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INTRODUCTION

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Abstract: The notion of ontological dependence can find application in distinct areas of philosophical research and can serve the purpose of better understanding the nature of the objects and phenomena at the center of such researches. What the present issue focuses attention on is the relation that subsists between our activities as human beings and certain types of entities that seem to depend on them.

Key Words: Ontological dependence; Human products; Ontology; Metaphysics.

This special issue of *Esercizi Filosofici* focuses on the notion of ontological dependence and specifically on how this metaphysical relation can help us better understand the nature of entities that are the result of human creative activities. Ontological dependence is a subject attracting nowadays the attention of a great number of philosophers working in the analytic tradition. This notion, of an exquisitely metaphysical character, can find application in distinct areas of philosophical research and can serve the purpose of better understanding the nature of the objects and phenomena at the center of such researches. Ontological dependence can be characterized as a family of relations subsisting between entities. It has a metaphysical character and must therefore be distinguished from a purely causal type of relation or from the logical dependence that exists between propositions. The fact that an entity depends ontologically on another seems relevant to determine what the first entity is and its essential characteristics. It follows, therefore, that an investigation of the link between dependent entities and entities on which they depend can help shed light on the nature of the former.

What the present issue focuses attention on, besides of course the concept of ontological dependence in general, is the relation that subsists between our activities as human beings and certain types of entities that seem to depend on them. In other words, the main goal is that of focusing the attention on those entities that depend ontologically, in one way or another, on the practices and activities of human beings. Dealing with this issue allows us to embrace a wide range of topics currently debated: social ontology, the metaphysics of artifacts, the metaphysics of artworks, fictional objects, and many others. The aim is to investigate specifically the nature of the entities dependent on us to shed light on

the different varieties of ontological dependence at play in these areas. On the one hand, the reflection on a certain category of objects can bring out new characteristics attributable to the relation of ontological dependence, on the other hand, considering some issues peculiar to certain types of entities focusing on their ontological dependence connections can help us to better understand the nature of these entities themselves.

In his paper, Michele Paolini Paoletti considers fictional objects and how artifactualism, one prominent theory of fictional objects, can be better formulated presupposing metaontological pluralism, namely the view according to which there are many irreducible relations of ontological dependence. Marilù Papandreou's paper offers a reconstruction of Aristotle's account of inadvertently made objects and how the possibility of such entities can shake our intuitions regarding the relation between the essence of artifacts and the intentions of their makers. She also considers how Aristotle's account can result interesting in the context of contemporary debates on the metaphysics of artifacts. Elena Bartolini in her essay offers a view on the subject of ontological dependence starting from Heidegger's comments on some Heraclitean fragments, specifically on the relation between *λόγος* and Being. Pyro Suarez in his paper considers the topic of moral contextualism and how it can be formulated in a way that makes it compatible with an externalist account of the semantics of moral terms which would save the substantiality of moral disagreement. This has some implications on how and to what extent moral reality, what makes our moral discourses true or false, is in/dependent on us and our practices. Lisa Paravan's essay deals with skepticism regarding the relation of ontological dependence. She exposes Unger's new skeptical perspective and she shows how such a view can impact the notion of ontological dependence. Finally, in my paper, I attempt to show how it is possible to make room for artifacts in a neo-Aristotelian conception of reality. The upshot of the paper is the proposal of a two-level criterion of identity for artifacts based on Evnine's doctrine of amorphism which sees artifacts as essentially dependent for their identity on the act of creation that brought them into existence.

I would like to close this brief introduction by thanking all the authors that decided to contribute to the present issue with a paper. Special thanks go to the invited authors, Michele Paolini Paoletti and Marilù Papandreou, for accepting my invitation to take part in the project. I would also like to thank all the referees for their precious work and Professors Paolo Labinaz and Gabriele De Anna for the help they provided me. I also want to thank the editorial board of *Esercizi Filosofici* which trusted me with the present project and the Department of Legal Science of the University of Udine that granted me the funding that allowed me to dedicate my time to the editing of this special issue of *Esercizi Filosofici*.

HOW FICTA DEPEND

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Abstract: I shall elaborate in this article on the connection between ficta and metaontological pluralism, i.e., the view according to which there are irreducibly many dependence relations. More precisely, I shall consider the main tenets of an artifactualist theory of ficta and show how they can be expressed from the standpoint of a pluralist theory of dependence that accepts irreducibly many Respect-of-Dependence relations (in short, RD-relations). In Section 2, I shall introduce the artifactualist theory at stake and, in Section 3, I shall recall my theory of RD-relations. In Section 4, I shall show how ficta identity-depend, origin-depend and sustenance-depend on further entities. In Section 5, I shall anticipate and solve three problems. In Section 6, I shall briefly compare my account with other accounts. Finally, in Section 7, I shall draw some conclusions.

Key Words: Fictional Objects; Artifactualism; Dependence; Grounding; Authorship.

1. *Introduction*

Fictional objects (or ficta, in short) are objects such as Sherlock Holmes, Bilbo Baggins, Sauron's ring, Harry Potter. Ficta give rise to several ontological challenges. For example, do ficta exist? If they exist, why does it seem that they do not exist in the same way as myself or my son? And how do they bear their properties – if any?

In this article, I shall not be concerned with these problems. I shall only consider ficta from the metaontological viewpoint. More precisely, I shall try to explore the relationship(s) between ficta and ontological dependence. “Ontological dependence” will be used here as an umbrella term covering many distinct notions.¹ I shall argue that one prominent theory of ficta – artifactualism – should be better developed from the perspective of metaontological pluralism. Metaontological pluralism is the view according to which there are irreducibly many relations of ontological dependence between entities.

In Section 2, I shall characterize artifactualism and my own version of this view. In Section 3, I shall recall a version of metaontological pluralism I have defended in Paolini Paoletti (2019) and (2021). By invoking this theory, in Section 4, I shall show that ficta depend in three distinct ways on further entities. Namely, that there are three distinct respects of dependence in which ficta depend on further entities. In Section 5, I shall anticipate and solve three problems.

¹ For example, grounding, modal existential dependence, and so on. See Tahko, Lowe (2020).

Finally, in Section 6, I shall argue that this view should be favoured over some views of the relationships between ficta and ontological dependence. Section 7 will contain some conclusions.

2. Ficta for Artifactualism

Artifactualism is a family of theories according to which ficta are artifacts.² Namely, ficta are objects that are created by someone and that are maintained in existence by something/someone. In this respect, ficta resemble concrete artifacts, such as weapons, forks and dishwashers.

We shall restrict our inquiry here to literary ficta. Literary ficta have creators, i.e., their authors. For example, Conan Doyle is the creator of Sherlock Holmes. Moreover, literary ficta are maintained in existence by copies of their stories and by the fact that such stories can be understood by someone. Indeed and intuitively, if all the books and movies about Sherlock Holmes were destroyed, if people ever forgot of Sherlock Holmes and/or if no one were able to understand Sherlock Holmes' stories anymore, Sherlock Holmes would go out of existence – or so artifactualists would argue.³

However, most artifactualists maintain that ficta do not exist in the same way as ordinary objects. Ficta are at least abstract. Namely, Sherlock Holmes is an abstract object, whereas I am a concrete one. At any rate, ficta exist. They exist as abstract artifacts.

Finally, most artifactualists hold that ficta possess (at least some of) their properties in a distinct and peculiar way. Sherlock Holmes is a detective. However, if one were to count all the detectives now existing in the world, one would hardly find Sherlock Holmes. If one were to solve a murder case in the 'real world', one would hardly get help from Sherlock Holmes. Indeed, Sherlock Holmes does not have the property of *being a detective* in the same way as a real detective. Sherlock Holmes is only characterized by the property of *being a detective* according to certain stories, in the fictional worlds depicted by those stories. Or he only gets the property of *being a detective* ascribed by someone (i.e., by his author).

² See van Inwagen (1977), Searle (1979), Salmon (1998), Thomasson (1999), (2003), Voltolini (2006), Kripke (2011), (2013).

³ In principle, it is also possible to hold that ficta are created by someone, although they do not owe their continued existence to anything else. Namely, they do not depend on anything else for their continued existence. But this conflicts with a powerful intuition: that everything that owes its existence to something else (e.g., a creator) cannot then become independent of anything else for its *continuing* to exist. Indeed, an entity of the latter sort can exist independently of anything else at every moment of its existence. Thus, why cannot it always exist without owing the beginning of its existence to anything else?

This does *not* rule out that ficta can also possess some properties ‘in the ordinary way’, so to say. For example, it seems that Sherlock Holmes has the properties of *being an abstract artifact*, of *having been created by Conan Doyle* and of *being a fictional character* ‘in the ordinary way’. Namely, he has such properties in the same way as I have the properties of *being human* and of *being a philosopher*.

This is only a rough sketch of artifactualism. Let me focus on the issue of ontological dependence. According to artifactualists, ficta are created by their authors. Namely, they owe their existence – or at least the beginning of their existence – to their authors. Moreover, they continue to exist insofar as copies of their stories continue to exist and insofar as such stories can be understood by someone. Copies of stories may well be written texts, but they may also be oral tales. It is vital that such stories can be understood by someone. Otherwise, no one would ever be able to think of the ficta they contain, of their properties and relations. It would be as if all of such ficta were not in existence anymore.

With regard to ontological dependence, Amie Thomasson (1999), (2003) constructed one of the most well-developed theories of ficta. She first distinguished between four sorts of ontological dependence. There is rigid dependence: A rigidly depends on B insofar as A depends on that very entity B. On the other hand, there is also generic dependence: A generically depends on the Bs insofar as the Bs are entities of a certain sort/kind on which A depends.

There is historical dependence: A historically depends on something insofar as A requires the latter at some time prior to or coincident with every time at which A exists. Roughly, A requires the latter before its beginning to exist or at least at the first time(s) of its existence. But there is also constant dependence: A constantly depends on something insofar as A requires the latter at every time at which A exists.

Equipped with these distinctions, Thomasson points out that ficta rigidly historically depend on certain physical activities and intentional acts of their authors. For example, on the mental states of their authors, on their neural realizers, on their authors’ writing certain texts, and so on. Moreover, ficta constantly generically depend on the presence of copies of their stories and on the presence of capable readership/interpreters, i.e., of readers/interpreters that can understand such stories.

I shall not conceal that artifactualism is affected by some troubles. Here are some examples.

First, it is difficult to maintain that ficta both exist – *qua* abstract artifacts – and that are fictional. Indeed, insofar as ficta are fictional, it also seems legitimate to hold that they do not exist.⁴

⁴ See Yagisawa (2001) and Brock (2002).

Secondly and more generally, it is difficult to characterize the act of their creation.⁵

Thirdly and relatedly, it is difficult to understand if ficta could have been created by different authors or not.

Fourthly, some ficta are affected by indeterminacy and/or inconsistency when it comes to the properties that are ascribed to them.⁶

Fifthly, it is difficult to single out the exact time at which they start to exist and/or the locations they seem to occupy - at least if they are located somewhere.⁷

Sixthly and relatedly, some processes of creation seem to be continuous.⁸ This may blur the distinction between creation and continued existence.

Seventhly, it seems that ficta have at least some of their properties essentially – both among the properties they seem to have ‘in the ordinary way’ and among those that are ascribed to them.⁹ For example, it is difficult to think of Sherlock Holmes – the very Sherlock Holmes created by Conan Doyle – as a rapper living in Atlanta in 2020 who is completely unable to solve murder cases.¹⁰

Eighthly and finally, dependence may be understood in different ways: in modal terms¹¹, in terms of grounding¹², in non-causal terms¹³, in terms of supervenience and embodiment.¹⁴ It is thus necessary to provide a better characterization of it in order to construct a satisfactory theory of ficta *qua* abstract artifacts.

I do not aim at solving all these problems here. What I wish to show is only that metaontological pluralism provides us with a better understanding of artifactualism.

In Paolini Paoletti (2016), I developed a theory of ficta that bears close resemblance with artifactualism. I maintained that fictional objects are objects that depend on the mental activities of their authors – and possibly of their interpreters – in order to have their properties and get individuated. Ficta can both have properties ‘in the ordinary way’ and get some properties ascribed to them. More precisely, I suggested that there is a family of ascription relations that hold (at least) between a fictional object, a minded subject, a property and a fictional context (roughly, a fictional world defined by a story). For example, Sherlock Holmes gets the property of *being a detective* ascribed to him by his author (and

⁵ See Deutsch (1991) and Brock (2010).

⁶ See Everett (2005) and (2013).

⁷ See Brock (2002) and (2010).

⁸ See Voltolini (2006).

⁹ See Voltolini (2006).

¹⁰ For some replies, see Goodman (2004), (2005), Schnieder, von Solodkoff (2009), Voltolini (2010), Zvolenszky (2013), (2014), Woodward (2017).

¹¹ See Fontaine, Rahman (2014).

¹² See von Solodkoff (2019).

¹³ See Irmak (2020).

¹⁴ See Leclerc (2016).

also by his faithful interpreters) within the fictional context defined by Sherlock Holmes' stories.

I also singled out some rather complex criteria of identity for ficta that I shall not recall here. At any rate, I left open the possibility that at least some properties are essential to ficta. Namely, that ficta have essential properties.

Finally, unlike artifactualists, I claimed that ficta do not exist – insofar as existence is characterized in a certain prototypical way (i.e., bearing irreducible causal powers). Nevertheless, ficta still are *bona fide* objects. For they still have specific identity- and individuation-conditions.¹⁵

Thus, ficta are non-existent objects that still depend – for their being objects – on the mental activities of their author – and possibly of their interpreters. This will be the version of artifactualism I shall delve into in this article.

3. Respects of Dependence.

Metaontological pluralism is the view according to which there are irreducibly many relations of ontological dependence between entities.¹⁶

In Paolini Paoletti (2019) and (2021), I developed my own version of metaontological pluralism. This version will ground my treatment of ficta in Section 4. Thus, I shall briefly recall its main tenets in this Section.

I started from the idea that, when we claim that something depends on something else, we often tacitly assume that the former depends on the latter *in some respect*. For example: accidents depend on substances in respect of their existence. Aristotelian universals depend on substances in respect of their existence and instantiation. Kimian events depend on substances, properties and times in respect of their identity and individuation. And so on.

I argued that the best way to cope with such respects of dependence consists in accepting that they give rise to distinct dependence relations. Thus, I introduced Respect-of-Dependence relations. In short, RD-relations. Among such relations, there are:

- identity-dependence (A identity-dependes on B insofar as A depends on B for its being an entity of a certain sort and/or the very entity of its sort A is);

- origin-dependence (A origin-dependes on B insofar as A depends on B for its starting to exist – or for its starting to possess its distinctive mode of being¹⁷);

¹⁵ In this respect, my theory is Meinongian, insofar as Meinongianism is minimally taken to hold that there are objects that do not exist. See for example Kroon, Voltolini (2018).

¹⁶ See for example Wilson (2014), Bennett (2017) and Koslicki (2018).

¹⁷ As we shall see in Section 4, this addition is meant to allow for entities distinct from substances (e.g., properties, events, and so on) to depend on something else for their distinctive modes of being. For it should be maintained in this context that only substances exist – given the restricted notion of existence I am working with here.

- sustenance-dependence (A sustenance-dependes on B insofar as A depends on B for its continuing to exist – or for its continuing to possess its distinctive mode of being¹⁸);
- instantiation-dependence (A instantiation-dependes on B insofar as A depends on B for its being instantiated);
- truth-dependence (A truth-dependes on B insofar as A depends on B for its being true);
- occurrence-dependence (A occurrence-dependes on B insofar as A depends on B for its occurrence);
- obtaining-dependence (A obtaining-dependes on B insofar as A depends on B for its obtaining);
- composition-dependence (A composition-dependes on B insofar as A is composed of B).

Of course, distinct RD-relations may only come together with certain categories of entities and not others. For example, obtaining-dependence only comes together with facts. Moreover, some RD-relations may entail further RD-relations. For example, with Aristotelian universals, instantiation-dependence entails origin-dependence and sustenance-dependence. More radically, some RD-relations may reduce to further RD-relations. For example, at least with Aristotelian universals, instantiation-dependence may well reduce to origin-dependence and sustenance-dependence taken together. What matters for metaontological pluralism is that the number of *irreducible* RD-relations is higher than one.

Additionally, some RD-relations may entail further dependence- or covariance-relations, such as supervenience, realization, and so on.

RD-relations may be qualified in further respects. First, given a certain RD-relation, there may be both *partial*₁ and *entire*₁ RD-dependence. A *partially*₁ RD-dependes on B if and only if A RD-dependes on B and on something else distinct from B.¹⁹ For example, a certain Kimian event partly₁ identity-dependes on the

¹⁸ Same here.

¹⁹ I assume here for the sake of simplicity that, if something partly RD-dependes on something else, it also entirely RD-dependes on the latter *plus* further entities. However, there may also be entities that are *only* partly RD-dependent without also being *entirely* RD-dependent. Namely, there may also be entities that partly RD-depend on something else and that are partly RD-independent of anything else. For example, I may be *partially* reimbursed by my employer for my expenses, without being fully reimbursed by my employer plus anyone else (this example is due to Leunberger 2020 and it

substance(s) partaking in it. A *entirely*₁ RD-dependes on B (or on B, C, etc.) if and only if A RD-dependes on B (or on B, C, etc.) and on nothing else. For example, a certain Kimian event *entirely*₁ identity-dependes on the property/relation, substance(s) and time partaking in it.²⁰

Secondly, given a certain RD-relation, there may be both *specific* and *generic* dependence. A *specifically* RD-dependes on B if and only if A RD-dependes on that very entity B, i.e., A RD-dependes ‘exactly’ on B. A *generically* RD-dependes on B if and only if A RD-dependes on B insofar as B plays a certain role. For example, an accident such as Aristotle’s whiteness *specifically* identity-dependes on the very substance it is an accident of (i.e., Aristotle). On the contrary, my heart *generically* sustenance-dependes on its cells. Namely, it depends on its cells only insofar as the latter compose it and do certain work. Yet, at other times and/or in other possible worlds, my heart could depend on further cells, insofar as the latter compose it and do the same work at those times/in those possible worlds.

Specific and generic RD-relations come into different types. There are three types of specific RD-relations. To single them out, it is necessary to distinguish between *necessary* and *contingent* RD-relations and between *permanent* and *non-permanent* RD-relations. A *necessarily* RD-dependes on B if and only if, in every possible world in which A exists, A RD-dependes on B. A *contingently* RD-dependes on B if and only if there is at least one possible world in which A RD-dependes on B (and A obviously exists) but it is *not* the case that, in every possible world in which A exists, A RD-dependes on B. Here and below, when A is not a substance, “exists” should be replaced with another predicate, expressing A’s distinctive mode of being (e.g., occurrence, instantiation, and so on).

Moreover, A *permanently* RD-dependes on B if and only if, at every time at which A exists, A RD-dependes on B. A *non-permanently* RD-dependes on B if and only if there is at least one time at which A RD-dependes on B, but it is *not* the case that, at every time at which A exists, A RD-dependes on B.

We can now single out three sorts of specific RD-relations. A *specifically*₁ RD-dependes on B if and only if A *permanently* but *contingently* RD-dependes on B. A *specifically*₂ RD-dependes on B if and only if A *permanently* and *necessarily* RD-dependes on B. A *specifically*₃ RD-dependes on B if and only if A *non-permanently* and *contingently* RD-dependes.

concerns non-supplementable partial grounding). In this case, my definitions of *partial*₁ and *entire*₁ RD-dependence do *not* allow for such a possibility. Thus, one should obviously redefine *partial*₁ and *entire*₁ RD-relations. One could start by taking *entire*₁ dependence as a primitive and then proceed in two steps. First, A is an *entirely*₁ RD-dependent entity if and only if there is something (an entity or a group of entity) on which A *entirely*₁ RD-dependes. Secondly, A *partly*₁ RD-dependes on B if and only if (i) A is an *entirely*₁ RD-dependent entity and B is only a proper part of what A *entirely*₁ RD-dependes on, or (ii) A is not an *entirely*₁ RD-dependent entity and A RD-dependes on B.

²⁰ In addition, I have also pointed out that A may *partly*₂ depend on B, insofar as A depends on B in some respect (i.e., for some RD-relation) but not in some other respect (i.e., for some other RD-relation).

In sum, and at least in principle, given a certain RD-relation, we can first distinguish between two further qualified RD-relations: specific RD-relations and generic RD-relations. Moreover, when it comes to specific RD-dependence, we can then distinguish between *specific₁*, *specific₂* and *specific₃* RD-dependence. For example, between *specific₁*, *specific₂* and *specific₃* origin-dependence.

Let me now turn to generic RD-relations. Also generic RD-relations may be necessary or contingent, permanent or non-permanent. Thus, we can single out: *generic₁* (i.e., permanent and contingent) RD-relations, *generic₂* (i.e., permanent and necessary) RD-relations and *generic₃* (i.e., non-permanent and contingent) RD-relations.

In addition, it is necessary to single out the relata of generic RD-relations. On the one hand, we have a certain dependent entity, e.g., my heart. On the other hand, we have further entities on which the former generically RD-depend, e.g., the cells that compose my heart and that do certain work. However, the latter entities (i.e., the *dependees*) may vary across times and possible worlds. Namely, at other times/in other possible worlds, there may be different cells composing my heart and doing certain work. Thus, it is *not* correct to claim that my heart generically RD-depend on the cells that now and/or in the actual world compose it and do certain work. For at other times/in other possible worlds my heart may come together with different cells as its *dependees* and generically RD-depend on the latter.

To cope with this issue, I suggested that generic RD-relations have *Roles-qua-groups* as *dependees*. Namely, my heart generically RD-depend on whatever plays a certain Role or, in short, on a certain Role (i.e., the Role of its cells). Moreover, such a Role should be thought of as a group. One and the same group can be composed of different members at distinct times and/or in distinct possible worlds. Members may also vary in number. Moreover, there may also be groups with only one member. Thus, my heart generically RD-depend on the *Role-qua-group* of its cells.

However, it seems that my heart also RD-depend – in some sense – on the specific cells that play the relevant *Role-qua-group* at a certain time/in a certain possible world. To disambiguate, I shall introduce here *generic-a* RD-relations, to be distinguished from generic RD-relations. A *generically-a* RD-depend on B if and only if there is some *Role-qua-group* such that A generically RD-depend on that *Role-qua-group* and B plays that *Role-qua-group* (i.e., it coincides with that *Role-qua-group* permanently or non-permanently, necessarily or contingently). This does *not* imply that A also *specifically* RD-depend on B. For A, in other situations where the *Role-qua-group* is played by something else, actually turns out to generically-a RD-depend on the latter. Thus, A's RD-dependence need *not* 'precisely' involve B. Moreover, and more crucially, *generic-a* RD-dependence must be 'mediated' by the fact that the *dependees* play

specific Role-*qua*-groups. On the contrary, specific RD-dependence is not 'mediated' in such a way.

Indeed, generic-a RD-relations come into three distinct types: generic-a₁ RD-relations (when the Role-*qua*-group is played permanently but contingently by the specific dependee(s)), generic-a₂ RD-relations (when the Role-*qua*-group is played permanently and necessarily by the specific dependee(s)) and generic-a₃ RD-relations (when the Role-*qua*-group is played non-permanently and contingently by the specific dependee(s)).

To summarize: given a certain RD-relation and at least in principle, we can distinguish between three distinct sorts of qualified, specific RD-relations (specific₁, specific₂ and specific₃ RD-relations), three distinct sorts of qualified, generic RD-relations (generic₁, generic₂ and generic₃ RD-relations) and three distinct sorts of qualified, generic-a RD-relations (generic-a₁, generic-a₂ and generic-a₃ RD-relations).

4. *Ficta and RD-relations*

In this Section, I shall apply my theory of RD-relations to ficta. I shall show that there are three different RD-relations that are relevant for ficta: identity-dependence, origin-dependence and sustenance-dependence.

Let me begin with identity-dependence. I am inclined to thinking that ficta have at least some properties essentially. Intuitively, as I pointed out in Section 2, it is difficult to think of Sherlock Holmes – the very Sherlock Holmes created by Conan Doyle – as a rapper living in Atlanta in 2020 who is completely unable to solve murder cases.

Of course, it might turn out to be difficult to specify *all* the essential properties of a fictum. We might be in doubt about the status of some of such properties. However, this does *not* imply that ficta do not have any essential property at all. Namely, this does *not* imply that ficta can vary all of their properties while remaining the same objects.

Let me then set apart the task of singling out the essential properties of ficta – a task I partly attended to in Paolini Paoletti (2016). And let me recall identity-dependence: A identity-depend on B insofar as A depends on B for its being an entity of a certain sort and/or the very entity of its sort A is.

It seems that ficta identity-depend on their essential properties, i.e., on the properties that define their being certain sorts of entities and/or the very entities of their sorts they are. Moreover, ficta seem to *entirely*₁ identity-depend on their essential properties. Namely, there is nothing besides their essential properties on which they identity-depend.²¹ Moreover, they seem to identity-depend on their

²¹ However, if we accepted the characterization of partial₁ and entire₁ RD-relations provided in note 19, we could also claim that ficta partly₁ identity-depend on their essential properties, while being also

essential properties necessarily and permanently. For if they changed at least some of such properties in a possible world/at a time, they would cease to be the very objects they are and they would immediately turn out to be different objects.

Of course, some of such essential properties may be had ‘in the ordinary way’ by ficta. For example, the property of *being a fictional object*. Further essential properties may be only ascribed to ficta. For example, the property of *being a detective* is only ascribed to Sherlock Holmes: Sherlock Holmes is not a detective ‘in the ordinary way’. Thus, with regard to ascribed properties, fictional objects would directly include in their essence only properties of the following form: *being ascribed property P by someone within a certain fictional context*. For example, *being ascribed the property of being a detective by someone within a certain fictional context*. However, the latter properties identity-depend in turn on ‘ordinary’ properties such as P (e.g., *being a detective*). And identity-dependence seems to be transitive. Therefore, ficta also identity-depend on ‘ordinary’ properties such as P (e.g., Sherlock Holmes also identity-depend on *being a detective*).

In sum, we can accept the following:

(I) ficta entirely₁ and specifically₂ (i.e., necessarily and permanently) identity-depend on certain essential properties P_1, \dots, P_n .

Before delving into the other RD-relations, we should make four remarks.

First, I claimed in Section 2 that ficta are not endowed with the ‘ordinary’ existence we attribute to ordinary substances, such as myself and my desk. ‘Ordinary’ existence may be defined in distinct ways. As I anticipated, my favourite definition involves bearing irreducible causal powers. Namely, I define an ‘ordinarily’ existing substance as one that bears irreducible causal powers. I hold that ficta, though resembling ‘ordinarily’ existing substances in multiple respects (e.g., they bear properties without being ‘borne’ by anything else), do *not* bear irreducible causal powers. This seems to preserve the intuition that ficta do not (‘ordinarily’) exist. Thus, what do we point to when we claim that a certain fictum starts to exist, is maintained in existence and eventually stops existing?

We can reason as follows. Besides ficta, there are further types of entities that do not enjoy ‘ordinary’ existence, such as events, facts, Aristotelian universals, and so on. Yet, it is legitimate to claim that such entities start to ‘exist’, are maintained in ‘existence’ and that they may eventually stop ‘existing’. Their ‘existence’ (from now onwards, existence*) coincides with specific features that typically characterize specific categories of entities. The existence* of events coincides with their occurrence. Thus, an event starts to occur, continues to occur

partly₁ identity-independent of anything else. For example, they might be partly₁ endowed with some primitive sort of identity/individuation conditions besides the ones provided by essential properties.

and may eventually stop occurring. The existence* of facts coincides with their obtaining. The existence* of Aristotelian universals coincides with their instantiation. And so on. Occurrence, obtaining, instantiation are all analogous to existence for ordinary substances. And they are all somehow analogous with one another.²²

Thus, we can introduce one further sort of existence* for ficta – and, more generally, for all the entities that somehow depend on mental subjects. Call it “existence-f”. Existence-f may be a new mode of being, such as mental existence. Or it may just coincide with the kind-property of *being a mind-dependent object*.

At any rate, with regard to ficta, existence-f is what both origin-dependence and sustenance-dependence point to. For origin-dependence was defined in Section 3 as follows: A origin-dependes on B insofar as A depends on B for its starting to exist – or for its starting to possess its distinctive mode of being. And sustenance-dependence was defined as follows: A sustenance-dependes on B insofar as A depends on B for its continuing to exist – or for its continuing to possess its distinctive mode of being. Now, the distinctive mode of being of ficta is existence-f.

The second remark to be made is an obvious one. Existence-f is part of the essence of ficta. For all ficta, insofar as they are ficta, are somehow dependent on mental subjects. And if something somehow depends on mental subjects, it enjoys existence-f. Thus, ficta partly₁ specifically₂ identity-dependes on existence-f as well. Namely, they also but not only identity-depend on existence-f in all the possible worlds and at all the times in/at which they have existence-f. If they did not have existence-f, they would turn out to be different entities.

Yet, this does *not* entail that ficta exist-f in all the possible worlds and at all the times. For they have existence-f only in some possible worlds and at some times.

The third remark is that origin-dependence and sustenance-dependence, on the one hand, and identity-dependence, on the other hand, may part ways. Intuitively, if A identity-dependes on B, this does *not* entail that A also origin-dependes on B. Sherlock Holmes identity-dependes on *being a detective*. Yet, the latter property is not responsible (not even in part) for Sherlock Holmes’ starting to exist-f. True: Conan Doyle also mobilized *being a detective* in order to ‘create’ Sherlock Holmes. However, *being a detective* was involved in the ‘creation’ process only insofar as it was mobilized by Conan Doyle. It was only Conan Doyle that was responsible for Sherlock Holmes’ ‘creation’.

One could reply that Conan Doyle’s mobilizing Sherlock Holmes partly₁ depended on the instantiation of the property of *being a detective* somewhere in the universe. Had that property not been instantiated, Conan Doyle would not have been able to know it and to include it in Sherlock Holmes. Right. But the

²² For a broader inquiry into the analogy of being, see McDaniel (2017).

instantiation of the property of *being a detective* somewhere in the universe did *not* originate – nor did it contribute to originating – Conan Doyle’s ‘creation’ process. At best, it was only a background condition for that process. Thus, it is *not* legitimate to appeal to the (supposed) transitivity of origin-dependence in order to argue that, since Sherlock Holmes origin-depends on his author²³ – or on his author’s ‘creation’ process – and since his author’s ‘creation’ process origin-depends also on the instantiation of *being a detective*, then Sherlock Holmes origin-depends also on the instantiation of *being a detective*. For it is *not* the case that Conan Doyle’s ‘creation’ process origin-depends also on the instantiation of *being a detective*.

Moreover, if A identity-depends on B, this does *not* entail that A also sustenance-depends on B. True: in order for Sherlock Holmes to continue to exist-f, it is necessary that *being a detective* continues to be ascribed to him. However, *being a detective* continues to be ascribed to Sherlock Holmes only insofar as it is mobilized within some sustenance process, involving physical copies of Sherlock Holmes’ stories and capable interpreters. Such stories and capable interpreters are ultimately responsible for Sherlock Holmes’ sustenance. In this respect, that *being a detective* is part of the essence of Sherlock Holmes is only a background condition for the sustenance process.

Additionally, if A origin-depends on B, this does *not* entail that A also identity-depends on B. This happens because A may origin-depend on B only contingently and/or non-permanently. On the contrary, whenever A identity-depends on B, it seems that A’s identity-dependence on B comes together with necessity and permanence. For similar reasons, if A sustenance-depends on B, this does *not* entail that A also identity-depends on B.

So far, so good.

Our fourth remark is related. Indeed, it seems that ficta could have had other authors from the ones they actually had. Maybe Sherlock Holmes could have been created by someone different from Conan Doyle, had Conan Doyle lived a different life or had he not existed. I am well aware that this issue is controversial. However, at first sight, it is intuitive to hold that authorship is a contingent relation. And so I shall assume it to be. However, my account may be easily modified in order to allow for necessary authorship.

Moreover, ficta could also have been sustained in existence-f by other entities, different from the ones that actually sustain them. For example, Sherlock Holmes could have been sustained in existence-f by oral stories, rather than by written texts. Or by books published in slightly different ways, or in other languages. And different readers/interpreters could have read about him or interpreted his stories.

We can now introduce our remaining theses:

²³ Being inclined to accepting substance causation, I would actually hold that authors are the causes of ‘creation’ processes. See Paolini Paoletti (2018).

(II) ficta entirely₁ and generically₂ (i.e., necessarily and permanently) origin-depend (i.e., for their existence-f) on authors.

Indeed, authors may be different. But it is still the case that, in every possible world/at every time in/at which a fictum exists-f, it origin-depend on some author or another.²⁴

(II) comes together with:

(III) ficta entirely₁ and generically-a₁ (i.e., contingently and non-permanently) origin-depend on certain specific authors.

For example, Sherlock Holmes entirely₁ and generically-a₃ origin-depend on Conan Doyle. For it is contingent that Conan Doyle plays the authorship Role-*qua*-group with respect to Sherlock Holmes. Moreover, such an origin-dependence is not permanent: when Conan Doyle stops existing, he is not Sherlock Holmes' author anymore – though it is still true that he *was* Sherlock Holmes' author.²⁵

Turn now to sustenance-dependence. Here come four different theses:

(IV) ficta partly₁ and generically₂ (i.e., necessarily and permanently) sustenance-depend (i.e., for their existence-f) on physical copies of their stories;

(V) ficta partly₁ and generically-a₃ (i.e., contingently and non-permanently) sustenance-depend on certain specific physical copies of their stories;

²⁴ If authorship were necessary, i.e., if Sherlock Holmes could not have had other authors different from Conan Doyle, (II) and (III) could be modified by just talking of entire₁ and specific₂ origin-dependence of Sherlock Holmes on Conan Doyle. Moreover, such an origin-dependence relation could be based on an essential property of Sherlock Holmes himself. Namely, Sherlock Holmes could also identity-depend on the essential property of *having been created by Conan Doyle*. And this could be what in virtue of which Sherlock Holmes entirely₁ and specifically₂ origin-depend on Conan Doyle.

²⁵ Yet, at a time at which Conan Doyle does not exist anymore, Sherlock Holmes still origin-depend on his Role-*qua*-group. For the Role-*qua*-group of Sherlock Holmes' authors should be thought of as an abstract entity that only identity-depend on Sherlock Holmes and that can be played by different authors. The intuition behind this solution is that being an author at a certain time implies existing at that time, so that Conan Doyle cannot be an author at a time at which he does not exist. But an alternative solution consists in denying this implication: someone can remain an author at a certain time even if s/he does *not* exist at that time anymore. Or someone can have at a certain time the property of *having been an author* (at a previous time) even if s/he does not exist at the former time. Or someone may never lose existence, so that s/he may always remain an author. Choosing among these alternatives hinges on one's favorite metaphysics of time.

(VI) ficta partly₁ and generically₂ (i.e., necessarily and permanently) sustenance-depend (i.e., for their existence-f) on capable interpreters;

(VII) ficta partly₁ and generically-a₃ (i.e., contingently and non-permanently) sustenance-depend (i.e., for their existence-f) on certain specific capable interpreters.

A few words of explication. Capable interpreters and physical copies of stories are both required for the continued existence-f of ficta. If physical copies of stories were not interpretable, it would be as if Sherlock Holmes did not exist. And if capable interpreters did not have such physical copies, they would not be able to recall Sherlock Holmes. Thus, were it not for *both* physical copies and capable interpreters, Sherlock Holmes would not exist-f anymore as a fictum.

The relevant sustenance-dependence is generic, though necessary and permanent: in every possible world and at every time in/at which Sherlock Holmes exists-f, he sustenance-dependes on physical copies of his stories and on capable interpreters.

Moreover, it seems that Sherlock Holmes could have had other physical copies of his stories and other capable interpreters from the ones he *actually* has. Thus, generic-a sustenance-dependence is contingent. Additionally, in the future, Sherlock Holmes' *current* capable interpreters and the *current* copies of his stories may disappear and/or they may be unable to perform their functions. However, they may be replaced with other capable interpreters and other copies. Thus, only non-permanently does Sherlock Holmes generically-a sustenance-depend on his *current* capable interpreters and on the *current* copies of his stories.

Since there is nothing else on which ficta seem to sustenance-depend, we may also put together (IV) and (VI) – as well as (V) and (VII) – and obtain:

(VIII) ficta entirely₁ and generically₂ (i.e., necessarily and permanently) sustenance-depend (i.e., for their existence-f) on physical copies of their stories and on capable interpreters;

(IX) ficta entirely₁ and generically-a₃ (i.e., contingently and non-permanently) sustenance-depend on certain specific physical copies of their stories and on certain specific capable interpreters.

Theses (I)-(IX) summarize how ficta depend.²⁶

²⁶ Besides Thomasson's theory, the artifactualist theory of ficta that best fits with (I)-(IX) is Voltolini (2006)'s syncretistic account, on which ficta depend on specific sets of properties and on specific types of make-believe processes.

5. Three Problems

In this Section, I shall briefly deal with three problems.

First, reconsider:

(I) *ficta* entirely₁ and specifically₂ (i.e., necessarily and permanently) identity-depend on certain essential properties P_1, \dots, P_n .

It seems that, among the essential properties of Sherlock Holmes, there is also that of *entirely*₁ and *generically*₂ (i.e., necessarily and permanently) *origin-depend* on his authors. Indeed, Sherlock Holmes essentially is a *fictum*. Namely, Sherlock Holmes also identity-depend on *being a fictum*. And the property of *being a fictum* should be in turn defined by also appealing to *entirely*₁ and *generically*₂ (i.e., necessarily and permanently) *origin-depend* on his authors. Since identity-dependence seems to be transitive, this entails that Sherlock Holmes also identity-depend on the property of *entirely*₁ and *generically*₂ (i.e., necessarily and permanently) *origin-depend* on his authors. But here a problem arises. It seems that the latter property is nothing but that of *entirely*₁ and *generically*₂ (i.e., necessarily and permanently) *origin-depend* on Sherlock Holmes' *Role-qua-group*. Such a property also identity-depend on Sherlock Holmes' *Role-qua-group*. And Sherlock Holmes' *Role-qua-group*, in turn, also identity-depend on Sherlock Holmes. Thus, by transitivity, Sherlock Holmes also identity-depend on Sherlock Holmes. However, this runs against the irreflexivity of identity-depend: it seems that nothing can identity-depend on itself.

To solve this problem, I see three options. First, one may reject the transitivity and/or the irreflexivity of identity-dependence. Yet, this comes at a high cost. Indeed, identity-dependence seems to be (or it should be) an ordering relation between entities. Therefore, it must be both irreflexive and transitive.

Secondly, one may reject that Sherlock Holmes' *Role-qua-group* also identity-depend on Sherlock Holmes. Yet, this comes at a high cost as well. For what would Sherlock Holmes' *Role-qua-group* identity-depend on? On all its possible members? Yet, the *Role-qua-group* may exist in possible worlds/at times in/at which some of those members do not exist. Alternatively, Sherlock Holmes' *Role-qua-group* may be an identity-independent entity. Yet, this runs against the intuition that Sherlock Holmes' *Role-qua-group* is the *Role-qua-group* of *Sherlock Holmes* and of nothing else. Namely, its connection with Sherlock Holmes is a necessary one. Moreover, such a connection is also part of what makes that *Role-qua-group* the very *Role-qua-group* it is (i.e., the *Role-qua-group* of Sherlock Holmes, and of no other *fictum*). It is an essential connection.

Thus, it seems that Sherlock Holmes' Role-*qua*-group also identity-dependes on Sherlock Holmes, so that the former cannot be an identity-independent entity.

The only remaining option consists in denying the identity between the property of *entirely*₁ and *generically*₂ (i.e., *necessarily and permanently*) *origin-depending on his authors* (i.e., a property on which Sherlock Holmes also identity-dependes) and that of *entirely*₁ and *generically*₂ (i.e., *necessarily and permanently*) *origin-depending on Sherlock Holmes' Role-qua-group*. This denial may look counterintuitive. But if we look at the property of *entirely*₁ and *generically*₂ (i.e., *necessarily and permanently*) *origin-depending on his authors*, we can see that it is far from being unreasonable.

What is essential to Sherlock Holmes as a fictum is that he *entirely*₁ and *generically*₂ (i.e., *necessarily and permanently*) *origin-dependes on some author(s)*. Namely, what is actually essential to Sherlock Holmes is the possession of the property of *entirely*₁ and *generically*₂ (i.e., *necessarily and permanently*) *origin-depending on some author(s)*.

It is trivially true that whatever plays the authorship Role-*qua*-group with respect to Sherlock Holmes is an author of Sherlock Holmes. And it is also trivially true that, by definition, this entails the existence of Sherlock Holmes' Role-*qua*-group. But it cannot be argued from these premisses that there is one additional property, i.e., that of *entirely*₁ and *generically*₂ (i.e., *necessarily and permanently*) *origin-depending on Sherlock Holmes' Role-qua-group*. Nor can it be argued from these premisses that such a property is essential to Sherlock Holmes.

In other terms, that Sherlock Holmes also identity-dependes on *entirely*₁ and *generically*₂ (i.e., *necessarily and permanently*) *origin-depending on some author(s)* and that this entails the existence of Sherlock Holmes' Role-*qua*-group – these two facts put together do *not* entail that there also exists the property of *entirely*₁ and *generically*₂ (i.e., *necessarily and permanently*) *origin-depending on Sherlock Holmes' Role-qua-group*. And, even if such a property exists and it is had by Sherlock Holmes, those two facts put together do *not* entail that Sherlock Holmes also identity-dependes on it.

What is entailed by the instantiation of an essential property of A is not by itself essential to A. Only if the essential property of A identity-dependes in turn on what it entails can it be derived that the entailed entity is essential to A as well. Yet, the property of *entirely*₁ and *generically*₂ (i.e., *necessarily and permanently*) *origin-depending on some author(s)* – which is essential to Sherlock Holmes – does *not* identity-depend on that of *entirely*₁ and *generically*₂ (i.e., *necessarily and permanently*) *origin-depending on Sherlock Holmes' Role-qua-group*. Therefore, the latter property is not essential to Sherlock Holmes.

There is a second, related problem. The property of *being a fictum* also identity-dependes on that of *having existence-f*. And the property of *having existence-f* may also identity-depend on the property of *entirely*₁ and *generically*₂

(i.e., necessarily and permanently) origin-dependence on authors. Assume now, *contra my hypothesis*, that a fictum necessarily and permanently has only a certain specific author. For example, that Sherlock Holmes cannot but have Conan Doyle as his author. In this case, it seems to be part of Sherlock Holmes' essence that he entirely₁ and specifically₂ (i.e., necessarily and permanently) origin-dependence on Conan Doyle. But this seems to collapse origin-dependence into identity-dependence. And something analogous may be claimed with respect to sustenance-dependence.

There are different ways to solve this problem. First, one could point out that, if there are further types of existents-*f* in addition to ficta, maybe it is *not* the case that having existence-*f* also identity-dependence on the property of *entirely*₁ and *generically*₂ (i.e., necessarily and permanently) origin-dependence on authors.

But assume that this is the case. Secondly, one could point out that a fictum's necessarily and permanently having only a certain specific author (e.g., Conan Doyle) does *not* entail that the latter is part of his essence. More precisely, this does *not* entail that it is part of Sherlock Holmes' essence that he entirely₁ and specifically₂ (i.e., necessarily and permanently) origin-dependence on Conan Doyle. For we could define what Sherlock Holmes is even without appealing to his necessary author, i.e., Conan Doyle.

But assume that this is also the case, i.e., that the property of *entirely*₁ and *specifically*₂ (i.e., necessarily and permanently) origin-dependence on Conan Doyle is essential to Sherlock Holmes. Thirdly, one could point out that this does *not* result in collapsing origin-dependence into identity-dependence. For Sherlock Holmes would still be *directly* origin-dependent on Conan Doyle. On the contrary, he would *not* be directly identity-dependent on Conan Doyle. He would be identity-dependent on Conan Doyle *only indirectly*, i.e., by transitivity. Sherlock Holmes would be directly identity-dependent only on the property of *entirely*₁ and *specifically*₂ (i.e., necessarily and permanently) origin-dependence on Conan Doyle.²⁷ And the latter would be directly identity-dependent (also) on Conan Doyle. In sum, since origin-dependence and identity-dependence part ways in this respect, the former cannot collapse into the latter.

Of course, one could reply that the indirect identity-dependence of Sherlock Holmes on the property of *entirely*₁ and *specifically*₂ (i.e., necessarily and permanently) origin-dependence on Conan Doyle is responsible for the direct origin-dependence of Sherlock Holmes on Conan Doyle. However, this move is far from obvious and it should be argued for. Actually, it seems to me that things stand the other way round.

The third problem still has to do with (I). Does (I) commit us to the view that ficta are nothing but bundles of properties, so that the former are derivative

²⁷ Something similar would happen if Sherlock Holmes directly origin-dependence on a "creation" process performed by Conan Doyle. Such a process would *not* be what Sherlock Holmes would directly identity-depend on.

entities? This is far from obvious. Even if ficta identity-depend on properties, properties may depend on ficta – and on other sorts of objects – in further, crucial respects. For example, if properties were Aristotelian universals, they may depend on ficta – and on other sorts of objects – for their instantiation.

6. Further Accounts

In this Section, I shall briefly compare my account with other accounts of dependence for ficta.

First, there are two modal accounts: the account presented by Thomasson (1999) – that I introduced in Section 2 – and the account presented by Fontaine and Rahman (2014).

Fontaine and Rahman (2014) first introduce artifactually dependent entities. Such entities enjoy two different sorts of dependence. First, they uniformly, historically and rigidly depend on certain individuals (i.e., their “creators”) in a possible world in which they are artifactually dependent entities. Secondly, they enjoy artifactual, constant and generic dependence on entities belonging to specific genus sets (i.e., literary works) in a possible in which they are artifactually dependent entities.

Uniform, historical and rigid dependence and artifactual, constant and generic dependence are defined in modal terms, by introducing further sorts of dependence.

Literary fictional characters are then described as artifactually dependent entities that have their characterizing properties in the worlds (partially) described by the relevant stories.

This account is a refinement of Thomasson’s account and it is meant to rule out some shortcomings connected with modal accounts of dependence. However, it seems to me that it has three main flaws.

First, it does not introduce essential properties for ficta, so that it does not provide identity- and individuation-conditions for the latter.

Secondly, it treats ficta as *bona fide* existing entities.

Thirdly and more importantly, it is less fine-grained than my own account. For my account distinguishes between origin-dependence and sustenance-dependence. On the contrary, this account just talks of the existence of ficta. With respect to the latter, it then distinguishes between historical dependence and constant dependence. Yet, the latter distinction only amounts to a distinction between different sets of modal requirements, to be stated in the possible world semantics. It is true that I invoke necessity and contingency as well. However, in my account, there is something more to origin-dependence and sustenance-dependence than their modal requirements.

We can also express this criticism in the form of a dilemma. Either this modal account aims at reducing the overall distinction between historical dependence and constant dependence to a distinction between different sets of modal

requirements, or it takes the latter as only expressing certain relevant features of the dependence relations at stake. If the former is the case, then this account runs into the risk of explaining *obscurum per obscurum*. For intuitively the distinction between historical dependence and constant dependence is less obscure than that between different sets of modal requirements expressed in the possible world semantics. Moreover, the possible world semantics still needs to be made sense of in ontological terms. What are possible worlds? Or what sorts of entities does the possible world semantics point to?

If the latter is the case (i.e., if different sets of modal requirements only express certain relevant features of the dependence relations at stake), one still needs to clarify the nature of such relations and how they are connected with further dependence relations – if any. This can be done by invoking my own account of dependence relations.

Mutatis mutandis, similar problems affect Thomasson’s modal account.

Let me now turn to Irmak (2020)’s account. According to Irmak, abstract artifacts such as ficta are entities that are intentionally and non-causally brought about by the generative conditions specified in their dependence bases. Namely, they are entities that are generated intentionally and non-causally. Irmak does not distinguish between existence and existence-f. Moreover, he does not introduce essential properties for ficta. Finally, he invokes non-causal generation in order to cope with the fact that ficta are abstract entities, so that it seems that they cannot be causally created. However, non-causal generation can be dispensed with in my own account. Indeed, if we distinguish between different modes of being (i.e., occurrence, instantiation, existence, existence-f, and so on), we can claim that causality is nothing but the origin-dependence of an effect on its cause for its own mode of being. For example, of an event on its cause for its occurrence. In this case, the “creation” of ficta may turn out to be a causal process. Or something analogous to a causal process, if causation is restricted to certain sorts of entities (e.g., substances or events). For even ficta origin-depend on their authors for their existence-f.

Let me finally deal with von Solodkoff (2017)’s account. According to von Solodkoff, ficta are grounded on further entities that are *not* fictional objects. For every fact involving a fictum is fully metaphysically explained solely by facts involving entities that are not fictional objects. Full metaphysical explanation is then interpreted in terms of grounding.

Grounding is a primitive relation of ontological dependence that seems to relate facts.²⁸ In Paolini Paoletti (2019), I argued that grounding accounts have

²⁸ Actually, “grounds” can be both interpreted as a predicate that relates facts (or propositions, corresponding to facts) or as a sentential operator. However, on the latter view, one still needs to look for the entities that are involved in grounding relations, or that make it legitimate to apply the grounding sentential operator to specific sentences. The best candidates are facts. On grounding, see for example Bliss, Trogdon (2014).

two shortcomings. First, they are committed to the idea that the entities to be exclusively or primarily involved in dependence relations are facts. However, I do not see any reason for denying that further sorts of entities may be exclusively or primarily involved in dependence relations. For example, ficta – rather than facts involving ficta.

Secondly, grounding accounts are committed to the idea that there is a fact – or something akin to a fact – for everything that is involved in a dependence relation. For example, there is a fact such as the identity of a certain fictum, or its starting to exist, or its continuing to exist. However, it is rather controversial to hold that there actually are all such facts. For example, it is rather controversial to hold that, in addition to a certain fictum, there is also the fact consisting in the identity of that fictum – a fact that is primarily involved in certain grounding relations involving that fictum itself.

On the contrary, following my account, we can maintain that different sorts of entities may be involved in RD-relations. And we can also avoid postulating facts as the relata of all RD-relations.

But assume that grounding can also exclusively or primarily relate entities different from facts. For example, assume that it is also legitimate to claim that Sherlock Holmes is grounded on Conan Doyle. And that Sherlock Holmes is grounded on *being a detective*. The resulting view is still less fine-grained than my own account. For Sherlock Holmes is grounded on Conan Doyle *for its origin*, whereas he is grounded on being a detective *for its identity*. Namely, he is grounded on Conan Doyle and on *being a detective* in different respects.

To obtain a more fine-grained view of dependence, grounding should then be seen as a ternary relation between the dependent entity/-ies (e.g., Sherlock Holmes), the dependee(s) (e.g., Conan Doyle or *being a detective*) and some respect of dependence (e.g., Sherlock Holmes' origin or Sherlock Holmes' identity). But consider now respects of dependence. They are nothing but facts – or entities akin to facts. Thus, also in this case, to obtain a more fine-grained view of dependence, grounding theorists need to postulate facts – or entities akin to facts – whenever dependence *qua* grounding is in place.

7. Conclusions

I have argued in this article that we can provide a plausible reading of artifactualist dependence claims by appealing to metaontological pluralism and to RD-relations. More precisely, I have argued that ficta depend in at least three distinct ways on further entities:

(I) ficta entirely₁ and specifically₂ (i.e., necessarily and permanently) identity-depend on certain essential properties P_1, \dots, P_n ;

(II) ficta entirely₁ and generically₂ (i.e., necessarily and permanently) origin-depend (i.e., for their existence-f) on authors;

(VIII) ficta entirely₁ and generically₂ (i.e., necessarily and permanently) sustenance-depend (i.e., for their existence-f) on physical copies of their stories and on capable interpreters.

Moreover, (II) and (VIII) entail the corresponding generic-a dependence claims, i.e.,

(III) ficta entirely₁ and generically-a₁ (i.e., contingently and non-permanently) origin-depend on certain specific authors;

(IX) ficta entirely₁ and generically-a₃ (i.e., contingently and non-permanently) sustenance-depend on certain specific physical copies of their stories and on certain specific capable interpreters.

I have anticipated and solved three problems for my account and shown that it has some advantages over other accounts of dependence for ficta.²⁹

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ARISTOTLE'S TAKE ON INADVERTENTLY MADE OBJECTS

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Abstract: The way metaphysicians conceive of inadvertently made objects has consequences for their understanding of the relation between intentions and kinds. Indeed, the very possibility of concrete material objects produced without human intention shakes the common identification of an object's kind and the intentions of the maker. The disruptive potential of inadvertently made objects also affects historians of philosophy, who have often failed to engage with the issue. In this paper, I shall reconstruct Aristotle's account of inadvertently made objects and the fortune of his examples. I will argue that Aristotle opens a conceptual space for inadvertent objects and will indicate the consequences for the relation between the intentions of the maker and an object's essence. Furthermore, I will put Aristotle into conversation with modern accounts and show the extent to which Aristotelian inadvertent objects constitute an instance different from the currently debated cases of appropriation, residues and by-products.

Keywords: Aristotle, Metaphysics, Objects, Intention, Inadvertent, Commentators

1. *Background and Introduction*

Notoriously, according to Aristotle's natural philosophy, an object can be accounted for by reference to four causes or four types of explanation:¹ material, formal, efficient, and final. This is true for natural and artificial beings alike (*Phys.* 2). Taking a traditional example, the material cause of a statue is the marble, the formal cause is its shape, the efficient cause is the sculptor, and the final cause is the statue's function. Aristotle introduces finer-grained distinctions applicable to all four cases:² (1) incidental and per se, (2) particular and general, (3) prior and posterior. While (2) refers to the level of generality, (3) has to do with whether a cause is prior or posterior in time, in account, or in substance.³ (1) marks the difference between a cause that is genuinely explanatory (per se) and a cause that is only incidentally so: the per se efficient cause of the Doryphoros is

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¹ For the interpretation of Aristotelian causes (*aitiai*) as kinds of explanation see Annas 1982, 319.

² For a clear discussion and illustration of the finer-grained distinctions see Cameron 2019, 69-70.

³ On the various senses of priority see *Met.* Δ 8, 1049b4-1050b27.

the sculptor Polyclitus, not a musical man (even if Polyclitus also happens to be a musical man). Giving the right explanation of something is to target, whenever possible, explanatory causes rather than incidental ones.

Now, there are two main kinds of efficient cause: nature (*physis*) and art (*technê*).⁴ Nature is famously defined as an inner principle of behaviour, an innate impulse with which natural beings are equipped.⁵ Art, by contrast, is an external principle of behaviour. While art is typically external in a spatial sense (it resides in the maker, not in the object fashioned), the sense in which art is external is not merely spatial. In *Phys.* 2.1,⁶ Aristotle draws a distinction between artefacts such as the house, in which the principle (the housebuilder) is clearly outside the object, and artefacts in which the principle is spatially inside the thing, as a container, but cannot be said to be in the thing of itself. He refers to the case of the doctor healing herself:⁷ of course, the doctor is in a way internal to the healed person, but to be spatially inside does not mean to be a genuinely inner principle (otherwise, puppets would be natural beings too). The doctor restores the health in the healed person not qua healed person but qua doctor. With the due distinctions, both nature and art are efficient causes, the former being internal and the latter being external. What is more, nature and art have another feature in common in that they both are teleological causes. Things that come to be by nature as well as things that come to be by art have a final cause, i.e. they come for the sake of something.⁸

This is however not the whole story about causes. Indeed, «some things are due to nature; for others there are other causes» (*Phys.* 2.1, 192b8). Among other causes, Aristotle includes not only art but also luck (*tychê*) and chance (*tautomaton*). Things can indeed happen due to causes, such as luck or chance, which are privations of nature and art.⁹ Luck and chance are both responsible for things that occur “for the sake of something” or with some sort of an end, but that do so incidentally.¹⁰ They are called “privations” of nature and art precisely because they yield the same result but “incidentally”, i.e. “without” per se causes such as nature or art. Luck occurs specifically among things in accord with decision (or among things with thought). Chance is broader than luck, for luck is chance that occurs to people. Consider a man who went to the marketplace to sell olives but met someone who owed him money and repaid the debt. This is a case

⁴ I translate *technê* with “art” for consistency with and adherence to the modern discussion on artefacts.

⁵ *Phys.* 2.1, 192b12-15.

⁶ *Ibidem* 192b27-32.

⁷ *Ibidem* 193b23-27.

⁸ The notorious art analogy is centered on the topic of final causation. Briefly put, we understand that there is a final cause in nature because art imitates nature and art has a final cause. The literature on the art analogy is vast, see for instance Broadie (1990); Scharle (2015); Witt (2015).

⁹ *Met.* Λ.3, 1070a7-8.

¹⁰ For Aristotle’s discussion of luck and chance, see *Phys.* 2.4-6.

of luck. Chance, by contrast, can involve also animals, children, or inanimate objects. Consider a statue which fell onto the man who had murdered. It is by chance that the murderer met his justice. In both cases, the outcome is the sort of result that nature could have caused for a purpose but has an incidental cause.

Scholars have primarily been discussing luck for its moral relevance and chance as occurring in the natural cases (i.e. spontaneous generation) because of its biological interest and related ethical implications. Chance, however, is privation not only of nature but also of art, and the scholarly debate has only addressed this specific case marginally, if at all. This understandable lack of discussion can be justified with the fact that Aristotle does not address this issue directly. Hence, his supposed account of things that come to be by chance as privation of art has to be patiently reconstructed by resorting to different passages in various works. My goal is to sketch Aristotle's account of "artefacts by chance", and, to do so, I will principally deal with the *Metaphysics* and the *Physics*. In particular, I will show that we have reasons to ascribe to Aristotle the view that there can be inadvertently made objects or – provisionally put – artefacts by chance. Moreover, I will argue that, according to Aristotle, an inadvertently made seat is not an artefact strictly speaking but still a seat, i.e. still an item belonging to the kind *seat*. This solution entails the non-trivial view that intentions are not built into the essence or the definition of members of artificial kinds. In the first section, I show that Aristotle opens a conceptual space for *beings* that come to be by chance by offering a close reading of *Met. Z 9*. In the second section, I employ Aristotle's example of the tripod to show that he can account for *material concrete objects* coming to be by chance, or inadvertently made objects. Here, I also chalk out the history of the ancient reception of this example. The third section will then reconstruct Aristotle's account of inadvertently made objects. Finally, the last section concludes by comparing Aristotle's notion of inadvertently made objects with the modern discussion of cases such as appropriation, residues, by-products, and other unintended results of human production. Although the subject matter demands touching upon wider topics, I will neither dive into Aristotle's account of artefacts proper nor address the problem of the substantiality of artefacts and inadvertently made objects.¹¹

2. Making Room for Objects by Chance: A Close Reading of *Met. Z 9*

The very possibility that something comes to be by chance, or spontaneously, is openly asserted by Aristotle with reference to both the animal and the artificial kingdom. This possibility is clearly stated in *Met. Z 7-9*, the so-called "physical chapters" of the seventh book of the *Metaphysics*. In the beginning of *Z 7*, Aristotle states that some things come to be by nature, some by art, and some by chance. In all three cases, things come to be by the agency of something (efficient

¹¹ For such a discussion see Papandreou (manuscript).

cause), out of something (material cause), and they come to be a thing of a certain kind (formal cause). Aristotle then focuses on the distinction between natural generation (*genesis*) and production (*poiêsis*). He further subdivides types of production into three kinds, depending on the governing principle: products can come about either by art (*technê*), by some capacity (*dunamis*), or by thought (*dianoia*).¹² He goes on saying that some of the things *produced* also can come to be by chance.¹³ Aristotle here¹⁴ introduces a problem which he puts on ice till Z 9, where he finally sets out the following aporia: why can some things come to be by art as well as by chance and others can only come to be by art?

There are indeed some artificial things, such as the house, that cannot come to be without an artisan, whereas others, like the health, can come to be even without the art of the doctor. For instance, let us imagine that Socrates is sick: he can turn healthy either by going to the doctor, or he might acquire his health without taking any appointment, perhaps just by way of taking a walk for other reasons. The solution of the aporia (1034a10-a14) refers to the matter involved in the generation of something (*hê hylê hê archousa tês geneseôs*). The matter involved in a production is either: (1) capable of being set in motion by its own agency (*oia kineisthai hup'hautês*), (1a) in the particular way required (*hê men hôdi hoia*) or (1b) not in the particular way required (*hê de adunatos*); (2) or it is incapable of being set in motion by its own agency (*hê d'ou*). It seems that some things that are brought about by art can be brought about by chance because the matter, that in the artistic production is that which initiates the coming to be and in which there is already some part of the outcome product, in some cases can move by its own agency. While (2) is not mentioned again, Aristotle basically deals only with (1a) and (1b), which also are the cases relevant to our discussion. We soon (1034a14-a18) learn that the case of the matter of the house, namely the stones, represents (1b), for it is said that this matter is incapable of being set in motion in the particular way required unless the agency of something else intervenes. That stones can move by their own agency is not puzzling, for Aristotle has clearly in mind their natural downwards tendency. Stones can move so as to fall downwards but not so as to form a house (i.e. in the particular way required). At this point, we could easily think that (1a) is supposed to represent the case of health. The reasoning would be the following: heat (as matter of health) can move by itself so as to produce health (1a); whereas stones (as matter of the house) cannot move

¹² In *Met.* E 1, products come to be either by art (*technê*), reason (*nous*), or some capacity again (*dunamis*).

¹³ This reminds us of Cray's (2017: 290) distinction between *artefacts*, i.e. products of human activity involving creative intentions, and mere *products*, i.e. products of human activity not coupled with an intention to generate. Applying Cray's distinction to Aristotle, one could say that products by art and by reason (or thought) are *artefacts*, whereas products by a certain capacity are *mere products*.

¹⁴ Z 7, 1032a28-32.

by their own agency so as to produce a house. This is why some things can come to be by art as well as by chance, while others cannot.

Aristotle then addresses the case of chance in more detail (1034a18-a21). What happens when something that comes to be by art comes to be by chance? There are two possibilities: either (a) the motion is started up by the agency of things that do not have art but can be moved by other things not having art, or (b) the motion starts out of a part. Now, these options are unclear at the very least, for Aristotle unfortunately does not immediately provide examples. So, how are we to understand (a) and (b)? Aristotle seems to provide an example for (b) soon afterwards (1034a26-a30), with the aim of showing how things coming to be by chance come to be out of something containing some part of the product (1034a25). Indeed, health comes to be out of a part of itself, namely the heat. As explained in 1034a26-a30, friction can produce heat in the body, and heat in the body might be part of what health is. An example of (a) is not provided in the text, but we could imagine the case of a dam: a dam can come to be either by art, if a skilled builder builds it, or by chance, if a large amount of stones just falls into the water («motion will be started up by the agency of these things that do not have the art») and creates a dam of a sort, because an earthquake occurs («but are themselves capable of being moved by other things not having the art»).

After addressing the case of natural type of things and providing an explanation parallel to that of artefacts' type of things,¹⁵ Aristotle clarifies that this state of affairs applies to *beings* belonging to any category, substances and predicates alike (1034b7-b10). I cannot stress the relevance of this statement enough. Indeed, given the focus on the case of health, one might say that, in Aristotle's view, only properties belong to the class of things that can come to be by art as well as by chance, whereas beings that would belong to the category of substance, such as the house, do not. However, this statement seems to establish that the account offered applies to substances too, i.e. not only to *beings* but also to *material objects*. Certainly, the fact that Aristotle expressly denies that a house can come into existence by chance could be taken as a denial of inadvertently made *objects*, and evidence that only events or properties can occur by chance. On the contrary, one might interpret Aristotle's endeavour in *Met. Z 9* as establishing the possibility of inadvertently made objects and to understand the case of the house as just so complex that it cannot simply come to be by chance. The more complexity an artefact shows, the more it appears to come from intelligent design. What is more, for the house to come to be by chance, the matter,

¹⁵ Aristotle will then tell a similar story for things that are constituted by nature (1034a33-b4). Some natural beings can come to be by nature as well as by chance, whereas others cannot. Indeed, some natural beings can come to be only by co-specific parents, whereas other natural beings (bloodless animals) can also come to be spontaneously. As in the case of artefact types of thing, also in the case of natural types of thing the reason why some can come to be without nature being the principle refers to the ability of matter to move by its own agency (1034b4-b7).

i.e. bricks and stones, ought to be able to move upwards by its own agency. But what if we take an object which requires the matter to move accordingly to its natural impulse? What if there is a case of an object (not a property) whose matter can move in the particular way required? There is indeed a pertinent example, offered by Aristotle and widely discussed in the later reception.

3. The Tripod Example and its Fortune

Aristotle chiefly discusses the notions of luck and chance in the second book of the *Physics*. As already mentioned, while luck obtains in matters of human practical life, chance is a wider concept and involves animate and inanimate beings alike. It is precisely when it comes to inanimate beings that we are offered the relevant example. In *Phys.* 2.6, 197b16-18, we read: «Chance on the other hand is found both in the other animals and in many inanimate objects – for example, the horse came by chance, we say, in that it was saved because it came, but did not come in order to be saved. And that the tripod fell [on its feet] is a case of chance, since, though it stood that way for the sake of being sat on, it did not fall for the sake of being sat on».¹⁶ He then explains that something occurs by chance when it is one of the things that occur for the sake of something, but does not occur for the sake of what actually results: the tripod as something to be sat on is among the things that come to be for the sake of something, but it was by chance that it could serve as a tripod. In this sense, it was due to an external cause, i.e. chance, that the tripod could serve its function. Aristotle does not tell us why the tripod fell, but it could have dropped onto the floor and knocked down a flight of stairs by someone accidentally.¹⁷ There is no necessity that the tripod falls on its feet instead of its side. However, it could move “in the particular way required”, i.e. so as to serve as a tripod, because its matter necessarily tends downwards.¹⁸ The tripod therefore seems to offer an example of an artefact type of thing that comes to be by chance, although typically coming to be by art. Importantly, a tripod is not a property like health. To this extent, it might qualify as an inadvertently made object.

In ancient Greece, tripods were frequently used to support lebes, or cauldrons, for cooking and they had other uses such as supporting vases, trophies or offerings. The best known tripod is the stool at Delphi on which the Pythia sat to utter her oracles.¹⁹ In this way, serving as a seat is indeed one of the relevant functions of a tripod. Thus, the tripod was originally positioned so as to form a seat and happened to fall in such a way that it did so once again. This is important

¹⁶ Translations of the passages from Aristotle’s *Physics* are by Reeve (2018).

¹⁷ See Lacey (1993: 176 n. 630).

¹⁸ For the concept of material necessity and its difference from hypothetical necessity see Cooper (1987).

¹⁹ Suhr (1971) discusses the meaning and significance of the tripod’s early prototype.

to highlight as it does not make it a case of *appropriation*, in which something is employed by a later user with a function that was not intended by the original maker. However, since the tripod was already a tripod before falling, Aristotle might still be treating the example not so much as the inadvertent coming to be of a new object, but rather as a fortuitous event (with emphasis on the falling on its feet) happening to the same object.

However it might be, this example did not go unnoticed in the later reception of Aristotle's works. Its fortune can be found in the commentators on the *Physics* as well as on other Aristotelian works. Indeed, whereas the example in Aristotle also can be understood as an instance of a fortuitous event, the commentators appear to pull Aristotle in the direction of conceptualizing the case of inadvertently made objects. Interestingly, they do so by conflating the example of the tripod with another example made by Aristotle few lines ahead in the same chapter: «in fact the stone that fell did not do so for the sake of hitting the man; it was by chance, therefore, that the stone fell, because it might have fallen due to someone and for the sake of hitting the man» (197b30-32). This second example is more clearly portraying the case of fortuitous *events*. If someone were to throw the stone to hit a man, the event of the stone hitting the man would not happen by chance; however, since the stone, in this case, fell by chance, the result is a fortuitous event. Now, later philosophers have conflated the two Aristotelian examples and have often talked about a stone that fell in such a way as to serve as a seat.²⁰ This operation is not without major consequences. First, focusing on the result of a seat instead of hitting a man makes the example concern objects and not events; second, taking the stone instead of the tripod amounts not only to taking a natural object²¹ instead of something already belonging to an artificial kind²² but also, and perhaps more importantly, to shifting the attention to an acquired function, i.e. that of a chair, which was never intended before and is certainly not the essence of a stone. Therefore, they more clearly introduce the case of an inadvertent production of a new object. I will briefly go through the reception of the example and its fortune by addressing authors in a chronological order, so as to illustrate – albeit incompletely – its fascinating history. We can witness something more than just a distorted repetition, for commentators also make different proposals as to what makes a seat a seat. What makes the stone a seat, i.e. something you can sit on?

²⁰ An exception is Thomas Aquinas, who, in his commentary on the *Physics*, maintains the tripod as the initial item and presents it as an example of chance happening to inanimate beings (Lecture 10, 232).

²¹ Naturefacts are naturally occurring objects intentionally modified to serve some human purpose (Hilpinen (2011)).

²² In this sense, the example is different from the one advanced by Juvshik (2021): «A lampshade that's turned upside down as a birdbath».

Alexander of Aphrodisias is the first and most influential Aristotelian commentator. In *Mantissa* 24, he (or his school) discusses the notion of luck as narrower than the notion of chance. Chance is referred to results that come about and are not that for the sake of which something occurs: «Thus the stone which was carried downwards and fell in such a way that it is possible to sit on it acquired this position fortuitously, [the position] following on the natural downwards motion of the stone on account of its weight.» (179,1-3; Sharples (2004)). As mentioned, Alexander is conflating the two examples. The stones acquired the *position* required for it to be sat on.

Considering the Neoplatonic School of Athens, Themistius and Simplicius introduce new elements to the picture. Themistius, after faithfully reporting the Aristotelian example of the tripod, twists the second example: «If, for example, a stone that has fallen down has the shape of a cube, it does not spontaneously occupy a position in which it can be effectively sat on, since if it falls, it is in its nature to fall that way every time» (*in Phys.* 55,2). He here adds an interesting element. Provided that the stone already possesses the right *shape*, it is only by necessity (and not by chance) that it falls down and can therefore serve as a seat.²³ The stone falls downwards due to its natural tendency. While Themistius seems to slim down the space for inadvertently made objects unless the *shape* changes, Simplicius makes more room for objects by chance – genuinely intention-independent – by opposing them to objects by luck – ultimately intention-dependent. In *in Phys.* 352,9-20, he stresses that, in the case of outcomes of chance, «the cause should be neither inherent nor entirely evident». Hence, the efficient cause could not be the shape of a cube, as «it would not be outside its nature to provide a seat» (translations by Fleet (1997)). Chance is an external cause in the sense that it must be outside the nature of the thing involved. Interestingly, Simplicius states that if it could be shown that an outcome resulted from intended actions (although intended for a different purpose), this would move it from the category of chance outcomes to that of lucky outcomes. For instance, the tripod fell by luck so as to provide a seat when it was thrown away by the thief who was being chased.²⁴ In this case, there is some intention, just not where we would normally find it.

As for the Neoplatonic School of Alexandria, the engagement with the Aristotelian example is not elaborate before Philoponus. According to Ammonius *in Int.* 142,31-143,1 it is the position of the fallen stone that makes it fit to serve as a seat. His pupil Asclepius also reports the example in the commentary on the *Metaphysics* written “from the voice” of Ammonius. In *in Metaph.* 398,1-5, while

²³ See also Simplicius, *in Phys.* 347,16-17 and Philoponus *in Phys.* 288,5 ff.

²⁴ Simplicius switches from the stone to the tripod, although they both wind up being a seat. In *in Phys.* 261,15-17, he states «while others again happen as a result of chance, such as the occurrence of a portent or the way a stone falls to form a seat» (translation by Fleet (1997)). The stone example appears again at 347,16-17.

commenting on Z 7's distinction between coming to be by nature, by art, and by chance, he reports the example of a stone falling down and thus becoming suitable for a seat, but does not specify how the stone comes to be a seat or what makes it fit to serve as a seat.²⁵ A more developed interpretation is provided by Philoponus, who turns to the example in his commentaries on *Categories*,²⁶ *Physics* and *Posterior Analytics*. The example is most recurrent in the commentary on the *Physics*,²⁷ where he takes the change of shape to be what ultimately makes the stone become a seat. The more detailed explanation is however provided in *in An. Post.* 380,18-22: «But if somehow, when occupying the place down below, the stone came to be [shaped in a way that is] suitable for a chair, on account of having its protuberances removed from around it during its descent and it were to be formed into a square, this very process of becoming [shaped in a way that is] suitable for a chair is said to be by chance since it is something that occurs as [what is] itself random and not in accordance with the aim of its nature» (translation by Goldin (2014)).

Now, the change of shape seems to be the key element for inadvertently made objects as the change of position alone can be due to the nature of the stone itself, which tends downwards. If it is in the nature of an object to change position in the particular way required *and* the shape of the object does not undergo any change, it seems that one cannot take it as an outcome of chance, after all – for the outcome is merely the result of natural necessity. We have seen, though, a growing attention to the *shape* of the matter, which must change too. If there is no intrinsic modification of the matter, then it may be a stone and its natural downward tendency. This condition is held also by Aristotle. Reconstructing the seat example by looking back to *Met.* Z 9, one might tell the following story. Objects that typically come to be teleologically might also come to be by chance if the matter can move in the particular way required. Now, in the case of a seat, one might say that the matter, i.e. stone, can move by itself in the particular way required, i.e. downwards. However, if all it takes to make a seat is for the stone to fall down, we would just have the case of a stone acting naturally. Thus, if the stone is to represent a case of chance, it needs not only to change position but also to change shape. If the stone becomes suitable to be a seat because, on the way down, it changed in shape, then (i) there is not merely natural necessity involved; (ii) the stone can move in the particular way required because the motion, i.e. the

²⁵ Asclepius reports the stone example also at 371,12-15; 372,8-10.

²⁶ *in Cat.* 127,17-20.

²⁷ *in Phys.* 260,12-13; 269,13-17; 288,6-291,21. For instance, *in Phys.* 260,13-14, we read «A stone fell down from above and breaking off its jagged edges became suitable for a seat - and it is said to have become [so] 'spontaneously'», and at 269,17 «For instance, a stone fell from on high, not having been securely perched, and was borne down by [its] natural impulse to the appropriate and natural place, and having been borne down smashed against some solid bodies and had its projections broken off and became suitable for a seat» (both translations by Lacey (1993)).

change of shape, is started up by the agency of things that do not have art (perhaps the hitting of the stone on surfaces) but can be moved by other things not having the art (whatever caused the falling of the stone).

4. Aristotle's Account of Inadvertently Made Objects

We have seen that the tripod example has been more clearly treated as a case of inadvertently made object by the later reception. However, Aristotle does make room for objects by chance and provides some hints as to how we should understand them. I will hereon sketch Aristotle's account of inadvertently made objects without going into the details of his account of artefacts.²⁸ In particular, I will stress how his account of inadvertent objects makes intentions unnecessary for identity.

Things can indeed come to be inadvertently, but I would like to focus on the fact that they are still the kind of thing they are. For instance, we have seen that health could be restored by a doctor or come about unintentionally, perhaps through going for a walk with a purpose other than getting your health back. However achieved, the result is still essentially the same. Health is a uniform state of the body, and a uniform state of the body is equally so whether achieved through medical skill or unintentionally. While Aristotle excludes that highly complex artefacts, such as the house, can come about without intention, he does not preclude the possibility that artefacts of lesser complexity might come to be inadvertently. What makes a house a house is a complex arrangement of matter, such that it seems highly unlikely that, without an external principle such as a skilful maker, matter would simply arrange by itself as to make a house.²⁹ By contrast, what makes a seat a seat is a less complex arrangement of matter, such that it seems plausible that matter would arrange itself as to make a seat, without a skilful maker.³⁰ There is just less demand on the matter.

The very possibility of inadvertently made objects resonates well with Aristotle's proposed definitions of certain objects in *Met.* H 2, 1043a5-18: «For instance, if we had to define a threshold, we should say 'wood or stone lying like this', and a house we should define as 'bricks and timbers lying like this', (or again, also the final cause would be in some cases), and if ice 'water frozen or solidified in this way', and harmony 'such and such a blending of high and low'; and similarly, in all other cases» (*Met.* H 2: 1043a2-12; my translation). Apart

²⁸ For the purpose of this paper, I will refer to key-passages that help illustrating Aristotle's view of artefacts without discussing them at great length. I refer the reader to Papandreou (manuscript) for more details and implications of his account.

²⁹ Michael of Ephesus, a Byzantine commentator of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, mentions the ship and things of the sort alongside the house (498,23-24).

³⁰ Here I follow Corkum's intuition: «I agree that the result is not an artifact, but it is less obvious to me – both as a philosophical claim and as a point of Aristotle interpretation – that the result is not a chair» (11).

from the case of the house, one might easily imagine those things coming to be intentionally as well as inadvertently. A threshold could come about by chance if wood and stone ended up in the right place; water can be solidified without a skilful maker intervening; a harmony might be achieved unintentionally. What is built into the essence of these objects are the arrangement, the structure, and the relations obtaining between the parts.³¹ It seems, at least, that intentions or social acceptance are not part of the essence of an artefact or a product. «A threshold is, in that it lies in this way, and the being means its lying in this way, and there being ice [means] being solidified in this way. Of some things, the being will be defined by all of these, by some [parts] being mixed, some blended, some bound, some solidified, and some require the other *differentia*, just like hand or foot.» (1042b26-31; my translation). Although some kinds are typically produced artifactually, this does not mean that the intention of the maker or the creative action constitutes the essence of the object or the kind of thing it is. As Corkum (p.15) points out, there is no textual evidence against the view that inadvertently made objects are possible. If anything, Aristotle would think that some instances are unlikely, given the complexity of the object and, thus, the work the matter would be required to do. At the same time, Aristotle would hold that *some* kinds only have artefacts in the strict sense as members.

Importantly, allowing for inadvertent objects does not make Aristotle's ontology "too easy". One risk, indeed, is to allow for a proliferation of new objects, if intention is not needed. If every time something falls down and can be used as something else a new object comes into existence, it would be too easy or even too frequent to come to be. However, according to Aristotle, for something new to populate the world, an intrinsic modification of matter *must* occur, such that social acceptance alone or later-use cannot bring about a new object.³² Consequently, intentions are not only unnecessary for the production of members of artificial kinds, but also insufficient. The relevant intention is insufficient even if paired with social acceptance. One might say that the case of the threshold in H 2, whose being is position, resembles the case of the stone becoming a seat. I cannot here fully develop Aristotle's account of proper coming to be, but placing something somewhere else or using something in some new way are not enough to bring about a new item. This is why Philoponus' intuition that the stone should not only fall down but also, crucially, change in shape, is a genuinely Aristotelian one.³³

³¹ This also implies that functions are not the essence, at least not from a strictly metaphysical perspective. For this claim, see Papandreou (manuscript).

³² For a general defense of this claim see Papandreou (2018).

³³ Change of position alone does not mean coming to be. Perhaps in Aristotle's text the ambiguity as to whether he is introducing inadvertently made objects or just speaking of fortuitous events is inescapable, for the case of the tripod happening to function once again as a tripod does not necessarily involve any change of shape or ceasing to exist along the way.

Therefore, are artefacts necessarily mind-dependent or intention-dependent? The focus on and the very possibility of material objects that are produced without human intention challenges the simple identification of an object's kind and the intentions of the maker. This challenge calls for an important clarification. If by "artefact" one means something that comes to be in virtue of art, then inadvertent artefact is a contradictory concept. Yet, if by "artefact" one means an object belonging to a certain kind K whose members are *typically* but not *necessarily* brought about in virtue of art, then there may exist inadvertent artefacts. To avoid ambiguity, one might say that Aristotle makes room for inadvertently made objects. Things that typically come about by art might still come about by chance (provided that the matter undergoes some relevant change like a change in shape), but this does not make them different things. A seat typically comes about by art, but it might come to be by chance, yet the seat that comes about by chance is still a seat. What we ought to say, then, is that things belonging to artificial kinds might occur without intention. However, not all artificial kinds have members that might occur without intention. A house, for instance, can only come to be by art.³⁴

5. Aristotle's Inadvertent Objects Confronted with Modern Issues

How one conceives of inadvertently made objects has implications on their notion of artefacts. Surely, it can also go the other way, namely that depending on one's definition of artefacts, inadvertently made objects qualify as artefacts or not. Either way, there is a connection hard to ignore. Koslicki (2018) stresses the importance of being clear as to what one means by "artefact". Any definition of artefact, indeed, seems to fail to accommodate «tricky cases» (Koslicki 2018: 218-219), among which Koslicki includes «by-products, residues, and other unintended outcomes».³⁵ By-products and residues³⁶ are, in fact, unintended results of intentional activity. Examples are pollution, sawdust, or scrap metal. Although these are unintended objects, it is important to stress that they represent a case different from the one discussed here, of inadvertently made objects. Koslicki also provides examples of «other unintended outcomes» that seem more relevant to our case: a village might unintentionally result from a collection of houses close to one another; a trail might be the unintended result of many walkers choosing the same path. Koslicki challenges the traditional definitions of "artefact" to accommodate such cases, either within or without the class of

³⁴ As pointed out by an anonymous referee, one could imagine tree branches spontaneously interwoven in such a way as to function as a shelter or even a cave, which can be used as a shelter. These are cases of later-use, which I shall briefly discuss in the last section.

³⁵ Other tricky cases are artificially produced members of natural kinds, artworks, products of non-human intentional activity, ready-mades and found objects.

³⁶ Residues are unintended by-products of intentionally creative activity (Hilpinen (2011)).

artefacts, as long as they are not left in a no-man's-land. Based on the observations made so far, according to Aristotle, unintended outcomes such as the village and the trail might not qualify as artefacts after all, but may still be a village and a trail respectively, and thus members of their respective artificial kind. Yet, they importantly differ from the case of residues. This is not the place for an exhaustive discussion of this distinction, which demands more attention and detail. My hunch, however, is that the sawdust (residue) and the inadvertently made chair importantly differ in that the latter embodies a structure which locates the object into a specific kind, whereas the former lacks a structure and, thus, resembles a heap. While the chair is *one* chair, the sawdust or pollution are still *many*, such that Aristotle would not regard them as *one* thing of a kind K.

This idea might be challenged by Juvshik (2021), who claims that in all accidental makings one can still identify the relevant intentions, such that there really are no inadvertently made objects in the strict sense. As he explains, accidental making can occur in three ways: first, historically, there are cases of accidental creation, such as the Post-it Note Adhesive, where the maker intended to do something but not quite what he ended up making. Second, there are cases in which there is no intention to make anything whatsoever. The example is that of Sophie the Clutz, who makes an accidental chair by way of her clumsiness, and her bumping and knocking around. While both cases are mind-dependent, neither seems to be intention-dependent. Juvshik however argues that both cases are still intention-dependent, but that the intentions are not where one would expect to find them. In the first case, one should trace the relevant intention not in Spencer Silver but in Art Fry (the man who had the idea of applying to paper an otherwise unimpressive adhesive), whereas in the second case, the relevant intention is Sophie's later intention to move the new arrangement into the house and use it as a chair. On this account, both cases are cases of *appropriation*, which is «taking a pre-existing object and making it into an artifact without modifying it, like moving a rock inside from the garden to become a doorstep». Lopes (2007) advances the distinction between accidental and incidental creation. Accidental creation obtains when someone unintentionally creates something in virtue of failing to make something else.³⁷ Incidental creation occurs when someone unintentionally creates something in virtue of succeeding in making something else. Both instances, though, involve some kind of intention – albeit disattended or indirect. Juvshik persuasively argues that both accidental and incidental creation are best understood as cases of appropriation.

Now, Aristotle does not accept the assumption that artefacts can be created by appropriation, i.e. without any intrinsic change in the matter. Let us consider once again the stone becoming a seat. Surely, it does not represent a case of failed artefact, as there was no intentional agent starting up the process. All the more,

³⁷ For a discussion of failed art see Xhignesse (2020).

we have seen that chance differs from luck in that it does not necessarily involve intentional agents. Thus, Aristotle's example does not resemble the Post-It story. Is it analogous to Sophie's story? Despite a *prima facie* similarity, Aristotle's example is significantly different in two ways, and, to this extent, it resists Juvshik's claim that accidental makings are intentional. First, Aristotle does not care to mention what happens after the tripod/stone falls, whether someone is really sitting on it. The later use might as well not even happen. The seat is a seat even if no one ever uses it as such. The emphasis on the structure rather than the intention³⁸ carries this result, and it extends to the point made by Bloom 1996, 5-6 with the example of the chair: it might be produced without the intention to be sat on and only to serve as an exhibition model, but it would still belong to the kind *chair* because «being sat on is what chairs are for». Second, while in both cases material parts undergo some structural change, the truly "creative" bit in Sophie's example is her moving the parts into the house. Now, merely moving the matter makes hers indeed a case of appropriation, but Aristotle's case can be understood as involving more than just moving the stone somewhere more suitable. Not only is later use not changing the essence of an object but any extrinsic change is not enough for something new to come to be. Hence, Aristotle's account of artefacts and inadvertently made objects does not allow for the treatment of inadvertently made objects as cases of appropriation. Juvshik 2021 states «a rock can genuinely become a doorstop with the right intentions, use, and communal acceptance». But in this case, if there is no intrinsic physical modification of matter but only an extrinsic one, the rock does not become a doorstop and remains a rock. Aristotle's interpretation, then, is able to hold two views that often are not simultaneously held: first, the view that appropriation is not "creative" of any new object; second, that one might create a new object without the relevant intention. Goodman (2020: 5) forcefully states «intentions are utterly irrelevant as to whether or not it is an artifact, and to what kind of artifact it is». Here, Aristotle would make a distinction. Intentions are relevant as to whether or not something is an artifact, but are irrelevant as to what kind of artefact it is. Intentions are therefore not only unnecessary for a seat to be a seat but also insufficient. In this regard, Goodman (2020: 6) strongly agrees with Aristotle when he states that «humans add to the inventory of the world by shoving parts about, and thereby configuring those parts in ways that are suited for further human use». An intrinsic modification of the matter is imperative for adding to the inventory of the world. The way parts are shoved around so as to create a given structure is indeed what a member of an artificial kind is. Whether this arrangement is achieved with or without intention does not make a difference on the kind to which the object will end up belonging.

³⁸ Both the intention of the original maker and the intention of a later user.

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PRESENZA-ASSENZA O ASCOLTO AUTENTICO.
LA DIPENDENZA ONTOLOGICA IN
HEIDEGGER COMMENTATORE DI ERACLITO

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Abstract: Commenting on some Heraclitean fragments, Heidegger examines the meaning of Being as *λόγος*, affirming the possibility to have access to it through an authentic hearkening. The most interesting aspect about this analysis is that it is outlined a tight ontological dependence — a sort of belonging that comes to be translated as obedience — of the human being with respect to Being. However, the German philosopher doesn't explicitly provide for human agency. This paper aims to give an account of the reading on Heraclitus that Heidegger presents in the '40s and '50, underlying its critical elements in terms of their implications.

Key Words: Heidegger, Heraclitus, logos, ontology, freedom.

*Un paese ci vuole,
non fosse che per il gusto di andarsene via.
Un paese vuol dire non essere soli,
sapere che nella gente, nelle piante,
nella terra c'è qualcosa di tuo,
che anche quando non ci sei resta ad aspettarti.*
Cesare Pavese

1. *Introduzione: due diverse interpretazioni heideggeriane di λόγος*

Uno dei termini cruciali durante l'intera ricerca filosofica di Martin Heidegger è *λόγος*, lemma appartenente al lessico del greco antico che solitamente viene tradotto nelle lingue moderne con la parola 'ragione'. Heidegger menziona il termine *λόγος* sia nelle sue opere giovanili, fortemente influenzate da Husserl e dal confronto di quest'ultimo con le correnti di pensiero a lui contemporanee come ad esempio lo psicologismo (si veda Martin Heidegger 1986: 23-84), sia nei suoi scritti più tardi, in cui l'interesse heideggeriano muove lo sguardo verso il sapere dei presocratici: nell'arco di questi decenni, con l'evolvere del suo pensiero, il filosofo ne fornisce diverse interpretazioni. Di conseguenza, tracciare gli scostamenti nei significati che egli ha attribuito a questo lemma risulta essere anche indicativo dei cambiamenti all'interno della filosofia stessa di Heidegger. In particolare, fino alla pubblicazione di *Essere e tempo* il pensatore ha dimostrato

di comprendere il *λόγος* all'interno di una cornice fenomenologica, ovvero collegato all'attività del *Dasein* inteso come essere-nel-mondo, mentre più tardi il *λόγος* diventa un modo di espressione dell'Essere stesso in cui all'essere umano viene riservato un ruolo meno determinante. Entriamo ora più approfonditamente nel merito della questione.

In *Essere e tempo*, nel proporre una spiegazione della sua definizione di 'fenomenologia' a partire proprio dai termini greci che compongono la parola stessa, Heidegger attesta di concepire il *λόγος* come *δελοῦν*: in sintesi, per il filosofo tedesco *λόγος* equivale a «render manifesto ciò di cui nel discorso 'si discorre'» (Heidegger 2009: 47-49). In tale contesto ermeneutico, Heidegger vede e chiarisce il *λόγος* nelle sue connessioni col *Dasein*, per cui il *λόγος* rappresenta la tendenza dell'essere umano a indicare qualcosa di significativo in un dialogo rivolto ad altri. Si tratta di una elaborazione molto simile a quella proposta da Aristotele nella *Retorica* dove, in effetti, unico luogo all'interno del corpus, lo Stagiritico descrive esplicitamente il *λόγος* affermando che esso «consta di tre elementi: colui che parla, ciò di cui si parla, colui al quale si parla» (Aristotele 2019: 25). In termini heideggeriani, si potrebbe affermare che attraverso il *λόγος* il *Dasein* è in grado di lasciare «vedere qualcosa (*φαίνεσθαι*) e precisamente ciò su cui il discorso verte» (Heidegger 2009: 47) come quella cosa specifica. Il *λόγος*-discorso è quel luogo — privilegiato per l'essere umano, data la sua particolare natura (Aristotele 1993: 6 e 1999: 41) — in cui si manifesta qualcosa mostrandolo, portandolo ad evidenza, ovvero traendolo fuori dall'oblio del nascondimento (Heidegger 2009: 48). Siffatta caratteristica corrisponde a ciò che Heidegger descrive come l'*ἀπόφανσις* del *λόγος*, quest'ultimo qui inteso appunto unicamente come abilità discorsiva: indicare un qualcosa attraverso il linguaggio così che il primo possa essere visto e possa essere esperito negli stessi termini interpretativi anche da altri. Sono queste le basi elementari della struttura dell'«in quanto», ovvero dell'ermeneutica *tout court*, per cui l'essere umano costruisce un mondo attorno a sé: qualcosa da interpretare e comunicare insieme a una comunità di riferimento a cui descriverla (Martin Heidegger 2009: 32-36).

Heidegger collega direttamente tale interpretazione apofantica del *λόγος* con quella della verità come disvelamento, sarebbe a dire della verità pensata in modo greco come *ἀλήθεια*. Sempre nel paragrafo §7 di *Essere e tempo*, Heidegger afferma inoltre che, alla luce di questa specifica funzione, il *λόγος* dovrebbe essere considerato in qualità di una sintesi (*σύνθεσις*), un insieme (si veda Heidegger 2009: 48); in altre parole, il *λόγος* dice di un legame tra cose. Tale legame — sintomo dell'apertura interpretativa del *Dasein* e del suo relazionarsi col mondo (si veda Heidegger 2009: 258-277) — è affermato nel discorso ed è stabilito dal *Dasein* stesso: è l'essere umano che mostra l'ente di cui parla ponendolo in relazione significativa all'interno di una affermazione e lo fa in virtù della necessità di comunicare con altri. Ne consegue che, per tutto il primo periodo e almeno fino alla fine degli anni Venti, il filosofo tedesco comprende il *λόγος* in

modo non direttamente correlato all'Essere ma piuttosto come elemento strutturante che caratterizza il *Dasein*, in quanto l'accento è appunto posto sulla possibilità per l'essere umano di formulare discorsi e, in essi, di mostrare collegamenti di significato interpretando gli enti come tali.

La posizione di Heidegger nei confronti del *λόγος* subirà modifiche significative nei decenni successivi alla sua opera più conosciuta: in seguito, infatti, nel prestare maggiore attenzione al *Sein* nella sua ricerca e quindi considerando il *Dasein* solo alla luce del primo, la lettura che il filosofo fornisce di questo antico termine greco assumerà una connotazione differente. In particolare, nel periodo più maturo del suo pensiero Heidegger comprende il *λόγος* come uno dei modi in cui l'Essere può venire indicato, una manifestazione espressiva dell'Essere stesso. Una delle prime opere heideggeriane in cui è evidente questo mutamento di prospettiva è il corso del semestre estivo del 1935, successivamente pubblicato con il titolo *Introduzione alla metafisica* (Heidegger 1968). Il testo si impegna a prendere in esame l'Essere nel suo complesso e si prefigge di analizzarne quelle che il filosofo riconosce come le sue quattro delimitazioni principali: divenire, apparenza, pensare e dovere. Nell'ultima parte del volume, Heidegger si propone di chiarire la distinzione e il contrasto tra essere e pensiero (Heidegger 1968: 125-199): in particolare, egli sottolinea che una tale distinzione è «richiesta dall'Essere stesso» (Heidegger 1968: 128) e poi esplicita che, in conseguenza di ciò, nella storia della filosofia occidentale la logica è stata largamente intesa come «la scienza del pensare, la dottrina delle regole del pensiero e delle forme del pensato» (Heidegger 1968: 129). Il passaggio sarebbe avvenuto nel modo seguente: la logica e il pensiero, secondo siffatta visione, sono in relazione l'uno con l'altro poiché il pensiero è espresso da frasi e le frasi, a loro volta, seguono le indicazioni descritte, o anche prescritte, dalla logica. Tuttavia, secondo Heidegger, questa comprensione concernente logica e pensiero è di fatto il risultato di secoli di incomprensione riguardo a cosa logica ed Essere siano veramente e, dunque, di come siano effettivamente connessi. Per cui Heidegger invita a ri-pensare logica e *λόγος* dall'inizio, da quelle che egli considera le prime fonti filosofiche. In queste circostanze, il pensatore propone perciò un nuovo modo per tradurre il termine *λόγος* stesso: esso smette di essere sovrapposto al significato di *δελούν*, quindi, invece di una indicazione di manifestazione discorsiva relegata ad una attività specifica dell'essere umano, *λόγος* dovrebbe invece essere compreso a partire dalla sua radice etimologica, ovvero secondo una considerazione più approfondita sul *λέγειν*. Afferma Heidegger:

Λέγω, λέγειν, in latino *legere*, corrisponde, come parola, al nostro “cogliere” (*lesen*), cogliere delle spighe, della legna, dell'uva, o anche “secernere” (*auslese*): la lettura di un libro è solo un caso particolare del “cogliere” nel senso proprio. Questa parola significa: porre una cosa vicino all'altra, metterle insieme, in breve: “raccogliere” (*sammeln*). [...] Ci contenteremo qui soltanto di ricordare che il termine *λόγος*, anche quando da lungo tempo già significava ‘discorso’ o ‘proposizione’, ha mantenuto il

suo significato originario, inteso a designare “il rapporto di una cosa con l’altra”. (Heidegger 1968: 133).¹

Sebbene ci sia stato uno scostamento rispetto alla definizione fornita in precedenza, rimane forte l’idea che l’essere umano abbia ancora un ruolo, tuttavia più limitato, nel raccoglimento rappresentato dal *λόγος*. Cogliere spighe, legna e uva significa stabilire un collegamento tra queste; si raccolgono parole; quindi si pongono una a fianco dell’altra costruendo rapporti tra loro. In altri termini, *λόγος* dice una relazione, una relazione di collegamento e, per questo motivo, finisce per significare *anche* discorso. A tal proposito, Heidegger sancisce:

Una volta afferrata la concezione del *λόγος* come raccoglimento e come insieme raccolto, occorre considerare e tenere fermo quanto segue. Il raccoglimento non è un semplice mettere insieme, un ammuccchiare. Esso mantiene in una coappartenenza reciproca ciò che tenderebbe a separarsi e a contrapporsi. Non lo lascia mai cadere nella mera disposizione e dissipazione. In quanto ritenzione, il *λόγος* ha il carattere dell’imporsi predominante (*Durchwalten*), della φύσις. Il raccoglimento non dissolve ciò che è sottoposto al suo dominio in una vuota assenza di contrarietà, ma lo mantiene, mercé l’unione degli antagonismi, nella massima acutezza della sua tensione. (Heidegger 1968: 133)

L’organizzazione operata dal *λόγος*, lontana da un un caotico disordine senza criterio, situa gli elementi in seno ad una struttura unitaria; questa struttura relazionale si presenta dinamica, appunto come significativa, il che, in altre parole, manifesta un reciproco coinvolgimento seppur nella diversità degli elementi implicati. La differenza caratterizzante ciò che è sottoposto al dominio del *λόγος* è motivo di ricchezza, di varietà in una tensione viva e palpitante. Tuttavia, da queste pagine, la semantica del *λόγος* pare sfuggire alla presa esclusivamente umana. In un certo senso, Heidegger inizia già ad intuire e anche ad esprimere che, così descritto, il *λόγος* come facoltà dell’umano si trova nella possibilità d’azione alla mercé della manifestazione dell’Essere, inteso esso stesso come *λόγος*. Di conseguenza l’analisi del filosofo approfondisce questa risonanza e cerca di ridefinire i confini di pertinenza. Ad ogni modo, nell’opera heideggeriana qui presa in esame, al momento non è esplicito in che termini tale orientamento semantico proposto dall’Essere come *λόγος* venga esperito dall’essere umano, ovvero, detto diversamente, non si spiega come *Dasein* sia in

¹ Per un’approfondita analisi etimologica del termine in questione: «The Greek *logos* retains, from the basic meaning “to gather” of the root *λε/ογ-* and as an almost indelible connotation, the semantic feature of being syntagmatic. Of all the well-known semantic variations of *logos*—“conversation”, “speech”, “tale”, “discourse”, “proverb”, “language”, “counting”, “proportion”, “consideration”, “explanation”, “reasoning”, “reason”, “proposition”, “sentence” — there is barely a single one that does not contain the original sense of “putting together”: the constitution or consideration of a series, of a notionally complex set. As “counting” or “proportion”, *logos* is never an isolated “number”; as “tale”, “discourse”, “proverb”, “proposition”, or “sentence”, it is never (or only never marginally) a “word”, and so on» (Barbara Cassin 2014: 583).

grado di cogliere la significatività dinnanzi a sé. Una analisi più attenta riguardo al *λόγος* eracliteo fornirà più dettagli in tal senso.

2. *Approfondimento della riflessione sul λόγος attraverso i frammenti di Eraclito*

Sempre nel contesto di *Introduzione alla metafisica*, immediatamente dopo aver presentato la riflessione brevemente riassunta poco fa, Heidegger si rivolge al frammento Eraclito B50 col fine di approfondire ulteriormente l'analisi sull'Essere e sul *λόγος*, invero sull'Essere come *λόγος*. Il filosofo offre la seguente traduzione per il frammento in questione:

Poiché avete udito non me, ma il *λόγος*, è saggio dire conformemente: l'Uno è il tutto. (Martin Heidegger 1968: 137)²

Nei paragrafi che seguono la versione, il commento di Heidegger circa questo frammento eracliteo è teoricamente molto articolato e coinvolge altre citazioni tratte dal filosofo presocratico. Ad ogni modo l'aspetto che a nostro avviso dovrebbe essere maggiormente tenuto a mente per il proposito dell'argomentazione che qui si propone è che in queste pagine Heidegger sottolinea la differenza tra udire (*hören*) e ascoltare, collegando un appropriato dare ascolto con una disposizione all'obbedienza rispetto a ciò a cui si presta ascolto (*Hörige zu sein*). In sintesi,

Al semplice udire e orecchiare si contrappone l'autentico essere-ascoltante (*Hörig sein*). Il semplice udire si disperde e si dissipa in ciò che comunemente si opina e si dice, nel sentito-dire, nella *δόξα*, nell'apparenza. (Martin Heidegger 1968: 137).

In tale analisi, la stessa resa di *λόγος* unicamente come facoltà umana del discorso o del linguaggio si mostra nella sua superficialità e, da ultimo, nella sua inadeguatezza. Questo termine, in effetti, esprime inizialmente un senso più originario e poi — solo successivamente, in modo derivato — giunge a designare ciò che ora chiamiamo 'discorso' o 'linguaggio'. In queste pagine il ragionamento di Heidegger evidenzia che per i Greci, all'inizio del pensiero filosofico, *λόγος* possedeva un significato diverso, più profondo, ma soprattutto denotava una dimensione non unicamente riconducibile all'essere umano e alle sue facoltà peculiari. Alcune domande, di conseguenza, sorgono dalle considerazioni che il filosofo suggerisce. Prima di tutto, perché è necessario porre una differenza tra udire e ascoltare? Secondo, in quale senso ascoltiamo il *λόγος*?

Heidegger argomenta che la distinzione tra udire e ascoltare è necessaria per una comprensione più meditata del pensiero di Eraclito. Infatti, se solitamente il frammento B50 è interpretato traducendo il termine *λόγος* con 'parola' o 'discorso', allora la lezione che se ne trae è che, udendo la parola o il discorso, è

² In greco: «οὐκ ἔμοῦ, ἀλλὰ τοῦ λόγου ἀκούσαντας ὁμολογεῖν σοφόν ἐστὶν ἔν πάντα εἶναί».

saggio dire che tutto è uno. Inoltre, in tale lettura emerge la priorità del *λόγος*-parola o del *λόγος*-discorso rispetto a chi li proclama. Di conseguenza, sembra che ciò che appare come più rilevante sia esattamente il *λόγος*-parola, che, nella terminologia heideggeriana, equivarrebbe ad una priorità dell'ontico sull'ontologico, degli enti sull'Essere. Questa è la ragione per cui, dalla sua prospettiva filosofica, Heidegger conclude che una tale interpretazione non possa essere il modo appropriato per leggere il frammento eracliteo. Per dimostrare il suo disaccordo in questo senso, Heidegger si rifà al frammento B1, che traduce come di seguito:

Ora, mentre il *λόγος* permane costantemente tale, gli uomini si comportano come degli insipienti (*ἄζύνητοι*), così prima di avere inteso come dopo di aver udito. Tutto infatti diviene essente *κατὰ τὸν λόγον τόνδε*, a misura e secondo questo *λόγος*; nondimeno essi (gli uomini) assomigliano a quelli che, privi d'audacia, non hanno mai fatto esperienza di nulla, benché si affannino tanto in parole ed opere, come quelle che io compio allorché analizzo ogni cosa *κατὰ φύσιν*, secondo l'essere, e spiego come essa si comporti. Ma agli altri uomini (alla generalità: *οἱ πολλοί*) rimane nascosto ciò che essi propriamente fanno quando sono svegli, come quello che han fatto nel sonno ridiviene in seguito per essi nascosto. (Martin Heidegger 1968: 136)³

e al frammento B34:

Coloro che non raccolgono il costante insieme sono degli audienti che assomigliano ai sordi (Martin Heidegger 1968: 138).⁴

Nel commentare esegeticamente questi passaggi il filosofo tedesco, parlando di coloro che sono presenti ma in realtà si comportano come se fossero assenti, sottolinea che Eraclito impiega il lemma *ἄζύνητοι*, termine che attesta una mancanza di comprensione. Una comprensione di cosa?, si — e ci — chiede il pensatore. Del *λόγος*, risponde. Collegando questi ultimi frammenti con il frammento B50, Heidegger vede in effetti una possibile negazione del fatto che gli esseri umani ascoltino propriamente il *λόγος* nel loro udire. Quanto affermato da Eraclito, dice Heidegger, è piuttosto che «gli uomini non pervengono al *logos* nemmeno se lo tentano con le parole» (Martin Heidegger 1968: 138). Quindi gli esseri umani odono parole, odono discorsi, ma di fatto non *ascoltano* propriamente quello che dovrebbe essere sentito. Più esplicitamente,

³ Fragment 1: «τοῦ δὲ λόγου τοῦδ' ἐόντος αἰεὶ ἀζύνητοι γίνονται ἄνθρωποι καὶ πρόσθεν ἢ ἀκοῦσαι καὶ ἀκούσαντες τὸ πρῶτον· γινομένων γὰρ πάντων κατὰ τὸν λόγον τόνδε ἀπείροισιν εἰκόσκι πειρώμενοι καὶ ἐπέων καὶ ἔργων τοιοῦτων ὁκοίων ἐγὼ διηγέσθαι κατὰ φύσιν διαιρέων ἕκαστον καὶ φράζων ὅπως ἔχει· τοὺς δὲ ἄλλους ἀνθρώπους λανθάνει ὁκόσα ἐγεργθέντες ποιοῦσιν ὅκωσπερ ὁκόσα εὐδόντες ἐπιλανθάνονται» (Martin Heidegger 1968: 136).

⁴ Fragment 34: «ἄζύνητοι ἀκούσαντες κωφοῖσιν εἰκόσκι· φάτις αὐτοῖσιν μαρτυρεῖ παρεόντας ἀπεῖναι» (Martin Heidegger 1968: 138).

gli uomini indubbiamente odono, e odono delle parole, ma in questo udire essi non sanno “ascoltare”, ossia seguire ciò che non è udibile come parola, ciò che non costituisce un particolare, ma il *λόγος*. (Martin Heidegger 1968: 138)

La distinzione tra udire e ascoltare diventa necessaria al fine di distinguere tra un mero sentire parole e discorsi ontici da una parte e l’ascolto del *λόγος* dall’altra. È il *λόγος* — e non parole umane — ciò che dovrebbe essere appreso. Dalle considerazioni tracciate è chiaro che, secondo la lettura heideggeriana, per Eraclito non è possibile ridurre il *λόγος* alle parole. Similmente, non è possibile ridurre l’ascolto al sentire. Il semplice sentire diventa opinione, *δόξα*, rimane sulla superficie della nostra comunicazione e non nutre il pensiero più importante, ovvero la domanda sull’Essere. Al contrario, il mero sentire — e, di conseguenza, il mero discorrere — ci allontana da essa. Gli esseri umani abitano questo mondo come se fossero assenti, poiché mantengono la conversazione tra loro a questo livello: si occupano degli enti, ma l’Essere non diventa mai argomento. L’Essere non diventa mai *la* domanda. Eppure, il centro stesso dell’essere umano è attraversato dalla possibilità di una tale domanda, dalla possibilità di un più profondo ascoltare, un prestare attenzione, un accordo con il senso dell’Essere. Heidegger afferma:

al semplice udire e orecchiare si contrappone l’autentico essere-ascoltante (*Hörig-sein*). [...] Noi non possiamo udire (*hören*) autenticamente se non siamo già disposti all’ubbidienza (*Hörige*). (Martin Heidegger 1968: 138)

Quindi, in aggiunta, Heidegger parla di un’ubbidienza al *λόγος* per coloro che sono in grado di coglierne la chiamata. Questo tema — che è in effetti tanto intricato quanto delicato — lascia aperte molte questioni alle quali Heidegger di fatto non risponde in modo esaustivo in queste pagine. Di fatto, la terminologia che il filosofo sceglie e utilizza nel passaggio sopraindicato sembra suggerire indicazioni circa una comprensione dell’ascolto del *Dasein* come di un coinvolgimento necessario nel dipanarsi dell’Essere stesso, un coinvolgimento che esprime — più precisamente, dice — una conseguente ubbidienza del *Dasein* al *Sein*. Tuttavia non viene fornita alcuna indicazione su quali siano i termini in cui questa obbedienza si manifesti o se una tale obbedienza possa essere in qualche modo elusa.

3. Ancora sull’ascolto autentico e sul suo legame con l’appartenenza

Alla luce della distinzione poc’anzi tracciata tra udire e ascoltare, come comprendere, allora, il *λόγος*? Viene detto che esso è udibile ma non è una parola, per di più il suo carattere più originario non è identificabile con il discorso o il dire (si veda Martin Heidegger 1968: 136). Se il *λόγος* è più che meramente e strettamente parole, se esso non è sovrapponibile al discorso ma, piuttosto, è più

originario rispetto ai due, come possiamo ascoltarlo? Come possiamo entrare in sintonia con il *λόγος*? In altre parole, si tratta di una attività intellettuale? O in qualche modo viene coinvolto anche il corpo? In *Introduzione alla metafisica*, Heidegger non si confronta con questa specifica problematica, ma in altre opere successive affronta in parte questo tema. Qui attesta solamente che

L'autentico ascoltare non ha invece nulla che fare con l'orecchio e con la bocca, [...] l'ubbidienza non ha nulla a che fare coi padiglioni auricolari. (Martin Heidegger 1968: 138)

Nella citazione appena riportata, Heidegger suggerisce solo che le orecchie fisiche non abbiano niente a che fare con un ascolto appropriato. In altri termini, egli sembra affermare che la dimensione corporea è solo secondaria rispetto a un altro livello di comprensione. La stessa posizione è espressa in un corso su Eraclito che Heidegger tenne qualche anno dopo, nel semestre estivo del 1944, successivamente pubblicato col titolo "La dottrina eraclitea del logos" (Martin Heidegger 2015: 121-252). Di nuovo, come durante il corso del 1935, il filosofo cerca di capire il percorso del *λόγος* attraverso la storia della filosofia occidentale, partendo dal momento in cui tale parola esprimeva una manifestazione dell'Essere fino a quando venne a indicare la scienza o dottrina del pensiero. Heidegger, infatti, è interessato a una analisi più profonda di quanto Eraclito intendesse con *λόγος*, ovvero, di cosa Eraclito colse con questo termine e cosa, attraverso la storia della metafisica, è stato perso rispetto a quella intuizione iniziale. Ma, ancor di più, è preoccupato del *modo* in cui avviene tale ascolto. Qui, e non per caso direi, Heidegger si confronta ancora una volta col frammento B50 e, circa l'argomento dell'ascolto, afferma:

Anzi il prestare ascolto [*Hinhören*] avviene laddove non ci colpisce alcuna percezione, là dove non risuona proprio nulla. (Martin Heidegger 2015: 161)

Ancora più esplicitamente, aggiunge:

Noi non ascoltiamo perché abbiamo orecchi, ma abbiamo orecchi e possiamo essere dotati di orecchi solo in quanto ascoltiamo. (Martin Heidegger 2015: 163)

Parafrasando le parole di Heidegger, tenendo inoltre a mente qualcuna delle altre sue opere come per esempio *Che cosa è metafisica?* (Martin Heidegger 2001), potremmo asserire che abbiamo orecchie così che possiamo ascoltare il Niente e il Niente è udibile ma non nel senso in cui percepiamo i suoni. L'ascolto autentico dell'Essere come *λόγος* trascende la nostra corporeità e, anzi, Heidegger sembra suggerire che la nostra stessa struttura corporea consegue a una più essenziale caratteristica che precede la dimensione corporea dell'essere umano in quanto tale. A partire dalla necessaria capacità di ascoltare che ci contraddistingue possiamo avere organi che permettono un ascolto *anche* fisico.

Ne *La dottrina eraclitea del logos*, Heidegger compie un passo successivo rispetto ad *Introduzione alla metafisica*: non solo mette in rilievo l'etimologia relazionale del *λόγος*, ma propone un sofisticato gioco terminologico riferendosi sia all'Esserci che all'Essere. Discutendo la dottrina di Eraclito, la traduzione che Heidegger propone del frammento B50 si modifica come segue:

Se non avete ascoltato soltanto me, ma avete prestato ascolto al *Λόγος* (disposti verso di esso), il sapere (consiste in questo), nel dire — dicendo la stessa cosa che dice il *Λόγος* — che tutto è uno. (Martin Heidegger 2015: 171)⁵

Il cambiamento dei termini di traduzione delle parole di Eraclito sono da imputare ad una diversa definizione del *λόγος* che Heidegger fornisce nel contesto di questo corso e che si riferisce ancora all'etimologia del lemma greco, alla sua radice semantica, in cui evidentemente traspare una dimensione relazionale, ma si configura diversamente l'assetto dei ruoli tra essere umano ed Essere. In effetti, Heidegger elabora la sua riflessione nel modo seguente:

Il *Λόγος* di cui parla Eraclito, in quanto è inteso come raccolta [*Lese*] e riunione [*Sammlung*] ed è l'uno che tutto unifica, non è una qualità riscontrabile all'interno dell'ente. Questo *Λόγος* è la riunificazione [*Versammlung*] originaria che custodisce l'ente in quanto esso è l'ente che è. Questo *Λόγος* è l'essere stesso nel quale ogni ente dispiega la propria essenza. (Martin Heidegger 2015: 182-183)⁶

A questo punto, Heidegger congiunge direttamente l'etimologia di *λόγος* col raccoglimento che si propone *da sé* in maniera unitaria, senza passare per la mediazione dell'attività impositiva del collegare da parte dell'essere umano, come invece accaduto in precedenza: ora si tratta di enfatizzare massimamente la manifestazione di ciò che è e che si dà in guisa di un raccoglimento, sotto forma di un delimitato presentarsi uno e significativo. Spighe, legna e uva si consegnano a noi già in modo significativo e quindi, riconoscendone la somiglianza, procediamo ponendole una a fianco dell'altra: esse si propongono così che noi possiamo *dire* una connessione tra loro. In altre parole, *λόγος* pone una relazione, una relazione che è, una relazione *ontologica* che è diretta espressione dell'Essere stesso. Interrompendo la concezione secondo cui il *λόγος* dovrebbe essere luogo

⁵ Si noterà in tale citazione, così come in quelle immediatamente seguenti tratte da Heidegger, una lambda maiuscola nel termine greco *Λόγος*: più di seguito, nel quarto paragrafo del presente articolo, verrà proposta un'interpretazione per la scelta effettuata in questo contesto da parte del filosofo, per ora possiamo solo anticipare che la differenza tra *Λόγος* e *λόγος* rispecchia quella tra *Sein* e *Dasein*.

⁶ E qui Heidegger prosegue con le seguenti affermazioni: «Seguire col pensiero questo *Λόγος* non è certamente seguire la logica nel senso corrente. Noi conserviamo una la denominazione “logica, ma intendiamo ora con questo termine qualcosa di meno definito, vale a dire la meditazione “sul *Λόγος*”, nel quale l'essere stesso si annuncia inizialmente, quell'essere che si disvela come ciò che deve essere pensato originariamente. Occuparsi di “logica” significa semplicemente imparare a esperire ciò che veramente deve essere pensato, l'essere stesso [...]».

di comunicazione dell'essere umano, facoltà di indicazione interpretativa, esso invece ora designa un raccoglimento di qualcosa che si presenta dinanzi a noi come *già* significativo, prima ancora dell'intervento linguistico dell'essere umano. Ancora meglio: un raccoglimento ontologico che manifesta la relazione di ciò che si dischiude. La definizione che Heidegger propone in questo testo sembra riferirsi ad una unità composta da elementi colti in un insieme, stabilendo così una connessione. In questo senso, la connessione non è completamente arbitraria ma emerge sulla base di un criterio di significatività: ciò che è coinvolto in tale unità si presenta all'interno di una unitarietà che lo colloca in una posizione precisa rispetto al resto. *Λόγος* è un insieme che si manifesta in una unità di elementi differenti, organizzati insieme in modo da essere significativi. Il termine greco *λόγος*, prima di qualsiasi altra connotazione, esprime un evento: l'evento di un raccoglimento significativo. Questo è il motivo per cui Heidegger si riferisce al *Λόγος* come all'Essere stesso: *Λόγος* è uno dei modi in cui l'Essere manifesta se stesso — nelle sembianze del *Λόγος*, l'Essere si mostra come un insieme di relazioni strutturali e strutturate; attraverso questo raccoglimento, in tale unità, ciò che è coinvolto viene mantenuto in una sorta di reciproca appartenenza. Detto altrimenti, ciò che è tenuto insieme trova, in tale raccoglimento, la sua collocazione propria, un significato, un senso. Noi abitiamo un mondo non neutro: l'azione linguistica dell'essere umano parte da una situazione di significato in qualche modo compromessa, con una configurazione pre-stabilita. Ciò non significa che l'essere umano non abbia nessun potere circa queste espressioni ontologiche, però si riconosce che, nel momento in cui veniamo al mondo, veniamo a un mondo di significati e tali significati ci in-formano a partire dal nostro primo respiro: «respirare coniuga inseparabilmente l'esser-ci e l'essere-con» (Luce Irigaray 1996: 11).⁷ L'Essere si esplicita in una maniera significativa, strutturale, relazionale e, in questo modo, l'esperienza dell'Essere avviene prestandogli ascolto.

Fino ad ora abbiamo visto Heidegger enfatizzare la dimensione non fisica dell'ascolto del *λόγος*: nelle affermazioni precedentemente riportate, infatti, sembra che Heidegger sia determinato a superare la sfera corporea dell'ascolto. In effetti, quest'ultima appare al pensatore come una limitazione — limitazione qui intesa in senso negativo, come foriera di impossibilità — dell'effettiva relazione del *Dasein* rispetto all'Essere. Questa, tuttavia, non sembra essere la posizione che invece lo stesso Heidegger prospetta nei seminari di Zollikon. Durante uno di quegli incontri, infatti, egli ritorna sul tema del *λόγος* e dell'ascolto evidenziando stavolta la dimensione fisica dell'esperienza del *Dasein*:

⁷ Altrove, l'autrice approfondisce: «Il primo gesto di autonomia compiuto dal piccolo umano è il respirare da solo, un gesto che nella maggior parte dei casi non si compie senza angoscia e senza sofferenza. In genere, il primo respiro autonomo del neonato si accompagna a un grido, e non assomiglia di certo a un grido di gioia!» (Luce Irigaray 2011: 27).

Ascoltare e parlare, quindi il *linguaggio in generale*, sono anche sempre *fenomeni del corpo*. Ascoltare è un essere-col-tema in modo corporeo. Ascoltare qualcosa implica di per sé la relazione del corpo con ciò che viene ascoltato. Il corpo [*Leiben*] appartiene sempre all'essere-nel-mondo. Determina sempre l'essere nel mondo, l'apertura e l'avere un mondo. (Martin Heidegger 2001: 96-97)⁸

Generalmente Heidegger non si mostra incline a parlare della dimensione corporea dell'essere umano nella sua elaborazione filosofica (si veda Daniela Vallega-Neu 2018: 49-52), tuttavia la sfera fisica è sempre sullo sfondo della sua riflessione e viene in effetti riportata in numerose esemplificazioni. Forse Heidegger, nelle considerazioni di natura ontologica, si sforza di evitare l'utilizzo di parole che potrebbero essere direttamente riducibili alla dimensione fisica o corporea dell'essere umano così da prevenire una sovrapposizione o una riduzione dell'essere del *Dasein* solamente ai suoi confini corporei.⁹ L'aspetto più importante, per il ragionamento che si propone in questa sede, è che in realtà questa dimensione corporea è sempre implicata nella nostra attività di ascolto dell'Essere, anche se il vero e proprio udire non può essere riducibile o unicamente riconducibile a ciò che viene percepito solo dalle nostre orecchie. Ciò significa che prestare attenzione al *Λόγος* è una attività complessiva che coinvolge il nostro essere nella sua totalità e, di conseguenza, che la nostra appartenenza all'Essere è un evento che ci riguarda a tutto tondo.

4. *Λόγος ed essere umano*

Un aspetto importante che, a mio avviso, viene raramente trattato col giusto risalto nella letteratura secondaria di matrice continentale è che, in questa opera come in opere successive, Heidegger — sempre molto attento e preciso nella sua scrittura — cambia in maiuscolo la lettera iniziale del termine *Λόγος*. A volte usa la lambda in maiuscolo e altre volte no. In effetti, in *Introduzione alla metafisica*, anche nei passaggi in cui si definisce il termine e che paiono risuonare in modo analogo nei corsi su Eraclito, *λόγος* compare sempre con l'iniziale minuscola. Secondo l'interpretazione di Heidegger che si propone in questa sede, il filosofo tedesco, riconoscendo inizialmente che il *Λόγος* è l'Essere, distingue tra *λόγος* e *Λόγος* nello stesso modo in cui distingue *Dasein* e *Sein*. Anche se il *Dasein* non è e non può essere designato come il luogo proprio, l'effettiva fonte dell'Essere, ciò

⁸ Traduzione italiana mia; "anche" è enfattizzato da Heidegger, il resto è enfasi mia. Di seguito l'originale tedesco: «Hören und Sprachen und damit Sprache überhaupt ist immer *auch* ein Leibphänomen. Das Hören ist ein Leibend-beim-Thema-sein. Das Hören auf etwas ist in sich der Bezug des Leibens zum Gehörten. Das Leiben gehört immer mit zum In-der-Welt-sein. Es bestimmt das In-der-Welt-sein, das Offensein, das Haben von Welt immer mit». (Heidegger 1987: 126)

⁹ Concordo con quanto affermato da Daniela Vallega-Neu: «This bodying-forth is fundamentally ecstatic, in Heidegger's account. The limit of bodying-forth is not the skin, not even what lies within the scope of our senses, but rather the horizon of being in which I dwell (ZS 87)» (Daniela Vallega-Neu 2018: 300).

nondimeno il *Dasein* è in una connessione profonda con esso: l'Essere riverbera nel e attraverso l'Esserci. *Dasein* non è un ente tra gli altri enti, ma non è nemmeno un Essere tra gli enti. Gli esseri umani occupano un posto peculiare in questo mondo: situati tra lo spazio ontico e la dimensione ontologica, apparentemente liberi di agire sugli enti eppure Niente è davvero in loro potere. Paradossalmente, la libertà dell'essere umano è assolutamente legata all'Essere:¹⁰ la libertà dell'essere umano si esprime come dipendenza ontologica dall'Essere. Infatti Heidegger, in “La dottrina eraclitea del logos” (Martin Heidegger 2015: 163 e 2015: 171), seguendo alla lettera il frammento B50 di Eraclito, afferma che *l'ὁμολογεῖν* è saggio: dire lo stesso che dice il *Λόγος* è saggio; esprimere attraverso il *λόγος* umano lo stesso che il *Λόγος* manifesta è la forma di conoscenza più rilevante. Il pensatore tedesco sancisce:

Il sapere, nel senso di *τό σοφόν, ἡ σοφία*, è l'essere a conoscenza di, l'aver pratica di. Tale sapere equivale in se stesso anche all'autentico esser pronti ad agire e a fare, che si determina però a partire dal prestare ascolto [*Hinhören*]. [...] Il sapere autentico è in se stesso *λέγειν καὶ ποιεῖν*, che in via del tutto preliminare traduciamo con “dire” e “fare” (parola e azione). (Martin Heidegger 2015:164)

Il sapere autentico, il tipo di conoscenza a cui la stessa filosofia è etimologicamente legata, si esplica nel dire e nel fare. Dire e fare, sottolinea il filosofo tedesco, che hanno origine da un prestare ascolto. Tale prestare ascolto, conclude, si manifesta sotto forma di una *ποιεσις*, una attività poetica: a partire dall'ascolto autentico si produce qualcosa, lo si propone dinanzi così da contribuire a fare mondo. D'altra parte, afferma altrove, «noi non pensiamo ancora in modo abbastanza decisivo l'essenza dell'agire» (Heidegger 1995: 31). Se avessimo pensato veramente a fondo l'essenza dell'agire sapremmo che questo termine, invece di indicare una sorta di conseguenza sulla realtà, in effetti stabilisce un «portare a compimento (*Vollbringen*)» (Heidegger 1995: 31). Il pensatore non sembra lasciare alcun margine di scelta, neanche uno spiraglio di possibilità altra: *se* si ascolta autenticamente, allora è vera sapienza e questa sapienza si manifesta come dire e fare. L'ascolto autentico diventa autentico dire e agire. Avendo prestato ascolto autenticamente, avendo prestato ascolto all'Essere con tutto il nostro essere, ci si esprime di conseguenza. È come se Heidegger si sforzasse di mostrare una necessità intrinseca alla dinamica di ascolto e sapienza a cui l'essere umano, proprio in virtù del suo *λόγος*, non può sfuggire. In altri termini, una dipendenza ontologica: il vero sapiente sa di non poter fare altro che rendere se stesso, letteralmente, portavoce dell'Essere. Costatato ciò, ci si potrebbe domandare quali sarebbero le basi di siffatta

¹⁰ In questo scritto, procedo evidenziando lo scarto ontologico tra essere umano ed Essere attraverso l'utilizzo della maiuscola per quel che concerne il secondo termine. Si sottolinea in questo modo l'origine della dimensione ontologica — non solo ontica — che caratterizza l'umano, lasciando comunque spazio per l'eccedenza che inevitabilmente l'Essere rappresenta rispetto all'uomo.

dipendenza ontologica, ovvero chiedersi perché essa sia possibile. A tal riguardo, Heidegger precisa:

Ma come potrebbe qualcosa venirci incontro in un rapporto di disponibile attenzione, se questo qualcosa che viene verso di noi non fosse già in possesso di noi stessi, in quanto noi in qualche modo gli apparteniamo? Se così fosse, allora l'udire, lo stare in ascolto, l'essere attenti ad una cosa alla quale noi già apparteniamo, alluderebbero ad una condizione di soggezione [*Hörigkeit*] che non ha niente a che fare con la schiavitù, perché tale soggezione originaria, che equivale all'essere aperti verso l'aperto, sarebbe la libertà stessa. (Martin Heidegger 2015: 161-162)

La libertà per l'essere umano è riconoscere la sua essenziale ed originaria appartenenza all'Essere, ascoltarne i riverberi e lasciarsi guidare da essi nell'apertura di significato che gli si dischiude dinnanzi. Una tale appartenenza paradossale è spiegata da Heidegger in un seminario proposto nel 1951, dove, accanto ad ascolto e obbedienza — forse con un tono meno normativo ma equamente determinato —, parla di appartenenza. Ancora una volta sul *λόγος* e ancora una volta commentando su Eraclito, Heidegger attesta:

Fino a che ascoltiamo soltanto il suono di una parola come espressione di un parlante, non ascoltiamo ancora affatto. In tal modo non arriveremo mai ad aver una volta udito autenticamente qualcosa. Ma quando, invece, accade ciò? Abbiamo udito (*gehört*), quando apparteniamo (*gehören*) a ciò che viene detto. Il parlare della parola che ci viene rivolta è *λέγειν*, lasciar-essere-insieme-dinnanzi. Appartenere alla parola che ci è detta non vuol dire altro che questo: ogni volta lasciar stare insieme dinnanzi nel suo complesso (*Gesamt*) ciò che un lasciar-stare-dinnanzi ci presenta. (Martin Heidegger 2018: 147).

La riflessione sull'etimologia del *λόγος*, come abbiamo visto, porta Heidegger ad enfatizzare l'aspetto relazionale intrinseco al termine e, dunque, ad indicare il coinvolgimento che interessa il *Dasein* all'interno dell'Essere. La capacità del *Dasein* di ascoltare il *Sein* nella sua manifestazione, così come l'abilità dell'essere umano di agire di conseguenza, avviene poiché il *Dasein* è in grado di sentire il riverbero, l'eco dell'Essere. Un tale riverbero è percepito dall'essere umano perché, come riportato poco sopra, questi già appartiene all'essere e può quindi prestargli attenzione.¹¹ Allo stesso tempo, grazie all'abilità di agire e dire attraverso il *λόγος*, gli esseri umani — in particolare pensatori e poeti (si veda ad esempio Martin Heidegger: 2017) — possono esprimere poeticamente l'appartenenza all'Essere o, al contrario, se mancano di autentico ascolto, celare questa appartenenza. Se il *λόγος* dice questa dinamica di ascolto e appartenenza, quale può essere, dunque, la descrizione dell'umano come *ζῶον λόγον ἔχον*? La domanda è estremamente pertinente all'analisi della lettura del frammento eracliteo poiché in B50 il filosofo greco parla di *λόγος* e di *ὁμολογεῖν*, che viene

¹¹ La posizione heideggeriana in questo senso è già chiara in *Essere e tempo*, anche se in quell'opera il *Dasein* mantiene una relazione differente e priore con l'essere.

indicato nei termini dell'attività più saggia. Dunque, attraverso la descrizione del *Λόγος* come Essere viene proposta anche un'interpretazione dell'essenza dell'essere umano, nonostante sia ribadito che per quest'ultimo potrebbe risultare difficoltoso essere sempre in sintonia con la propria natura più intima (si veda Martin Heidegger: 182-183).¹² La definizione dell'essere umano come *ζῶον λόγον ἔχον*, dunque, lontano dal definire un animale razionale e calcolante, lontano dall'indicare una facoltà scientifica separata dalla sfera fisica, lontano dall'indicare un animale linguistico, ci dice di una essenziale capacità di ascoltare l'Essere e, quindi, di essere in sintonia con esso, in sintonia con il sempre significativo accadere che è. L'essere umano è l'animale che ha il *λόγος* perché è animale attento al senso di ciò che è e poiché attraverso il suo esprimersi, corporeo o linguistico che sia, si fa portatore di significatività. Solamente in virtù di una riflessione così attenta del *Λόγος* Heidegger può arrivare a dire che «l'uomo è pastore dell'essere» (Martin Heidegger 1995: 56).¹³ Quando l'essere umano ascolta il *Λόγος*, l'essere umano diventa la voce del *Λόγος*. Abbiamo una possibilità di eludere il *Λόγος* una volta che lo abbiamo ascoltato? Heidegger non risponde. Egli sembra dire che all'uomo sono riservate solo due possibilità: o non sentiamo e non ci armonizziamo col *Λόγος*, vivendo un'esistenza assente nel mezzo di opinioni superficiali e mera chiacchiera; oppure prestiamo ascolto al *Λόγος*, quindi non possiamo che agire e parlare di conseguenza. Quando l'essere umano diviene consapevole della sua appartenenza all'Essere, la sua ubbidienza all'essere è la conoscenza più saggia che possa conseguire.

Ascoltare risulta essenzialmente connesso con l'appartenenza. All'inizio del testo, abbiamo già visto il tentativo di Heidegger di indicare una connessione di obbedienza tra l'essere umano e l'Essere per via del *λόγος*. In alcune opere successive le considerazioni di Heidegger procedono ulteriormente: ora il filosofo vede la possibilità di ascolto dell'Essere da parte dell'essere umano fondata in una appartenenza così essenziale per il *Dasein* da rischiare quasi di cadere nell'oblio. Ascoltare e quindi appartenere significa che la chiamata dell'Essere ci parla costantemente, ma che rischiamo di dimenticare come prestarvi attenzione, come ascoltarla. Dice anche che non possiamo sfuggire a qualsivoglia situazione significativa, che in ogni aspetto della nostra esistenza siamo chiamati dall'Essere e che abbiamo la facoltà non solo di ascoltarlo ma anche di manifestare l'Essere attraverso il nostro modo di essere — il *Dasein* come mediatore del *Sein*.

¹² In particolare: «L'uomo è caratterizzato dal *λόγος*. Il *λόγος* è ciò che l'uomo possiede di più caratterizzante»; e ancora: «Ma, se riflettiamo rigorosamente e sufficientemente, da tutto quanto siamo venuti dicendo dobbiamo desumere che l'uomo, con il suo *λόγος*, può nell' *ὁμολογεῖν* essere in rapporto col *Λόγος*, ma che non lo è sempre, anzi forse lo è raramente» (Martin Heidegger 2015: 201).

¹³ Nella stessa opera, Heidegger precede tale affermazione con le seguenti formulazioni: «L'avvento dell'ente riposa nel destino dell'essere. All'uomo resta il problema di trovare la destinazione con-veniente (*das Schickliche*) alla sua essenza, che corrisponda a questo destino (*Geschick*)» (Martin Heidegger 1995: 56).

In conclusione, seguendo la riflessione heideggeriana sull'Essere come *Λόγος* attraverso le interpretazioni del frammento di Eraclito, possiamo dire che il significato della nostra esistenza ci sta già accadendo, sta già venendo a noi, già apparteniamo ad esso. Dobbiamo solo prestargli ascolto.

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THEORY-INDEXED MORAL CONTEXTUALISM

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Abstract: One way to understand the nature of our moral disagreements is to study the meaning of moral discourse. Nonetheless, Metaethical Theories that account for these disagreements face important challenges. For instance, if our theory of moral terms assigns them a reference too specifically related to a contextual parameter, we might be ruling out the substantiality of moral disagreements (e.g., while ‘To eat people is wrong’ is plausibly true relative to our culture, it’d be false for a community of cannibals). This paper (1) explores the theoretical room for a contextualist account of moral terms that models the substantiality of moral disagreements; (2) sketches the characterization of the contextual parameter these terms’ meaning is sensitive to; and (3) shows the tools this account has to avoid reducing moral disagreements to merely linguistic ones.

Keywords: moral twin-earth; moral contextualism; moral disagreements; verbal disagreements; moral externalism.

1. Introduction

In the present paper¹, I would like to account for what I call *Theory-Indexed Moral Contextualism*. That is: a contextualist and realist account for moral terms. In Section 1, I present Horgan and Timmons’ Moral Twin-Earth argument that purports to argue against any approach with fixed references for moral terms. In Section 2, I present an empirical test provided by Khoo and Knobe about our semantic intuitions that I use as the ground to account *contra* the Moral Twin-Earth Argument’s conclusions. In Section 3, I elaborate on how a contextualist approach to moral terms would look like. Finally, in Section 4, I use a Hirsch-like argument to reveal the commitment of speakers’ claims under a moral disagreement by showing how moral disagreements under contextualist modeling of moral terms can still be substantive.

2. On Moral Twin Earths

Horgan and Timmons (1991, 1992a, b) propose the following thought experiment. Let’s imagine that on the planet Earth, earthlings behave, think, and argue morally according to Consequentialist principles. And whenever earthlings use moral terms, like ‘good’, to evaluate their actions, the references of those will

¹ In the present work I show the main ideas argued in my postgraduate thesis (2021) in the University of Tartu.

be related to Consequentialist properties (e.g., what maximizes expected utility). Let us say that the extension of the predicate ‘good’ used by the earthlings is *Ec*. That is, *Ec* the set of whatever falls under the predicate ‘good’ that earthlings use. On the other hand, on another planet Twin-Earth, twin-earthlings behave, think and argue morally according to Deontological principles. And whenever twin-earthlings use moral terms, like ‘good’, to evaluate their actions, the reference of those will be around Deontological properties (e.g., what honors Kantian categorical imperative). Similarly, let’s say that the extension of the predicate ‘good’ used by the twin-earthlings is *Ed*. Furthermore, let us concede that *lying for saving a life* is considered as a good thing according to Consequentialist principles, but as something wrong by Deontologist principles. For exposition purposes, let’s name ‘Coco’ and ‘Dede’ our representatives of each respective planet². Let’s now imagine that Dede, a twin-earthling, manages to go to Earth and she argues with Coco, an earthling, about the truth of the sentence ‘Lying for saving a life is good’. As Horgan and Timmons (H&T) point out, there is an intuitive sense in which the earthling, Coco, and the twin-earthling, Dede, are having a moral disagreement. In that sense, they are arguing about whether *lying for saving a life* is morally good or not and not merely about something linguistic. If we are to take Coco-Dede’s disagreement as a substantive moral disagreement, and not as a merely linguistic one, H&T argue that we would need to take their uses of ‘(morally) good’ as referring to the same property. Otherwise, if we take Coco and Dede to be arguing about if *lying for saving a life* is morally *good_c* or morally *wrong according to its coherence with so and so principles*, H&T point out that a strong moral relativism comes into place since we can take both Coco and Dede to hold something true at the same time. That is, it would be simultaneously true that lying for saving a life is *good_c*, and also that lying for saving a life is not *good_d*. If we follow a standard treatment³ of reference fixation and we claim that meaning is determined by the properties causally regulating the uses of a term, we will have to admit that some sort of relativism seems to be in place. Insofar as earthlings’ and twin-earthlings’ moral claims are causally regulated by different properties, their moral terms will refer to different properties. Since *lying for saving a life* is part of the extension *Ec* but not of the extension *Ed*, then the earthling’s ‘good’ and the twin-earthling’s ‘good’ are not co-extensional. That drives H&T to argue that one of the following must be false:

- (1) Moral properties causally regulate how we use moral terms. The extension of moral terms is determined by the moral principles ruling the user’s community.

² The names ‘Coco’ and ‘Dede’ weren’t mentioned by H&T but by me for exposition purposes

³ I understand a *standard* metaseantics as what the *Causal Theory of Reference* (Boyd 1988), or what Putnam’s *Twin-Earth Argument* (1975) shows.

(2) The meaning of ‘good’ is the same in Coco-Dede’s dispute.

H&T argue that for understanding Coco and Dede’s exchange as a moral disagreement, we would have to take (2) to be the one that is true. It’s intuitive, they claim, that in this kind of exchange the earthling and twin-earthling are having a moral disagreement while disagreeing about the truth of ‘Lying for saving a life is good’. And both uses of ‘good’ have to refer to the same property. Denying (2), according to H&T, would rule out the possibility of substantive moral disagreements in cases like the one presented and we would be left only with a merely linguistic disagreement. Since (1) seems to be predicting that two different properties are the ones behind the two uses of ‘good’ by the disagreeing parties, H&T argue that (1) is false, as it is inconsistent with (2). Any story like (1) about how moral terms fix their references has to be false, since it wouldn’t capture the substantivity of the disagreement. That way, we could build a Moral Twin-Earth disagreement scenario with different properties regulating the use of moral terms. If a moral term has a fixed reference R , then a Moral Twin-Earth disagreement scenario can be built with different fixed reference R_2 for the moral terms of the twin-earthlings to show that the intuition about this being a moral disagreement is not compatible with any fixed reference for our moral terms; at least with our standard story of reference fixation. Nevertheless, there are different attempts to escape from this problem. In the following section

David Copp (2007), on the other hand, argues that we could accept as true both (1) and (2) and, at the same time, make that compatible with the satisfaction of the widespread intuition about the earthling and the twin-earthling having a substantive moral disagreement. Copp argues that both communities (earthlings and twin-earthlings) use those terms to guide their behavior. Earthlings and twin-earthlings will disagree in many practical implications of their respective uses of ‘lying for saving a life is good’, for example, earthlings will advise their children to lie when the life of a person is at risk, and twin-earthling will advise their people to avoid or resist lying even when the life of a person is at risk: they will still convey appraisal of actions. Also, Copp argues that it’s plausible to believe that consequentialist’s and deontologist’s ‘good’ share an important part of the extension. Based on that, as Copp (2007: 214-215) puts it, we can think that earthling’s ‘good’ is the best possible translation of twin-earthling’s ‘good’. In that sense, we can consider Coco’s and Dede’s ‘good’ to have the same *meaning*. In order to hold that, Copp reveals what seems to be an assumption from H&T—that I will put in the following terms:

(1) Moral Extensionalism is true: the meaning of a moral term is determined by its extension.

Since (1) is considered true by Copp, the only way to accept (2) too—to argue that the meaning of moral terms in Coco-Dede’s scenario are the same—is by disassociating extension from meaning. That is, Copp thinks of (3) as false. That way, with a broader notion of *meaning*, Copp satisfies our intuition regarding earthlings and twin-earthlings disagreeing morally by holding that the *meaning* of their moral terms is the same.

In the following, I would like to argue –*contra* Horgan and Timmons– not only that we could accept (1) and still consider Coco-Dede’s disagreement as a moral one; but also argue that we don’t have to reject (3) in order to do so.

3. *On the semantics of moral disagreements*

According to Copp, even though moral terms have the same meaning between disputants in moral disagreements, the extension of their moral terms might vary. H&T (2000) replied to Copp that even if we allow terms with the same meaning to have different extensions, problems remain. H&M hold that if our semantic treatment of moral terms in disagreements allows us to assign them the same meaning, we could escape from a relativism about concepts. Nevertheless, if the disputants refer to different properties in the moral disagreement, we wouldn’t be able to escape from a standard relativism: that is, with disagreeing parts holding at the same time something true *relative to their moral principles*. However, I claim that H&T ignored that in some moral disputes, backgrounds are far enough from each other, in order to think that necessarily one of the disputants is mistaken. About that, Khoo and Knobe (2018) have defended the plausibility of moral contextualism by taking semantic intuitions empirically tested as a guide. Let’s observe:

The experiment tested the semantic intuition about the existence of exclusionary content in a moral disagreement between two fictional characters uttering opposite moral claims about an action⁴. The intuition was tested in three different scenarios: when the fictional characters belonged to the same culture, when they were from far-away cultures within the same planet (an American student and a warrior from the Amazon), and with an inter-planetary distance between the origin of the characters. The intuition regarding the truth of the claim ‘At least one of them must be wrong’ changed from closer-to-true to closer-to-false while the characters were from further backgrounds. Khoo and Knobe (K&K) argue that the experiment shows that our semantic intuitions regarding the use of moral terms allow room for non-exclusionary disagreements; and that the semantic theorizing for our moral terms should give room for non-exclusionary cases too. That is, even though an individual utters something of the form «*x* is wrong» and another one utters «*x* is not wrong» –if their backgrounds are far enough, our

⁴ An individual that got a new knife and decided to test how sharp it was by stabbing the first person he encountered.

semantics should allow the possibility for both to be saying something true in their own terms.

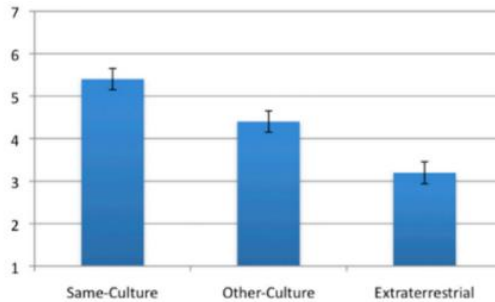


Figure 1. Mean agreement with the claim that “At least one must be wrong” by condition. Error bars show standard error of the mean.

If we want to follow K&K and make our semantic treatment for moral terms to allow space for non-exclusionary disagreements, we still need to explain how a moral disagreement is possible despite denying that necessarily one part is mistaken. We could adopt a Copp-like strategy and say that in a broad sense of ‘meaning’ we have moral disputants to be *meaning* something similar enough with their moral terms for us to consider their disagreement a moral one. That is, even if we are allowing disagreeing parts saying «*x* is wrong» and «*x* isn’t wrong» to be simultaneously correct, following a Copp-like strategy, we could still consider both parts to disagree in virtue of two things. First, in virtue of the partly shared extension of their moral terms; and second, in virtue of the fact that both parts *conventionally use* moral terms for expression of appraisal of actions.

Nevertheless, I think that we could question Copp’s approach in the following way. We could question if the intersection between what consequentialists and deontologists consider as *morally good* is bigger than its complement –as he seems to assume. Or at least argue that his solution isn’t clear enough for moral disagreements where the intersection of the extensions of the moral terms used isn’t bigger than its complement—or even null. In the following, I show the ground under which a Theory-Indexed Contextualist account for the meaning of moral terms finds its way to provide better solutions.

4. Contextualism and non-exclusionary disagreements

Let’s say that an Earthling speaks E-English and a twin-earthling, T-English. Let’s say that the moral sentence *p* is true in E-English but false in T-English. That means that *p* is true in E-English and «*not p*» is true in T-English. The risk of standard relativism appears in formalizations like the previous one because as H&T anticipated, we might be allowing people disagreeing morally to be saying something true at the same time in their different languages. The only logically

consistent way to allow earthlings and twin-earthlings to utter the same moral sentence—but also allow the sentence to be true for one and false for the other—is to argue that that moral sentence has different truth conditions in the earthling utterance and in the twin-earthling one. A disagreement like the previous could only be understood consistently under a *contextualist account*. That is, a moral claim is indexed to a contextual parameter of use in order for it to have truth-conditions.

At the same time, we don't want to reduce absolutely every moral disagreement to a non-exclusionary one based on differences in truth-conditions. If we are to follow K&K's test regarding our moral semantic intuitions, we should also allow room for exclusionary disagreements: that is, we should allow that people can express the same moral proposition from the utterance of the same sentence. One way to do it is to follow K&K's suggestion and try a contextualist approach that indexes moral utterances to the same local parameter to obtain the same proposition in same-culture-like cases and distinct propositions in the human-extraterrestrial-like case. That way, we could satisfy the semantic intuitions regarding the use of moral terms in disagreements with exclusionary content in same-culture cases and non-exclusionary content in the extraterrestrial case.

H&T ignored the possibility of legitimate non-exclusionary disagreements. Let's imagine for instance that in the Moral Twin-Earth disagreement, twin earthlings, instead of being human-like deontologists, would have been non-anthropomorphic entities that had a moral theory related to Nitrogen-Accumulation Principles. That is, their moral system would consider something to be *good* if the action accumulates a certain amount of nitrogen. In that case, earthlings and twin-earthlings could have been disagreeing about the truth of the moral sentence 'killing lives in order to get nitrogen is morally wrong' and that disagreement would have been clearly non-exclusionary. The participants of the disagreement could have been defending something true (even though one claim appears to be the negation of the other) because their claims are indexed to different contextual parameters. H&T would probably reply that if this new disagreement between these new earthling and twin-earthling were a moral one, it would have to be substantial otherwise a standard relativism would come into place. However, I argue that the standard relativism that H&T fear, in this case, is a desirable consequence for a semantic treatment that allows non-exclusionary disagreements. The earthling and the twin-earthling's utterances are relative to different contextual parameters and, in that sense, a fair semantic treatment—since different properties are being referred to—to allow the possibility of both utterances being true at the same time.

One way to understand the contextualist approach that we are proposing would be the following. Let C be a set of moral claims. And let a Moral Theory M be a finite set of sentences $\{s_1, s_2, s_3 \dots s_n\}$. For everything element of C , M

provides a corresponding truth value⁵. A Moral Theory sets the truth-conditions of a moral claim because a moral claim has a truth-value in virtue of a Moral Theory. One way to explain why earthlings and twin-earthling could have non-exclusionary moral disagreements is to index a different *M* to the earthling and the twin-earthling's utterance. That way, despite how exclusionary both utterances look, they would be related to different truth-conditions allowing the possibility of both moral sentences simultaneously true.

On the other hand, if the same moral sentence *s* uttered by an earthling and by a twin-earthling were indexed to the same Moral Theory, it would have the same truth conditions. Only with moral claims indexed to the same Moral Theory, we would have the possibility of exclusionary disagreements. That way, the intuition presented by K&K in their test is being met. Since it's natural to think that two people being culturally closer makes it easier for them to share a Moral Theory, we can now explain why the exclusionary feature of the disagreements rises in culturally close cases. Similarly, the further the communities of the people disagreeing morally, the easier to imagine that they endorse different moral theories: so, non-exclusionary disagreement's intuition is explained.

H&T might still consider, nonetheless, that substantive moral disagreements are something different than merely linguistic disagreements—and that our contextualist account is reducing at least some moral disagreements to that. In the following section, I would like to address that inquiry by presenting a Hirsch-like approach for differentiating substantive from merely linguistic disagreements.

5. A Hirsch-like argument for substantive disagreements

It might be argued that moral disagreements are not the kind of disagreement that can be solved just by adjusting our terminology—or by making explicit which Moral Theory works as a contextual parameter. If an earthling typically indexes its moral claims to the Moral Theory M_1 and a twin-earthling to the Moral Theory M_2 , then it will seem like their disagreement might be solved by just agreeing in the vocabulary. Let's take for instance the Coco-Dede's disagreement (where Coco is a consequentialist and Dede a deontologist). When Coco is saying 'lying for saving a life is not morally wrong'—according to our contextualist approach—he would be saying something like 'According to consequentialism, lying for saving a life is not morally wrong'. Similarly, Dede would be saying something like 'According to deontologism, lying for saving a life is morally wrong'. So, just by making the Moral Theory explicit, someone could think that the disagreement could be solved, as Coco wouldn't have any problem in accepting Dede's utterance. That might take us to think that moral disagreements modeled in that way, as H&T feared, would be reduced to merely linguistic

⁵ Or, if it's easier to understand, *M* is a subset of *C*. That is, *M* is the list of all the true moral claims out of the set of moral claims *C*.

disagreements. I don't think that's the case. About that, Eli Hirsch (2009) addresses the question about the difference between disagreements on reality and merely linguistic ones. So, following a Hirsch-like line of argumentation, I present one reason to believe that moral disagreements—even non-exclusionary ones under our contextualist approach proposed above—cannot be reduced to merely linguistic ones by comparing them to actual merely linguistic disagreements.

I would like to present how a merely linguistic disagreement would look like. Let's imagine that someone comes from a region X where they don't think that people «die» but that they «pass away». In a region Y, people think that people never «pass away» but they «die». If the inhabitant of X goes to the Y region and they are at the funeral of the baker of the town, the X-inhabitant will disagree when Y-people utter the sentence 'the baker died'. The X-inhabitant could reply that 'it is false that the baker died, he passed away'. Y-inhabitants could, of course, reaffirm themselves by saying 'You, X-inhabitant are totally mistaken, the baker didn't pass away. The baker died'. We are observing a highly shallow disagreement that has a clear solution. Now, let's imagine for instance that when the X-inhabitant arrived in the Y-region, he pretended to keep a low profile and to avoid being recognized as an X-inhabitant. The X-inhabitant decided to speak and behave like the Y-people but at the same time, he decided to keep all the beliefs he had from the past. So, the X-inhabitant decided to create a secret language: every time he would say or hear that someone «dies» he would think to himself that someone «passed away», that way his beliefs will be kept and he could accept what the Y-inhabitants tell him during the funeral. After this change in the meaning of those sentences that the X-inhabitant did in his mind is made, if he succeeds in that systematic translation, there will be no possible complication during his secret visit to the Y-region with that respect. No other possible dispute will arise from that sentence secret translation that would put at risk his secret visit and no ramifications of semantic complications are possible. The X-Y inhabitants' disagreement about the truth of 'the baker died' is, then, merely verbal.

Now, let us observe what would happen if the X-inhabitant didn't think that people «die» but that they «sleep for three days and resuscitate». In his travel to the Y-region, this time, the X-inhabitant decides to create the following secret language: every time he would say or hear that someone «dies» he would think to himself that someone «sleeps for three days and resuscitates». In this case, multiple possible disputes would arise after this arbitrary translation, even if he succeeds in interchanging a term for the other in his mind. Clearly, the X-inhabitant doesn't just have a merely verbal disagreement with the Y-inhabitants about if people just «die» or «sleep for three days and resuscitate». In that sense, the verbal translation fails.

Let us imagine now that Coco secretly travels to Twin-Earth and he wants to be there among the twin-earthlings without them noticing that he is an earthling. However, Coco doesn't want to forget his moral beliefs, so he creates a secret language that he only speaks while talking to the twin-earthlings. Whenever Coco utters 'Lying for saving a life is morally wrong', he is going to mean (secretly in his mind) 'Lying for saving a life is deontologically wrong'. We could be tempted to conclude, like in the «die»-«pass away» example, that since the twin-earthling's sentence can be translated into a sentence that Coco is willing to accept as true in his secret language, the disagreement is merely linguistic too. But that would be a mistake. Let's imagine that during his trip Coco is caught *lying for saving a life*. What honest answers could Coco give to justify his behavior in front of the twin-earthlings? Notice that Coco accepts the truth of the sentence 'Lying for saving a life is deontologically wrong', a sentence both Coco and twin-earthlings agree with, yet he still disagrees with the twin-earthlings⁶. Coco cannot solve the disagreement just by virtue of hiding the verbal differences through a secret language. If Coco or Dede are guided by their moralities—as the original Moral Twin-Earth experiment requires—then non-linguistic behavior will put into evidence Coco's disagreement with twin-earthlings.

This wouldn't happen if the disagreement were merely verbal. More than just vocabulary changes are needed by Coco to hide his disagreement. Now, it might seem that resources from outside contextualism are being imported to explain away the intuition of disagreement. Nevertheless, in general, it is only by virtue of resources from outside semantics that we are able to figure out if a disagreement is merely verbal or not. In that sense, the same conclusion holds for whatever piece of information from the world that is sufficient to show how making explicit the moral theory behind claims doesn't settle moral disagreements.

In Hirsch terms, "more is needed for an issue to degenerate into "merely a matter of choosing a language". It is required that each side ought to find it plausible to interpret the other side as speaking the truth in the other side's language." (Hirsch 2009: 238) The psychological reality of us endorsing our moral theories avoids the possibility of Coco, or Dede, finding it plausible to interpret Dede's, or Coco's, belief as being true in the other side's language. It's highly implausible that a moral disagreement could be solved that way. That is, the following argument holds:

⁶ It might be argued that a better characterization of the twin-earthling sentence 'Lying for saving a life is wrong' inside Coco's mind would be something like 'Lying for saving a life is wrong according to deontologism & deontologism is correct'. Nevertheless, since what is or isn't *morally wrong* in Twin-Earth is just—sort to speak—what is *deontologically wrong*, I believe that the chosen characterization proves the following point: even though there's sentence that Coco is willing to accept in replacement of the twin-earthlings' moral claim, that doesn't rule out a possible disagreement.

- P1. A disagreement is merely verbal if it could be solved just by virtue of a change into a vocabulary the parties accept.⁷
- P2. Coco and Dede cannot solve their disagreement just by adjusting their vocabulary.
- C. Coco and Dede's disagreement is not merely verbal.

Even if we create a possible language in which a sentence we disagree with is true, the disagreement can still be substantive. Thus, it doesn't follow from H&T's Moral Twin-Earth argument that if there's room for Coco's and Dede's claims to be simultaneously true, then we wouldn't be able to explain how's that a real disagreement. As we have seen, since mere verbal disagreements behave differently, we have reason to believe that non-exclusionary moral disagreements might not be reduced to purely verbal ones. Anyone arguing that moral disagreements under a contextualist approach are reduced to purely verbal ones should explain why moral—and other substantive—disagreements don't seem to be settled just by vocabulary adjustments.

6. Conclusions

H&T's Moral Twin-Earth Argument purports to show the problems that arise from not treating moral terms as referring to the same property—even within different moral communities. Theory-Indexed Moral Contextualism treats moral terms from different moral communities as referring to different properties. Nevertheless, without having to reject (3)—that the meaning of a moral term is its extension—as Copp's strategy does, I've given reasons to believe that Moral Contextualism that has Moral Theories as the contextual parameter survives the Moral Twin-Earth Argument whilst properly fits K&K's test about our semantic intuitions on moral terms.

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DIPENDENZA E INDIPENDENZA ONTOLOGICA: IL PUNTO DI VISTA DEL NEOSCETTICISMO

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Abstract: This contribution aims to explore scepticism's implications with respect to the notions of ontological dependence and independence, referring especially to Peter Unger's New Scepticism. First, a reconstruction is offered of the fundamental theoretical perspective acting as the backdrop of Unger's scepticism, in relation to his volume *Ignorance: A Case for Scepticism* (1975). Then, light will be shed on the implications that this perspective has on the ontological level, referring also to some of Unger's sceptical and nihilistic philosophy's subsequent developments. At last, a critical interpretation is suggested of the author's proposed solution to the radical outcome of his philosophy, in light of the notions of ontological dependence and independence.

Key Words: New Scepticism; Ontological Dependence; Nihilism; Language; Knowledge.

1. *Scetticismo e ontologia*

Probabilmente, lo scetticismo in generale, ma soprattutto le sue più recenti declinazioni, rappresentano il punto di vista più utile per verificare la tenuta epistemologica delle diverse forme di dipendenza ontologica che sono state affermate nel corso della storia della filosofia. Infatti, il punto di partenza di ogni discussione scettica sospende non solo l'idea di una dipendenza ontologica tra entità (o, al loro interno, tra sostanza e accidenti oppure, ancora, la dipendenza degli enti da un essere o da un fondamento unico), ma anche le implicazioni che tale idea potrebbe comportare sul piano del linguaggio (e, a partire da qui, sul piano epistemologico in generale).¹ Naturalmente, questo avviene soprattutto quando la sospensione scettica viene avviata e motivata in modo rigoroso: escludiamo subito dal nostro orizzonte le forme semplicemente provocatorie, distruttive e ingannevoli dello scetticismo.

Tra le posizioni scettiche (ovvero neoscettiche) più recenti,² in questo articolo prenderemo in considerazione la posizione di Peter Unger,

¹ Per un'introduzione ai problemi che ruotano attorno alla nozione di «dipendenza ontologica», ma anche ai diversi significati assunti da questo concetto, cfr. Hoeltje, Schnieder e Steinberg (2013). Per un'introduzione al problema più ristretto della dipendenza (o indipendenza) tra il piano ontologico e quello epistemologico, che rappresenta lo sfondo dell'itinerario che qui seguiremo, cfr. Nolan (2011); Schnieder (2006).

² In particolare, oltre alla filosofia di P. Unger, si segnalano le riflessioni di T. Nagel, B. Stroud, S. Cavell e R. Fumerton. Per una panoramica generale del dibattito filosofico attuale sullo

probabilmente la posizione più radicale. L'argomentazione di Unger mette in dubbio l'esistenza del mondo esterno e di ogni forma di conoscenza, di ciò che chiamiamo soggetto e delle relazioni tra soggetti. Ci troviamo di fronte a un autore che rivendica al suo pensiero esiti quali l'«ignoranza», il «silenzio», il «nichilismo». Tuttavia, la radicalità di questi approdi non dipende tanto da ciò che evocano, ma dal modo in cui sono raggiunti, soprattutto dal rigore argomentativo con il quale il suo scetticismo viene sviluppato. Non solo: se esiste una sia pur minima possibilità di ricucire relazioni di dipendenza epistemologica e, soprattutto, ontologica tra linguaggio e cose, tra conoscenza e realtà, questa possibilità dipende dal rigore con cui lo scetticismo conduce le sue operazioni di analisi. È una possibilità che appare tenue e debolissima, ma che invece è sostenuta da una coerenza logica davvero sorprendente.

Non avremo qui lo spazio per ricostruire e ripercorrere in modo analitico l'argomentazione di Unger. Tuttavia, all'interno dell'orizzonte problematico che abbiamo richiamato, in questo articolo mostreremo innanzitutto il nocciolo teorico che sta alla base dello scetticismo ungeriano; in secondo luogo quali sono le sue implicazioni sul piano ontologico; infine, qual è la strada (o la via di fuga) che Unger indica per recuperare, fin dove è possibile, la possibilità di individuare concrete relazioni di indipendenza e, soprattutto, di dipendenza ontologica.

Per comprendere la posizione ungeriana è necessario fare riferimento a *Ignorance: A Case for Scepticism* (Unger 1975), la prima opera di ampio respiro del nostro autore, nella quale argomenta a favore di uno scetticismo radicale, che si articola in tre tesi fondamentali. La prima è la cosiddetta tesi dell'*ignoranza universale* (Unger 1975: 92 sgg.), secondo la quale nessuno sa mai nulla riguardo a nulla.³ Secondo l'autore questa tesi implica logicamente una seconda tesi scettica, quella dell'*irrazionalità universale* (1975: 197 sgg.), secondo la quale «nessuno è mai giustificato o per nulla ragionevole in qualsiasi cosa. In particolare, quindi, nessuno sarà giustificato o per nulla ragionevole nel credere qualsiasi cosa» (Unger 1975: 1);⁴ oltre alla conoscenza dobbiamo rinunciare anche al *reasonable belief* riguardo al mondo esterno. Infine, nell'ultima sezione Unger sostiene l'impossibilità della verità intesa come oggetto della conoscenza (Unger 1975: 272 sgg.). Ci concentreremo ora sulla prima di queste tre tesi, di gran lunga la più conosciuta e discussa all'interno del dibattito filosofico contemporaneo riguardo allo scetticismo: le riflessioni che l'autore porta a sostegno di essa costituiscono il cuore della sua posizione e

scetticismo e delle posizioni degli *New Sceptics*, cfr. Coliva (2012); De Caro e Spinelli (2007: 211 sgg); Pritchard (2002).

³ «The thesis that no one ever knows anything about anything» (Unger 1975: 1).

⁴ Nel presente lavoro, laddove non altrimenti indicato, tutte le traduzioni tratte dai testi di Peter Unger sono mie.

mostrano con chiarezza il tipo di approccio che caratterizza la filosofia ungheriana.

L'autore parte dalla constatazione della forza e della profondità degli argomenti a favore dello scetticismo, di fronte ai quali ogni tentativo di confutazione appare superficiale e in ultima istanza inefficace. Ciò ha indotto Unger a ritenere lo scetticismo impossibile da confutare proprio perché fondamentalmente corretto: gli argomenti scettici fanno perno, secondo l'autore, sul significato reale dei termini chiave in ambito epistemologico. Ordinariamente facciamo un uso alquanto libero di tali termini, che è aproblematico soltanto in apparenza: in realtà, essi sono caratterizzati da condizioni di applicabilità estremamente rigide, tanto che non trovano effettiva applicazione alla realtà che ci circonda. La filosofia scettica ungheriana mette in luce la problematicità insita nel linguaggio di cui disponiamo: in esso sarebbe incorporata un'antica teoria delle cose, sviluppatasi assieme al linguaggio stesso in tempi antichi. Inconsapevolmente, tale teoria «è sempre sulla punta delle nostre lingue» (Unger 1975: 274), e tuttavia è inadeguata a descrivere la realtà e il nostro rapporto epistemico con essa. La visione del mondo tipica del senso comune, che si articola ed esprime attraverso il linguaggio, viene messa radicalmente in discussione dagli esiti della posizione ungheriana, che può propriamente essere definita paradossale.

Emerge qui l'elemento fortemente critico della filosofia di Unger, critico soprattutto nei confronti dell'approccio a suo parere prevalente nella filosofia contemporanea. Quest'ultima sembra limitarsi a un'analisi acritica dei termini del linguaggio ordinario, termini attraverso i quali trovano espressione le credenze del senso comune, ritenute nel complesso corrette: fare filosofia significherebbe «lasciare immutata la nostra visione del mondo» (Unger 1975: 4). Di contro, gli esiti dello scetticismo ungheriano rendono evidente la necessità di impegnarsi in una vera e propria «ricostruzione linguistica» (Unger 1975: 6): ideare nuovi modi di esprimerci, che sostituiscano quelli di cui ora disponiamo e dei quali non è possibile un uso veridico, comporterebbe un'alterazione della nostra concezione della realtà. Un simile compito consentirebbe alla filosofia di tornare ad assumere un ruolo sostanziale, aprendo nuove direttrici di ricerca e impegnandosi a modificare e arricchire la nostra visione del mondo.

Due sono i punti principali che vanno tenuti a mente per la comprensione dello scetticismo ungheriano: il primo è certamente l'importanza che l'autore riserva alla dimensione del linguaggio, in quanto stimolo e allo stesso tempo fulcro dello sviluppo della sua concezione filosofica. In secondo luogo, va tenuta presente la componente critica del suo pensiero, strettamente connessa all'idea che Unger ha della filosofia stessa, come di una disciplina che sia in grado di contribuire allo sviluppo della nostra visione della realtà, fornendo modi significativi di concepirla.

2. Conoscenza, certezza e dogmatismo

Il primo passo del percorso che Unger propone in *Ignorance* non è altro che l'introduzione, in forma chiara ed efficace, di «quegli argomenti che hanno spinto molti a pensare per la prima volta in modo scettico» (Unger 1975: 10), di cui paradigmatico è l'argomento del genio maligno delle *Meditazioni* cartesiane: si tratta di argomentazioni costruite su esperimenti mentali che mirano a minare la nostra conoscenza del mondo esterno. Tali argomenti condividono una stessa forma, la forma di quello che Unger definisce «l'argomento classico a favore dello scetticismo» (Unger 1975: 8). Lo scopo che l'autore si prefigge è quello di far emergere alcune intuizioni a favore dello scetticismo, e di offrire una spiegazione convincente di tali intuizioni. A tal fine Unger proporrà in seguito due ipotesi, riguardanti rispettivamente la cosiddetta «*attitude of (absolute) certainty*» (Unger 1975: 30) e la relazione tra sapere ed essere certi.

Unger propone una versione più accattivante dell'argomento classico, in cui al posto del genio cartesiano troviamo uno scienziato malvagio, il quale, mediante elettrodi impiantati nel cranio delle sue vittime, tramite impulsi elettrici fa sì che queste ultime credano falsamente nell'esistenza di alcuni oggetti nel mondo esterno, ad esempio delle rocce (posto che il mondo in cui si trovano lo scienziato e le sue vittime sia privo di rocce).

In primo luogo, se tu *sai* che ci sono rocce, allora *puoi sapere* che *non c'è* uno scienziato malvagio, un essere altro rispetto a te stesso, che, mediante elettrodi, ti sta ingannando in modo tale da farti credere *falsamente* che ci siano. [...] Ma, in secondo luogo, *non puoi* mai *sapere* che le cose stanno davvero così. Dunque, tu *non sai* che ci sono rocce. La stessa cosa funziona per ciascuno in ogni situazione, e rispetto a ogni cosa esterna. Perciò, nessuno *sa* mai nulla riguardo al mondo esterno (né mai potrebbe). (Unger 1975: 13-14)⁵

Un argomento di tale forma conclude, dunque, a favore di una tesi scettica piuttosto forte, secondo la quale «nessuno sa mai nulla *riguardo* al 'mondo esterno'» (Unger 1975: 10): viene esclusa la gran parte di ciò che ordinariamente riteniamo e affermiamo di sapere, mettendo fortemente in

⁵ Unger tuttavia non si accontenta, e il passo successivo è quello di proporre l'argomento classico in una formulazione che sia logicamente valida, con premesse che comprendano ogni caso possibile, e che presenti pertanto la conclusione, la tesi scettica, come necessariamente vera. La versione definitiva dell'argomento è dunque più articolata, e tale complessità è richiesta per evitare alcune possibili «vie di fuga» che renderebbero la conclusione non necessaria. Una trattazione approfondita di tali aspetti esula dal presente lavoro: lo scopo di questa sezione di *Ignorance* è quello di isolare una forma di argomento scettico che funga da base di partenza per le considerazioni esplicative che Unger avanza rispetto all'efficacia dei «classici argomenti scettici» (cfr. Unger 1975: 10-24).

discussione, dunque, la posizione della «‘commonsensical’ majority» (Unger 1975: 24).⁶

In questa fase iniziale l’interesse dell’autore è incentrato sulle intuizioni che l’argomento classico suscita a favore di una tesi scettica circa la possibilità di conoscere il mondo esterno; per farle emergere in modo più evidente, Unger prende in considerazione i possibili tentativi di rovesciare tale argomento. Ad esempio, qualcuno potrebbe sostenere di *sapere* che ci sono rocce nel mondo esterno; dunque, ragionando deduttivamente a partire da qui, può venire a *sapere* che non c’è uno scienziato che lo sta ingannando in modo tale da fargli credere falsamente che ci sono rocce. Tuttavia, affermare qualcosa del genere sembra, secondo Unger, temerario, addirittura dogmatico. Infatti, proseguendo con l’esperimento mentale proposto all’inizio, possiamo immaginare che lo scienziato malvagio esista davvero, che rimuova gli elettrodi e ci faccia dunque esperire ciò che realmente ci circonda, sospendendo l’inganno. A questo punto verosimilmente proveremmo imbarazzo e penseremmo di essere stati a dir poco irrazionali, se non addirittura dogmatici, nel ritenere e nell’affermare di *sapere*. Non solo: anche affermare di essere *certi* o *sicuri* del fatto che non ci sia un tale scienziato apparirebbe, alla luce di tali considerazioni, qualcosa di dogmatico e irrazionale. Non possiamo mai effettivamente *sapere* se le nostre esperienze siano davvero frutto di un incontro con la realtà, come suggeriscono le ipotesi scettiche di un inganno radicale: «l’affermazione che uno *sa* che non c’è nessuno scienziato *può* essere sbagliata perché c’è uno scienziato. Tuttavia, *sarà sempre sbagliata*, così sembra, perché dogmatica e irrazionale» (Unger 1975: 27).

Questa sensazione di imbarazzo, osserva l’autore, non si limita agli «exotic cases» (Unger 1975: 24) presi in considerazione finora, ma a ben vedere può insorgere anche nel quotidiano, nella vita di ogni giorno. L’esempio più efficace che Unger fornisce è il caso in cui affermiamo di sapere che una certa città è la capitale di un determinato stato: qualora scopriremmo, poi, che la capitale è in realtà un’altra (magari perché è stata da poco cambiata),⁷ penseremmo di essere stati irrazionali, dogmatici nel nostro esser certi di sapere. «Se hai *positivamente asserito* qualcosa a un altro in una conversazione, riportando tale fatto come *qualcosa che tu sai*, contrastanti esperienze successive potrebbero farti percepire di aver oltrepassato i limiti del buonsenso e della razionalità. La percezione è che tu abbia manifestato i tratti di una personalità dogmatica» (Unger 1975: 29). Mentre è relativamente semplice trovare sequenze possibili di esperienze per casi come quello in cui affermiamo di sapere qual è la capitale di un certo stato, è invece necessario ricorrere a *exotic contrast cases* (Unger 1975: 7) per suscitare intuizioni favorevoli alla tesi scettica anche per quanto riguarda

⁶ Per una lettura critica di questo argomento ungeriano, cfr. Smith (1981).

⁷ Ad esempio, immaginiamo di essere nel 1960 e di affermare che la capitale del Brasile è Rio de Janeiro.

conoscenze più ordinarie, che appaiono più solide (appunto, ad esempio, sapere che ci sono rocce nel mondo esterno). Queste sequenze di esperienze a dir poco bizzarre aiutano a portare alla luce una fundamentalmente identica «attitude of dogmatism» (Unger 1975: 30) presente ogni qual volta affermiamo di *sapere* qualcosa riguardo al mondo esterno.

Due sono le ipotesi esplicative che Unger avanza al fine di spiegare l'efficacia dell'argomento classico per lo scetticismo e le intuizioni che quest'ultimo suscita a favore della propria conclusione radicale. In primo luogo, l'essere assolutamente *certi* di qualcosa implica un'attitudine o schema mentale eccessivamente rigido. Si tratta della «*attitude of (absolute) certainty*» (*ibidem*), che Unger tratteggia in questi termini: «non importa che cosa una qualche esperienza *sembri* mostrare o suggerire riguardo all'essere o al non essere—così di qualcosa, ora *rifiuterò in quanto fuorviante* qualsiasi esperienza che *sembri* mostrare o suggerire che la cosa in questione *non è* così» (*ibidem*). Si tratta di una *attitude* contraddistinta, come appare evidente, da un forte carattere dogmatico, da una componente irrazionale, in quanto prevede il rifiuto acritico di ogni possibile esperienza che possa non confermare ciò di cui si è certi.

La seconda ipotesi esplicativa avanzata da Unger, complementare rispetto alla prima, riguarda la connessione tra *knowing* e *being certain*: «se qualcuno *sa* che qualcosa è così, poniamo, che *p*, allora ne consegue che è (perfettamente) *corretto* per lui essere assolutamente *certo* che *p*, e questo viene accettato (forse solo implicitamente) per lo meno dai parlanti inglesi» (Unger 1975: 33). Dunque, combinando le due ipotesi, il fatto di sapere qualcosa dovrebbe porci in una posizione tale da giustificare la *attitude of certainty*, e quindi il rifiuto di qualsiasi nuova esperienza che metta in dubbio la verità di ciò che sappiamo.

Unger stabilisce quindi una connessione, legata all'uso di termini quali *know* e *certain*, tra il sapere e questa *attitude* in ultima istanza dogmatica, in un certo senso *assoluta*:⁸ è questa connessione a spiegare le intuizioni prese in esame in precedenza. L'imbarazzo che proviamo quando ci rendiamo conto che eravamo convinti di sapere qualcosa che in realtà si rivela errato fa apparire evidente come la *attitude* in questione sia del tutto fuori luogo: in questo senso abbiamo manifestato i tratti di una personalità dogmatica. Più difficile è rilevare la presenza di tale *attitude* nel caso in cui qualcuno ritenga di sapere cose più semplici e ordinarie, come ad esempio che ci sono rocce: gli *exotic cases* su cui fa leva l'argomento classico mostrano come ogni nostra conoscenza che riguardi il mondo esterno, per quanto solida possa apparire, sia intrisa dallo stesso carattere dogmatico e irrazionale. Riflettendo sulle intuizioni a favore dello scetticismo che l'argomento in questione suscita, Unger ha portato al centro della nostra attenzione la percezione del carattere fundamentalmente dogmatico

⁸ Non a caso Unger fa uso di tale terminologia in riferimento alla *attitude of certainty*: infatti, secondo Unger *certain* è, come vedremo, un *absolute term*.

e irrazionale delle nostre asserzioni relative alla conoscenza del mondo esterno: inoltre, le due ipotesi esplicative avanzate ci forniscono una chiave di lettura utile per comprendere e articolare gli elementi impliciti che inconsciamente accettiamo quando ordinariamente affermiamo di *sapere* qualcosa.

3. «*Absolute terms*» e «*relative terms*»⁹

Il secondo passaggio offerto da Unger consiste nell'approfondire le considerazioni appena introdotte relativamente all'uso di termini epistemici fondamentali quali *know* e *certain*: è in questa fase che l'autore stabilisce espressamente un legame tra il suo scetticismo e la dimensione linguistica. Ciò che Unger sostiene è che, mentre comunemente i mezzi linguistici di cui ci serviamo per esprimerci vengono ritenuti efficaci nella pratica e corretti, in realtà spesso ci inducono in errore, ci inducono ad affermare cose non vere: ciò accade, osserva Unger, soprattutto nell'uso di una determinata categoria di termini, che chiama «*absolute (limit) terms*» (Unger 1975: 49). *Flat* e *certain* sono esempi di tale classe di termini, caratterizzati da condizioni di applicabilità talmente esigenti da risultare in realtà inapplicabili al mondo che ci circonda: dato un *absolute term* *x*, esso risulta applicabile all'oggetto *Y* solo se «nulla potrebbe essere più *x* di *Y*», in quanto «essere *x*» equivale a «essere assolutamente *x*». Se tali sono le condizioni da soddisfare per poter veridicamente applicare un *absolute term* come *flat*, pressoché nessun oggetto fisico è propriamente definibile come piatto. Analogamente, dire di un soggetto *S* «*S* è certo che *p*» significherebbe dire «*S* è assolutamente certo che *p*», ovvero «nessuno potrebbe essere più certo di quanto non lo sia *S* che *p*»: «ci troveremmo in una posizione tale da poter avanzare la tesi che, per ogni essere umano, non c'è pressoché nulla di cui egli sia certo» (*ibidem*).

Una tesi scettica che poggia su tali considerazioni relative al funzionamento del nostro linguaggio appare difficile da accettare, in primo luogo perché implicherebbe che i «terms of knowledge» (Unger 1975: 50) risultino inapplicabili e dunque inducano a esprimerci sistematicamente in modo errato: le nostre credenze relative a ciò che riteniamo di sapere sarebbero dunque false. Pare difficile ammettere ciò: le nostre esperienze, infatti, non evidenziano in qualche modo la falsità delle nostre credenze. Tuttavia, Unger sostiene che ciò non è sufficiente a smentire tali osservazioni relative al linguaggio e, dunque, la tesi scettica che poggia su di esse. Inoltre, le osservazioni linguistiche proposte da Unger non ci presentano i *knowledge terms* come «isolated freaks of our language» (Unger 1975: 54), gli unici che non possono essere utilizzati per fare semplici asserzioni vere: in realtà molti altri termini, tutti appartenenti alla classe di quelli che Unger chiama *absolute terms*, sono ugualmente problematici. Come abbiamo anticipato, *flat* è un esempio di tale classe: dire che

⁹ Unger 1975: 47 sgg..

una cosa è piatta significa dire che è assolutamente o perfettamente piatta, o, meglio, che «proprietà *che sono questione di grado non sono istanziate sulla superficie [piatta] in nessun grado. Così, qualcosa di piatto non è per nulla irregolare, e per nulla curvo» (ibidem). Infatti, *bumpy* e *curved* sono invece «relative terms» (ibidem),¹⁰ che indicano appunto proprietà che sono questione di grado. Gli *absolute terms* denotano un «absolute limit» (Unger 1975: 55): «ci si approssima a questo limite nella misura in cui la proprietà o le proprietà relative rilevanti sono assenti nella cosa in questione, alla quale si potrebbe sensatamente applicare l'*absolute term*, o i suoi *relative [terms]* correlati» (ibidem). I *relative terms*, dunque, forniscono *negative defining conditions* (cfr. Unger 1975: 60), logicamente necessarie per la corretta applicazione degli *absolute terms*. Unger definisce *basic absolute terms* quegli *absolute terms* «che non [sono] (naturalmente) definiti in termini di altri *absolute terms*, nemmeno parzialmente» (Unger 1975: 56); sono invece *defined absolute terms* quegli *absolute terms* che sono, per l'appunto, parzialmente definiti dai primi, anche se presentano alcune caratteristiche o dimensioni *relative*. Se *flat* e *certain* sono *basic absolute terms*, *cube* e *know* sono *defined absolute terms* (infatti, un oggetto è un cubo solo se ha superfici che sono piatte; secondo quanto sostiene Unger, poi, la certezza è una condizione necessaria, ma non sufficiente, del sapere).¹¹*

Il resoconto che Unger propone rispetto al significato degli *absolute terms* appare in netto contrasto con il loro normale uso nella quotidianità: un *absolute term* come *flat*, ad esempio, viene utilizzato in riferimento a un'ampia gamma di oggetti, molti decisamente lontani dall'essere assolutamente o perfettamente piatti. Intuitivamente spesso riteniamo di usare un termine come *flat* per classificare insieme oggetti che condividono una proprietà comune; tuttavia, sostiene Unger, tutte queste considerazioni relative all'uso ordinario del termine non costituiscono un valido controesempio al suo resoconto, e non escludono la possibilità che ciò che intendiamo affermare facendo uso di un tale termine sia invece che l'oggetto in questione è *sufficientemente vicino all'essere perfettamente piatto*, in relazione agli scopi del caso (cfr. Unger 1975: 50 sgg.). Non è dunque a partire dall'uso corrente dei termini che possiamo giungere al significato reale delle parole che infatti, secondo Unger, non viene consapevolmente portato alla luce nella conversazione ordinaria, in cui spesso assumiamo che gli *absolute terms* si comportino come *relative terms*. A prima

¹⁰ La scelta di denominare in questo modo le due classi di termini che Unger qui contrappone è dovuta al fatto che i primi accettano *absolutely*, mentre i secondi *relatively*, quali *grammatical modifiers* con funzione prevalentemente di enfasi (cfr. Unger 1975: 61-62).

¹¹ Per distinguere gli *absolute terms* dai *relative terms* Unger propone una serie di test sintattico-semantiche, in particolare, una procedura di parafrasi valida solo per gli *absolute terms* e l'osservazione del comportamento dei cosiddetti «augmenting modifiers» (Unger 1975: 58), ovvero termini come *very*, *extremely*, *especially*. Una trattazione approfondita di tali aspetti esula dal presente contributo: cfr. Unger (1975: 54 sgg.).

vista, affermazioni come «Quella cosa è piatta; quell'altra è più piatta» (Unger 1975: 74) non appaiono incoerenti, sebbene dovrebbero esserlo qualora *flat* fosse equivalente ad *absolutely flat*, come sostiene Unger. Tuttavia, procedendo con un'analisi più accurata, con un accorto uso dell'enfasi riusciremmo ad apprezzare il reale significato dei termini che usiamo e, soprattutto, l'assolutezza che costituisce il carattere distintivo degli *absolute terms*. Unger avanza quindi un metodo e alcuni principi utili al fine di ottenere un «proper focus» (Unger 1975: 80) sul significato reale: l'idea di fondo che guida l'autore è che l'enfasi¹² non modifica il significato di termini e frasi a cui è applicata; la sua funzione è piuttosto quella di dirigere l'attenzione verso ciò che si ritiene rilevante e su cui siamo invitati a concentrarci (cfr. Unger 1975: 76 sgg.). Grazie all'applicazione dell'enfasi è possibile apprezzare l'incoerenza che prima poteva passare inosservata in enunciati come «Quella cosa è *piatta*; quell'altra è *più piatta*»; «Quella cosa è davvero *piatta*, ma non è assolutamente *piatta*» (Unger 1975: 82). Non proviamo un analogo «feeling of inconsistency» (Unger 1975: 80) in simili affermazioni con *relative terms* («Quella cosa è *irregolare*; l'altra è *più irregolare*») (*ibidem*).

L'*absolute term* sui cui l'attenzione di Unger è incentrata è *certain*, in contrasto rispetto a *relative terms* quali *confident*, *doubtful* e *uncertain*: il suo significato equivale alla totale assenza di dubbio.¹³ A causa delle caratteristiche proprie di questa classe di termini (*absolute terms*) risulta dubbia la possibilità di una loro corretta applicazione: tale dubbio coinvolge naturalmente anche *certain*. Se, propriamente, essere certi di qualcosa significa che *non* potremmo essere *più certi* di nessun'altra cosa (dato il carattere assoluto di *certain*), secondo Unger è possibile sostenere, ad esempio, che quasi nessuno è veramente certo che « $45 + 56 = 101$ » (Unger 1975: 67-68): infatti, affermare di essere certi di tale somma significa che è impossibile che esista qualcosa di cui siamo più certi. Più difficile appare sostenere ciò relativamente a casi più semplici, in cui comunemente riteniamo di essere assolutamente certi, come, ad esempio, quando affermiamo di essere assolutamente certi dell'esistenza delle automobili. Tuttavia, anche in questo caso, a ben vedere è difficile sostenere che non ci sia nulla di cui siamo più certi: è probabile, ad esempio, che riteniamo di essere più certi della nostra attuale esistenza di quanto siamo certi dell'esistenza di qualsiasi cosa nel mondo esterno. Comparando *quanto* siamo certi della nostra esistenza presente e *quanto* lo siamo di tutto ciò di cui normalmente

¹² Per enfatizzare i termini oggetto di interesse lo strumento principale è lo *stress*, ma anche alcuni *modifiers* (avverbi e aggettivi come *really*, *real* etc.) e alcune figure retoriche. Unger fa uso principalmente dei primi due (cfr. Unger 1975: 74 sgg.).

¹³ Unger prosegue con un'analisi di *certain* in cui applica i test precedentemente proposti per distinguere gli *absolute terms* (*augmenting modifiers* e *comparative constructions*), confrontando il comportamento di *certain* rispetto a *confident*, *doubtful* e *uncertain*, che invece sono *relative terms* (cfr. Unger 1975: 62-65).

riteniamo di essere certi, è ragionevole concludere che non c'è quasi nulla di cui siamo realmente *certi* (cfr. Unger 1975: 68). Tali osservazioni diventano fondamentali in relazione al rapporto tra *being certain* e *knowing*, soprattutto se, come sostiene Unger, il secondo richiede il primo come condizione logicamente necessaria. Il nostro parlare quotidiano è piuttosto informale, vago, e spesso tendiamo a far passare quanto diciamo come vero, come qualcosa che sappiamo: secondo tale uso piuttosto libero e superficiale di *know*, sapere qualcosa apparentemente non equivale a esserne assolutamente certo.

Tuttavia, se l'analisi riguardante gli *absolute terms* è corretta, come Unger sostiene, allora dobbiamo concludere che, nonostante ciò non appaia evidente nel nostro comune uso del linguaggio, in realtà ci serviamo di termini che ci inducono sistematicamente ad affermare il falso. Per quanto sorprendente possa apparire, dovremmo ammettere che molte delle nostre credenze sono false, anche se non contrastano con l'esperienza ordinaria. Tali *false beliefs* riguardano non solo le cose che crediamo essere piatte, ad esempio, ma soprattutto le cose che crediamo di sapere o di cui crediamo di essere certi. L'argomento a favore dello scetticismo che Unger costruirà sulla base di tali osservazioni fa leva sulla connessione necessaria tra *knowing* e *being certain*: non c'è nulla che sappiamo, in quanto non c'è nulla di cui siamo certi.

Pertanto, l'argomento fa leva su quello che pare essere il requisito più facile da soddisfare della conoscenza (rispetto ad altri requisiti, come ad esempio quello della verità del contenuto della conoscenza o quello relativo all'essere giustificato da parte del soggetto della conoscenza etc.), appunto «il requisito della *'attitude'*, in questo caso della certezza personale» (Unger 1975: 89). Il motivo di tale scelta è legato alle riflessioni proposte in precedenza, a partire dalle intuizioni che suscita l'argomento classico a favore dello scetticismo, e dunque alle due ipotesi che Unger ha avanzato per spiegare tali intuizioni: il legame tra *knowing* e *being certain* e la *attitude of certainty*. Infatti, quest'ultima era stata caratterizzata da Unger come una posizione estremamente severa e rigida, costituita dal rifiuto di ogni nuova esperienza che possa mettere in dubbio o diminuire la nostra certezza relativa a una data cosa. Unger aveva individuato il carattere dogmatico e irrazionale di tale *attitude* nel suo essere, in un certo senso, *assoluta*. Inoltre, aveva connesso tale *attitude* al sapere, sostenendo che ci fosse una stretta relazione tra *knowing* e *being certain*. Capiamo dunque l'importanza del resoconto linguistico proposto relativamente agli *absolute terms*: sia *certain* che *know*, infatti, appaiono appartenere a tale classe di termini e avere un significato che denota un *absolute limit*. Tali considerazioni, allora, non vanno solo a favore delle ipotesi esplicative in questione, mettendo in luce come la forma classica di argomento scettico vada alla radice di un nodo semantico-concettuale fondamentale per il nostro pensiero, ma anche a favore della tesi scettica sostenuta da Unger. Infatti, quest'ultima trova un'ulteriore conferma alla luce di nuove intuizioni, suscitate

stavolta da un'attenta e approfondita analisi dei *terms of knowledge*, che vada al cuore del loro significato reale e faccia affiorare il legame, normalmente inavvertito, che esso intrattiene con i nostri concetti relativi al sapere.

4. «An Argument for Universal Ignorance»¹⁴

Il passo successivo che Unger compie consiste nel proporre un nuovo argomento a favore della tesi scettica dell'*ignoranza universale*. Per molti aspetti, questo passo rappresenta il cuore del percorso proposto in *Ignorance*: si tratta di un argomento diretto, caratterizzato da premesse avanzate come necessariamente vere e la cui conclusione, pertanto, si presenta come una verità necessaria. La linea argomentativa sostenuta da Unger fa leva sui risultati cui è pervenuto nelle riflessioni precedenti, articolandoli in un «normative argument» (Unger 1975: 91) che, saldamente legato alle osservazioni già riassunte sul carattere assoluto dei più importanti *terms of knowledge*, faccia forza anche sui «normative requirements» (*ibidem*) della conoscenza (cfr. Unger 1975: 90 sgg.).¹⁵ L'autore vuole giungere, in questo modo, a una tesi radicalmente negativa, dimostrando «che l'ignoranza è necessaria o inevitabile, nonché universale o completa, o totale» (Unger 1975: 94). L'argomento viene avanzato in questi termini:

- (1) Se qualcuno *sa* che qualcosa è così, allora è corretto per lui essere assolutamente *certo* che è così [...]
- (2) Non è mai corretto per nessuno essere assolutamente *certo* che qualcosa è così [...]
- (3) Nessuno *sa* mai che qualcosa è così. (Unger 1975: 95)¹⁶

La seconda ipotesi esplicativa avanzata da Unger per le intuizioni sollevate dall'argomento classico stabiliva un legame tra *knowing* e *being certain*: la prima premessa di questo argomento consiste proprio nell'affermazione dell'esistenza di una «analytic connection» (Unger 1975: 98) tra i due concetti, confermata da alcune considerazioni linguistiche. Sebbene spesso facciamo un uso piuttosto libero di *know*, prendendo in esame contesti in cui ci riferiamo a tali concetti è tutto sommato facile percepire intuitivamente il fatto che sapere implica essere assolutamente certi (cfr. Unger 1975: 98 sgg.),¹⁷ e che *knowing*

¹⁴ Unger (1975: 92).

¹⁵ Unger offre inoltre un'interessante analisi di *know*, allo scopo di trovare un'ulteriore base linguistica per l'argomentazione e la conseguente tesi scettica (Unger 1975: 136-147).

¹⁶ Per ulteriori specificazioni dell'argomento, cfr. Unger (1975: 95-105). Per una discussione critica degli argomenti avanzati da Unger a sostegno della sua tesi scettica, cfr. Carrier (1983); Douven e Olders (2008).

¹⁷ Spesso, ad esempio, possiamo avere l'impressione che qualcuno sia certo di qualcosa ma che non dovrebbe esserlo; la domanda «Come puoi esserne certo?» implica proprio che non dovrebbe

equivale a «knowing with absolute certainty» (Unger 1975: 99). Pertanto, seguendo Unger possiamo affermare che questa prima premessa trova un fondamento forte nel nostro uso corrente dei *terms of knowledge*: negarla «significa fare violenza al significato di 'know' e al nostro concetto di conoscenza» (Unger 1975: 103). Tuttavia, secondo Unger è la seconda premessa a essere davvero cruciale: dall'accettazione o meno di essa dipende la decisione tra scetticismo e dogmatismo. Infatti, è il dogmatismo (assieme al *common sense*) a essere l'alternativa opposta allo scetticismo, il «massive error» (Unger 1975: 9) dal quale la filosofia scettica di Unger vuole prendere le distanze. La portata di tale premessa è universale, in quanto afferma che essere assolutamente certi è qualcosa di negativo e inappropriato in ogni circostanza. Infatti, sostiene Unger, la *attitude* correlata, quella che ha definito in precedenza *attitude of (absolute) certainty*, è sempre dogmatica.

La seconda premessa di questo argomento si connette dunque alla prima ipotesi esplicativa proposta da Unger per le intuizioni sollevate dall'argomento classico, che viene qui ulteriormente articolata, con un'analisi più estesa della *attitude of (absolute) certainty*. Infatti, Unger connette la caratterizzazione di tale *attitude* alle osservazioni precedentemente avanzate riguardo al linguaggio, e in particolare agli *absolute terms*. Come aveva sostenuto prima, infatti, *certain* appartiene a tale classe di termini, al pari di *flat*: serve a indicare un *absolute limit* e, dunque, il suo significato equivale a quello di «assolutamente certo». Affermare, dunque, che «*x* è (assolutamente) certo di qualcosa» equivale a dire che «nessuno potrebbe essere *più certo* di quanto non lo sia *x* della tal cosa». Dal momento che condizione necessaria per la corretta applicazione di un *absolute term* è la completa assenza di ciò che viene denotato tramite i *relative terms* correlati, dobbiamo aspettarci che ciò valga anche per *certain* (che, ricollegandoci a quanto detto in precedenza, ha come *relative terms* correlati *confident* e *doubtful*).

Unger sostiene che ci siano tre condizioni per la corretta applicabilità di *certain*: in primo luogo la totale assenza di dubbio, in secondo luogo, implicita in quest'ultima, l'assenza di qualsiasi forma di apertura alla considerazione di nuove esperienze o informazioni che possano essere rilevanti per la verità o falsità della cosa in questione¹⁸ (la *attitude of certainty* è, dunque, condizione necessaria della certezza personale) e, infine, «che non si sia affatto esitanti o riluttanti a rischiare ciò che si ritiene prezioso o di valore per la verità della cosa in questione».¹⁹ Queste tre condizioni non sono equivalenti, di per sé, alla

esserlo, perché potrebbe *non sapere* la cosa in questione. Come abbiamo notato in precedenza, inoltre, con l'enfasi si evidenzia l'incoerenza di un'affermazione quale «*Sapeva* davvero che stava piovendo, ma *non* ne era assolutamente *certo*» (*ibidem*).

¹⁸ Si tratta di una condizione necessaria ma non sufficiente per la certezza personale (cfr. Unger 1975: 116).

¹⁹ Anche in tal caso si tratta di una condizione necessaria ma non sufficiente (*ibidem*).

certezza assoluta, ma sono necessarie alla presenza di quest'ultima: con questa breve analisi, Unger ha messo nuovamente in luce il legame necessario tra *being certain* e *attitude of certainty*, legame che trova fondamento nel carattere assoluto del significato di *certain*. In tale assolutezza risiede il dogmatismo insito nella *attitude of certainty*, che pertanto è sempre limitante e inopportuna.²⁰

È proprio il dogmatismo che costituisce l'alternativa opposta e contraria allo scetticismo, e che la filosofia ungheriana (e scettica in generale) rifiuta. Per questo comprendiamo l'importanza che assume all'interno dell'argomentazione di Unger il rifiuto della certezza personale, fondato proprio sul carattere assoluto, e dunque dogmatico, della *attitude* da essa implicata. *Dogmatic* è, secondo Unger, un *relative term*: più si è dogmatici, più si tende a rifiutare nuove esperienze ed evidenze che possano mettere in discussione la propria posizione. Esso indica dunque il grado di approssimazione al limite rappresentato dalla *attitude of (absolute) certainty*: essere *completamente dogmatici* equivale, secondo Unger, ad avere tale *attitude*.

Pertanto, il carattere dogmatico della certezza personale è apprezzabile quando si manifesta in modo evidente tale atteggiamento negativo e di rifiuto: capiamo dunque perché, relativamente alle affermazioni di conoscenza più ordinarie (ad esempio, quando affermiamo di sapere che c'è una penna sulla scrivania, se effettivamente c'è una penna sulla scrivania), è difficile poter apprezzare il fondamentale carattere dogmatico che le accomuna ad affermazioni relative a prese di posizione più complesse e controverse. Ciò è dovuto non solo alla quasi totale assenza di posizioni discordanti, ma soprattutto all'indisponibilità di esperienze ordinarie che possano mettere in dubbio la nostra posizione al riguardo: le esperienze che potrebbero diminuire questa certezza appaiono infatti bizzarre e fantasiose, decisamente lontane dall'esperienza ordinaria. Nonostante ciò, sostiene Unger, le sequenze di esperienze delle ipotesi scettiche²¹ vanno prese in seria considerazione, in quanto rimangono sempre possibilità aperte: rifiutarle completamente, o non ritenerle affatto rilevanti, significa per l'appunto manifestare quel carattere

²⁰ Per una critica di questi aspetti dell'argomentazione di Unger e della sua discussione su *certain* quale *absolute term*, cfr. Andre (1982); Barnes (1973); Cargile (1972); Stanley (2008); Stoutenburg (2017).

²¹ Nelle pagine seguenti, Unger descrive varie possibili sequenze esperienziali che potrebbero minare la nostra certezza personale in questi casi più semplici e apparentemente problematici, come la presenza di un oggetto davanti ai nostri occhi, le nostre credenze ordinarie riguardo agli oggetti che ci circondano, la nostra percezione della temporalità e le cosiddette *Cartesian propositions* (che riguardano l'esperienza immediata, come ad esempio la percezione di un colore o della sensazione di dolore, ma anche le più semplici necessità logiche e matematiche e il caso della propria esistenza): cfr. Unger (1975: 123-136). Per una critica dell'efficacia di queste ipotesi scettiche, cfr. Parisi (2011).

irrazionale e dogmatico della *attitude* implicata dalla certezza personale, ed essere quindi esposti all'accusa di dogmatismo.²²

Il percorso ungeriano è chiaro: riflettendo sulle intuizioni sollevate dall'argomento classico a favore dello scetticismo ha avanzato due ipotesi esplicative fondate proprio sul legame semantico-concettuale tra sapere e certezza personale. Le osservazioni sugli *absolute terms* hanno mostrato come questo legame si rispecchi, a livello linguistico, nel fatto che *know* è un *defined absolute term* parzialmente definito da *certain*: è nell'assolutezza del significato di tali termini, e dunque dei concetti corrispondenti, che risiede il carattere dogmatico della *attitude of (absolute) certainty* sottesa ogni qual volta affermiamo di sapere. L'argomento ungeriano a favore di un'ignoranza universale e inevitabile fa leva proprio su un esplicito riferimento al «dogmatic flaw in knowledge» (Unger 1975: 147), fondato sul carattere assoluto che accomuna i significati dei *terms of knowledge* e dunque sulle relazioni semantico-concettuali tra i nostri concetti relativi all'epistemologia, espresse dal nostro linguaggio.²³

5. Scetticismo, nichilismo e ontologia

L'approccio *semantico* di Unger al problema della conoscenza si concentra sull'analisi delle condizioni logiche che regolano significato e applicabilità dei termini chiave in epistemologia. I suoi argomenti e la sua riflessione in generale trovano il loro fulcro nella dimensione linguistica: oltre all'importanza della distinzione tra *absolute terms* e *relative terms* proposta congiuntamente all'argomentazione a sostegno del suo scetticismo, l'autore dà ampio spazio a ulteriori analisi linguistiche che mettono in luce l'imprescindibilità del riferimento al concetto di conoscenza nell'uso di verbi e aggettivi (Unger 1975: 152-196), nomi (Unger 1975: 214-226), e, infine, per la riuscita dei nostri atti linguistici e delle pratiche comunicative ordinarie (Unger 1975: 250-271). Connettendo le proprie tesi scettiche alla dimensione linguistica, l'autore giunge alla conclusione estrema secondo la quale «la nostra ignoranza ci impone di stare in silenzio, piuttosto che di dare espressione ai nostri pensieri in qualsiasi modo familiare» (Unger 1975: 250). Questa critica radicale lo porterà ad affermare anche l'impossibilità della verità, intesa quale correlato oggettivo della conoscenza, che si configura come uno stato o posizione relazionale (la

²² Per una discussione critica del legame stabilito da Unger tra conoscenza e dogmatismo, cfr. Baumann (2013); Black (1974); Dicker (1974).

²³ La radicale posizione ungeriana non ha ottenuto un consenso unanime, divenendo oggetto di critiche su più fronti. In questa direzione, in aggiunta ai contributi precedentemente citati, cfr. innanzitutto Blose (1980) che critica l'uso ungeriano dell'enfasi e il legame da lui stabilito tra conoscenza e certezza; inoltre, cfr. Dretske (1981) e Lewis (1979: 351 sgg.): entrambi, pur ammettendo in parte la validità del resoconto ungeriano relativo agli *absolute terms*, non ne accettano le conclusioni scettiche.

whole truth about the world sarebbe l'oggetto di una forma di onniscienza, mentre le parti della *whole truth about the world* sarebbero gli oggetti delle nostre conoscenze ordinarie) (Unger 1975: 272 sgg.). Con la tesi dell'ignoranza universale Unger ha negato la conoscenza, in quanto il limite assoluto che la caratterizza non può mai essere raggiunto: la verità, che secondo l'autore ne è l'oggetto, risulta quindi impossibile. Si tratta dell'esito, radicale ma assolutamente coerente, dell'analisi da lui lucidamente portata avanti in queste pagine: l'impossibilità di esprimerci e di concepire la realtà in modo veridico è dovuta, secondo Unger, all'inadeguatezza della «metafisica della conoscenza e della verità» (Unger 1975: 273) incorporata nel nostro linguaggio, nei termini della quale concepiamo la realtà che ci circonda.

Non possiamo dire di conoscere alcunché e, a maggior ragione, non possiamo dire nulla sull'esistenza del mondo esterno o sulle proprietà ontologiche delle entità che, presumibilmente, lo compongono. In modo corrispondente, l'indipendenza ontologica delle cose, della realtà e del mondo – indipendenza a questo punto assoluta – si richiude anch'essa su di sé. Ogni forma di «mind-independent reality» è esplicitamente «demistificata» da Unger (cfr. Unger 2006: 74 sgg.). Il piano ontologico è radicalmente separato da quello di un conoscere che non può essere certo nemmeno di sé stesso. L'indipendenza ontologica della realtà dal soggetto che la conosce non è indice di oggettività e di verità, bensì di inaccessibilità e, pertanto, di inconoscibilità.

In questo contesto, sarebbe assurdo porsi il problema della dipendenza ontologica tra le cose oppure quello della dipendenza ontologica delle cose da un fondamento. Il suo scetticismo ci costringe a riconoscere a noi stessi un'«ignoranza universale» che esclude la *whole truth about the world*, «entità metafisica» che sottostà, in modo più o meno implicito, a ogni conoscenza che si pretende vera o oggettivamente riconoscibile. E anche le varie forme di «context-dependence» avanzate da diverse direzioni per trovare qualche punto di appoggio a sostegno della relazione mente-mondo, anche quelle che passano attraverso una certa filosofia del linguaggio, sono soltanto dei surrogati. La filosofia (in senso ampio: la scienza, il senso comune, ecc.) deve innanzitutto prendere atto di questa condizione: non si è più in grado di proporre concezioni della realtà che siano «concretely substantial» (Unger 2014: 4 sgg.).²⁴

Spostando il punto focale dal piano puramente metafisico e ontologico al piano linguistico ed epistemologico, indubbiamente differente, ma strettamente interconnesso, l'approccio semantico che caratterizza il pensiero ungeriano appare particolarmente adatto a portare allo scoperto i nodi problematici nei quali s'impiglia il pettine del filosofo impegnato nella comprensione del rapporto tra realtà, pensiero e linguaggio. Qualsiasi riflessione che coinvolga la

²⁴ Notevoli sono i legami tra *Ignorance*, prima opera di rilievo dell'autore, ed *Empty Ideas*, la più recente (cfr. anche Unger 2014: 239 sgg.).

dimensione linguistica e comunicativa, nella quale l'attività creativa dell'uomo si esplica in una delle forme più primitive e potenti, si interrogherà anche sui rapporti di interdipendenza che si instaurano tra parole e realtà: di quale natura è la relazione che lega il linguaggio al mondo? È il simbolico a dipendere dal reale, oppure è la nostra concezione della realtà a dipendere dai termini nei quali essa è compresa e formulata, come Unger sembra suggerire? Infine, se lo scetticismo in generale permette di esplorare la natura della relazione epistemica tra soggetto conoscente e realtà conosciuta, anche e soprattutto nei termini della dipendenza o dell'indipendenza delle entità coinvolte, la sfumatura linguistica che caratterizza lo scetticismo ungeriano presenta risvolti particolarmente interessanti rispetto a una declinazione specifica del problema della dipendenza ontologica, quella relativa alla comprensione della relazione del *truthmaking*.

In connessione a quest'ultimo punto, va segnalato che Unger si è fatto portavoce di altre tesi certamente controverse, connesse a una profonda riflessione su alcuni paradossi relativi ai concetti di esistenza, identità ed essenza, soprattutto in relazione alla sua posizione nichilista e alle riflessioni successive attorno al cosiddetto *problem of the many*.²⁵ In particolare, lo stesso approccio semantico notato in relazione al suo scetticismo è riscontrabile negli articoli nichilisti di poco successivi a *Ignorance*, in cui le tre tesi principali sostenute da Unger, secondo cui non esistono gli oggetti ordinari, non esiste il soggetto stesso (ovvero «io non esisto»), e non esistono nemmeno le altre persone²⁶ vengono argomentate a partire da osservazioni linguistiche. Infatti, gli argomenti dell'autore trovano il loro fulcro nelle condizioni logiche che regolano il significato di quelle che Unger definisce *vague discriminative expressions*, ovvero espressioni vaghe che tuttavia pretendono di discriminare gli oggetti a cui esse si applicano rispetto a quelli a cui esse non si applicano. Secondo Unger, tali espressioni sono regolate da condizioni logiche in conflitto tra loro e pertanto risultano incoerenti; perciò, gli oggetti che esse pretenderebbero di denotare risultano anch'essi incoerenti e quindi logicamente impossibili, e in questo senso non esistono (Unger 1979c). Il progetto ungeriano di una filosofia scettica e nichilista, che affonda le sue radici in considerazioni relative al piano semantico-concettuale, coinvolge nelle sue conseguenze estremamente radicali anche il piano extra-linguistico.

Eppure, anche a fronte degli esiti nichilistici che il suo scetticismo sembra prospettare, Unger sembra lasciare aperta una strada per poter individuare una qualche relazione tra linguaggio (e il conoscere in generale) e realtà. È vero che, nella condizione ricostruita da Unger, il linguaggio (e, quindi, i concetti) non possono essere applicati alla realtà: ad esempio, la nozione estremamente ristretta di «certezza» al centro del suo scetticismo non consente una relazione o

²⁵ Per il nichilismo ungeriano, cfr. Unger (1979a; 1979b; 1979c; 1980a). Per il cosiddetto *problem of the many*, cfr. Unger (1980b).

²⁶ Cfr. rispettivamente Unger (1979a; 1979b; 1979c).

un'applicazione di parole e concetti alla (presunta) realtà. Tuttavia, l'autolimitazione della conoscenza, cioè l'opera di decostruzione condotta dal sapere nei confronti delle proprie certezze, ha come esito l'apertura, in negativo, di una dimensione extra-linguistica ed extra-soggettiva.

Come accennato, l'alternativa proposta da Unger al silenzio cui la nostra ignoranza ci costringe è quella di «trovare nuovi modi per esprimere le nostre idee» (Unger 1975: 250), tramite la ricostruzione linguistica da lui auspicata. Ci si potrebbe chiedere, a questo punto, a quale livello si muova Unger con i suoi argomenti e, dunque, come vada interpretata la sua proposta di soluzione. Gli articoli nichilisti, ricchi di spunti autointerpretativi, forniscono informazioni preziose per chiarire i termini e il significato della sua presa di posizione così radicale.

In primo luogo, Unger sostiene che gli argomenti da lui avanzati a favore della sua posizione nichilista riguardano non solo le parole, ma anche le cose e i tipi di cose:²⁷ l'incoerenza dei termini che appartengono al nostro linguaggio ne implica la non applicabilità alla realtà e, quindi, comporta la non esistenza degli oggetti che tali termini pretenderebbero di designare. Non solo: secondo l'autore ciò che vale per le parole ha un'immediata ricaduta sul pensiero, poiché gran parte di esso si articola e si esprime in tali parole. Questo stretto legame tra linguaggio, pensiero e realtà, già messo in luce da Unger in *Ignorance*, viene ora ulteriormente specificato:

Quando abbiamo l'impressione che stiamo pensando a un oggetto nel mondo [...] e, così, stiamo pensando a qualcosa che esiste, sostengo che siamo [...] in errore. Nel migliore dei casi, stiamo pensando a qualcosa, ma solamente in modo simile a quando stiamo pensando a un'entità fittizia [*fictional*]. In alternativa, potrebbe essere che non stiamo in realtà pensando affatto a [...] nessuna entità (finita). [...] Il nostro pensiero deve fare molto meno contatto con la realtà di quanto comunemente assumiamo. (Unger 1979a: 149)

Se gli argomenti a favore del suo nichilismo concernono una «*semantica descrittiva*», mostrando l'incoerenza di gran parte del nostro linguaggio ordinario, essi vanno letti in funzione di una «*semantica prescrittiva*» (*ibidem*), che mostra la necessità di rinunciare a tali termini e di impegnarsi nella ricerca di nuove parole e nuovi modi di esprimersi. Le considerazioni più rilevanti rispetto a questo nodo fondamentale del progetto ungeriano, che si riconnette all'idea di «ricostruzione linguistica» proposta quale esito del suo scetticismo, si trovano, in particolare, nella conclusione di *Why There Are No People* (Unger 1979c: 216 sgg.).

²⁷ «Our arguments concern words and kinds, as well as things which are neither» (Unger 1979a: 148).

Come anche in *Ignorance* per gli *absolute terms*, Unger non nega che ci sia un uso quotidiano delle espressioni incoerenti fulcro della sua argomentazione nichilista. L'autore suggerisce di considerare un modello di spiegazione dell'uso di tali termini (ad esempio, di «persona») come risposta a stimoli: noi impariamo a rispondere a determinati stimoli, ovvero alla presenza di determinati oggetti davanti a noi, e la risposta consiste nell'utilizzare il termine in questione o meno. Considerando le risposte di vari parlanti in un'ampia gamma di situazioni, dati i differenti paradigmi individuali per le presunte «persone», tali risposte si distribuiranno lungo curve diverse, i cui centri tendono a non differire di molto (consentendo un accordo di fondo tra parlanti). Tuttavia, ci possono essere differenze più marcate per i casi più lontani da quelli al centro della curva: in questi casi tenderemo a contrapporci rispetto a quale sia la risposta corretta, ovvero se il termine si applichi o meno all'oggetto in questione (Unger 1979c: 216-218).

La «ricostruzione linguistica» auspicata da Unger prevede che i termini incoerenti vengano rimpiazzati da nuove espressioni che, oltre ovviamente a essere coerenti a differenza di quelle che andranno a sostituire, dovranno poter disporre di «un repertorio di risposte simile» (Unger 1979c: 220) e, inoltre, dovranno determinare una risposta, positiva o negativa, anche nei casi dubbi. Si tratta, dunque, di «una risposta “pragmatica”» (*ibidem*), che consiste nell'operare una scelta, «scelta che poi si rifletterà in come il termine stesso “decide le cose”» (Unger 1979c: 221) e che rifletterà, di conseguenza, determinati interessi, «che favoriranno le entità incluse dal termine rispetto a quelle che non vengono così incluse» (*ibidem*). Tuttavia, sarebbe davvero molto complesso stabilire quali priorità e interessi vadano rispettati o debbano avere maggior peso. L'autore non dà ulteriori indicazioni in merito alle direzioni di ricerca proposte; la nota conclusiva di questo contributo consiste nel ribadire la difficoltà del cammino in direzione di quel «nuovo inizio», di quella «ricostruzione linguistica» di cui ha ribadito più volte la necessità e che auspica in tutte le opere che finora abbiamo preso in esame.²⁸

In conclusione, questa ricostruzione linguistica avrebbe come fine, per così dire, una sorta di «linguaggio utopico» esente da contraddizioni, al quale, a questo punto, dovrebbe corrispondere un mondo ontologicamente consistente, sia pur limitatamente al suo esistere. Sarà un mondo del quale non si potranno precisare i rapporti di dipendenza ontologica tra gli enti che lo compongono, tra le loro qualità o con un fondamento che ne sta alla base, ma che, se non altro, confermerà ancora una volta che la paradossalità delle tesi di Unger non si risolve in una pura provocazione.

²⁸ L'autore stesso in seguito ha dichiarato ammissibile anche una posizione contestualista e *commonsensical* rispetto al problema filosofico della conoscenza (cfr. Unger 1984 e 1986).

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A PLACE FOR ARTIFACTS

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Abstract: In this paper, I show how it is possible to allow for the existence of artifacts within a neo-Aristotelian conceptual framework. In order to do this, I show the main features of the mainstream Quinean approach to ontology, I then expose the main features of the neo-Aristotelian metaphysics and introduce some key notions such as sortal concepts and criteria of identity, and finally, I propose a criterion of identity for artifacts based on Evnine's doctrine of amorphism. I also propose a solution to a possible objection to amorphism.

Key Words: Artifacts; Ontology; neo-Aristotelian Metaphysics; Criteria of Identity; Amorphism.

1. Introduction

In this paper, I show how a neo-Aristotelian approach to ontology constitutes a theoretical background well suited for the formulation of a plausible metaphysics of artifacts. In order to do so, in the second section, I introduce the main features of the dominant approach to ontology, namely Quinean metaontology. In the third section, I expose the main characteristics of the neo-Aristotelian metaphysics and I outline the main differences with the received view. I stress how the neo-Aristotelian, unlike the Quinean, sees reality as structured and constituted of different layers with substances at the base grounding the identities of all the other sorts of things. In the third section, I introduce the notion of a sortal concept and I show how such concepts have associated with them criteria of identity, metaphysical principles that determine in what the identity under a sortal consists of. I argue that criteria of identity can be seen as revealing the identity-dependence of the kinds of objects for which the criterion is formulated. In the final section, I show how, employing Evnine's theory of artifacts, it is possible to formulate a criterion of identity for artifacts according to which the identity conditions for such objects are stated in terms of creative acts. I finally try to provide a solution to a possible objection to Evnine's theory. The main aim of the paper is to show how a neo-Aristotelian approach to ontology, as opposed to the Quinean one, can provide the conceptual resources needed in order to understand the dependent nature of artifacts.

2. *The received view: Quinean metaontology*¹

According to Quine, the goal of ontology is to answer the question “what is there?” and the answer to such question is very easy: “everything” (Quine 1948: 21). The Quinean approach to ontology is nowadays considered the received view and the one that most of the philosophers working in the analytic tradition endorse. Even though the spreading of Quine’s theses represented a renewal of interest towards metaphysics after its decline during the neo-positivist period, this should not lead us to think that Quine was an enthusiastic defender of traditional metaphysics. Quite the opposite! He believed that the traditional metaphysical debates were senseless and that because of that it was perfectly fine to completely redefine the scope and methods of the discipline.

Quinean metaontology, namely the rules of the ontological game according to Quine, comprehends a series of principles. The first principle is the idea that ontological questions are indeed quantificational ones. Are there numbers? Are there universals? Are there possible worlds? According to Quine metaontological principles, the general form common to the just reported questions is the following: $\exists x (Fx)$? Where ‘F’ stands for a generic kind of entity. Quine follows Frege and Russell in believing that the existential quantifier adequately expresses existence. Our general form of the ontological questions mentioned in the previous lines could equivalently be rephrased as ‘Do Fs exist?’. Existence in these terms is not a first-order property of objects, but rather a property of properties.² This does not mean that by saying that Fs exist we are claiming the existence of the property of *being F*, but rather that such property is instantiated³ (of course by existent objects). I don’t have space here to discuss this matter, but I don’t find this move entirely convincing and I believe that the Meinongian has some reasons protesting against the Quinean on this point, especially when singular negative existential statements are taken into consideration.

The second principle of the Quinean metaontology consists in the thesis that everything exists (Quine 1948: 4). This might appear as an odd claim. It is just not true that the Sasquatch⁴ exists. What Quine means by saying that everything exists is that existence is a logical property, namely a maximally general property that everything must have (Giaretta e Spolaore 2011: 11). ‘Everything’ here is taken as quantifying over the totality of the existents and when we claim ‘the Sasquatch does not exist’, we are saying, according to Quine, that there is nothing

¹ For an extended exposition of this topic see Berto and Plebani (2015: chs. 1-3).

² Indeed Quine does not accept the existence of properties. The only things that exist are the objects constituting the domain of quantification, that is the ontology. Everything else is ideology. Predicates, on this view, do not refer to properties.

³ As Berto (2012: 27) correctly points out, existence is not exactly identified with quantification in the Frege-Russell account, but it is rather explained away.

⁴ Also known as Bigfoot, a large, hairy, humanlike creature believed by some people to exist in the northwestern United States and western Canada.

identical with the Sasquatch. The Sasquatch then, according to this view, is not something, but it is nothing. By taking the domain of quantification to be constituted by all and only the existents, 'Everything exists' must of course be true. Furthermore, Quine analyzes existence in terms of the logical notions of identity and quantification. So, *to be* is equivalent to *being identical with something* and since everything is self-identical, everything exists. Furthermore, if 'Everything exists' is true, 'Something does not exist' must be false since each statement is the negation of the other. Another important point to be stressed regarding the Quinean approach is that *being* turns out to be a univocal notion in virtue of its strict connection with the concept of number. As van Inwagen (1998: 17) points out, there is a close relation between being/existence and number. To claim that horses exist is to claim that the number of horses is greater than zero and to say that werewolves do not exist is to say that the number of werewolves is zero. According to van Inwagen, given the univocity of number and its strict relation with that of being/existence we can infer the univocity of the notion of existence.

The third principle of the Quinean metaontology is the criterion to establish the ontological commitments of a given theory and it can be synthesized with the motto "to be is to be the value of a variable". According to Quine, a theory is ontologically committed to a certain kind of entity, let say the Fs, if it explicitly contains the statement 'There are Fs' or if it can be derived logically from other statements of the theory (Quine 1948: 9). In order to discover the ontological commitments of a theory then, we need to translate it into the language of first-order logic, and then we need to find out the quantified statements implied by the theory. These will express the ontological commitments. According to Quine, we need to admit in our ontology all and only the entities that must be included in the domain of quantification in order to make the quantified statements true.

The method outlined in the lines above is to be applied, according to Quine, to our best theories about reality, namely, scientific theories (Quine 1981). This makes Quine an adept of the doctrine of naturalism, the position according to which we should admit the existence of all and only the entities postulated by science. Ontology can be seen as concerned with the task of making explicit the ontological commitments of our best theories in the way just showed, namely by translating them in the language of first-order logic and determining what the domain of quantification must contain for such theories to be true. What if the best theories are at odds with our common sense? Then too bad for common sense! The Quinean approach to ontology is revisionary in nature.

Nowadays many philosophers accept the Quinean metaontology and when arguing for the existence of a given kind of entity, they try to show that our best theories unavoidably quantify over such objects. This, as Lowe (1998: 34) points out, is a semantic approach to ontology. We start from language and get an ontology out of it. Analogously to the Fregean strategy of defining an object as

the referent of a singular term, Quine takes objects to be the possible values of a bound variable. Should we then accept the existence of whatever turns out we need to admit for our best theories to be true? Not exactly. Quine poses some restrictions and these can be summarized by the motto “no entity without identity”. The idea is that whatever we accept in our ontology, should have clear criteria of identity. What if one of our best theories quantifies over problematic entities? We have different options: we can reject the theory, we can bite the bullet, or we can try to find some eliminative paraphrase that shows how commitment to the problematic entities is dispensable.⁵

When talking about identity conditions, it seems to me, we are moving from a purely semantic level to a more genuinely metaphysical one. The resulting view though is not ideal either. If following Lowe (1998: 29), we take ‘object’ to mean ‘entity with determinate identity conditions’, it follows from the Quinean approach that only objects exist. In this way, to exist/be would be equivalent to being an object. But this means that we condemn to non-existence a variety of entities that, not having clear identity conditions, do not satisfy the requirements to be considered objects. We should conclude then that properties do not exist, as well as meanings or other kinds of entities to which we usually refer to and quantify over in everyday talk. Of course, a Quinean would not take this as a *reductio* since her approach is reformative by its nature. I think though that in doing metaphysics one should always try to save as many pre-theoretic intuitions as possible. Of course, our intuitions are sometimes incoherent and confused, but I believe that the correct approach is that of trying to reinterpret and systematize them. From this point of view, I feel more sympathetic towards an Aristotelian approach that takes experience as the starting point of philosophy, as the *datum* that has to be explained. From this perspective, the apparent inconsistencies in our experience are what stimulates philosophical reflection.

3. *A neo-Aristotelian approach*

Nowadays, even though the Quinean metaontology is still dominating, there has been a resurgence of Aristotelian approaches to metaphysics.⁶ From this perspective, what is central in ontology is not to answer existential questions like “Are there numbers?” or “Are there properties?”, but rather to articulate the

⁵ As Yablo (2001, p.72) points out, fictionalism adds an additional voice to what he calls the Quinean menu, namely we can maintain our talk about problematic entities, but take it with a different attitude. This means take the statements involving our problematic entities in a non-letteral way.

⁶ We can find this renewed interest in the Aristotelian approach to metaphysics in authors such as, David Wiggins, Jonathan Lowe, and Kit Fine. I believe though that the initial input was given by Saul Kripke and its work in modal logic that, somehow, rehabilitated the notion of essence (even though understood in purely modal terms).

structure of reality.⁷ The Aristotelian sees reality as hierarchically structured and constituted of different levels. The real interesting question in an Aristotelian account of, let us say, properties, is not whether these entities exist or not, but what position they occupy in the hierarchy of being. This philosophical approach seems better suited than the Quinean one to accommodate our pre-theoretical intuitions. At the same time though, someone might worry that it could lead to the acceptance of an overpopulated ontology. Is this worry justified? From a Quinean perspective, the domain of quantification that contains the objects to which our best theories are committed is flat (Schaffer 2009: 354). So, any kind of object is on a par with all the others, and admitting the existence of one more kind of things, just means expanding the ontology. As I have already pointed out, from an Aristotelian standpoint, reality is not flat, but structured. There are different levels and each one is grounded in the ones underneath. At the bottom, we find substances, namely concrete objects. Everything else is in some way dependent on substances.⁸ From this perspective, matters of ontological parsimony are important at the level of substances, but not at the higher ones. We don't need to be parsimonious regarding non-substantial entities as long as we are capable of showing how these are related to the deepest strata of reality.

What about identity conditions though? One might think that, even in the Aristotelian approach, the Quinean motto "No entity without identity" still holds. But this is not the case. As Lowe (1998: 38) writes «Not everything is a thing» and I agree with him. 'Thing' here is to be taken as equivalent to 'object' whereas the quantifier 'everything' ranges over a domain not entirely constituted of objects, namely, containing also entities not possessing clear identity conditions. Such entities would be those belonging to the Aristotelian categories other than substances such as, for instance, properties and relations that characterize substances and that depend for their existence upon them. This does not mean that the only things that depend on substances are the non-substantial entities, but, as I will try to show, dependence is a relation holding among objects as well. By this, I mean that there are kinds of objects that depend upon other kinds of objects and, consequently, that some kinds are more basic than others. We could then stipulate that among the objects, those more basic are the substances, the entities upon which every other entity depends but that do not depend upon anything else. This claim might be puzzling, in what sense substances, namely concrete objects, are not dependent upon anything else? As I will specify in the following

⁷ From a neo-Aristotelian perspective, the commonly accepted distinction between ontology and metaphysics is not particularly relevant. For the neo-Aristotelian, the acceptance of a kind of entity depends upon the possibility of showing what position such entities occupy in the hierarchy of reality. Hence you cannot decide whether a certain kind of entities exist before knowing what such entities are.

⁸ It is worth to specify that not all those who accept this way of conceiving ontology agree on the idea that there is a basic grounding level.

paragraphs, I take identity-dependence as the central relation to consider when trying to determine the structure of reality.

3. *Sortals*

From an Aristotelian perspective, reality is not flat but structured, beings are not all on the same level. This structure, I believe, is manifested in the relations of dependence holding between the various kinds of entities present at the different levels. As I claimed in the previous paragraphs, I take objects to be entities with clear identity conditions and substances as basic objects. This means, as we will see, that substances are directly or indirectly involved in the determination of the identity conditions of all the other objects. A notion strictly connected with that of an object is that of a sortal concept. A sortal concept, when truly predicated of a subject, tells us what the subject is. An example is the property expressed by the predicate ‘being a human being’, when (truly) predicated of Socrates it tells us what kind of being Socrates is. On the other hand, the predicate ‘being white’ does not tell us what Socrates is, but rather how he is. If we asked the question “What is Socrates?”, “white” would not be an acceptable answer. Furthermore, it seems plausible that Socrates might continue to exist even without being white, but not without being human. When Socrates loses his humanity, he ceases to exist; this means that his humanity determines, or at least contributes to determine his existence conditions.

The distinction between sortal concepts and attributes can be traced back to Aristotle’s *Categories*. There we find the distinction between what is *said of* and what is *in* a primary substance. To maintain our original example, humanity is *said of* Socrates whereas whiteness is *in* Socrates. We can, alternatively, call the first mode of predication essential and the second accidental. The idea is that a true substantial predication expresses what the subject is, whereas the accidental predication expresses a way of being of a primary substance. For a substance, it is necessary to fall under the sortal that it instantiates, or better, it is necessary to fall under the substantial sortal that it instantiates. This means that if the substance *s* falls under the substantial sortal *K*, then *s* must be *K* at every time at which it exists. If there is a time *t+1* at which *s* is not *K*, then *s* does not exist at *t+1*. As Wiggins (2001: 30) has shown, some sortals are not substantial like *being a child*. A human being can cease to be a child without falling out of existence. Wiggins calls sortals like these, phasals. There are also compounds sortals like ‘white man’, here though we don’t need to accept the existence of a property *being a white man*, but only of a sortal predicate the conditions of application of which involve the sortal concept *being a man* and the attribute *white*. Anyway, the fact that a substance instantiates a phasal sortal, presupposes that that same substance instantiates a substantial sortal: for every *t*, if something is a child at *t*, then it is a human being at *t*.

Substances are usually referred to through singular terms and are never *said off/in* anything. Primary substances, namely concrete individuals, are never *said of* anything. Secondary substances, namely the kinds and species, are *said of* primary substances. Here though we need to distinguish different levels: we can say of Socrates that he is a human being, but we can also say of the human being that it is an animal. So there are sortals that can only be predicated of individuals and sortals that can be predicated both of individuals and other sortals. If we predicate a sortal K of another sortal K_1 (with truth) and K_1 can only be predicated of individuals, then every individual falling under K_1 , also falls under K . Furthermore, when a substantial sortal is predicated of a substance like in the statement ‘Socrates is a human being’, we can substitute the occurrence of the sortal predicate with its definition *salva veritate*. So, if the definition of ‘Human being’ is ‘Rational animal’, we can substitute the former with the latter and obtain ‘Socrates is a rational animal’ which is a true statement. In general, if ‘ s ’ is a singular term referring to a substance, ‘ K ’ a substantial sortal predicate and ‘ φ ’ the definition of ‘ K ’, then ‘ s is K ’ is true if and only if ‘ s is φ ’ is. In other words, in a true substantial predication, the definition of the predicate is always truthfully predicable of the subject. The same does not hold for accidental predication. First of all, the grammatical subject does not satisfy necessarily all the predicates satisfied by the predicate. Let us consider ‘Socrates is white’ and ‘White is a color’, from these two statements we cannot infer that Socrates is a color and, since the definition of white will refer to the notion of color, Socrates will not satisfy the definition of ‘white’ either. What about Socrates’ whiteness? It cannot be a substance since it is *in* Socrates, but it is white and also satisfies the definition of ‘white’, is then ‘Socrates’ whiteness is white’ a substantial predication? The answer is “no”, since both Socrates’ whiteness and whiteness are *in* Socrates. Primary substances are never said of anything, secondary substances are only *said of* substances, individual properties (e.g. Socrates’ whiteness) are only said *in* and universal properties are said both *in* and *of*.

Kathrin Koslicki (2018: 140) takes the two modes of predication mentioned in the previous lines as indicating two varieties of ontological dependence. She takes the fact that primary substances are always the subject in a sentence and never the predicate as a sign of their ontological priority. The general principle here seems to be that what is predicated is dependent on what is the subject of the predication. Since substances are never predicated, they must be somehow basic. I am not completely sure that it is correct to read in the modes of predication that Aristotle distinguishes in the *Categories* a distinction in the way in which secondary substances and attributes depend on the primary substances, but I am not unsympathetic either towards the idea that somehow language reproduces in its structure some aspects of the extra-linguistic reality and I think this is a conviction that could be attributed to Aristotle as well. As Christopher Shields (2007: 148) points out, Aristotle in the *Categories* is interested in the features of

language as long as these can tell us something about the nature of the reality represented by it. Following Lowe (2009; 2006), from the analysis of predication that we find in the *Categories*, it is possible to extract a general ontological framework according to which there are four main ontological categories: individuals, kinds, individual attributes, and universal attributes.

The category of individuals in Lowe's system is not to be confused with that of primary substances though. It is important to keep in mind that objects are entities with clear identity conditions but this is not sufficient to catalog them as substances. As I have already said, objects are individuals falling under a sortal concept and, even though all substances are objects, the converse does not hold. In a neo-Aristotelian perspective, different kinds of objects can occupy different positions in the hierarchy of reality. Substances are the basic objects, those that occupy the fundamental level.

3.1 *Criteria of Identity*

A typical feature of sortal concepts is that of having associated with them a criterion of identity for the entities falling under them. A criterion of identity, in the sense that I consider here, is a metaphysical principle establishing what it is for two entities of a given kind to be identical.⁹ The notion of a criterion of identity was introduced by Frege in the *Grundlagen* (1884: sec. 62) where he prescribes to associate to the introduction of a singular term, say 'a', a criterion of identity, namely a method that permits to decide whether a is identical with b or not. More precisely, where 'a' and 'b' are singular terms and 'K' a sortal predicate, a criterion of identity is a principle that establishes the conditions under which the statement 'Ka & Kb & a = b' is true. According to the metaphysical reading, criteria of identity are metaphysical principles that determine what the identity of two objects under a sortal consists in. They are not epistemic principles that we use to determine the truth value of an identity statement.¹⁰

A criterion of identity for Ks can be formulated as follows:

C.I.K: *If K(x) and K(y), then $x = y$ iff C.*

C here stands for a sufficient and necessary condition for the identity of objects falling under K. A classic example of a criterion of identity is the well-known principle of extensionality for sets:

⁹ Besides the metaphysical one, there are also epistemic e semantic ways of understanding a criterion of identity (see Carrara and De Florio, 2018).

¹⁰ Criteria of identity are not to be taken as definitions of the notion of identity. Such notion seems to be too basic to be defined (see Noonan and Curtis (2018)).

(PE) If x is a set and y is a set, then $x = y$ iff every element of x is an element of y and *vice versa*.

C here is the condition that we find at the right end of the biconditional, namely co-extensionality. If two sets have the same members, they are identical and if they are identical, they have the same members. This explains why, for instance, there is only one void set. Condition C is constituted by an equivalence relation involving objects of the same kind over which the criterion quantifies. In (PE), for instance, the relation is *having the same members*. Of course, identity is an equivalence relation as well, but an identity criterion that states that two sets are identical when they are identical would be completely useless and uninformative.¹¹

A common distinction found in the literature is that, introduced by Williamson (1990: 145), between one-level and two-level criteria of identity or, as Fine (2016: 2) calls them, direct and indirect criteria. A one-level criterion of identity is something like (PE) in which the quantifiers range over entities of the same kind for which the criterion is formulated. A two-level criterion of identity quantifies over objects of a different kind from those for which the criterion is formulated and refers to these through functional terms. The arguments of the functions are objects of the kind over which the criterion quantifies and condition C is formulated in terms of an equivalence relation holding between objects of this same kind. A classic example is Frege's criterion of identity for directions:

$$(D) \forall x \forall y ((\text{Line}(x) \ \& \ \text{Line}(y)) \rightarrow (dx = dy \leftrightarrow x/y))$$

Here the criterion of identity for directions is formulated in terms of the relation of parallelism between lines. The criterion explicitly quantifies over lines and refers to directions by means of the functional sign 'dx', namely, the direction of x . So the identity of directions is to be understood in terms of parallelism between lines.

I will now turn to a matter that I think is related to the topic of criteria of identity. It seems plausible to me that in two-level criteria of identity it is explicitly expressed a relation of ontological dependency of the kind of entities for which the criterion is formulated from those over which the criterion quantifies. So, considering (D), the fact that the identity conditions for directions are expressed in terms of parallelism between lines is an indication that directions ontologically depend on lines. This might be thought to be true in general of what is designated by means of functional signs and their argument. Take for instance

¹¹ This does not mean that identity should never appear in C, but simply that C should be a condition that informatively determines what it means for two instances of a sortal K to be identical. This does not exclude that the identity conditions of two instances of a given sortal K could be specified in terms of identity of instances of a different sortal K1.

Socrates' whiteness, the particular instance of white that Socrates has is, in fact, dependent upon Socrates and this is represented in the way in which we refer to it. I would be careful though in taking this linguistic fact as a secure indication of a relation of ontological dependence. After all, I can refer to anything as the object of my thought, but this does not make what I think about dependent on me in any way. Let us suppose that I am thinking about the Moon, since the Moon is the object of my thought should I conclude that it depends ontologically on me? Such a conclusion would be absurd! The thought itself would depend on me, not the object represented in it.

Even though a functional way of referring to something is not always to be taken as an indicator of a relation of ontological dependence between the argument of the function and its value, it seems to me that in the case of two-level criteria of identity this assumption might hold. In general, it seems to me that when a functional way of referring to an object is somehow revealing of its essence, we can conclude that there is a dependence of the value of the function from its argument. In other words, when it is essential for an object to be the something of something else, the object in question ontologically depends upon the "something else", namely, the argument of the function. From this point of view, two-level criteria of identity can be seen as metaphysical principles that express explicitly the relation of ontological dependence between kinds of objects.

I borrow here Lowe's (2013: 193) notion of essential identity-dependence¹² which I believe is the kind of ontological dependence metaphysically more relevant for the comprehension of an entity's nature. According to Lowe, an object x essentially depends for its identity on an object y if and only if it is part of the nature of x that there is a function f such that $x = f(y)$ (Lowe 2013: 194). Furthermore, which instance of its kind x is, is determined by which instance of its kind y is. In other words, y is the individuator of x .¹³ This implies that for every x and y , if y is the individuator of x , then x essentially identity-dependes on y . As Lowe (2012: 217) points out, criteria of identity and principles of individuation are not the same thing, even though a principle of individuation for K s can provide a criterion of identity for K s, the converse does not necessarily hold. From the point of view that I exposed in the previous lines, namely that in the hierarchy of being substances occupy the most fundamental level, this might be problematic. Concrete particulars seem to be individuated by their matter, this would imply that it is possible to formulate a criterion of identity for such entities in terms of their matter, but this would imply that they depend for their identity upon it. Substances though are supposed to be ontologically independent and to ground the identities of all other entities. I don't have the space here to deal with such an

¹² See also Lowe (1998: 147).

¹³ I intend here individuation in a metaphysical as opposed to cognitive sense (Lowe 2012: 214).

issue, but it seems to me that at the level of substances it is not possible to find non-circular identity criteria. This is because the identity of substances is somehow primitive. The matter of a given substance is designated functionally as the matter of *x* and this seems to me to indicate that the identity of that matter presupposes the identity of the substance of which it is matter.¹⁴ Substances are not something of something else, the best way to show what they are, is to point at them. For my purposes here it suffices to take the identity of substances as primitive. In the next section, I will consider the case of artifacts and consider a way in which such entities can be taken to be objects depending for their identity on other more fundamental entities.

4. Artifacts

I now turn my attention to artifacts and how they can find a place in a neo-Aristotelian conception of reality. Despite what I have said in the previous paragraphs, the received view on artifacts is anti-realism (Carrara & Mingardo 2013: 358). This is mainly due to the work of David Wiggins (2001) which, from a neo-Aristotelian perspective, denies the existence of artifacts on the grounds that such entities would lack an internal principle of activity and hence clear identity conditions¹⁵ (Carrara & Mingardo 2013: 360). The lack of clear identity conditions associated with artefactual kinds is due, according to Wiggins, to the fact that artefactual kinds are functional kinds (Carrara & Mingardo 2013: 359) and this means that the fact that a certain object belongs to a given kind, depends on it being able to perform a certain function. This makes artefactual kinds dependent on our minds and intentions and hence not real kinds, but just conventional ones. Artefactual kinds, according to Wiggins, are not substantial kinds because there are no clear identity criteria associated with them, and this, in turn, is due to their mind-dependency. I agree with Wiggins on the non-substantial nature of artifacts¹⁶ and their mind-dependency as well, the point on which I disagree is their lack of identity conditions. According to the perspective that I presented in the previous paragraph, I believe that non-substantiality and mind-dependency are perfectly compatible with the possession of clear identity conditions as in the case of non-substantial objects. In the remainder of this paper, I will propose a formulation of a two-level identity criterion for artifacts based on Evnine's (2016) theory.

¹⁴ On this point I agree with Oderberg (2007: 78).

¹⁵ Another influential anti-realist position can be found in van Inwagen (1990).

¹⁶ Indeed we might allow for the existence of substantial artefacts like plastic or genetically engineered organisms. I don't have the space here to deal with such particular cases and I will concentrate on common kinds of artifacts like pencils, chairs and screw drivers.

4.1 Evinine's Amorphism

Evinine (2016) puts forward a theory that he calls amorphic hylomorphism (amorphism from hereon). Such theory has been developed with artifacts in mind as the paradigmatic case of objects with a hylomorphic structure and then extended to other kinds of entities like organisms. I don't believe that Evinine's theory is convincingly extendible beyond artifactual objects, but I will not be concerned with this issue here since the focus of this section is on artifacts. I will try to show how, adopting amorphism, it is possible to formulate two-level criteria of identity for artifacts. This will show how such entities are dependent for their identity on entities of a more fundamental kind and will determine their status as non-substantial objects.

Classical hylomorphism is the doctrine according to which concrete particulars are compounds of matter and form. Amorphism is a version of hylomorphism that abandons the notion of form and relies only on that of matter. According to Evinine (2016: 3), «some things stand in the relation of *being the matter of* to other things and this relation (the matter relation) is irreflexive and asymmetric». This means that where such relation is instantiated, there are at least two objects and nothing can be its own matter. Furthermore, any theory satisfying the condition just quoted can, according to Evinine, be considered hylomorphic. According to amorphism, artifacts are “ideal objects”, and this means that they are “the impression of mind on matter”. What an artifact is and its function(s) are aspects strictly related to the creative process that led to its existence. This process consists of the work done by the maker on a certain portion of matter with certain intentions in mind. On this view, artifacts are essentially the result of intentional work, and the act of creation that brings them into existence is essential for their identity.

In formulating his theory, Evinine takes inspiration from Aristotle which saw a connection between the doctrine of hylomorphism and that of the four causes. The four causes are the material, the formal, the efficient, and the final one. The first two are just the constituents of a hylomorphic compound, namely, matter and form and they account, respectively, for what a given thing is made of and what kind of thing it is. The efficient cause accounts for how a certain thing comes into existence and the final one for its purpose, what it is for. Evinine (2016: 8) points out how, according to Aristotle, formal, efficient, and final cause very often coincide. Amorphism conceives artifacts as objects non-identical with their matter but gets rid of the notion of form. As Evinine writes (2016: 12):

[...]hylomorphically complex entities are sui generis entities that have matter to which they are not identical, but there is no further component of them that plays the role of form. Such objects fall essentially under certain kinds and must be understood in terms of the kind-related processes of work on their (original) matter by which they come to exist.

An artifact then, from the amorphic point of view, is what it is not in virtue of some internal principle, but because it is the result of a certain intentional process. For instance, a chair is a chair because a certain individual worked on some matter, let say wood, with the intention of making a chair out of it, namely an object with a certain function and characteristics. The chair is what it is because of the intentions of its maker. Of course, the intention is not sufficient, the result of the process must be adequate. A shapeless piece of wood is not a chair even though someone worked it with the intention of making a chair.

An artifact *a* of a kind *K* with an associated function(s) *f* exists because of its maker, it is a *K* because its maker intended to make a *K* and has the function(s) *f* because *K*s have such function(s) associated to them. In other words, you cannot have the intention of making a *K* without wanting to create an object capable of performing the function(s) *f*. *a* is what it is because its maker worked the matter it was made out of with some specific intentions in mind. In this respect, we can say that *a* has not an internal nature determining the kind of thing it is, but its being what it is depends on something external to it, namely, the intentions of the maker. Furthermore, *a* is not just the kind of thing it is because of its maker, it also is the particular instance of such kind because of the relation it bears to its creator. *a* is essentially the result of a certain act of creation, it is the impression of its creator's mind on matter. This implies that *contra* Kripke (1980: 113-14), the wood out of which a chair was made is not essential to it, its maker could have made the same chair out of a different portion of wood.¹⁷ What is essential to the chair is being the result of a specific act of creation.¹⁸ In other words, the identity of the chair is determined by the identity of the act of creation that brought it into existence and this, in turn, depends for its identity upon the individual that performed it.

From what I have said so far we can draw some interesting conclusions. As we have seen, an artifact is necessarily the result of a specific act of creation. This act is essential for the identity of the artifact in the sense that it determines the kind to which the artifact belongs and its being the specific instance of that kind. Using Lowe's terminology, we can say that the artifact essentially identity-dependes upon the act of its creation since being the result of that specific act determines what instance of its kind the artifact is. So, if *a* is an artifact and *c* is the act by which *a* begun to exist, we can say that *a* is identical to the (intended) result of *c*. 'Being the result of *c*' is then the functional term that we can use to refer to our artifact *a*. Furthermore, *c* is, recalling what I said earlier in this paper, the individuator of *a* and this means that we can use the functional term 'Being

¹⁷ Not necessarily out of a different material. If the intention had been that of making a wooden chair, the same chair could not had been made out of a portion of, let say, plastic.

¹⁸ Evinne (2016 pp. 86-96) adopts a thesis which he calls "necessity of origin as act" distinct from Kripke's necessity of origin as matter.

the result of x ' to formulate a two-level criterion of identity for artifacts that quantifies over acts of creation. The criterion will quantify over acts of creation and refer to artifacts through the functional term 'Being the result of x '.

The two-level criterion of identity for artifacts I propose is the following:

$$(C.I.A) \forall x \forall y ((C(x) \ \& \ C(y)) \rightarrow (R(x) = R(y) \leftrightarrow x = y))^{19}$$

Here ' $C(x)$ ' stands for the predicate ' x is an act of creation' and ' $R(x)$ ' stands for the functional term 'being the (intentional) result of x '.²⁰ This criterion states that two artifacts are identical if and only if they are the result of the same act of creation. A problem though might beset the plausibility of what I am claiming. Aren't acts of creation a kind of event? Now, the time at which an event occurs is essential for its identity and this means that no two events can be numerically identical if they occur at different times. If acts of creation are events, this implies that they are subject to the same condition regarding the time of occurrence. But this means that if an artifact had been created a minute later than it was actually created, it would have been a different artifact. This seems an implausible conclusion.

A possible solution might consist in claiming that the relation between acts of creation and events is not identity but a kind of constitution. An act of creation is not identical with an event, but it is constituted by it and this would allow for some flexibility regarding its identity. In these terms, an act of creation could have occurred at a different time and hence be constituted of another event. What then does determine the identity of an act of creation? The solution advanced by Evnine and towards which I am sympathetic, consists in taking acts of creation as being identified by intentions. In these terms, an act of creation would be the expression of a creative intention and it would be dependent for its identity upon it. In these terms, an act of creation would be essentially the expression of a certain creative intention and it would be constituted by an event.

Another possible solution to the problem just considered might be that of maintaining the identity between creative acts and events, but changing the equivalence relation in the formulation of the identity criterion for artifacts. The relation that must hold between two creative acts for their products to be identical would not be identity, but the relation of *being the expression of the same creative intention*. Two artifacts would then be identical if and only if they are the result of creative acts that originated from the same creative intention. For this solution

¹⁹ One could restate the criterion in a direct form in the following way: $\forall x \forall y ((A(x) \ \& \ A(y)) \rightarrow (x = y \leftrightarrow \exists z (C(z) \ \& \ x = R(z) \ \& \ y = R(z))))$. What is important is not whether the criterion of identity is one or two-level, but rather that the identity conditions of artifacts are stated in terms of acts of creation and that an artefact can be uniquely referred to by means of the functional term 'Being the result of x '.

²⁰ Rx is here intended as a function from creative acts to artifacts.

to work, it should be added that a creative intention is like a gun loaded with a single bullet, once the bullet is fired, there cannot be other shots. Similarly, once a creative intention is expressed by a creative act in a possible world, that act is the only expression of that intention in that world. This stipulation allows for some modal flexibility since the time of occurrence of a certain act of creation doesn't need to be the same in all possible worlds. So, the same artifact could be the result of acts of creation occurring at different times in different possible worlds as long as these are expressions of the same creative intention. On this view, intentions are individual, namely, no two makers can have numerically the same intention, but at most the same type-identical intentions. From this, it follows that acts of creation are essentially tied to the individuals that perform them. A certain act of creation a is essentially the expression of the creative intention of some individual s . From this, we can conclude that the result of a , say o , is essentially the result of a and consequently the impress on matter of s 's mind. From this, it follows that necessarily, for every x , if x made o , then $x = s$.

The identity dependence of an artifact upon its maker seems to follow from the transitivity of such relation. It seems quite plausible to assume that if a depends on b for its identity, then a depends on everything upon which b depends for its identity. In our case, an artifact depends for its identity on the act of its creation, the act of creation depends on the creative intention of which it is an expression and this depends on the individual whose intention it is. Hence, by the transitivity of the identity dependence, it follows that the artifact depends for its identity upon its maker. This is a welcomed consequence from the Aristotelian perspective that I have exposed in the previous section. Makers are human beings and human beings are substances, the denizens of the most fundamental level of reality. Again, from a neo-Aristotelian point of view, the goal of ontology is not just that of making a list of what there is, but rather that of showing if and how a given kind of entities is grounded in the fundamental level.

At this point, I would like to consider some possible issues for the amorphist account of artifacts. Are we sure that *being the result of x* is actually a function? In other words, are we sure that for any (successful) act of creation there is exactly one artifact that is the result of such act? And conversely, could not be the case that a certain artifact is the result of multiple creative acts? I will not be concerned with the first issue since Evnine (2016: 97-103) gives a plausible explanation of mass production. I will then focus on the second problem, namely, the case in which an artifact seems to be the result of multiple creative acts. I don't intend to consider the case in which I, for instance, decide what to make and how and then I call someone over to help me, in this situation the intention is mine and my helper is just an executor, the mind impressed in the matter would be mine and only mine. I think there are more puzzling cases. Consider for instance two sculptors that decide to create a sculpture together without any previous agreement besides that of accepting everything the other will come up with. They

start to work the clay and the final result is the sculpture *c*. The problem now is: what is *c*? Whose intention does it depend upon for its identity? Is this a counterexample to amorphism? Is *c* the result of two creative acts?²¹

I believe that a response to the possible objection just considered, might be that of recognizing that there are two creative acts involved, but that *c* is the result of neither of them. Rather, the two creative acts constitute a third one and it is of this one that *c* is the result. What about the identity of this composite creative act? Which intention is it the expression of? As I argued before, two distinct individuals cannot have numerically the same intention and the two sculptors in question have different intentions anyway. One possibility compatible with amorphism would be that of admitting that there isn't a single object *c* but rather two distinct co-located objects, one for each sculptor. Let us say *c*₁ and *c*₂, *c*₁ is the impression on matter of sculptor *s*₁ and *c*₂ of *s*₂. It seems to me that for this solution to work, the intention of *s*₁ must comprehend the will of accepting *s*₂'s contribution and *vice versa*. I believe though that this is a quite counterintuitive solution. Alternatively, one could admit the existence of collective creative intentions. In the case here considered the intention of *s*₁ and *s*₂ of accepting each one the work of the other could give rise to a sort of second-level intention whose expression is the creative act constituted by the work done respectively by *s*₁ and *s*₂. There would be in this case only one object, namely *c* and this would depend for its identity upon the creative act that is constituted by the creative acts of *s*₁ and *s*₂ and this, in turn, would depend upon the second level intention which is grounded in *s*₁ and *s*₂'s creative intentions. Ultimately, the identity of *c* would depend upon *s*₁ and *s*₂, it would be the impress on matter of their minds.

5. Conclusion

I have shown how, adopting a neo-Aristotelian approach to ontology, it is possible to accept artifacts conceived as objects that depend for their identity upon acts of creation. Acts of creation, ultimately, depend on human beings for their identity, namely on a kind of substance. Substances are the fundamental entities in a neo-Aristotelian conception of reality and showing how a kind of entities depend on such basic beings, means sanctioning their admissibility in our ontology. From this point of view, it is impossible to sharply separate the ontological and the metaphysical question. In order to determine whether a kind of beings exists, we need to know whether it is substantial or not, and if it isn't we need to show how it is grounded in the fundamental level.

²¹ Note that this example says nothing against the functional nature of *being the result of x* since a function can perfectly have multiple values for a given argument. 4 is both the square of 2 and -2, yet the squaring function is still a function.

I have shown how, following Evinine's theory, artifacts can be seen as essentially identity-depend upon acts of creation and how a given artifact can be referred to by means of the functional term 'The result of x ' where ' x ' stands for an act of creation in general. Following Lowe, I have adopted the position according to which if x is the individuator of y , then there is a function f such that $y = f(x)$. Furthermore, I have formulated a two-level criterion of identity for artifacts which directly quantifies over acts of creations and refers to artifacts through the functional expression 'The result of x '. I have then posed as a condition for the identity of two artifacts the identity of the creative acts that brought them into existence, namely the identity of their individuators. Finally, I have considered some possible objections to Evinine's amorphism and I have proposed some possible solutions.

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