firm and final.

### 3. "CONS"

A favourable attitude towards the view on existence of intentional objects, represented in the preceding section, is motivated by reasons of theoretical convenience. It is convenient to adopt the notion of an intentional being, since it makes it possible to construct a semantic theory which well presents the common way of thinking on literary works and the like. We believe the latter with regards to texts which are about something, whereby this something is composed neither of the states of mind of the author, nor the elements of empirically given reality. And since this is neither a domain of the mind nor the domain of empirical reality, then there is nothing else left but to assume that we are dealing with some third world.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>It is worth adding that firm access to the concept of the third world, motivated by the deliberations from the field of philosophy of science, was presented by Karl Popper (Popper 1968).

Such argumentation provides grounds for the conclusion intended by it, yet provided that this conclusion does not result in a contradiction or even paradoxes and provided that attempts at construction of competitive theories, which would have no worse explanatory power, would be as simple, and additionally would do without an additional type of beings, fail. The latter argument would provide such theories with an advantage over the discussed theory. Presently we will consider various attempts at questioning the concept of intentional objects, these attempts will later be subjected to critical analysis, aimed at what is an indispensable supplement of construction endeavours, and what has been described by one of the medieval authors as "destructio destructionis".

A thorough critical analysis of intentionality, which fairly well described the present condition of the issue, has been carried out by A. Prior in the book entitled *Objects of Thought*. Prior formulates a certain basic difficulty presented by the concept of an *object of thought*, he indicates three possible ways of getting rid of the difficulty, yet ends up criticising them.

The basic difficulty, being the starting point, consists therein that the two assertions irresistibly coming to mind when someone is thinking of something are inconsistent with each other (we are therefore dealing with a kind of a paradox). These are the following assertions.

(1) When  $x$  thinks of  $y$ ,  $x$  strives for  $y$ ,  $x$  reveres  $y$  etc., then  $y$  is always an element of this relation to the same extent  $x$  is, and therefore  $y$  exists.

(2) In certain cases, when  $x$  thinks of  $y$ , there exists no  $y$  (Prior 1971: 119, 127).

One may attempt to reconcile these assertions by various means. Prior lists three, but all of them seem unacceptable to him. Below are the three alternative attempts at solving the dilemma:

(a) It is possible to assume that thinking of a real object is an activity entirely different from thinking of an object deprived of reality.

(b) It is possible to assume that when thinking of something we are not in relation with this something, but with the "idea" of this something, in which idea in certain cases represents a real thing and in other cases this type of representation does not occur.

(c) It is possible to assume that there are stronger and weaker modes of existence, that all objects of thought without any exception have at least some weak way of existing, and only a certain subset thereof is characterised by a strong mode of existence (Prior 1971).

In what manner each of attempts (a), (b) and (c) could prevent the

antimony which would follow from joint acknowledgement of (1) and (2)? What difficulties follow from each of these attempts? Can these difficulties be overcome, and if yes, how? These are the questions waiting to be answered.

In order to make the formulation of the first of those problems clearer, let us reformulate (1) and (2) in such a manner that their contradictory character will be emphasized.

(1') Whenever  $x$  thinks of  $y$ ,  $y$  exists.

(2') Sometimes  $x$  thinks of  $y$ , whereby  $y$  does not exist.

It is now clearly visible that these sentences contradict each other, and it would be possible to avoid the contradiction, if it were assumed that either the word "thinks" or the word "exists" (or both) have different meanings in either of the sentences.

Proposal (c), the most natural and supported by a strong tradition, whose key representative was A. Meinong, consists in diversification of the meanings of the word "exists". This is the same direction, which has been assumed in the constructive part of this paper, we will therefore discuss it first.

Prior himself does not provide arguments against this standpoint, he refers however to the criticism thereof presented by Russell. The same criticism by Russell is referred to by Jerzy Pelc in the abovementioned monograph, who agrees with Russell, as one may suppose, on the basis of the deliberations denying the sentences of a literary text with any logical value. This denial is justified only when it is assumed that by the so-called fake use of an expression, characteristic for literary texts, this expression is deprived of denotation, i.e. when one agrees with Russell's statement expressed in the following words:

"Many logicians have been driven to the conclusion that there are unreal objects. It is argued, e.g., by Meinong, that we can speak about the golden mountain, the round square, and so on [...] In such theories, it seems to me, there is a failure of that feeling for reality which ought to be preserved even in the most abstract studies. Logic, I should maintain, must no more admit a unicorn than zoology can; for logic is concerned with the real world just as truly as zoology, though with its more abstract and general features. [...] To maintain that Hamlet, for example, exists in his own world, namely, in the world of Shakespeare's imagination, just as truly as (say) Napoleon existed in the ordinary world, is to say something deliberately confusing, or else confused to a degree which is scarcely credible. There is only one world, the 'real' world: Shakespeare's imagination is part of it, and the thoughts that he had in writing Hamlet are real. So are the thoughts that we have

in reading the play. But it is of the very essence of fiction that only the thoughts, feelings, etc., in Shakespeare and his readers are real, and that there is not, in addition to them, an objective Hamlet” (Pelc 1971: 129f).

What role in this deduction is played by the view on the object of logic expressed in the first part of the above paragraph? One may suspect that in the works of authors attacked by Russell there is the following assumption: since sentences concerning unicorns etc. are consistent with the rules of logic, therefore they have the right to some sort of being. Russell’s response is as follows: they cannot be consistent with the rules of logic, since logic pertains to the real world. This view on logic, represented by Russell at the time when he was writing his *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy* is quite isolated, since it is commonly accepted that the rules of logic are complied with — as stated by Leibniz — in all possible worlds; sentences concerning unicorns, provided that they do not result in contradiction, refer to one of the possible worlds, which, as it happened, had not been lucky enough to come to existence.

The second part of Russell’s text presented above, which reduces the supposed intentional objects to psychological phenomena, is more important than the controversy concerning the object of logic. Such reductionism constitutes a self-imposing alternative for the concept of intentional objects. Let us trace the line of this reduction with an example. We have a sentence from *Iliad* (the beginning of book XVI)

(H.1) *Patroclus drew near to Achilles.*

This is a sentence which after relevant editing falls under the pattern  $a \in b$ , and therefore it results in the consequence *ex Patroclus*. How to avoid this consequence? Russell’s recipe seems to be as follows: since no Patroclus exists, there only exist thoughts on Patroclus, then sentence *ex<sub>i</sub>Patroclus* is an abbreviation of saying: *There exists someone who thinks about Patroclus*. Let us write it down in a shortened formula, where  $T$  means *thinks about* and  $a$  pertains to *Patroclus*:

(H.2)  $ex_i a \equiv (Ey) (y T a)$ .

It is now sufficient to treat sentence (H.1) in the same manner, i.e. transform it into a sentence which states that: someone thinks that  $a \in b$ ; where  $a$  means *Patroclus*,  $b$  means *drawing near to Achilles*; and  $T$  means *thinks that*:

(H.3)  $a \in b \equiv (Ey) (y T : a \in b)$ .

The aptness of this reconstruction is demonstrated by the fact that the left part of the equation of (H.2) results in the field of ontology from the left part of (H.3) and that an analogous resulting takes place on the other side;

although it is difficult to demonstrate the latter precisely, as long as we do not dispose of the formal theory of functor  $T$ , yet intuitively it is obvious that if someone thinks that  $a \in b$ , then at the same time he is thinking about  $a$ . Assertion (H.3) will to an extent resemble the (IC) criterion, since someone's thinking that  $a \in b$  constitutes a certain potential text. There is however, a material difference, since according to (H.3) the thing that creates the intentional state of things is the mere fact of thinking about them, whereby the (IC) criterion demands acknowledgement in the specified sense prescribed by the  $\mathbf{U}$  system, whereby it protects itself against impossible "objects". From the point of view of ontology as the first philosophy (it should not be confused with Leśniewski's ontology), one may see in (H.3), as well as in (IC) an expression of the fact that intentional objects are existentially heteronomous in the sense intended by Ingarden (Ingarden 1960b: 97).

The conclusion that since this kind of reduction of intentional objects to real objects (to be more precise: reduction of sentences concerning the former to sentences concerning the latter) has been successful, then the notions of intentional object and intentional existence are redundant would be premature. The situation here is the same as in the case of each new notion introduced with the use of a classical definition. The fact that it can be eliminated thanks to translatability means only that it is not indispensable, but by no means that it is useless. It is hardly possible to imagine any more extensive scientific theory, for example arithmetic or mechanics, doing without terms introduced by means of definitions. The notion of an intentional object does so well i.a. in the research of literary works (as demonstrated by Ingarden's research), as well as in certain epistemological research (as demonstrated by those of Ajdukiewicz), that it is justified to adopt it, even if only as a derivative term. It remains an open case whether formulations such as (H.3) or (KI), which would be adopted as definitions, are characterised by the non-creativity required from a definition. If they are creative in a sense that they lead to new assertions, then it would be impossible to derive without them, then they are bad definitions (which would be a reason to question the success of the reduction), yet they could be good philosophical assertions.

As to the difficulty formulated by Prior, which would be to consist in the inconsistency of assertions (1) and (2), it resolves itself simply in that the word ("exists") in (1) should be understood within the meaning of intentional existence, as specified by (IC), and the identical word in sentence (2) refers to real existence.

Having therefore opted for the solution similar to (c) and having outlined the line of defence of this standpoint, there is nothing left to do, but to

assess the two remaining proposals. As to (b), it is entangled in all of the epistemological difficulties which are characteristic for so-called indirect realism. This is a separate and complicated problem, therefore there is no need to go into it in the situation, when adoption of a solution of the (c) type is sufficient to lift the difficulty indicated by Prior, i.e. the juxtaposition of sentences (1) and (2). For the same reason one could refrain from dwelling upon point (a), yet looking into it closer will let us observe certain peculiarities and dangers accompanying the discourse on intentional objects.

Let us now assume that the word "exists" has been used in (1) and (2) in the same sense, i.e. in the sense of intentional existence. Is it possible in such a case to acknowledge both words without falling into the trap of contradiction? It would be possible if the word "thinks" could be ascribed a different meaning each time, and we would be dealing for example with two different types of thinking. As an attempt, in order to consider a certain possibility, we will assume that when thinking about something we always somehow take into account the existential moment, i.e. we think of this something as of something that exists, does not exist (e.g. something fictional) or something that is neutral with respect to existence, the latter case takes place when we suspend our judgement as to existence, either as a result of an actual lack of knowledge or in order to place ourselves in a certain cognitive situation (Descartes' methodological doubt or Husserl's *epoché*). We shall determine the first two cases, not excluding the possibility of yet other approaches to existence, with the use of the following conditions, wherein the symbols  $TE$  and  $TN$  are, respectively, abbreviations of the following expressions "thinks of the existing" and "thinks of the non-existing".

$$C.1 \ xTEy \equiv xB(ex \ y)$$

$$C.2 \ xTNy \equiv xB(\neg ex \ y).$$

Let us now distinguish the two meanings of the word "thinks", appearing in the set of sentences (1) and (2), differentiating them with the use of symbols  $TE$  and  $TN$ :

$$(1'') \ (x)(xTEy \rightarrow ex_iy)$$

$$(2'') \ (Ex)(xTNy \ \& \ \neg ex_iy).$$

Thanks to this differentiation, the pair of sentences (1) and (2), if adequately interpreted as (1'') and (2''), is not threatened by contradiction, even if the word "exists" is used each time within the same meaning. As to the veracity of (1'') and (2'') — it is guaranteed by our criterion of intentional existence, which on the basis of the fact that a certain sentence is acknowledged allows to infer that a corresponding intentional "fact" takes



place, and the expressions  $xTEy$  and  $xTNy$  are equivalent, by virtue of C.1 and C.2, to relevant assertions concerning acknowledgement.

Thus, in this way it is also possible to avoid the mutual inconsistency of sentences (1) and (2), which threatens, if one does not distinguish the meanings in one of the two pairs of shape-identical expressions appearing therein. This, however, is not a general solution, since it refers only to the realm of intentional objects; if in both cases we meant real existence, then irrespective of the fact that sense is ascribed to the word "thinks" in sentence (1), this sentence will always be false.

The pair of sentences (1'') and (2'') presents a certain difficulty, which requires one more distinction in order to overcome it. Sentence (2'') may be ascribed the sense that it will turn out to be false: if  $x$  thinks of  $y$  as of a non-existing object then this results in the fact that  $y$  is the object of the thoughts, i.e. an intentional object, and therefore  $y$  exists intentionally contrary to the thesis of (2''). We are protected against this charge by the distinction introduced by Ingarden, distinguishing between the structure of the intentional object and its contents (Ingarden 1948: 256 et seq.: chapter X, § 45 a). The contents of certain conceptual structures may include the fact that they do not exist, as was the case with the emperor's clothes in Andersen's tale. These clothes not only do not exist in reality, but they do not exist also in the tale itself, in the fictional world created thereby. And they do not exist because the sentence on their non-existence is included into the text of the tale and is acknowledged in the language thereof; this is therefore a situation to which (2'') pertains. This situation should for this reason be distinguished from the situation in which an intentional object does not exist with respect to the structure. i.e. it has not been constructed by any mental acts; therefore there is no text, either actual or potential, which would mention such an object. This difference could be noted with the use of a special notation, for example with the formula  $\neg (ex_i)y$ , when the acts creating  $y$  have not occurred, and with the formula  $(\neg ex_i)y$ , in case an act establishing the non-existence of  $y$  in a certain intentional world has taken place; the brackets would indicate the contents of the intentional object, which in the first instance includes existence and in the second — non-existence.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The problem of intentional objects is a difficult issue, connected with many riddles and paradoxes. If one believes that it can be solved, one needs to approach it cautiously and with little steps, so as not to fall into the trap

of ambiguities and aporias along the way. What does a step made in these considerations consist of? In order to see it, one needs to point out certain properties of the method applied. This is a method, which most appropriately should be called analytic, and to be more precise — reconstructionist — whereby reconstruction is perceived as one of the methods of analysis. It is distinctively different (which does not mean any competition) from the phenomenological method, which was applied to intentional objects by Husserl, Ingarden and others. A phenomenologist starts with what is given, i.e. what in an irresistible way appears in the mind, and abstracts from what this has to do with actual knowledge, common sense and some philosophical assumptions (these issues may later be taken into consideration, however they are omitted at the starting point). The second characteristic feature of phenomenology is the way it communicates data, which does not aspire to be adequate with respect to the contents which are to be expressed. One cannot pick holes in the discourse produced by such an author, since particular words and sentences even gain sense first in a wider context. This is not evidence of any assertions or definitions of any concepts. This is a kind of heuresis, directing the recipient towards experiences and line of thinking which were shared by the author. The philosophical language in this case has the function which was called *agitating* by Ajdukiewicz, but this word, had it been adopted by phenomenologists, would have needed to lose any pejorative shade. Since this is exactly what is intended — to agitate (*agitatio*) the mind of the recipient, so that he starts and continues in the right direction.

The matters are different in the case of analytical philosophy. The starting point is to formulate certain conditions, which should be met by philosophical notions, for the notions to be capable of being a part of a theory. Apart from obvious formal requirements provided by logic, most often there functions certain substantive requirements, stemming from ontological assumptions — from the answers to the question "what does exist?" adopted a priori. If one assumes, as Russell did at some point in time, that the least disputable type of beings are the sensorial data — then all other objects must demonstrate the same indisputability or must be reduced to the latter by means of definitions. Again, if one assumes that the existence of physical objects is indisputable, then they become the model of obviousness and the basis for any reductionist attempts. Any category of objects may be distinguished, but still some category must be, which after all is connected with the reductionist approach, since it is first possible to conduct a definitional reduction of other categories of objects to the distinguished category, which constitutes the very core of the activity of

an analyst-reductionist, inspired by the slogan of not multiplying beings (whereas a phenomenologist represents the standpoint that the number of beings should not be unnecessarily limited). Whether a reduction is successful is decided i.a. by the correctness of the definitional activities. In each notional construction there is as much content as provided thereto by the terms it applies, i.e. the point of gravity rests by striving for terminological precision.

The attempts made in this paper fall into the analytical stream. As the basis for reduction we have adopted the assumption on existence of physical and psychological objects; the latter include the acts of acknowledgement. Acknowledgement, being a primal notion, is characterised by the **U** system postulates. The notion of existence, which is also primal, i.e. non-definable, is characterised axiomatically on the basis of Leśniewski's ontology. With the use of these two notions one specifies the notion of the intentional object and the intentional being.

The use of Leśniewski's ontology, which is extended by certain terminological constants, e.g. from the language of the mythology, and a certain rule of acknowledgement, was a step first made by Kazimierz Ajdukiewicz. Then, a certain next step was made in this paper, namely, we have determined the notion of acknowledgement in such a manner, that it is prevented from being included into the category of intentional objects which are logically impossible (contradictory), whereby Ajdukiewicz's criterion allows contradictory objects into the family of intentional objects. This step may be found to be controversial, yet it introduces the most important question of what the relation between intentionality and logical possibility is.

Reduction, with the use of the (IC) criterion, of the intentional objects to the category of ontological objects, which are considered to be more basic (physical and psychological objects), does not need to result in resigning from the notion of the intentional object. This notion has already proved its usefulness and theoretical significance, which provides a decisive argument in favour of its presence in philosophy's notional apparatus, in particular in the apparatus of the philosophy of the language.

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