

Extended Modal Meinongianism

Daniel Milne-Plückebaum

Bielefeld University
Faculty for Linguistics and Literary Studies
Computational and Mathematical Linguistics

ECAP 9 | LMU Munich
August 25, 2017

Outline

Defining Modal Meinongianism

Challenging Modal Meinongianism

Defending Modal Meinongianism

Extending Modal Meinongianism

Some Final Thoughts

Outline

Defining Modal Meinongianism

Challenging Modal Meinongianism

Defending Modal Meinongianism

Extending Modal Meinongianism

Some Final Thoughts

Meinongianism

(Nonexistence Thesis) Some objects don't exist.

(Existence-as-a-Property Thesis) To exist is to instantiate *existence*.

(Distinctness Thesis) For some nonexistent object o and some
nonexistent object o' , $o \neq o'$.

(So-Being Thesis) Distinct nonexistent objects are distinct in
virtue of differing in terms of what they're like.

(Actuality Thesis) Nonexistent objects are actually something.

(Concreteness Thesis) Nonexistent objects are concrete.

A Meinongian Account of Intentionality

- ▲ In seemingly thinking about something that doesn't exist, one needn't in fact be thinking about nothing, but might be thinking about a particular nonexistent object.
 - ▲ In seemingly thinking about distinct objects that don't exist, one needn't in fact be thinking about one and the same nonexistent object, but might be thinking about distinct nonexistent objects.
 - ▲ In thinking about a particular nonexistent object, one can principally tell which object it is that one is thinking about.
- What is the intended object like such that *it*, but no other object, is intended?

Characterisations

- ▲ Intentional objects are typically associated with certain characterisations.
- ▲ Given a thought involving a characterisation C , it is whatever satisfies C that is thereby intended, and vice versa.
- ▲ C-Satisfaction is grounded in being just as C says.

Characterisation Principles

- ▲ A CP yields, for every characterisation C , a C -compliant condition of so-being.
- ▲ Whatever uniquely satisfies C does so in virtue of fulfilling this condition.

A First Attempt

(CP_N) For every characterisation C , whatever uniquely satisfies C uniquely *actually instantiates all properties represented by C* , and vice versa.

But...

- ▲ What about the characterisation of being golden, a mountain *and existent* (Russell, 1905, 483)?
 - Whatever satisfies it actually instantiates goldenness, mountainhood *and existence*.
- ▲ But nothing actually instantiates these properties!
 - Nothing satisfies the characterisation!
- ▲ Is the characterisation illegitimate for directed thought?

No!

(Intentionality Thesis)

- (i) *Every* characterisation is uniquely satisfied by some object; and
- (ii) *distinct* characterisations are uniquely satisfied by *distinct* objects.

What to Do?

- ▲ Meinongians must formulate a different CP!
 - ▲ Path of Restriction (Parsons, 1980)
 - ▲ Path of Disambiguation (Zalta, 1983)
 - ▲ Path of Relocation (Priest, 2005; Berto, 2012)

Modal Meinongianism

(CP_M) For every characterisation C , whatever uniquely satisfies C uniquely instantiates all C -represented properties *in all and only C-imagination-realising worlds*, and vice versa (see Priest, 2005).

- ▲ In @, nonexistent objects instantiate only properties that aren't *existence*-entailing.
 - ▲ In imagination-realising worlds, nonexistent objects instantiate their characterising properties.
- Whatever satisfies the characterisation of being a golden mountain instantiates golden-mountainhood (and thus existence) in all and only imagination-realising worlds. ✓

Outline

Defining Modal Meinongianism

Challenging Modal Meinongianism

Defending Modal Meinongianism

Extending Modal Meinongianism

Some Final Thoughts

But...

- ▲ What about the characterisation GM_{act} : being an object such that, *actually*, it's a golden mountain (Beall, 2006; Sauchelli, 2012)?
 - ▲ For every world w , \ulcorner actually, $\varphi \urcorner$ is true in w iff $\ulcorner \varphi \urcorner$ is true in @.
- Argument:
- (1) Whichever properties GM_{act} represents are such that whatever instantiates them in any GM_{act} -imagination-realising world instantiates golden-mountainhood in @.
 - (2) Nothing instantiates golden-mountainhood in @.
- \therefore Nothing satisfies GM_{act} —against IT_(i).

Premise 1?

- ▲ Which properties *does* GM_{act} represent?
 - ▲ @-indexed properties, perhaps (see Plantinga, 1974, 63)?
 - ▲ A property P is @-indexed if for some property Q , we have:
For every object o and world w' , o is P in w' iff o is Q in @.
- Premise 1 becomes:
- (A) GM_{act} represents golden-mountainhood-*in*-@ and
 - (B) golden-mountainhood-*in*-@ is such that whatever instantiates it in any world instantiates golden-mountainhood *in* @.

Outline

Defining Modal Meinongianism

Challenging Modal Meinongianism

Defending Modal Meinongianism

Extending Modal Meinongianism

Some Final Thoughts

Priest: Against B

- ▲ If GM_{act} represents properties that “bleed back from an *arbitrary* world to the actual world” (Priest, 2011, 251; emphasis added), *then* Modal Meinongianism is in trouble.
- ▲ Priest: Don't forget *impossible* worlds!
 - For every *possible* world w , \ulcorner actually, $\varphi \urcorner$ is true in w iff $\ulcorner \varphi \urcorner$ is true in @.
 - A property P is @-indexed if for some property Q , we have: for every object o and *possible* world w' , o is P in w' iff o is Q in @.
 - GM_{act} -imagination-realising worlds are *impossible*.

Against Priest's Defence

- ▲ @ realises the situation about the object characterised as *being such that, actually, it's a granitic mountain*.
 - ▲ But no *nonactual* world in which something instantiates granitic-mountainhood-in-@ does.
 - ▲ Otherwise: @ would be imagination-realising in the case of the characterisation of being a wizard in a *Harry-Potter*-world.
- Given a characterisation of being such that, *actually, P*,
- if no nonactual world in which something instantiates *P*-in-@ is imagination-realising *although* something instantiates *P* in @,
 - then *a fortiori*, no nonactual world in which something instantiates *P*-in-@ is imagination-realising if *nothing* instantiates *P* in @.

Barz: Against A

- ▲ *Actually* (\equiv *in the actual world*) is context-sensitive.
- ▲ “[W]hen an agent characterizes an object as $[GM_{act}]$, she imagines herself at centre stage, surrounded by [golden mountains]” (Barz, 2015, 5-6)
- GM_{act} -imagination-realising worlds are *considered as actual*, with the imaginer at its centre.

Properties?

- ▲ But then, which properties does GM_{act} represent, such that whatever satisfies GM_{act} does so in the right worlds?
- ▲ Perhaps: Given an imaginer i :
 - ▲ *bearing- R -to- i* , where R is existence-entailing for both relata (such as *being-spatiotemporally-related-to*)
 - ▲ *being-such-that- i -experiences-her-surroundings-from-within*
 - ▲ *golden-mountainhood*

Against Barz' Defence

- ▲ In imagining something as GM_{act} , an imaginer i needn't imagine a golden mountain as instantiating a doubly-existence-entailing relation *to i herself*, or as being experienced by i herself *from within*.
- ▲ i might just imagine *this world*, @, as being such that a golden mountain exists in *it*, perhaps even *while i herself does not*.
- Such an imagination is *de re*, where @ is the relevant *res*, but not necessarily *de se*.
- As such, it isn't realised by any world other than @.

Modal Characterisations

- GM_{act} is a *modal* characterisation that represents properties and a world, @ (i.e., *instantiating-in-@ golden-mountainhood*)
- ▲ The worlds represented by modal characterisations are those from which the ones relevant for world-relative property instantiation are to be drawn in the first place.
- ▲ But modal characterisations can't even be handled by CP_M .

What to Do?

- ▲ \underline{CP}_M : For every (non-modal) characterisation C, whatever satisfies C does so in virtue of being related to certain worlds in a special way.
 - ▲ These worlds aren't antecedently given.
 - ▲ But satisfaction conditions for modal characterisations must be knitted around antecedently given properties *and* worlds.
- $(CP_M^?)$ For every *modal* characterisation C, whatever uniquely satisfies C uniquely instantiates all C-represented properties in exactly those *of the C-represented* worlds that realise the situation about the object so envisaged, and vice versa.

Enter the Philosophising Cat

→ $(CP_M^?[GM_{act}])$ Whatever uniquely satisfies GM_{act} uniquely instantiates golden-mountainhood in exactly those worlds of $\{@\}$ that realise the situation about the object so envisaged, and vice versa.

 But consider the characterisation PC_{act} : *being an object such that, actually, it's a philosophising cat*:

→ $(CP_M^?[PC_{act}])$ Whatever uniquely satisfies PC_{act} uniquely instantiates philosophising-felinity in exactly those worlds of $\{@\}$ that realise the situation about the object so envisaged, and vice versa.

A New Problem

- ▲ Of $\{\text{@}\}$, no world is imagination-realising in either case of characterisation-induced imagination.
- Each of these $CP_M^?$ -yielded conditions of so-being is such that whatever fulfils it, fulfils it vacuously.
- Given $CP_{M'}^?$, whatever uniquely fulfils the GM_{act} -compliant condition of so-being *also* fulfils the PC_{act} -compliant condition, *and vice versa*.
- Given $CP_{M'}^?$, whatever uniquely satisfies GM_{act} *also* uniquely satisfies PC_{act} , *and vice versa*.
- Given $CP_{M'}^?$, $IT_{(ii)}$ turns out to be false!

Outline

Defining Modal Meinongianism

Challenging Modal Meinongianism

Defending Modal Meinongianism

Extending Modal Meinongianism

Some Final Thoughts

A False Presupposition

(Realisation Thesis) For *every* characterisation C, only *worlds* can be C-imagination-realising.

▲ But consider:

▲ being an object such that, *necessarily*, it's a golden mountain

▲ being an object such that, *possibly*, it's a round square

▲ being an object such that, *in most dogless worlds*, it's a philosophising cat

→ These characterisations trigger *modal imaginations*, none of which is realised by any world or other, taken individually!

Bigger Imagination-Realisers

- ▲ What else might play the role of imagination-realiser?
 - whole *pluralities of worlds* (*pows*)!
- ▲ Recall: For whatever satisfies the characterisation of being a golden mountain, Modal Meinongians relocate *its instantiation of its characterising properties, including existence*, to certain *nonactual worlds*.
 - Now: For whatever satisfies GM_{act} , Modal Meinongians can just relocate *its instantiation of its characterising properties in (some of) its characterising worlds, including its instantiation of golden-mountainhood in @*, to certain *nonactual pows*.

Extended Modal Meinongianism

→ **Extended Modal Meinongianism** incorporates:

(CP_M^+) For every *modal* characterisation C, whatever uniquely satisfies C instantiates all C-represented properties in some or all C-represented worlds in exactly those *pows* that realise the situation about the object so envisaged, and vice versa.

Crazy?

▲ But: CP_M^+ is compatible with IT only if the following satisfaction conditions are non-vacuously fulfilled:

$(CP_M^+[GM_{act}])$ Whatever uniquely satisfies GM_{act} uniquely instantiates golden-mountainhood in @ in exactly those pows that realise the situation about the object so envisaged, and vice versa.

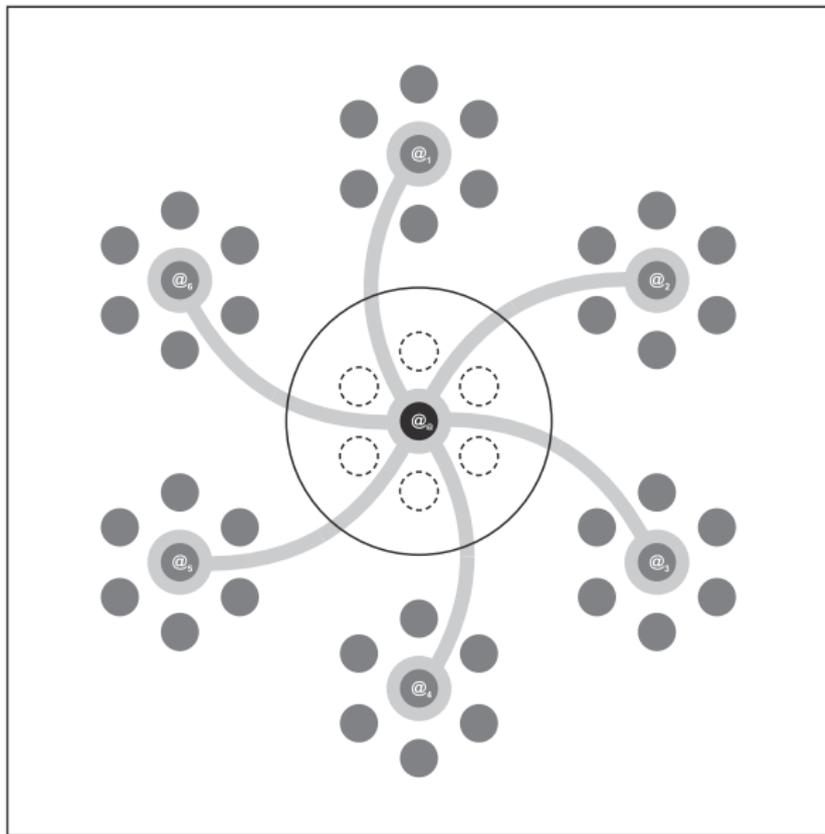
$(CP_M^+[PC_{act}])$ Whatever uniquely satisfies PC_{act} uniquely instantiates philosophising-felinity in @ in exactly those pows that realise the situation about the object so envisaged, and vice versa.

→ But then some things must be nonactual pows!

On the Pluralities of Worlds

- ▲ To constitute a genuine kind of *Meinongianism*, the (pluralities of) worlds invoked in $CP_M^{(+)}$ must be regarded as:
 - ▲ *Concrete*; otherwise: non-CT
 - ▲ *Nonexistent*; otherwise: non-NT (and perhaps: non-AT)
- ▲ Moreover, worlds are to be regarded as *trans-pow-objects*.

A Picture



Outline

Defining Modal Meinongianism

Challenging Modal Meinongianism

Defending Modal Meinongianism

Extending Modal Meinongianism

Some Final Thoughts

Final Thoughts

- ▲ According to EMM, a nonexistent object o uniquely satisfies a modal characterisation C , if it does, in virtue of uniquely being just as C says.
- ▲ EMM can even deal with the sophisticated modal characterisation given by Kroon (2012).
- ▲ What about the characterisation of being an object such that, *in the actual pow*, it instantiates-in-@ golden-mountainhood?
- The question is: What is one imagining? Then: Extend EMM!
- ▲ Adding ((pluralities of ...) pluralities of) worlds requires giving up an assumption that all Meinongians so far shared: that *all* nonexistent objects are individuated solely on the basis of *existent entities* (in particular, *properties*).

▲ Thank you very much! 🐱

References

- Barz, Wolfgang. 2015. Two-Dimensional Modal Meinongianism. *Ratio* (online first).
- Beall, J.C. 2006. Review of Towards Non-Being: The Logic and Metaphysics of Intentionality. *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews*.
- Berto, Francesco. 2012. *Existence as a Real Property*. Springer.
- Kroon, Fred. 2012. Characterisation and Existence in Modal Meinongianism. *Grazer Philosophische Studien* 86:23–34.
- Parsons, Terence. 1980. *Nonexistent Objects*. Yale University Press.
- Plantinga, Alvin. 1974. *The Nature of Necessity*. Clarendon Press.
- Priest, Graham. 2005. *Towards Non-Being: The Logic and Metaphysics of Intentionality*. Oxford University Press.
- . 2011. Against Against Nonbeing. *The Review of Symbolic Logic* 4:237–253.
- Russell, Bertrand. 1905. On Denoting. *Mind* 14:479–493.
- Sauchelli, Andrea. 2012. Fictional Objects, Non-Existence, and the Principle of Characterization. *Philosophical Studies* 159:139–146.
- Zalta, Edward N. 1983. *Abstract Objects: An Introduction to Axiomatic Metaphysics*. Reidel.