

Synthese Library 360

Dale Jacquette

Alexius Meinong, The Shepherd of Non-Being



Springer

Synthese Library

Studies in Epistemology, Logic, Methodology,
and Philosophy of Science

Volume 360

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Alexius Meinong, The Shepherd of Non-Being

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Synthese Library
ISBN 978-3-319-18074-8 ISBN 978-3-319-18075-5 (eBook)
DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-18075-5

Library of Congress Control Number: 2015938094

Springer Cham Heidelberg New York Dordrecht London
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*Let us frankly concede that
Gegenstandstheorie itself is dead, buried, and
not going to be resurrected. Nobody is going
to argue again that, for example, "there are
objects concerning which it is the case that
there are no such objects."*

— Gilbert Ryle, "Intentionality and the
Nature of Thinking," *Revue Internationale de
Philosophie*, 27, 1973, 255

*Dedicated in fond memory of
Rudolf Haller (1929–2014)*

Preface

The very name of Alexius Meinong used to be anathema in analytic philosophy circles. Gilbert Ryle testifies to this attitude in the quotation cited on the book's opening leaf as its ironically intended motto. These are famous last words and a caution against predictions about where philosophy will take its future course. Today, 40 years later, there is, contrary to Ryle's postmortem, a flowering of rigorously developed formal symbolic Meinongian logics and active discussion of his work. Meinongian logicians and philosophers, like the best exemplars of logical analysis among antipodal referential extensionalists, pursue a family of different strategies in analyzing the meaning, formal expressive and inferential structure, of thought and discourse. Meinongians, unlike extensionalists, cultivate their analytic aspirations by positing a Meinongian referential semantic domain of both existent and nonexistent objects. All intended objects alike are admitted, regardless of their ontic status, provided that they satisfy intensional property-based Leibnizian identity conditions. As such, both existent and nonexistent objects can be referred to by names understood as abbreviating true descriptive predications of their constitutive properties, counted and quantified over, independently of whether or not they happen to exist.

Meinong's thought, because of its connections to phenomenology and intentionality theory, continues to be of interest to so-called analytic and so-called continental thinkers. It builds upon and complements a powerful philosophy of mind in all its outlets of symbolic and artistic expression. As a student of Franz Brentano, like Edmund Husserl, Meinong in some ways is a dialectical opponent in logic, semantics, and philosophical psychology, to mainstream analytic philosophy centered in the writings, among others, of Gottlob Frege, Bertrand Russell, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and W.V.O. Quine. Meinong has often stood as the absurd first lame half of a dilemma, which, once mentioned, typically with ridicule, is quickly disposed of, leaving the analytic movement free to develop its radically contrary pure semantic extensionalism. Anything else was propagandized as visiting logic with a philosophically objectionable psychologism, to which the great founders of modern symbolic logic had agreed never to subscribe.

From the beginning, this was a mistaken and in many ways unfair impression. It was fostered especially by Russell's off-target criticisms of many of Meinong's most central and important ideas in his influential *Mind* reviews of three of Meinong's books, monographs and edited work, eventually more formidably, in Russell's *On Denoting* (1905a). Virtually anyone training in analytic philosophy in this era studied *On Denoting*, but not many looked behind Russell's criticisms and polemical calls for a sense of Meinong-opposing robust reality to Meinong's writings themselves. It is easier to take Russell's objections as gospel than to learn the hard way exactly what Meinong's ideas were, whether Russell's objections were well-aimed, and whether philosophical logic and semantics should take the extensionalist or intensionalist route. The historically unsupported prejudice against Meinong, who was never a formal mathematical logician in the contemporary sense, as an incompetent semantic theorist and ontically inflationary metaphysician, has been repeatedly and so thoroughly exploded in the literature, that one thinks of deprecating attitudes toward Meinong of this nature today as quaintly uninformed.

Now, as part of that same turn of fate unforeseen by Ryle's hubris, Meinong is glacially gaining prestige as an important thinker in his own right and a bridge figure between analytic and continental thought. On the analytic side, this is largely thanks to the more urgently perceived need for an adequate intensionalist semantics of meaning to partner with an intentionalist philosophy of language and philosophy of mind. It is owing to the failure of mainstream extensionalist analytic efforts that Meinong's more expansive treatment of meaning in the relation between intending thought and its expression and direction toward intended object, independently of the object's ontic status, has begun to recover its birthright philosophical respectability. Meinongians need not disregard or feel compelled to refute or replace the early pioneering days of logic and semantics among other main branches of analytic philosophy, in the referential domain extensionalisms of Frege, Russell, Quine, and the early Wittgenstein. All of these findings of these giants in the philosophy of mathematics and language that survive criticism on their own terms can be incorporated in the extensionalist subsystem of a more complete and comprehensive intensionalist Meinongian logic and semantics.

Whether an open-minded reader leans instinctively toward Frege or Meinong, it cannot fail in either case to be a useful, philosophically instructive exercise to see how a sympathetic development of Meinong's object theory stacks up against what sociologically has been more mainstream logical-semantic referential extensionalism, as it has evolved especially from the time of Frege. That is one of the main purposes of the book, which I hope succeeds at that level even for those who at the end are more convinced than ever that Meinong was on the wrong track. There are surprising parallelisms and interesting departures, limits, and distinctions observed and transgressed in the ongoing dialogue in philosophical logic and semantics between extensionalism and intensionalism, and there is much to be learned from the dynamic of theoretical advantages and disadvantages on both sides of this major conceptual watershed in the theory of meaning and interpretation of logical symbolisms. There is no basis for comparison and informed judgment, unless a solid

intensionalist alternative to Frege-Russell-Quine referential extensionalism like Meinong's is given more of a fair hearing than it has usually enjoyed in the past.

The present book brings together a collection of my mostly previously published essays that have appeared since the release of my *Meinongian Logic: The Semantics of Existence and Nonexistence* (1996a). These chapters explore related background aspects of Meinong's thought, beginning with his early categorization of assumptions as a fourth kind of mental state, supplementing Brentano's three-part division of thoughts into presentations, feelings, and judgments, to details of Meinongian semantics for metaphysics and intentionalist philosophy of mind, including phenomenology and the concept of aesthetic value, the meaning of fiction, and ontic commitments of false scientific theories and historical narratives. The title of the present volume, *Alexius Meinong: The Shepherd of Non-Being*, makes playful reference to Martin Heidegger's catchphrase, in his 1947 *Letter on Humanism* (2008, 234; 245), pronouncing in sermonette fashion on the human responsibility, not to be an overlord, but rather a steward or caretaking shepherd of being. Surely non-being, pastoral flocks of nonexistent intended objects, otherwise unorganized, need equally to be herded and tended in their fields, as Meinong appoints himself to do. This book explains part of Meinong's philosophical motivation as directed toward the rigorous systematization of all the different kinds of intended objects by which alone their intending thoughts can be distinguished by satisfying intensional property-based Leibnizian identity conditions.

The continuity of themes in this sequence of chapter essays reflects an effort at systematic development of my thinking over several decades on many aspects of referring to and truly predicating constitutive properties of beingless objects that are neither dynamic nor abstract. Intended objects include not only spatiotemporally existent entities, like Julius Caesar and the Taj Mahal, but those mentioned in works of fiction, such as Sherlock Holmes, and the notorious combinatorially property-constructible golden mountain and round square. They number also among the objects of thought ideal theoretical objects like the ideal pendulum and frictionless surface that do not actually exist, but are indispensable for many kinds of scientific explanation. We can think about them and truly or falsely predicate properties of these nonexistent intended objects, just as we can of existent physical entities. My original motivation for developing a Meinongian logic was not to explain the meaning of fiction, but to understand the semantic status of ostensible reference to such putative objects as the ideal gas, perfect sphere, average homeowner, projectiles unimpeded by impressed forces, and the like. Similarly, Meinongian referential semantic domains must contain objects ostensibly referred to in false science and false history, such as phlogiston, vortices, the planet Vulcan, and many other *irrealia*. Here hypotheses may have once appeared justified but have since come through the progress of science to be regarded as false and even insupportable. Mathematical objects might also be categorized as Meinongian, allowing true predication of constitutive properties to *abstracta* without supposing that they must therefore exist. The Meinongian domain also presumably includes such intended objects as future states of affairs, toward which our actions might be directed, but that, as the purpose or aim of actions, without reference to which our actions cannot

be adequately explained, do not exist unless or until the intended action is undertaken and succeeds in achieving its end.

The book as such is not merely a compilation of past reflections on Meinong, but knits together my persistent preoccupations with specific themes and key aspects of the Meinongian proposition that every thought intends an intensionally identifiable individuated object, independently of the object's ontic status. A unified portrait is encouraged of Meinongian logic and semantics, along with its supporting empirical intentionalist phenomenology, as the essays proceed from first to last, and essential ideas are extended and refined. The essays in content, as they have been integrated, are meant to tell a single albeit incomplete story about a currently momentum-gaining philosophical movement based on a very different set of assumptions than mainstream analytic philosophy has historically acknowledged. The assumptions are uniquely the original property of a cluster of several dozen important European philosophers at the turn of the previous century centering around the early intentionalist phenomenology of Brentano and Meinong. Here these concepts are critically investigated by the same practiced tools of logical analysis in the clarification of ideas and pursuit of truth forthcoming as conclusions of the most intuitive and objection-resistant arguments. The hope is that this selection of interconnected essays offers a *tableau vivant* of a promising but still controversial and only partly exploited way to think about logic, meaning, existence, and nonexistence that is more responsive to the generality and nuances of thought and language beyond reference and true predication of properties to existent objects. The challenge and promise is to recommend a preferable alternative to some of the strategies that have predominated historically despite their limitations in every branch of contemporary analytic philosophy.

Bern, Switzerland

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Acknowledgments

I am grateful to the following published sources of essays appearing as chapters, generally in highly edited revisions. I thank the editors and presses of these books and journals in philosophy for their permission. “Meinong’s Life and Philosophy” is my retitled “Alexius Meinong (1853–1920),” first published in Liliana Albertazzi, Massimo Libardi, and Roberto Poli, eds., *The School of Franz Brentano* (Kluwer Academic Publishers 1996), 131–59. “Origins of *Gegenstandstheorie*: Immanent and Transcendent Intended Objects in Brentano, Twardowski, and Meinong” originally appeared in *Brentano Studien*, 3, 277–302, from which source it is heavily revised. “Meinong on the Phenomenology of Assumption” appears with only minor changes in *Studia Phenomenologica*, 3, special issue on *The School of Brentano and Husserlian Phenomenology*, 155–77. “*Außersein* of the Pure Object” was first published in Albertazzi, Jacquette, and Poli, eds., *The School of Alexius Meinong* (Ashgate 2001), 373–96. “Constitutive (Nuclear) and Extraconstitutive (Extranuclear) Properties” appears under the original title “Nuclear and Extranuclear Properties” also in Albertazzi, Jacquette, and Poli, eds., *The School of Alexius Meinong*, 2001, 397–426. “Meditations on Meinong’s Golden Mountain” was first published in Nicholas Griffin and Dale Jacquette, eds., *Russell versus Meinong: The Legacy of “On Denoting”* (Routledge 2009), 169–203. These are selected conference papers from the meeting Griffin and I organized at McMaster University in May 2005; details concerning which appear further below. “Domain Comprehension in Meinongian Object Theory” appears in a new collection on *Objects and Pseudo-Objects: Ontological Deserts and Jungles from Brentano to Carnap*, Bruno Leclercq, Sébastien Richard, and Denis Seron, eds. (Walter de Gruyter 2015), 101–22. “Meinong’s Concept of Implexive Being and Non-Being” was first published in *Grazer Philosophische Studien*, 50, 1995, 233–71, now incorporating some parts of my essay, “On Defoliating Meinong’s Jungle,” *Axiomathes*, 7, 1996, 17–42. “About Nothing” is forthcoming in *Humana.Mente: Journal of Philosophical Studies*, special issue, “Meinong Strikes Again: Meinong’s Ontology in the Current Philosophical Debate,” and presented here with substantial amplifications. A version of this essay was presented under the present title at the International Colloquium, “Objects and Pseudo-Objects: Ontological

Deserts and Jungles from Meinong to Carnap,” Université de Liège, Liège, Belgium, May 15–16, 2012. I am grateful to those in attendance for lively discussion and to Peter Simons and Leclercq for useful follow-up correspondence about several aspects of the logic and semantics of nothing or nothingness as an intended object that is also its exclusive constitutive property. “Tarski’s Quantificational Semantics and Meinongian Object Theory Domains” first appeared in *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*, 75, 1994, 88–107. “Reflections on Mally’s Heresy” was published in *Axiomathes*, 8, 1997, 163–80. “Virtual Relations and Meinongian Abstractions” originated as “Virtual Relations” in *Idealistic Studies*, 25, 1995, 141–54. “Truth and Fiction in Lewis’s Critique of Meinongian Semantics” was published in *Metaphysica: International Journal for Ontology and Metaphysics*, 2, 2001, 73–106. “Anti-Meinongian Actualist Meaning of Fiction in Kripke’s 1973 John Locke Lectures” is forthcoming in *Meinong Studies*. “Metaphysics of Meinongian Aesthetic Value” was previously published in *Meinong Studies*, 4, 2010, special issue on *The Aesthetics of the Graz School*, edited by Venanzio Raspa, 53–86. “Quantum Indeterminacy and Physical Reality as a Predicationally Incomplete Existent Entity” is previously unpublished. “Confessions of a Meinongian Logician” appeared in *Grazer Philosophische Studien*, 58–9, 2000, 151–80. “Meinongian Dark Ages and Renaissance” is previously unpublished. “Object Theory Logic and Mathematics: Two Essays by Ernst Mally” (Translation and Critical Commentary) was published in *History and Philosophy of Logic*, 29, 2008, 167–82. A preliminary version of Chapter 11 was presented before the Society for Exact Philosophy, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, August 17–19, 1989. A version of Chapter 9 was presented at the conference on “Meinong and His School,” Centro Studi per la Filosofia Mitteleuropea, Trento, Italy, December 9–10, 1994. I am grateful to Liliana Albertazzi for inviting me to participate and to Wilhelm Baumgartner, Jacek Julius Jadacki, Jacek Pasniczek, Roberto Poli, Matjaz Potrc, Robin Rollinger, Karl Schuhmann, and others for stimulating philosophical discussion of these topics. I am grateful to Rudolf Haller and Reinhard Fabian for inviting me to participate in the International Meinong Conference, sponsored by the Forschungsstelle und Dokumentationszentrum für österreichische Philosophie and the Karl-Franzens Universität Graz, Graz, Austria, September 28–30, 1995. It is to Haller and his tireless promotion of Austrian philosophy that this book is dedicated. I especially wish to thank Simons, Pasniczek, and Alberto Voltolini for their valuable comments and discussion when the paper was presented. I am indebted to participants at the conference on “Russell vs. Meinong: 100 Years After ‘On Denoting,’” that Nick Griffin and I organized at McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, May 14–18, 2005, especially Simons, Paul Weingartner, and Griffin. I thank the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities and Social Sciences (NIAS) and the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW) for supporting this among related research projects during my Resident Research Fellowship at the institute in 2005–2006. Special thanks are due to my research assistant Rian Zuberi for technical assistance in preparation of this manuscript from dusty digital files and for his careful editorial skills in reading and commenting on a preliminary draft.

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Introduction: Meinong and Philosophical Analysis

The theoretical appeal and explanatory advantages of Meinongian object theory can be understood constructively as the culmination of a series of intuitive steps, one leading to the other with a kind of satisfying inevitability. All thought intends an object, but not all intended objects exist. Beingless intended objects are distinguished as they are defined intensionally in relation to their characteristic constitutive properties. The other, upward, path to Meinong and Meinongianism, strewn with roots and loose stones, is by thinking through all the problems encountered by the alternatives to a Meinongian logic and semantics that do not acknowledge a semantic referential domain of both existent and nonexistent intended objects.

Alexius Meinong at the turn of the twentieth century takes his philosophical starting place for all his work in philosophy and theoretical and experimental psychology as the intentionality of thought. Meinong's charismatic teacher Franz Brentano in his influential 1874 (and later editions in 1911 and 1924) work, *Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkt*, and the impact of Brentano's sense of conviction about the intentionality of thought in their philosophical interaction as mentor and student had established the proposition to Meinong's independent satisfaction. Meinong begins from the critically examined assumption that thought, unlike the purely physical world, is essentially intentional. Thought is always *about something*, directed upon an intended object. Brentano distinguishes between psychological and purely physical nonpsychological phenomena on the basis of the insight that psychological phenomena are always about or directed upon an intended object, whereas nonpsychological purely physical phenomena are not. To believe is to believe (that) *something*, some proposition (is true), to love is to love *something*, for there to be an existent or nonexistent intended object of the feeling of love, to or upon which the emotion of love is directed, however this complex mental state and bodily condition is finally to be understood. Similarly for other mental states, whether their intended objects are things in the ordinary sense, physical or abstract, or states of affairs, such as the intended outcome of a contemplated action or decision to act, an as-yet nonexistent state which an action aims to realize.

Meinong accepts Brentano's classic three-part phenomenological analysis of mental states as consisting of a mental act, the content of the act, and the act's intended object. The act intends the object transparently through the thought's content, and the exact role of the contents of thought in establishing or fixing an intention for cognitive processes is subject to debate. It is not quite so simple, although it is sometimes the case that the content of a mental act determines the mental act's intended object. This happens in such instances as when you try to visualize afterward whether you locked your office door. Sometimes there is a reassuring memory, clicking into place in its details as you try to relive your movements, that you did turn the key, perhaps because of something else you remember in that moment that could only be recalled from an experience occurring earlier today.

Unfortunately for such oversimplifications, there is no logical reason to expect that the content of thought is always a mental picture of an intended object. There need be no more associational relation than simultaneity linking content and object when an object is intended. The content of passing moments of consciousness presumably plays a variety of cognitive roles related to thinking about an intended object. Any association can hold between any thought content and any intended object in the moment that a mental act intends an intended object and experiences a simultaneous lived-through thought content, *quale* or *noema*. Introspectively, it is easily discovered that the content of a mental act sometimes bears no direct relation between a mental act's content and its intended object. We can intend the Eiffel Tower while entertaining as mental content an accompanying mental image or equivalent description of the Taj Mahal. Twin Earth thought experiment scenarios, popularized by Hilary Putnam's 1975 essay, "The Meaning of 'Meaning,'" expanding on Putnam's 1973 essay, "Meaning and Reference," further reinforce the logical independence of thought content and intended object.

Add then, to Brentano's generalized intentionality thesis that all thoughts are about something, the phenomenological observation that many thoughts ostensibly intend nonexistent objects, and at once a referential domain of objects of intentional states is opened up for application in reference and predication of properties to specific existent and nonexistent intended objects. We can then appeal to the liberated referential semantic domain to address many otherwise intractable problems in logic and semantics, colloquially and symbolically. The preanalytical evidence may be thought overwhelmingly to support the Meinongian alternative, and the technical literature is replete with hackneyed examples that remain thorns in the flesh of reductive extensionalisms. Extensional semantics and ontologies that limit their referential semantic domains exclusively to existent, especially physical spatiotemporal or abstract entities, are unable to explain the meanings of propositions in which subjects intend nonexistent objects.

How shall these delicate matters be approached? Ontic commitment to the existence of abstract intended objects is made when objects considered as putative entities turn out to be absolutely indispensable for the conduct of science. Abstract intended objects enter the extensional existence-presuppositional referential semantic domain, especially as intended objects of thoughts in applied

mathematical physics, numbers, sets, classes, propositions, properties, or whatever is thought to be essential for the ontology of mathematical entities, in precisely the same way and with precisely the same type of justification or rationale. They enter also in the form of the many ideal theoretical objects of applied mathematics, in the natural laws of physics and mathematical genetics and population models, including the ideal gas and perfect fulcrum, projectile unimpeded by impressed forces, or the average Swiss Alphornblaser, that are useful for explanations of physical phenomena, but have no place in the world of physical phenomena themselves.

With appropriate adjustments for apparent counterexamples, involving such sensations as the experience of pain or pleasure, which does not always seem to be *about* anything, Meinong follows Brentano in regarding all thought as intentional. It follows that when thoughts intend beingless objects that are neither actual nor abstract, then there must be a reference domain of distinct nonexistent intended objects in order to distinguish my thinking about Sherlock Holmes from my thinking about Professor Moriarty or Anna Karenina. Thoughts about the Taj Mahal are thoughts about the Taj Mahal. Thoughts about Sherlock Holmes are thoughts about Sherlock Holmes, and not just about Sherlock Holmes's character, the character *of* Sherlock Holmes. For Holmes's character in this sense can only be intended by other thoughts more specifically directed upon distinct intended nonexistent fictional objects, in order to be able to distinguish the character of Holmes from that of Karenina. Granted that they are different sets of properties, which are which, which are Holmes's properties, and which are Karenina's, if they are not the properties *of* distinct intended objects? We already know that the property clusters themselves are different.

The extensionalist tradition in the logic and semantics of scientific expression is a grand but uneasy synthesis of Plato and Aristotle at the origins of Western philosophy. Aristotle provides the metaphysics of physical spatiotemporal entities as real things, as fundamental reality itself, whether identified collectively as all the existent primary substances or furniture of the universe. Plato, reluctantly among many contemporary analytic thinkers and irrespective of the philosophical chronology, supplements Aristotle's commonsense picture of a world of physical things accessible to the empirical senses by positing a realm of existent (in some terminologies subsistent) abstract entities. Abstract intended objects, in turn, since they do not present themselves in the usual way to be named, counted, truly described, and quantified over, theorists think themselves free to maintain are reducible to numbers, sets or classes, propositions or properties, or logically possible worlds. These reductive strategies have an intrinsic cognitive interest, although the present point is only how uncomfortably the contemporary synthesis of Aristotelian and Platonic ontologies travel together. Platonic and Aristotelian metaphysics are set down side by side in the contemporary analytic synthesis, contrary to their deepest philosophical incompatibilities. It is the contradiction with its dynamic inner tension that seems historically to hold the beating metaphysical heart of mainstream Western analytic philosophy.

Plato and Aristotle themselves would have encountered no such theoretical schizophrenia. Plato did not regard Aristotle's primary substances as real things in the first place, but only appearances imperfectly imitating or participating in their corresponding abstract ideal Forms. Aristotle in turn considered his teacher's Platonic Ideas as misunderstood secondary substances, forms with a small "f," inhering in real physical spatiotemporal primary substances in his more comprehensive *ousiology*. Modern philosophy has it differently, loves its empirical science, and believes that anything needful for science must somehow exist. Contemporary scientific philosophy scorns Aristotelian inherence and grudgingly makes room at the table for Plato's *abstracta* only because mathematics cannot easily make do without them. Metaphysics in the scientific grain simply juxtaposes the physical or spatiotemporal dynamic with the transcendent abstract as two mutually exclusionary ontic realms. A single adequate philosophical rationale for this unaccountable attempt at synthesis, although and probably because its lack does not seem to be much lamented or even noticed, has yet to be discovered. As witness to the difficulty, one cites Paul Benacerraf's dilemma of explaining the meaning of and truth conditions for mathematical theorems on a par with those of true propositions in the physical sciences, in his frequently discussed 1973 essay, "Mathematical Truth." An adequate epistemology seems inherently wanting for determining the truth or falsity of mathematical propositions. The problem, still awaiting resolution, of providing both an adequate general semantics and epistemology for mathematical as for nonmathematical propositions.

If all thoughts are *about* something, if all psychological occurrences *intend* an object, and if some thoughts appear to intend nonexistent objects, as when we produce or entertain a work of fiction or false scientific or historical explanation, or decide and plan to bring about an as-yet nonexistent state of affairs by undertaking a certain physical action, then there are thoughts and the expressions of thoughts that intend nonexistent objects. We can try to reduce the apparent intending of nonexistent objects to existent objects only, but these efforts cannot explain thoughts about things that do not exist by mapping them onto existent things, as though we were to try explaining Shakespeare's fictional character Hamlet by "reducing" references to that nonexistent entity to Shakespeare or to an actor playing the part of Hamlet. A semantic referential domain of nonexistent objects for some predications in a logic is accurately considered Meinongian. Meinongian objects, more properly speaking, are any intended objects, irrespective of their ontic status, existent or nonexistent. Where a distinction between spatiotemporal physical *existence* [*Existenz*] and what is usually translated as abstract *subsistence* [*Bestand*] is observed, as in some of Meinong's writings, we say more generally, when extreme perspicuity is required, *beingless* (and *beinglessness*) to cover both *non-existent* and *nonsubsistent* intended objects.

The golden mountain and round square are intended objects because we can think about them, as we can about any nominalized combination of constitutive identity-determining properties. We can put them freely together in a truth-functionally complex combination, just as we do in inventing a character for a fantasy of fiction. We rely on the same associated properties by which all objects

are identified as particulars and distinguished from all other objects under intensional property-based Leibnizian identity conditions, regardless of their ontic status. The fact that in the case of nonexistent objects we have only incomplete collections of properties available is really no different than when we intend existent objects. We never have full command of all the constitutive properties of an existent object like the Taj Mahal, to which we can nevertheless refer and to which we can truly predicate properties. It is the same with respect to nonexistent intended objects, as when we think about Sherlock Holmes. We can only partially and even then with only partial comprehension grasp his storied properties in exact detail, despite errors of memory and judgment, after we have read one of Arthur Conan Doyle's gripping detective adventures. We may lose track of certain details or invent our own filler or background, even with the book still in our hands, just as can happen when we are self-consciously in the presence of an existent object of reference and true predication such as the Taj Mahal.

A purely extensionalist semantics cannot adequately account for the meaning of fiction and false science and history, everyday falsehoods, and intendings to bring about states of affairs that as yet do not and may never finally exist. Extensionalism with its referential semantic domain limited exclusively to existent entities cannot adequately, naturally, or plausibly account for the distinct intended objects of imagination, including projections of as-yet nonexistent states of affairs in problem solving, invention, and advance planning. These are not dispensable or postponable semantic frills, but absolute essentials, if we are going to understand practical reasoning in action theory and the role of reason in decision-making, among numerous other semantic occurrences. We see the failure of a purely extensionalist semantics, among other ways, in the fact that intuitively Sherlock Holmes is a different intended fictional object than Anna Karenina, although the null extensions, like those of any other ostensible nonexistent object, fictional, ideal or in ostensibly mentioning nonexistent objects in other literally false thoughts and their expressions, are always identical for the predicates, "being Sherlock Holmes" and "being Anna Karenina."

Meinong's often quoted "Über Gegenstandstheorie" object theory banner that "There are objects of which it is true to say that there are no such objects" stands in stark contrast with conventional classical logic and extensionalist existence-presuppositional semantics. Rather than a shocking explicit self-contradiction, the statement highlights two different meanings of the colloquial phrase "there are." Meinong maintains that semantic reference to an intended object is independent of the objects' ontic status and that *Sosein*, so-being or identifying and distinguishing character, is logically independent of *Sein*, existence or being. There are objects, in the sense of intended objects, to which we can refer and truly predicate properties. They are objects of thought, belonging to a referential semantic domain of all intendable objects, only some of which exist, and hence of which it is true to say in an ontically loaded rather than merely referential semantic sense that there are actually and abstractly no such (existent) objects. To say that there *are* nonexistent objects is to say something more significant, which is the point of Meinong's playful formulation.

This is the crux of what a Meinongian object theory offers the semantics of fiction and of meaningful sentences in false science and false history. It serves colloquial description in many informal practical contexts, in acts of imagination and goal formation and pursuit. Nonexistent objects are merely intended. Since they do not exist, responding to Quine's famous challenge, we shall not bump into any predetermined finite number of them in the doorway—fat, bald, or otherwise. The situation is no different with respect to not interacting causally with existent classes, numbers or universals, or other *abstracta*, should our explanations together with our semantics generally require us to say that these intended objects exist, in order to explain the meaning of pure and the meaning and efficacy of applied mathematics. Naturally, much more of our thought may intend objects that actually or abstractly exist. We need only consider all the things there are to see in a busy office. Meinongian object theory already covers true and false predications of properties to existent objects. Plus it does something more. It extends the same semantic principles from existent to nonexistent intended objects, in order to explain the meaning and truth conditions of propositions that ostensibly intend nonexistent objects. To assert reasonably enough that Sherlock Holmes is a detective is already enough to raise the argument as to what exactly this pronouncement should be understood to mean. It provokes the question whether Sherlock Holmes is a fictional intended object capable of supporting the constitutive property of being a detective, just like any existent detective. Insofar as they are detectives, Sherlock Holmes and a real detective we may then suppose, among all their other differences, share alike at least the constitutive property of being a detective. To speak of detectives is to intend a semantic subdomain of existent and nonexistent intended objects that have the property of being a detective, including real and fictional detectives alike. Context and conversational implicature often restrict discourse to existent detectives, in the example, or alternatively as a semantic courtesy to nonexistent detectives.

Suppose I write a novel in which someone writes a novel in which Sherlock Holmes at the last moment rescues Anna Karenina from the locomotive's wheels. The two fall madly in love and escape from Russia together to live in disguise on a greenhouse parsley farm where they supplement their herb sales by translating Russian comedies. They don't just live happily ever after, but they face a series of interesting difficulties, in addition to the fact that they are constantly being hunted by Alexei Alexandrovich Karenina's private agents, who eventually team up with Holmes's nemesis, Moriarty, who escaped death by means of a camouflaged helium balloon at Reichenbach Falls. The love of Sherlock and Anna triumphs through every emergency, and their relationship is tested and strengthened, taxed and broken, and finally ambiguously repaired. If I have just described the plot outline of a *logically possible novel*, then I am already intending Sherlock Holmes, Anna Karenina, and a sequence of fictional events in which Holmes and Karenina do things together that presumably were never envisioned by their respective authors. If you understood what I was proposing to write about in the imaginary novel, then you were also intending nonexistent fictional objects. We can agree that one obligatory scene in the novel would have to be when Holmes no doubt ingeniously

removes Karenina in the nick of time from the crushing wheels of the oncoming train. That event, to my knowledge, has not yet been depicted in any extant work of fiction, but to understand the illustration, even as a philosophical thought experiment, is to understand something about how fiction comes to be composed. It is a product of imagination intending nonexistent objects and nonexistent states of affairs, projections of possible predications in which intended objects are imagined to have at least some properties that no existent object fully instantiates in reality.

If we were to formalize Meinong's insight, we might do so by introducing a predicate for existence, $E!$, as several classical logicians for different purposes have also proposed, and so write on behalf of Meinong's mildly paradoxical statement that there are objects of which it is true to say that there are no such objects, $\exists x \neg E!x$. Here the phrase "there are" is understood as an ontically neutral quantifier over the intended objects in an object theory referential domain, *versus* attributions of existence, actual or abstract, to an intended object. To deny the Meinongian insight, the anti-Meinongian extensionalist in philosophical logic must accept the contrary thesis that $\forall x \exists y [x = y]$. Although in one way the formula is logically superfluous, and functions only for emphasis, since conventionally in classical logic the quantifiers are interpreted as ranging over a semantic referential domain exclusively of existent entities, it nevertheless serves a polemical purpose. To further underscore their differences, the classical anti-Meinongian extensionalist might also adopt the $E!$ predicate, in writing $\forall x [\exists y [x = y] \leftrightarrow E!x]$. If the "existential quantifier" \exists is understood as implying actual or abstract existence, then the Meinongian object theory thesis is logically inconsistent, and it follows that $\neg \exists x \neg E!x$. This negative existential, by trivial quantifier duality with negation, is logically equivalent to asserting that $\forall x E!x$. All objects in the logic's extensionalist referential semantic domain exist. All objects, speaking more generally with the Meinongian intensionalist, on the contrary, do not actually exist, unless countless putative intended objects of thought are not really objects. Their exclusion would further imply that they could not be named, counted, quantified over, or the like, all of which operations on the present assumptions can in fact manifestly be performed on existent and nonexistent objects alike.

We can count the number of distinct characters in the canonical Sherlock Holmes stories and say how many there are, even though they do not exist. We can say how many nonexistent cases Holmes solves, and the like. We can speak of all and some of his cases, all and some of his clients, villains he encounters, and so on. If existence-presuppositional semantics in a conventional extensionalist logic is correct, then nonexistent intended objects classically cannot be the predicational subjects of true predications of constitutive properties. Contrary to intuitive assumption and practical experience, if a referentially extensionalist logic and semantics is assumed, then we cannot intend a golden mountain as being golden and a mountain, a round square as being round and square, and Sherlock Holmes as being a nineteenth-century private detective operating in London. That would mean that we cannot think of these things as distinct objects, which we can obviously manage. At the same time, ideal objects like the perfect pendulum, projectiles moving in space unimpeded by impressed forces, and the like, are also excluded

from meaningful true predications. We cannot in that case account semantically for the difference in meaning between a false history about the 1849 California Gold Rush and a false history about the events leading up to the 1455–1487 English War of the Roses. We want to be able to say that they are false because they describe different intended objects or states of affairs that happen not to exist. A semantic referential domain of nonexistent objects is thereby integrated into the theory of meaning and truth conditions for false histories, for whatever shortcoming it is that makes them false. It is generally the nonexistence of exactly that object or event described in the false history, exactly that nonexistent object or event that did not actually occur as the history maintains.

An important question for contemporary logic and semantics is therefore, amid the theoretical wreckage of extensionalism, where do we go from here? From radical extensionalism there is only one alternative, which is an intensionalism that subsumes radical extensionalism as a proper part. This is what a Meinongian logic and semantics affords. The line of reasoning described above is exactly the path by which several years ago I arrived at a philosophical and derivatively historical interest in Meinong's philosophy. There are parts of Meinong's thought that I have not yet probed, and there is always more to learn. My interests, as I hope the reader is about to discover, are limited primarily to Meinong's vintage *Gegenstandstheorie*, and what I think can be done with it, to make it relevant to contemporary universal semantics. I have come to regard nonexistent objects as essential to understanding the meaning of any false thought, interpreted as being false because the state of affairs it symbolically represents does not actually exist.

Anything else, as a platform of an evolving analytic philosophy, can be nothing more substantial than Meinong-bashing ideological indoctrination. Philosophers being more open-minded than one can often give them credit for might largely prefer the neatness and familiarity over the coverage inadequacies of the extensionalist experiment. These are represented by confident, if not exactly heroic and venturesome, extensionalists and actualists, in a heritage line extending from Frege through Russell, Tarski, Quine, Kripke, and much although not all of contemporary analytic philosophy. Its history can be interpreted as progressing toward a more unified and encompassing intensionalist alternative. These mainstream thinkers cannot be credited with comparing their views against a challenging option, on the other hand, if, in the course of their investigations, they have not seriously considered intensionalist Meinongian alternatives to a presupposed radical extensionalism. If we can explain the meaning of true scientific assertions, the anti-Meinongian prides, that is a good enough day's work for semantics. Fiction and entertainment thinking and expression are luxuries, unimportant in their logic and predication meaning when judged against the main interests of formal structural and interpretive analysis. If we must go that way, kicking and screaming from extensionalism toward the principles of an intensional logic, then we may still prefer to join Richard Montague, a sane person, as exponent of an intensional grammar, before we follow Meinong. Or we may choose to bury structural semantic analysis away in the complexities of occurrent background circumstances that more

finely determine the exact communication of speaker meaning to audience understanding in particular speech act exchanges. We thread the needle of sensitive grammatical distinctions that are brought out only by argument, analogy, and comparison, from a selection of actual usages of the words and sentences whose meanings we propose to explain. Here the established route starts like a trailhead with the later Wittgenstein and extends primarily through Austin and ordinary language philosophy and its splinterings among later pragmatists in philosophy of language and philosophy of mind.

Still, we do not find Meinong along any of these trodden avenues. Meinong is remarkable precisely because he is so philosophically independent and unprecedented. This is in turn partly because his work at least until recently has been dismissed on undeserved and directly unexamined reputation. His ideas, for a variety of reasons, have not been fed into the analytic blender along with those of Frege, Russell, Tarski, Quine, and Kripke. Some thinkers today are interested in Meinong primarily for historical reasons, if they are interested in the Brentano School typified in any of its branches. Or they have sparked an interest as historians of experimental psychology in Europe, Meinong having instituted the first laboratory for the scientific study of psychological phenomena in Graz, Austria. Others are fascinated with Meinong's contributions to phenomenology and descriptive psychology, inspired by Brentano's empiricism in the study of mind. Meinong's theory of perception is especially noteworthy in this regard, but also his more abstract and somewhat hazardous later theory of modalities and probability, as a chapter in the general history of modal and inductive reasoning.

My interests in Meinong have remained specialized, although, I would urge, central to Meinong's philosophy. These are Meinong's *Gegenstandstheorie* and the intentionality thesis that supports its domain comprehension principle of all existent and nonexistent objects. I accept a version of Brentano's intentionality thesis, although, like Meinong, Twardowski, and others of Brentano's students and followers, I reject and significantly qualify Brentano's original Humean skeptically distancing immanence or in-existence doctrine of intentionality. I consider the intended objects of perception as standing outside the thoughts by which they are intended. I have now had some years and a variety of opportunities to reflect on Meinong's object theory and its applications, its implications for metaphysics, and a variety of related topics that are featured in the discussion of these essays. Along the way, despite my narrow concentration on developing a revisionary Meinongian logic and semantics, I have gained some knowledge of aspects of Meinong's thought that are indirectly related to my immediate areas of analysis. Where these can be connected, at least tangentially to Meinong's object theory, as in the case of Meinong's analysis of the concept of aesthetic value, I have shadowed Meinong's intrinsically interesting arguments concerning the ontology of aesthetic values as intended objects of aesthetic judgment.

The project of this book, in which the reader is invited now to share, is to explore the prospects for a Meinongian approach to philosophical logic and semantics that is different from the descent of torch-bearing Fregean referential extensionalism in contemporary analytic philosophy. Partly I am interested in seeing how